

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NOT IN WORD, BUT IN POWER.



1st Corinthians 4:20

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A study on The fear of the Lord

Introduction.

This paper will look at and explain what “the fear of the Lord”, is. The definitions used are taken from and only from God's Word of what the phrase means. Telling us what is the purpose and the benefit of keeping, “the fear of the Lord” is and how this concept is consistent and aligns itself with other New Testament scriptures. Many people are confused as to what is “the fear of the Lord”? They wonder if we really need to fear our Creator, who in the garden blessed man?, **Genesis 1:28**. This would be in contradiction with the Gospel accounts when Jesus, (the Word *made flesh*), said multiple times to His disciples, “fear not”. So are we now to fear God? Is Jesus the good guy and God the tough guy? I can assure you that the Godhead is not divided but, is rather unified, for a house divided cannot stand, **Luke 12:52**. It was also prophesied that Jesus would operate under “the fear of the Lord”, **Isaiah 11:1-3**. Knowing that Jesus is, (*the Word made flesh*), that we do not have a divided kingdom and that God is for us, **Romans 8:31**. We need to take a closer look at what, “the fear of the Lord”, really means. It is my hope that this paper will give you a proper understanding of what, “the fear of the Lord”, is and you will be able to then grow in wisdom and in your relationship with the Lord, **Luke 2:52**.

A scriptural foundation, to build on.

God is a Spirit of love
(John 4:24), + (1st John 4:8)

And perfect love cast out fear, **1st John 4:18**

This truth must be consistently applied to all other concepts. From this we can say: there is not any fear in God nor is He the author of fear. But, this no-fear zone also applies to us too.

For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind,
2nd Timothy 1:7.

So are we then to fear a God of Love?

If man is in fear, it is either coming from the world's system or from the devil himself, it is not coming from God. If there were some reason for man to fear, to be in fear or to regard God or others with fear, God would have given man a godly ability to fear, rather He told us that:

Thou wilt keep *him* in perfect peace, *whose* mind *is* stayed *on Thee*: because he trusts in Thee,
Isaiah 26:3.

We cannot fully trust a person we have reason to be in fear of or have reason to regard with fear. If we are seeking and trusting God, we will be in perfect peace. And if we reside in perfect peace it is impossible to be in literal fear or to regard someone with fear.

At first sight these foundation truths only seem to muddy up the waters since they do not even allow for one to be in literal fear. So what does, “the fear of the Lord” mean and why was it given such a scary name if no one is to get into fear? This will come together for you as you read on.

The scriptural definition, of the Fear of the Lord.

The fear of the LORD *is* to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate, **Proverbs 8:13**.

God loves righteousness and hates iniquity, (**Hebrews 1:9**, **Zechariah 8:17**, **Psalms 97:10**) and we must also learn to hate what He hates, doing this alone will cause us to start walking in “the fear of the Lord.”

We must first depart from evil:

By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil, **Proverbs 16:6**.

The fear of the LORD *is* a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death, **Proverbs 14:27**.

And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that *is* wisdom; and to depart from evil *is* understanding, **Job 28:28**.

Then we can began to learn (wisdom and knowledge):

The fear of the LORD *is* the instruction of wisdom; and before honor *is* humility. **Proverbs 15:33**.

The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do *his commandments*: his praise endureth for ever. **Psalms 111:10**,

The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy *is* understanding. **Proverbs 9:10**.

The concept will always be with us.

The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether., **Psalms 19:9**.

This scripture tells us that:

- 1). The fear of the Lord is not something to shun it is clean, it is to be desired and embraced as you would a clean garment of righteousness, **Revelations 19:8**.
- 2). The fear of the Lord endures forever, its concept is valid for today, it was not canceled at the cross, nor will it go away when we get to heaven.
- 3). The “fear of the Lord,” has to do with the LORD's righteous judgments. Thus we can conclude that He is judging against unrighteousness.

Benefits of operating in the fear of the Lord:

By humility *and* the fear of the LORD *are* riches, and honor, and life, **Proverbs 22:4**.

The fear of the LORD *is* a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death, **Proverbs 14:27**.

The fear of the LORD prolong days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened, **Proverbs 10:27**.

The fear of the LORD tends to life: and *he that has it* shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil, **Proverbs 19:23**.

