
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FEAR GOD?

DOT DOT DOT | Week 4 | 7.14.2019

Hey, so if you are a man and you want to go to our fall retreat Lake Champion, there is a deadline for registration for a discount right now—today—so we'd love for you to register. Moms, wives, look at your husband and your son and kind of nudge him and tell him to come register. We have a registration table out here in the Café, we'd love for you to connect. I am jealous, I can't go because my wife is due with our fourth girl and I would get in trouble. I tried [Applause], I tried to weasel my way because I think it would be an amazing thing. I haven't gone yet, but I just hear amazing testimonies of how men in this church bond and grow in relationships with each other and just, you can walk in on a Sunday morning and it changes for you. Right? Because you know people and you're connected and so I want that but unfortunately, my wife, she's going to have our fourth and so I can't do it this year. But I would love for everyone who's interested to do it and I'd love for you to share your testimony when you get back.



Men's Fall Retreat, Sept. 19-22
Register: CFDowningtowntown.com/men

So turn with me to Romans Chapter 3. As you do that, I was on vacation last week—by the way, my name is Pastor John Lawley for those who don't know, a lot of the students do. We have students up here [*gestures to front row*] going to Old Mill, students, give them praise. [Cheers] For those who don't know, I'm the Next Generation Pastor so I oversee our kids in the student department, that's kind of what I do here. Actually it's a privilege to be here this morning.

But I was on vacation last week, I went to kind of the Cape May area, beautiful, first time we were at the beach. Loved the beach. My family and I had a great time. All my girls and my wife we just kind of hung out and it was a wonderful time. So I get home and I'm unpacking, and man, I just want to rest from my rest. Do you guys know what I mean? I have kids, I just want to rest from my rest. And so I go upstairs and all of a sudden I hear a waterfall and I think, *That's not right. Why do I hear a waterfall?* And I go down the hallway and my daughter's bathroom, the plumbing burst, probably like on Tuesday, and it's just gushing out. And so I try to turn it off underneath, ran down to my basement—flooded, and so I turned it off.



Flooded basement



Erie Insurance has been wonderful. We have dryers going 24 hours a day at our house. Some of you with the rain this past week probably had similar situations. A lot of people were busy so I'm figuring that's probably why, been calling a lot of people to help us out. But God is still good and it's just stuff, but pray for us. It's been a pleasant return. I thought like hey, I should I should mention that as part of my testimony here this morning, that I had a great week but it was a tough ending, but we're safe and good and appreciate your prayers.

So we are talking about DOT DOT DOT series, but the reason I actually mentioned this flood to you is we are also really moving towards a heart of community here at our church. And one of the things I noticed when that happened was, man, my small group that meets on Tuesday nights at our house, they were just— they heard about it because we asked for prayer, and they were just coming over, dropping off stuff, asking if they could help. And we were just so blessed to be part of a community of people that love Jesus, so that we can come alongside of and when life happens like that, that they are there for us. And so we believe that if you come here on a Sunday and you are not yet part of that community, you haven't really stepped into full community with us. And so on your bulletins we're introducing an app

called Church Center and it's a really great tool that we're gonna roll out in the next couple months as ways for you to connect. So if you go on an app store and you download Church Center and they'll show you a picture on the bulletin and you can click on Calvary Fellowship and you can have our website, I mean our church's app. And so you can register your kids before you come on a Sunday morning, you can sign up for events really quickly, you can update your information, but also you can see our groups; groups that meet all throughout the week, all types of groups. We're gonna be adding more groups as we go and so if you want to get connected to a Bible study or maybe you love to knit, you can go into that app and connect with people in our church that meet together and step into that community because we believe that life is better together. Right? And so we'd love for you to get that if you don't have it already. Like I said, the bulletin will give you information on that.



But we're starting a series called DOT DOT DOT and what we're doing is we looked at the book of Romans for the past kind of year, and so in the summer we stopped looking at the book of Romans and we're gonna kind of look at verses in the book of Romans. And we're going to stop at a verse, highlight that verse, and then kind of flesh it out to see what that verse says in, really, the context of that verse because there's a lot of verses in Romans that we kind of flew over. And so for the summer we want to stop and kind of look at the verses, and for today we're gonna look at Romans 3, verse 18. And so this is what it says, it'll show up behind me as well.

