

Holy Fear – Part 2

Foundational Text: Hebrews 12:28 NLT - *Since we are receiving a Kingdom that is unshakable, let us be thankful and please God by worshiping him with holy fear and awe.*

Quick Review: If God is so loving, kind and compassionate, why does Scripture say we should "fear" Him? What exactly is the fear of the Lord?

There are two types of biblical fear:

- 1) The Terror of the Lord (sometimes translated as the dread of the Lord)

The Terror of the Lord is what falls upon the rebellious when God is executing judgment upon them.

- 2) The Fear of the Lord (which is Holy Fear; I call it love's fear)

Holy fear is love's fear because it is not the result of condemnation and the execution of eternal judgment; it is a fear that is inspired by love. Holy fear is the healthy anxiety and concern that our actions should never grossly disappoint, disrespect, or violate our relationship with God.

Another aspect of Holy fear is the fear of discipline. God disciplines those He loves. God loves us enough to correct harmful attitudes, habits and sins. The correction of the Lord can range from a mild rebuke to a severe spanking.

**Holy fear is loves fear.
Holy fear is the fear of chastisement.**

Sins that Offend

The book of Revelation is a precious gift. It reveals to us many things, but one thing that stands out to me for this series, is how God gave us a revelation of His interaction with specific churches in different cities. By reading this revelation we are able to see what pleases Jesus in the church world and what offends Him. The sins that offend Him must be **FEARED!**

Read: Revelation 1:10-19 NLT - *It was the Lord's Day, and I was worshiping in the Spirit. Suddenly, I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet blast. v.11 It said, "Write in a book everything you see, and send it to the seven churches in the cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea." v.12 When I turned to see who was speaking to me, I saw seven gold lampstands. v.13 And standing in the middle of the lampstands was someone like the Son of Man. He was wearing a long robe with a gold sash across his chest. v.14 His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow. And his eyes were like flames of fire. v.15 His feet were like polished*

bronze refined in a furnace, and his voice thundered like mighty ocean waves. v. 16 He held seven stars in his right hand, and a sharp two-edged sword came from his mouth. And his face was like the sun in all its brilliance. v. 17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as if I were dead. But he laid his right hand on me and said, "Don't be afraid! I am the First and the Last. v. 18 I am the living one. I died, but look—I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave. v. 19 "Write down what you have seen—both the things that are now happening and the things that will happen.

Note: Obviously this is a prophetic book. In prophecy, God often takes the current events of that day and speaks warnings and truths into the future. So, as the resurrected Jesus was speaking to John about the 7 churches of his day, He was also speaking to us.

3 Major Sins that Offend Christ

1) Losing Your First Love

Ephesus

- a) Compliment: Hard working, persevering saints who would not tolerate false teachers or false teaching
- b) Complaint: Revelation 2:4 NLT - *But I have this complaint against you. You don't love me or each other as you did at first!*

Just as when a man and woman fall in love, everything is excited and new, so also new believers rejoice at their newly found forgiveness. But, when we lose sight of the seriousness of sin, we begin to lose the thrill of our forgiveness. Peter says when believers stop growing they become "... shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins." (2 Peter 1:9 NLT).

- c) Consequences: Revelation 2:5 NLT - *Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don't repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches.*

If you don't repent and renew your love, the light of your witness in the city will be extinguished.

- d) Loosing your first love for Christ results in a lukewarm spirit.

The church in Laodicea was neither hot nor cold. They were lukewarm. Jesus said, "I will spit you out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:16). He told them, "those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent" (Revelation 3:19).

2) Compromising for Financial Gain and Social Acceptance

Pergamum: *Pergamum* was a sophisticated city and the center of Greek culture and education. It boasted a 200,000-volume library that was second only to the famous library in Alexandria in Egypt. Pergamum offered religious diversity. It was the center of four of the most important gods of the day - Zeus, Athene, Dionysus and Asclepius. The city's chief god was Asclepius, whose symbol was a serpent and who was considered the god of healing.

- a) Compliment: The church had not denied Jesus in the face persecution and martyrdom but they had compromised in other ways.
- b) Complaint: You tolerate the teaching of Balaam and the Nicolaitans.
 - i) Balaam was a weird prophet hired by the Moabite King Balak to curse the Israelites. God would not let him curse the people He had blessed though he tried to curse them 3 times. He wanted the money so he counseled the King to cause Israel to sin against God by marrying heathen women and worshiping their idols along with worshiping God.
 - ii) The Nicolaitans were the politically correct Christians of that day who thought it did no harm compromise their worship for the sake of peacefully existing in a city of cultural religious diversity. They were like the Universalist of today!

