

# CHIEF

## MINISTRIES

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Two mighty forces strengthen us to obey God - love for God and fear of the Lord. Our life must exhibit both if we are to finish our race of obedience.

If we look at John 14:15, we read the words of Jesus; *“If you love me, keep my commandments”* in the King James. In a more accurate translation it says; *“If you love me you will keep my commandments”*. God was saying, “If you fall head over heels in love with me, you will be able to keep my commandments” He wasn’t saying, “If we keep His commandments we will prove that we love Him”. See the difference?

Have you ever fallen in love? If you have you know that your partner was your constant thought. You would do whatever you could just to spend time with that person. If they needed something, no matter what the inconvenience, if at all possible, you’d try and get it for them. If they had called in the middle of the night and said, “Honey, I want some ice cream”. You would have said, “What kind?” I’ll be there in five minutes. “We would have done anything to fulfill any desire or request made of us.

Because of our intense love, it was a joy to do whatever they wished. We didn’t do this to prove we loved that special person, we did it because we loved them!

This exemplifies what Jesus was saying. Out of our intense love for Him, we take delight in fulfilling His desire. His word is not a restricting law but a consuming passion.

Let’s look at one of my favorite Bible characters - King David. David was a man who loved God with a passion. God said, *“I have found David, son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, who will do ALL my will”* (Acts 13:22). There was no willful rebellion in His life. What gave him the ability to do all of God’s will? He delighted in God’s commands. He did not see them as restraints but as bonds of his relationship with God.

David wrote often of the law. *“For I find my delight in your commandments, which I love. (Psalms 119:47 ESV). “Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors” (Psalms 119:24 ESV). “I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word” (Psalms 119:16 ESV). “Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it” (Psalms 119:35 ESV). “I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart” (Psalms 40:8 ESV).*

David loved God therefore it was his delight to obey Him. However, there was a dark time period in his life, a season when he departed from this obedience. He took Bathsheba, wife of Uriah the Hittite, one of David’s faithful soldiers. When David found out she was pregnant, he tried to conceal it from her husband by bringing him home to sleep with her. When Uriah would not go to his wife because the other soldiers were at the front lines, David had him murdered.

Once again a prophet was sent to confront a king. This time King David was confronted by the prophet Nathan. Nathan exposed David’s treachery. He pronounced judgment over David, *“Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house....because of this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord (2 Samuel 12:10, 14)* David’s disobedience had opened the

devils door. It left his life and family vulnerable to the enemies of God - not only the natural ones but also the spiritual ones. A family and a nation would suffer by his disobedience.

In the midst of this intense confrontation, David's love for God caused him to repent quickly and return to a life of obedience. He cried out before the prophet, "*I have sinned against the Lord*" (2 Samuel 12:13)

Both Saul and David confessed they sinned, yet Saul was concerned for himself while David understood whose heart he had disappointed. Unlike Saul, David was not concerned with what the elders or men of Israel thought. He was alone before his God and only cared what God thought. He loved God more than anyone or anything. Knowing he had hurt the heart of God, he would not allow himself to be comforted by man. He wanted to be reconciled to his Master.

And he cried out, "*Against you and you only have I sinned and done this evil in your sight*" (Psalms 51:4). His heart was broken from the weight of disappointing the one he loved. It was the most painful consequence of his disobedience. Unlike Balaam, it was not the sword David feared, he could not stand the breach between he and his Lord.

David's son with Bathsheba died. His daughter was raped and defiled by her own brother. One son murdered another, then his favorite son rose up against him in rebellion, took the throne and attempted to murder David. Then that son was killed. The price of David's disobedience was great, but God retained him as king.

David was after God's heart, while Saul was after a kingdom! David was sustained by his love for God. Saul was destroyed by his love for self. God's judgment of David's failure to keep his law did not cause David to rebel and view the law as impossible. Rather it caused him to love God even more passionately so that he would never fail him again.

These two lives illustrate what the Lord revealed in John 14:15. When we love Jesus with all our hearts, we can obey Him. All else pales in comparison because nothing is more important. He becomes our life.

The second force that strengthens obedience is the fear of the Lord. Proverbs 16:6 says, "*by the fear of the Lord one departs from evil*". By the fear of the Lord men depart from disobedience.

Much can be learned by examining the children of Israel. Paul explained their experiences in the wilderness, "*Now all these things happened to them as examples and they were written for our admonition (instruction) upon whom the end of the ages have come*" (1 Corinthians 10:11) we are to learn from their example.

They lost the promise of God due to their disobedience. Paul explained; "*And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey?*" (Hebrews 3:18)

Their disobedience was not due to lack of knowledge. The word of God had been proclaimed to them. "*For who, having heard, rebelled.*" (Hebrews 3:16)

Why then did they disobey God who had done so many mighty miracles and lived in their midst? God summed it up this way: "*Oh that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep ALL My commandments that it might be well with them and their children forever.*" (Deuteronomy 5:29)

They did not fear God; therefore they could not keep His commandments. The one who fears God will set his heart toward keeping all His commandments, not just the ones he selects or the

convenient ones. To fear God is to tremble at His Word. You will not take lightly anything God has said. Each command is honored as important.

Read carefully the following exhortations given to the New Testament believers: *“Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it”*. (Hebrew 4:1) This verse admonishes us to fear lest we fall short of entering God’s promise as the children of Israel did. How could a New Testament believer lose the promises of God? Paul says, *“Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.”* (Hebrew 4: 11)

There is a link between disobedience and the lack of the fear of the Lord, just as obedience is paired with the fear of the Lord. We find the strength to obey hidden in the fear of the Lord. *“Therefore having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”*. (2 Corinthians 7:1)

The fear of the Lord includes, but is not limited to, reverence and respect. It is to acknowledge Him with the glory, honor and preeminence He alone possesses. When we hold this position in our hearts, we will esteem Him and His desire over and above our own desires. We will hate what He hates and love what He loves, trembling at His Word and in His presence.

