

## Who and What Do You Fear, Love, and Hate? (Psalm 119:113-120)

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What things do you fear the most in life?

What things do you love most in life?

What things do you hate most in life?

Your truest and greatest fears, loves, and hates reveal as much about you spiritually as anything else. The secret of the godly life of the man who wrote Psalm 119 is found in where his fears, loves, and hates were found and focused.

**Psalm 119:113-120 (NASB95)** <sup>113</sup> I hate those who are double-minded, But I love Your law. <sup>114</sup> You are my hiding place and my shield; I wait for Your word. <sup>115</sup> Depart from me, evildoers, That I may observe the commandments of my God. <sup>116</sup> Sustain me according to Your word, that I may live; And do not let me be ashamed of my hope. <sup>117</sup> Uphold me that I may be safe, That I may have regard for Your statutes continually. <sup>118</sup> You have rejected all those who wander from Your statutes, For their deceitfulness is useless. <sup>119</sup> You have removed all the wicked of the earth *like* dross; Therefore I love Your testimonies. <sup>120</sup> My flesh trembles for fear of You, And I am afraid of Your judgments.

My life has been changed by expository preaching and continues to be. I count it a great honor and joy and privilege and weighty responsibility to seek to pass on God's truth in such a manner. By expository or expositional teaching I mean studying a Bible text – usually one primary passage – examining it in its original contexts by deep study to determine its original meaning and then seeking to exposit it (preach by exposing and explaining and applying) the God-inspired big idea of the passage, rather than my ideas. There are times where on a given Sunday I may preach from a different part of Scripture than the week before, but all preaching should be expository in nature (truly text-derived, text-determined, and text-driven). *Consecutive* expository preaching (where you work through a long passage or book of the Bible verse-by-verse, week-by-week) is the healthiest regular diet of the church.

*Advantages of Expository Preaching that is consecutive:*

1. It's the way God wrote it, one verse after another, in context
2. In the long haul, it's more likely to be faithful to the biblical mandates to “declare the whole counsel of God” (rather than just our favorite subjects or passages) and the solemn charge to “preach the Word.” When Paul says “preach the Word,” it's not *what men want to say or hear*, but what *God has said - the way He said it* - without reshaping, twisting, distorting, or watering down God's intent, bringing His whole truth to bear with humble boldness.

‘We must resist the urge to merely incorporate Bible verses into our messages to support our own opinions and agenda. To preach expositively is to actually *preach* Bible verses ... we are going *to the Bible to find out what we will say*. In the end the preacher does not use the Bible to preach his own message; *instead, it is the Bible that uses the preacher to preach its message* ... Those who try to preach [mainly topically] often end up using the Scriptures to preach their own message. Most preachers will find it safer to make a regular practice of seeking to convey the message of God in one passage per sermon. While other passages may be mentioned to reinforce the meaning of the text at hand, one primary passage should drive each sermon.’<sup>1</sup>

3. I don't have to cleverly think up and decide what to teach on next, or what *I* want to say to get *my* agenda and ideas across, and then try and find a verse or two to throw in for good measure. It's freeing (not to mention good for my conscience) to simply go to the verses that come next in our consecutive study and study them and do my best to communicate *what God wanted to communicate* in the next passage. And I never cease to be refreshed and blessed by how relevant the next text is.

4. Scripture stretches you and says things you wouldn't normally say or think about and it challenges the way you like to think of things.

- Ex: v. 113a "I hate those who are double-minded"  
 – I didn't think we were ever supposed to hate?  
 v. 113b "I love thy law"  
 – how can someone love a law? I can see loving the gospel, but the law of the OT (Leviticus, etc.)?  
 v. 120 "My flesh trembles for fear of You and I am afraid"  
 - believers aren't supposed to fear, tremble, be afraid of God, are we? That's just for unbelievers, right? Doesn't love cast out fear for God's children?

Expository preaching forces us to deal with such tough questions. As we seek to deal with each section each week of this Psalm (the original writing treats each section as a unit), we don't have time to exhaust every possible truth or question in all eight verses. But I do want to always seek to cover the major truths, and today to answer those 3 questions which will in turn cover the 3 major truths. 3 key words that stand out in this text: **Hate, Love, Fear.**

### 1. What He Hates

Verse 113 begins with what this godly man hated, a jarring verse.

