

# The Fear of God

Exodus 20:18-20

(Reading: 19:1-2, 10-19; 20:1-21)

While we talk plenty about God, we rarely talk about *fearing* God; however, Scripture frequently speaks about the fear of God and repeatedly calls us to do just that. Let's explore the Biblical concept of the fear of God.

## 1. The Cause of Fear Explained

- A) our experiences of God's power shown in nature
  - i) Derecho (Ontario, 2022)
  - ii) Kilauea (Hawaii, 2018)
- B) Israel's experience of God's power in an utterly overwhelming theophany
  - i) thunder & lightning
  - ii) earthquake
  - iii) smoke
  - iv) trumpet

## 2. The Kind of Fear Experienced

- A) different kinds of fear
  - i) healthy fears
  - ii) fun fear
  - iii) sinful fear
- B) fear of dread experienced at Mt. Sinai
  - i) Reason: the law exposes man's sin and condemns him
    - Romans 4:15 – “For the law brings wrath” (when it comes to sinful people)
    - Romans 3:19-20 – “<sup>19</sup> Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. <sup>20</sup> Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”
  - ii) Examples
    - Adam & Eve (Gen.3:10)
    - Moses at the burning bush (Exo.3:6)
    - Isaiah's throne-room vision (Isa.6:5)
    - Mary as God's messenger appears (Luk.1:30)
    - shepherds in the fields (Luk.2:9)
    - Peter at the net-bursting, boat-sinking catches of fish (Luk.5:8)

### C) Assessment

- Christopher Hitchens's thoughts re: the possibility of God's existence (Fox News)

"I think it would be rather awful *if* it was true. If there was a permanent, total, round-the-clock divine supervision and invigilation of everything you did, you would never have a waking of sleeping moment when you weren't being watched & controlled & supervised by some celestial entity from the moment of your conception to the moment of your death.... It would be like living in North Korea."

### D) The Solution: Moses as a mediator who presents a contradictory solution?

#### i) the apparent contradiction:

- Exodus 20:20a – "Do not fear."
- Exodus 20:20b – "God has come to test you ... that His fear may be before you ..."

#### ii) not a contradiction, but a contranym

- apology
- cleave
- fast
- dust
- left
- sanction

## 3. The Kind of Fear Expected

### A) awe at God's greatness

- Psalm 8:3-4 – "<sup>3</sup> When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, <sup>4</sup> what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You care for him?"

### B) trust in God's goodness

- Psalm 34:8-9 – "<sup>8</sup> Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him! <sup>9</sup> Oh, fear the LORD, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him."
- Psalm 115:11 – "You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their shield."

### C) love for God's graciousness

#### i) passages demonstrating that fear of God results in love that is expressed by obedience

- Exodus 20:20 "And Moses said to the people, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and *that* His fear may be before you, *so that* you may not sin.""
- Deuteronomy 10:12-13 – "<sup>12</sup> And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, <sup>13</sup> and to keep the commandments of the LORD ..." (cf. 6:1-9; 31:12-13)

- Proverbs 8:13 – “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil.”
- Ecclesiastes 12:13 – “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all.”
- John 14:15 – “<sup>15</sup> If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”

ii) examples of godly fear leading to obedience

- Exodus 1:17 – “But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live.”
- Hebrews 11:7 – “By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family.”

D) Charles Spurgeon's description

“[We stand before God] not afraid, but full of delight, like a child who rejoices to see his father's wealth, his father's wisdom, his father's power,—happy, and at home, but feeling oh, so little!”

#### 4. This Kind of Fear Enlivened

A) Jesus' experience on Mt. Zion (Mt. Calvary)

- Matthew 26:39 – “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.”
- Luke 22:44 – “And being in agony, ... His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”

B) Our experience at Mt. Zion

- *Amazing Grace* – “T'was grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved.” (stz.2)
- Psalm 130:3-4 – “<sup>3</sup>If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? <sup>4</sup> But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.”

#### Conclusion

If you do not approach God on Mt. Zion, where He offered His Son on the cross on Mt. Calvary, they you will stand in dread of His approach on the Day of Judgment as the Israelites dreaded His approach at Mt. Sinai. But if you have approached God at Mt. Zion through faith in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, you have nothing to dread; rather, you know the wonder of godly fear—the fear of awe at, trust in, and love for our Creator and Redeemer God!