These scriptures show us that knowing and abiding in “the fear of the Lord,” is a good thing. It brings riches and is a fountain of life that prolongs your days and satisfies your life. If it were something to despise or fear of, it would create stress, lead to death and shorting your days.

Our New Testament example.

Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied, [Acts 9:31](#).

The New Testament church walked in, “the fear of the Lord”, showing us that it applies to us today as new testament believers. “The fear of the Lord”, is entirely about knowing good from evil, hating evil and departing from evil.

What scriptures has so far taught us.

We see so far that scripture has defined, “the fear of the Lord,” as the principle of, hating evil and departing from evil, [Proverbs 8:13](#). The beginning of wisdom and knowledge, that it is clean and endures forever, [Psalm 19:9](#). Giving one a long and satisfied life. You might be thinking this is a bit incomplete, wondering where the fear God part comes in, if there is a fear God part. I will address this and other issues, however, I first want to emphasis the truth of the scriptures.

Walking in, “the fear of the Lord” can be likened to walking in righteousness and having a fear of living in unrighteousness. For living unrighteously can distract us from ever seeking God's kingdom, being overtaken by unrighteousness and possibly even leading to our own eternal destruction.

The exact phrase, “the fear of the Lord”, is found 27 times in the bible, 26 times in the Old Testament and one time in the New Testament. Whereby 96% of the time the phrase is found in the Old Testament, it is wrong to consider this to be just an Old Testament concept.

We must seek out the truth:

To understand the scriptures we must seek out wisdom. Whereby salvation is a gift to all that believe that God raised Jesus from the dead, [Romans 10:9](#), gaining wisdom and understanding requires effort and study. We first must desire Godly wisdom and seek it out, (asking for it), [James 1:5](#). Then be obedient to God's Word and what we have learned, so that we can retain that wisdom.

It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings *is* to search out a matter, [Proverbs 25:7](#).

⁴ If thou seeks her as silver, *{wisdom}* and searches for her as *for* hid treasures; ⁵ Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God, [Proverbs 2:4-5](#).

⁹ O fear the LORD, ye His saints: for *there is* no want to them that fear Him. ¹⁰ The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good *thing*. ¹¹ Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD. [Psalm 34:9-11](#).

The word, “fear” itself

The word “fear” can be used as either a noun or a verb.

Noun: An emotion, danger or fright usually related to another person.

Verb: To be afraid, frightened or anxious of a certain situation.

Since we know that God is love, that perfect love casts out fear, that He has not given us a spirit of fear and that He will keep us in perfect peace if we keep our mind stayed on Him. Therefore we cannot use the word as a noun placing our fear towards God, Himself or another person, it must be used as a verb fearing a certain situation. We need to fear living an unrighteous life, for we can be taken in and consumed by unrighteousness. But, it's up to us as where we place our fear.

There is but one lawgiver:

There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judges another?, [James 4:12](#).
But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him, which after he has killed has power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him, [Luke 12:5](#), {[Matthew 10:28](#)}.

We can choose to fear the Lawgiver that judges our unrighteous deeds, causing us to even further distant ourselves from Him. Or we can learn to hate unrighteousness as much as God hates it, causing us to desire to depart from evil and thus be judged righteous.

It is our choice whether we choose to somehow fear God the just and righteous Lawgiver, or to fear living in unrighteousness and to depart from evil. Our choice will not change God's righteous judgment, but it will greatly determine the closeness of our relationship that we have with the Lord.

A misleading term called, “reverential-fear”

The most widely used reasoning to explain away what “the fear of the Lord” is, is what people call “reverential-fear”. By coining this new word combination people are trying to sanitize the word “fear” by adding the word “reverence” to it, without applying the scriptures we have just gone over. Reverential-fear is what I call a black box definition, for it does not explain how you can achieve it. It leaves the person to self-define the word and the required action, figuring that if they reverence God long enough or hard enough they will be abiding in “the fear of the Lord.” Whereby walking in “the fear of the Lord” will naturally result in reverence, honor and awe for God, we cannot claim a certain end result before we understand and apply its concept.

