We sometimes hear it said that Christians should be "God-fearing people". Does this contradict what John says in 1 John 4:17-19, "There is no fear in love"?

The Bible certainly tells us to fear God. Solomon said, "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man, for God will bring every work into judgment..." (Ecc 12:13-14).

Peter said, "In every nation, the person who fears God is accepted with him" (Act 10:34-35, 1Pe 1:17, 2:17).

Paul said, "Beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2Co 7:1).

Yet the Bible also tells that we need not fear God! John says, as we mentioned before, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear" (1Jn 4:18).

Paul agrees: "You have not received a spirit of bondage again to fear" (Rom 8:15). "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and of a sound mind" (2Tm 1:7).

We should not fear God like the "one mina" man feared his master. No doubt the other men feared their master too, but in a different way (Lke 19:12-27). We should not have an abject and paralyzing fear of God as if he were a tyrant.

Rather, we should have a deep respect and awe of our dear Heavenly Father. We know he loves us and we love him, but we also know he is our Sovereign God, and not someone to mess with or take lightly.

Since the two previous lessons have been about faith and hope, you probably expected this lesson to be about love, for "faith, hope, and love, these three..." certainly belong together (1Co 13:13).

However, I am keeping love for our seventh and last influence, and looking now at an influence that is linked to faith, hope, and love, namely fear (1Pe 1:17).

Fear of God Encourages Obedience

The Hebrew writer contrasts "full assurance of faith" with "a certain terrifying expectation" (Heb 10:22, Heb 10:26-31).

Now of course a terror of God is not the fear that Christians have. Rather they fear God with a healthy fear (Heb 12:28-29). The Hebrew writer uses this reverence and awe to motivate Christians to keep obeying God. Healthy fear encourages faithfulness.