

## Doctrine of Fear

- 1) Preliminary considerations.
  - a) Fear, in various forms, is a prominent theme throughout Scripture.
  - b) The expression of fear may be classified into two broad categories: sinful and non-sinful fear.
  - c) Sinful fear is an emotion which is generated by the OSN. It is an emotion that is primarily aroused by concern for impending pain, danger, evil, etc.
  - d) The circumstances which arouse sinful fear may or may not be real.
  - e) It is the type of fear that is most prevalent in the world in both believers and unbelievers.
  - f) Although the expression of sinful fear is an accepted norm in the world, it is an area that must not be ignored or treated as acceptable by the believer.
  - g) If unchecked in the life of a believer, sinful fear will inhibit spiritual growth.
  - h) Non-sinful fear, also referred to as righteous, sanctified or legitimate fear, is not sponsored by the OSN. Additionally, such fear may be expressed apart from an emotional response.
- 2) Various terms that express fear:
  - a) Hebrew:
    - i) אִי־מָה - emah, “terror, dread” (Josh. 2:9).
    - ii) בַּהֲלֵל - bahal, “to terrify, disturb (Gen. 45:3).
    - iii) בַּהֲלָה - bahalah, “sudden disaster, horror” (Lev. 26:16).
    - iv) זֶעֶבַח - zeevah, “trembling, an object of trembling” (2 Chron. 29:8).
    - v) חָרַד - charad, “to tremble, terrify (Job 37:1).
    - vi) חָת - chath, “terror, filled with terror, shattered” (1 Sam. 2:4).
    - vii) חָתַת - chathath, “to be shattered, disheartened, terrified (Isa. 51:7, Jer. 1:17).
    - viii) יָגַר - yagur, “to be afraid, to dread” (Deut. 28:60).
    - ix) יָרָא - yare, “to fear” (Jonah 1:5, 9-10, 16).
    - x) יָרָא - yirah, “fear” (Jonah 1:10, 16).
    - xi) יָרַח - yarah, “to be afraid, paralyzed with fear” (Isa. 44:8).
    - xii) מִוִּרְהָ - morah, “terror” (Psa. 9:20).
    - xiii) עָרַץ - arats, “to be in dread, be terrified” (Deut. 7:21).
    - xiv) פָּחַד - pachad, “trembling, dread, fear” (Prov. 1:27).
  - b) Greek:
    - i) δειλιάω- deiliao, “to be fearful, cowardly” (John 14:27).
    - ii) ἔμφοβος- emphobos, “startled, terrified” (Acts 24:25).
    - iii) ἔντρομος- entromos, “to tremble or shake with fear, to be in extreme terror” (Acts 7:32).
    - iv) ἔκφοβος- ekphobos, “to be intensely afraid” (Mark 9:6).

## Doctrine of Fear

- v) ἐκφοβέω- ekphobeo, “to cause to be intensely afraid, to terrify” (2 Cor. 10:9).
  - vi) πτύρω- pturo, “to be intimidated or frightened” (Phil. 1:28).
  - vii) πτοέω- ptoeo, “to be alarmed, startled, terrified, very frightened” (Lk. 21:9).
  - viii) φόβος- phobos, “fear, alarm, fright” (Matt. 14:26).
  - ix) φοβέω- phobeo, “to put to flight, to strike with fear, to have reverence or respect” (Gal. 2:22).
  - x) φοβερός- phoberos, “causing fear, frightful, terrible” (Heb. 10:31).
  - xi) φρίσσω- phrisso, “to shudder from fear” (James 2:19).
- 3) Sinful fear
- a) Sinful fear is a mental attitude sin and is not an acceptable emotional response to various circumstances (cf. Prov. 3:25, Matt. 10:31).
  - b) It is more accurately categorized as a disorder or maladjustment in the soul which is being controlled by the OSN (cf. Ps. 6:3).
  - c) It is a characteristic of spiritually dead unbelievers (**Genesis 3:7-10** Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. <sup>8</sup> And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup> Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" <sup>10</sup> And he said, "I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.", **Jonah 1:4-5** “And the LORD hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up. <sup>5</sup> Then the sailors became afraid, and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten *it* for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down, and fallen sound asleep. Cf. **Hebrews 2:14-15** Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; <sup>15</sup> and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.).
  - d) Fear is often manifested in the life of the maladjusted believer (cf. 1 Sam 17:11, 24; 18:12, 29; 28:5 cf. **Matthew 8:26** And He said to them, "Why are you timid, you men of little faith?" Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and it became perfectly calm.).
  - e) Sinful fear in the life of a believer demonstrates a lack of faith in God’s essence and His provision.
  - f) Believers are specifically enjoined not to exhibit sinful fear (cf. Josh. 8:1, Isa. 41:10, Matt. 14:27, Acts 27:24, Rev. 1:17).
  - g) It is the result of the refusal to apply sound doctrine (Lev. 26:16).

