

## The fear of the LORD

What Does It Mean to Fear the Lord? The fear of the Lord is described as the "discipline" or "instruction" of wisdom. It is a fear that comes forth out of love for the Lord.(PRO15:33) According to Psalm 111:10: *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments; His praise endures forever."* When we fear God, His divine and wisdom becomes available to us. Fearing God is equal to delighting in His commands. Remember, the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and wisdom is to depart from evil. Now that you are saved and delivered from the grip of sin through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit directs and empowers you to avoid sin, or any kind of evil in your life. Fearing God means having such a reverence for Him that it has a great effect on the way we live our lives. The fear of God is respecting Him, obeying Him, submitting to His discipline, and worshipping Him in awe. Reverence defined as a 'feeling or attitude of deep respect, love, and awe, as devotion to God. A frequent command given to God's people in the OT is to "fear the Lord." What this command means for Christ's followers today. Only as we truly fear the Lord will we be freed from all destructive and satanic fears. By fearing God, we can avoid being trapped by the natural pull toward going our own way, defying God and giving in to the inviting ways of immoral behavior. The broad command to "fear the Lord" involves understanding several things about a believer's relationship with God. *"fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all His decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life."*(DEU6:1-2) First of all, we must recognize that God is loving, merciful and forgiving; but He also is holy, just and righteous. Knowing God and understanding His character means accepting the fact that His justice and holiness cause Him to judge sin. The Lord is a God of justice who will judge the human race should be reason enough to produce a godly fear. It is a sobering and absolute truth that God is constantly aware of our actions and motives, good and bad, that we will be held accountable for those actions. In this sense, fearing the Lord is to appreciate His character. Fearing the Lord means to be in reverent awe of His holiness, to give Him complete reverence and to honor Him as the God of great glory, majesty, purity and power. For example, when God revealed Himself to the Israelites at Mount Sinai through "thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast," they all "trembled" in fear because of His great power.(EXO19:16) They even begged Moses to deliver God's message to them so they would not have to encounter God Himself.(DEU5:22-27) Psalm 33:8-9 reflects on God as Creator, he says: *"Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the people of the world revere Him. For He spoke, and it came to be; He commanded, and it stood firm"* Fear of the Lord causes believers to place their faith and trust in Him alone for salvation. For example, after the Israelites crossed through the Red Sea on dry ground and saw how God destroyed the Egyptian army who came after them, they *"feared the Lord and put their trust in Him"*. The psalmist encourages all who fear the Lord to "trust in the Lord—He is their help and shield"(PSA115:11) Fearing God produces confidence, hope and trust in Him, which are necessary when we are looking to God for mercy, forgiveness and spiritual salvation.(PSA85:9) Fearing God means to be moved to belief/trust. The fear of the Lord has a sanctifying (i.e., purifying, separating from sin, spiritually maturing) effect on God's people, just as applying the truth of God's Word does. It compels us to hate sin and avoid evil. It causes us to be careful in what we say. It protects us from weakening our consciences and our moral sensitivity toward what is right. The fear of the Lord has a spiritually cleansing, purifying and restoring effect that can last forever.(PSA19:9) The holy and reverent fear of the Lord motivates God's people to worship Him with their whole being. People who truly fear God will praise and honor Him as Lord of all.(PSA22:23) David said that a worshiping congregation is the same as "those who fear" God.(PSA22:25) At the end of age, when the angel who proclaims the eternal gospel—calls everyone on earth to fear God, he immediately adds, "and give Him glory, Worship Him who made the heavens, and earth, the sea and the springs of water"(REV14:6-7) Finally, to fear God involves recognizing that He is angry about sin and has the power to punish those who stand arrogantly against Him and break His laws.(PSA76:7-8) When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, they were afraid and tried to hide from God's presence.(GEN3:8-10) Moses experienced this aspect of the fear of God when he spent forty days and nights praying for the sinful Israelites:(DEU9:19) In his final address to the Israelites, Moses connected fearing God to serving and obeying Him *"Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!"*(DEU5:29) If we fear the Lord, we will obey His commands, live according to His Word and say "No" to sin. "through the fear of the Lord a man avoids evil" Heb.10:31, God's coming vengeance and judgment: *"It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"* God has promised to reward all those who fear Him. *"Humility and the fear of the Lord bring wealth and honor and life"* (PRO22:4) Other rewards include security and protection from death (PRO14:26-27), provisions for daily needs (PSA34:9) and a long life (PRO10:27) Fearing God brings a humble confidence and overwhelming spiritual comfort. The NT directly links the fear of the Lord with the encouragement of the Holy Spirit (ACT9:31) Those who do not fear God will have little or no sense of his presence and protection.(ECC8:12-13) However, those who fear God and obey his Word will experience a deep sense of spiritual security and the anointing (i.e. empowering) of the Holy Spirit. A reverential love for the Lord and a holy fear of our God translates into willing obedience to God's will. In Ecclesiastes, the whole duty of the human race is summarized by two requirements: *"Fear God and keep His commandments"*(ECC12:13) Cultivate an attitude of Godly fear.