³ *"There is no fear of God before their eyes."*

~ ROMANS 3:18

Paul says, I'm going to say that again. Paul says, "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Now it's quick to read over this, but we're going to stop with this passage and ask the question: What does it mean to fear God?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FEAR GOD?

Well, I remember when I was younger this was a confusing thing because I would also read in Scripture that perfect love cast out fear.¹ And so okay, wait, are we supposed to fear God or are we supposed to love God? Why would we fear God? That doesn't make sense. What does he mean by that? And why is there a warning if we don't? And so what does it mean to fear God, this is the question that we're gonna answer this morning.

And I came across a quote that I believe is really a beautiful way of talking about why it's important to fear God, and this is what the quote says. Do you ever have a quote that you read and it just floors you? And you're like running around and you tell everyone you know, "Look at this! Look at this!" And they're all just like, "Yeah, I don't get it." And you're like, "No!" You sort of have like a response to it. Anyway, this is the quote that did that to me, it just rocked me, here's what it says: "When you fear God, you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God, you fear everything else."

¹ *There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. ~ 1 JOHN 4:18*

“The remarkable thing about God is that when you fear God, you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God, you fear everything else.”

– OSWALD CHAMBERS, *My Utmost For His Highest*

And I thought, man, what a beautiful way to summarize the type of fear that Paul and what we're gonna be talking about this morning. But there's all types of fears, isn't there? There's different types of fears, like, I'll give an example. There is a “fun fear” like, there really is. Like I have to make a confession. A lot of my illustrations this morning is going to be about my daughters because I just spent all week nonstop with them in a small apartment, and so as I was kind of defining this message I just had a lot of examples. One of the things I love to do with my daughters, I love to scare them. [Laughter] I do. Like, I do. I love it, it's fun for me, and they love it, too, they love it, too. I'm not, I'm not [*he laughs*] “BLAAAH!” [Laughter] But they love it, too. So, I'm sure the audio guy loved that.

So what I do is I put them in our bedroom and I put them in the bed and they're all laying on the bed and I go to the end of the room and there's a switch. Right? It's underwater right now, but before [Laughter], there's a switch and so the blinds are covered, it's all dark, and I turn off the light. Right? And it's pitch black and they giggle and they're nervous and I kind of sneak around and, like, I sneak up on the bed and they're all laughing, “Daddy, turn on the light.” And I tickle one of them and then we all go crazy and I turn on the light and we laugh and we do it again. And I enjoy it, they enjoy it, it's a fun fear. Like, there's a fun fear. I personally, my wife doesn't enjoy it, but I personally love to hide around corners and scare my wife. [Laughter] It's a fun joy, fun fear for me. Right? Anybody enjoy that? So I like to hide behind the corner, “BLAAAH!” And she'd be like, “Oh, my goodness.” And I'd be like, “Did you get scared?” And she's like, “You are...” And I'd be like, “I love you.” [Laughter] And so now that she's pregnant and she's about to have a kid I don't scare as much, um, and my house is underwater. But anyway, so I love to—it's a fun fear.

**BOO!
Did I
scare
you?**

Like, I'll give you an example. There are people that love to—I don't—but they love to get up on planes and jump out of them. Right? And there's that fear and the adrenaline that comes just before that and



there's this like, “Yeaaaaaaah!!” I would be maintaining fear the whole way down and then long after, but some of them they love that, like, adrenaline fear. So there's kind of a good fear, there's a fun fear that we're not talking about, and then there's also a fear that's kind of bad. Right? Like a bad fear and sometimes we equate fearing God with this. And what I mean is there's a fear that paralyzes you, doesn't it? Like the fear that comes over you because maybe somebody has

broken your heart in the past and so you may be afraid to be in a relationship in the future. There's a fear that comes over you; you don't trust people because maybe you at one point in your life exposed who you really were only to be hurt, and so you're afraid of ever being known again.