## Doctrine of Fear

- h) Under fear, the believer is not pleasing to God. Such a believer is compromised in his thinking and actions (cf. Deut. 1:21-32, John 19:38-39).
- i) The fearful believer is dominated by his OSN. If he consistently fails to take the necessary steps to over rule his fear, then his spiritual growth will be jeopardized.
- j) Being out of fellowship due to any sin for any amount of time is never advantageous for the believer.
- k) Believers are specifically enjoined not to fear the following:
  - i) Death (**Psalm 23:4** Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.” cf. Acts 7:54-58).
  - ii) Living grace provision (Luke 12:22-31).
  - iii) The opposition of those who are maladjusted to sound doctrine (Gal. 2:11-14, 1 Peter 3:14 cf. Luke 12:51-53).
  - iv) The declaration of Divine viewpoint (cf. Jer. 1:17, Matt. 10:19, Acts 18:9, 1 Peter 3:15).
  - v) Verbal maligning (cf. Psa. 41:5-13).
  - vi) Persecutions (Rev. 2:10 cf. Matt. 13:21, 2 Cor. 12:10).
  - vii) War, conflicts, famine and violence (Job 5:20-22, Luke 21:9 cf. 2 Kings 6:15-17, Psa. 27:3).
  - viii) The orientation to one’s proper geographical niche (cf. Gen. 46:3).
  - ix) Angels (Dan. 10:19, Luke 1:13).
  - x) The loss of loved ones (Mark 5:35-42).
  - xi) Various tests in our niche (Ex. 20:20 cf. **James 1:2-4** Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, <sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. <sup>4</sup> And let endurance have *its* perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.).
- l) Unrestrained fear may develop into other areas of sin:
  - i) Intensified fear (Lev. 26:16-18, 26, cf. Deut. 28:28).
  - ii) Lying (Gen. 18:15, 26:7).
  - iii) Mental anguish (Num. 14:1).
  - iv) Complaining (Psa. 106:25).
  - v) Rebellion against God (Num. 14:9).
  - vi) Physical violence (Num. 14:10, cf. 1 Sam. 18:10-13).
  - vii) Erroneously assigning blame to others (**Genesis 3:10-12** And he said, "I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." <sup>11</sup> And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" <sup>12</sup> And the man said, "The woman whom Thou gavest *to be* with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.").
  - viii) Partiality in judgment (Deut. 1:17).

## Doctrine of Fear

- m) Worry and anxiety are synonymous with sinful fear.
  - i) Both terms refer to a fearful or apprehensive mental attitude usually over some impending or anticipated contingency (e.g. results of lab tests, final grades, business meeting, etc.).
  - ii) Anxiety may be a result of personal sin (Psa. 38:18).
  - iii) Worry and anxiety are oppressive. Further, they rob the believer of happiness and prevent him from being spiritually alert (Prov. 12:25, Luke 21:34).
  - iv) As growing believers, we are not to be anxious for anything (Phil. 4:6 cf. Isa 35:4).
  - v) In addition, we must not worry about tomorrow or the events of some future date. Rather, focus on making the correct applications today (Matt. 6:34).
- n) The believer may overcome any fear or anxiety through faith in God's provision and reliance on His power (i.e. Faith-Rest, Psa. 27:1, 56:3-4).
  - i) We must cease from our own paltry efforts to combat various fears and, instead, cast our anxiety upon God (1 Peter 5:7 cf. Psa. 62:5-8, 2 Cor. 1:9, Eph. 6:10).
  - ii) After all he has known the particulars of our respective niches from eternity past.
  - iii) Therefore we must have complete confidence in His ability to carry us through any adversity that we encounter in our life (Psa. 27:14; 37:5; 91:2ff, cf. Heb. 11:6).
  - iv) The believer who is not overruled by fear and places his confidence in God will have peace (Psa. 112:7, Isa. 26:3).
  - v) The adjusted believer recognizes that God is firmly in control and is working to benefit him (cf. Rom. 8:28).
- 4) Non-sinful fear (righteous, sanctified or legitimate fear).
  - a) Believers are commanded to fear God (1 Sam. 12:24, Psa. 111:10, **Ecclesiastes 12:13** The conclusion, when all has been heard, *is*: fear God and keep His commandments, because this *applies to* every person.).
    - i) This type of fear doesn't involve a sinful emotional reaction.
    - ii) Depending on the context, it refers to reverence, honor, awe, and righteous behavior in relation to God.
  - b) In fact it is arrogant and foolhardy not to fear Him (cf. **Proverbs 1:29-32** Because they hated knowledge, And did not choose the fear of the LORD. <sup>30</sup> "They would not accept my counsel, They spurned all my reproof. <sup>31</sup> "So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way, And be satiated with their own devices. <sup>32</sup> "For the waywardness of the naive shall kill them, And the complacency of fools shall destroy them., **Jeremiah 5:21-25** 'Hear this, O foolish and senseless people, Who have eyes, but see not; Who have ears, but hear not. <sup>22</sup> 'Do you not fear Me?' declares the LORD. 'Do you not tremble in My presence? For I have placed the sand as a boundary for the

