

The Gospel Unashamed

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

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~ All articles are written by Terry Carter unless otherwise stated ~

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The Fear of the Lord...

We are all familiar with and can probably quote, the verse from Proverbs that begins with, "The fear of the Lord". We know that it is the beginning of wisdom or knowledge. We love that verse and quote that verse and rightly so.

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction." Proverbs 1:7 (NKJV)

This is a very important principle in Scripture. It is so important that it is repeated for us more than once or twice.

"And to man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, And to depart from evil is understanding.'" Job 28:28 (NKJV)

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever." Psalms 111:10 (NKJV)

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." Proverbs 9:10 (NKJV)

As important as wisdom is, the fear of the Lord is more than just the beginning of *wisdom*. A quick search of the phrase "fear of the Lord" will

turn up a number of things that result from a fear of the Lord. In fact, there are many benefits to us when we fear the Lord.

In this article, I want to show that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of *worship*. While the phrase, "fear of the Lord" is not found in the passage I want to explore, the concept is most certainly there.

When Moses first came to Pharaoh and asked him to let the people go and worship God, he refused. Pharaoh asked who the Lord was that he should obey His voice. He said he did not know the Lord. He had no fear of the Lord at all. Where there is no fear of the Lord, there is no belief, obedience, or worship.

"And Pharaoh said, 'Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, nor will I let Israel go.'" Exodus 5:2 (NKJV)

Pharaoh was about to find out the hard way who the Lord was. He was the one and only true God who ruled heaven and earth. Pharaoh would see that God was righteous and Pharaoh and his people were wicked.

"Thus says the LORD: 'By this you shall know that I am the LORD. Behold, I will strike the waters which are in the river with the rod that is in my hand, and they shall be turned to blood.'" Exodus 7:17 (NKJV)

"So he said, "Tomorrow." And he said, "Let it be according to your

word, that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God." Exodus 8:10 (NKJV)

"For at this time I will send all My plagues to your very heart, and on your servants and on your people, that you may know that there is none like Me in all the earth." Exodus 9:14 (NKJV)

"And Pharaoh sent and called for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, 'I have sinned this time. The LORD is righteous, and my people and I are wicked.'" Exodus 9:27 (NKJV)

God sent ten plagues upon Egypt. Each one was designed to show that He was not like the gods of Egypt. He was actually executing judgment on the false gods of Egypt.

"For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD." Exodus 12:12 (NKJV)

After the final plague, the death of the firstborn, Pharaoh sent the people of Israel out of the land. He was in such a hurry to get rid of them that he didn't even wait till morning. He called Moses and Aaron by night to send them away. The people of Egypt were happy to see them go. They were afraid that they would all die if they stayed any longer.

"31 Then he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, 'Rise, go

out from among my people, both you and the children of Israel. And go, serve the LORD as you have said. 32 "Also take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone; and bless me also." 33 **And the Egyptians urged the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste. For they said, "We shall all be dead.""** Exodus 12:31-33 (NKJV)

They were finally free. However, it didn't take long for Pharaoh to change his mind and chase after the Israelites. Pretty soon he had them trapped with his powerful army behind them and the Red Sea before them.

Though the Israelites were afraid, God delivered them by dividing the Red Sea for them to cross on dry ground. Pharaoh's army followed them into the sea, but God brought the waters upon them and drowned every single one of them. Thus, the Lord saved Israel that day.

"28 Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained...30 So the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore." Exodus 14:28,30 (NKJV)

The very first thing that is said about Israel after this is that they feared and believed the Lord.

"Thus Israel saw the great work which the LORD had done in Egypt; so the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD and His servant Moses." Exodus 14:31 (NKJV)

What did this fear of the Lord and belief in Him cause them to do? It caused them to worship. Their worship is recorded immediately after the statement above. It fills most of **Chapter 15 of Exodus**.

Moses and the children of Israel sang to the Lord and worshiped. Miriam led the women in singing to Him. Their worship was joyful, praise filled, hopeful, and it contrasted the Lord

with His enemies and the false gods. You will notice that what drove this worship and praise was the fear of the Lord and belief in Him.

Fear of the Lord often led to worship in the Scriptures.

1. The first time we see Jacob worshipping God was after he feared Him.

"16 Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." 17 **And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place!** This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" 18 Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. 19 And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously. 20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, 21 "so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then **the LORD shall be my God.** 22 "And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and **of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."** Genesis 28:16-22 (NKJV)

2. When the sailors tossed Jonah overboard calming the sea, they feared and worshipped.

"15 So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. 16 **Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the LORD and took vows."** Jonah 1:15-16 (NKJV)

3. Isaiah worshipped the Lord, and desired to serve Him, after he feared Him.

"1 In the year that King Uzziah died, **I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up,** and the train of His robe filled the temple. 2 Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his

face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" 4 And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 **So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because 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."** 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. 7 And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged." 8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?" **Then I said, "Here am I! Send me."** Isaiah 6:1-8 (NKJV)

4. Peter fell at Jesus' knees when he feared Him.

"4 When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." 5 But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net." 6 And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. 7 So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. 8 **When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"** Luke 5:4-8 (NKJV)

5. When Jesus walked on water, the apostles feared and worshipped.

"25 Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. 26 And when the

disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. 27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."... 32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God.""
Matthew 14:25-27,32-33 (NKJV)

6. At the Transfiguration, the disciples fell on their faces and were greatly afraid.

"6 And when the disciples heard it, **they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid.** 7 But Jesus came and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid.""
Matthew 17:6-7 (NKJV)

7. When John saw Jesus on Patmos, he fell at His feet as dead, but was told not to fear. "And when I saw Him, **I fell at His feet as dead.** But He laid His right hand on me, **saying to me, "Do not be afraid;** I am the First and the Last." **Revelation 1:17 (NKJV)**

8. Ezekiel fell on his face after seeing a vision of the Lord and hearing His voice.

"28 Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. **This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. So when I saw it, I fell on my face,** and I heard a voice of One speaking. 2:1 And He said to me, "Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak to you.""
Ezekiel 1:28-2:1 (NKJV)

While the words "fear" and "worship" are not found in all the passages above, the ideas are clearly there. When there is fear of the Lord, worship follows. Worship of God and fear of God go hand-in-hand in the Scriptures.

Why do people who have been delivered from sin not worship the Lord?

Why do they not tithe to Him like Jacob?

Why do they not serve Him like Isaiah? It is because they do not fear Him.

Why do people in general not worship the Lord? It is because they do not believe in Him. People fail to worship the Lord because they only see Him as Someone from Whom they can receive something. They do not see Him as the One to Whom worship should be offered.

Today many, if not most, do not think of the fear of God when they think of worship. That, it seems to me, is precisely the problem with much of what is called "worship" today.

The truth is that worship, by definition, means "to show reverence and adoration". Reverence means "to show deep respect, i.e. fear". When we fear the Lord, we cannot help but to fall before Him in worship.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of worship.

When we view worship as nothing more than a celebration or some kind of party, it is not really Biblical worship. Without a reverence for God, it can never be worship. We can celebrate without the fear of the Lord, but we really can't worship without it.

Maybe the reason so many are not changed today by our so-called "worship services" is that they lack the fear of the Lord.

You can celebrate and not be changed, but you can hardly fear the Lord without being changed. That is not to say that there is no celebration in our worship. It is to say that genuine worship must include fear of the Lord.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of worship, and it may just be the missing ingredient in what is called "worship" today. Lack of it may be why so many fail to worship at all.