

Ecclesiastes 12:13

Sunday 1/31/2021

I want to share two verses with you. One is in Ecclesiastes 12:13, and it says,

Ecclesiastes 12:13

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

So He says, "Fear God and keep His commandments. This is the whole duty of man." Then you compare that to 2 Timothy 1:7, and it says,

2 Timothy 1:7

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

The question is, how do you reconcile that? How do you reconcile that paradox, that discrepancy where He says, "The whole duty of man is to fear God," and then He says, "But God hath not given us the spirit of fear"? How does it work? Obviously, the answer is that there are two kinds of fear in the Bible: there is the fear of the Lord, and then there is the fear of man. That is what I would like to speak about this morning for just a little while.

Let us go to the Lord in prayer and ask for His blessing today. Heavenly Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. First, Lord, I just want to lift Bob up. Certainly, we do not mean to make light of whatever hit him this morning, but it had to be something serious enough to pull him out of this pulpit. So we just pray for him. We pray for a quick recovery, that whatever is going on, it is nothing serious, and that he will feel better just as quickly as possible. He will be right back up here on Thursday where he belongs. Lord, we just pray for him, that You will watch over him and help him through this.

Father, as I prepare to preach this message, we just ask for Your Holy Spirit to just give me the words to say. Lord, I pray that it will be a blessing. Just allow me to have clarity of thought, that I can say what You want me to say, that it will make sense, and that we can all take some things out of Your Word today that we can move forward and apply into our lives and our walk with You, Lord. We love You. We ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

I. The Fear of Man

I want to start with the fear of man. This is not a deep message today. This is not one of those messages where Bob takes us on deep dives. This is just going to be very down to earth, very practical. But I think it is something that we need. Especially looking at what is going on in the world around us, there are a lot of things that we can be afraid of right now in this world. Obviously, there is a virus that has put us all into a situation where we have to make announcements about not sitting too close to people and wearing these stupid masks and all of this nonsense that we are having to deal with. Yet, at the same time, I do not mean to make light of something that has made a lot of people around this country and a lot of our own friends and family members very, very sick. So it is an extremely serious thing for a lot of people.

Then you have the fact of what is going on with our government right now and the power struggle that is happening between the two political parties, where both sides have so much anger and just literal hatred and vitriol for the other side. That has extended all the way down through our society. There are a lot of things out there that we can be fearful of. But I want to share with you Proverbs 29:25, because we have to be really careful that we are fearing the right things and that we have the proper perspective.

Proverbs 29:25

The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.

I could read that verse, probably just stop right there, close it up, and pray and say amen. I would stop sweating for one, and we could go home and just think about that verse. That is the crux of the whole thing. If we could just get that down and understand that the fear of man brings a snare. When we fear men, what is a snare? A snare is something that catches you and does not let go. It does not necessarily kill you. When you set a snare out in the woods to catch an animal, you do it to trap it. Then you come up later and you kill it, I guess. But the fear of man is going to trap you. It is going to snare you. It will not necessarily kill you, but if you stay stuck in that snare, you eventually will die. Spiritually, if we get caught in that snare of fearing men as opposed to fearing God, we are going to get trapped and we are going to get stuck. If we do not get out of it, at some point we are going to die spiritually.

One of the biggest things that gets us in trouble in our life is worrying about what men say and worrying about what men think about us. When I say men, I am talking about in the general sense. Obviously, this is women, boys, girls, this is everybody, people, mankind. Worrying about what man says about you, worrying about what man thinks about you, is one of the biggest problems that you are going to run into in your Christian life because you will become governed by that instead of being governed by the Word of God.

This is what happens in politics. You see it all the time. Politicians, one of my biggest frustrations with politicians, is that for the most part, they say they have a set of core beliefs that they stand on. But at the end of the day, they are licking their finger and putting it out and seeing which direction the wind is blowing. Whatever the people are wanting at that point, that is the direction they are going because all they really care about is being popular so they can get elected again. They do not really care about actually doing anything for people. That is what Christians do sometimes. That is what we as Christians do. We listen to our friends, we listen to our family, we see what people around us are saying, what people around us are thinking, and we begin to make those thoughts our thoughts. We begin to go down that road because we do not want to have the trouble. We do not want to have somebody think that maybe we are a mean person or maybe we are judgmental. It is a terrible thing to get caught up worrying about what man thinks.

Turn over to Exodus 32. We are going to look at a couple of quick stories here that illustrate this fear of man and the problem that it can bring. Exodus 32:1-4 says,

Exodus 32:1-4

1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron; and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

2 And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.

3 And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.

4 And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

You guys know what is happening here. You know the story. Moses is up on the mountain. He is meeting with God. God is laying out the law to him, and the people are getting restless. They are just kind of sitting down there waiting. When they saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, who is the priest, and said unto him, "Up, make us gods, which shall go before us. For as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him."

