

**Worship (3)**  
**The Fear of the Lord**  
Deut. 10:12-13

Introduction:

1. Scripture is replete with the requirement to “fear the Lord.”
2. “Fearing the Lord” is often elevated to the prime position in our relationship to God.
  - a. Prov. 1:7 says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.”
  - b. Prov. 9:10; Psa. 111:10 says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”
  - c. Ecc. 12:13 summarizes the conclusion, “When all has been heard fear God and keep His commandments.”
3. The N.T. just as forcefully commends fearing the Lord.
  - a. Jesus said, “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after have no more that they can do. But I want to warn you whom to fear; fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!” (Lk. 12:4-5).
  - b. 1 Pet. 2:17 summarizes the Christian’s responsibility of submission: “Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.”
4. But what does it mean to fear the Lord? Must I be afraid of Him? How does fearing the Lord relate to our worship? Is it appropriate to teach people to fear the Lord?

Discussion:

- I. The terms and their use in Scripture.
  - A. The Hebrew term “yārē” is used in two senses in the first covenant.
    1. It denotes “terror, fright” in unknown circumstances, toward enemy armies, wild animals, death and God.
      - a. Jer. 5:22: “Do you not fear me? declares the Lord. Do you not tremble in My presence?” God has placed the sand on the sea shore and the sea stops there. How magnificent is that! He gives rain in its season. How incredible is that!
      - b. Micah 7:17 observes how the nations, as mighty as they are, will come trembling out of their fortresses. Before the Lord they will be in dread and afraid.
      - c. Job spoke of his dread and fear of the Lord (9:34-35).
    2. Reverence and awe are associated with this word (Deut. 10:12). It is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom.
    3. The uses blend into one another so that sometimes it is hard to distinguish whether it is a reference to terror or a reference to awe.
  - B. The Greek terms “phobeō” and “phobos” are used in the second covenant.
    1. These words carry the idea of putting to flight, thus the idea of being afraid.
    2. But like the Hebrew “yārē” are used of showing reverential respect. Cornelius

was one who “feared God” (Acts 10:2), i.e., he respected God.

II. There are many incidents described in Scripture that should incite fear and respect in us.

- A. The creation. Psa. 33:8-9 says, “Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.”
- B. The crossing of the Red Sea and the defeat of the Egyptians. Miriam sang, “Your right hand, O Lord, is majestic in power. Your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy. And in the greatness of your excellence, You overthrow those who rise up against You; You send forth Your burning anger, and it consumes them as chaff” (Ex. 15:6-7).
- C. When Israel was before Sinai the Lord descended upon it in fire. “It’s smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently.” God answered Moses with thunder. The people were warned to not break through to gaze or they would perish (Ex. 19:18ff). They said to Moses, “Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, or I will die” (Deut. 18:16).
- D. Then there is the account of Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, who offered “strange fire before the Lord.” “Fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord” (Lev. 10:1-4). God said, “By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, and before all the people I will be honored.”
- E. Korah, Dathan and Abiram, sons of Levi, who in Num. 16 questioned Moses’ leadership. God spoke to the congregation saying, “Get back from around the dwellings of Korah, Dathan and Abiriam.” The ground opened up and swallowed them up. Fire came from the Lord and consumed 250 men who were supporting Korah, Dathan and Abiriam. All Israel fled saying, “The earth may swallow us up!”
- F. And then there was Uzzah in 1 Chron. 13. David was moving the ark from Kiriath-jearim. They made a new ox cart to move it on. It was a big celebration. David and all Israel were singing with lyres, harps, tambourines, cymbals and trumpets. Uzza and Ahio were driving the cart. The oxen stumbled and Uzzah put out his hand to steady the ark. “The anger of the Lord burned against Uzzah, so He struck him down because he put out his hand to the ark.” He died on the spot. “David was afraid of God that day.” 2 Sam. 6:7-9 identifies irreverence as the problem.
- G. “These incidents all occurred in the first covenant. The second covenant is not like this.” Oh, but it is!
  1. Surely, we forget Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) who were struck dead for lying to the Holy Spirit. “Great fear came over the whole church and over all who heard these things” (Acts 5:11).
  2. Surely, we forget Heb. 10:28ff: “Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.’ And again, ‘The Lord will judge His people.’ It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

3. How can we look at the cross and not see the awesomeness of God against sin?

III. "But I thought we should come boldly into the presence of God (Heb. 10:19ff). That we should not be afraid of Him. That His rod and His staff would comfort us (Psa. 23). So are we supposed to be afraid of God or not?"

- A. The answer is found in Gen. 3:10.
  - 1. After the sin of Adam and Eve God came to walk in the garden and Adam and Eve hid themselves from the presence of God.
  - 2. Adam's explanation, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I as naked."
- B. Reverence is transformed into terror by sin!
  - 1. Understand how the two go together.
  - 2. God is awesome. He is Holy. He is powerful. You ought to respect that. When you don't terror is the response.
- C. Why were Nadab and Abihu struck down? They did not treat God as holy (Lev. 10:3).
- D. Why were Korah, Dathan and Abiram consumed by the earth? They had spurned the Lord (Num. 16:30).
- E. Why was Uzzah struck down? For his irreverence (2 Sam. 6:7).
- F. Why were Ananias and Sapphira struck down? They had agreed together to put the Lord to the test (Acts 5:9). That's disrespect!
- G. You cannot trample underfoot the Son of God, regard as unclean the blood of the covenant, insult the Spirit of grace! God will be treated as holy. He will be treated with respect. He will be honored. Yes, He is a God of compassion. Yes, He is a God of forgiveness. Yes, He loves you lavishly. All of these are reflections of His awesomeness.

Conclusion:

- 1. The fear of reverence is transformed into the fear of terror by sin!
- 2. Let us fear the Lord in reverence that we not have to fear Him in terror!
- 3. Let us worship the Lord in the reverence of respect, not in terror and fear.