I believe God will withhold his glory to test and prepare us. Will we fear and obey him even when his tangible presence is not there? So often the modern church behaves as foolishly as the children of Israel - rejoicing in His presence and miracles, yet sinning when these things are absent. The Israelites were excited when God blessed them and performed mighty miracles for them. When God parted the Red Sea, brought them across on dry land, burying their enemies behind them, they sang, danced and shouted the victory. (See Exodus 15:1-21) Sounds like our church services!

But only a few days later when food and drink were scarce, they complained against God and wanted to return to Egypt. They had quickly forgotten their captivity and decided slavery had been better for them. (See Exodus 16:3)

Later God came down in his awesome splendor on Mount Sinai, wrapped in a dark cloud to shield his brilliant glory! Now they did not complain or disobey in His fearful awesome presence - they were afraid and drew back. Moses pleaded with them, *“Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.”* (Exodus 20:20)

Notice the difference between being afraid of God and fearing God? If people are afraid of God, they run and hide from Him. They will not keep His word because they will not know His heart. The children of Israel retreated from God’s glorious presence. Although they promised to keep His word, (Exodus 24:13) for two thousand years they could not.

On the other hand, the one who fears God (but is not afraid of Him) will draw closer to Him. *“So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was”*. (Exodus 20:21) Only as we draw near do we find the strength to obey. Many parents discover that the children who are closest to them are the most obedient.

You would think that after experiencing all this glory. The children of Israel would obey, right? Wrong! While they drew away, Moses went to the top of the mountain. What did these people do? They took the gold God gave them from the Egyptian woman and built a golden calf with it! Interesting isn’t it? They took the blessing of God and made it an idol! (Have there been those in our churches today that have done the same thing?) Again, it was the lack of the fear of God that produced their disobedience in God’s absence.

Joseph (my other favorite character) was quite a different story. God gave him a dream which showed he would be a great leader. He would lead his brothers and even his mother and father. The children of Israel had a promise of a new land and Joseph had a promise of leadership. But what happened after he received this promise? The brothers over whom he had ruled in the dream ended up throwing him into a pit. However, there is no evidence that Joseph complained against God.

Then he was sold as a slave into a foreign nation by the same brothers. He served as a slave in another man's house for over ten years. Though, he was given a dream by God, each year he appeared to head in the opposite direction. Imagine his thoughts, where is God? Where is His presence? Yet, he fought those thoughts and did not yield to them!

The children of Israel did not fight these thoughts, they indulged in them. Though Joseph was patient for 10 years, they were ready to quit in less than 40 days! Many people have bitter thoughts towards God if their prayers aren't answered in two weeks. Quite different than Joseph, wouldn't you agree?

Joseph endured far more than ten years without a hint of possible fulfillment of God's promise. He was isolated in a pagan land from all that he had known or loved. The wife of a man whom he had served faithfully cast longing eyes towards Joseph. She had a strong seducing spirit and wanted him. Dressed in the finest of Egypt and wearing the best perfume, she knew how to seduce a man. She did not solicit him once but daily.

I love the way Joseph feared God. He did not disobey though he had experienced hardship and disappointment. Joseph denied this attractive woman. *"How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9)* Consistently he said no. This obedience to God eventually resulted in imprisonment in Pharaoh's dungeon. Even there he continued to fear God! No disappointment could draw this man's heart away from obedience to God.

I'm sure you've heard messages in the church where you attend that would lead you to believe you are out of the will of God if you're in hardship or suffering; yet, in obedience Joseph did just that - suffered!

It is clear that the fear of God yields the strength to obey while the lack of it leads to disobedience.

*"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in My presence only, but now much more in My absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:12-13)*

I know this is from Paul to the Philippians but it is also a letter from the Lord to us. I like to read this verse as if God were speaking to me personally. It shows how the fear of God will strengthen me to obey Him not only in His presence but also in His absence - when we don't feel Him or His promises are yet to be fulfilled.

God will work in those who fear Him so they will both want to do His will and then actually do it. I hear many claim this promise, yet its benefits are limited to those who fear and tremble before the Lord Almighty.

There is such a weak understanding of the fear of the Lord. Many view it as an optional virtue in the New Testament or limit it to a reverence or respect for God.

However if all we need is respect, why does Paul describe *"fear and trembling"*? Trembling does not sound like mere respect.

If it means only reverence, why did the writer of Hebrews admonish us, *“let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and Godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire”* (Hebrews 12:28-29) The all-consuming fire ought to inspire more than just reverence.

Our Father God, the great consuming fire, the one who placed the stars in the heavens with His fingers, merits much more awe than we have given Him. How can we claim to have known Him if we do not fear Him? *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, the onset of knowing Him.”* (Proverbs 1:7, 2:5) You haven't truly begun to know Him until you acquire the fear of Him.

Yes, He loves us. He is love. (1 John 4:8) But He is also a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29). He is our Father (Romans 8:15) but He is also the judge of ALL (Hebrews 12:23). Yes, we are to love Him but we are to fear Him as well. We are admonished to *“consider the goodness and the severity of God”*. (Romans 11:22)

Our ministry and obedience to Him is incomplete without both love and fear. *“On some have compassion, making a distinction, but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh”* (Jude 22-23)

Let us ask God to fill us with His love (Romans 5:5) but not to the neglect of the Spirit of His holy fear. (Isaiah 11:2-3) These two forces will be enable us to walk in obedience before Him.

I challenge you to love, fear and obey.

We're in this together for His glory!

Be Blessed

**Chief**

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*Christ's Heart In Every Felon*