

Associates for Scriptural Knowledge • P.O. Box 25000, Portland, OR 97298-0990 USA  
© ASK, November 2018 • All rights reserved • Number 11/18

---

**Telephone: 503 292 4352**

• **Internet:** [www.askelm.com](http://www.askelm.com) •

**E-Mail:** [askoffice@askelm.com](mailto:askoffice@askelm.com)

## Fear In Scripture

by Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D., 1976

Edited by David Sielaff, November 2018

First read the "[November 1, 2018 Commentary](#)"

Then read the "[November 2018 Newsletter](#)"



We live in a time of increasing fear. This article deals with different aspects of fear and how Scripture addresses fear in our lives. It is constructed from two messages by Dr. Martin. Part 1 is from an audiotape titled, "Fear Nothing but Fear Itself." Part 2 is from a short 1975 written article, "Victory Over Fear."<sup>1</sup> Consider these two presentations as companions to a separate Doctrinal article "[Suicide and the Bible](#)," a difficult and increasing health problem today in societies around the world. DWS

### *Part 1: Fear Nothing but Fear Itself*

This subject of fear is a very important one to every single one of us. The reason it is so important is that none of us is immune to this matter of fear. We all have it. It is a common experience.

- The fear that we have may be a fear of God;
- it may be a fear of the consequences of our sin;
- it may be a fear of man;
- it may be a fear for our marriage, or
- it may be a fear for our children or other loved ones.

There are many types of fears that can come up in people's minds.

We are almost constantly barraged with a number of things occurring in our lives that cause us to fear. You may fear for your job, for your income to support your family. You may fear for your health. You may fear for all types of things that plague the human race.

Franklin Roosevelt brought out the phrase, "**We have nothing to fear but fear itself.**" He said that at the beginning of his administration<sup>2</sup> because at the time of the Great Depression, there was a considerable amount of fear in the United States, and the depression and the fear spread around the world. People were fearful for

---

<sup>1</sup> Part 2 of this article was previously reprinted in the June 16, 2012 Commentary. DWS

<sup>2</sup> President Franklin Roosevelt, first [Inaugural Address](#), March 4, 1933. DWS

their lives and the lives of their families, the welfare of their children and of themselves. Income was not available to many. People were having difficulty paying bills. Quite a number of people were out of jobs. Roosevelt did make this statement. Whether you liked him as President or not, this statement is pregnant with truth, “Fear nothing but fear itself.”<sup>3</sup>

Why should you “fear” fear? You should because the Bible says that fear is torment. Any time a person has fear he has just the opposite of what you might call courage. He is in a position of defeat, a position of feeling that he is not worth anything, a position of feeling very pessimistic about life. Fear certainly is torment and that is exactly what the Scripture says in 1 John 4:18. Looking back throughout our lives, many of our fears were unfounded, yet we were plagued with them nonetheless.

### *Proper Fear of God*

So many people I have met in the past have been fearful of God. I realize that in the Old Testament and even in the New Testament, there are verses saying we should fear God. But that has been completely misunderstood as to our present ordinary meaning of the word “fear.”

The phrase “fear of God” means to have reverence or respect for God. It does not mean under any circumstance that you should have terror of Him. After all, what has God’s Son Jesus Christ done for all of us?

- He has come into the world. He lived the perfect life for us.
- He died on the tree of crucifixion for us (see “[The Sanhedrin and the Mount of Olives](#)”).
- He was resurrected from the dead for us.
- He is at the right hand of God the Father at present pleading with God the Father on our behalf.

All these things were done because He loves us. He is telling us by example that you do not have to have terror of the living God. So many of us look on God as a lesser deity we should be terrified of.<sup>4</sup> Look in a mirror and call yourself a sinner, which indeed you are. “**All have sinned and come short of the glory of God**” (Romans 3:23). Because you are a sinner and God cannot sin and He tells you to do right and good, and because you fail sometimes, you get the idea that you are out of relationship with God.

If you feel you are outside of a relationship with Him, you begin not to fear Him from respect, but you begin to have terror of Him. Jesus Christ came to show that we should not have such a terror.