<sup>113</sup> **I hate those who are double-minded ...**

Question: I didn't think we were ever supposed to hate anyone? He says He loves God's law at the end of the verse, but doesn't the 2<sup>nd</sup> greatest commandment of that law forbid hating others? Leviticus 19:17-18: "You shall not hate your brother in your heart ... You shall love your neighbor as yourself." You can avoid difficult questions by not studying the Bible verse-by-verse paying attention to details, but we want to seek God's whole counsel as best we can

There are 3 other verses in this psalm where it says he hates falsehood or false ways, but here he seems to hate the false teachers themselves?? Let's start with the term "double-minded."

1395 Wycliffe translation "I hate wicked men"

1525 Coverdale translation "I hate ye ungodly"

1611 KJV "I hate vain **thoughts**" (the Heb. word is more, though)

NKJV "I hate the double-minded" [f.n. *divided* in heart or mind].

Scholars today recognize the term refers to those who are double-minded people. Even hundreds of years ago, before modern studies understood the term better, Puritan commentator Matthew Poole wrote 'the ancient interpreters understand this word not of things, but of persons, and so it may be understood of men that think evil, that devise wicked devices, or that have false and evil opinions, opposite to God's law, or tending to seduce men from it.'<sup>2</sup>

One translation has “I hate people with divided loyalties” with the footnote: *Heb* “divided ones.” The word occurs only here; it appears to be derived from a verbal root, attested in Arabic, meaning “to split” ... Since the psalmist is emphasizing his unswerving allegiance to God and his law, the term probably refers to those who lack such loyalty. The translation is similar to that suggested by L. C. Allen, *Psalms 101–150* (WBC), 131.<sup>3</sup>

This verse is not referring to purely pagan unbelievers or even his personal enemies like other verses in this Psalm. The term seems to refer here to professing believers who preach or practice contrary to the faith, intentionally not trying to be devoted to God alone.

- They don't outright *disown* God, they just think they can have *double* lives, *dual* loves, *deceptive* lips (cf. v. 118b)
- They are *disloyal* to the God they profess, *divided* in soul.
- They have split souls, minds in the middle, they're *half-hearted*, perpetual “partial” believers. One foot in, one foot out, they're on the fence.
- They're like an expired bad coffee creamer box of half and half. They want to mix or combine the things of God with the rotten things of the world, but the result is a bad taste to God, deserving only to be dumped out and thrown away.
- Anytime we try and stir in or syncretize or integrate God and His Word with something less and something else – the true and jealous God of Scripture must depart because He will not be shared with another, as He has said so many times in His Word. So many verses teach this vital truth.
- To try to only partially please God is to displease God.
- Half-truths are actual lies. There is no middle ground, no compromise, no combination – this is not Burger King where you can “have it your way.” The King of Kings says it is my way or you're on another highway.

God frequently draws a line in the sand and says essentially I am either Lord of all or I'm not Lord at all. “Choose you this day whom you will serve.” “No man can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and [anything else].” “There can be no fellowship with light and darkness.” The greatest commandment is “love the LORD your God” – not with half your heart, or divided mind or some part of your soul – but “with ALL your heart, all your soul, all your mind.”

“Double-minded” in v. 113 comes from the same root as the word translated “two opinions” in 1 Kings 18:21: Elijah came near to all the people and said, “How long will you hesitate between **two opinions**? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” But the people did not answer him

Double-minded people are those who know about God but who are not fully determined to worship and serve him only. They want Baal as well as the benefits of the Lord, they want a Savior and they want their sin. God hates that, and so does the man after God's heart in this passage. James Boice adds: ‘I believe he is also saying he hates the same double-mindedness in himself. Otherwise, why does he continue by asking God to sustain him, according to his promise, and uphold him so that he might be kept from sin? These verses breathe out love of God's law and determination to avoid double-mindedness, as Maclaren says, but it is only against the dark background of his tendency to be lukewarm that the strong fixing of his mind and will to obey God's law makes sense.’<sup>4</sup>

So David prays in Psalm 86:11 “Unite my heart to fear thy name”

It’s possible for a believer’s heart to be divided, so we need to pray for it to be united, and we must pray without doubt or divided mind

James 1:6-8 (NASB95) <sup>6</sup> But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup> For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, <sup>8</sup> **being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.**

Jesus said in Revelation 2 He spews the luke-warm out of his mouth. “I wish that you were either hot or cold, but I despise double-mindedness. Get off the fence! You’re either with me or against me.” Those who try to be in-between are offensive to God.

