

LEARNING TO FEAR GOD

Deuteronomy 14:22-23

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. It has been said that “fear not” is the most repeated command in the Bible.
2. Someone has reported that “fear not” is found 365 times in the Bible, one for every day of the year.
3. But did you know that the Bible also commands us to fear? On the one hand, fear not, on the other hand, do fear.
4. Today we’re going to learn about the one thing we need to fear, and why it is so important.

II. TEXT

1. **1 Samuel 12:24-25** “Above all, fear the Lord and worship him faithfully with all your heart; consider the great things he has done for you. 25 However, if you continue to do what is evil, both you and your king will be swept away.”
2. At this point in Israel’s history, they had no king. The prophet Samuel was their leader, but he was not their king. But the people wanted a king. So, God told the prophet Samuel to anoint a man named Saul to be the first king of Israel. Before Saul took over as king, the prophet Samuel gave a final speech to Israel. And these were his last words. “Above all, fear the Lord.”
3. It’s true that there are a lot of things that Christians don’t need to fear.

III. WHAT WE DON’T NEED TO FEAR

1. There is no need to fear death, because death is a promotion. Philippians 1:21
2. There is no need to fear pain, because it is only temporary. 2 Cor 4:17
3. There is no need to fear being different, because you have to be different to be like Jesus. Jn 15:18
4. There is no need to fear being alone, because God will always be with us. Heb 13:6
5. There is no need to fear persecution, because earthly rejection means heavenly rewards. Mt 5:11-12
6. There is no need to fear suffering, because God uses it for our growth. Hebrews 13:7
7. There is no need to fear adversity, because God works all things together for our good. Rm 8:28
8. There is no need to fear sudden danger, for the Lord will keep your foot from a snare. Pr 3:25-26
9. There is no need to fear poverty, because God will provide for you. Philippians 4:19
10. There is no need to fear loss, because God will comfort you. 2 Corinthians 1:4
11. There is no need to fear sickness, because God will heal you. James 5:15
12. There is no need to fear the devil, because the evil one cannot touch you 1 Jn 5:18
13. There is no need to fear the odds, because the Lord is your helper. Heb 13:6

14. There is no need to fear hell, because there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Rm 8:1

IV. **WHAT WE DO NEED TO FEAR**

1. While Christians don't need to fear all those things, there is something we do need to fear? Only one thing. God.
2. This is commanded over and over again in the Bible.
3. The fear of the Lord is referenced more than 150 times in the Bible.
4. Not just in the Old Testament.
5. **2 Corinthians 7:1** "So then, dear friends, since we have these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from every impurity of the flesh and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God."

V. **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FEAR GOD?**

1. Definition: Reverential awe.
2. The fear of the Lord is a combination of three things:
 - i. Dread: A dread of God's punishment.
 1. In C.S. Lewis's book *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, one of the children asks Mr. and Mrs. Beaver about Aslan the Lion.
 - a. "Is he – quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion."
 - b. "That you will, dearie, and no mistake," said Mrs. Beaver. "If there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most or just plain silly."
 - c. "Then he isn't safe?" said Lucy.
 - d. "Safe?" said Mr. Beaver; "don't you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the king, I tell you."
 2. God is good, but He is not safe. In fact, God is dangerous.
 3. **Hebrews 12:28-29** "28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful. By it, we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and awe, 29 for our God is a consuming fire."
 4. God cast the devil and demons out of heaven. He cast Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 6 he flooded the earth and killed everyone in the world except for Noah's family. He rained down fire and sulfur, destroying the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for their sexual perversion. He turned Lot's wife into a pillar of salt for looking back. He sent the ten plagues on the Egyptians for disobeying Him, ultimately killing every firstborn son in Egypt. God killed Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu instantly for offering unauthorized fire before the Lord. God instantly killed Uzzah for

touching the ark of God. God instantly killed Ananias and Sapphira for lying about their donation to the church. God created hell, and He promises to punish unbelievers in hell for all eternity. God promises to discipline His children when they disobey Him. God is good, but He is not safe.