God is our Father. He is one who understands us. He knows the difficulties that we go through day by day. He realizes the sins that so easily beset us. He knows we are but flesh. After all, He created us the way we are. That is why He sent Jesus Christ here to this earth to die for us on the tree of crucifixion so all these difficulties that cause us to fear — fear of man and fear of God — can be eliminated.

Fear can torment us and cause a form of mental anguish, pain, or torture. Fear is not good to have, especially if we are Christians, yet many fears are natural and we will continue to have fears while we are in the flesh. I have them to a certain extent, and you have a different set of fears. But if we would test our Christianity based on the amount of fears we have, the amount of fears you have is inversely proportional to the amount of love you have. That is, if you have a great abundance of love for God and man, and for yourself, you will have a small amount of fear. The more love you have, the less fear you have. To put it another way, the more faith you have, the less fear you have. The more fear you have, the less faith and the less love you have for God and for man. We should realize that our elder brother Jesus Christ came into the world to redeem us to the Father, and He is THE Father to us.

<sup>3</sup> For possible origins of Roosevelt’s statement, see “[Thoreau & FDR](#).” DWS

<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 8:5–7:

**“For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth (as there be gods many, and lords many), But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.”**

## *A Principal Jesus Gave*

There is one principle that Jesus Christ said throughout His ministry. He reiterated it a number of times. He said if a person would understand one Old Testament Scripture, he would be able to comprehend how God looks upon us. Jesus said (quoting Hosea 6:6), go, learn, and understand this scripture:

**“But go you and learn what that means, ‘I will have mercy, and not sacrifice’: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”**

• **Matthew 9:13**<sup>5</sup>

Sacrifice was something that God ordained in the Old Testament. It was a ritual, a ceremony, something that had to be done in precise detail. Do you know what He desired more than keeping His commandments on a ceremonial or ritualistic level? He desires and wants mercy to be given to you.

If God thinks and says we should have mercy toward one another, don't you think that He has mercy upon us? Does not He, as God our Father, have mercy upon us through Christ? That is the very reason He sent Jesus Christ in the first place, to show us that He is our Father, that Jesus Christ is our Elder Brother, and Christ has come to give us love, to give us joy, to give us the abundant life. You can only have that when you get rid of the fears that plague most of the human race today.

## *No Fear in Love*

As I presented at the beginning, note again the cardinal Scripture about fear and love:

**“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love.”**

• **1 John 4:18**

John says, **“There is no fear in love.”** I want to stop and comment on that statement. What is the cardinal attribute, the first attribute of having God's Holy Spirit? It is love.

Do you love God the Father and Jesus Christ? Do you love your fellow man? Do you love your wife or your husband or your children or your friends? You should. The more you love the less you have fear. The more you fear, the less you have love. That is all there is to it. **“There is no fear in love.”**

I read the other day about a man who said something in a feeling of genuine concern. He said that he felt he could meet a tiger, and he honestly believed he could look that tiger in the eye. If he loved the tiger entirely, thoroughly, and loved the tiger supremely, he should never have any fear of him, because the tiger should be able, even in its animal mind, to understand that here is a person who loved him.

I do not recommend you get into a cage with a tiger (after all, some fears are practical and help protect us), but this is what this man said. It is true to a certain extent because if you show love to something, whether it is an animal, a human, or whether it is God, does that love not show? I think it does.

If you show love even to someone persecuting you, afflicting you, or doing something wrong to you, and you exude love to that person, it is very, very powerful on the individual that is afflicting you. In reality, it has the ability of casting out the fear you might have had for him or her in the first place. Again, there is no fear in love.

## *The Effect of Perfect Love*

Now note the next important phrase in John's verse:

---

<sup>5</sup> The complete verse of Hosea 6:6 gives us understanding of how important our knowledge of God is to Him:

**“For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”**

Jesus later quoted Hosea 6:6 in a different context with a different explanation in Matthew 12:7:

**“But if you had known what this means, ‘I will have mercy, and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless.” DWS**

**“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love.”**

• 1 John 4:18

**“Perfect love”** puts out all fear. If you have a little fear, analyze your own life. You will find that you do not have perfect love, even if it is a fear of God. So many of us are fearful of God. Some have said, He will toss me into hell where I am going to burn, or I will be annihilated, or some say burn forever and ever and ever. You know, when you really think of God, He is a God of mercy.