Look at v. 118 of our text. The attitude of v. 113 comes from God:

**<sup>118</sup> You have rejected all those who wander from Your statutes**

Those who profess God’s statutes but really reject them, God rejects. The writer here is a man after God’s heart hates what God hates and rejects what God rejects. Other translations of verse 118 say God “despises / disdains” (NET) or He “spurns” (ESV) or “has trodden down” (KJV). The man who thinks he can have his foot in God’s way and walk his own way, turning his foot away from God, he will soon meet the right foot of dis-fellowship from God Himself

**<sup>119</sup> You have removed all the wicked of the earth *like dross***

Dross is the slag or scum that is removed from molten metal (Prov. 25:4; Ezek. 22:18), the worthless residue is scrapped off and cast aside. When making precious metal, the impurities that rise to the top in the heat are removed so that only the pure remains.

So what about v. 113 where David (if David is the author) says he hates these wicked? We need to consider this in context to understand this man after God’s heart had an attitude also including great compassion. This feeling toward his enemies was not devoid of compassion, as we see how David wrote strong words of enemies but treated his enemy Saul with great kindness and mercy.

**136** My eyes shed streams of water, Because they do not keep Your law.

Righteous anger at sin (which our Lord had toward false teachers and Pharisees) does not exclude affection to sinners (“Father, forgive them ... Jerusalem, Jerusalem ...”). Like our Lord we should hate sin but because it’s against God, not us. We see this balance in Paul:

Never pay back evil for evil ... never take your own revenge [personal offenses], beloved but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, *Vengeance is Mine, I will repay*, says the Lord (Rom 12:17-19)

In Psalm 119:13: “love” and “hate” are antonyms, opposites, expressing two ends of the spectrum. Just like the word “love” should not be confused only with emotions like the English word is sometimes used, “hate” in Scripture should not be confused only with emotions of sin as we most commonly use the word. The massive 12-volume *Theological Dictionary of the NT* traces words from OT to NT equivalents in discussing this Hebrew word “hate.” It says ‘when the righteous of the old covenant hate evil, this is not primarily an emotion of the human heart, it is a passionate disowning in faith of the evil or the evil person whom God Himself has rejected. In his hatred, the wise man is on the side of divine judgment.’<sup>5</sup>

*The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* says this attitude is ‘toward persons and things which are opposed, detested, despised, and with which one wishes to have no contact or relationship.’<sup>6</sup> Why does David not want the evildoers to be close to him?

<sup>115</sup> Depart from me, evildoers That I may observe the commandments of my God

It’s been noted that this is the only verse after verse 3 of this Psalm that does not address God directly. He turns just for a moment to address the evildoers directly, and he does this not for any personal vendetta or sinful or selfish grudge *but because he wants to be able to obey God’s commands*. “Get away from me so that I can follow God’s way! I don’t pray this for the goal of my personal comfort but for the goal of my personal commitment to God’s commands.” He knows that bad company corrupts good morals, and he knows that Ps 1 says we are not to have close relationships with ungodly, so this detesting disowning is for God’s glory and his good.

*Vine’s* gives the 2 main definitions of this word as “hate” and “set against” and says it ‘may indicate that someone is “untrustworthy,” therefore an enemy to be ejected from one’s territory.’<sup>7</sup>

In Psalm 6:8 David writes “Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity” (KJV). We know that Jesus who never sinned also says in Matthew 7 on the last day to the false believers like in v. 113: “Depart from me ye workers of iniquity.”

Ecclesiastes 3:8 says “there is a time to love and a time to hate.” We don’t think about that enough, but Scripture not only teaches *times* for love and hate, but *types* of love and hate. In 2 Chronicles 19:2 the prophet says “Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord and so bring wrath on yourself from the Lord?” The expected rhetorical answer to those who know the Lord is no.