FEAR

There's a type of fear that says, okay, well, maybe I should just not be who I am and just kind of change who I am, because it's a paralyzing fear. Like, man, if people actually knew who I was they would not like me. And so a fear comes over us. Teenagers, you know I'm talking about

here of man, of people. Like you walk into a high school and you're afraid. What are you afraid of? You're afraid that you won't have any friends, that they won't accept you, that, man, how many of you in high school or in college, maybe, we're afraid of the cafeteria at first? Like you go in and you're like man, my greatest fear is that I don't have my friends in this cafeteria at this time and I'm just gonna sit by myself. You're afraid of people, you're afraid of what they think of you, you're afraid of whether they'll



like you or not, whether you fit in, whether you're funny enough, whether you have the right clothing. There's a fear of people that can come over you that's a dangerous, dark, evil fear that is not of the Lord and it cripples you, it paralyzes you, and that's not the type of fear we're talking about either.

And then there's another fear and this is the fear that I would believe is a good one, it's a good fear. It's a type of fear that makes you run from danger. It's a type of fear that I had at the beach when I got too far into the ocean and sharks came into my mind. [Laughter] Right? And then a dolphin fin and I just was like full-on into the shore again. Right? That's a little

irrational, but there's a healthy fear of danger. Right? You go into a dark alley and you think man, I'm not gonna go there. There's a healthy fear that comes over you where it reminds you of danger, it reminds you that that's not the right path, that's not the good way to go, and that's the type of fear that we're gonna flesh out and we're gonna talk about this morning, the good fear. The fear that without it we would be lost, and if without it we would step into danger. And so this is the type of fear we're gonna talk about.

For an unbeliever the fear that's good is very simply the fear of judgment. If you do not believe Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you are to fear judgment. You are to fear it. And for many of you who do not walk in the Lord, it doesn't come often because you like to distract yourself from it, but it comes every once in a while and here's what I mean by that. When you're laying in bed and you think *Man, I'm not promised to wake up*, or you see your friend pass away and you're like *What if I go next?* Or sometimes, how many of you ever started breathing and thought *Man, I'm not promised that my heart's gonna keep beating*. And what happens? There's a fear, there's a fear of what comes next. What I'm doing now doesn't matter. Is there a God? Is He real? Does He want to know me? Am I gonna be good enough on judgment day? And so you fear that.

A lot of us we just have that moment and what do we do? We distract ourselves—let's go hang out, let's go party, let's go play video games, let's do something to distract me; I don't want to think about those things. Why? Because they're scary and for an unbeliever that's a good fear. It's a good fear to know that no matter what you do in this life you can reject God for a temporary time but you will give Him glory; you will bring Him glory either through judgment or through grace, but every knee will bow. And so the fear for an unbeliever is *Man, am I in right relationship with God?*

Because I tell this all the time, here's the reality of why we should fear Hell: **Hell is the separation from God**, so the greatest fear you should have in your life is loneliness because what will happen in judgment is you will go before the Lord who created you and everything—look at me—everything in your life that you've been chasing up to this point to satisfy you, you will find in Him.



In that moment all the echoes, all the pieces of His creation that points to Him, you'll recognize them then the reason I chased after friendships rather than God. The reason I chased after relationships rather than God is because I enjoyed the part that that brought me. What you'll realize is that that thing, that feeling, was made complete in Him, that it actually was to point to Him, and you'll know that. You'll know *God, You were with the thing I was chasing my whole life. I was chasing after You and I didn't even know it.* And in that moment for unbelievers—look at me—you will realize that you needed Him the whole time. And you will meet Him and—listen to me—He will give you what you desire. So if you live your whole life saying, “I don't need You,” He'll show you what that looks like.

The Rich Man and Lazarus
Luke 16:19-31



‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’

And that's terrifying because being apart from God—we see this in Scripture, remember the rich man? To be separated from God is to be separated from all that is good—that's terrifying. And so why is that a good fear? Because it makes us want to be right with God; it makes us want to know God; it makes us want to have a relationship with God so that when we meet Him we can stay with Him. And here's a beautiful part about our faith: Because of the cross we can have that even though we don't deserve it. That's the Gospel. The Gospel is how do you be made right with God? Through the cross, through receiving the gift of salvation. If you reject it, you reject the very thing you hunger for and that's terrifying because a lot of us, we won't realize that until we see it.

