

Fears That Do Not Come From God



Part 2/5

The Fear of the Lord
By Derek Prince

In my introductory talk yesterday I established three important points. First, God's Spirit is searching the whole earth for a person with a certain attitude of heart. This attitude is described as a "heart that is perfect toward God" or "a heart that is fully committed to God." Second, wherever God finds such a person, it is his purpose to strengthen that person or to strongly support him or to show himself strong on his behalf. Third, one essential mark of a person with this kind of attitude toward God is the fear of the Lord. However, this phrase, the fear of the Lord, tends to produce some kind of negative reaction and we almost shrink away from it as something stern and unattractive.

One reason for this kind of negative reaction is that we unconsciously confuse the fear of the Lord with other kinds of fear that are unpleasant and often also harmful. Therefore, in my talk today I'm going to deal with these other forms of fear, fears that are unpleasant and harmful. I'm going to identify them and show how they differ from the kind of fear which is beneficial and pleasing to God; that is, the fear of the Lord.

I believe there are four main kinds of fear that we experience that are unpleasant and harmful that are not the fear of the Lord. So, I'm going to speak now briefly about each of these four kinds of fear.

The first kind I would call "natural fear." It's something that we all experience, it's part of human nature. There are times when we get afraid. I get afraid, you get afraid. Let me give you just a few simple examples. One that's always very vivid to me is being at the top of a roller coaster and you see that long swoop that's going to go down there and you start down it and you feel you've left your stomach somewhere about fifty yards behind you and the muscles of your stomach just tense, and that's a very strong kind of fear. I don't know why people go back over and over again to experience the same thing. I suppose what they really appreciate is having the fear and finding there was nothing to be afraid of. Personally, actually, I've lost interest in going on roller coasters. That's just by the way. But that's a fear that most of us have experienced.

Another source of natural fear is thunder and lightning. There are few people who haven't been scared at some time or other in their lives by a loud peal of thunder or a

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sudden flash of lightning. As a matter of fact, even animals like dogs tend to fear that.

Another kind of fear which I have experienced, too, myself is the fear of a soldier in battle, lying there and the bullets are whistling over your head about three inches above you and you know if they were three inches lower, that would be the end of you. And there are not many people that haven't experienced fear in that situation. Or it could be a civilian under aerial bombardment, such as the cities of Europe experienced in World War II. And I remember being in London, England, the first night the air raid siren sounded there and being there subsequently in some of the bombardments. Even the sound of that siren produced a kind of convulsion inside you, a tensing of all your muscles. So, those are kinds of natural fear. They're not necessarily evil but they're certainly not the kind of fear that we're talking about that God is looking for.

The second kind of fear I would call "demonic or tormenting fear." Let me give you a couple of Scriptures. In Romans 8:15, Paul says:

> "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'"

Paul here is contrasting the Spirit of God that assures us that we are God's children with another kind of spirit. He calls it a spirit that makes you a slave or a spirit of slavery to fear. That's not just something purely natural, that is something in the spiritual realm and its result is slavery. One thing we know is that God never produces slavery in his children. He doesn't want slaves, he wants sons. So that kind of fear that produces slavery is not the fear of the Lord and it's not good.

In 2 Timothy 1:7, Paul also speaks about a kind of spirit that's not from the Lord. He says:

> "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."

The mark of the Holy Spirit is power, love, and self-discipline or self-control. Any spirit that doesn't have those marks is not the Holy Spirit and Paul is contrasting it with a spirit of timidity. The King James Version calls it a "spirit of fear." This is one of the commonest spiritual problems of Christians. In my ministry I've seen hundreds of Christians who needed to be delivered from this spirit of fear. Now, these are wrong spirits. They're not the Spirit of God. They're not what we're talking about under the heading of the fear of the Lord.

How would we identify them? One of the key words, I believe, is "torment." In 1 John 4:18, John says:

> "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."

You see, there's a kind of fear which is tormenting and that's not from God, that's evil. If I were to choose other words to identify this evil spirit of fear or timidity, I think the words would be something like these: unnatural, unreasonable, obsessive, binding, enslaving. Those are the marks of that kind of spirit of fear. There are many, many manifestations. For instance, two things—to use long, medical terms—claustrophobia and agoraphobia. Claustrophobia means fear of being shut up in a confined space. Many people experience that. My first wife suffered with it for years. Then one day we identified it as an evil spirit, she claimed deliverance from the Lord, and after that she was a different person. Before that I always had a problem getting her into an elevator. She'd rather walk up four flights of stairs. After she was delivered from that spirit of fear she was perfectly content to go up in the elevator. That's an example.

Another example that's often demonic is fear of the dark. We find people who are unable to sleep without a light. In most cases, that's the result of occult involvement.

And then another kind of demonic fear is fear of specific creatures: cats, birds, bees. I've seen some remarkable cases. I knew one young woman who was just desperately afraid of bees. Her whole life was controlled by determination never to be near bees. She was a highly educated, very talented young woman. Gradually this thing came to light, she was delivered from it. The next day she was eating lunch in front of an open window, a bee flew into the dining room, flew right around her head and flew out again and she didn't budge. She realized she'd been delivered. Well, all those are kinds of fear that are not the fear of the Lord. They're demonic and we have to distinguish them.

The third kind of fear that is not the fear of the Lord and is not good is what I would call "religious fear." Isaiah speaks about this. Isaiah 29:13:

> "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men..."

That's what I call a kind of religious fear, it's conformity because of rules, because of demands, because of a fear that "if you don't do that you won't be counted as one of the 'good' people." And the important thing to see about it is it doesn't bring a person's heart near to God. The people that Isaiah speaks about had this religious fear but, at the same time, their heart was far from the Lord. Jesus challenged the religious leaders of His day with that kind of fear. In fact, He quoted Isaiah to them. In Matthew 15:7–9:

> "You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people honors me with their lips; but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men."

I call that "rigid religious conformity" not motivated by genuine love of God but by fear of being different. I would say that typically, religion seeks obedience through fear. And the kind of obedience it achieves is not heart obedience. It isn't a heart attitude that God welcomes, that's right with God, that's pleasing in his sight. And remember, we're talking about the fear of the Lord as that which produces the right heart attitude toward God. That kind of religious fear is often associated with the kind of fear I spoke about just before—the spirit of slavery to fear, religious fear.

All right. The fourth kind of fear that is not from God and is not the fear of the Lord is what I just call "fear of men." This, too, is spoken about in Scripture. Proverbs 29:25:

> "The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the Lord will be exalted."

You see that the fear of man here is contrasted with trusting in the Lord. So, this is a kind of fear that does not cause us to trust in the Lord. Therefore, it is not good. I think you could express it this way: It's a kind of fear that makes man seem bigger than God, so when you measure man's opinion against God's opinion, man's opinion seems more important. And, it leads to disobeying God. You see, the fear of the Lord will never lead to disobeying God, that's one sure, distinguishing mark. So, examine yourself. Ask yourself as we think about the fear of the Lord, "Do I have the right kind of fear or are the wrong kinds of fear binding me and holding me and keeping me from being the kind of person that God wants me to be?"

Well, our time is up for today but I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll continue with this theme of the fear of the Lord. I'll be showing you how the fear of the Lord was manifested in the life of Jesus Himself and how it should be manifested also in our lives.

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