Have you ever learned to love God in spite of your sin? Understand that if you love Him, love Him as much as you possibly can, and the more you love Him, then the less fear (in a sense of terror) you will have of God. You should not have any terror of God, not the slightest millimeter of terror of Him. Fear Him, yes, in the sense of respect and awe, but He sent His Son Jesus Christ to this earth to show how much He loved us. You do not have to fear the eternal God in terror. If you are terrified of God, it shows you do not love Him all that much. The more you love God the less you fear God in the sense of terror.

The more you love your wife, the more you love your neighbor, the more you love your children, the more you love your boss, the more you love those who are over you whoever they may be, in government, in politics, whatever — the more you love them the less fear you have in life. That is all there is to it.

John wrote about **“perfect love.”** The only trouble with all of us is that we do not have perfect love. If we did, we would not have one single fear in our lives. I do not care what it is.

You can test whether or not you have **“perfect love”** by just analyzing your own life and asking yourself this: Do I have any fear of any kind? If you do, you do not have perfect love, whether of God or man. This shows that we really should be striving for that love that God says He can give through His Holy Spirit. How many of us fear about our income? Over our job? Over our health? Over all of the things that you can think of that plague mankind? Every time you have a fear of any of these things, and it happens to all of us, but any time you have a fear it shows you a little less love than you ought to have.

If you had more love, you would get rid of fear. The more love you have the less fear you have. If you have perfect love, do you know what you have done? You have cast out all fear, every bit of it. Of course, it is difficult for us to do that, but it is a good gauge on whether you do or do not have love.

We should love God how? We should love God with all our might, with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, with all our strength (Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27).<sup>6</sup> If you love God that way you would not have one fear according to the apostle John in 1 John 4:18.

If any of us have any fears whatsoever, it simply shows we are not perfect — yet. But God is perfect. God has perfect love. He showed His love so much for you and for me that He sent Jesus Christ to live for us, to die for us, to be resurrected and He is there at the right hand of God petitioning His Father and our Father for us at the present time, all out of **“perfect love.”**

### ***Does God Have Fear?***

Does God have any fear of us? He has no reason to fear us because He is almighty and we are not. Because He has perfect love for us and for His creation, that means, according to 1 John 4:18 (and even philosophically it must be the case), He has **“perfect love”** and there is no fear or terror in Him whatsoever.

Each of us can gauge whether or not we have love by this element of fear. I hope none of us has any fear, but of course, you do. Every time you have fear, you can know it shows a lack of love either for God or for man in your life. If you had perfect love, you would cast out every single fear there is in the universe. That is what God wants to bring to you.

<sup>6</sup> These verses expand upon Deuteronomy 4:29–31, 6:5–6, 10:12–13, 11:13, 13:3; Joshua 22:5 and other Old Testament passages. In Matthew 22:37–40 Jesus said:

**“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”** DWS

He has already shown what He wants by sending Jesus Christ to you. We fail to see Jesus Christ crucified on the tree in the proper way. We cannot believe God loves us so much. We think God wants to terrify us, to punish us, to hit us over the head, or we think He wants to do everything contrary to us because we sin. That is not the case.

He sent Jesus Christ to take care of our sins. Why? It was because He loves us and we need to love Him. If we love Him perfectly we do not have one single fear of Him. Every person must die, we know that. Death is an enemy (1 Corinthians 15:26). You will die. I will die. Death is said to have a kind of sting, **“the sting of death”** as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:55–56, quoting Hosea 13:14. True enough, that is in the Scriptures.

But if you have perfect love of God, you can die in perfect and complete serenity no matter what the circumstances of your death. The reason is because you have no terror in your fear of God, you have no fear of death. You have no fear of man. The reason you could have no fear is because you have love, love for God and love for man. The more you practice love the less fear you will have of things in your life, things of God, and things of man.

### ***Fear Has Torment***

To go on with John:

**“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love.”**

• 1 John 4:18

The original Greek word of “torment,” *kolasi*, really means **“fear has punishment,”** or you might say pruning or cutting, or something like that, pain, chastening, or something of that nature. “Torment” I suppose is a good translation because indeed, **“fear has torment.”** Every person that I ever talked to in my life has had fears, and I have talked to many people. I have also talked to myself, and I have had fears. I still have fear in some cases. I admit it that I do, because I do not yet have perfect love.

