

Overcoming the Fear of the Man with the Fear of The LORD

Trinity Grace Church | February 2026 | Paul Houk

1. The Fear of Man

“Fear in the biblical sense is a much broader word. It includes being afraid of someone, but it extends to holding someone in awe, being controlled or mastered by someone, worshipping someone, putting trust in someone, or needing someone more than needing God” – **Edward T Welch**

No one needs to be taught to fear man; it comes very naturally. Whether it is failure, rejection, humiliation, or harm, there are many ways we can fear others in an ungodly way. When we are young, we call it peer pressure, but as adults, we can define it as people pleasing.

Proverbs 29:25 says, *“The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe”.*

Isaiah 8:12b-13 says, *“do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But the Lord of hosts, Him you shall honor as holy. Let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread.”*

2. What is Fear of the Lord

The Bible references the term “Fear the Lord” around 80 times. It is one of the most common themes in scripture.

In **Deuteronomy 6:1-2** when Moses is repeating God’s commands to the people he begins like this *“Now this is the commandment-the statutes and the rules-that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son’s son, by keeping all His statutes and commandments, which I have commanded you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long.”*

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. – **Proverbs 1:7**

“The fear of the Lord means reverent submission that leads to obedience, and it is interchangeable with the worship of God. It is reliance on Him. Trusting in Him. Hoping in Him. This includes a deep understanding of our sin in the eyes of a Holy God. Knowing that He is just to punish rebellious sinners, yet having confidence in His great mercy and forgiveness towards those who humble themselves before Him, repenting and believing in the redemption found through Jesus Christ.” – **Ed Welch**

Charles Bridges also says it like this, “What is the Fear of the Lord? It is that affectionate reverence by which the child of God bends himself humbly and carefully to his Father’s law.”

A right fear of God produces love for God. A right fear of God produces worship to God. A right fear of God produces humility before God. A right fear of God produces obedience to God.

3. Reasons We Fear the LORD

God the Creator:

*“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb, when I made clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band, and prescribed limits for it and set bars and doors, and said, ‘Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed’? Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place, that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it? It is changed like clay under the seal, and its features stand out like a garment. From the wicked their light is withheld, and their uplifted arm is broken. Have you entered into the springs of the sea, or walked in the recesses of the deep? Have the gates of death been revealed to you, or have you seen the gates of deep darkness? Have you comprehended the expanse of the earth? Declare, if you know all this. – **Job 38***

One of the most obvious things to us that reveals the wisdom and glory of God is His creation!

The fear of man can lose its grip on me because Christ conquered death; fear of harm no longer has ultimate authority.

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above[a] proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. – **Psalm 19**

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. – **Romans 1:19-20**

In our modern culture full of technology, concrete, dull square buildings, and other man-made lifeless objects, we can often miss out on the glory of God's creation. Creation is meant to remind us on a daily basis of the power and majesty of the God we serve.

Creation, with a loud voice sings, 'The Lord God reigns!' 'He is sovereign over all things!' If God can speak into existence the miracle of life in everything we see, and sustains it all in perfect order, then He can be trusted in His will in your life.

God is Holy:

God is not just a "bigger better" version of us. When the word says that God is holy it means that He is morally perfect and separated from sin. But it also means that He is completely set apart. He is different than us or as theologians say, God is "other". He is creator, we are creatures. We have limits, He has no limits. We derive life from Him, but He derives life from no one.

"Holiness is not simply one attribute among many. It is the attribute that describes God's very essence." – **R.C. Sproul, Holiness of God**

"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said:

*"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!"*

*And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts! Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for." – **Isaiah 6:1-6***

If the angels who dwell in His presence respond with this humility how much more should we as sinners who have committed treason against God's perfect standard.

The phrase "woe is me", in the original text translates as a declaration of judgement. Or "I stand condemned." Then he says "I am undone." Which means, "I am ruined" or "I am cut off."

"When we encounter real holiness, we don't compare ourselves to other people – We collapse." –

R.C. Sproul

When man is confronted with the holiness of God, it is a traumatic event. He doesn't say, "wow what a cool spiritual experience." He falls on his face, totally aware that he deserves the eternal wrath of God.

God's Righteous Wrath:

"To fall into the hands of a living and angry God who has infinite power is the most terrifying thought in all the universe. And the appalling thing is that virtually no one thinks about it. And it is coming for so many." – **John Piper**

If we don't know about God's wrath, then it cheapens His love. It waters down the gospel. If God's wrath didn't exist, then there would be no need for the gospel.

If we are going to have a biblical understanding of the fear of the Lord, then we need to understand His wrath towards sinners

"The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; You hate all evil doers. You destroy those who speak lies; the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man. – Psalms 5:5-6

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. – Hebrews 10:31

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. – Romans 1:18

God's wrath against sinners is not an emotional tantrum. God's wrath is a controlled measured response to sin.

It is only when we grasp the eternal wrath that we deserve that we can truly worship Jesus for the free gift of grace that we did NOT deserve.

Because Jesus lived a perfect life, He became the perfect sacrifice. God's wrath was poured out on Jesus instead of those who have been redeemed by His blood.

In Christ, God's people are no longer driven by terror – the fear that has to do with punishment. Instead, we are filled with reverential awe and worship motivated by the redeeming work of Jesus Christ.

Practical Application

One of the great blessings growing in the fear of the Lord is we think less often about ourselves.

When our hearts are being filled with the greatness of God, we have less room for the question, “what are people going to think of me?”

From his book, Ed Welch puts it like this.

“If you have ever walked among giant redwoods, you will never be overwhelmed by the size of a dogwood tree. If you have ever been through a hurricane, a spring rain is nothing to fear. If you ever have been in the presence of the Almighty God, everything that once controlled you suddenly has less power.”

When we formulate our value based on how people perceive us we are like a ship with no anchor. We drift around, pushed by the current of people pleasing until suddenly we find ourselves on dangerous shores. But when our value is found in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ we stay anchored on the shores of the Lord’s satisfaction.

Question: What is the chief end of man?

Answer: Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.

This is accomplished in our lives when we worship at the greatness of who He is in creation, have a deep reverence and humility for His holiness, and tremble in thankfulness and obedience in the truth that we were saved from God’s eternal wrath through salvation Jesus Christ.