

## Fear and Fears - Part 2: The Fear of God

Luke 12:5

Well, I've been having some printer problems at home, do you ever have those? Printer problems, so I decided to fix my printer problems by buying a new printer. And I went online and I found one on sale and I had it shipped to my house and that was a big mistake. Buying a printer on sale. It had all the right things that it said I wanted and it certainly had this feature I thought would be great, wireless printing. Well, that's what I wanted. I wanted everybody to access it, wirelessly, print right to it. Plug it in put it in the corner and it'll be great. Well, I set it up and I got it to print the first time and then I went back to doing my stuff and hoped my family would have great success with it and it didn't really work. It worked like 40% of the time. It came with this thing called an instruction manual, which I pretty much ignored until I got home and found no one was having success with the printer. So, I picked it up and I flipped through it and I tried to look for key words that I thought might help me and I'd read a sentence here and a sentence there and I'd turn back to this page and that page and I did what I could but didn't seem to help and I thought well this is just too many words here, I'm going to go on the internet and find the answer. That was my second mistake.

I went on all these user forums hoping to have somebody answer my question in just like a paragraph. If I could get three sentences to fix the problem that would be great and all it did was just deepen my confusion and broaden my ignorance. It wasn't helpful at all until I came to the manufacturer's web page. And you know what it did for me? It just reprinted the whole instruction manual there on that page. And again, too many words, I don't want to read all that but I did exactly what I did with the printed one. I just kind of skimmed through it and looked for words, key words, I even searched and thought this is better it's got a searchable database and I searched for the words that I thought might work and it didn't work so then I plugged it in and now it works so I got a cable for it. See my wireless printer not working the way I had hoped.

And I thought how sad it must be for the people that write all these instructions. Here they are I assume they're paid for, they're trying to help me use this the way it's intended to be used and I'm just kind of flipping through it and not sitting down and doing what they expect me to do. And that is to read through it and find out that when it says "access point" it doesn't mean the one on the printer it means the one on the router. If it says IP address it doesn't mean the one on my computer it means the one that's built in on the printer. All these things that if I just sat and read it I would figure these things out and know that I just can't flip for the words that I think are going to work and then they don't work. I mean it's not defining things in context and so I don't understand it. Then I thought how frustrating it must be when we write things or give people instructions or write out and e-mail that's important and have people, can you imagine reading our e-mails the way that I read these instruction manuals? Can you see where I'm going with all this?

So God sends us, if you will an instruction manual. Most people don't sit down and read it as we ought, the entirety of it keeping this part in mind, reading that part, we just basically flip through it and find key words we like. We get computer software we search for keywords that we like and we try to figure this book out to get God's mind on this, that or the other and we really don't understand things in their proper context. We'll read a narrative about someone passing judgment on somebody and go, well I read else where in this instruction manual that judge not less you be judged, so this must be bad. So I'm looking at this with a bent brow thinking this isn't right what he's doing and then I don't recall that there's another place over here in the instruction manual that said well you should judge but with righteous judgment. Well which applies here, I don't know because I haven't read the context.

Or like last week. We talked about the coming judgment. You think well I know what that means because I've read verses about judgment and that means I'm going to stand before God and He's going to cast me into the lake of fire. Well, I'm a Christian now so there's no judgment for me, that's great, when I run into a passage on judgment, whoo, I'm glad that doesn't apply to me but I don't read the context to find out there's another judgment called the Beema Seat of Christ judgment and that does apply to me but I miss understand the whole thing because I don't have the whole picture.

Or maybe you were here Thursday night, talking about sanctification. Had to make a clear point that we got to keep in mind when we run into the word sanctification it could refer to this thing called positional sanctification where



God sets us apart for Himself, once and for all at our conversion. Or it could refer to that process of progressive sanctification and that's different so you've got to know which one you're dealing with when you run into it. And if all that has missed your attention then at least you know when we have baptisms here I always ask an important question to show you the problem when I ask, "Does baptism save you?" And I've taught you all to ask the question, "Which one?" Well, because the Bible talks about more than one. There certainly is the dipping into water as a sign of this immersion into the church and the body of Christ. But there's this being placed into Christ by God via the Spirit and that's different so I got to be clear and I can't just answer that question without knowing what we're talking about.

So this is a common problem we have. Probably no more dramatically felt in modern Christianity than when you come across the word fear. When you see the word fear you think, well, huh, I hope that doesn't apply to me because that's an unpleasant word and it's filled with unpleasant emotions and so I know this, I've read it in Joshua 1, you know fear not, don't fear these people, be of good courage. I know Jesus comes on the scene and says, don't fear them. So, I know fear is not for us. And yet we run across other passages of scripture and then we scratch our heads. I don't know where to file this one. It says work out your salvation with fear and trembling. If you call on father this one impartially judges your life then live with fear during your exile on earth. Serve the Lord with fear, fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and now I don't know what to think. If only there was one verse that would help us untangle these two fears. You've come at the right time.

