

# THE FEAR OF GOD (OR) THE FEAR OF THE LORD

So, what does the Dictionary say “FEAR” is:

**As a noun**, - fear is an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat of something that should be avoided.

**As a verb**, - fear is to be afraid of someone or something as to be likely to be dangerous, painful, or threatening.

From the beginning of time, humans primarily saw Fear as only a verb. Adam and Eve, living in the Garden of Eden knew no fear at all as they lived in a perfect world with no negativeness at all. A paradise where everything could live peaceably - forever. However, once the Devil tricked them into defying God’s one simple rule by plying upon their free will, fear arrived as witnessed in Adam hiding from God. When questioned as to why he was hiding, Adam condemned himself in saying that ***“he was afraid as he was naked”***. God did not slay Adam and Eve for their transgression; but banished them from the Garden and in making a loincloth from leather ended the “living forever” --- witnessed --- as something had to die to provide the leather.

Stepping forward in time, God did not slay Caine for killing Able, and even when doing so in sparring him, Caine feared for his life from the retaliation from mankind. God merely marked him so that any inadvertent retaliation would not happen. These same human failures of mankind’s “Free Will” continued through the times of Noah, Abram, and others for a couple of thousand years. During these times, the fear of God was wrongly held very much as the verb definition whereas God was feared as someone that was going to invoke harm upon them – even if they viewed themselves as the “just”.

Continuing in history, about the time of Moses, when God gave mankind a clear set of rules to live by in order to live in God’s Graces --- the meaning of Fear started to move to the noun definition. This is clear in God’s blessing of the Israelites – ***“The Lord bless you and keep you! The Lord let His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace!”***.

For the next thousand years even King David, Solomon, and others moved from one form of fear to another --- taking the Israelites from a Royal Kingdom, to a Divided Kingdom, Exile, Return, and the restoration of the Jewish Faith in the Maccabean Revolt. During this same time, God worked through the Prophets not only in the preparation for Christ --- but for a time of the fullness of the realization of the Love of God. A transition whereas their fear was to be of **the detachment with God** --- where the same grace message given to the Israelites would not be available to them. Specifically, **(1)** the one to fear being the devil, **(2)** the acts to fear being those that separate us from God in Sin, and **(3)** the place to fear being Hell which is the eternal separation from God.

Moving to present day, for many older Catholics, a real fear of punishment hung over their spirituality. God could seem on the one hand loving and merciful, but a vision of hell seemed to compete with this vision of a God who was a loving parent.

For many, our vision of God as parent is shaped by our earliest experience of parents. We are all the products of parents. So, when we think about fearing this father, we fear not him, but we fear offending someone who could love us so totally and unconditionally. We fear the thought of rejecting this kind of love, of not accepting this kind of invitation. We fear missing the wholeness of life that this kind of parent offers to us. We fear hurting this parent or being absent from his liberating love. How could we not fear separation from such a parent?

Pope Francis, in speaking of fear of the Lord, said, ***“There is no reason to be scared of him! --- instead, fear is a gift of the Holy Spirit through whom we are reminded of how small we are before God and of his love.”*** When someone distances themselves from God, the pope said, ***“he lives only for money, for fun, for vanity, or power or pride, then the holy fear of God sends us a warning: Be careful! ... You will not be happy.”***

Overall the Catholic Answers' site states --- The Catholic view of "fear of God" is: (1) a joyful awareness of God's grandeur and a grateful realization that only in him do our hearts find true peace<sup>1</sup>. (2) It is one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit<sup>1</sup>. (3) The fear of the Lord is the desire not to offend Him, and the certainty that He will give us the grace necessary to keep from doing so<sup>2</sup>. (4) A genuine relationship with God is based on love, not fear<sup>4</sup>. (5) A healthy fear of the Lord means we love God above all things and, therefore, do not want to forsake him<sup>5</sup>.

In Catholicism, as viewed by the US Bishops, the "fear of the Lord" is an affectionate or reverential feeling that moves a person to do God's will and avoid sin because of love for God, who is all good and deserving of all of our love<sup>123</sup>. This takes us all the way back to the beginning of Biblical Time. (1) The word "fear" in this context means awe or profound respect, not literal fear of God's power<sup>1</sup>. (2) The fear of the Lord is described as the "discipline" or "instruction" of wisdom<sup>4</sup>. (3) This spiritual gift can help direct the faithful back on the right path when they start to sin

Perhaps it helps to think of fear of the Lord as “awe in the presence of the Lord.”

Rather than fear the thought of God, we should fear being separated from God as expressed in Deuteronomy, **the powerful God who marches with us and promises not**

to abandon us. A clear message to us here tonight – and, for all those that we touch!!

## Knights Reflection October 2023