

# Job 31:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure.

## Analysis

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**For destruction from God was a terror to me** (כִּי פַחַד אֱלֹהִים אִידָּל, ki faḥad elay eid El)—faḥad (פַּחַד, terror/dread) and eid (אִידָּל, calamity/destruction) are stacked for emphasis. **By reason of his highness I could not endure** (וּמִשְׁעֵתוֹ לֹא אֹכַל, u-mi-se'eto lo ukhal)—se'et (שְׁעֵת, majesty/exaltation) emphasizes God's transcendent holiness. Yakol (יָכַל, able/endure) appears in negative: Job could not bear to sin against such a God.

This verse reveals Job's ultimate motivation: fear of the Lord, which is "the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10). Job didn't refrain from oppressing orphans merely from humanitarianism but from terror of God's judgment and inability to sin against His holiness. This anticipates the NT teaching that we work out salvation "with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12) and that it is "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31). Job's godly fear produced righteous living.

## Historical Context

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The concept of fear of the Lord pervades Hebrew wisdom literature (Job 28:28, Psalm 111:10, Proverbs 1:7). This isn't servile terror but reverent awe before God's holiness, power, and justice. Job's fear motivated obedience—he knew that God sees all (v. 4) and will judge (v. 14). This theocentric ethic contrasts with humanistic morality grounded in social contract or utility. Job's righteousness flowed from relationship with a holy God.

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

## Study Questions

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1. How does cultivating 'terror' of divine destruction shape ethical decision-making differently than mere social conscience?
2. What does Job's inability to endure God's 'highness' teach about holiness as a motivation for justice toward the poor?
3. How can the church recover healthy fear of the Lord without falling into legalism or works-righteousness?

## Interlinear Text

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כִּי	פַּחַד	אֵלַי	אֵלַי	לֵאלֹהִים
H3588	<b>was a terror</b>	H413	<b>For destruction</b>	<b>from God</b>
	H6343		H343	H410
וּמִשְׁאֵת יְהוָה				
<b>to me and by reason of his highness</b>			H3808	<b>I could</b>
H7613				H3201

## Additional Cross-References

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**Psalms 119:120** (Parallel theme): My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments.

**Job 13:11** (Parallel theme): Shall not his excellency make you afraid? and his dread fall upon you?

**2 Corinthians 5:11** (References God): Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

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