

Transformational Fear

Is there anything in our lives that has us afraid? Do the events of the world today stimulate a sense of fear in the hearts of men? What if a gunman burst in on our church service? What if a terrorist or other criminal threatened our lives? Would we tremble?

The Scriptures indicate trembling for fear must only be in awe of the Lord God; it should never be our response to the things of this world.

Thou shalt **not** be afraid of them...

Let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble,
neither be ye terrified because of them;

Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave...

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear;
but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.
Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord,
nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the
afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God

2 Timothy 1:7-8

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Introduction

Second Timothy is an encouragement to Timothy and an admonition to stand strong in effective ministry despite the hardship and persecution that would come. After Paul's greeting and brief history of Timothy's spiritual heritage, Paul gets immediately at the heart of the matter: God has not given us the spirit of fear. Rather than fear of man, fear of circumstances, fear of hardship, we are to manifest the spirit of power, of love and of a sound mind. When we have the spirit of fear, we will **not** be successfully living with power, love and a sound, unshakable mind (nor the stable emotions that follow).

The following scenario has floated around the internet to encourage Believers to stand strong and true to the Lord.

Imagine the surprise one Sunday morning during the service at a 2000 member church, when two men enter, both covered from head to toe in black, carrying submachine guns. One of the men shouted, "Anyone willing to take a bullet for Christ stay where you are!"

It was not merely surprise that this congregation experienced, it was fear.

Immediately, the choir fled.... the deacons fled... most of the rest of the congregation fled. Out of the 2000, there only remained 20.

The man who had spoken took off his hood... He then looked at the preacher and said, "Okay Pastor, I got rid of all the hypocrites, you can start the service.

Although that little story may have been manufactured, a similar true story did occur where the supposed "terrorists" were actually Believers that wanted to know who they could trust in a small house church. Those that stood fast feared God rather than man.

This little scenario should cause us to think not only on whether we would stand steadfast for the Lord if threatened, but on the implications of the fear that caused so many of those believers to flee. Why does fear well up in the human heart at times? The instruction is given throughout the Bible to "Fear Not", so it must be that we do have a choice when it comes to fear. We are to have the spirit of power, love and a sound mind, not a spirit of fear.

Is there anything in our lives that has us afraid? Do the events of the world today stimulate a sense of fear in the hearts of men? What if a gunman burst in on our church service? What if a terrorist or other criminal threatened our lives? Would we tremble?

In 2 Timothy 1:7, the spirit of fear is contrasted to the spirit of power, of love and of a sound mind. If you are living in fear, do you think you will be manifesting a spirit of incredible power? Of course not - you will be more self protective and cowering, not stepping forward in battle. And will you be reaching out in selfless love? Or will you rather, be fearfully focused on trying to protect yourself,

unwilling to reach out where life can be dangerous? And what of a sound mind? Can a person gripped with fear, think clearly? Can he be rock solid in God-focused thoughts? Or will the dangers and hardships or other types of fears be racing around in his mind?

The spirit of fear is not compatible with the spirit of power, love and a sound mind. And the spirit of fear is not from the Lord. So if we want to live in power, love and a sound mind, we must shed the spirit of fear.

2 Timothy is not the only place that the scriptures instruct us to walk without fear; the Bible has some very specific teaching about fear and its implications.

Fear – We are supposed to live without fear!

What is God's view of fear? Over and over, we see God encouraging mankind to set aside fear and trust Him. God does not want us living in a state of fear. Dreadful situations may arise, but we are not to be in dread. Frightening events may present themselves, but we are not to be afraid. We may encounter terrorist activity, but we are not to let terror grip our hearts. We can see an early example of God's thinking on fear in Deuteronomy 1:1-28.

Israel was facing a formidable foe. They had slipped into a state of dread, their hearts discouraged because of the reports of the strength of the Amorites. In verse 28, the people said "Whither shall we go up? our brethren have discouraged our heart, saying, The people *is* greater and taller than we; the cities *are* great and walled up to heaven; and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakims there." They were shaking in their **sandals – afraid of the Amorites. Seems like a natural response. But how did God respond? Continuing in verse 29:** "Then I said unto you, Dread not, neither be afraid of them. The LORD your God which goeth before you, he shall fight for you, according to all that he did for you in Egypt before your eyes; And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the LORD thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place. Yet in this thing ye did not believe the LORD your God, Who went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents *in*, in fire by night, to shew you by what way ye should go, and in a cloud by day. And the LORD heard the voice of your words, and was wroth, and sware, saying, Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I sware to give unto your fathers, Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly followed the LORD. (vs 29-36)" **The people failed to keep in their minds the deliverance the Lord had provided in the past, and they allowed fear to settle in. Even after the admonition from Abraham came to "Dread not, neither be afraid of them" they feared man rather than God.**

"Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed...." Joshua 1:9

This type of instruction continues throughout Deuteronomy:

Deuteronomy 7:19&21 Thou shalt not be afraid of them: but shalt well remember what the LORD thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt. . . . Thou shalt not be affrighted at them: for the LORD thy God is among you, a mighty God and terrible.

