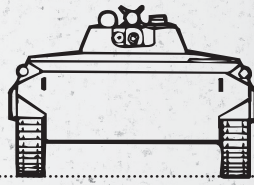


TWO KINDS OF FEAR



WARM UP

An English-speaking Russian friend of mine who was growing nicely in the Lord, said to me once, "Mike, you know there are some sins that the love of God will not get out of my life, but the fear of God will!" That was an honest confession, and one that provoked a fair amount of thinking on my part. Fear and love must coexist in our relationship with the Father. In order that both passions may be healthy and that we may rightly serve God, we must have an intricate balance of love and fear.



BACKGROUND

The Greek word for fear is *phobos*, from which we get our English word phobia. In the New Testament the word is common and occurs about 47 times. Interestingly, the word is quite neutral, and its meaning is known by the context in which it occurs. In Greek *phobos* can be fright (being scared), which causes trembling and makes a man take to his heels and flee. Or it could be a feeling of awe and reverence for some exalted ruler and especially for some divinity or god. Summing it up then, let us consider the following two kinds of fears: The fear of MAN, and the fear of GOD.

READ Proverbs 14:2, 16, 26, 27; Proverbs 29:25



QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between being frightened of God, which the Bible does not teach, and fearing God in awe and reverence, which the Bible does? Give personal examples.
2. Give your interpretation of what Proverbs 16:6 means. Illustrate from experiences in your own life.

3. Read Proverbs 29:25 again. What do you feel the snare is, when we begin to fear MEN rather than GOD? (See John 9:20-22 - fear of the Jews.)

4. What reaction did the early church have when they witnessed God slaying Ananias and Sapphira? (See Acts 5:5,10,11.) Has this kind of fear of God ever gripped you, causing you to immediately toe the line?

CONSIDER THIS

The fear of God can be expressed in different ways:

- Superstitious fear, which is the fruit of ignorance.
- Servile fear, being submissive or compliant for fear of retribution or punishment.

Think about what motivates you as you follow God - is it because of fear, love or obedience?



IT'S TIME FOR PRAYER

Maybe the fear of man has caused you to compromise your stand for Christ! Confess it and lift it to Him in prayer.

MY RESPONSE AS A PROMISE KEEPER

Help me to fear You, Lord, with the right kind of fear, so that I will not fear you at the judgement.
If I fear You now, I won't fear You then.
If I don't fear You now, I will certainly fear You then!



WRAP UP

Pray as a group, focussing on King Solomon's closing words in Ecclesiastes 12:13 "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandment: for this is the whole duty of man."