



# THE POWER OF FEAR

Series: The Power of Fear

Message: The Fear of the LORD

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Smythe Street Church

## This Morning's Passage

### **Deuteronomy 10:12–21 (NIV)**

12 And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good? 14 To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. 15 Yet the LORD set his affection on your ancestors and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations—as it is today. 16 Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer. 17 For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. 18 He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. 19 And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt. 20 Fear the LORD your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name. 21 He is the one you praise; he is your God, who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes.

## Prayer

May we hear with our hearts something to help us love you better God, and follow you in the days you have set before us.

## Have You Ever Imagined What It Would Be Like to Live Without Fear?

Fear is powerful. What would it be like to be fearless? We all have fears that hold us back, that restrain us.

- Physical Fears: heights, death, animals (or spiders), confined space, open spaces, strangers

- Social Fears: our desires for acceptance can make us inhibited from trying new things (being in front of crowds, speaking, acting, dancing) or can push us to do things (being in front of crowds, speaking, acting, dancing)
- Internal fears: fears of being a successful parent cause us to indulge or overreact, loss of control
- That's not even to begin talking about environmental fears or the anxiety that a global pandemic and people's responses to it can produce.

Fears that we have learned or picked up have a powerful influence over our lives.

So coming into July, I felt that it would be good to take a look at fear. The Bible is full of passages where we read, 'Be not afraid', how we can be overcomers. One key passage that came to my mind was:

2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV)

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

## The Big But...

But if we begin searching through Scripture looking to become fearless, we encounter an interesting phrase that happens over and over again. "The fear of the Lord", a phrase that over 70 times in the Old Testament.

**Deuteronomy 10:12–13 (NIV)**

12 And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

Another Passage:

Ecclesiastes 12:13 (NIV)

13 Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind.

I could give you pages of other ones.

**Is this just an old covenant understanding of God, in the New Testament we realize that we need not be afraid of God?**

Except that is not true, the same Paul that wrote that God has not given us a spirit of fear wrote:

Philippians 2:12 (NIV)

12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling...

And then Jesus' own words, when talking of not being fearful of what others may think of us said:

Matthew 10:28 (NIV)

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

**Is it just respect?**

Some would point out that the word fear has other shades of meaning, like respect or awe. But I think sometimes we point to those meanings of fear so that we can minimize

Revelation 1:17–18 (NIV)

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

## So what is the good of a Fear of God?

Proverbs 14:27 (NIV)

The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, turning a person from the snares of death.

“The Lord came in an awesome epiphany at Mount Sinai to cause the people to fear Him so that they would not sin (Exod. 20:20). So from the beginning the fear of God made a moral and spiritual impression upon God’s people. The fear of Him engendered obedience to Him and righteous living. It was never to engender fear for fear itself.”<sup>i</sup>

## Thoughts from *Nerve* by Eva Holland

After hearing an interview with Eva Holland on the radio, I read the book *Nerve: A Personal Journey Through the Science of Fear*.

“In 1968 Arthur Kling captured a group of wild rhesus monkeys on a small island off the coast of Puerto Rico. He removed their amygdalae and set the monkeys free. Within two weeks, all of them were dead, either by starvation, drowning or attacks from their intact peers.”<sup>ii</sup>

Urbach-Wiethe Disease, attacks the amygdala, the fear control centre of the brain. Patient S.M. a lady in her 50’s had what we would refer to as a damage in her brain that caused her not to be triggered with natural fear responses to naturally fearful events and situations.

“What you see in S.M. is really a manifestation of somebody living life without those brakes.”<sup>iii</sup>

A fear of God helps us to have brakes.

Psalm 111:10 (NIV)

10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.

**God Fearer** was the term in the time of the NT that was used to refer to Gentiles (non Jews) who worshipped the YHWH the God of Israel. <sup>iv</sup>

## **My struggle to explain how we can serve a God of Love and yet have a ‘reverent fear’ I thought of my vacation**

A few years ago, my family took a vacation in PEI and we found a place to stay near the ocean.

Love the ocean, the perspective, it is healing to me. I long to go there. I find it majestic, awe inspiring, good for my soul

At the same time, I fear the ocean, because I know it is more powerful than I am. In 2004 I got caught in a rip-tide in New Zealand and had to swim for 30 minutes before I escaped the waves. That moment was one of the life-stories that shape how I understand myself in this world

It is a respect but more than a respect. I know what the water can do. Sailors who love the water have a deep understanding that the water is powerful and uncontrollable.

## **THE FEAR OF GOD GIVES US LIFE CHANGING PERSPECTIVE.**

## **What would happen if we were truly overwhelmed with God?**

If we had the fear of the Lord? I need not imagine:

Deuteronomy 10:17-21 (NIV)

For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. 18 He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. 19 And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt. 20 Fear the LORD your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name. 21 He is the one you praise; he is your God, who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes.

Our hearts would bend towards the things his bends towards. Our love for our neighbour would increase, we would be more compassionate, our desire to see his love and gospel shared would grow, because we would see that we are small next to the ocean of his love and faithfulness and we would be changed.

## HAVE YOU BEEN OVERWHELMED BY GOD LATELY?

## Notes:

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<sup>i</sup> Eugene E. Carpenter and Philip W. Comfort, [\*Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words: 200 Greek and 200 Hebrew Words Defined and Explained\*](#) (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 60.

<sup>ii</sup> *Nerve: A Personal Journey through the Science of Fear* by Eva Holland. Allen Lane, 2020. Page 212

<sup>iii</sup> Justin Feinstein quoted in *Nerve: A Personal Journey through the Science of Fear* by Eva Holland. Allen Lane, 2020. Page 213

<sup>iv</sup> Acts 10:2 (NIV) He [Cornelius] and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.