

Deuteronomy 7:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou shalt not be affrighted at them: for the LORD thy God is among you, a mighty God and terrible.

Analysis

The command 'Thou shalt not be affrighted' (literally 'shattered with terror') is grounded in God's presence: 'the LORD thy God is among you.' Divine presence is the antidote to fear. God's character is described as 'mighty God and terrible'—El gadol venora (great and awesome God). This isn't terrifying in the sense of capricious danger but awe-inspiring in power and holiness. The same God who is terrible to enemies is refuge to His people. Emmanuel—'God with us' (Matthew 1:23)—fulfills this promise supremely in Christ's incarnation. The Holy Spirit's indwelling means God's presence is even more intimate for believers than for Israel (John 14:16-17). Perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18) because God's presence guarantees victory.

Historical Context

God's presence with Israel was manifested through the pillar of cloud/fire (Exodus 13:21-22), the glory in the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-38), and victories in battle (Joshua 10:10-14). When God's presence departed due to sin (Ichabod, 1 Samuel 4:21), defeat followed. God's presence was Israel's unique advantage—not military might, technology, or numbers. The ark of the covenant symbolized God's presence going before them in battle (Numbers 10:35-36; Joshua 3:1-17). Christ promised His presence 'where two or three are gathered' (Matthew 18:20) and 'even unto the end of the world' (Matthew 28:20).

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does awareness of God's presence with you affect your response to fearful circumstances?
2. In what ways should God's 'terrible' (awesome) power inspire both reverent fear and confident trust?
3. How can you cultivate greater consciousness of God's abiding presence in daily life?

Interlinear Text

ל א	תַּעֲרֹץ	מִפְּנֵי	כִּי	יְהוָה
H3808	Thou shalt not be affrighted	at	H3588	them for the LORD
	H6206	H6440		H3068
יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ	בְּקִרְבֵּנוּ	אֵל ל	גָּדוֹל	וְנֹרָא:
thy God	is among	God	you a mighty	and terrible
H430	H7130	H410	H1419	H3372

Additional Cross-References

Nehemiah 9:32 (References God): Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day.

Nehemiah 1:5 (References God): And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments:

Deuteronomy 10:17 (References God): For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward:

Joshua 3:10 (References God): And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites.

Nehemiah 4:14 (References Lord): And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.