Deuteronomy 20:1 & 3 When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the LORD thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. . . . Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them;

Deuteronomy 31:6 Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

Joshua 1:9 sheds further light. Have not I **commanded** thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest. **It does not say that**

“God would **like** his people to be fearless.” Being without fear was an actual **command!**: "Have not I **commanded** thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed." God earnestly wants men to trust in Him, and to have **no** fear of their enemies, or of what their future might hold.

Human enemies can certainly trigger fear, but in the Scriptures when an angel (not an enemy) appears to man, the natural response is one of overwhelming fear. The human response to significant glory or power, like that of an angel, is a response of fear. Interestingly, the angelic response to that demonstration of fear is often the statement "Fear not!" Was that response just a considerate statement to comfort the overwhelmed person? Probably not. The Scriptures teach that there is a relationship between fear and worship. If we fear something or someone, could that be the same as worshiping them, and if so would being afraid be a form of idolatry?

It is evident from the Biblical descriptions of angelic appearances that fear is a natural human response to the glory of these beings. The experience of Zacharias and Mary are two examples.

Luke 1:11 “And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord ... And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias ...”

Luke 1:29 “And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary....”

In Mark 16:5-6, after the Lord’s resurrection, we see this again. The angelic instruction was given to **fear not**: “And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.”

Be not affrighted. It was not simply that the angels had compassion on the poor human soul that quaked in the presence of their glory. Angels have beheld the intense glory of God; they were eye witnesses of creation; they saw the fall of Lucifer when his own glory became magnified in his mind. They know the frequent admonition in the Scriptures that drive men to fear God and God alone. They know God is a jealous God and that he will not share his glory with another.

I think the angelic admonition to “Fear not”, was likely **much, much** more than a kind comforting word. The prospect of fear, which is indeed a form of worship, going to **anyone** other than God is unthinkable to these angelic beings.

The Fear of the Lord – We are supposed to live with THIS kind of fear!

So far it looks like God's desire is that those he loves would not be afraid, but this fearlessness is interestingly not really **absence** of fear, but absence of the fear **of man, of circumstances, of spiritual wickedness in high places**. Having the fear of the Lord, however, is something that God most definitely wants in our hearts. The fear of the Lord is something that persists across the dispensations, and is absolutely **key** to our ability to live without the spirit of fear.

There is a large emphasis in the Bible on *the fear of the Lord* and its results. Consider the first three verses of Deuteronomy 6. "Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey." (Deu 6:1-3)

Instruction is given in Deuteronomy 8:6 to "keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him." This was in the context of being joyful with what God had provided the nation

of Israel, and fearful/wary of what would become of them if they attributed their wealth and prosperity to themselves and not to God. It may seem that the fear referred to here is fear of the negative consequences that could lie ahead for them. That is part of it, but there is a more fundamental aspect of this fear that is not so human focused. The concept has to do with **God himself**, not what he may do for or against a people. God's statements in verses 17-18 make it clear that **God is the source of blessing and all things good**: "And thou say in thine heart, my power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is **he** that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers as it is this day" (Deuteronomy 8:17-18).

He will not (and should not) share His glory with another (I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. -- Isaiah 42:8). To take the credit for what God is doing, is ascribing glory to man rather than the Lord. That is lack of reverence for God, it is not fearing the Lord. Aggrandizement of man is the first step toward diminishing God and stealing his glory. When we take our focus off God, and attribute achievement to self, we inflate ourselves, and in our own minds narrow the gap between man and God. The glory that should be going to God, then gets directed away from him and toward man.

When the Bible addresses the idea of fear relative to God, it uses strong words such as fear, terror and dread. In Deuteronomy 10, God's expectations for Israel with respect to fear are made clear. The chapter is also a clear statement of the greatness, the terribleness, the awesomeness of God.

