

## **The Fear of God**

### **1- Objective**

- ❖ What is the fear of the Lord?
- ❖ How to acquire the fear of Lord by loving Him?

### **2- References**

- ❖ [http://www.suscopts.org/literature/literature.php?subaction=showfull&id=1144040596&archive=&start\\_from=&ucat=5&](http://www.suscopts.org/literature/literature.php?subaction=showfull&id=1144040596&archive=&start_from=&ucat=5&)

### **3- Scriptural Verse**

- ❖ “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Proverbs 1:7)

### **4- Lesson Guidelines**

#### **What is fear and what to be afraid of?**

- ❖ Being afraid is a natural instinct that we have towards a perceived danger. It is a protective mechanism. We have to keep us safe in the face of a danger that threatens our peace, our bodies or our emotional state. It causes us to avoid a dangerous environment, to get out of a dangerous situation or to take precautionary measures to prevent danger from happening. This kind of fear is different than Spiritual fear.

#### **What is the spiritual fear?**

- ❖ Spiritual fear is of two types: the first type is when we fear God because we are afraid of the punishment we will receive because of our sins. The Lord Jesus Christ approved also this kind of fear when He said, “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28).
- ❖ The second type is a sense of awe and reverence that we feel towards God’s work in our lives and the lives of others. In the Old Testament, God asked for this kind of fear “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him” (Deuteronomy 10:12).
- ❖ Our Lord Jesus Christ offered us the greatest love and said, “No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you” (John 15:15). And He proved His great love on the cross “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13). Accordingly, we fear Him and owe Him for His great love “We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

#### **Fearing God’s wrath and punishment**

- ❖ Adams experienced this fear after the fall: “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself” (Genesis 3:10).

- ❖ David also experienced it and said, “My flesh trembles for fear of You, and I am afraid of Your judgments” (Psalms 119: 120).
- ❖ We need this fear to act as a hindrance from our sins, and to help us from losing our salvation “Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience” (Hebrews 4:11).
- ❖ The people of Nineveh feared God’s wrath and their demise and the king made an order: “Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?” (Jonah 3:7-9).
- ❖ It is also a fear that compels us to do good as the Hebrew midwives “But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive” (Exodus 1:17).
- ❖ This fear will not be with us when we are in heaven as the Final Judgment would have passed and we would have taken off our old nature.
- ❖ We usually acquire this fear from what our parents have told us about God as children; it is embedded in us from our childhood. As we walk deeper in our relationship with God, we develop a second type of fear; a fear out of love (lest we may upset Him).

### **Fearing God’s presence in our life**

- ❖ This is a sense of awe and reverence that we feel towards God’s work in our lives and the lives of others as in the life of Joseph when he said, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Genesis 39:9). and also Elijah talking to Ahab the king said, “As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word” (1 Kings 17:1).
- ❖ It is mixed with a sense of love, peace and joy that you are in the presence of a God who is truly great “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4) and the Lord Jesus Christ said, “but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you ...Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:22, 24).
- ❖ It makes you feel really small before this awesome God, as David the prophet said, “O Lord my God, You are very great. You are clothed with honor and majesty, Who cover Yourself with light as with a garment, Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain” (Psalm 104). Also the people who witnessed the healing of the paralyzed, said fearfully, “We have seen strange things today!” (Luke 5:26). Another time they said, “Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?” (Matthew 8:27).
- ❖ This fear will continue with us until we reach heaven because through it, we will want to continually praise God “Then a voice came from the throne, saying, ‘Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great! And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, ‘Alleluia!’ For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready” (Revelation 19:5-7).

### **How do we develop the fear for God?**

- ❖ It is by developing a faith in God that my life is in His hands. It is keeping an open eye to how He works in my life, what He permits, prevents and ordains. It is not ascribing the good things in my life to luck, coincidence or my effort but to God's goodness.
- ❖ It is by having hope in bad times that God will use this for good. We develop this by having an inner life that no one sees. The inner life is the life of prayer and spiritual reading that allows my faith to grow so that I begin to see God's hand in all things as Joseph who said, "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive" (Genesis 50:20).
- ❖ The first type of fear may come even without having a prayer life. But, the second type comes only when I have a mature relationship with God.
- ❖ This sense of awe leads to an even deeper love for God in which the first fear we had for God diminishes. This is because our behavior is led solely by the love of God and not wanting to offend Him because we don't want to hurt His feelings. St. Anthony once said, "I do not fear God." This statement perplexed his disciples and they said to him "this is a hard statement our father." So, he went on further to explain, "I do not fear God because I love Him." This is the relationship of the lover and the beloved as portrayed in the Song of Songs, where our relationship with God is more of an intimate friendship.

### **God's promises to those who fear Him**

- ❖ "Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways. When you eat the labor of your hands, you shall be happy, and it shall be well with you. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house, your children like olive plants all around your table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord" (Psalm 128: 1-4).
- ❖ "But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive ... And so it was, because the midwives feared God, that He provided households for them" (Exodus 1: 17, 21).
- ❖ "Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the Lord your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, that you may fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the Lord God of your fathers has promised you—'a land flowing with milk and honey'" (Deuteronomy 6:1-3).

### **5- Conclusion**

- ❖ The fear of the Lord has to be before our eyes lest we miss the road. The Bible says: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Proverbs 1:7). And St. Paul confirmed this by saying "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting" (Romans 1:28).

- ❖ We have to make sure that we fear God out of love and reverence and not because we are afraid from His punishment. It is written, “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).

## **6- Activities / Discussion Points**

- ❖ Go through the Book of Esther and stress on these points to see how the person who fears God, has courage and does not fear evil authorities. In the contrary, the people of authority fear him; as king Ahab feared Elijah.

“When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath. But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of the people of Mordecai. Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus—the people of Mordecai” (Esther 3:5, 6).

“Moreover Haman said, ‘Besides, Queen Esther invited no one but me to come in with the king to the banquet that she prepared; and tomorrow I am again invited by her, along with the king. Yet all this avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate’” (Esther 5: 12, 13).

“Afterward Mordecai went back to the king’s gate. But, Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered. When Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him, his wise men and his wife Zeresh said to him, ‘If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish descent, you will not prevail against him but will surely fall before him’” (Esther 6: 12-13).