Clearly there’s a type of love that is wrong to have toward certain types of people. We could do a whole other study on God’s hatred, the senses in which He loves all as well as the statements of those God hates in Scripture. But for now just remember the biblical word “hate” is not necessarily devoid of any compassion or type of love. In one of the first occurrences of this Hebrew word for “hate” in the OT, it takes on the meaning of “love less” by comparison.

Genesis 29:30-34 (NASB95)<sup>30</sup> So *Jacob* went in to Rachel also, and indeed **he loved Rachel more than Leah**, and he served with Laban for another seven years.<sup>31</sup> Now the LORD saw that Leah was **unloved [same word translated “hated” in Psalm 119, even though v. 30 said he loved her, just not as much]**

It’s a negative term, but it does not necessarily exclude any love.

Proverbs 13:24 (ESV)<sup>24</sup> Whoever spares the rod **hates his son**, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

Parents who won’t physically discipline or spank their child, God says those parents hate their children. They are, at least at that moment (when not diligent to discipline), revealing they don’t love their children with biblical love. Of course that doesn’t mean there is *absolutely no love* in other ways and areas they have for their children, but in this area and sense, they don’t love as they should and as God calls them to.

*This brings us to the second point in our passage in Psalm 119:*

## 2. What He Loves

<sup>113</sup> I hate those who are double-minded, **But I love Your law.**

Again, like the last point, this isn't language we normally use, but language of loving God's law is all over this psalm (love, delight). Have any of us in this room ever said we love *the law* God laid down? Maybe we're willing to say we love God's Word, but surely "I love thy law" is not something a NT Christian would say, right?

The Apostle Paul uses NT equivalent language in Romans 7:22. "I delight in the law of God" (NASB "joyfully concur with."). Paul joyfully loved God's law, he says, "in the inner man," which could be translated, "from the bottom of my heart." Emanating from the depths of his soul, Paul had a great love for the law of God.<sup>8</sup>

Psalm 119:97 shouts it out emphatically: "O how I love thy law"!

R. C. Sproul writes: 'here is an ejaculation of religious affection, an unrestrained outburst of emotion ... "Oh, how I love Thy law!" When was the last time you heard a Christian pour out his heart with affection for the law of God? How foreign that is to us! ... The Psalmist loved the law of God. Read again what he wrote: "Oh, how I love the law!" Is that what he said? What did I change? It's "Thy" law. We must not move from the personal to the impersonal, to a list of abstract rules and regulations. Nobody in Israel was falling in love with rules. It was "Oh, how I love *Thy* law!" They loved the law because they understood that the law revealed Him whose law it is. If you love Him [your lovely Lord], then obviously you want to live a life that is pleasing to Him. You want to understand what He says is virtue. You love the law because it is *His* law, because you love the Lawgiver. How can you love God and hate [what He says in His good commands]? This is what Jesus said: "If you love Me, keep My commandments."<sup>9</sup>

So we read things like Ps 119:29b "graciously grant me Your law"

Is this how we think of God's law, as a gracious gift given by our Loving Father? Sometimes we mistakenly think that *the gospel* is a gracious gift from God, but God's law was just a harsh legal code from another dispensation with no relevance today and no relation to grace. "We're not under the law" many point out, happy to be rid of demands they don't like. It's true we're not under the *law of Moses* or any law as a means to earn salvation (which no one could anyways – that was the whole point)! It is true that the ceremonial and sacrificial aspects of OT law are fulfilled in Christ, but it is not true that God's *moral law* is not relevant today or is not related to grace. Law and grace are partners. Even Mosaic law *was a grace*, a gift to protect His people, preserve His people, and point them to their need for saving grace in the only One who could live the law perfectly. Law shows us what is pleasing to God. Law shows us our sin and how displeasing it is to God. It's a schoolmaster that draws us to Christ, Who enables us to be pleasing to God in Him, even though we fall short of God's glory and standard in our flesh.

To the Psalmist, as one explained it: 'This law is neither an intolerable burden, nor a mere reference book, but a gracious gift of God, which is the faithful man's delight and joy, his comfort and the source of the fullness of life'<sup>10</sup>

One of the commentaries I read quotes in *Reflections on the Psalms*, C. S. Lewis has a chapter on the love of God's law that the various psalm writers express. He confesses how strange this seemed to him when he was starting to study the psalms. He understood how a writer could respect a good law and try to obey it, but to love it or delight in it seemed to him a bit like loving the instruments with which a dentist pulls out teeth or loving the front line of a battlefield. Part of the answer to this problem is that "law" means more than "laws." It means the whole of God's written revelation, including promises as well as warnings, blessings as well as judgments. Yet this distinction cannot be the whole answer, because the psalmists seem to rejoice in – perhaps even emphasize – those specific commandments of the Bible that keep them from every evil path. In other words, it is not just the promises that delight them but the laws as well ...