Take your Bibles if you're not already there and turn to Luke chapter 12 verse number 5. Now if you pull your worksheet out, take a look at the text and you may think I'm having printer problems at work as well. We've grayed out part of this passage. How dare you. What are you doing? Well, we finished the first section of Luke 12 last week as we walked through the book and you'd think after verses 1 through 3 we would preach on verse 4 but that's grayed out. Why is that? Well because if you look at this, verses 4 through 7 dealing with us not fearing. And you're saying there it is, fear not, fear not, fear not, don't fear. But right in the middle of this in verse number 5 here's a verse about fear we should have. And if we don't understand that, which I think is going to take an entire message, we better spend a whole week contemplating this, then we won't know really the answer to the other fear and I've got to understand what this means to fear God. And because He said it so emphatically here, Jesus does, not to the crowds or the Pharisees or his enemies, notice if you would in the context we started with Him speaking to his disciples first and now he says in verse number 4 he calls them his friends. So we've got the insiders here and He's going to say, don't fear, don't fear, don't fear but right in the middle he says but you should fear. So what are you talking about? Let's sort these things out.

For the sake of completeness and we'll get to the grayed out verses on your worksheet there next week, verses 4, 6 and 7 Lord willing that's our plan at least. But in the middle verse number 5 we're going to deal with that this morning. But for completeness let's read the whole thing, you follow along as I read it for you. As Jesus says in verse 4, I tell you my friends; do not fear those who kill the body. And I'm thinking that sounds pretty serious to me but I'm not suppose to fear that, well that's an amazing kind of courage and bravery, that's awesome. Get to that next week.

After that He does try to explain there's nothing more that they can do, that seems like a lot to me. Well, no there's something more worse. But I will warn you whom to fear. Now remember who is he talking to here? Disciples? What does he call them in verse 4, His friends? You want your friends to fear something? I thought it was all about being fearless. Christianity is fearless; I have to have no fear. I warn you whom to fear. Fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. You want me to fear God? Yes, I tell you, fear Him. Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Well this is a hard downshift here. What? Yeah, and not one of them is forgotten before God. Well, sounds like a nice God to me. Why even the hairs on your head are all numbered. Well, he cares for me that much. Fear not, yes, you are of more value than many sparrows. Now you can see why we need two weeks on this paragraph. What are you talking about?

Now, today, let's just deal with one verse, Luke chapter 12 verse number 5. It seems so emphatic, you'll see the word fear here in this verse three times, do you not? I'll warn you whom to fear, fear Him, bottom of verse 5, yes I tell you, fear Him! So I know this, that what ever we're talking about in terms of having fear extracted from my Christian life there is something here in this text that should be there and it's using the same word representing something it seems of the same kind of emotions and I've got to figure out what exactly He's affirming here. So let's start just by thinking through the redundancy in this verse which certainly depicts the frequency of it through



out the Bible, just how often the Bible would tell us to fear God. Let's put it down this way, we need to understand, think through, number 1, the repeated call to fear God.

## 1. Understand the Repeated Call to Fear God

Why all this talk of fearing God, over and over and over again? Fear of God. If you would start reading in your Bibles, Genesis, it wouldn't take long to find that God looks at righteous people like Abraham, who we're, suppose to emulate in terms of faith, and at that critical moment in Genesis 22, he is commended personally by God for fearing Him. Then you get other bright spots like the story of Joseph, and Joseph is said to be a man of character and godliness because he feared the Lord. You'll see the foreign kings chided by God in his commentary in Genesis because they did not fear the Lord. You'll turn to Exodus, and you'll see these Egyptian midwives who are praised oddly enough, these foreign midwives having these Jewish Moms give birth to these babies and sparing them and their praised because they feared the Lord. Do you see the people are described as trustworthy in Israel and Exodus because they learned to fear the Lord? You can keep going and you can work all the way to the end of the Bible in Revelation and you know what you'd find? Hundreds of references to the positive characterization of people who fear God.

I looked at the basic Hebrew and Greek words that translate into the words like afraid and fear, fears and feared. And I came up with a list, and this is not all the nuance statements about trembling or dread, I'm just talking about the basic plain words "fear". I looked in Genesis to Malachi, Matthew to Revelation, Hebrew, and Greek. Throw those all on a database and I came up with 611 passages. 611 passages and I said what would be really good is to do my own study on this, not going to trust the commentary or anything else, haven't even seen this done in a commentary but I'm going to look up every single reference, in it's context, read it and put it into one of two categories. There's two major categories, is this something I'm told not to do, is this an example of something I should not follow, or is this positive and posed in some way as something I should have, something I should do. In other words, is fear commended in this passage or is it condemned. Is it a fear not passage or is it a fear God passage.

Out of 611, and it's always poetic the way God seems to do this, 305 or them were positive, 306 of them were fear not. The objects were different, the idea of who's doing it and why, those are all important in context but 50% of the passages in the Bible from beginning to end, Old and New Testament, when fear and afraid is put before our eyes on the printed page of scripture, we're told half the time you better fear, and the other half don't fear. Now that's a lot of commands. Fear the Lord.

