

FIRST WATCH MEN'S MINISTRY

Grace Bible Church

FEAR GOD

The Nature, Rule, and Grace of the Fear of the LORD

“The fear of God is not only a duty in itself, but, as it were, the salt that seasoneth every duty.”

— John Bunyan, *The Fear of God*

INTRODUCTION

“Blessed is everyone who **fears** Yahweh.”

(Psalm 128:1)

- Scripture does not whisper the command to fear God — it **thunders** it.
The fear of God is not a **secondary** doctrine among many; it is **foundational**.
- The fear of God stands at the very **center** of biblical faith.
- Remove it, and everything else begins to **unravel**.

John Bunyan wrote that the fear of God is

“the **salt** that **seasoneth** every duty.”

Without it:

- Prayer becomes **noise**.
- Worship becomes **performance**.
- Obedience becomes **hypocrisy**.

I. GOD HIMSELF IS THE OBJECT OF OUR FEAR

“Let Him be your **fear**.” — Isaiah 8:13

- Biblical fear does not begin with **emotion** or **circumstance** — it begins with **God**.
- Scripture sometimes speaks of fear as a **name/title** for God Himself (Genesis 31:42 — “the fear of Isaac”).
- God is fearful because He is **holy**, **infinite**, and **glorious**.
- The question is not *whether* God should be feared, but **why** He would not be.

GOD'S PRESENCE PRODUCES FEAR

- When Jacob encountered God at Bethel, he said, “How **fearsome** is this place!” (Genesis 28:17)
- When Isaiah saw the Lord, he cried, “**Woe** is me!” (Isaiah 6:5)
- When John saw the risen Christ, he **fell** at His feet (Revelation 1:17).

“Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.” — 1 Corinthians 16:13

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Key Insight:

The nearer God draws, the more clearly we see our **sinfulness/corruption**.

GOD'S GOODNESS INCREASES FEAR

“With You there is forgiveness, that You may be **feared**.”

(Psalm 130:4)

- Forgiveness does not eliminate fear — it **creates** it.
- Grace does not make sin **small**; it makes sin **clear**.
- True fear produces “**rejoicing** with trembling” (Psalm 2:11).

II. THE WORD OF GOD IS THE RULE OF OUR FEAR

“The fear of Yahweh is **clean**, enduring forever.”

(Psalm 19:9)

- We do not decide **how** to fear God — we are **taught**.
- Fear unguided by Scripture drifts into **terror** or **presumption**.
- Scripture is fearful because its **Author** is God.
- Scripture is fearful because its subject is **eternity**.
- Scripture is fearful because its verdict is **final**.

“To this one I will look... who **trembles** at My word.”

(Isaiah 66:2)

III. NOT ALL FEAR OF GOD IS SAVING FEAR

1. NATURAL FEAR

- Comes from **conscience**.
- Can restrain **outward** behavior
- Cannot **regenerate** the heart

“Even the demons **believe** — and shudder.” (James 2:19)

2. SLAVISH FEAR

- Sees God only as **Judge**.
- Produces **despair**, not repentance
- Causes sinners to **hide/run** from God

“I was **afraid**, so I hid.” (Genesis 3:10)

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3. SLOTHFUL RELIGIOUS FEAR

- Stays near **religion** but avoids obedience
- Distrusts God's **goodness**.
- Produces **inaction** and **excuses**.

"I was **afraid** of you..." (Matthew 25:24)

Warning:

A man may **fear** God — and still **perish**.

IV. TRUE FEAR IS A GRACE IMPLANTED BY GOD

"I will put the **fear** of Me in their hearts."
(Jeremiah 32:40)

- True fear is not **natural** — it is **supernatural/gracious**.
- This fear hates **sin** more than **suffering**.
- This fear loves **holiness**.
- This fear preserves **perseverance**.
- This fear strengthens **assurance**.

Key Truth:

Fear does not drive the believer **away** from God — it keeps him **near** to God.

- Grace never produces **swagger**.
- Mercy never produces **irreverence**.
- The forgiven man both **rejoices** and **trembles**.
- "Blessed is everyone who **fears** Yahweh" (Psalm 128:1)

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FIRST WATCH DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **How can you tell the difference between fearing God rightly and merely being afraid of consequences?**
(Consider Psalm 130:4; Hebrews 12:28. What does your obedience reveal about what you actually fear?)
2. **Where are you most tempted to treat God casually rather than reverently?**
(Think specifically about worship, prayer, Scripture intake, or repentance. What habits reveal familiarity instead of fear?)
3. **When Scripture confronts you, what is your first instinct: to submit, explain, or soften it?**
(Isaiah 66:2; Psalm 119:120. How does your response to God's Word reveal your fear of God?)
4. **Which false fear are you most prone to—and why?**
 - Natural fear (image, reputation, consequences)
 - Slavish fear (avoidance, guilt, despair)
 - Slothful religious fear (excuses, inactivity, partial obedience)
(What fruit shows up in your life when that fear dominates?)
5. **How should the grace of forgiveness deepen—not diminish—your fear of God this week?**
(Psalm 130:4. What specific sin, habit, or area of obedience should be affected by a renewed fear of the Lord?)