## Doctrine of Fear

- sea, An eternal decree, so it cannot cross over it. Though the waves toss, yet they cannot prevail; Though they roar, yet they cannot cross over it.<sup>23</sup> 'But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart; They have turned aside and departed.'<sup>24</sup> 'They do not say in their heart, "Let us now fear the LORD our God, Who gives rain in its season, Both the autumn rain and the spring rain, Who keeps for us The appointed weeks of the harvest."<sup>25</sup> 'Your iniquities have turned these away, And your sins have withheld good from you. )
- c) Believers are to have a legitimate fear of our authorities (Prov. 24:21, Rom. 13:4 cf. 1 Peter 2:17).
  - d) The believer should fear failure to reach spiritual maturity (Phil. 2:12 cf. Heb. 4:1).
  - e) The fear of a pastor when his congregation is faltering in their spiritual progress (cf. Gal. 4:11).
  - f) "Fear of the Lord" is a synonym for positive volition in the following areas:
    - i) Belief in the Gospel (Acts 10:34-35).
    - ii) Belief at the point of hearing sound doctrine (Prov. 1:7, 15:33).
    - iii) The application of sound doctrine (Psa. 112:1, Prov. 8:13 cf. Eph. 5:21).
  - g) Various traits of those who possess a true fear of God.
    - i) Recognition of the importance of sound doctrine (i.e. wisdom, Job 28:28, Psa. 86:11, Prov. 4:7, 8:11).
    - ii) Readily discusses Divine viewpoint (Psa. 37:30).
    - iii) Strong confidence in God and His plan (Prov. 14:26).
    - iv) Separation from and hate for evil (Prov. 3:7, 8:13, Rom. 12:9 cf. **2 Corinthians 6:14** Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?<sup>15</sup> Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?<sup>16</sup> Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people."<sup>17</sup> "Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you."<sup>18</sup> "And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty.).
    - v) Contentment in one's niche (Prov. 15:16).
    - vi) Does not envy those who are negative to the Truth (Prov. 23:17).
  - h) Various blessing associated with the "fear of the Lord" (**Psalm 115:12-13** The LORD has been mindful of us; He will bless *us*; He will bless the house of Israel; He will bless the house of Aaron.<sup>13</sup> He will bless those who fear the LORD, The small together with the great.)
    - i) More doctrine and guidance (Psa. 25:12-14).
    - ii) Blessings in time (Psa. 34:9, 112:1-10, Prov. 22:4).
    - iii) Every legitimate desire (i.e. those desires which are in accordance with God's directive will, Psa. 145:19).

## Doctrine of Fear

- iv) Deliverance and protection (Psa. 33:18-22; 34:7 cf. **Proverbs 19:23** The fear of the LORD *leads* to life, So that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil.).
  - v) Prolonged life (Prov. 10:27, 14:27).
  - vi) Mercy from God (Psa. 103:13, 17-18).
- 5) Concluding remarks
- a) The Word of God discusses both sinful and non-sinful categories of fear in great length.
  - b) Of the two categories, sinful fear is the most prevalent in humanity today.
  - c) Indeed, we see from Scripture, that sinful fear has been common in every dispensation beginning with Adam after the fall.
  - d) Ultimately sinful fear in the life of a believer indicates a failure to apply sound doctrine and trust God.
  - e) The wise believer will strive to overcome sinful fear and utilize faith-rest in every area of his thinking.
  - f) Non-sinful fear, on the other hand, is commanded in various areas (e.g. God, authorities).
  - g) It denotes a reverence and honor for God and various aspects of His plan.

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James Allen