We can better understand how we cannot put an end result before we perform the required concept, by looking at the gift of salvation. Our salvation from the eternal damnation that we deserve should also result in reverence, worship and awe for God. However, the only way we become saved is to confess that Jesus is the Son of God and believe that God raised Him from the dead, [Romans 10:9](#). Reverencing God without believing and confessing will not bring about salvation. An unbeliever that reverence and praises God due to their circumstances without believing, remains an unbeliever. Likewise we cannot put reverence before we understand and walk in, “the fear of the Lord.” When we do this we negate the entire concept.

How people reason the word, “reverential-fear”:

People use the reasoning that Jesus not only equated the below two scriptures, but substituted and replaced the phrase the “fear the Lord,” with the word “worship.”

Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve Him, and shalt swear by His name, [Deuteronomy 6:13](#), {[10:12](#), [10:20](#), [13:4](#)}.

Then said Jesus unto him, **Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve**, [Matthew 4:10](#), {[Luke 4:8](#)}.

Reverence and worship is a result of understanding and abiding in, “the fear of the Lord, however, reverencing the Lord will not teach you what “the fear of the Lord” is and how to walk in it. Once we learn and apply, “the fear of the Lord,” we will naturally give Him pure worship and reverence rather than just praising Him with our lips.

One of the Greek words in the new testament used for fear is, Strong's #5399, this definition can be either: “*to frighten, to be in awe of, to be afraid, fear with (exceedingly) reverence.*” The word has been used to tell of a literal fear of others, and also to fear God, implying a reverence. [Click here](#) for a detailed look at the word and the verses it is used in. The only way to warrant its usage

is to say that the same word can have different definitions depending on the context it is used in. The Word of God was never meant to be this confusing, there is an easier way, the simplicity of Christ and His Word.

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. [2nd Corinthians 11:3](#).

Reverence is not part of the definition. In the scriptures we have gone over concerning “the fear of the Lord”, reverence or worship does not appear. The only place in the scriptures where reverence and godly fear are both mentioned, the terms are not combined, they are treated as two distinct terms separated by the conjunction “and.”

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: [Hebrews 12:28](#).

Why people gravitate to the concept of “Reverential-fear.”

If we do not see or realize the evils in living an unrighteous life-style, we are naturally going to define a concept such as this. For fearing God together with reverence, awe and worship is the only other option left open to us. Another reason is, if you are content living as you are in the flesh; Say that you are at the peak of your game, all is going well, yet you know everything you do is not upright as it should be. Rather than condemning yourself for your less than righteous ways, you overlook them and adopt a concept such as “reverential-fear.”

The harm of the term, “reverential-fear”

The major harm that the term, “reverential-fear,” does is it sets up a barrier between us and God, and we then regard Him with a certain fearful concern. This is completely opposite of how it should be. For God gave His only Son, Jesus to die for us, to bring us back into right relationship with Him. And scripture tells us that Jesus prayed the prayer that we would all be one:

[That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that thou has sent Me, John 17:21.](#)

As long as we are living out of our flesh, we will naturally justify some kind of “reverential-fear” towards the Lord. However, when we learn to live out of our spirit and start walking in the light we must discard our concept of “reverential-fear.” For once we have made the choice to turn from and forsake the darkness of this world and shun its unrighteous deeds and start walking in the light, as He is in the light, [1st John 1:7](#), we have actually begun to walk in the true meaning of, “the fear of the Lord.”

Fear not.

And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, [Fear not; I am the first and the last, Revelation 1:17.](#)

When Jesus or an angel said to someone “fear not”, they meant fear not, “do not be afraid.” God's Word is meant to be simple, it takes man to complicated it and make it confusing. If Jesus or an angelic messenger told us “not to fear,” and later we read in scripture “to fear God,” using the same Greek word, there must be a contradiction somewhere.

Do not despise wisdom and knowledge.

For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD, [Proverbs 1:29](#).

And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, *and* strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD *is* his treasure, [Isaiah 33:6](#).

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, [Ephesians 1:17](#).

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him, [James 1:5](#).

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy, [James 3:17](#).

The equivalent New Testament terms.

The Old Testament was based around the law and the phrase “the fear of the Lord,” was what the people understood and could comprehend the best, with the knowledge they had at the time. To better understand this concept and realize that it also applies to us today, we will add New Testament terms such as: “having the fear of God” and “the wrath of God.” This will help us to understand that all of the terms do still apply and how we need to understand them and walk in them.

