

Learning to Fear Christ

Loving God or Fearing God?

Christians have “the impression that fear and love are two different languages preferred by two different Christian camps...The one camp speaks of love and grace and never of fearing God. And the other camp seems angered by this and emphasizes how afraid of God we should be”
(p. 16)

Michael Reeves, *Rejoice and Tremble: The Surprising Good News of the Fear of the Lord*

Shorter version: *What Does It Mean to Fear the Lord?*

Ephesians 5:21b Message

The fear of Christ is a sense of joyful wonder and sobering awe at His majesty

Fearing God is equated with loving God

Ps 145:19-20

Deut 6:1-5

Love is the core of fearing God

“When a man really receives the pardon of all his sins, he is the man who fears the Lord. This is clearly the case, for pardon breeds love in the soul; and the more a man is forgiven, the more he loves. Where great sin has been blotted out, there comes to be great love. Well, is not love the very core of the true fear of God?”

C. H. Spurgeon, “Forgiveness and Fear”, www.spurgeon.org

Fearing God is to delight in Him

Isaiah 11:1-3

Psalm 112:1

Godly fear “trembles with sacred delight” (Spurgeon, “A Fear to Be Desired”, www.spurgeon.org)

Trembling happens when we are overwhelmed by God's majesty, beauty, greatness, power

God “is not a truth to be known unaffectedly, or a good to be received listlessly. Seen clearly, the dazzling beauty and splendor of God must cause our hearts to quake” (*Rejoice and Tremble*, p. 53)

The fear of the Lord is “a heartfelt quaking at the goodness and greatness and glory of the Redeemer” (p. 132)

Godly fear “is a startlingly physical, overpowering reaction”. “Awe” doesn’t “quite capture the physical intensity, the happy thrill, or the exquisite delight” (p. 58)

Fearing God is worshipping God

Psalm 5:7

John Owen taught that the fear of the Lord means “the whole worship of God, moral and instituted, all the obedience which we owe unto him”

(*Works*, vol. 6, “An Exposition Upon Psalm 130”, p. 382)

Fearing God our highest duty

“I call it the highest duty, because it is, as I may call it, not only a duty in itself, but, as it were, the salt that seasoneth every duty. For there is no duty performed by us that can by any means be accepted of God, if it be not seasoned with godly fear”

John Bunyan, (“A Treatise on the Fear of God”, www.digitalpuritan.net)

How do we cultivate the fear of the Lord?

1

Meditate
on God's
word to
delight in it

2

Obey God's
command
and delight
in it

3

Meditate on
& delight in
God's
character

4

Tremble
and rejoice
in God's
works

1) Ps 112:1; 19:9; Prov 2:1-5 ; Dt 17:18-19; 31:10-13; 2) Dt 6:1-19; 1 Jn 5:3; 3) Jer 10:7; Rev 15:4; Dt 10:12, 17; Hos 3:5; Ps 145:5-7; 130:4; 4) Isa 60:5; Ps 130:4

Fear God for His goodness

“To fear the Lord and his goodness, and to fear him for his goodness; to trust in his power and faithfulness; to obey his authority; to delight in his will and grace; to love him above all, because of his excellencies and beauty;-this is to glorify him”

Fearing God for His goodness

“when the heart of man hath once felt a sweet taste of God’s goodness...it is stricken with such an inward awe and reverence”

William Gouge, (“Domestical Duties”, www.digitalpuritan.net)

Fearing God for His goodness

John Bunyan said Jeremiah 33:7-9 shows that “in this true tenderness, softness, and endearedness of affection to God, lieth the very essence of this fear of the Lord”

John Bunyan, (“A Treatise on the Fear of God”, www.digitalpuritan.net)

The Cross and fearing Christ

“The cross, by the forgiveness it brings, liberates us from sinful fear. But, far more than that, it also cultivates the most exquisitely fearful adoration of the Redeemer”