5. A lot of people have an unbiblical view of God. They see God as loving and good and gracious and merciful. But they forget that the Bible also describes God as jealous, and hating sin, and the Judge of all mankind.
 6. Some people like the God of the NT, but not the OT. The God of the Old Testament is the same God in the New Testament. The New Testament gives us a fuller view of God, but not a different view of God.
 7. As Christians, we do not have to fear God's ultimate wrath, because we have been saved by Jesus Christ. But we should fear His temporal judgments when we sin and stray from God.
 8. **Hebrews 12:6** "For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and punishes every son he receives."
 9. The fear of the Lord is the conviction that God is always watching, sees everything you do, and will reward or discipline you accordingly.
 10. If your attitude toward sin is, "I know this is wrong, but God will forgive me," you have an unhealthy fear of the Lord. If you deliberately sin, God will still love you; He will forgive you if you repent; but He will also discipline you to prevent you from behaving like that in the future.
- ii. Reverence: A deep respect for God's goodness.
1. While we fear God's temporal punishments, we also deeply respect God because He is perfectly righteous and just, He is loving, kind, good, merciful, gracious, patient, compassionate, and generous. He is our heavenly Father who has promised to protect us, provide for us, guide us, save us, and never leave us.
 2. There is a dread of God's punishment, but a reverence for His goodness.
- iii. Awe: An amazement of God's greatness.
1. God is all-powerful – He can do anything. He is omnipresent – He is everywhere at the same time, and sees everything that occurs. He is omniscient – He knows everything. He is eternal – He has no beginning. He is sovereign – nothing happens in the universe without His permission.
 2. To fear God is to stand in awe, and wonder, and amazement of God.

3. What does it look like on a practical level to fear God? Jerry Bridges wrote an entire book on this topic, called *The Joy of Fearing God*. In it he described five fundamental characteristics of a person who fears God. A person who fears God:
 - i. Seeks to obey God in every area of life. They seek to live all of life under the authority of God.
 - ii. Seeks to live all of life in the conscious presence of God. During the Protestant Reformation, the Reformers tried to summarize the essence of the Christian life. They came up with the Latin phrase *coram Deo*, which literally means before the face of God. The idea is that the essence of the Christian life is to live all of your life in the conscious presence of God. Conscious that He is always watching; living only to please Him and no one else. It is being conscious that we are always acting under the gaze of God.
 - iii. Seeks to live all of life in conscious dependence on God. This is the realization that we are nothing without God, and we need His help every second of the day. This translates to a life of unceasing prayer.
 - iv. Seeks to live all of life to the glory of God. They aim to reflect God's glory to those around us.
 - v. Worships God both as an activity, and as a way of life. We don't live for God because we are afraid He will punish us; we actually love and adore God with every fiber of our being.

VI. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

1. The Bible emphasizes the importance of fearing God. Are there any benefits or rewards?
2. The Bible promises many benefits to those who fear of the Lord. Let's look at a few.
 - i. Wisdom.
 1. **Proverbs 9:10** "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."
 2. God will help you make really good decisions.
 - ii. Guidance.
 1. **Psalm 25:12** "Who is this person who fears the LORD? He will show him the way he should choose."
 2. God will reveal His will for your life.
 - iii. Protection.
 1. **Psalm 34:7** "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and rescues them."
 2. God will make sure that nothing happens to you unless it is what is best for you.
 - iv. Provision.
 1. **Psalm 34:9** "Those who fear him lack nothing."
 2. God will supply all your needs – spiritual, physical, emotional, financial, etc.

- v. A good life.
 1. **Psalm 25:12-13** “12 Who is this person who fears the LORD? He will show him the way he should choose. 13 He will live a good life, and his descendants will inherit the land.”
 2. God will give you a full and meaningful life; an abundant life.

VII. HOW CAN WE LEARN TO FEAR GOD?

1. If tithing is so important, and so desirable, does the Bible tell us how we can grow in the fear of the Lord?
2. Tithing.
3. Four Quick Facts About Tithing:
 - i. Tithing means a tenth.
 1. That’s what the word actually means. You can’t tithe three percent, or seven percent. It literally means one-tenth.
 2. Tithing means giving the first ten percent of your income to God. When you get paid, give the first ten percent off the top to the church.
 3. When I get paid every month, the first check that I write is ten percent to Church Acadiana. I put it in an offering envelope, bring it to church on the first Sunday of the month, and drop in the offering box.
 - ii. Tithing is a command.
 1. **Leviticus 27:30** “Every tenth of the land’s produce, grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.”
 2. Tithing is not optional. It is not a suggestion. It is a command.
 3. Tithing is for everyone. It doesn’t matter if you are young or old; if you make a lot of money or just a little bit of money.
 4. I love to see the young people in our church tithing – even very small children. They are being obedient.
 5. My younger children don’t have jobs yet, but they get money for doing chores here and there, and they are faithful to tithe. One of my sons gives 30 percent of his earnings to God; 10 percent tithe, and 20 percent to Build to Equip.
 6. I love to see our teens and college students tithe. I like to see that when they get their first job, they start tithing regularly. That’s awesome. I love to see obedience.
 7. Some people think that Christians don’t need to tithe because Christians are now under grace and not under law. Three quick responses to that:
 - a. Just because a command was first given in the Old Testament doesn’t mean it no longer applies to Christians. Aren’t we still