[Lewis wrote:] His "delight" is in those statutes (15);

To study them is like finding treasure (14);

They affect him like music, are his "songs" (54);

They taste like honey (103);

They are better than silver and gold (72).

As one's eyes are more and more opened, one sees more and more in them, and it excites wonder (18) ...

It is the language of a man ravished by a moral beauty. If we cannot at all share his experience, we shall be the losers.'<sup>11</sup>

What are some reasons or results of loving God's law we don't want to lose or miss out on?

Verse 114 gives 3:   - a hiding place in the storm  
                           - a help in the battle ("my shield")  
                           - a hope in any time ("I wait / hope")

**A HIDING PLACE IN THE STORM** ("you are my hiding place")

A hiding place was a place of refuge, a shelter in a time of storm. This type of language is all over Scripture, especially in the Psalms. God hides us in shadow of his wings, the hollow of His hand, and no one can snatch us out of the Father's hand. God is our eye in the storm, our storm shelter, He is our immovable rock.

Psalms 46:1 "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble"

"A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing, a shelter he amid the flood ..." Imagine yourself as Martin Luther hiding physically for your life in a castle and finding your spiritual hiding place here.

Psalms 91:1 "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the almighty."

Imagine yourself as Elisabeth Elliot seeking comfort from that Scripture when her husband Jim Elliot had been martyred by the Waodani (Auca) Indians, and finding a hiding place in that verse.

Think of Corrie ten Boom, whose book has that title *Hiding Place*, who wrote of her faith in Nazi prison; God was her hiding place.

“Sovereign Love” is an old hymn (written in 1776) that develops this them “hiding place” theme

*Hail Sovereign Love that first began The scheme to rescue fallen man  
Hail matchless, free eternal grace That gave my soul a hiding place.  
Against the God that built the sky I fought with hands uplifted high  
Despised the mention of His grace Too proud to seek a hiding place.  
Enwrapped in thick Egyptian night And [loving] darkness more than light  
Madly I ran a sinful race Secure without a hiding place.  
But thus the eternal council ran Almighty Love, arrest that man  
I felt the arrows of distress And found I had no hiding place ...  
Thus I wandered 'lone and feared Till mercy's [messenger] soon appeared  
And led me at a [peaceful] pace To Jesus for a hiding place.  
On Him Almighty vengeance fell That would have sent a world to hell  
He bore it for a sinful race And thus became our hiding place.  
Should sevenfold storms of thunder roll And shake this globe from pole to pole  
No thunderstorm can daunt my face For Jesus is my hiding place.  
A few more days at most Will land me on fair [heaven]'s coast  
Where I shall sing the songs of grace And see my glorious hiding place.*

Praise God for His sovereign love, a hiding place for His elect! If you're not yet in Christ, I plead you to come, before the storm does

**HELP IN THE BATTLE** (v. 114 says God is “my shield”)

Proverbs 30:5 says *God's Word is pure* [tested and found pure] and *He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him / who trust in Him.*

Paul picks up on this imagery in Ephesians 6 (the shield of faith).

This truth should help us not to be afraid. It first appears in Gen 15

<sup>1</sup> After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, “**Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you ...**

This language of protection is all over the Psalms. A few examples

Psalm 3:3 *Thou, O Lord, art a shield about me, you're my glory, and the lifter of my head* [His protection helps us feel safe / confident, not cowering down low]

Psalm 18:2-3 *The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.* <sup>3</sup> *I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised; So shall I be saved from my enemies ...* <sup>46</sup> *The LORD live[th]! Blessed be my Rock! Let the God of my salvation be exalted.* (NKJV)

His truth in particular is a shield in Psalm 91:3-7 (NKJV)

His truth *shall be your* shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, *Nor* of the arrow *that* flies by day, *Nor* of the pestilence *that* walks in darkness, *Nor* of the destruction *that* lays waste at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, And ten thousand at your right hand; *But* it shall not come near you.