So, first problem, you have the people telling the man who is in charge. Moses is up meeting with God. Aaron is left in charge, and the people tell him, "Up." What is that? That is another problem that we have in churches today. That is a problem we have in families today, I think, is that the person who should be in charge, everybody else in the family is like, "Up, do this, up, do that." My kids will joke with me about things like that, and they will kind of tease sometimes. I just look at them and I am like, "Are you having an aneurysm right now? Are you having some sort of brain problem? What did you just say to me?" That is not okay. It is a tremendous sign of disrespect. They tell Aaron, "Up, make us gods, which shall go before us." They said, "For as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what has become of him." They did not know where he was. They did not know what was going on. So they wanted him to make them gods that they could worship. Well, they knew that they were not supposed to make other gods. They knew that they were not supposed to worship other gods.

Verse 2 says, "And Aaron said unto them," and he just goes right along. So Aaron is following right along with what the people say. He says, "And he said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, and of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me." And all the people broke off their golden earrings, which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool. After he had made it a molten calf, they said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

You could stay there for a little while with all the problems that you see there. Aaron did not even try to give them any resistance. They say, "Hey, go do this." And he is like, "Okay, pass all your gold up." And he goes and he throws it, and he makes this molten calf. Then look what he says.

He says, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Really? Is that really what happened? So those are the gods, the molten calf that he made. Those were the gods that parted the Red Sea. Those are the gods that did all of the miracles in Egypt so eventually get Pharaoh to let them go. Is that really what happened? It is amazing how quickly he went along with them.

God is pretty upset at them. Look at Exodus 32:19-24.

Exodus 32:19-24

19 And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.

20 And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.

21 And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?

22 And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief.

23 For they said unto me, Make us gods which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what has become of him.

24 And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.

Now Aaron is backtracking a little bit. He says, "Hey, hey, hey, what are you mad at? Don't get mad at me." He is like, "You know the people, they are set on mischief. What am I supposed to do?" He says, "For they said unto me, Make us gods which shall go before us. For as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what has become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me, then I cast it into the fire."

What is Aaron doing here? He is putting it back on the people. But ultimately, what you see is that the reason that Aaron did it in the first place is because he feared the people more than he feared God. Instead of taking a stand and looking at all those people of Israel and saying, "Look, you guys are all wrong. We know that we are not supposed to make any molten image, any images. We are not supposed to worship any other gods. We are going to sit right here and wait like we were told to. We are going to obey God. And I do not care if you like it or not." But that would have been a pretty difficult thing to do, considering the masses and the multitudes were all up in arms about the situation they were in. So Aaron feared man instead of fearing God, and he committed a terrible sin to the point that God was ready to come down and let them all have it.

You cannot miss here what he says at the end of verse 24, because this is something that happens when you begin to fear man and you go down this path: it turns you into a liar. Look at verse 24.

It says, "And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me, then I cast it into the fire." So far, so good. And look, "and there came out this calf." What? That is not how it happened. Look back at verse 4. It says, "and after he had made it a molten calf." So we get the truth, we get the reality in verse 4 that Aaron took the gold, he knew exactly what he was doing, and he formed it into a calf. Then he tries to remove himself from it when he is telling Moses what happened. At the end of verse 24, he says, "Hey, I just threw it into the fire and this calf came out." It is amazing. It was like a miracle. It must have been God that did it. This is what we do when we fear man. We commit sin. We go down this wrong path, and then we become a liar about it. We get very dishonest about it. We go back and we want to blame other people for our own problems, for our own mistakes, or we just flat out try to change what really happened. We try to say that is not really what it was. That is not really how it went.

Turn over to 1 Samuel 15. Let us look at another quick story here. In 1 Samuel 15, you have a story of Saul, and Saul, of course, is an absolute mess. In 1 Samuel 15, God had told Saul to go and to destroy Amalek. He said to kill everything. He said, "Don't leave anything alive." Saul mostly followed him, but it says he took the king alive and also the best of the animals. Let us look at 1 Samuel 15:11-24.

1 Samuel 15:11-24

11 It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night.

12 And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal.

13 And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD.

14 And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?

15 And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.

16 Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on.

17 And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?

18 And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed.

19 Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD?

20 And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.

21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal.

22 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

24 And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.

God has said, "Look, I wish I had not made Saul king. It was obviously a mistake. He has gone back. He is not following any of my commandments." Verse 12, "And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and has gone about and passed on and gone down to Gilgal." And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said unto him, "Blessed be thou of the Lord, I have performed the commandment of the Lord." And Samuel said, "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the oxen, which I hear?"