On the other hand, every person I talk to who had fear is a person in torment. There is no doubt about it. You have fear or people have had fear about their job, about their income, about their health, about the health of their children, parents, friends, or about their position with God. Every single time I have seen a person in fear, I have seen a person tormented.<sup>7</sup>

This Scripture is absolutely correct; it is inspired of God. Here is John telling us the truth of God. We know it to be a fact. Still, our common ordinary circumstances and the evidences around us point out that fear is definitely a great torment.

### ***Not Made Perfect in Love***

Now last important phrase at the end of 1 John 4:18:

**“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love.”**

There is your example. You can actually describe yourself, show yourself, or analyze yourself on the amount of love you have. You say, well I want love. You know what love is? Love is the keeping of the commandments of God, all of the commandments of God center in the word love. (See footnote 5 above.)

Again, you can gauge yourself, as I have given already. As John tells us, if you have fear, you have less love. If you have more fear, you have even less love. If you have a lot of fear, paralyzing fear, you have very, very little love. I am not suggesting you get into the cage of the tiger. That illustration may be silly in one way, but I honestly believe that if a person can show love to whomever he or she meets, be it God or man,

---

<sup>7</sup> **“Of all the liars in the world, sometimes the worst are our own fears”** — Rudyard Kipling. **“We are more often frightened than hurt; and we suffer more from imagination than from reality”** — Seneca (from [“73 Inspirational Quotes on Fear”](#)). DWS

and truly show love, fear begins to leave the person. When Franklin Roosevelt said, “Fear nothing but fear itself,” he knew what he was talking about because fear is torment.

What a person needs is courage. Courage can only come through love — love of God and love of man. This is so important. This is one reason I wanted to give this lecture, because we are not only talking just about fear, we are talking about love. The love you have can get rid of fear. If you do not have love, you will continue having your fears. We need love toward God and love toward man.

### *False Evidence, Needless Fear*

What comes into your mind in many occasions to cause us to have fear really does not exist and should never have caused fear at all.

I knew a man one time who was perfectly happy, or so he looked and acted as if he was happy. He had a knowledge of God and he was a Christian. He attended a particular college and he was happy there. Until he got there he knew nothing or very little about what some people call evil spirits or demons. He had a little mental health issue in the past, but it did not bother him very much. When he got to this particular college all of a sudden the authorities there, the ones who (supposedly) really knew what they were talking about, had great biblical knowledge and all of that, began to tell him he was being besieged by evil spirits.

Do you know what happened to this man? Before he had a little bit of trouble but not much. Now he was told by top religious authorities, whom he respected, that he was being besieged by malevolent forces from outside of him, and they were trying to take over him and his body. The man came to believe that all of a sudden all the forces of evil were breaking out on him.

Do you know what I saw happen to that man from the moment he was told that? He began to deteriorate tremendously because suddenly he felt things were out of his control. He began to have fear of these malevolent creatures that people told him were besieging him.

In fact, I began to talk to him later and I found out that was not the case at all. But he began to believe it, and when he believed it, he changed from being a man of courage to being a man of complete pessimism, virtually overnight. This happened all because someone told him these things were around him, he did not know it before, and now he did. The man quickly turned into an individual who was very cowardly, if you want to put it that way.

He was told to trust in God. Trust in God when all of these forces are coming against him? He tried to do it all right, but the point is that he lost courage. He lost strength. He lost faith because highly respected people told him these things were against him and continuing to be with him to plague him. All he could do was to have hands laid on him and maybe he could get rid of these evil forces. The problem was, he was perfectly happy before someone told him these things (when in this case was not true) and immediately afterward his mental demeanor began to change.

He could see that people were saying that he was now afflicted by these outside forces. I had to tell him that was not the case. Once I told him that, do you know what happened? His whole countenance began to change. He began to trust in God. He began to have faith in God. He began to love people more. He began to love God more. I even told him, you know, even if these forces are afflicting you, do you know what you should do? Do not put up with them, but love them. That sounds rather odd, but I said love them. I do not mean love them and put up with them, that is not the point, if they are afflicting you. You have to love everybody. If you love people, how can you be afraid? That is what the Scripture says.