- obligated to keep the OT commands not to murder, kill, steal, and commit adultery?
 - b. Tithing predates the law. Abraham tithed hundreds of years before God gave the law to Moses.
 - c. Jesus commanded us to tithe. **Matthew 23:23 (NLT)** “You should tithe.”
 - iii. Tithing is a blessing.
 - 1. **Malachi 3:10** “Bring the full tenth into the storehouse so that there may be food in my house. Test me in this way,” says the LORD of Armies. “See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure.”
 - 2. Tithing doesn’t leave you ten percent poorer, it makes you richer beyond measure.
 - 3. A man in our church told me that he started tithing, and in three months his income went up 33%.
 - 4. **Tony Evans** “Tithing is believing God can do more with 90% than you can do with 100%.”
 - iv. Tithing serves two purposes.
 - 1. First, it provides for God’s work through the church.
 - a. Just like any organization, the church has bills. It has to pay for salaries, and equipment, and programs, and ministries, and events, and maintenance, etc. God uses the tithe to provide for the church’s ministry.
 - b. **Adrian Rogers** “God’s tithe is to be brought to God’s house on God’s day so that God’s work will be done in God’s way.”
 - 2. Second, it teaches people to fear God.
 - a. **Deuteronomy 14:23 (NLT)** “Bring this tithe to the designated place of worship—the place the LORD your God chooses for his name to be honored—and eat it there in his presence. This applies to your tithes of grain, new wine, olive oil, and the firstborn males of your flocks and herds. Doing this will teach you always to fear the LORD your God.”
 - b. God doesn’t actually need our money. He can provide for His church without our money. I can imagine someone going to a very large church with a lot of money thinking, “This church is loaded with money; they don’t need my tithe.” But God has a higher purpose for tithing than simply providing for His work. Tithing is a tool for spiritual growth. It teaches us to fear God.
 - c. Our church has to pay rent each month to meet at Celebrity Theaters. Each month I send them a check. That check doesn’t merely provide them with a source of income. It does

something else. It reminds me that the building doesn't belong to me. It reminds that I'm not in charge of it; I can't do whatever I want with it. It reminds me that they will hold me accountable for how I treat the building.

- d. Tithing does the same thing. Every time you tithe it reminds of you three things:
 - i. Your money belongs to God. Everything you have belongs to God.
 - ii. You are not in charge of your money or your life.
 - iii. God is watching everything you do and will hold you accountable.
 - e. In other words, every time you tithe, it helps you to grow in the fear of the Lord.
4. Some of you haven't been tithing because...
 - i. You didn't understand what it meant.
 - ii. You didn't know that it was a command.
 - iii. You didn't know that you need it for your own spiritual growth.
 5. But the Bible says your tithe doesn't just help the church, it helps you. You need to tithe more than the church needs your money.
 6. God doesn't want your money. He wants your heart. He wants you to love Him with all that you are. And He knows that the key to getting your heart is for you to surrender your finances to Him. That's where tithing comes in.

VIII. CONCLUSION

1. Take out your Commitment Card.
2. Today is Commitment Day.
3. I want to encourage you to make a commitment today.
 - i. If you'll look at the middle box (green), you have four options.
 - ii. For some of you, your commitment today will be to begin tithing.
 - iii. For others of you, you are already tithing, you are already giving to BTE, and your commitment today is just to keep going.
 - iv. For some of you, your commitment will be to start giving to BTE today.
 - v. For others of you, you need to have an amnesty conversation.
4. In a moment we are going to have a song.
 - i. Stay seated.
 - ii. Fill out your Commitment Card.
 - iii. Bring it forward and drop it off, along with offering today.
 - iv. Sing with us.