That is kind of funny. That is one of my favorite stories in the Bible. Saul, he says Saul is trying to be big and bad and magnanimous. He says, "I have completed the task that God gave me. I have obeyed the commandment of the Lord." And then you hear the sheep in the background, and it is like, "Baa." And Samuel is like, "What? Then what is that noise? What is that noise that I keep hearing?" It is like when you ask your kids to do something. We are going out, we are going to be gone for a couple of hours. Make sure you start the dishwasher right after we leave, because I want it done when I get home so we can empty and reload it. Then you get home, and it is like, "Hey, did you do what I asked you to do?" And they are like, "Yeah, yeah, we did. Yeah, we did." And it is like, "Well, then what is that sound I hear? Because it sounds like the dishwasher is running. So I am guessing you started it about 10 seconds ago when you heard the garage door open." That is how it is. He says he obeyed the commandment of the Lord, but he did not obey the commandment of the Lord. He did not fully obey the commandment.

Look at verse 15. Look what he does here. It says, "And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God, and the rest we have utterly destroyed." Here is Saul. Do you notice a pattern here? Same thing that Aaron did. Saul is putting the blame for himself. He is the leader. He was the one that was given the instructions. He was told to leave nothing alive. He was told to kill everybody. He said, "The people saved the animals back." Then he tried to spiritualize it. Then

he tried to say it was for a good reason. It was for a good cause. He said, "They saved the rest alive, or they saved the best of the sheep and the oxen to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God." So he tried to spiritualize his own sin and his own disobedience. Is not that something that we love to do? We love to manipulate our circumstances, and we halfway follow what God says. We go part way down the road. Then it is always situational ethics. It is the ends justify the means. We come up with some reason why it was okay that we did not fully obey God, that we did not fully follow the principle because, "Well, it was because of this over here." It is always some spiritual reason that we try to attach to it.

Read on verse 16. "Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay and I will tell thee what the Lord has said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on. And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel? And the Lord anointed thee king over Israel. And the Lord sent thee on a journey and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil and didst evil in the sight of the Lord?" And Saul said unto Samuel, "Yea, I have obeyed the voice." So he will not let go. He is still not going down without a fight here. He says, "I have obeyed the voice of the Lord and have gone the way which the Lord sent me and have brought Agag, the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites." So even within his trying to justify, he admitted to not doing what he was supposed to do because he said to kill everybody. He says, "I brought the king, but I killed everybody else."

Verse 21, again, here we are, blaming the people again. "But the people took of the spoil, sheep, and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God and Gilgal." Samuel said, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams."

Let us stop right there for a second. That obviously right there is one of the greatest verses in the Bible that if you do not have that marked, if you do not have that highlighted, if you do not have that, if not memorized, at the very least somehow burned into the back of your brain so it pops into your head on a fairly regular basis, you need to understand that principle. To obey is better than to sacrifice. When it comes to fully understanding what is important to God and what is not important to God, sacrifice was a pretty important thing in the Bible. Would you agree with that? It is how the nation of Israel got forgiveness for their sins. It is how they got cleansed. It is how we got cleansed from our sins when the Lord Jesus Christ sacrificed himself. Romans 12 tells us that we are to be a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. We are to be a sacrifice. Sacrifice is clearly pretty important to the Lord. It is important for us in our relationship with the Lord to sacrifice the things of our life, the things that we want to do for God. But look at what he says. He says, "To obey is better than sacrifice."

I love it when there are definitive things in the Bible. There are obviously a lot of definitive things in the Bible, but sometimes you are thinking about something that is like, "Well, you are not going to find, I do this," or, "You are working on a devotion or something, and you are like, I want to make this point, and I know this is the principle, but I am looking for a verse that just

says this." And it is like, "Well, you are not going to find a verse that just literally says that phrase that you are looking for. You are going to have to find the principle that backs it up." I love it when it is clear when God says, "To obey is better than sacrifice." There is no gray area there. There is no ambiguity. There is no, "Well, I do not know, but in some circumstances." No, he says, "Obey is better than sacrifice."

That is something that we tried the best of our ability, at least, to bludgeon into our kids' heads as they were growing up about the importance of obedience. When they were children, when they were little, it was about obeying us. It was about, "You will obey me, you will obey your mom, you will do exactly what we say." How do we say it? Mason, I will put you on the spot like grandpa does with Aunt Calkel and mom sometimes. How do you obey? What is the definition of it? Exactly. We would tell them, "You obey immediately, exactly, and with the right heart attitude." If you are missing one of those three ingredients, you are not obedient. Immediately. If I tell you to do something, you do it when I tell you to do it. If I say, "Get up and go do this," you are not like, "Ah, all right, in a little bit. I am just going to finish this up." You do it exactly.

This was Saul's problem. Saul did not obey exactly. He kind of obeyed. If you think about it, he mostly obeyed. He killed all the people, and he killed a lot of the animals. He just saved some of the animals, and he saved the king. So he mostly obeyed, but he did not obey exactly. He did not fully obey and do everything that God had told him to do. Then the third one, this is the hardest one, is with the right heart attitude. They got in all kinds of trouble when they were young for doing what we told them to do exactly how we told them to do it, but doing it with a sour attitude. That would get them a whooping just as much as not doing what they were supposed to do, because you need to obey with the right heart attitude. It is about because you love me, if I have asked you to do something, you do it.