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"And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD'S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked. For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name. He is thy praise, and he is thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen." (Deu 10:12-21) **In this passage, there are a number of external actions God demanded of Israel, but two expectations were of the heart alone: "fear the LORD thy God" and "love him."** The very first expectation listed, even before loving the Lord, is that man fear the Lord. The heart of man needs to have appropriate reverence for the Almighty. It could well be that the depth of our love for God is proportional to the height of our fear of Him.

There is a difference between the fear of the Lord that a **believer** has and the fear of the Lord that an unbeliever has, but the core of that fear is still rooted in the intense nature of God. 2 Chronicles 20:29 sheds light on how the fear differs. Here the kingdoms around Israel heard that the Lord fought for Israel, and this caused the fear of the Lord to come upon them. "And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries, when they had heard that the LORD fought against the enemies of Israel. (2Ch 20:29) The phrase "the fear of God" used there is a different type of fear than in the previous passages. It does not indicate worship or reverence, but rather sudden fear, dread or terror. It is more of a **self-focused dread** than a **God-focused awe**. It aligns well with the modern word scared or frightened (suddenly alarmed with danger). There is a difference between being afraid due to a threat, and being overwhelmed with the sheer power and awe of the Omnipotent. **Our** fear is properly focused on the glory of the Lord, not on what he might do to us.

Defining the fear the Lord & motivators to fear Him

Psalm 33 gives more insight on *the fear of the Lord* and God's desire that all stand in awe of him. "Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright. Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise. For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth. He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD. By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him." (Psalm 33:1-8)

This psalm is ascribing glory to God for his wondrous capabilities: "Praise the Lord...Sing unto him a new song...For the word of the Lord is right... all his works are done in truth...He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made...He gathereth the waters of the sea...the counsel of the Lord standeth forever... he is our help and our shield..." **The fear identified here is *not* mankind dreading the hand of an omnipotent judge. Rather, it is the sense of fear that recognizes the immense glory of the Creator. When we are fully whelmed, actually **overwhelmed** with the attributes of the Lord, we stand in the fear of the Lord. God intends that all the earth stand in awe of him. The Lord loves his children, and **our** fear of our Heavenly Father is a holy fear that makes us quake with awe when we contemplate who he is.**

It could well be that the depth of our love for God is proportional to the height of our fear of Him.

The very next psalm, Psalm 34, gives another look into the meaning of *the fear of the Lord*. It can be seen in this short psalm both that God will deliver from fear **AND** that it is important that we learn the fear of the Lord.

Verse 4: I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.

Verse 9: O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.

Verse 11: Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

Two seemingly opposing concepts exist here: 1) fear is something God does not want us to have (He was willing to deliver David from it), and 2) fear is something God **does** want us to have. To reconcile this, we only need to look at the object of the fears. It is **not** good for us to be afraid of any **creature**, nor the circumstances brought about by elements of the creation (men, animals, fallen angels, weather, flood, fire, ...). However, when the object of the fear is the Creator himself, fear is no longer bad.

Even with that understood, it still can seem strange that fear can be both good and bad. What if the word "fear" is replaced with the word "worship"? There should be no difficulty understanding that it can be both good and bad. The Believer recognizes, almost intuitively, that worship ascribed to elements of the creation is **wicked**, but worship ascribed to the Creator is wholly appropriate and pleasing to God. Fear **is** worship, and that is why we are told many times in scripture both to "fear not" and to "fear the Lord."

When was the last time I trembled as I held the Word of God in my hands?

When the loving, caring, comforting nature of the heavenly Father is considered, the idea of fearing him can feel uncomfortable. God has many attributes that can seem at odds with each other, but they are all still true and do not conflict with each other. A rich appreciation of the grandeur of God is by itself so intense, that it overwhelms the human soul, and we cannot help but tremble.

A believer will begin to understand the coupling of fear and worship as comprehension of the immensity of God grows.

Misplaced Worship

Fearfulness Directs Worship Where it Does Not Belong

Thinking back to the verses on angelic appearances, the instruction they gave to be not afraid makes a lot of sense when it is understood that fear is a form of worship. Worship going to **anyone** other than God is unthinkable to angelic beings and should be unthinkable to us.

The angels are well aware that God is the only one worthy of worship and therefore the only one worthy of fear. They know that all worship, all trembling and fear belong to God alone. They saw, with the casting down of Lucifer, the consequences of self-glorification and misplaced worship.