So for unbelievers this is the type of fear that's good, so I would recommend for those who haven't walked with the Lord yet, when you think about death, when you think about life after this world, let it cause you to pursue God. Let it cause you not to be satisfied by the things of this world—we're gonna talk about that more—because it won't satisfy you. That's why you have those thoughts. That's why some of you have the thoughts *Man, is this all there is?* That's a good thing to think about because there is more. Don't be blind to that, embrace that and pursue that which is more, which is Christ Jesus.

For believers there's a very different type of fear. There's a very different type of fear, look at Hebrews Chapter 12, verse 28, it says this:

²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our “God is a consuming fire.”

~ HEBREWS 12:28-29 (NIV)

So reverence and awe is the type of fear that a believer should have for the Lord. We are to have reverence and awe for God. That is what's going to cause us to have a healthy fear of God. Proverbs Chapter 1, verse 7, says this:

⁷ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

~ PROVERBS 1:7 (NIV)

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of what? Wisdom. So as we fear the Lord, as we develop a reverence and awe for the Lord to say, “Father, the sole purpose of my life is to know You more and to bring You glory.” As we start to live that way the Bible says we step into wisdom; that if we fear the people of this world and we fear the things of this world, that the Bible says we will never understand

God. We won't understand His ways and we won't have a relationship. And in fact, the Bible says we will be making foolish notions of what this world is all about. But as we step into this kind of fear we step into wisdom, and I love the fact that wisdom from God is understanding who He is. This is the beautiful part about your faith; as you grow in your understanding of God you gain wisdom. It's not you talk to people in this world about how to live this world, it's no, you talk to people who are pursuing God and they will also give you wisdom. It's the idea of those that are going after God is who you should surround yourself with.

So I say all the time if you want a great relationship and you're single, find somebody running after the Lord as you run after the Lord and introduce yourself. That's probably a good match. If you're pulling somebody along, stop, it's probably dangerous. It's the same thing in life. You want wisdom, pursue those that are pursuing the Lord and ask questions.

Here's one of the things that we see in Scripture in Deuteronomy Chapter 10, verse 12, and I'm gonna hop over to 20 as well. It says this:

¹² “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul,

²⁰ You shall fear the Lord your God. You shall serve him and hold fast to him, and by his name you shall swear. ²¹ He is your praise. He is your God, who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen.

~ DEUTERONOMY 10:12, 20-21

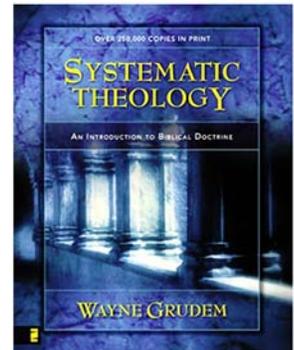
And so the fear of the Lord, Deuteronomy is teaching us it's to walk in His ways. It's to abide in Him. It's to obey what He asks you to do. Why? Because you trust that to be the right thing. You're saying “Okay, I fear You because I fear not being right with You.” Like, follow this, I fear if I step outside of your will for my life what that would look like. I don't want to be on my own, that leads to death, that leads to the destruction, so I'm gonna walk in your ways, I'm gonna read Scripture every day, I'm gonna seek your face because I need to know what You say because I'm afraid of not knowing.

The Bible says that fear is also when you seek out wisdom. Seek out, like, I love the story of King David. The reason I love the story of King David is King David did not have a perfect resume. Amen? How many of us will connect with not having a perfect resume? Okay, King David was called “a man after God's own heart.” I don't understand that unless it's about fear, I don't understand because he does not have a good resume, but what made David a man after God's own heart is as you read the Psalms David was quick to recognize his sin, he was quick to turn to God, confessing a need for God, a need for God's sovereignty over his life, a need for God to change him. And so David was quick to fear God and in his failures he went to God, not to man. And because of that God looked upon David's life and said he is a man after my own heart²—because David had great reverence and great awe for the Lord.

