

Part of the very nature of God is that He is a *just* God. In His infinite justice He will distribute reward and He will punish transgressions (II Tim. 4:1-8; Col. 3:25). In His divine righteousness He can do nothing else but hate sin and regard it as deserving of punishment. God is a *just* God.

*“He is the Rock, His works are perfect, and all His ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is He.”*  
(Deuteronomy 32:4 NIV)

*“For there is no respect of persons with God.”* (Romans 2:11 KJV)

*“If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth;”* (I Peter 1:17 NASB)

*“Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.”* (Colossians 3:25 KJV)

*“God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you.”*  
(II Thessalonians. 1:6 NIV)

Fear of God does not result from doubting His love for us, but is rather a result of faith in the promises He made regarding condemnation for sins.

*“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”* (II Peter 3:9 NKJV)

Those who have not had the benefit of accepting the cleansing blood of His Son (the only sacrifice sufficient to remove the sin from our lives) will face judgment with no advocate except their own voice pleading for mercy. What will be the result? God alone knows. *Our* task is to make every effort to share the Gospel of Christ and create assurance in place of fear.

Are we condemning anyone? Absolutely not. Condemnation is a result of our *own* actions — or the lack thereof — and the discipline will fit the crime unless Christ is our advocate with the Father and pleads our case *because* we have put on His cleansing blood in the watery grave of baptism (Gal 3:27; I Tim. 2:5). As a child, sometimes I was successful in pleading my case and thereby avoided what would have been a just punishment. *Sometimes*, I was successful — more often I was *not!*

Who will plead the case for sinners who have no fear of God and no knowledge of the actions required by God for them to avoid the eternal punishment of Hell?

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# DILIGENCE

*“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.” — Hebrews 6:11*

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## Fear of God

*“Fear God and keep His commandments.”* (Ecclesiastes 12:13 KJV)

*“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.”* (Proverbs 1:7 NASB)

*“For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.”*  
(Deuteronomy.4:24 KJV)

*“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.”* (Luke 12:5 NIV)

*“...Fear God and give Him glory...”* (Rev 14:7 NIV)

A child is having one of those days when confrontation and being difficult is the plan for the day. In this particular instance the mother is the one who has the privilege of dealing with the situation first hand. After applying a “time out” and various other techniques, in desperation she resorts to the use of fear and states, “Just wait until your father gets home!”

As a child I didn't like the implications of such a threat and usually straightened up. On some occasions I would plead my case in an attempt to get Mom to agree not to tell Dad what I had been doing. Sometimes I was wise enough to actually get her to remove certain punishment. Other times I was unsuccessful and received punishment that my father thought was appropriate for the situation.

The fear of my father coming home and delivering appropriate punishment did not result in a general fear of him, but rather was very specific as it related to the inappropriate acts or behavior in which I had been engaged at that particular time. I knew what was the *proper* way to behave and had been given ample opportunity to correct the errant behavior but simply refused to make any adjustment before my Mother would bring Dad into the situation. As children we learn, or should learn that improper behavior results in some form of discipline. The choice of exactly what that discipline consists of, is up to the parents or person in charge of us at the time.

The rebellious world we live in is much like the child. There are laws, rules and moral standards in place to define order and proper acts in our society. However,  
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just as with a child, our society also continually tests the bounds of morality. It is no wonder that our society is riddled with inappropriate acts that end in divorce, abortion, adultery and fornication, lying, deceit and all sorts of evil. The Word of God is like the mother of a child saying to mankind, “Just wait until your Father gets home!” In context with this analogy, the billboard that states, “Don’t make me come down there” amuses me.

Too frequently in today’s teachings, the many Scriptures that instruct us to have appropriate fear of God are avoided and attention is given *only* to the loving aspect of God’s nature. Let there be no mistake, when my father punished me as when I punished my own children, it was not to create fear, but to discipline them as God disciplines us.

*“And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes everyone He accepts as a son.” (Hebrews 12:5 & 6 NIV)*

Love is demonstrated by discipline.

One of the dangerous offshoots of our avoidance of being honest about the need for each of us to have fear of God, is the conclusion that God, as a *loving* God will not send *anyone* to a burning Hell. It is clear in Scripture that God is...

*“...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (II Peter 3:9 KJV)*

His desire is that all will be saved from such an unpleasant end. But the Scriptures are *just as plain* in making us aware that there *is* a Hell and it is reserved for sinners who see no need to follow the plan that God revealed to us for our salvation.

*“...you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, 'Lord, open up to us!' Then He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know where you are from.' Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets,' and He will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you are from; depart from Me all you evil doers.' In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out.” (Luke 13:25-27 NASB)*

*“So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 13:40-42 NASB)*

*“A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: ‘If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name.’ This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.” (Revelations 14:9-12 NIV)*

Unlike many parents today, God has not *removed* discipline because He loves us. Some parents have become conditioned by our society to the point that they are blackmailed by threats from institutions and sometimes the government itself, into fearing that they could be brought up on charges for spanking their children or disciplining them in a manner that someone other than themselves feels is not appropriate. God’s Word clearly instructs parents to discipline children. We just read on the previous page that “...*the Lord disciplines those He loves...*” Should we not do the same for our children? Choosing to ignore the teachings of the Scriptures puts our children in peril. In a like manner, choosing to believe that God’s love *does away with* all punishment including the eternal punishment of Hell, puts *us* as well as those to whom we may teach such a belief in peril. It is simply not what the Scriptures teach. God’s love is what *provided the way* for us to escape Hell. Failure to follow that way of escape is failure to accept God’s love.

The far-reaching effect of the current softening of Biblical teaching concerning fear of God is that many souls will be lost. We can’t know with certainty who will be in Heaven or Hell for eternity, but we *can* know that each place exists for us following the judgment and that God *will* punish those who do not obey His commands.

We must be kind and understanding with others when we share the Good News. But at the same time, we must also be very *honest* with them that Scriptures *clearly* state that God *expects* us to keep His commandments (Matt. 5:19; Matt. 19:17; John 14:15; John 14:21; John 15:10; I Cor. 7:19; I John 2:3; Rev. 22:14; Rev. 14:12) and that eternal punishment will be the result of failing to do so. Just as parents have rules that children are expected to abide by or suffer the consequence, there are rules for living God’s way. To live in such a way and teach that we can ignore His commandments because His *love* alone will *overcome* all of our failings, is to teach and live in a way that will come under His condemnation and ultimate punishment.

Fear is useful in our avoidance of all sorts of hazards. Many people test the limits of their fears and take risks that result in injury and sometimes death. The same thing is true of people in a spiritual sense. It’s easy to believe that we can *all* go to heaven simply because God loves us. It is *difficult* to understand that His love *also* requires that failure to do what He commands will result in an eternity in Hell.