## HOPE IN ANY TIME (v. 114b “I hope in Your Word”)

His hope is further articulated in verse 116:

Sustain me according to Your word, that I may live; And do not let me be ashamed of my hope.

His love for God’s law and his hope in God’s Word must be sustained by God Himself.

“According to your Word” is a more specific Hebrew noun that can be translated “promise,” so some of your translations say “uphold me / sustain me as you promised.”

We cannot hold up our end of this deal unless God holds us up through His promises. The main idea of the Hebrew verb is not only “lifting up” but “leaning upon.” It is the Word of the Lord that we lean on, leaning on the everlasting arms of Jesus the Author, which in turn lifts up our arms and sustains our strength and supports us.

The ancient Benedict Rule, largely made up of the Psalms, was introduced into England with the landing of Augustine. Under this Order when a novice’s period of preparation was ended, and he was ready to become attached [in the induction ceremony] for life, with outstretched arms, he sang three times the verse [Ps 119:16]. Three times the community repeated the words, and added the Gloria Patri.<sup>12</sup> This acknowledged that the commitments of such a devoted life could only be sustained by God, to whom all glory belongs.<sup>13</sup> The next verse also shows this proper dependence:

<sup>117</sup> Uphold me that I may be safe, That I may have regard for Your statutes continually.

Similar to the request in v. 116, this word for “uphold” includes ‘the idea of giving aid and refreshment ... When we feel like falling down and just giving up, the Lord comes to our aid in ways we could never fully understand.’<sup>14</sup>

Charles Spurgeon put it in his own words this way: ‘*Hold ... me up*: as a nurse holds up a little child. *And I shall be safe*, and not else; for unless [you] hold me up I shall be falling about like an infant that is weak upon its legs. We have been saved by past grace, but still we are not safe unless we receive present grace.’<sup>15</sup>

*We’ve seen what the Psalmist hates, and what he loves, now*

### **Thirdly and Finally – What He Fears (v. 119-120)**

<sup>119</sup> You have removed all the wicked of the earth *like* dross; Therefore I love Your testimonies.

<sup>120</sup> My flesh trembles for fear of You, And I am afraid of Your judgments.

This brings us back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> question: Believers aren’t supposed to fear, tremble, be afraid of God, are we? That’s just for unbelievers, right? Doesn’t love cast out fear for God’s children?

Again, this is why the whole counsel of God is important, but even in this text, as you read these last 2 verses, it’s clear that God’s judgments on ungodly are to have a sobering effect on the godly. In the missionary journal of Henry Martyn he wrote: “In prayer, in the evening I had such new and terrific views of God’s judgment upon sinners in Hell, that my flesh trembled for fear of them ... I flew trembling to Jesus Christ as if the flames were taking hold of me! Oh! Christ will indeed save me or else I perish.”<sup>16</sup>

The Fear of the Lord is not just an O.T. theme, the N.T. says things to professing believers like “it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of a living God” which should cause us all the more to ensure our hiding place and refuge is in Christ. The most vivid pictures in all the Bible of God’s wrath are not in the distant past of the OT but in the book of Revelation, of the future.

Revelation 14 speaks of an angel that will preach the eternal gospel to the whole world and what he says is “Fear God and give Him glory ... Worship Him” (14:6-7). Fearing God is part of the true gospel, and proper glory of God and proper worship. As Romans presents the gospel, chapter 3 says the end problem of man’s depravity is no fear of God before their eyes.

The OT worship and fear of God continues in Christ to the end

Rev. 15:3-4 (NASB95) <sup>3</sup> And they sang the song of **Moses**, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the **Lamb**, saying, “Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations! <sup>4</sup>“**Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; For ALL THE NATIONS WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE YOU**

Many pastors and writers will be quick to tell you this word “fear” doesn’t mean “fear” it just means “think God is awesome” or “just respect Him very highly -- believers need never fear.” But the word “fear” includes fear, as well as of course reverential awe.

And look at v. 120; it not only has the word “fear” (which would be clear enough by itself) but it also adds the word “trembles” and the phrase “I am afraid” regarding God’s Word. God has always desired His people to tremble at His Word, not merely respect it.

