

Wonder, Awe, and the Fear of the Lord

Opening text: Acts 9:1-7, 31

31 Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.

Introduction: As New Testament people, sometimes we don't know what to do with the concept of *the fear of the Lord*. Is it a New Testament thing? Is it compatible with 'living under grace'? It is indeed a New Testament concept. It is found in the 4 gospels, Acts, Romans, 2 Corinthians, Philippians as well as in Revelation.

Some of the benefits of understanding the fear of the Lord:

- a) It will lead to peace, edification, and multiplication (v.31)
- b) It will lead to a deeper type of worship
The Passion Translation: 31b - ... "*they worshiped God in wonder, and awe and the fear of the Lord*"
- c) **Proverbs 1:7a** - "*The fear of the lord is the beginning of knowledge*" ...
It is where you start in your journey of knowing God, it is foundational. There are at least 114 verses in the bible that tell us to walk like that.

Today I would like to deal with a few questions people have regarding the fear of the Lord, and allow the Bible itself to answer each one of those questions:

1. Since we are under 'grace' is there a place for the fear of God?

Hebrews 12:28 - *Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have **grace**, by which we may serve God acceptably with **reverence and godly fear**.*

Grace and godly fear appear in the same sentence. Grace is not a license to live anyway we feel like but to '*serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear*'.

2. Doesn't the concept of the fear of God exclude the goodness of God

Hosea 3:5 - *Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They shall **fear the Lord and His goodness** in the latter days.*

- a) Did you notice fear and goodness in the same sentence?
- b) In Hebrew, the word for 'fear' is *pachad*. That is a special word and means *to be startled, to tremble, to stand in awe, to revere, to fear or to be amazed*.

This passage in Hosea basically means that Israel will tremble because of God's startling, sudden, amazing goodness showered upon them in the last days. This verse shows how positive the Hebrew concept of the fear of the Lord is.

3. Doesn't the concept of the fear of the Lord exclude that of Joy?

Proverbs 28:14a – *“happy is the man who is always reverent” (pachad)*

The word for ‘happy’ in Hebrew is literally overjoyed. The TPT, **The Passion Translation** translated this passage like this: *“Overjoyed is the one who with tender heart trembles before God”*

Matthew 28:6-8 - *He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. ⁷And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.” ⁸So they went out quickly from the tomb **with fear and great joy**, and ran to bring His disciples word.*

The fear of the Lord doesn't exclude joy. See how they were both part of the same experience?

4. But doesn't the Bible say that God is our Father?

a) Jesus as a Son, also walked in godly fear:

Hebrews 5:7-8 - *who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His **godly fear**, ⁸ though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.*

b) As sons and daughters, we are also called to walk in the same way

1 Peter 1:17 (The Passion Translation) - *Since you call on him as your heavenly **Father**, the impartial Judge who judges according to each one's works, live **each day with holy awe and reverence** throughout your time on earth.*

Although God is our heavenly Father, it is appropriate to live reverently, to be respectful and honouring of Who He is.

He is Abba, we have confidence with Him, we can come boldly to the throne of His grace, but this doesn't exclude standing in awe of Him, being amazed and even feeling ‘small’ because of His greatness.

c) There is a right way to ‘fear God’ and a wrong way:

- It would be wrong to be afraid of God like we would of some imminent danger. We don't fear God like we would a snake for instance. The fear of the Lord is not that type of fear.
- When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water, they cried out for fear thinking that it was a ghost. Jesus said, ‘fear not, it is I’. That is a type of fear motivated by a spirit of fear and that is something Jesus came to precisely set us free from.

- There is also fear motivated by a dark sense of dread and calamity. That is not a fear we associate with our relationship with God.
- There is also a fear motivated by guilt and condemnation. For instance:

Genesis 3:10 - *So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was **afraid** because I was naked; and I hid myself."*

This is the kind of fear that the blood of Jesus came to set us free from.

Romans 8:15 - *For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."*

We don't fear God in this way. We should not fear God with the fear that comes from bondage or the spirit of fear. We have not received the spirit of fear.

The right way to fear God

The right way to fear God has to do with admiration, reverence, awe, deep respect, honour, esteem, wonder and amazement.

Luke 5:26 - Amplified Bible (AMPC)

"And overwhelming astonishment and ecstasy seized them all, and they recognized and praised and thanked God; and they were filled with and controlled by reverential fear and kept saying, we have seen wonderful and strange and incredible and unthinkable things today!"

Luke 7:16 – Amplified Bible (AMPC)

"Profound and reverent fear seized them all, and they began to recognize God and praise and give thanks, saying, a great Prophet has appeared among us! And God has visited His people [in order to help and care for and provide for them]!"

Luke 9:43 – Amplified Bible (AMPC)

"⁴³ And all were astounded at the evidence of God's mighty power and His majesty and magnificence. But [while] they were all marvelling at everything Jesus was doing, He said to His disciples,

Acts 2:43 – Amplified Bible (AMPC)

⁴³ And a sense of awe (reverential fear) came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were performed through the apostles (the special messengers).

Conclusion

Philippians 2:12 – Amplified Bible

Therefore, my dear ones, as you have always obeyed [my suggestions], so now, not only [with the enthusiasm you would show] in my presence but much more because I am absent, work out (cultivate, carry out to the goal, and fully complete) your own salvation with reverence and awe and trembling (self-distrust, with serious caution,

tenderness of conscience, watchfulness against temptation, timidly shrinking from whatever might offend God and discredit the name of Christ).

The fear of the Lord is not an Old Testament concept. It is not outdated. These are all New Testament Scriptures.