

Cultivating the Fear of the Lord

Previous articles: [Fear God and Live](#), [Fear Not](#), and [The Missing Key](#).

Seraphim

1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

2 Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

4 And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. (Isaiah 6:1-4 KJV)

Notice verse 2 spotlights "seraphims." This is the only place in Scripture where these beings are mentioned. The word seraphim means "a burning," and it is clear that they are agents of purification.

Each seraphim has six wings; two covered his face, two covered his feet, and with two he flew. Why do seraphims cover their faces? They apparently could not look upon the perfection and holiness of God in spite of their own *sinlessness*. There appears to be almost a kinetic activity with the seraphim. It's as though they are so excited and awed to be in God Almighty's Presence that they cannot be completely still. Yet, they approach God in awe, wonderment and profound, reverential respect.

In spite of the fact that these seraphim have never *sinned*, they *still* cover their faces as Moses hid his at the Burning Bush, even as Isaiah realizes he is a man of unclean lips. If this is the reaction to God from seraphim, how much more should we be willing to in sincere humility come before God and with fear and trembling? While we *are* accepted in the beloved (**Ephesians 1:6**), does this mean we lose sight of His absolute holiness and perfection? Paul would say, "God forbid!"

Is it too much to ask that we adopt this same attitude seen in the seraphim? Certainly, the seraphim are under no possibility of God's wrath and judgment because they are without sin. Yet, their correct *fear* of God guides their attitudes and actions.

*...there is **no fear in love**; but **perfect love casts out fear**, because **fear involves torment**. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. (1 John 4:18; emphasis added)*

Some will remember the above verse and may be confused. Does it negate the whole of Scripture that explains why not only unsaved people should fear God (as in terror of coming judgment),

but why *saved* people should also have some sense of fear of the Lord (as in the sense of wanting to keep themselves from *offending* Him through sin)? No. Authentic Christians will *never* experience God's wrath. But there are many other reasons for us to maintain a growing *fear* of the Lord. Referring to this passage, author Albert N. Martin states:

...it informs us that if we embrace God's love to us in Jesus Christ, the overall ethos and climate of our relationship with God will not be marked by a prevailing pattern of tormenting fear and dread of God...(but)...there is still a limited place for the fear and dread and terror in the heart and life of a true child of God. [1]

In any loving relationship there should be an element of fear. When I was young, I loved my parents but feared them. Because of it, I tried *avoiding* things that would invite my parents' wrath. I didn't want to pay the price for it later. That's like being under the **Law**. I was focused on what would happen to me.

In my relationship to my wife, I avoid the things that could harm our relationship, specifically by grieving *her*. This too is an element of a *fear*. I do not wish to emotionally harm my wife through my carelessness, thoughtfulness and even sin. Do you see how I've gone from "fearing" what would happen to me as a young boy, to a fear of *grieving* my wife? This is like being under **Grace**.

Our relationship to God should reach a point where we move past simply *fearing* His chastisement, to *fearing* His sorrow when we *grieve* Him. Consider the difference. On one hand, I fear the consequences of chastisement that the Lord might send my way if I sin willingly. On the other hand, I am now coming to realize that my growing fear is how my sin will *grieve Him* (**Ephesians 4:30**). Yes, He may choose to send chastisement my way in response to any unchecked sin in my life, but that would be fully *deserved*, wouldn't it? My increasing overriding goal though, is to simply *not* deliberately sin so that I do not cause Him *grief*. I *fear* doing that! I'm sure you see the difference.

I also believe this is why Jesus differentiated to His disciples between being servants and friends *if they obeyed His commands* in **John 15:14-15**. Notice Jesus still expected them to *obey* Him didn't He? But the substance of their relationship had changed. He was helping them realize that if they did the things He wanted them to do *from their hearts* (promoted by a healthy, profound, reverential fear), and not simply outwardly they would be His friends. Recall Peter who betrayed Jesus in **Luke 22**. He knew he had grieved the Lord and it was unbearable for Peter.

