

WORSHIP AS TREMBLING, AND WORSHIP AS TRUSTING

Bruce A Ware, Professor of Christian Theology, Southern Seminary, Louisville, KY

I. Introduction: What does it Mean to “Fear of the Lord”?

To fear the Lord means to **tremble before Him** because of the power and holiness of His character and His just judgment against all wickedness; and to **trust Him unreservedly** because of the bounty of His goodness, mercy, and blessing toward those who turn to Him alone for their life and well-being — expressing itself in 1) a resolved and fervent **opposition to all unrighteousness** and wickedness, and 2) a resolved and fervent **obedience to God's word**, in humble and joyous recognition of the goodness of God's ways (i.e., obedience is our delight) and God's rightful authority over our lives (i.e., obedience is our duty), for His glory and our good. (Ware)

II. Worship as Trembling and Trusting

A. Trembling before God's holiness, purity, power, greatness, and righteous judgment—Exod 14:31; Josh 4:24; 1 Sam 12:18; Ps 90:11-12; 96:4-6; 119:120; Isa 8:13; Jer 10:6-10; Rev 14:6-7; 15:3-4

Exodus 14:30-31 – ³⁰ Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. ³¹ When Israel saw the great power which the LORD had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses.

1 Samuel 12:17-18 – ¹⁷ “Is it not the wheat harvest today? I will call to the LORD, that He may send thunder and rain. Then you will know and see that your wickedness is great which you have done in the sight of the LORD by asking for yourselves a king.” ¹⁸ So Samuel called to the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.

Psalms 33:6-9 – ⁶ By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all of their host. ⁷ He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deeps in storehouses. ⁸ Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. ⁹ For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

Psalms 96:4-6 – ⁴ For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. ⁵ For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the LORD made the heavens. ⁶ Splendor and majesty are before Him, strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.

Jeremiah 10:6-10 – ⁶ There is none like You, O LORD; You are great, and great is Your name in might. ⁷ Who would not fear You, O King of the nations? Indeed it is Your due! For among all the wise men of the nations and in all their kingdoms, there is none like You. ⁸ But they are altogether stupid and foolish in their discipline of delusion—their idol is wood! ⁹ Beaten silver is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of a craftsman and of the hands of a goldsmith; violet and purple are their clothing; They are all the work of skilled men. ¹⁰ But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth quakes, and the nations cannot endure His indignation.

B. Trusting God's mercy, compassion, forgiveness, kindness—Exod 14:31 (implied); Josh 4:24 (implied); 1 Sam 12:24; 1 Kings 8:40, 43; Ps 33:18; 34:8-10; 103:17-18; 130:4

1 Kings 8:37-40 – ³⁷ [Solomon prays:] “If there is famine in the land, if there is pestilence, if there is blight or mildew, locust or grasshopper, if their enemy besieges them in the land of their

cities, whatever plague, whatever sickness there is, ³⁸ whatever prayer or supplication is made by any man or by all Your people Israel, each knowing the affliction of his own heart, and spreading his hands toward this house; ³⁹ then hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and forgive and act and render to each according to all his ways, whose heart You know, for You alone know the hearts of all the sons of men, ⁴⁰ that they may fear You all the days that they live in the land which You have given to our fathers.

Psalm 33:18–22 – ¹⁸ Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who hope for His steadfast love, ¹⁹ To deliver their soul from death and to keep them alive in famine. ²⁰ Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield. ²¹ For our heart rejoices in Him, because we trust in His holy name. ²² Let Your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us, according as we have hoped in You.

Psalm 34:8–10 – ⁸ O taste and see that the LORD is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him! ⁹ O fear the LORD, you His saints; For to those who fear Him there is no want. ¹⁰ The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; But they who seek the LORD shall not be in want of any good thing.

Psalm 128:1–4 – ¹ How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in His ways. ² When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, you will be happy and it will be well with you. ³ Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within your house, your children like olive plants around your table. ⁴ Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD.

Psalm 130:3–4 – ³ If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? ⁴ But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared.

III. Worship Expressed in a Fervent Opposition to Sin and a Fervent Obedience to God

A. Opposition to Sin—Job 1:1, 8; 28:28; Ps 34:11–14; 36:1–4; Prov 3:7; 8:13; 2 Cor 7:1

Psalm 36:1–4 – ¹ Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart; there is no fear of God before his eyes. ² For it flatters him in his own eyes concerning the discovery of his iniquity and the hatred of it. ³ The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit; he has ceased to be wise and to do good. ⁴ He plans wickedness upon his bed; he sets himself on a path that is not good; he does not despise evil.

Proverbs 8:13 – The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverted mouth, I hate.

B. Obedience to God—Deut 5:29; 6:1–3; 10:12–13; Ps 103:17–18; 111:10; 119:63; Eccl 12:13

Deuteronomy 5:29 – ²⁹ ‘Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!

Deuteronomy 10:12–13 – ¹² “Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³ and to keep the LORD’s commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?

IV. Conclusion: Commitment to grow in trembling and trusting, opposing sin and obeying God, is growth in fearing, honoring, loving, and worshiping the Lord, the one true and living God.