Why is God telling us so often that we ought to fear Him? Oh, He's telling us not to fear them, not to fear others, don't fear the army, don't fear the peril, don't fear if a thousand fall at your side, don't fear, don't fear, but then equally fear, fear, fear, fear, fear. Well there's a lot of passages that would speak to why. In the back of your worksheet, I always provide you discussion questions and lookup passages that I think would be helpful for your discussion and I think I put a lot of them this week, twelve of them on the back of the worksheet. Eleven of them are ones that would affirm the positive nature of fearing. Now, next week it'll be just the opposite I'm sure. This week I have one of the kind of fear that we shouldn't have, and eleven that's speak to the fact that we should have this fear and you'll notice if you glance through that none are from the book of Proverbs. And I'll bet if I said, which book speaks the most of the fear of God, a lot of you Sunday School Graduates would say the book of Proverbs and you're right. I avoided that because I want to spend some time right now skimming our way through the book of Proverbs. While I can turn you to twice and many let me give you a list of a few that would give us the answer to the question, Why so often does He tell us to fear Him? Why? Well, let me at least say this, because there's a lot of benefits attached to it.

Let's start in chapter 9 with one of the most obvious. One I'm sure that you've heard. So let's go to the book of Proverbs. Proverbs chapter 9 and let's see the things that the Bible holds out to us as promises and benefits if you would just learn to fear the Lord. Chapter 9 verse 10, a lot of you could quote this from memory. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. It doesn't say that the fear of the Lord is the apex of wisdom, the summit of wisdom, varsity wisdom, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. I'm not even started on the road to wisdom until I learn to fear the Lord. I can't even get through the portal of the front door of being a wise person unless I fear the Lord. I'd like to be a wise person; well I can't get there without fearing the Lord according to the Bible. Repeated many times in the scripture, particularly in the book of Proverbs.



Look across the page chapter 10 verse 27, Proverbs 10:27, the fear of the Lord, look how practical this gets, what's the next two words there, prolongs life. Wow, I think of the Bible being so, you know, excited about giving that command to children to obey your parents, because it's the first command with a promise. And what was the promise? You live a long time on the earth, so life is expanded by that. To kids, hey obey your parents this is a great start for your life and now it says, hey grown-ups, you want a life that doesn't end prematurely, fear the Lord, prolongs life. But the years of the wicked will be cut short.

Chapter 14, skip ahead, again I could give you a lot more in Proverbs than just these but let's skip through this and move our way to the end of the book and let's go next to chapter 14 verse 26. This one especially you parents put your eyeballs on this one. You got kids in your home? Here's an important promise appended to this command to fear the Lord. 14:26 in the fear of the Lord one has a strong confidence, sometimes translated as a strong fortress, a bulwark, there's something you have in your life that's like a battleship. And then look at the next one. And his children, the one who fears the Lord, his children will have a refuge. You want to provide a home to your kids with a kind of protection from the Lord? Maybe some of the books you've been reading have been missing one of the key ingredients about parenting. Mom and Dad learn to fear the Lord. Look at the next verse, here's another one. The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life that one may turn away from the snares of death. Now fountain of life, that may be poetic, and take some time to figure out another passage of scripture, but I understand the idea here of the snares of death. I'd like my life not to be characterized by the snares of death. Learn to fear the Lord, fountain of life, life without snares.

Now chapter 19 verse 23, 19:23 and if you can't keep up with your nimble fingers at least jot them down. 19:23 let's look at the other promise here. Matter of fact as you move through these I know many of you never heard an entire sermon on the fear of God, you're going to be feeling like you've had some clergy malpractice, you know, in your life because all of the great things God says you can have if you learn to fear the Lord. And you're going to think why don't we hear this more often? We don't hear it because it's an unpleasant thing, isn't it? Fear, I don't want to fear anything. I thought Christians are supposed to be fearless. Verse 23, the fear of the Lord leads to life, and whoever has it, look at the next two words, rests satisfied. Well that'll preach right there, I'd like to rest satisfied. Yeah, that's what I want, not to be visited by harm. Well there's a lot of books being written about Christians how to have a restful satisfied protected non-harm filled life. Well we need more books on the fear of God.

Chapter 22 verse 4. I mean it's starting to sound like the prosperity gospel but through a means you're never going to hear them preach on. 22:4 the reward listen to this, the reward for humility and fear of the Lord is riches, honor and life. Wow, that one they might even sell at Costco, I mean a book on the fear of God if it promises riches, honor and life, sign me up.

Chapter 28 verse 14 blessed, there's our great Hebrew word, Asher, this is a positive word that deals with my disposition. It's almost a paradox the way it's stated. Blessed is the one who fears the Lord always, happily optimistic relieved and happy is the one who fears the Lord always? Wow, yeah but if you harden your heart, if you try to get that shield up so you don't have any negative feeling, negative emotions, don't want any of that, you're going to fall into calamity.

You can jot this one down but I know you know this one by heart. At least the ladies in the room know it, Proverbs 31:30. Proverbs 31:30 Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who, has been to charm school? No, is pretty? No, isn't overweight? No, what? Fears the Lord is to be praised. Wow, that's kind of nice. Well that sounds almost, I don't know, self serving. Riches, honor, life, praise, blessed, satisfied, resting, life without snares, confidence, kids secure, long life, wisdom, that's great. I think we need more attention on the fear of God, and that's just one book. We could go all over the Bible. There are 305 of these by my count and study this week that will help you understand what a positive thing it is for us to learn to fear the Lord.