One of things we're doing in student ministry that I really am passionate about because it's kind of my testimony, is we're studying systematic theology. And what that is it's Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology* and it's this big, thick book that we study once a month and literally what we're doing is we're asking questions. What do you want to talk about today? Well, let's talk about the role of men and

² *Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. 22 And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, ‘I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.’ ~ ACTS 13:21-22*

women. Let's talk about the Trinity. Let's talk about end times. So we pick a topic and then we go to *Systematic Theology* and what that is it's a study of God. So we look at Scripture and we compare different passages of Scripture and by doing that we grow in our understanding of who God is. And in fact, because we do that we grow in our fear and reverence towards Him.



Like my testimony is I grew up in the church and I did not know God. I grew up in the church and I did not know God—how can I fear somebody I don't know? How can I have reverence for somebody I don't know? And my testimony is when God called me out in college to go to a Christian college my first class was this guy who taught the book of John for 45 years and he opened up the book of John and he spent an hour and a half on John 1:1 [Laughter] and it blew my mind. And in that moment something happened for me—God revealed to me His depth. You guys following me? He opened up the fact that I only knew a little tiny bit of who He was. I scratched barely the surface and what this man did was he opened it up for me and says there's a God to be known, there's a journey to be had here of who God is and what He's taught us in His Word so that you can know Him more, worship Him greater, have more reverence, have more awe for Him. He opened up that door and man, I ran full speed into that.

You're telling me the Bible isn't used to just open up and read a verse out of context and be like, “This is strange,” [*gestures closing the Bible*], close it, and put it down on the dusty shelf? That's not what the Bible is. He opened it up and he showed me depth, and I thought *Man, I never knew this*. And so I ran towards that depth to find a God who was so much greater than I thought. And I pray that our students, I pray that you understand that that's the God that you are to worship and to know. And that's what it means to walk in reverence and fear towards God.

In Hebrews Chapter 12 it also talks about for believers that God disciplines. He disciplines believers just as a good father would discipline his child, a good mother would discipline a child, so does God for those that are in Christ Jesus. So for believers you are to be fearful of not being in the will of God. Why? Because God loves you. Remember we talked about you are no longer—if you are believer—you are no longer enslaved to sin. You have been set free, BUT you have every ability to choose to go back into slavery, but our God loves us enough not to bless us in slavery. Amen? Like He's not going to bless the decisions that rebel against Him.

And so for believers if you say, “God, You are my king,” and you worship the world, He's not going to bless that. Why? Because He loves you. He says I'm not going to speak life over my daughters when they do something wrong; I'm gonna correct and rebuke and then challenge. And then as they try I will speak life, but I love them too much to allow them in darkness. I love them too much. The Bible says God pursues believers with that type of love and that type of discipline, and that's a good thing. But we are never to be afraid of God. We do not have to be afraid of God for believers. This is why the fear of God is an important concept to have clarity. There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus,³ there's nothing that can separate us from God⁴—Romans 8—remember? That there's this relationship with God that will never leave and never forsake us, so we are not afraid of being scared of God, like, we can't go

³ *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. ~ ROMANS 8:1 (NIV)*

⁴ *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. ~ ROMANS 8:38-39 (NIV)*

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to Him, but we do see God as a Heavenly Father and because of that He desires good for us, and He desires us to walk in goodness. And so just as a child would be insecure when they're not doing what they're called to do, we are to see God and say yes. He will discipline us as we walk astray because He loves us.



Another thing we see is that fearing God is very simply respecting, obeying, submitting to His discipline, submitting to all of this. Like, how many of you have ever sinned greatly and owned it? You know what I'm talking about? Like you messed up and you know that you've been saved by grace, and you know that you've been forgiven, and you know you're under the blood of Jesus, and so because of that you confess it, "I have sinned and I've sinned against my family, I've sinned against—" and you confess it and you're vulnerable, but in that vulnerability you are not afraid. Why? Because you know you're not judged by God,

that you are under grace, and so because of that you can confess those things and say, "Father, I'm happily able to come under your discipline, happily able to have people come over me and speak into me and correct me because my ultimate desire is to be right with You, not pretending to be right."

