

# Fear – A Biblical Understanding and Response

## The First Fear

**Genesis 3:10** - *“He said, “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.””*

God instilled this natural response (fear) in us to give us energy to do what needs to be done to avert danger. However, all good things got twisted in the Fall of Man and now have to be VERY carefully monitored.

## Falling to Fear: The Downward Spiral

**Neh 6:10-14** – Nehemiah recognized that fear could lead to sin, which would dishonor the Lord  
Fear that is left unchecked and not directed in the right manner will lead to sin. This can become a downward spiral that will weigh down and shipwreck a life.

**Gen 19:18-22, 30** – Lot’s fear over what God allowed to happen to Sodom & Gomorrah drove him to the mountains despite God’s Word, which perpetuated fear in his daughters and multiplied sin.

Abraham’s fear of local kings taking his wife led him to lie (sin) and be disgraced twice.

King Saul had a life that dominated and ultimately destroyed by fear

- **1 Samuel 15:24** – His fear of the people led to sinning against God and losing his kingdom
- **1 Sam 18:12-15, 29** – His fear of David led to jealousy and then to hatred with murderous intent
- **1 Sam 28:5** – His fear of the Philistines led him to go to a medium, who prophesied of his death
- **1 Sam 31:4** – His fear of the Philistines led him to commit suicide

## Fear Can Take Many Faces

Paralysis (Failing to do what needs to be and should be done)

- **Gen 19:30-38** – Lot seemed to be paralyzed by fear after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, which was perpetuated in his daughters who sinned with him for fear they would never have husbands.
- **Gen 42:4** – Jacob would not send Benjamin with his brothers to Egypt because he had lost Joseph
- **2 Sam 6:9** – David didn’t bring the ark to Jerusalem (for a time) after the man who touched the ark died
- **Matt 25:25** – The evil servant to who Jesus gave a talent of silver
- **Prov 28:1** – *“The wicked flee when no one is pursuing, but the righteous are bold as a lion.”*

People-Pleasing

- **1 Sam 15:24** – Saul became a people-pleaser because of fear
- **Gal 2:12-14** – Peter contorted the gospel because of his fear of man
- **Proverbs 29:25** – *“The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the Lord will be exalted.”*

Anger & Jealousy

- **1 Sam 18:12-15, 29** – People often hate what they fear
- **Deut 2:3-5** – The fear that the Edomites had of the children of Israel made them dangerous.

Avoiding or Rejecting What is Good

- **Mark 5:15** – The people in the Gadarenes drove off Jesus
- **Acts 24:25** – Felix became frightened at the gospel message and sent away Paul

This can vary from being afraid of going to the doctor, to pushing away from the life saving truth of the gospel.

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Fear can be Contagious

- **Deut 20:8** – Fear can be contagious

Fear can become a Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

- **Job 3:25** - *“For what I fear comes upon me, And what I dread befalls me.”*

## Fear Can Be Good

### **Natural Fear**

There is the obvious natural response to danger which can help us (when rightly controlled) to avoid danger, injury, or some type of harm to ourselves or others.

### **The Fear of God**

**Rom 8:14-17** – The fear of God is not a slavish fear of a brutal and capricious Master. It is the loving reverence of a great God, Father and King who is unspeakably holy and means what He has spoken.

**1 John 4:18** – *“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.”* – **Rom 8:1** – No condemnation for those in Christ.

**Heb 12:9-11** – His discipline is from the perspective of a loving Father skillfully guiding us to righteousness. For His children, the rod of the Lord is not punitive but corrective.

**Proverbs 9:10** – *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”* We understand the fear of the Lord as a deep reverence of Him because of all of who He is. This fear is not inconsistent with having heart-felt hope, joy, and peace in Him and at His appearing.

## Fear that Hinders

**2 Timothy 1:7** - *“God did not give us a spirit of fear (timidity), but of power and love and discipline (a sound mind).”* Paul contrasts a negative and a positive.

- Fear is characterized by: 1) weakness (inability to accomplish a task); 2) selfishness (concern over self rather than love for others); and 3) a lack of self-control (or a lack of sound judgment). This is the opposite of the spirit we have received.
- Christians have been given a spirit to counteract the desires or effects of fear.
  - Power – the ability to accomplish a task (**Phil 4:13**) – He has given us (or will give us) what we need to do what He has called us to do.
  - Love – the premier fruit of the Spirit
  - Self-Control (Sound mind) – also a fruit of the Spirit

As our confidence in God grows, the spirit of fear will fade. (power, love, self-control)

Good fear morphs into ungodly fear when we focus on the object of fear more than we fear the Lord.

## Fighting Sinful Fear

### **1. A Matter of Truth**

- **Psalm 56:1-13** – David’s plan to deal with fear (he had to address it a lot). This is more than the song of a man who has overcome fear, though it is; it is also the song of a man who is seeking to overcome fear. Note the common refrain “In God, whose word I praise” in verses 4 and 10. When we give in to fear despite the promises & pronouncements of God, we are calling Him a liar.

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## 2. A Matter of Faith - God's common refrain to the Believer is "Fear Not"

- **Gen 15:1** – Abraham
- **Exodus 14:13** – Moses & Israel
- **Joshua 1:9** – Joshua - This has a lot of similarity to the Great Commission.
- **1 Chron 28:20** – Solomon

In every one of these circumstances, their eyes were drawn to the Lord.

- **Isaiah 12:2** – *"Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation."*
- **Matt 4:40** – *"And He said to them, "Why are you afraid? How is it that you have no faith?"*

## 3. A Matter of Prayer

- **Phil 4:6-7** – Clear instruction for dealing with fear/anxiety
  - a. Make your request known to God – prayer and dependence on Him rather than taking it into your own hands.
  - b. Thank Him for what He has already done – proper honor but also an important reminder to you.
    - **Deut 9:15-19** – Moses was afraid of God's wrath, which drove him to desperately seek God on Israel's behalf.
    - **2 Chron 20:1-4** – Jehoshaphat was afraid of a coming invasion, so they proclaimed a fast and sought the Lord
    - **Neh 6:9** – *"For all of them were trying to frighten us, thinking, "They will become discouraged with the word and it will not be done." But now, O God, strengthen my hands."*
    - **Acts 4:29** – Early disciples prayed for confidence to spread the Word boldlyEach of these examples are of individuals fearing God above all else.

## 4. A Matter of Focus

- **Phil 4:8-9** – Think on the right things  
Bring your thoughts under subjection to the Lord – fear starts in the mind and it can either grow or be defeated in the same place.
- **Heb 13:5-6** – Freedom from a love of money protects us from fear  
**1 Tim 6:6-10** – The love of money is the pathway to all sorts of other types of evil and pain.  
Serving other gods without the power & promises of the true and living God may leave us fearful because success depends upon our ability to get what we want rather than God's ability to deliver on His promises.

## 5. A Matter of Self-Control and Commitment

Gideon's example

- **Judges 6:25-27** – Tearing down the idol by night
- **Judges 6:36-40** – The fleece
- **Judges 7:2-3** – Ridding Israel's army of those who were fearful
- **Judges 7:9-11** – Getting assurance before going into battle

Although driven by a degree of fear, Gideon is listed in the "Hall of Faith" (**Heb 11:32**). Therefore, we cannot define faith as the absence of fear, but of having a fear of God that overpowers all other fears.