The phrase “having the fear of God,” or similar terms applies in meaning and context, much the same as does “the fear of the Lord,” therefore I will not make a distinction between these like phrases.

“The wrath of the Lord,” is understood to be an end time judgment, however, living an unrighteous life-style is the catalyst that will bring upon this wrath and we see this warning many times in scripture.

For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, [1st Thessalonians 5:9](#).

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness, [Romans 1:18](#).

Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things comes the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience, [Ephesians 3:6](#).

“The wrath of the Lord,” is a judgment between righteousness vis. unrighteousness. And abiding in “the fear of the Lord”, (departing from evil and walking in righteousness), is the principle that will keep us from the Lord's wrath. However, know that, God does not wish that His righteous judgment should come upon any of us, for He wishes that no not one should perish, but that all should come to repentance [2nd Peter 3:9](#).

A righteous God must judge unrighteousness

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, [Hebrews 10:31](#).

This scripture is addressing those that live in and take pleasure in unrighteousness. The Lord wishes that all men would choose to live righteously, so that He would not have to condemn them. Rather than blaming the Lord we should be seeking to correct the cause of that judgment and strive to live a righteous life-style. For a righteous God must judge unrighteousness, even if it's among His own children.

God is the only one that sends people to their final destination of heaven or hell and it is up to us of how we view that. Either we can blame God for declaring His righteous judgment over us or we can take responsibility and shun living in unrighteousness and strive to live a righteous life-style, so that we are not judged to be unrighteous.

God's thoughts on the subject.

I believe, the thought of a righteous God, who is the essence of love having to condemn His unrighteous creation to eternal damnation, that are made in His own image must be almost unbearable for Him. This will happen on the day of judgment and I believe it tells us of a dread or a fear of what the Father will be required to do on that day. For a righteous God must judge and condemn unrighteousness. God has given man freewill to choose his own thoughts and our thoughts whether righteous or unrighteous will one day determine and direct our own destiny.

Why the hesitation to rush in.

A few reasons are; People do not see this world as a dark place and do not perceive any danger in living unrighteously or do not even realize they are living an unrighteous lifestyle.

They have believed wrong teaching, thinking that abiding in the fear of the Lord has no personal responsibility to it, believing that it is simply worship, reverence, awe and wonder.

It is much much easier to acknowledge some kind of fear towards God than to be responsible for one's own lifestyle.

Jesus was heard because He feared.

Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; [Hebrews 5:7](#).

Jesus, was 100% Man and 100% God, and yet He was heard because He feared. Jesus could not have been in fear of the Father because He was one with the Father, [John 10:30](#), and He also was God. Yet even Jesus feared unrighteousness, for He knew that a righteous God would judge all forms of unrighteousness. This needs to be an example for us today, we are not to direct our fear towards God, but rather being fearful of knowing what living in unrighteousness can do to us.

Why such a scary / fearful name.

Why the scary names such as “the fear of the Lord”, or “being in fear of God”, why not call it: “being a servant of righteousness” or “walking in the light.” These last two names don't sound scary and they don't scream, “danger or warning” at us, and that is exactly the point. God wanted to underscore to us the dangers of what living an unrighteous life-style can do to us. How it can distract us from ever seeking His kingdom and even led to our own eternal damnation. Perhaps even figuring that it would be better if His people even had a false concept of the fear of the Lord, rather than to perish.

It is an age old principle, for our good.

And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as *it is* at this day, [Deuteronomy 6:24](#).

The concept of “The fear of the Lord,” has not changed since the very beginning, what needs to change is the way we perceive its principle. Under the Old Covenant the people had limited revelation about God, knowing only the law. Thus a literal fear of God was the most they could understand. As New Testament believers having the teachings of the epistles we understand that God is a God of love who is also righteous and just and must judge unrighteousness. Therefore, rather than literally fearing God without having understanding as they did in the Old Testament. Our perception needs to be to fear getting consumed with and swept away by an unrighteous life-style that the world presents to us, that can result in our own damnation.

The conclusion of the matter.

Better *is* little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith, [Proverbs 15:16](#).