Like, one of the fears I have is that there are people in this room—according to Scripture—there are people in this room that come often and do a lot of good things but when they hear what I'm saying about fearing God – there's nothing that happens to you. That's terrifying to me that the enemy has you so blind that you can hear about God's love, you can hear about judgment, you can hear about God calling you out of this world into the eternal reality in which you were created for, and you get out of here and you forget it and you drive home and you do nothing different. It doesn't change you at all. It's—for some reason you are hardened and you are okay with that—that's terrifying to me. And my prayer going into this message is that the Spirit of God would take the enemy's lies out of this room and that for the first time maybe in your life something inside of you is *like there's something true about what this guy's saying* and that your soul, which has been starving up to this point, is waking up and is screaming: "This is what I desire." This is why you are not satisfied with stuff. I pray that your soul is screaming right now because I fear the enemy's lies.



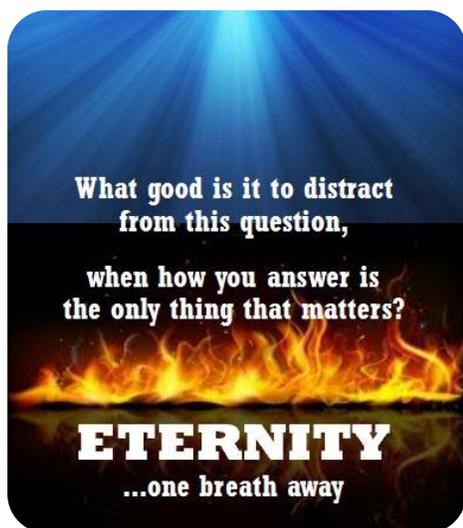
Like one of the things, just an example because I'm gonna crush this with a couple examples because I want you to get this. My daughters, I am teaching my daughters to be terrified of the street. I'm teaching, we have a little driveway, it's kind of horizontal, like it's not ideal but like it's, it's also—so anyway, it's not the greatest driveway in the world but they love to draw chalk and so we have this long line and if they cross that line we scream at them, "Stop!" [Laughter] And they're petrified. UH?! And we're like up on the porch and we scream at them and we teach them, "Do not walk across the street without our hands. Do not walk across the street without our hands." We are teaching them to be terrified of the street and I'm so grateful for that. I'm grateful that my daughter is afraid of the street because I want to tell her a bedtime story and scare her tonight. [Laughter] Right? Like I'm grateful that my daughter's afraid of the street because I want to walk her down the aisle one day. I'm grateful that she's afraid of the street because by being afraid of that and recognizing her need for us it protects her. It protects her from danger. It protects her from being upset, from being hurt—it's a good fear. It keeps her eyes on that who desires to love and protect. It keeps her from wandering into danger, into destruction, into death. It's a good fear.



Listen, this church thing it's not a social club. Though we need community, we need it, this is about Heaven and Hell, death and life, eternity with/eternity separated—**IT'S A BIG DEAL** and we are to not make light of that. Like one of the things my mentor always convicts me of is when you have trial in the church, if you have broken relationships with your brothers and sisters, you are distracting people from what matters. So to be quick to bring about—what?—unity because it should be about the things that matter. Because heaven forbid somebody walks in here who needs Jesus and they're distracted by us. We are to fear that, church, that people come in here who are unbelievers and they see everything but. Man, we are to be quick to say, “Okay.” Man, I fear it's about me, so put that to death.



One of the things that I think that's so common and this idea of fear is don't we, when we have this fear—and I mentioned this earlier—aren't we quick to distract? Like, we are. We're quick to say let's go hang out with somebody, let's go watch TV, let's go play board games, let's go do whatever, because we don't want to think about these things and we distract. Let me ask us an honest question: What good is it to distract from this question? What life does that bring you? Does that question go away? Like, for those that don't have a relationship with Jesus, does your fear of death go away when you don't think about? Maybe... but does it pop up again? Why? Because your soul is longing and God loves you, He's pursuing you, and those questions lead to forgiveness to grace to repentance—it's good, it's good to think about those things, it's good to contemplate the fact that we are not promised tomorrow. It's good.



