

Extra on the Fear of God Bible Study

AUTHOR'S COMMENTARY ON EMPHASIS

For about 10 years, I was led to believe that "fear" in Scripture meant super-respect. And it does in some cases. But this presupposition caused me to do some real "explaining away" at other times, which I was all too eager to do since I saw the fear of God and the love of God as inexorably opposing each other.

But finally the absurdity of this struck me. Fear is fear, and respect is respect. Could not God have used the right word? Why did Jeremiah, Isaiah, etc., use "fear" when there were perfectly good words for respect, honor, and reverence? Are we wiser than the Holy Spirit, or just resisting the truth?

Beyond the brief snippet in the beginning of the study, it should be noted that yirah is fear mingled with reverence, as opposed to only fear or only reverence. In Greek, however, what could be clearer than phobos - or abject terror (where we get phobia from). Yare is similar in Hebrew.

Still, many attempt to explain this away. Hey, I did it for years. But the trembling part, in both Testaments, should have given us a clue to the folly of attempting to explain-away God's Word.

In the study, I did not even bother with the KJV's mis-rendering of deilia in 2 Tim 1:7, as most are on to this. Deilia is not fear, but "cowardice" or "timidity" or "wimpyness". And we were certainly given no such Spirit. As to the Fear of the Lord, consider the double portion in Isaiah 11:2-3 as part of the "the Name of the Lord."

Many modern expositors are in "one-accord" (Jer 5:5) in dulling the sword of truth when it comes to the Fear of God, and their textual gymnastics are a spectacle to see. I finally fell off the bar - into humility, fear, and love.

When I researched this out, Acts 17:11 style, I came to the position that is represented in the attached study.

After reluctantly repenting, some time later I had an intense encounter with God that allowed more than mere intellectual ascent, to say the least. I began to realize what had "set itself up against the knowledge of God" in my head was the "anti-myth" of the Wizard of Oz. While this was rather personal, I suspected it might also be true in others, and so I risked including it in the study as an opening "teaser".

While there are many wrong ways to fear God, and some ways that are useful but temporary (1 John 4:17), I no longer see the need to pit fear versus love. It is not one or the other, but both.

Rom 11:22 (Phi) You must try to appreciate both the kindness and the strict justice of God.

Do you think maybe Luke had this in mind when he wrote?

Ac 9:31 (NRS) ...Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it [the Church] increased in numbers.

Fear is the only possible initial response to a real encounter with the Living God while in a body of flesh. Our fears may be quelled, but only by His word, not ours.

Fear and Love are not in a state of paradox. Fear is rather a right of passage to other things, including love among others. At least this appears to be God's opinion...

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning..."

As a further attempt to explain this, please consider this - more obtuse - explanation, which may be of help.

The fear of the Lord we liken to a virgin's fear of consummation with her husband. It is not a fear by itself, but a fear coupled with passion to do the thing that is so fearful.

This is going to HURT, but I want it SO MUCH.

The absence of either shows something horrible is wrong, no? To be giddy and flippant is to set yourself up to fail in the moment. To be overly fearful makes the whole thing rather cruel and loveless, no?

Both Laura and I were virgins when we married, so we know of what we speak here. <grins>

We were both desirous of each other and seized with fear at the same time. IT WAS NO PARADOX, but soberminded reality of actually getting we had hoped so much for - and being terrified at the prospect of it actually happening.

And we are the (virgin?) bride of Christ. He is coming for us, and we want Him so badly. And yet we know that His coming will involve much pain...

Am 5:18 (NIV) Woe to you who long for the day of the LORD! Why do you long for the day of the LORD? That day will be darkness, not light.

Mal 3:2 (NIV) But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap.

Are we waiting like calloused prostitutes, indifferent for all this means? are we waiting as frigid cowards, shrinking back from the inevitable?

Or are we waiting like trembling maidens, being found in the moment for which we were made...

EXTRA VERSES AND SECTIONS

THE SCROLL OF THOSE WHO FEAR THE LORD

Most of us know that our names are written in the "Book of Life" spoken of in Phi 4:3 and Rev 21:27. But Daniel 7:10 and Rev 20:12 mention "books". Could this be the other one, or another one? Will you be listed?

Mal 3:16 (NIV) Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name.

Pr 31:30 (NIV) Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

FEAR AND JESUS

Isa. 11:2-3 (NIV) The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him - the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD - and he will delight in the fear of the LORD...

Isa 11:2-3 (NRS) The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD...

Heb 5:7 (RSV) In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear.

FEAR AND THE CHURCH

Acts 10:34-35 (TEB) Peter began to speak: "I now realize that it is true that God treats all men on the same basis. Whoever fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him, no matter what race he belongs to."

Jer 32:38-40 (NEB) They shall become my people and I will become their God. I will give them one heart and one way of life so that they shall fear me at all times,.. I will fill their hearts with fear of me, and so they will not turn away from me.

Acts 9:31 (NIV) Then the church... enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.

Ac 9:31 (NRS) ...Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it [the Church] increased in numbers.

MISC VERSES

Ps 103:11-17 (NIV) For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him,.. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him,.. But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him...

Ps 33:18 (NEB) The Lord's eyes are turned towards those who fear him...

Ps 115:13;145:19 (NEB) The Lord will bless all who fear him, high and low alike... He fulfills their desire if only they fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.

Ps 34:7 (NEB) The angel of the Lord is on guard round those who fear him, and rescues them.

Ps 90:11 (NIV) Who knows the power of your anger? For your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you.

2 Tim 1:7 (KJV) For God hath not given us the spirit of fear (deilia -timidity)...

Rom 11:22 (NIV) Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.

EXTRA COMMENTS NOT USED

Mike Yaconelli: "We aren't afraid of God , we aren't afraid of Jesus, we aren't afraid of the Holy Spirit. As a result, we have ended up with a need-centered gospel that attracts thousands ...but transforms no one."

HEBREW WORD LEGEND

yare 3372/3 fear, revere (Jon 1:16, Ps 90:11,25:12-14,34:9,118:4,76:7,19:9, Is 8:12a)

yirah 3374 fear, terror (Jer 5:22, Mal 3:16, Ps 34:11,111:10, Pr 9:10,8:13,8:13,16:6, Pr 14:26, 19:23, Job 28:28)

pachad 6342/3 fear, dread (Job 3:25a,Ps 119:120, Job 23:15)

arats 6206 dread, fear, tremble (Ps 89:7,Is 8:12c,Is 8:13b)

mowra 4172 fear, reverence, terror (Is 8:12b,Is 8:13a)

kabad 3513 honor, glorify, heavy (Ex 20:12)

GREEK WORD LEGEND

phobeo 5399 to terrify (Mat 10:28, Luke 12:4-5, 1 Jn 4:18b)

phobo 5401 fear, dread, terror (Mt 28:4, 1Pt 2:17c, 2 Cor 5:11,7:1, 1 Jn 4:18a,b, 1 Pt 1:17, Plp 2:12)

phoberos 5398 fearful, terrible (Heb 10:31,12:21a)

ekphobos 1630 exceedingly fear (Heb 12:21b)

tromos 5156 tremble, quake (Plp 2:12b)

timao 5091/2 honour, venerate, value (1Pt 2:17a/d [this verse is a most interesting contrast of words])

aidos 127 reverence, shame (Heb 12:28a)

eulabeia 2124 reverence, veneration (Heb 12:28b)