

THE ABSENCE OF FEAR TOWARD GOD

Found in 28 passages from our list

The modern church tends to be filled with false teachers who downplay (or even deny) the need for people to fear God. They never tell you what Scripture associates with the lack of such fear. In fact, they wouldn't *want* you to know what it says, for then you would realize how false their teachings really were!

Scripture describes the "fear of God" as a *necessary* response from *all* people. Our focus here is on the *absence* of this fear. There are a few other types of fear mentioned at the end of this study, most of which tend to exist only when the proper "fear of God" is absent.

Note that some of the following verses are based on their contrast to the *presence* of fear toward God - especially when the passage is from the Psalms, Proverbs, or other section of Scripture that is written in a poetic structure. In Hebrew poetry, contrasting or opposite concepts are often grouped together, to show the differences in their characteristics, or the consequences of each.

Since the concept of "fear" can be translated several ways (including words such as "afraid" and "reverence"), it is put in italics, where present in the verses listed below.

1. Some of the CAUSES for lack of fear.

- a. It is a choice.
Proverbs 1:29 - They did not choose to *fear* the Lord.
- b. The actions of others may encourage it (though we are still responsible for *our* choices).
Joshua 22:25 - (A potential situation that hadn't happened.) If the 10 tribes of Israel (west of the Jordan River) made the Jordan a boundary between them and the Reubenites and Gadites, and said, "You have no share in the Lord" ... they might cause the descendants of the Reubenites and Gadites to stop *fearing* the Lord.
- c. (Possibly) - A misguided reaction to one's circumstances during trials.
Job 6:14 (In some translations, such as NIV) - Job mentions the theoretical scenario of a despairing man who forsakes the *fear* of the Almighty. [Job didn't do this; the passage is difficult to translate and might have a somewhat different meaning.]
- d. It may be a judgment from God, because of our deliberate rejection of him and our determination to sin.
Isaiah 63:17 - (Isaiah prays in behalf of the nation who has rejected God. The people themselves couldn't care less about their *true* spiritual condition. They denied that there was any problem.) Why, O Lord, do you ... harden our hearts so we do not *fear* you? Return to us... [This is a warning to those who choose to abandon God and turn to sin. If you reject God, he will give you what you want: he will give you over to your sin. But in doing so, your heart will become hardened in your sin - and this will be part of his judgment against you. See also Romans 1.]
- e. Many of the items listed in the next section could also be put here.

2. Things ASSOCIATED with lack of fear.

- a. Some of these passages are direct statements; some are implied, being based on stated contrasts to what it means to *have* fear of God.
- b. All sorts of sinfulness (passages containing lists).
 - Psalm 36:1 - Concerning the sinfulness of the wicked: There is no *fear* of God before his eyes. [See v. 2 and following. These verses list many of the characteristics of the wicked.]
 - Malachi 3:5 - [The context contains a list of sins they willingly commit] ... but they do not *fear* me.
 - Romans 3:18 - There is no *fear* of God before their eyes. [See v. 10-17 for a description of these people. This verse is just the final summary, a quote of Psalm 36:1.]
- c. Lack of humility, disobedience to God.
 - Jeremiah 44:10 - They have not humbled themselves, shown *reverence*, or followed my law and the decrees.
- d. Despising the Lord.
 - Proverbs 14:2 - He who walks in uprightness *fears* the Lord; the person with devious ways despises him.
- e. Spiritual adultery (= putting other things ahead of God).
 - Jeremiah 3:8 - God speaking: I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away (into captivity) because of her constant adultery. Yet her unfaithful sister Judah did not *fear*; but also went out and committed adultery.
- f. Rebellious - toward both God and people.
 - Proverbs 24:21 - *Fear* the Lord and the king; don't join with the rebellious.
 - Jeremiah 5:23-24 - These people are stubborn and rebellious ... They do not say, "Let us *fear* the Lord our God."
- g. Murdering others (here referring to the attitude of a nation).
 - Deut. 25:18 - (The Amalekites...) cut off all who were lagging behind... because they (the Amalekites) had no *fear* of God.
- h. Not caring about others; unconcerned about justice.
 - Luke 18:2-4 - There was a judge who neither *feared* God nor cared about people. ... He refused to grant justice to the woman (until she wore him out with her pleas). But he finally gave in, "even though I don't *fear* God or care about people."
- i. Fear of others.
 - Isaiah 57:11 - Whom have you so dreaded and *feared* so much, that you have lied to me, have ignored me and not even given it any thought? I have been silent for a long time (because of your sins)... is this the reason you do not *fear* me?