Here's another example that I like to use because I think it's one of my favorite books, Ecclesiastes in the Bible is a story about King Solomon. And King Solomon is David's son and he's a very attractive, very powerful, really, the nation of Israel is at its hiatus during King Solomon's reign. He is wealthy. He is powerful. He is really a fascinating leader because he also was given a gift of wisdom, he was given the gift from God of wisdom. So here's why I love the book of Ecclesiastes. Solomon says this, he says I am going to chase after the world and so he does, he chases after the world.

Now I want you to do me a favor, I've been talking about this: If you've chased after these things—I want you to hear me—soften your heart to this because it will change your life. Solomon said okay, I'm gonna chase after the world to see if any of that stuff satisfies me, if fearing the world and getting the approval of the

world is somehow gonna satisfy me I'm gonna try and see if that works. And so what does he do? He throws parties, and they're bigger parties, more food, more friends than any of you and I could ever dream of doing, and he does it day after day after day. And after a while of throwing parties he's the most popular, most famous person who has ever walked this planet, after throwing parties he says you know what, I'm gonna build houses. So he built mansion upon mansion upon castle upon castle and he builds and he builds, and after he builds all these things he starts to have pools. And he starts to have gardens, he starts to build out on his real estate and he has all this stuff. And then he says, you know what, I'm gonna chase after the flesh because that's where it is. And so he has hundreds of concubines, hundreds of wives, and he tries out all these desires of the flesh. And he's doing all these things, he's chasing after all these things, trying to win approval of the world, trying to find satisfaction in the world,

and listen to me, here's what Solomon does—he achieves that pursuit farther than anyone else in this room and that's a gift. Why? Because for every one of us we may think we could get farther, we won't. And he looks at those things and he says this: Meaninglessness.

Don't harden your heart to that. Man, we can defeat the enemy this morning if you listen to me. He says in these things there was momentary pleasure, momentary happiness, but I had to do it again because those things died and unless I kept doing it and doing it, it would go away. It did not satisfy me and I kept chasing and chasing and it's all meaningless, it's like the wind, it did not satisfy me. And then in the end—this is why this is such an important story when we talk about fear—Ecclesiastes Chapter 12, verse 13, here is his conclusion, here is a man who has feared the world, who has chased after the world to find there's nothing there that will satisfy. It is a well that keeps on drying up. When he does that he stops and in his wisdom he concludes the point of this world, the point of your life is to fear God and to keep His commandments.

**The end of the matter; all has been heard.
Fear God and keep his commandments,
for this is the whole duty of man.**

~ ECCLESIASTES 12:13

That is the [INAUDIBLE 0:07:45.0] of your life; that is the pursuit of your life that will bring you the joy that does not run dry, the happiness that leads to peace everlasting, the joy that brings about—look at me—soul satisfaction. The Gospel is very easy to present to people because without it you have a void. It's not hard, “Hey, do you not know Jesus?” “No.” “Okay, I know you have a voice because He's the only one that can fill that.” And Solomon's saying, listen, try the world – I tried it, there's nothing there. So church, we are called to stop fearing the world and start fearing God. And when we do that we begin to fear a little else.

Like I don't fear the fact that my house is flooded, it's a house, I can have joy. I can have laughter. I can have fellowship because it's a house, it's not my Lord. It's not my treasure. My job, my goal is to bring glory to God. My hope is not that people will praise me, it's that when I stand before the Lord He is pleased with me, and that has nothing to do with the house I own, it has to do with how I use it. That's the freedom in Christ is you begin to recognize what matters and think and dwell on what matters. But fear keeps us there or draws us there and that's why it's a good thing. Amen? That's why it's a good thing.

One of the things I don't like about fire and brimstone, which is a little bit of what I did this morning, fire and brimstone is like a teaching style and what fire and brimstone is it's basically like, “If you don't believe in Jesus you're gonna burn in Hell”—and just kind of sit there, I'm waiting [*crosses his arms across his chest*]. Right? And a lot of people are like, “Well, I don't want hell, I'm in.” But that's not the Gospel, so I don't like that style. I like leading with grace. I like leading with hope. But listen, there's something really valuable with every once in a while recognizing that you are not promised your next breath. You're not. And what matters now is whether or not you know the Lord. Don't run from that, embrace that, fall on your knees and confess, “I need You, Lord.” It's a good thing. It's good to be convicted over that. It's good to wrestle with that. So though it's good to lead in grace, conviction comes sometimes through fear. Right? Man, I've been chasing after the wrong things. I'm terrified of

where that's gonna lead me. I'm terrified that I will spend the rest of my life doing what Solomon already did only to finding out on my deathbed the same thing he says.