I pointed out this Scripture of what John said, that we ought to have love for God and love for man. Once you have love, Satan the devil and all of these fears will flee from you. They will get as far away as they possibly can. The only trouble is we do not love enough. That is what we ought to do.

I know myself that I do not know why, but I am afraid of heights. About 8 or 9 years ago all of a sudden I started to get afraid of heights, for some reason or another. Many people are this way, but if someone would tell me in the nighttime that I was on the side of a cliff, I might be very much afraid all of a sudden. Now even if I was not on the side of a cliff but someone told me I was, I still might be afraid. Do you know why? It is

because I imagine that is true.<sup>8</sup>

Every time that happens, it shows that I do not have a trust, I do not have a faith, and I do not have the love of God to protect me that I should have. Well, I do not really have very much fear of heights these days, but it can happen to every single one of us. It is what we think in our minds. What we need is courage and strength. The more courage you have, the more love you have.

We ought to be like Joshua when God told him before he led the people of Israel into the land of Canaan. God told him, **“Be strong and of a good courage”** (Joshua 1:6). In verse 9:

**“Have not I commanded you, be strong and of a good courage? Be not afraid, neither be you dismayed: for YHWH your God is with you whithersoever you go.”**

• *Joshua 1:9*

Though that command was to Joshua, it is a general principle that can equally apply to you. We need to have courage; we need to have strength. I will tell you this, if you have love for God and love for man, your fears will begin to disappear. Fear nothing but fear itself. Put courage in its place and above all have love — love for God and man — and the fears will begin to go.

Ernest L. Martin, 1976

David Sielaff, November 2018

## *Part 2: Victory Over Fear*

We all admire those who have courage. The courageous treat the ordinary fears of life with respect but they are not overcome with them. People who have deeply entrenched fears are in a very unhappy state. **“Fear has torment”** (1 John 4:18). No one should want to be frightened out of his wits. To be terrorized with fears is a frightful experience, but those of courage are able to deal effectively with fears that constantly seem to affect all of Adam’s descendants. We all need to muster confidence and stout-heartedness to conquer fear.

### *A Proper Fear and Correction*

There is, however, a type of fear that is good for man to have. When a woman cooks at the stove, she should be careful not to touch the hot stovetop or grill so she is not burned. The man who uses a chain saw must be prudent or he could injure himself seriously. Actually, having such “fears” are ways of showing love to self and to others. Such “fears” are healthy because there is no intimidation or terrorism being subjected upon man in respect to them.

If a child “fears” chastisement by a parent, this can be proper because the parents love the child and will correct him and teach him not to run into the road to be maimed or killed. The Bible says even God chastens His children in like manner (Hebrews 12:5–11) and we should respect Him in reverence for His parental care.

“Fear of God” results in our preservation and salvation. This type of fear does not (or should not) result in one being terror-stricken. It is merely a veneration, a respect, and an awe for the All-Powerful One who created us in His image, sustains us, and saves us. God is a loving parent who teaches us to be aware of the true physical and spiritual dangers that lurk around us, He wishes us to respect Him and His ways so we will not wander into situations of injury, pain, fright, or panic. In this case, such “fear” is both helpful, desirable, and helpful toward our overall happiness and security.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> No one knows who first made the word “fear” into this acronym, but it is often true that, **FEAR** is found to be **F**alse **E**vidence **A**ppearing **R**ead. The salesman and promoter Zig Zigler had his own acronyms: **“FEAR has two meanings: ‘Forget Everything And Run’ or ‘Face Everything And Rise.’ The choice is yours”** ([“73 Inspirational Quotes on Fear”](#)). DWS

<sup>9</sup> **“The fear of YHWH”** is:

- **“the beginning of wisdom”** (Psalm 111:10, Proverbs 9:10), which leads to –

## *Fear Tactics in Religion*

There are other types of fears, however, which should be vanquished from our minds. No one should ever be subjected to an overpowering dread or horror, which can be used by men to sustain political or religious organizations. The use of fear tactics involving religious matters is especially bad. To intimidate people with threats and curses if they do not subscribe to the religious beliefs of others is barbaric and non-Christian. There are actually religious organizations that teach their members that they will suffer a horrifying tribulation, be taken over by demons, be cursed financially, get cancer and die a miserable death, and assuredly go to hell fire if they leave the particular church organization.<sup>10</sup>

Though all things are possible, is it right for religious leaders to threaten people with such menacing prospects just because they join another Christian denomination? The whole procedure is unkind, unloving, and wrong. Indeed, it is contrary to the word of God. Even if someone in the Christian *ekklesia* becomes disorderly and one has to withdraw fellowship to him, the Bible commands the Christian to **“count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother”** (2 Thessalonians 3:15). No one in his right mind would terrorize or intimidate his own brother in an effort to admonish him. Christian instruction must be motivated by love, concern, and respect for all people.

Furthermore, many “preachers of righteousness” tell their congregations to read such books as *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* or *Hitler’s Ovens* so they will keep in their minds what can happen to those who fall away from their denomination. Some who are subject to such admonishment can be driven to mental anguish with those prospects. Mothers lay awake at night in fear for their children who may not be “converted.” Even grown men cower into subservience if physical punishment is graphically portrayed before them.

Though God does chastise, the attributes of God, which dominate His character, are those of mercy, faith and love. This is what God glories in:

**“But let him that glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am YHWH which exercises lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, says YHWH.”**

• **Jeremiah 9:24**

God does indeed set rules for Christians to obey and if they are broken He chastises — but He does it as a loving parent. Our own physical children should not go around with hysterical or terror-stricken fear of punishment they may receive of parents for broken rules. After all, good rules are to be obeyed because they are given in love and are in force for the children’s well-being and safety.

Why do religious leaders teach that God is not like a loving parent? Instead, some are prone to strike panic into the hearts of their congregations. They feel they will lose control of the people unless they preach the vengeance of God on anyone who questions their authority or dares to leave their denomination. Those who accept their threats become wedded to the organization by such fear. Their personal initiative can leave them.

The religious group assumes a paternalistic control over them. They must conform to the opinions of men who are their religious “authorities.” What this does is to breed spiritual childishness, defeatism, discouragement, dependence upon men, and creates an unhealthy fear. Not allowing anyone to have a genuine personal, one-on-one relationship with God, it promotes an environment of dependence upon men, not God!

## *Love As a Disguise for Fear*

Some ministers use the teaching of love as a disguise for fear. They say they are warning people not to question their authority because they love them and do not want to see them get cancer, or go through the

- **“the instruction of wisdom”** (Proverbs 15:33); which becomes –
- **“wisdom”** itself (Job 28:28), which develops toward becoming –
- **“his treasure,”** the treasure by the person possessing wisdom (Isaiah 33:6). *DWS*

<sup>10</sup> **“Fear is the main source of superstition, and one of the main sources of cruelty. To conquer fear is the beginning of wisdom”** — Bertrand Russell. **“Fear is pain arising from the anticipation of evil”** — Aristotle ([“73 Inspirational Quotes”](#)). *DWS*

tribulation, or go through hell fire. This is a misuse of the love of the Bible and is not a true display of that virtue. Always examine the fruits of such preaching in the lives of the people and see if it results in an inner joy, peace, faith, and love. Real love always instills happiness and encouragement to the individual, not a frightening experience to scare him into submission to denominational beliefs.

### ***Obedience Through Love***

Christians should want to please God by being obedient to Him, but the obedience should come because we love Him not because we are terrified of Him. Love is lasting, but fear can be very ephemeral. If children obey parents solely out of fear, you can rest assured they will not perform the teachings of the parents when they are adults and no longer need to be afraid. Children ought to be taught to practice all their normal duties out of love and respect for the parents and because they simply wish to please them. If our children realize that we first loved them and we continually love them, they can then respond with a proper obedience. Any reward we can give them (such as an inheritance) should not be given because of legal “rights,” but because we love them.