Well what does it mean? Alright get your pencils ready. Fear means fear. He earned his paycheck right there baby, that was genius, our pastor is so smart. Fear means fear. Oh no, help me with it man, fear can't mean fear. No, fear means fear. I mean if you were a four year old, what does fear mean? I mean your 4 year old never asks that because your 4 year old knows that. Well what would you say? It uncomfortable, unpleasant, uneasy feeling, discontented, I just a bad emotion, a bad feeling. Hmm, it is an unsettling, uncomfortable, unpleasant, uneasy feeling. Now think this through and you know this, but when do I feel those feelings and call it fear? It's when I'm



encountering something or someone who has the unilateral ability, the unilateral power, to be able to negatively impact my well-being. Now that sounds more like what our Pastor Mike defines it as. Great, there it is, an uneasy, unpleasant, uncomfortable feeling, facing something that unilaterally can decide to negatively impact my well being.

Now growing up here in Southern California obviously not a surfer guy but I did a few years out there and I remember one time out there in the third break, Huntington Cliffs, beautiful day between sets, sitting out there, my buddy who was with me, it was kind of cold, we had our wetsuits on and all of that, and he was down the way, two hundred yards away, and there I sat and all of a sudden I hear and turn and look this fin came out of the water. This was after Jaws came out. You know what I felt? Fear. You would too. Unsettled, uncomfortable, uneasy, unpleasant feeling because here was this weird thing in the water, this shark brain, that could unilaterally decide to negatively impact my well being. Right? Easily. And in that I was afraid because he wasn't going to ask me if I wanted to be eaten for lunch. He wasn't going to say, what do you think about this, you weigh in on this. He was going to unilaterally decide what was going to happen to me that day. And that made me afraid and made me a very fast swimmer knowing of course that he could unilaterally decide to swim faster than me.

I went to college in Chicago, thought I was pretty tough guy, was told not to go in certain neighborhoods, thought I'd try it anyway, what's this like? How bad could it be a white kid from Long Beach? I'll be alright, pretty tough. Walked down the wrong street encounter this group of people who could unilaterally decide to negatively impact my well being, and I was afraid, very afraid, because they weren't going to ask me. Take a vote Mike, you have veto power here, we'd like to mug you, rob you, perhaps kill you, are you interested, do you want to. No, they were going to decide this without my input. I was afraid, unpleasant, uncomfortable, unsettled, uneasy, it's a bad feeling. You're up in the mountains, out there at Big Bear, someone pops out the name sake of the mountain, big hairy guy, you look at him, he looks at you. You are now afraid because you understand that bear can unilaterally decide to negatively impact your well being for the afternoon.

Even things that seem much smaller than that like spiders and snakes, you don't like those either. That scares you some of you because you know they could just slither up your pant leg without asking, crawl up your neck and bite you. I don't want that, that could negatively impact my well being, I don't want that, I'm afraid, I fear that. That's what fear is. What is fear? Fear is fear. You know what it is.

Well, if that emotional response is something God wants in my life as I think about Him, I just don't understand it because there seems to be a lot in the Bible that would contradict that. Here's the key, are you ready? Here's the key, fear is not to be your uniformed emotional response to God. Do you follow that? No, the Bible doesn't teach us that it is to be our uniformed emotional response to God. No, but if you sit here this morning and you say, I have a relationship with God but I never feel those feelings in the portfolio of feelings I have when I encounter and deal with and relate to the living God, then I'm just going to tell you don't know God very well, or perhaps you don't even know Him at all. Perhaps your dealing with a God of your own imagination, because the real God presents Himself in the Bible as someone that is going to at some point and in often very large portions of your emotional state going to induce feelings of being uneasy, unpleasant, unsettled, all that, you're going to feel that. Not in the entirety of your emotional response to God but it better be there. And if it's not there, then you don't fear the Lord.

I talked about Proverbs let me jump into Psalms for you, and I won't make you turn to these but at least jot them down. Psalms is of course the song book of Israel, the inspired song book of Israel. I talked to Ben about songs relating to the fear of God, being in the twenty-first century not many of those. My grandparents in the hymnal they had, no, they didn't. We don't write many hymns on this. We don't write songs on this. Why? Because it's an unpleasant feeling. We don't talk about fear; we don't want to feel unpleasant, unsettled, uneasy. We want God to make us feel the opposite of those things and yet when you open up the inspired song book of the Old Testament a lot of passages about the fear of the Lord. Now many of them talk about just like Proverbs, the benefits of fearing the Lord, but let me just highlight a few that deal with why we fear the Lord. What the natural response to God is when we think of aspects of his character.