Jesus was offended over this because His people valued the fear of man more than the fear of God!

- c) Consequences: Revelation 2:16 - *Repent of your sin, or I will come to you suddenly and fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*
 - i) Christ was not only telling the “Balaams” and Nicolaitans to repent; He also wanted the church to repent for not taking a stand with people who openly disregard the truth of God’s Word.
 - ii) If the church did not repent of its sin and deal with the compromise, then God would come and do it—and that would be disastrous.
- d) The spirit of Balaam and the Nicolaitans is very much operating in the world today.
 - i) Cultural relevance has a higher place than discipleship and equipping with the Word.
 - ii) Political correctness has infected the church with the disease of compromise.
 - iii) In many churches, people are being misled to think that God approves of a watered down grace free from the consequences of sin.

There can be no compromise between loyalty to Christ and the sinful pleasures of idol worship or sexual immorality. Christians may differ in some areas, but there is no room for heresy and moral impurity. Don’t tolerate sin or the philosophies of the sinful by bowing to the pressure of being open-minded.

**Fear God with a HOLY FEAR for everything that
can be shaken will be shaken!**

3) Worshipping of Sex and Pleasure More than Christ

Thyatira

- a) Compliment: Revelation 2:19 NLT - *I know all the things you do. I have seen your love, your faith, your service, and your patient endurance. And I can see your constant improvement in all these things.*
- b) Complaint: Revelation 2:20 - *But I have this complaint against you. You are permitting that woman—that Jezebel who calls herself a prophet—to lead my servants astray. She teaches them to commit sexual sin and to eat food offered to idols.*

- i) Jezebel was probably a symbolic name for a woman or some influencing and seductive women who called themselves prophets.

Some believe that this was probably a woman or women who were involved in cultic prostitution which involved worship in some of the pagan temples of that day.

- ii) What is so offensive to Jesus here is the worship of sex.

Sex outside of a covenant marriage is sin.

- c) Consequences: Revelation 2:21-23 - *I gave her time to repent, but she does not want to turn away from her immorality. v.22 “Therefore, I will throw her on a bed of suffering, and those who commit adultery with her will suffer greatly unless they repent and turn away from her evil deeds. v.23 I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am the one who searches out the thoughts and intentions of every person. And I will give to each of you whatever you deserve.*

God uses suffering as a means to discipline His children.

Sexual sin has consequences: (1) sexual addictions, (2) sexually transmitted diseases, (3) unwanted pregnancies, (4) unwanted emotional attachments, (5) broken marriages

We need a holy fear in the church of sexual compromise! We live in a sex saturated society and many of us are suffering from the consequences of sexual compromise.

Holy Fear Recognizes the Discipline of the Father

- 1) The Lord disciplines those who are His.

Question: Who loves his child more—the father who allows the child to do what will harm him, or the one who corrects, trains, and even punishes the child to help him learn what is right?

- 2) The fear of the Lord accepts divine discipline.

Hebrews 12:5-6 NLT - *And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, "My child, don't make light of the Lord's discipline, and don't give up when he corrects you. v.6 For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child."*

Holy fear treats God as the heavenly Father and accepts His discipline.

- 3) How does God discipline His children?

(Health – Hostilities – Hardships)

- a) Health

The self-absorbed Corinthian church – 1 Corinthians 11:20, 21 ESV - *When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. v.21 For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk;*

vv.27-32 - Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. v.28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. v.29 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. v.30 That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. v.31 But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. v.32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

- b) Hostility

- i) God uses the hostility of sinners as a means of discipline for us.

Note: God is very concerned that we will not accept His discipline and, as a result, we will give up because life is too hard.

- ii) Hebrews 12:3-6 - *Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up. v. After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin. v.5 And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, "My child, don't make light of the Lord's discipline, and don't give up when he corrects you. v.6 For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child."*

c) Hardships

Does God use the hurricanes and the storms of life to discipline His kids? If He would use sickness and the hostility of sinners, I am sure He uses storms too!

- i) Hebrews 12:7-10 NIV - *Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? v.8 If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. v.9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! v.10 They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness.*

Because God promises to discipline His children, believers must endure this divine discipline. The only other choice would be to refuse to endure it, to pout, to grow depressed, or to give up completely and go back into the world.

- ii) God's design and purpose for discipline is love.