Like, how many of you—I say this all the time because this is for me sometimes when I talk to people about the Gospel, I talk about this all the time because it's the enemy's lies that we need to expose, I say this all the time—how many of you have had loved ones that passed away in the last couple years? How many of you were hit in the gut when you looked around the world and it did not care? People still laughed, sports were still played, and you stopped and you thought *Why does this not matter to them?* Listen to me, it's a beautiful thought, you know why? Because it makes you stop worshiping the world. It makes you think it doesn't matter then. Your life matters to the Lord; He's weeping, they're not, so stop winning their approval, start chasing after the One who matters. It's good to see that. It's good to recognize that yes, I have a legacy to leave here but I have a purpose. That's a healthy way to end it. Right? That's a healthy thing.

Do not love the world or the things in the world.
If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

For all that is in the world
—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—
is not from the Father but is from the world.

And the world is passing away along with its desires,
but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

~ 1 JOHN 2:15-17

So let me ask you a couple questions as the band comes up. Where are we with this? Do you fear the Lord? Or do you fear everything but? What do we need to do in response this morning? I'm gonna pray over our offering time, but I'm gonna ask for some of you, some of you it's simply just surrendering, it's falling on your face saying, “Lord, I need You,” and so as we pray you don't have to make a public display of it but give your life to the Lord. Accept what He's done on the cross for you. Be right with Him. Listen, it's a gift, you don't have to earn it. You don't have to live in shame. It's a gift. You are called to live in hope and grace. And so I pray for some of you that's your response. For unbelievers, for you it's stepping into belief.

And so now, some of you who are believers—I'm going to pray over our offering—I'm gonna ask you to move your fear towards the things of the Kingdom, and here's what I mean by that. When we do our offering time the reason we do our offerings separate and we highlight it is not that we want your money. It's not. It's not. It's because we want you to be obedient because by giving to the Kingdom we set our treasures in Heaven. Like, I want to give, my wife and I give online, we want to give because I want a sex slave to be rescued and I may not be able to do that, but man, I can give to people who are. Like, I want the people in Senegal to know about Jesus and I may not be able to go, but I know people who are, so I'm giving to the purpose that I'm called to which is to further His Kingdom, to make His Name known, and to bring light to the darkness of the world. So we stop and we highlight giving because it's an act of obedience and He is glorified when we do and you are blessed when you do.

But listen, you don't believe in God, don't give. If you're new, don't give. It's for those that are walking in obedience saying, “Lord, we fear having stuff in this world that we can't take with.” Like, seriously, my fear is I chose stuff over eternity. That's my fear. And I need things and God delights in protecting

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and providing for me, but man, I'm afraid that if I didn't buy that I could have saved a soul. Like, I'm afraid of that because, man, I know that I can't bring my U-Haul after I die, of stuff, I can't bring that. Right? I stand before the Lord and He says, "What have you done?" And so for those brothers and sisters, I just would pray to you there's so much we want to do in the Kingdom around the world. We so much want to do more and more and more and so let's do it. Amen? Because we aren't promised tomorrow, but man, I want to bring God glory today. Let me pray and then we're gonna pass out the offering.

Father.

We love You, and Lord, we have reverence and awe for You. I pray in this room that there are people right now that for first time in their life You've softened their heart to the Gospel of grace.

Lord, I pray right now that there are people who have fears that are deep, unhealthy fears, and Lord, that You've forgiven them and that You take that fear away and You replace it with a reverence. Lord, I pray for those right now that have a fear that You would never love them because of what they've done. Lord, I pray You'd take that away, too, that's the enemy. I pray that they would replace that with your grace, your mercy upon their lives.

So Lord, I pray for this offering. Let it bless You, build your Kingdom, and for your glory and honor. Amen.

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