Let me start with this one, the omnipotence of God. When we encounter the omnipotence of God in the Bible and we start to interact with that in our minds and our emotions, now I understand a lot of times I feel comforted by His omnipotence, I feel protected by His omnipotence, I feel secure by His omnipotence, but there ought to be a portion of my emotional response to that one attribute that leads to passages like this. Psalm 89 verses 6 and 7. Psalm 89:6-7 when I think about powerful authorities the Psalmist says this, "Whom among the heavenly beings is like Yahweh,



like the Lord, a God greatly to be feared in the council of His holy ones, and awesome above all those who are around him? Look at His transcendent surpassing power. If you're in the presence of that kind of power, if you imagine the presence of that power, if you imagine how the angels must feel in the presence of that power. You know what they're not going to feel? Comfortable. Now a lot of times I think about the attribute of God's omnipotence and I'm comforted by that, I'm secure in that, I feel like I have a Father that's strong, clearly true but where's that part of my contemplation of the omnipotence of God where I have the fear kick in. It should be there.

How about His sovereignty? That He rules over everything, that He is the great king of the universe that nothing as Nebuchadnezzar says can happen without His purview and His permission and His involvement. He can deal with people on the earth the way He wants. Psalm 47:2 for Yahweh, the Lord, the Most High, is to be feared, a great king over all the earth. He's fully involved, every leader must bow to Him, every tongue will confess to Him, He is the sovereign, He dispenses power how He will and if you think about that, the sovereignty of God you may feel comforted by that sometimes, you may feel challenged by that sometimes, you may feel like that's a great blessing to have a God who's sovereign and all of that can settle a lot of issues, but sometimes I got to look at the sovereignty of God and go, wow. That's a scary attribute.

This one shouldn't be hard, jot it down, justice, justice. The last sermon in this eleven part series through Luke 12, I've entitled it "God's Perfect Justice". Even that subtitle ought to scare you if you understand the God of the Bible. Whoa, that's something I don't want. God's justice. When I think about the justice of God I must admit there may be 20% in my thinking and feeling in response to that where I think, oh that's comforting but usually when I'm thinking about you and not me. Do you catch that? Yeah, I feel good when I think about the God of justice when I'm watching the eleven o'clock news, but most of the time if I got a mirror somewhere in the room I think, oh I don't feel good about God's perfect justice. Even when I think about the cross, I don't feel good about His perfect justice. Is there relief on the other side of it? Sure, there is, but man that justice is a scary thing. Psalm 76:8-9, from the heavens you utter judgment, the earth feared and it was still when God arose to establish judgment, of course, who wouldn't be. Can you read the book of Revelation and see Him dispense His justice and go "That was a nice read, pass the Cheez-Its"? No, I mean that's a scary read. Why? Because God is just and when His judgments come it's scary.

Omnipotence, Sovereignty, Justice, how about this one? And this will blow your mind, Grace. Jot that one down, grace. Oh no, Mike, man you're maybe starting to sell me on the justice thing but not grace. There's no more cuddly, snuggly, fur slippers doctrine in the Bible than grace. That makes me feel warm and fuzzy inside. You're right. I think 80% of the time, and I must admit maybe 90% I think of God's grace and mercy I feel so good. Psalm 130 verses 3 and 4. Psalm 130:3-4 if you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, who could stand? Now that's the justice side, I can understand fear from that. No, no, no, notice this now? Verse 4, but with you Lord there is forgiveness, that you may be feared. Wait a minute, so that you can be praised? I get that. So that you can be thanked? I get that. You mean to tell me there's something about the forgiveness of God that should make me fear? I didn't tell you that. Psalm 130 verse 4 told you that. And you know what it would make some sense I suppose. I mean if I really think of all my sins before the holy tribunal of God and I think about the fact that He put all that on His Son and He took all of my debt and He forgave it completely and I think about that forgiveness and how great it is to be a recipient of grace is there anything that would leave me fearful about that? Well sure, if this weren't sin but if this were money and you got a terrible debt you wracked up you couldn't pay and then I came in assuming I was some you know super rich dude and I said, "Let me pay it off". And I inconvenienced my own family and my children I'm going to pay off all your debt and that mess you got yourself into, I'm going to pay it all. And I forgave all of that. You'd say that's gracious, that's merciful, that's fabulous. And then you're shopping at Costco for Christmas presents and I walk in and see you. "Hey how's it going?" "Good, just getting a few things here for Christmas." Perhaps you'd think a little bit about your present situation and how you spend your money now because you stand in the presence of someone so forgiving. Yeah, there's a part of that, that would make you fear, unpleasant, uncomfortable, unsettled feeling.

Now notice in all of these, I'm trying to tell you there is a non-uniformed emotional response to each of these attributes. And sometimes it will lend itself to 80% comfort and 20% uneasiness. Sometimes it's 80% uneasiness and 20% comfort, I understand. But we need to know that if you are absent the uncomfortable part then you don't fear God, and then what? I don't think you understand His attributes very well. Perhaps you don't know the God of the Bible, or perhaps you don't know Him very well, because truth about God is going to lead you to fear. Not the uniformed emotional response but it better be present and in some way a recurring pattern of response to the God of



the Bible.