The point of that, I am not trying to act like we were some great parents, because we screwed a lot of things up. You do your best, right? That is what we try to instill in them. But the reason for it, and now that they are getting older, they are beginning to understand, is because they need to transfer that attitude into their life and their walk with the Lord today. You have to learn that as a young child. So eventually, I want them to transfer that. So when they are learning the principles of the Bible, and when they are here in the preaching, and they are getting into this book, and God is giving them things and telling them what he wants them to do, telling them where he wants them to go, how that he wants them to do it, that they understand that concept of obedience, and how it does not matter. It does not matter if you are discipling seven people, God is not impressed by that. If you do not obey Him in the simple things that He gives you to do, if you cannot be fully obedient in the simple principles on a daily basis, it does not matter how much you know about the Bible. It does not matter if you could get up and answer every question that Bob answers on a Thursday night. It does not matter if you could get up and lay out that whole chart and lay out Daniel's 70th week and whatever. Forget all of that stuff, because when it comes to what God thinks of you and your relationship with Him, to obey is better than sacrifice. There is nothing more important to Him than obeying His truth and doing what He says to do.

Now skip ahead and look at verse 24, and finally, Saul admits it, and we get an idea of why. He finally comes clean. Verse 24 says, "And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned." That is the first fully truthful thing that Saul has said so far. He says, "For I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and thy words." And here is the thing. Why? Why did he do it? "Because I feared the people and obeyed their voice." So Saul, this is the end of it for Saul. He stays on the throne for a while, but this is where God says, "He is out. I am going to replace him on the throne." This is literally it for him. This is the final straw, so to speak. Why did he get there? How did he get there? It is that one phrase, "Because I feared the people and obeyed their voice." What was that first verse we read? Proverbs 29:25, "The fear of man bringeth a snare." Saul brought himself a snare because he feared the people. Instead of being the man that God wanted him to be, instead of being bold and being courageous and standing up and saying, "This is what God said, this is what we are going to do," he feared the people. He feared what they would think about him. He wanted to be popular. So he sinned against the commandment of the Lord, and he paid dearly for it. He ends up losing the kingdom as a result.

Acts 5:29 says,

Acts 5:29

Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

What a great verse, but what a simple principle. "We ought to obey God rather than men." This is not a deep message, but boy, this is one of those messages that just lands right in your lap. Because I think if we are honest, we can all look at situations where we were fearful of men and we were fearful of our friends. Maybe we were fearful of our family. We were fearful of what people would think about us. Maybe we were fearful of what they might say about us, and we would not speak the truth. We would not do the right thing fully and completely. Maybe we partly did it the way that Saul did, but we would not fully do it.

Matthew 10:28, everybody has heard this verse many times:

Matthew 10:28

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

God makes it pretty clear. He says, "Don't fear man, that the only thing that he can do is kill the body." Especially if you are a Christian, for crying out loud. Paul tells us that for me to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I get killed, boo hoo. From my perspective, I think my family might be sad about it, I hope, but for me, what does that mean? I close my eyes and I open them up, and I am in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why is that anything to be worried about? "Don't fear man which can kill the body, but not able to kill the soul, rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Obviously, this is a verse that is primarily speaking to an unsaved man, saying that "Don't fear man, you need to fear God," and that is what is going to allow him to get in the right mindset to trust Christ and to get saved. I am not worried about my soul being destroyed in hell, but the problem as a Christian is I become fearful of men in other things, and it hurts me and it kills me spiritually. God is not going to destroy my soul in hell, but

I can lose my relationship with Him. I can lose favor with Him. He can remove His hand from me if I get caught up fearing men instead of fearing God.

II. The Fear of the Lord

So that brings us to, we spent a little bit of time here talking about the wrong kind of fear, and I think we can all relate to it. I think we have all been there. But let us talk now about the right kind of fear. What is the right kind of fear that we need to have in our life? Obviously, it is the fear of the Lord. I want to give you a few things here.

Proverbs 8:13 says,

Proverbs 8:13

The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

I am not to hate people that do wrong. As a Christian, I should not hate anybody, but I am absolutely supposed to hate the things that they do and the attitude that they have. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil. I am never to hate a person. People do evil, and I am not going to hate people for doing evil things. But as a Christian, I am to hate evil that is out there, and pride, and arrogance, and the evil way. It is funny, I think as Christians, that is probably something that we are pretty good at. We love to point fingers at other people. We love to point out other people's pride and arrogance, and I think it is probably a pretty easy thing to hate. So I would turn that verse back around on you and me and say, "What about hating my own pride and arrogance?" Because he says it is to hate evil, pride, and arrogance in the evil way. He does not say unsaved people's pride and arrogance. He just says all of it. So I think sometimes we need to look within our own hearts, within our own lives, and learn to hate our own pride and learn to hate our own arrogance. Because sometimes we get walking around this life, and we puff our chests out just a little bit too much. We get thinking we have got it all figured out. I think it is like this: sometimes you have to learn to take yourself down a notch, or you are basically asking God to do it for you. I think it is always better to do it yourself than to let God do it. I think many of you, maybe all of you, certainly myself, have been in a situation where God had to bring us down a notch, and that is not a fun situation to be in. So learn to hate those things, and it is about the fear of the Lord.