Isaiah 66:2 says God only looks with favor on the humble, repentant-hearted believers who tremble at His Word.

When His Word was first given at Sinai, God made this very clear

Exodus 19:16-19 (NASB95) <sup>16</sup> So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who *were* in the camp **trembled**. <sup>17</sup> And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. <sup>18</sup> Now Mount Sinai *was* all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and **the whole mountain quaked violently**. <sup>19</sup> When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and **God answered him with thunder**.

Exodus 20:18-20 (NASB95) <sup>18</sup> All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw *it*, **they trembled and stood at a distance**. <sup>19</sup> Then they said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die.” <sup>20</sup> Moses said to the people, “**Do not be afraid**; for God has come in order to test you, and **in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin**.”

True believers need not fear God’s eternal wrath if they are in Christ, but we should have a healthy godly fear restraining our sin.

The whole counsel of God answers clearly whether or not God wants true believers to fear or even tremble at times, as they see God rightly and see themselves rightly. We should ... we must.

As Watson points out, the clearest proof that believers should fear is that ‘every time we see someone in Scripture get a glimpse of God, even a believer, they are terrified. Isaiah [sees the Holy, Holy, Holy God and he] cried out, “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 mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isa. 6:5). The same was true of Daniel (Dan. 10:8–9; cf. 8:17), Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:28; 3:23; 9:8; 43:3; 44:4) ... Job (Job 42:5–6). In sad contrast, there is today a frivolous and nonchalant attitude toward God, where He is thought of as our buddy and pal. Many church services are casual and man-centered ... We have lost the Truth of God’s holiness and man’s sinfulness. We have lost what people of Scripture knew, namely, that when confronted with the blazing glory of God, *we [should fear] in our unworthiness*. As Paul exhorts believers, we should “serve God acceptably with **reverence and godly fear**: For our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:28–29). I for one am fearful of disobeying God, fearful of disobeying His Word, fearful that I might be unfaithful in my study and teaching of the Word ... *This absolutely must be the beginning of one's attitude*. Unless God is enthroned in the human heart, there can be no real knowledge of *His* truth.<sup>17</sup>

Or in the words of Solomon: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge / wisdom”

You might wonder how “love” (v. 119b) and “fear” (v. 112) fit together? Fear of wrath, fear of man, and other fears must be cast out. But fear of God and love for God actually do go together

Deuteronomy 10:12 “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 ...**”

Deuteronomy 6:5, 13 (NASB95) “**You shall love the LORD your God** with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ...<sup>13</sup> “**You shall fear** *only* the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name.

May we love God more with our whole heart (not half-heartedly) and our whole mind (not being double-minded) and may our soul hate what he hates, and may our whole being fear Him with a healthy godly fear in light of His holiness and the whole counsel of God, so that we can worship and glorify Him more fully and truly.

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<sup>1</sup> Mike Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives*, 16.

<sup>2</sup> *Matthew Poole's Commentary*, 2:189.

<sup>3</sup> *NET Bible Notes*.

<sup>4</sup> James Boice, *Psalms*, 3:1033.

<sup>5</sup> *TDNT*, 4:687.

<sup>6</sup> *TWOT*, 2:880.

<sup>7</sup> *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (1996). Nashville: T. Nelson. 1:105

<sup>8</sup> John MacArthur. *The Gospel According to the Apostles : The role of works in the life of faith*. Originally published: *Faith works*. Dallas : Word Pub., 1993. Nashville, TN: Word Pub.

<sup>9</sup> Sproul, R. (2000). *R.C. Sproul's chapters from symposium volumes* (electronic ed.). Grand Rapids: Baker Books.

<sup>10</sup> A. A. Anderson, *Psalms*, 2:807.

<sup>11</sup> Boice, 3:1018.

<sup>12</sup> Herbert Lockyer, *Psalms: A Devotional Commentary*, 585.

<sup>13</sup> Boice, 3:1034.

<sup>14</sup> Warren Wiersbe (2004). *Be exultant* (1st ed.). Colorado Springs, Colo.: Cook Communications Ministries, p. 129.

<sup>15</sup> Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*.

<sup>16</sup> Lockyer, 588.

<sup>17</sup> J. D. Watson. *The Sufficiency of God's Word - An Exposition of Psalm 119*.

<http://www.thescripturealone.com/PS119.html>