Living in fear is stealing worship from God.
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The Lord is a jealous God (Exodus 20:5; 34:14; Deuteronomy 4:24; 5:9;6:15; Joshua 24:19) and will not share his glory with another. He is also unwilling to share fear with others. 2 Kings 17 is a good example of this. 2 Kings 17:35-39: "With whom the LORD had made a covenant, and charged them, saying, Ye shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them, nor serve them, nor sacrifice to them: But the LORD, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt with great power and a stretched out arm, him shall ye fear, and him shall ye worship, and to him shall ye do sacrifice. And the statutes, and the ordinances, and the law, and the commandment, which he wrote for you, ye shall observe to do for evermore; and ye shall not fear other gods. And the covenant that I have made with you ye shall not forget; neither shall ye fear other gods. But the LORD your God ye shall fear; and he shall deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies."

In this passage the Israelites are commanded **not** to fear other gods, nor to bow before them nor to serve them nor to sacrifice to them. That is reserved to God alone. In these three verses, they are told **three** times that they must **not** fear other so-called *gods*. Only Almighty God is worthy of fear and he will not share that worship with any other.

So, when angels comfort, "Fear not!", they are also redirecting glory to its rightful recipient: Almighty God. Living in fear is actually stealing worship from God.

Deuteronomy 1 further emphasizes this. The form of fear addressed there is called dread. Dread is something more than simple fear, but less than terror. It tends to be a chronic, ongoing weighty concern. As with all unhealthy fear, it is tied to an improper view of God, an inadequate or distorted relationship with the Almighty, and it should not reside in our hearts.

In the first chapter of Deuteronomy, vast numbers of Israelites are being denied access to the Promised Land. They had some knowledge of the inhabitants of that land and had allowed themselves to lose sight of the powerful, delivering hand of God. They had such supernatural deliverance, provision and protection throughout their journey, but when they saw that the people of that land were "greater and taller" and that the cities there were "great and walled up to heaven" and that there were "sons of the Anakims there", their hearts sank, and dread settled in.

This was a pivotal point in Israel's history. Moses admonished the people "Dread not, neither be afraid of them." Their dread must have been a slap in the face to God. He had done so much for them. He brought the incredible plagues upon the Egyptians; he supernaturally delivered them from the pursuing chariots of Pharaoh literally clearing a path through the sea for them; he was their deliverer; he was their guide; he was their source of sustenance. Yet their response to the obstacle before them now was not trust. It was not an overwhelming sense of God's great power and a sense of wonder at how he would glorify himself in this new situation. It was not a strong sense of confidence in their God. Their attention was not on their God, but on themselves. And really, what they were saying through their dread was that the new foe before them was greater than God. Who were they worshipping? It was not the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!

Because of this lack of trust, the underestimating of the power of God, the resulting dread that was essentially ascribing glory to the enemy rather than to God, judgment came upon Israel. In verses 32

through 40 Moses said:

Yet in this thing ye did not believe the LORD your God, Who went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night, to shew you by what way ye should go, and in a cloud by day.

And the LORD heard the voice of your words, and was wroth, and sware, saying, Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I sware to give unto your fathers,

Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly followed the LORD.

Also the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, saying, Thou also shalt not go in thither.

But Joshua the son of Nun, which standeth before thee, he shall go in thither: encourage him: for he shall cause Israel to inherit it.

Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it.

But as for you, turn you, and take your journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea. (Deut.1:32-40)

God Takes the Wrongly Directed Worship (fear) VERY Seriously

There can be a human tendency to think God's judgments are sometimes harsh. After bringing these people through so much, God forbids them from entering the land promised to their fathers, banishing these people from the Promised Land because they were afraid?! When we see an elevated response from God, it ought to help us realize that God has strong feelings about the subject. God will not share his glory with another. He does not find it acceptable for men to doubt his word. He does not think it a small matter for us to be in fear, in dread or in terror. Any dread of circumstances, of man or of other creatures is a diminishing of the worship and glory we ascribe to the Omnipotent One. It takes what is reserved to God alone, and gives it to another, and he does not take that lightly.

If Strong got it right in his concordance, the word translated as "dread" throughout the old testament is also translated as "idol" in Jeremiah 50:38: "A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols." In this verse, the Chaldeans and Babylonians were noted to be single minded, focused, overwhelmed and celebratory in the worship of their idol, "mad upon their idols." It is quite noteworthy that an idol of carved wood, stone or metal could be **so** associated with dread and fear that the very word for dread can be translated as idol. This certainly joins the concept of worship (of an idol in this case) and fear or dread.