Luke 12:5 I will warn you whom to fear, fear Him. Yes, I tell you, fear Him! Now in the middle of that He makes a statement that should send a shiver up our spine because he says, "after he has killed, he has authority to cast into hell". Scary. Authority to cast into hell. Number 2 on your outline you need to fear God because of His absolute authority over eternity.

## 2. Fear God's Absolute Authority Over Eternity

He makes decisions and it has eternal impact on people and when He talks about casting people into hell - that is scary. Now remember the context, He's talking to His friends. He's talking to his disciples. But even as I said in Psalm 130 verses 3 and 4 even the forgiveness on the other side I should fear, wow that's big, you're right I'm dealing with God who could, or in our case, could have cast us into hell but he didn't. By the way, if you get a picture of the God of the Bible and you start to present that God to people, your neighbors, your friends, your co-workers and you're sharing the Gospel, I would venture to guess that what comes up pretty regularly in those discussions is the problem of hell. When it does, I'll bet you have some people say to you, "Shouldn't do that". I know that from experience. Doing a lot of the evangelism I do right here on this platform, whenever I bring up the issue of repentance and faith some times I'll bring up the problem if you don't and it's called, hell. The consequences that are eternally placed there by a holy and just God and you know I get letters, I get e-mails. I use to keep a file of them, of complaints about those gospel presentations. I literally had a file, at some point I keep putting things in the file and I thought, "Why do I even keep them?" What, am I going to read these? Grant them, bequeath them to my children. I got rid of it, so I don't have it any more. If you send me a letter, I'll read it, I'll contemplate it, I'll pray about it and then I'm going to get rid of it.

But I thought about all these letters I get about, here's one of the lines, "You shouldn't scare people into Christ". If you're tempted by the way, whether it's my preaching or one of our pastors preaching something in the youth program where you're angry because they brought up hell when they talk about people coming to Christ. Just make sure you cc Jesus, he'll want to read it, and maybe the Apostles, all the prophets of the Old Testament. Oh, and add one more if you can get a hold of him, the Angels, why don't you do that? Michael. I mean, put as many angels as you can find because I know this, Revelation chapter 14, this would be a good one to jot down, when they are dispatched from heaven in that scene depicted in the book of Revelation chapter 14 verses 6 and 7 they're told to bring eternal gospel to the earth. Here it is. John sees it and records it. Let me read it for you. I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with the eternal gospel to proclaim to all those who dwell on the earth, to every nation, every tribe, every language and people. And he said with a loud voice, here it comes, here comes the gospel, [in a high pitched voice] "Jesus loves you". Oh, you've read this passage. Do you think that's wrong? You know the first two words of the gospel proclamation from the angels who I think probably got it right. Fear God and give him glory. Why, because his judgments have come upon the earth. Are you threatening me?

Listen; try to get someone out of a burning building. I can understand not spending a lot of time describing the dangers of a burning building, if you have someone who is conscience stricken, they understand the problem and they're just looking for you to show them the way out. And I understand why you wouldn't have a lot of expose on hell in particular but to the guy who sits there who's insensitive, hard hearted, stiff necked, obtuse in his lack of sensitivity to the gospel it's time to talk about hell. You'll be in really good company; by the way should I read the passage again? I'll warn you who to fear, fear him who after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!

Jesus on His iPhone has his podcasts of preachers and at the top of His list according to His own testimony is John the Baptist's "best of sermons", you've studied his sermons with me in Luke, the ones we had there earlier in the book. He wouldn't have brought up hell, would he? I think I titled the sermon when we dealt with the core of that sermon that John the Baptist preached, I called it, "Loving People Enough to Tell Them the Truth About Hell". That was a long subtitle. He's talking about axes at the root of tree, about branches being cast into the fire. What's with that? Sounds a lot like Jesus. Now again I'm not saying that every evangelistic explanation needs to have some long discourse about hell, but when you're dealing with the stiff-necked, the hard hearted, the obtuse among us, people that lack sensitivity to the God of the Bible. I think it's very important that we warn them of what they're rejecting. Hear God's absolute authority over eternity, the apostles did it in Hebrews chapter 4 verse 1. Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest, speaking there poetically of salvation, still stands, let us fear lest any of you should



seem to have failed to enter it.

Even our forgiveness by the way, directly I'm telling people you should be afraid if you reject this. Even indirectly they should see us seated comfortably in the lifeboat while they're choosing to stay in their stateroom and they look out their window and they see us seated there. They should see such peace and relief in our lives and such joy of deliverance that they are afraid. Psalm 40 verses 2 and 3. The Lord drew me from the pit of destruction. He has put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see it and fear, and they will put their trust in the Lord. Even that, I know when you sit there at the lunch room at work and you talk about your Christianity when you're bold enough to do that, you try to talk about things like, oh it's really helped my life, inner peace, things are in order, and all that's great, to the extent that it's true, that's great to talk about. But how about saying, it's so good, such a relief to know I'm not going to hell. It is so good to know that my sins have been nailed to the cross and there's no condemnation in my life. He drew me out of the pit of destruction, He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise, many will see it and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.