On the contrary, the Pharisees focused solely on externals, on outward appearances. The inner motivation never came into play for them. They wrongly thought as long as they did the right thing *externally*, they would please God. They couldn't have been more wrong as Jesus pointed out many times.

New Covenant

*39 And I will give them one heart, and one way, **that they may fear me for ever**, for the good of them, and of their children after them:*

40 And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. (Jeremiah 32:39-40 KJV; emphasis added)

In the New Covenant, God says, He will give us one heart so that we might *fear* Him forever, which signifies an *everlasting* covenant. He promises to *never* turn away from us. His intent toward us is only for our good. Notice also that He clearly states, "...I will put my fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from me."

His fear in our hearts is placed there so that we will never depart from Him (which also implies eternal security). God is the One who places that fear in our hearts. But this does not absolve us from our responsibility of enlarging or cultivating that fear. We must partner with God for that fear to grow enough to literally and in a healthy way, guide our steps in this life; what we say, what we think and what we do. Much of God's work in us is unseen, though the effects of that work should become obvious to others.

...if our view of Christ and His exaltation by the Father's decree does not induce us to serve Him in the climate of godly fear, we have not rightly understood nor responded to the exaltation of the Son by the decree of the Father. [2]

There appear to be many professing believers who have made absolutely no change to their life at all because of the formulaic way people have been taught to "receive Jesus." Hardly any thought goes into it. To see these folks from the outside (bearing in mind we cannot see their heart's true condition), there appears to be little to nothing that convinces anyone that they have received actual salvation. There seems to be no fear of God evidenced by how they live and what they say, which tends to translate to [antinomianism](#).

...Serve the LORD with fear, And rejoice with trembling. (Psalm 2:11)

Doesn't Paul say the same thing with, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" in **Philippians 2:12** (ESV)? It's the exact same concept as **Psalm 2:11**. Our godly effort must go into this.

There can be no true service to our Lord unless accompanied by an honest fear and trembling. Why? Because we are to love God so much that we become *desperate* to not offend or grieve Him. Doing so would actually hurt our hearts more than the offense itself and any chastisement from God for it.

For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him. (Psalm 103:11)

While we were yet sinners, estranged from God, we enjoyed sin. Once the fear of God took hold of us so that we realized our need of salvation, we humbled ourselves and received that salvation. No longer did we have to concern ourselves with being the recipients of His wrath in any way.

But this new life within us is supposed to promote a godly fear that is evidenced by right living in obedience to His moral commands.

Psalm 103:11 points out that His *mercy* extends to those who *fear* Him. This is *limited* to a specific group of people. It is reserved for those who live with a palpable, growing, reverential, profound fear of God. This creates humility, puts God first, others second and ourselves last. It should become a delight to cultivate that fear within us.

Start with asking God to enlarge that fear that He says He has already given placed within you. Start there. The next thing that needs to happen is to become immersed in His Word. Without this, we will go nowhere except backwards. Are you reading His Word daily? Are you memorizing Scripture?

There are numerous ways to immerse in His Word throughout the day. [MyiBible](#) is a great source as highlighted by one of our readers. There are also numerous free apps for iPhone and Android that can be downloaded allowing people to hear the Word throughout the day. Other apps are helpful that focus on memorizing Scripture. Readers can also simply record verses of Scripture on the voice recorder of their smart phone for playback.

How serious are you about His Word? It is the fuel that increases not only our knowledge of Him but our fear of Him as well.

Just as we are to partner with God in allowing the fruit of the Spirit (who dwells within us), to rise to the surface of our lives, so too must we partner with God to increase the measure of godly fear He has placed within us.

We'll discuss more related to fearing the Lord next time.

[1] The Forgotten Fear: Where Have all the God-Fearers Gone? Albert N. Martin

[2] Ibid