Psalms 111:10 says,

Psalms 111:10

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.

Obviously, we all want to be wise. We all want to have wisdom. But notice it does not say that reading the Bible is the beginning of wisdom. You are not going to get wisdom without reading the Bible, so I think it goes without saying you have got to read the Bible and you have got to learn the principles of it. But it says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." When you learn to fear God instead of man, when you learn to be more concerned about what God

thinks about you, to be more concerned about what God wants for your life and what God expects out of you, then you are concerned about what your fellow man thinks about you. That is the beginning of wisdom. What is wisdom? Wisdom is when you have that ability not to just quote scripture, but to actually apply it into your life, to actually be able to say, "This is the principle that applies in this situation, and I am going to follow that. I am going to do what that says." Wisdom is having the ability to see something that is coming down the road and to be able to avoid the trouble sometimes before you stumble right into it and walk face first into it. So the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Proverbs 15:16 says,

Proverbs 15:16

Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith.

Be content with what you have. Be content with where you are. He says you are better off with having just a little in life and having the fear of the Lord than to have great treasure and trouble therewith. The Powerball got up to some ungodly number last week, right? It was like eight or nine hundred million dollars. I do not know if you guys ever do this, but I will sometimes, when I am driving down the road, think about, "What if I won eight hundred million dollars? What would I do with that?" So I am like, "Well, the cash option is only like five hundred million. Then after taxes, maybe I have like three hundred million left. What would I do?" You always start with the, because we make ourselves feel good about ourselves, so we start with like, "Well, obviously I am going to tithe." So I am going to give this much to the church. That way I am good with God. Then I start thinking about, "Well, I am going to give money to this person, and I am going to give money to that person." But at the end of the day, all we really want to do is come back around to, "What am I going to do for me?" You go down that road, and then it is like, "Oh my God, what am I doing? Why am I even thinking about this stuff?" We waste our time thinking about it.

Bob was talking about this just a couple of weeks ago. It came up in Bible study about putting, setting your affection on things above. We cannot set our affection on the treasures of this earth because they go away. Our problem is that we have no perspective, and we are human, so it is sort of understandable, but we have no real perspective on our life in comparison to eternity. That is where I try, when I start being stupid about stuff and I start worrying too much about the things of this world, I try to think about that. I try to think about, "Okay, so my life, if the rapture does not happen, I am going to live what, 60 or 70 or 80 years old." Then you think about how long eternity is. I heard a preacher at some point give the analogy to try to put into perspective how long eternity is. So think about a bird flying across the universe to another planet and picking up one grain of sand, just one grain of sand, and then flying back across the universe to earth and then dropping that grain of sand in the ocean. Then he goes back to get another one, and back and forth, and back and forth until he fills the entire ocean up with sand. That is like one second in eternity, because eternity goes forever. It is eternity. So when you think about that, why in the world am I so caught up in trying to get things in this life that I am going to have for 60 or 70 years? Or why am I worried about the things that happen in this life when it is such a minuscule

amount of time compared to what hopefully, what God does have in store for me in eternity? The hopefully part is that I do not lose it by being an idiot down here. I do not mean my salvation, understand. I know I cannot lose my salvation, but I mean the rewards and the inheritance that God has for me, what He has set aside for me, the song that Kenzie sang this morning about the mansion that I know that He has got, that He is building for me. What God has in store for me in eternity and how long that I am supposed to be able to enjoy that, and yet I may give it all up because I am just worried about this life. I am worried about having what I want in this stupid life, and I put these things ahead of that. He says, "Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith." Perspective. You hear Bob talk about it all the time when he preaches, "We have got to have perspective." The fear of the Lord itself is a treasure. When you have it in your life, it gives you that perspective. It helps you to see things the way that you need to see them.

Proverbs 14:27 says,

Proverbs 14:27

The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

Obviously, the fear of the Lord will lead you to salvation. If you are sitting in here this morning, I do not know if there is anybody that is here or even watching on YouTube right now that has never trusted the Lord as their own personal Savior, but if you have not, it starts with the fear of the Lord. That is where it was for all of us. It was because we began to fear God. We began to see some truth. Somebody somewhere shared with us what our fate was if we were to die without Christ, if we were to die in our trespasses and sins, and we began to get some fear of the Lord. That is what got our heart around to the point where we were ready to repent from our sins and turn away from our whole life and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ and ask Him to come into our heart and to save us. So that fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, but it continues to be that for us after we are saved. After we are saved spiritually, God is going to continue to feed you and to keep you alive spiritually to be able to serve Him and do everything He wants you to do.