Now this is a fear we want you to resolve. We don't want you to be on the other end of that discussion we want you to be able to say, "Hey, 1 John chapter 4 verse 18, perfect love casts out fear". When you quote that make sure you understand verse 17, we're talking about coming judgment for the retribution of our sins. When you have confidence before God and we think about that judgment today because I'm not in line for the Great White Throne. No condemnation for those in Christ, that done. But even as Psalm 130 says, doesn't mean that I still don't have a residual sense of, wow. It still makes me fear when I think about the forgiveness that God has granted me. But let's resolve the problem, we'll deal with more of that next week when we talk about the things that God tells us not to fear because we know we're at peace with Him and our adversary has become our advocate. And the one who can condemn has become the one who intercedes for us at the right hand of God, to quote Romans chapter 8 verse 34.

Well, if I'm not going to hell that sounds like the ultimate relief and it is, so I don't have anything to fear. No, we've been dealing with this. We've been talking about this clearly there's a promise to fear God even for those that aren't condemned. Let's put it this way, number 3. We need to fear God's absolute authority over each day.

### 3. Fear God's Absolute Authority Over Each Day

Over each day. Now what you want to put next to that, I know I have already printed it for you but, verse 5 letter b, that means the second part of this. What's the second part of this? Well right before He says he has authority to cast into hell the line in front of that says, "after he has killed" oh, well that is a little unsettling, I suppose. That God could kill but, hey I'm a Christian so He wouldn't kill me. Now, that's a really good thought. Share it with Ananias and Sapphira when you get to the New Jerusalem. God would never kill me. Share that with the Corinthians that Paul says by prophetic insight as an Apostle some among you because of the way you treat the Lord's supper like a potluck, some of you are sick some of you are weak and frail and some of you have died, 1 Corinthians 11. Tell those when you stand in line to meet people from Corinth you tell them God would never kill me. I thought God was my advocate, you said He was interceding for me. He is, but he loves you so much, that much like Ananias and Sapphira who became an example for all of the church, He doesn't want sin in your life, the things that pin Christ to the cross. He wants you to repent of those things and if you don't here what He is, a disciplinarian.

Hebrews 12, the most important passage in the New Testament to help us understand. He is like a father who is not in Orange County, indulgent father who lets kids be kids, He cares about your holiness, and if you step out of line and say, "God I don't care what you think about this. I like this pattern of living." He'll say, "I'm going to discipline you." And where does that stop. I guess the ultimate is your death. Examples of that, New Testament, Ananias and Sapphira. And what did that do to the church? It made them afraid and that was a bad thing, right? No, that was a good thing. In Acts chapter 5 where the story is told twice it says because of these things, the death of Ananias and the death of Sapphira, the church feared. The whole church was afraid. Well that's unhealthy. By the time we get to chapter 9, it says this church that was saturated with the fear of God was blessed of God, it was presented as healthy in chapter 9, and at the end of chapter 9 God multiplied the church that feared Him.

I told you I blew my knee out in high school playing on a church softball league. I also broke my foot. I know a lot of injuries on a church softball league, so beware. I avoided surgery, the doctor said he could do surgery and I said I'm not an athlete just can we get around with physical therapy and all that. So I did that, tried to work the muscles around by knee up, got it built back up and then I became a college pastor in Tucson years later. And they were into





this thing called broomball, which is a stupid sport. And so I put together this kind of outreach for the university. We're going to go out and get all these guys together, we'll play broomball and of course you know the young college pastor, I'll be out there with you. And so I went out there and did the same exact thing, to the same knee, had pretzel dislocated underneath me crumpled to the ground, in the same knee, and ever since, I hate broomball. Hate it. Go ahead and invite me to play broomball. I won't do it. As a matter of fact, I know many of you for New Year's Eve we get together and go over to the ice palace when it's all done with our time here and a lot of times people break out on the one side and they play broomball. Not only will I not play, if you ask me, I won't even wander over there to watch because there's nothing pleasant about watching you play broomball at all. Matter of fact I'm waiting for people's knees to explode. I hate it; it is uncomfortable for me to watch you doing something that has such proven pain in my life.

So my kids are watching ESPN reversing it and playing again when the guy on the football field gets his knee blown out, they watch they do it just to torture me. I'm under the couch, just ooh, wincing and wreathing and I can't stand it because I have such empathic pain. It's an uncomfortable, unsettled, unpleasant feeling, even when I'm not experiencing the injury, but just my imagining it. God can exempt me from the penalty of my sin by the grace that He provides in Christ but not remove the wincing and the uncomfortable fear that I should have when I contemplate sin in the present. That is exactly how God works. The grace of God does not exempt us from the fear of God. It exempts us from the Great White Throne and the fear of judgment and condemnation, it does not then take away the wincing and pain when I consider the sin that put Him on a cross. It doesn't. Matter of fact if I'm absent that in my thinking about my sanctification something is wrong, seriously wrong.