No matter what difficult circumstances rise before us, whether it is a huge enemy with walled cities and giants or a *kingident* driving a nation to its demise and integration into a single world governing structure; a healthy, Biblical perspective of God should bring peace, joy, confidence and hope. As noted at the very start of this article, God reminds us through the apostle Paul, that God has **not** given us the spirit of fear; but of **power**, and of **love**, and of a **sound mind**.

Terrorism Misdirects Worship

Now, keeping in mind the strong response God had to the Israelite fear when they were so near to entering the Promised Land (forbidding entry because they were afraid), think back to that terrorist-in-the-church-building scenario. Was the fearful response from the majority of the congregation an acceptable human response? It was surely a natural response, but would God think it was OK to behave that way? Absolutely not. Being afraid of the terrorist is actually worshipping the terrorist.

What does a terrorist (or torturer for that matter) do? They exercise immense power over another person. They demand obedience. They may take what's not theirs. They command fear from others.

Well, who is it that **really** has power over us? Who is it that **really** deserves our obedience? Who is it to whom **all** things ultimately belong? Who is it that **is** worthy of fear, and is **not** willing to share that worship with any other? It is God alone.

Giving fear to a created being, terrorist or otherwise, is **wholly** inappropriate. Aren't terrorists behaving like Lucifer did when he said "I will be like the most high!"?

We are not to be in fear of them, nor of any other dreadful circumstances. God has given us a different spirit, not of fear. However, until we let God occupy a proper place in our minds and hearts, the fear of man will naturally and consistently overshadow our holy fear of the Lord, and the spirit of power, love and a sound mind will be thwarted.

Let's face it - there are **many** things in this world that can naturally make man afraid. And as this world moves closer to its final days, dreadful circumstances will continue to increase. Paul reinforces this truth in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

And in verse 12: Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

Who is it that is worthy of fear, and is not willing to share that worship with any other? It is God alone

We are not to be discouraged by this progression. This world will continue to falter, and as evil grows, it is likely to touch the lives of believers in difficult ways, **but we are not** to live in discouragement or fear. God desires that we live here in incredible victory. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that even "though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

Keeping our focus on things above, on things eternal, is key to our being able to manifest the spirit of power, love and a sound mind. Developing an increasingly high view of the Lord is also absolutely fundamental.

The Fear of the Lord Transforms Lives

How should the *fear of the Lord* impact our daily lives and the way we face the trying world in which we live? God's word indicates that the fear of the Lord can result in seriously transformed lives; lives with increased intimacy, increased courage and a perspective on life that is aligned with the perspective of God.

Fear → Intimacy → Fearlessness/Power

In Psalm 19:9, we are told that "The fear of the LORD is **clean**, enduring forever." The Bible very frequently uses the word *clean* to indicate purity. Here in Psalm 19 we are given the idea that fearing the Lord is a very special thing, a pure thing that is vitally important to our relationship with our Creator. It stands to reason that to be **without** the fear of the Lord, is to have an impure relationship with Him. We ought to desire a pure, clean relationship with the Lord, and having the fear of the Lord is a key component of that.

In addition to impurity of relationship, there is another problem when the fear of the Lord is lacking. Psalm 25:14 says "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him." What secret is that?? It is not actually a **specific** secret. The Bible mostly uses the word *secret* like we tend to think of it today (something hidden and not generally known), but it also uses *secret* to indicate intimacy or close counsel. We can gather from this verse that in David's time, those who were intimate with God were the ones that also feared God. *The fear of the Lord* was a pre-condition to real intimacy. There is no reason to believe that this is different today in the dispensation of grace. Today, believers have a position of being in the body of Christ, but we will **not** avail ourselves of true intimacy with Him unless we truly KNOW him. When we truly know Him, we will by very nature, drop before Him awestruck and trembling. When we truly understand what the Bible calls "the fear of the Lord," we will be enabled to have sweet intimacy with Him.

When we truly understand the fear of the Lord, we will be enabled to have sweet intimacy with Him.

In describing the especially close intimacy that caused Eve to conceive, God said Adam "knew" Eve. And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. ... And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth ..." (Gen 4:1,25) The sexual union is the most personal and intimate of human relationships, and God uses the term "know" or "knew" to describe it. To know God, similarly, is to have deep and intense connection with him, to have a oneness of purpose, nothing hidden, barriers removed, facades eliminated. When we know God deeply, have no illusions about our own grandeur and see him for the infinitely glorious being that he is, the resulting openness, vulnerability, and honesty will invigorate and intensify our relationship with him. Increasing intimacy results when we fear the Lord, and the fear of the Lord results when we have increased intimacy with him.