“The fear of the Lord,” is to hate evil, [Proverbs 8:13](#). If we do not first hate evil, we will not seek the righteous ways of the Lord. As we further define what evil is, we will understand how we can achieve this. Through “the fear of the Lord,” men depart from evil, [Proverbs 16:6](#). Once we have learnt to hate evil, (to hate what God hates), we can then start walking in the light and this is the beginning of wisdom, [Psalm 111:10](#). Allowing us to grow in wisdom and understanding.

The new testament church walked in the fear of the Lord and we must also do the same. As long as we are content to live in our unrighteousness, we will not be able to embrace the light and walk in purity and holiness. We can't for they are at opposite ends of the same spectrum.

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, [2nd Corinthian 7:1](#).

Using an analogy of a motorist traveling down a city street at 65 miles per hour when the speed limit is posted 40 mph. When they are pulled over for speeding, they do not blame the officer for writing them the ticket. For it is understood that the officer is but doing their job. It may not even seem apparent at first that going 65 mph. in a 40 mph. zone is even dangerous. We may find the law too restricting, but after time we learn that it is for our good and we start to abide by it. Likewise, God's laws come to us in much the same way, at first we may not even see the reasoning or the need to keep them. But after time and maturity, we will realize that they are for our good and we need to abide by them.

To fully understand this we must first establish the basic reality that that there are only two kingdoms, the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of Light and we must chose one over the other. For Jesus said that it is imposible to serve two masters or we could also say two conflicting kingdoms or two different kings.

The choice is yours as to where you choose to place your fear. You can literally or in some way fear the Lord, the righteous Lawgiver who loves you, or you can fear and shun living in unrighteousness that can ultimately lead to your own eternal destruction. Thus leaving room for your relationship with God who loves you to grow and flourish.

Points to Ponder:

- “The fear of the Lord” is the beginning of wisdom and understanding, [Psalm 111:10](#). To achieve right thinking, (to gain wisdom and understanding) you must understand this concept and be walking in the light as He is in the light, [1st John 1:7](#).
- You must desire and be willing to put in the effort to seek out the wisdom within God's Word.
- You must desire the truth enough to be willing to discard traditional teachings that you have learned, if it goes against scriptural truths.
- Always keep certain foundational truths about God's goodness at the forefront of your mind. God is love, [1st John 4:8](#), God is good, [Mark 10:18](#), and that nothing can separate us from the love of God, [Romans 8:39](#).
- In this section praise the Lord because we can all come into agreement with God and His ways and He will bring us into a higher understanding of His kingdom.

Appendix of scriptures on, “the fear of the Lord”

- Behold, the fear of the Lord *is* wisdom; and to depart from evil *is* understanding, [Job 28:28](#).
- The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether, [Psalms 19:9](#).
- O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for *there is* no want to them that fear Him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good *thing*. Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD, [Psalms 34:9-11](#).
- The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do *His commandments*: His praise endures forever, [Psalms 111:10](#).
- The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge: *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction, [Proverbs 1:7](#).
- For they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD, [Proverbs 1:29](#).
- Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God, [Proverbs 2:5](#).
- The fear of the LORD *is* to hate evil: pride, and arrogance, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate, [Proverbs 8:13](#).
- The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy *is* understanding, [Proverbs 9:10](#).
- The fear of the LORD prolong days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened, [Proverbs 10:27](#).
- In the fear of the LORD *is* strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge. The fear of the LORD *is* a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death, [Proverbs 14:26-27](#).
- Better *is* little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith, [Proverbs 15:16](#).
- The fear of the LORD *is* the instruction of wisdom; and before honor *is* humility, [Proverbs 15:33](#).
- By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD *men* depart from evil, [Proverbs 16:6](#).
- The fear of the LORD *tends* to life: and *he that hath it* shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil, [Proverbs 19:23](#).
- By humility *and* the fear of the LORD *are* riches, and honor, and life, [Proverbs 22:4](#).
- And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: [Isaiah 11:1-3](#).
- And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, *and* strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD *is* his treasure, [Isaiah 33:6](#).
- Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied, [Acts 9:31](#).
- Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; [Hebrews 5:7](#). (“the prayers of Jesus were effective because He feared”, scripture does not say, “He feared God”, but rather the next verse talks about obedience to God).