Likewise, the husband or wife should want to serve the family because of love — not from a sense of duty or from fear to disobey. Christians should also serve God not simply for the sake of duty or because we fear Him, but because we love Him. God promises us salvation. However, what a sad thing if we claim salvation just because it is our “right” or that we demonstrate so much “fear” of Him that we have not stepped out of line. This is not God’s way. He gives salvation to us because He loves us, not because we deserve it:

**“For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.”**

• ***Ephesians 2:8–10***

Christians should be told that love (not fear and intimidation) is a lasting virtue we should extend to others. Indeed, if we ourselves can adopt true Christian love, we will banish all fear from our personal lives:

**“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love.”**

• ***1 John 4:18***

We, as Christians, must instill love into the minds of all we meet. Love is the opposite of fear — the kind of fear which terrorizes. Really, to frighten the wits out of someone is showing hate to him or her. There is of course a proper “fear” which instructs your brother to be prudent around chain saws or heavily traveled highways. Our Father also chastens us as a parent and we should respect that discipline.

God chastises from an attitude of parental love. Any Christian can admonish his brother to be careful in his life relative to the manner in which he uses it (especially if his brother shows a reckless abandon with life), but it is not within our jurisdiction to heap curses upon a person’s head simply because he has different religious beliefs. Let any recrimination come from God because no religious leader has authority to exercise such judgments on anyone.

The Christian legal position in God’s eyes has been greatly misunderstood even by Christians themselves. Many still fear the judgment seat of God, when they ought to realize that all our sins were fully wiped clean by the blood of Christ at the cross. The future judgment for Christians is to receive rewards, or a lack of them, not punishments (1 Corinthians 9:17–18). We do not have to worry about **“the day of judgment”**:

**“Herein is our love made perfect that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.”**

• ***1 John 4:17***

The boldness that we have, through love, prepares us for God’s judgment day. We can be fearless because

we are reckoned by God as being **“as He is.”** Christ was accepted by God the Father as a perfect example of righteousness, and as John says, **“... as he is, so are we in this world.”** God now looks on all Christians as He does His own son. The Father loves the Son, and He loves us. That is why **“there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love”** (1 John 4:18).

The Christian who has love and practices mercy need have no fear of the day of judgment. God says, **“mercy triumphs over judgment”** (James 2:13, Revised Standard Version). God is a God of mercy and if we are also merciful, we can exult triumphantly over all forms of judgment — even the judgment of God. This is what the Bible teaches.

Though God does chasten us, and this can be a fearful thing (Hebrews 10:31), we need to know that He has perfected and sanctified us forever (Hebrews 10:14).

- Our salvation is secure in Christ. **“And this is the Father’s will which has sent me, that of all which he has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day”** (John 6:39).
- Paul said that Christ **“shall also confirm you unto the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ”** (1 Corinthians 1:8).
- Our response should be, **“Being confident of this very thing, that He which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”** (Philippians 1:6).

God guarantees His love to all (John 3:16). He does not wish to terrorize us. He has demonstrated His overpowering love for us through Christ. **We no longer need to fear death or the judgments of God.**

**“That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”**

• **Hebrews 2:14–15**

## **Christian Courage**

Christians should have the courage to stand firmly on their own two feet before God. They should let no man or church organization intimidate them by threats and curses. We no longer need fear any man regarding spiritual matters, and we should have the boldness to look the judgment of God squarely in the eye with utter confidence that Christ will accept us **“as He is”** (1 John 4:17). Though none of us is yet perfect, we can know that our salvation is secure in Christ.

And especially, let us never as mere human beings step out of our bounds of authority and consign a person to the great tribulation, financial ruin, some dread disease, to the possession of demons, or to hell fire. Is this love? Is it mercy? Is it Christian? We have no authority to take the place of God and attempt to ascribe such judgments to our fellowmen. There is only one thing we owe men, and that is to love them:

**“Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loves another has fulfilled the law.”**

• **Romans 13:8**

**“For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but [the spirit] of power, and [the spirit] of love, and [the spirit] of a sound mind.”**

• **2 Timothy 1:7**

Love should replace all hate for the Christian! Fear has been defeated in Christ! Have courage! Christ has conquered all things, which are against us. May God give us a clear mind to see this truth.

Ernest L. Martin, 1976  
David Sielaff, November 2018