

## When Fear is Good For You

This day begins the week in which our country will celebrate its declaration of independence from Great Britain. Independence day, the fourth of July our nation's birthday---it's a day to celebrate all that is good about the United States of America. We enjoy a form of government that allows us the freedom to choose our leaders on a regular basis. In spite of the abuses of power that inevitably plague all forms of government this one seems to be the one that works the best. We have a document that spells out all of our rights and privileges as Americans, and it also outlines our freedom. Rather than being oppressive the law of our land guarantees our freedom.

This government was forged in the fires of tyranny, smelted and refined in the furnaces of fear and oppression, and polished by the blood sweat and tears of untold thousands of men and women who worked to establish it and keep it alive. The United States of America now shines as a beacon of liberty for the entire world.

This government that we live under began as a dream of men who no longer wanted to live under fear. It's the kind of fear that grips you when you are awakened in the middle of the night by constables

searching your home. Or told that your home is being commandeered as sleeping quarters for soldiers and you must feed them. Fear that you feel when you have to choose between going to jail for not paying taxes or going to jail for stealing food to feed your family. Fear that you may be jailed or shot out right for speaking out against the king. These were the conditions under which the British owned American Colonies existed before the Revolutionary War that began in 1776. These were the fears that would be eliminated under the Constitution of the United States of America.

This government works not because we are afraid of it but we have a reverence for it. And because when it was first established God was a part of it. The very first amendment to the Constitution was the right to practice religion. Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

*Comment: The government cannot create or inhibit religion, ban most types of*

*speech, restrict the press, stop people from gathering peacefully, or bar citizens from asking the government for reform.*<sup>1</sup>

It is important to note that the first amendment **doesn't say** that there should be a separation of church and state. It simply says that government may not favor one form of religion over another. But it does allow for the practice of all religions. Even today our leaders in Washington D. C. begin each session of Congress with prayer. However today more than ever before our government seems to be turning away from God. We as a nation are losing our Godly Fear.

In the book of Proverbs we find several passages that contain the word fear. Just listen to these put together and see what God is trying to tell us.

Prov 1:7

7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.  
(NIV)

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<sup>1</sup>"Constitution of the United States," *Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2000*. © 1993-1999 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

Prov 2:1-5

1 My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you,  
2 turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding,  
3 and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding,  
4 and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure,  
5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.  
(NIV)

Prov 3:7

7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.  
(NIV)

Prov 9:10

10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.  
(NIV)

Prov 10:27

27 The fear of the LORD adds length to life, but the years of the wicked are cut short.  
(NIV)

Prov 14:27

27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death.  
(NIV)

Prov 15:16

16 Better a little with the fear of the LORD than great wealth with turmoil.  
(NIV)

Prov 15:33

33 The fear of the LORD teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor.  
(NIV)

Prov 16:6

6 Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for; through the fear of the LORD a man avoids evil.  
(NIV)

Prov 19:23

23 The fear of the LORD leads to life: Then one rests content, untouched by trouble.  
(NIV)

Prov 22:4

4 Humility and the fear of the LORD bring wealth and honor and life.  
(NIV)

Prov 23:17

17 Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the LORD.  
(NIV)

Prov 29:25

25 Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.  
(NIV)

Obviously there are several benefits that are derived from being fearful of the Lord. We gain knowledge. We gain peace. We gain humility. And we avoid evil. That word that is translated “fear” in all of these passages is a Hebrew word that can also be translated reverent or respectful. The Greek equivalent is the word phobeomai, which can also mean treat with reverence. Let’s be clear about this

however, there is a big difference between doing something because you are afraid you are going to die and doing something because you want to show your reverence or respect. It is the respect and reverence that we should be showing to God because he has already told us we don't need to fear death.

We have become so worried about offending our fellow man, or to put it another way we are so concerned with being "politically correct", that we have forgotten that it is **more important** not offend God. Remember what it said in Proverbs 29:25, "Fear of man will prove to be a snare". And in Luke 12:5 Luke 12:5

5 But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him. (NIV)

We as a country need to rekindle a healthy respect or fear of God in our lives. When America fears God again, it won't have to fear its enemies. When American fears God again, we will have peace and tranquility for "ourselves and our posterity" to borrow a line from the Declaration of Independence. Let's start right now in this congregation putting God first in our lives again. And maybe just maybe God will bless America again.