- j. Hating knowledge.
Proverbs 1:29 - They hated knowledge and did not choose to *fear* the Lord. (Other passages emphasize the connection between fear and knowledge. Example: Proverbs 1:7.)
- k. Moral folly.
Proverbs 1:7 - The *fear* of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.
- l. Hard-hearted.
Proverbs 28:14 - Blessed is the man who always *fears* [the Lord]; but he who hardens his heart will meet disaster.
- m. Being hotheaded and self-confident.
Proverbs 14:16 - A wise man *fears* the Lord ... a fool is hotheaded and self-confident.

3. CONSEQUENCES of lack of fear.

- a. God will deal with them.
Psalm 55:19 - God, who is enthroned forever, will hear them and deal with them - men who have no *fear* of God.
- b. They will reap the consequences of their attitude and actions.
Proverbs 1:29 - They did not choose to *fear* the Lord, so... (they will eat the fruit of their ways - v. 31 - and other consequences in the following verses).
- c. Potential shortened life (or at least not *gaining* length of life).
Proverbs 10:27 - The *fear* of the Lord lengthens one's life; the years of the wicked are cut short.
Eccles. 8:13 - Because the wicked do not *fear* God, it will not go well with them. They won't live longer because of it.
- d. On a national level - judgment / destruction / lack of leadership.
Deut. 25:18-19 - You shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; because they had no *fear* of God (and so killed many of the Israelites).
Deut. 28:58 - If you do not *fear* his glorious and awesome name... (there will be consequences). [See the long list of judgments, beginning in verse 59. This is contrasted with the huge list of blessings for those who *do* fear God, listed elsewhere in the passage.]
Deut. 32:17 - They sacrificed to gods your fathers did not *fear*. [Consequences are listed in the verses that follow.]
Hosea 10:3 - They will say, "We have no king because we did not *fear* the Lord. And now it wouldn't do us any good even if we did have a king."
Malachi 3:5 - I will come near to you for judgment. (You who commit all kinds of sins) ... but do not *fear* me.

Note: When nations (or groups) are judged, innocent people *do* suffer, because of the sins of the majority. (Examples - Jeremiah and Daniel, who both had to experience the consequences of the destruction and captivity of Judea.) In such cases, those who fear God look forward to the final Day of Justice, when all things will be made right.

4. A few **EXAMPLES**.

Exodus 9:30 - Moses, to Pharaoh and his servants: "I know that you do not yet *fear* the Lord God."

Deut. 25:18 - (The Amalekites) ... had no *fear* of God.

Deut. 32:17 - (Prophecy about Israel) They sacrificed to demons... gods your fathers did not *fear*.

5. **UNNECESSARY (or forbidden) types of fear.**

- a. Fear of being tested by God.

Exodus 20:20 - Do not be *afraid* (about being tested by God). [It was in order that the *fear* of God (which *is* needed) would remain with them.]

- b. Fear of false gods.

Deut. 32:17 - (implied) ... gods your fathers did not *fear*.

- c. Fear of people.

Matthew 10:28 - Do not *fear* those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul. *Fear* him (God) who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Luke 12:4-5 - Do not be *afraid* of those who kill the body, but after that can do no more. Instead, this is the one you should *fear*: *Fear* him who has power to throw you into hell, after the body is killed. Yes, I tell you, *fear* him.

Verses used: Exodus 9:30; 20:20; Deut. 25:18-19; 28:58; 32:17; Joshua 22:25; Job 6:14; Psalm 36:1; 55:19; Proverbs 1:7, 29; 10:27; 14:2, 16; 24:21; 28:14; Eccles. 8:13; Isaiah 57:11; 63:17; Jeremiah 3:8; 5:23-24; 44:10; Hosea 10:3; Malachi 3:5; Matthew 10:28; Luke 12:4-5; 18:2-4; Romans 3:18.