Most wives feel safer in a dangerous situation if their husband is with them. God designed that response. The stronger that marital relationship, the better for feelings of safety and security. Think of the courage we could have if we were on extremely intimate terms with the Almighty Creator. When we know God and the intensity of His greatness, His **awesomeness** (not merely awesomeness, but His awe**FULL**ness), fear will be driven out and replaced with a spirit of power and courage, no matter what is going on around us.

Fear → Courage

Back in Isaiah 8, verses 9-13 are pretty interesting. The passage is describing Israel's enemies aligning themselves together against Israel. The prospect of an invincible confederacy that could wipe out Israel was a frightening thing to Israel. But Isaiah speaks forth God's wisdom, that indeed, no ganging together can withstand the power of the Almighty. Isaiah issues the warning to avoid all fear but the fear of the Lord, ending in verse 13 with this: neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." **God's incredible power must** hold our attention when the world around us is particularly dangerous or frightful.

I Peter 3:14-15 is another indication that we are to be without fear of man, but steeped in the fear of the Lord. Peter wrote: "if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." When persecution comes and suffering occurs for being righteous, when others desire to bring terror into our hearts and minds, the result ought **not** be a fear of the *terrorist*, but fear **of the Lord**. A holy fear of the Lord ought to drive **out** the fear of man.

When you realize that, yes, persecution and other trials are to be expected, and we stand in the fear of the Lord, we can have an incredible boldness and power and a tremendous outreach of love toward the world as did many in the church when Paul was imprisoned. "But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; And many of the

brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.” (Philippians 1:12-14)

Now here is a bit of a paradox. In Proverbs 14:26 King Solomon penned this, "The fear of the Lord is strong confidence." Does that seem a bit odd? We are often told that fear usually comes from **lack** of confidence, aren't we? But the scripture did **not** say the fear of the Lord is strong **self**-confidence! "The fear of the Lord is strong confidence." It is confidence in the Lord himself. When we fear the Lord, we will have NO doubts about his love, his power, and his capabilities.

Conclusion

If we do **not** have full confidence in victory in this life; if we do **not** have the spirit of power flowing forth from us; if our interactions with others is not characterized by love; if our minds are found weak and undisciplined; it is likely that we are walking in fear and have not yet laid hold of *the fear of the Lord*.

*"The fear of the Lord is strong confidence."
Prov 14:26*

Whatever the danger, risk or threat, we are to go forward into the battle **without** fear.

Psalms 96 instructs "Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people. For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens. Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. ... Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name ... O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth. Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth ..." A natural human response to anything or anyone that is great, glorious, majestic, mighty and full of wonders is fear - the deep recognition of the magnitude and intensity of that great thing before us. God is the only being worthy of commanding such a response from the human soul.

The fear of the Lord might not come easily. We too easily push the grandeur of our Lord out of our minds. In the dispensation of grace that we now live in, God interacts with us on a different level than in times past, and the incredible and obvious manifestations of his power are not the norm of the day. In Israel's early days, God's powerful intervention was abundantly visible. Their minds were **taught** the fear of the Lord by his incredibly miraculous interventions. We need **our** minds to be taught the fear of the Lord as well. The evidence of God's incredible glory is all around us, but we need to be taught the fear of the Lord. We know where to go for that teaching. 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us that all scripture "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

The Word of God is what will bring about the fear of the Lord in our hearts and minds. Deuteronomy 17:20 indicates that regarding the Law, man (in this case the king) shall "read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God..."

Back to 2 Timothy again... God has explicitly designed our new nature to be one of power, love and a sound mind, with fear explicitly excluded. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." (2Ti 1:7-8) **We** are not merely to endure, but to endure with power. When we recognize the source of our strength, and tremble **only** before **his** awesome power, there is no room for fearing others. The Psalmist said it so excellently, "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1)

Saturating our minds with God's Word is absolutely essential to developing a fear of God and the resulting transformation of our hearts and minds that drives out fear and equips us to live for Christ – no matter what the circumstances - according to the power of God.

As we contemplate the overwhelming awe of his glory, and as we recognize the incredible love he has for us, may we have **no** fear, but the fear of the Lord. May we tremble before no one or no thing other than the Lord. May we go forward each day with no fear of man, no fear of hardship, no fear of lack, no fear of future events, but rather a fear of the Lord that moves us forward in power, love and a sound mind.

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