

Fear

An Elementary Education

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"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom ..." (Psalms 111:10).

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge ..." (Proverbs 1:7).

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom ..." (Proverbs 9:10).

One thing that should stand out to us in the three verses above is that fear is only the "beginning" of wisdom and knowledge. It is only man's starting place with God, his Creator.

Many miss this important truth, and in doing so, they overlook the pure *elementary* nature of fear. The "fear of the Lord" is mankind's first approach to God. It is the awesome discovery of who we really are, and who He really is. It is humanity's approach to God in infancy and immaturity – seeing Him as the righteous almighty One!

Note carefully the first verse that we quoted above, along with the next phase that is to follow:

*"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that **do His commandments** ..." (Psalms 111:10).*

We see the connection between "the fear of the Lord" and doing "His commandments." The "commandments," or the "law," is associated with fear.

When God gave "the law of commandments" at Sinai the children of Israel "trembled" in fear; but the "law" and its natural fear in relationship to God was only divine *elementary* education. It was simply a "schoolmaster" to bring us to the Lord Jesus Christ (and who among us has not feared the schoolmaster!)

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Galatians 3:24-25).

Because the “schoolmaster” has brought us to Christ, we are no longer enrolled in its elementary process of “fear.”

As mature, adult “sons of God,” our childish, immature “children of God” “fear” of the Father is replaced by the fullness of “love.”

Little wonder Paul wrote:

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (II Timothy 1:7).

Hear these words! “God hath **not** given us the spirit of fear!”

God has not given us a place as fearful children. Fear has no place in our relationship with the Father. We have been given a place of mature, adult sonship. What He has given us in replacement of elementary “fear” is power, love and a sound mind.

John wrote of this as well:

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love” (I John 4:18)

Hear these words as well. “There is **no** fear in love.” None!

There is no place for “fear” in the life of the mature believer, for he has been completely submerged in the glorious love of the Father – “because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Romans 5:5).

The very definition of our Father is Love – “God **is** Love” (I John 4:8, 16). He is Love, in fact He is perfect Love – and “perfect love **casteth out** fear.”

Fear and love are exclusive of each other. The issue is one of really knowing who God is; of actually getting to know *Him*.

Our first approach to God is in ignorance and fear. Then, as we come to know Him in truth – as we become acquainted with His genuine nature of love – fear is driven from our lives, for “perfect love **casteth out** fear.”

Only those who do not yet know Him, or do not yet know Him very well, fear Him, for “*he that feareth is **not** made perfect in love.*”

Now, there are actually three stages related to the “fear of God” that we might refer to as:

Pre-School
 Elementary
 Post-Graduate

We have looked briefly at the last two of these stages. The “Elementary” stage is the early stage of knowing God. It is the acknowledging that there is a God, and is usually associated with the law (or legalism and religion). This stage is exemplified by those in the “Gospels” who *“were sore afraid.”*

We have also looked at the “Post-Graduate” stage. This is the stage of maturity where the believer no longer lives under the *“the fear of God,”* but enjoys the knowledge of God in fullness. This is the divine goal of perfect love.

There is however an earlier, “Pre-School” stage that sometimes is a predecessor of the “Elementary School” stage. For some, this stage comes before the basic knowledge that there is a God. This is the denial or total disregard of God. It is “Pre-School” because it is “pre-law,” or “pre-religion.” It is the “fool” stage that says *“there is no God”* (Psalm 53:1), resulting in *“No fear of God before their eyes”* (Romans 3:18).

We might review these three stages as follows:

Pre-School	Denial or Total Disregard of God	Fool	<i>“No fear of God before their eyes”</i>
Elementary	Basic Acknowledgment that there is a God	Infant	<i>“They were sore afraid”</i>
Post-Graduate	Knowing God in Fullness	Adult	<i>“God hath not given us the spirit of fear”</i>

When our Lord Jesus Christ was here on the earth, His most often repeated instruction to those who heard Him was “Fear Not!” – “Fear Ye Not!” – “Be Not Afraid!” He came to lead others out of fear and into the freedom and peace of love. He lived in a place of perfect Love – that place was His Father.

Getting to know the Father in the reality of His Love will *mature* us out of “fear” and into “perfect love” – a love that is all consuming. No wonder Fanny Crosby wrote in her hymn, Blessed Assurance, that we are *“Filled with His goodness, lost in His Love.”*

We who really know Him are overtaken by the sea of His divine Love.

Frederick M. Lehman penned his marvelous hymn in 1917:

The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;
It goes beyond the highest star,
And reaches to the lowest hell;
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
God gave His Son to win;
His erring child He reconciled,
And pardoned from his sin.

When hoary time shall pass away,
And earthly thrones and kingdoms fall,
When men who here refuse to pray,
On rocks and hills and mountains call,
God's love so sure, shall still endure,
All measureless and strong;
Redeeming grace to Adam's race –
The saints' and angels' song.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.

Oh, love of God, how rich and pure!
How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure –
The saints' and angels' song.

Are you afraid of the Loving Father? Then you do not yet know Him for who He *really* is. Something of ignorance, religion, and tradition has you bound to a false view of Him.

It is time to know the liberating freedom that is available in the full-growth-knowledge of Him in power, love, and a sound mind.

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