If you understand that you'll read passages like this, Exodus chapter 20, if you know your Bible that's the Ten Commandments passage. You'll say, now I get it, now it makes sense, because at the end of that passage, in the end of chapter 20 of Exodus, they've been brought into the desert. Into the Sinai Peninsula after exiting Egypt as slaves, God is redeeming them. As 1 Corinthians 10 says, they are an example and a picture and a type and a model of what it means to be extracted from slavery of sin and now they're God's covenant people and He brings them there and gives them the law. And they're freaked out about it. Why, because the mountain covered with dark gloomy clouds and peals of lightning and thunder. And they said to Moses don't let God talk directly, if you want to relay the message, okay, but don't let God talk to us, lest we die. We're afraid we're going to die. Here's God's response. "Do not fear, you will not die, I've come to do this to test you so that you will fear me". Did you catch that? Now I've left off the last phrase but catch it so far. You're not going to die. I'm not bringing you out here to kill you. Here's this picture, symbolic, He's not going to cast us into hell, don't fear that, but I brought you hear to see my glory, to put fear in you. Here's the last phrase, so that you will not sin. To understand that we're not condemned with the world, that's great, the ultimate relief in the Bible. But now as we stand and perceive the glory of God we should understand that we are called to have as we think about not a uniformed emotional response but as we think about the greatness of God, the holiness of God, the fact that sin put Him on the cross, when I think about my sanctification I ought to as 2 Corinthians 7:1 says, I ought to perfect holiness in my life in the fear of God.

Well, Mike you just quoted an Old Testament text, didn't it get better in the New Testament? I don't fear Him as much as the Old Testament. Jot this reference down, look it up on your own this week. Hebrews chapter 12, the last half of Hebrews chapter 12. Here's the argument made from lesser to greater. The argument from lesser to greater. The argument from God giving the law to the children of Israel on Sinai that was the lesser and now He's given us His own son and he's brought to us forgiveness in Christ along with as He says in the Great Commission being taught to observe all the things he commanded. So he's brought us salvation and direction and He says this, if they were punished and didn't escape when they refused to listen to Him in the old covenant how much more should we have that visceral response of discomfort, unpleasant, unease when we dare to disregard His voice in the new covenant. We've come to something so much more profound. We've come to a God that you should see His glory even more profound majestic way. Then he says listen, he shook the mountain, one day he's going to shake the world. When He shakes the world you be grateful you're part of the kingdom that cannot be shaken, but now as a part of that kingdom, here's how that chapter ends. You ought to learn how to worship Him acceptably with reverence and awe because our God is a consuming fire. Not to cast you into the lake of fire but for you to stand in awe of Him and recognize, Christianity isn't an easy, simple, happy go lucky, carefree experience. Oh, you may have a lot of emotions and response to your relationship God this week that are comfort, and security and peace but there ought to be some where you say I serve a consuming fire.

I know this probably won't be the sermon you recommend to your prospective visitors to Compass Bible Church to



listen to first. They're not all like this. Or you brought someone this morning; it's not always like this. And I know this won't be your first choice for a sermon because we have a natural aversion to aspects to God's character that make us uncomfortable. We have a natural dislike it seems in our flesh at least for expectations God put upon us that make us feel uncomfortable, that are unpleasant. Just like little kids have a natural dislike for vegetables, and grade school kids have a natural dislike for wearing their helmet when they ride their bicycles and like licensed teenagers have a natural dislike for seat belts and speed limits and no texting laws. They don't like those things. But you're a parent and you hope that they do have some kind of sense of responsibility and even fear of what might happen to their bodies or their head or their life if they don't have a healthy understanding of the consequences if you don't put these things in place. See the fear of God may not be pleasant, you may have a natural aversion to it, but you and I must learn to fear the Lord, not just because it's the right thing and God is there flexing His muscles, making sure you're afraid of Him. That's not it, part of it is certainly right to fear Him, but you need to fear Him for your own good. I mean that has to be part of our motive because God beckons us with reward and even says this at a great moment in Israel's history at a time when God looks and says you got it right now.

He says this; jot this down, last thing, Deuteronomy chapter 5 verse 29, Deuteronomy 5:29, God says, listen to the language here, "Oh that you had such a heart as this always, to fear me and keep my commandments. Why, that it may go well with you and with your descendents forever." Oh that you would just continue; because right now you get it. It would be great if you could just always have this mindset because then it would be so good for you. You would be protected, you'd have a fortress, you'd have a confidence, your kids would have a refuge. How great it would be if you just continue in the fear of the Lord, not just for you but your kids and your grandkids. I know we love to say we follow Christ, feels good to say we love the Lord; can we get comfortable with the uncomfortable statement this week, that we also fear Him? Fear Him. Fear God. Fear the Lord. May God allow that in our lives, let's pray.

God help us, uncomfortable doctrine but an important one. Oh that we might get comfortable recognizing what it means to enjoy all the emotions that we're so naturally drawn to. To feel loved, secure, to feel significant in Christ as an adopted child of the King but also to realize that our portfolio of emotional responses to you must include fear, to be unsettled and uncomfortable when we think about your sovereignty, your power, even your redemption and your grace, not as the uniformed experience of our heart but certainly as an important part of it. Make that a reality for us then let us as a congregation and as individuals reap those benefits that you articulate for us not just in Proverbs but through out the Bible. In Jesus' name, Amen