The last one on this part I want to talk about is Psalms 19:9, and it says,

Psalms 19:9

The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

The fear of the Lord is going to keep you on the straight and narrow. It is going to keep you clean. It is going to keep you out of trouble. My youth pastor when I was in high school a long time ago now, used to say, "Well, the Bible says it is a fearful thing to fall into the hand of the living God." He used to tell me when I would get myself in trouble at home, because believe it or not, I did stupid things when I was younger. He used to say, "It is a fearful thing to fall in the hand of the living mother." And I was like, "Yes, it can be." So that, as a kid, as a child, it is the same principle. Fearing the rod, fearing the spoon or the whip. I have never used a whip. I think that is frowned upon. So for YouTube people, I have never whipped my kids with an actual whip. I have only used spoons. I did break one of Barb's wooden spoons on one of their rear ends one

time though. But I think it was old. So I do not think it was because I spanked them too hard. We are going to blame it on that. I did feel bad about the spoon though.

Fearing your parents when you are a kid keeps you out of trouble. It is that fear. That is what I learned. It is that fear of like, "Okay, if I do not do what I am supposed to do, I know I am going to get a spanking." So I am going to do what I am supposed to do. Then hopefully as time goes on, it becomes, "Well, I am going to do what my mom wants me to do because I love her." When they are two, three, four years old, they do not necessarily grasp that. So it is fear, and then it changes. Your relationship with the Lord grows in a similar way, but the fear of the Lord keeps you clean. It is a fear, not in the sense that I think God is going to come down and just hammer me, but God is my heavenly Father. I know that the Bible says that God will chastise me for my sins. He will chastise me when I get out of line, when I get into trouble. So the fear of the Lord is going to keep me clean. It is going to keep me doing what I am supposed to do. It is going to help me make the right decision when I am faced with a choice. Kids that are in school and you are faced with choices all the time to do the right thing or to do the wrong thing. It is the fear of the Lord that helps you to make the right decision to say, "I am not going to do that. I do not want to risk the Lord being upset with me."

The growth of your relationship with God is that where maybe at the beginning you fear the chastisement, but then it hopefully grows to the point, like I said with your kids, where it becomes just a fear of, "I do not want to disappoint God. I do not want to disappoint my heavenly Father. I do not want Him to have to come down and chastise me." That is still true. But ultimately, if I get to the point where I have a relationship with God the way that I should, I should be scared to death of disappointing Him. I do not want to give the devil something. I preached about on New Year's Eve, as one of my examples, where the devil is the accuser of our brethren. He goes up to heaven. I do not want to give the devil ammunition to throw in God's face things that I have done in my life, things that, times that I have been disobedient. I want God to be happy and to be pleased with me.

III. Results of Fearing the Lord

We saw that the fear of man results in you becoming a liar. It results in you blaming others for your sin. In Saul's case, it ultimately results in losing everything, everything that you have with God. So the last thing I want to look at now is, let us look at what the fear of the Lord is going to result in your life. We have seen some things there about what the fear of the Lord is. Let us look at some of the results of having the fear of the Lord in your life. I am going to give you these verses. We will not necessarily turn to all of them, but I have a list of things here. You can write these down and look at these later.

The first one, let us turn there, Psalms 147:11.

Psalms 147:11

The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

I want to please God with my life. I want to stand before Him someday at the judgment seat of Christ. I know that that day is coming. I know that there is going to be a day where I am going to stand before the Lord, and I am going to give an account for my life. I am going to give an account for the things that I did for the Lord and the things that I did not do for the Lord. I am going to have to answer for those things. I want to hear Him say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." I want God to be pleased with my life. That is one of the things that the fear of the Lord results in. When you get the proper fear, God is going to be pleased with your life.

Look at Psalms 103:13.

Psalms 103:13

Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

Boy, do not we need that? Do not we need God's pity? Certainly, I needed it as a sinner before I got saved. I needed God's pity. That is what, for Him to love me enough as rotten as I was and as rotten as I still am, that He would die on the cross for me, that He would willingly sacrifice His Son and shed His own blood so that I could be saved. I need God's pity. I was having a conversation with one of my girls about something similar to this a few weeks ago, talking about God showing grace to people. There are times where you think, "Why?" You look at, and we are, I think we are all guilty of it. You look at the world and you see people that just thumb their nose at God, and you are like, "Why does it seem like they always win? Why does it seem like they always get away with it? Why?" My answer was this:

1. Nobody ever gets away with anything with God. God ultimately is going to make everything right one way or another. So, if you see somebody, whether they are a Christian or whether they are unsaved, that seems like they are getting away with something that they have done that is wrong, God is going to deal with them on it, either in this life, or He is going to deal with them on it at the judgment. But they do not get away with it.
2. If they do, it is because God gave them grace. Do not ever, ever, ever, ever get upset about God showing somebody grace. Because we need grace. I am never going to begrudge God showing somebody else grace. Because the Lord knows that I need grace every day of my life. So, I sure do not want Him to come up short in that department with me someday. So, do not, we need God's grace. We need God's pity. We need God's mercy. If God shows pity to somebody else, do not ever look at that and think, "Oh, that is not fair." I think ultimately with so many of these things I say, I mean, I think the theme is, just quit looking at other people. That will keep us out of a lot of trouble. If we just get our eyes off other people in that sense and get our eyes on ourselves and look at our own selves, examine our own selves. But God pities us when we have the fear of God in our lives. We need God's pity. Because, man, I just do the dumbest things sometimes. I just need God to look down at me like, "Oh my gosh, I feel sorry. He is such an idiot. I feel sorry for him. I am just going to let that go." I will take all the pity. I will take all the pity that I can get.

Acts 10:35 brings God's acceptance. I want God's acceptance in my life. That is what we all want from our parents growing up. We want our parents to be proud of us. We want them to accept us.

We want people in general to accept us. But ultimately, I want God's acceptance. I want to know that God is happy with me.

Psalms 103:17. We were just there. Let us look at another verse there.

Psalms 103:17

But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;

So God's mercy is something else that results from fear in the Lord.

Psalms 112:1. It is a few pages over.

Psalms 112:1

Praise ye the LORD. Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments.

"Blessed is the man." So God's blessings come from fearing Him.

This is an important one. Proverbs 14:26. So many of God's people struggle with this, and it is confidence.

Proverbs 14:26

In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge.

So many of God's people today struggle with confidence because they put their confidence in the wrong things. They put their confidence in themselves. They put their confidence in their own abilities, in their own, whatever. Yet the Bible says our confidence comes from having fear of the Lord. Our confidence needs to come from God. That is going to give you the confidence to go and to serve Him, to go and to do what He wants you to do. Because let us be honest, we need that in today's day and age. Bob has been hitting it hard the last several weeks. He does not know, and I do not know, and none of us knows what is coming, right? We do not know when the rapture is going to happen. Lord willing, it will happen before I pray here in a few minutes. But we may be here for another five or ten years, and we do not know what is going to happen in this world between now and then. But it is not looking good, right? It is not looking good for people who believe the truth of the Word of God. It is certainly going to start to get uncomfortable at the very least, and maybe beyond that. So we may find ourselves in a situation where we are going to have to decide who are we going to fear. Are we going to put confidence in the Lord? Are we going to have, like the second part of this verse says, "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence and his children shall have a place of refuge." It says, "shall have a place of refuge." So are we going to believe that, if I hearken back to what I preached on New Year's Eve, are we going to actually believe what the Bible tells us? That it says we shall have a place of refuge, or are we going to fear man? Are we going to back off of some of the stances that we have taken on the Word of God when the heat starts to get turned up in the world around us? When people start to say, "Because you believe the Bible or because you believe this or you believe that, that you are an evil person, that you are a terrible person," maybe they are going to say that you should be

thrown in jail. Who knows? But where are we going to stand when that comes? Fear of the Lord versus fear of man. That is what is going to determine the decision that we are going to make, whether we are going to do what is right and we are going to stand for God or not. So the fear of the Lord brings confidence.

The next one, Malachi 3:16 says, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another." I love that verse.

- Fear of the Lord brings fellowship.

You need that. I need that. I need to be around people that fear the Lord. Because they are going to challenge me. They are going to encourage me. That is where I am going to find additional strength is through being around them. Pay attention to the people that you hang around. Be cognizant of it. Be wary of it. Be aware of it. Yes, as a Christian in our lives, we are to have a ministry to people that need to be ministered to. No doubt about it. So there are lost people that God is going to put in your world that you need to reach out to and minister to. There are going to be saved people that God is going to put in your world, maybe people in this church that you need to reach out to and that you need to minister to that are not doing what they need to be doing. God wants to use you there. But you better be careful and you better be smart enough to make sure that you do not get into a situation where you are spending all of your time with those people. Because that is not going to help you. Eventually that will kill you spiritually. You have to have time where you are fellowshiping with people that fear the Lord. People that are rowing the boat the same direction that you are. That will keep you strong spiritually and keep you built up. Then together with those people you reach out to the ones that need to be reached out to. But you have got to be aware of who you are around. So then they that fear the Lord spake often one to another. If you fear God, you want to be around other people that fear God. You are going to talk to each other a lot about it. About what God is doing in your life. About the challenges you are facing. About the things that are going on. You are going to encourage each other in that. We need that.

The next one, Proverbs 16:6 tells us that it brings separation from evil.

- Separation from evil.

We pretty much covered this. It is going to keep me out of trouble. We know that the fear of the Lord keeps us clean. It is going to help me separate from evil.

Proverbs 10:27, it brings long life.

- Long life.

This is a very important one.

Isaiah 8:12-13 says,

Isaiah 8:12-13

12 Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid.

13 Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

The fear of the Lord will actually move out the fear of men out of your life. It is not like you have to just say, "Okay, I am not going to fear man anymore. I am going to fear God." And then it is done. You are going to struggle with fearing men. It is natural. It is your flesh. We all are going to have that. So what do you do? You put more and more and more and more of the fear of God in your life. That pushes out the fear of man. You are not going to be able to just snap a finger and say, "Oh, well, I do not care what people say anymore." You better get the right relationship with God and the Word of God and the principles of the Word of God. You better get a fear of God in your life. But when you do, that is going to push out the fear of men. It is going to remove that out of your life.

IV. Conclusion: Fear of God vs. Fear of Man

I want to finish up here, and we are going to pray. I am just going to leave you with one final thought. I heard somebody say this once, and I do not know who it was. Maybe it was Bob that said it. But they said this: "The man that fears other men cannot fear the Lord. But the man that fears God will never fear men." That is such a true statement that really captures everything that I am trying to say. If you fear other men, you cannot fear the Lord. You cannot do both at the same time. But if you fear God, you will never fear other men. It is as simple as that.

What I love about the Bible is that there are so many things in the Bible. I say this when I teach, if I am doing marriage counseling or premarital lessons, just about everything that we teach, and I say it over and over again, I am like a broken record, I say, "This is very simple. It is just not easy." If you understand what I am getting at, that is what I love about the Bible. There are so many things in the Bible. It is just simple. It is not hard. It is not hard to get. It is not hard to understand. Fear God, and you will never fear men. Fear men, and you will not be able to fear God. That is simple. It is just not easy. That is just hard to do it. That is the thing. Understanding the Bible, understanding these principles, understanding what God wants us to do, what He does not want us to do, understanding what we need to put in our lives and what we need to take out of our lives, it is not difficult. It is not confusing. It is really easy. It is just that it is really, really hard to do it. It takes some courage, and it takes consistency. It takes getting into that book every day. It takes allowing God to build everything in your life, into your life that He wants to build into your life, and developing that fear for God so that that rules your decision-making process. So that rules your thought process. Not worrying about your friends at school, or the people that you work with, or your neighbors, or your family members, or all those people that can make it difficult, that can make it uncomfortable, and it can be sometimes hard to say the things that you know that you should say.

Get to the point where you are more worried about what God thinks about you than you are worried about what any of those other people think about you, and you will get the courage to speak when you need to speak. You will get the courage to stand in front of anybody, and not in a jerk kind of a way. The Bible says that we need to have grace and truth. You have to have it both. But that you will be bold enough to speak the truth. Do not back away from it. Say, "Look, this is what the Bible says. I believe it. I am not saying it is right because I believe it. I am saying I

believe it because it is right. I choose to believe it because it is the truth of the Word of God." Fear God. Fear what He thinks about you more than what men think about you. You may lose, you will lose friends. It has always been that way. That can be hard sometimes, but it is what it is. Because those friends are not going to be standing next to you at the judgment seat of Christ. You are going to stand alone. That was the problem. Aaron blamed the people. Saul blamed the people. But at the end of the day, Aaron was accountable and responsible for the decision he made. Saul was held accountable. He lost the kingdom because of the decision that he made, and it did not matter what he said about the people. So all of those people that you are worried about, that you are worried about what they are going to think about you, you are worried about what they are going to say about you behind your back, you are worried about what they might post about you on Facebook or Instagram or Snapchat or whatever else social media you are on. You are worried about all of that stuff. None of those people are going to be standing there at the judgment seat of Christ when you are standing before your Lord and Savior giving an account for your life and why you did the things that you did and made the choices that you made and why you forsook the truth of God for the world after you got saved and after He gave you everything that He gave you.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we love you and again thank you for all that you do for us. Lord, we thank you for the message today. I hope that it was a blessing to everybody. Lord, I know that it is certainly something that I need in my life. So at the very least, Lord, help me to take the things that we talked about today and make sure that I am doing these things in my own life. Lord, I pray that I am fearing You more than I am fearing men, that I am having the right kind of fear in my life so that I can keep on the straight and narrow so that I can serve You to the best of my ability, Lord. I pray for everybody as they head out today and go throughout the week. I pray that You will watch over all of us, take care of us, Lord. Give us opportunities to share Christ with people that need it, Lord. Give us the boldness and the courage that we need to say what we need to say, Lord, and let us just be a light in this world. Father, as I said, if it is Your will, Lord, we want You to come back as soon as possible. We want to go home today to be with You if we could. But until that day comes, Lord, help us to be faithful. Help us to do what You called us to do as individuals and as a church, and help us to stand strong until that very last second that You call us home to be with You. Lord, again, we just want to lift Bob up. We pray that he is starting to feel better. But we just ask that You will just take care of him and help him to get through this little illness he is dealing with right now. We love You and we ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.