

WALKING IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD

Church of the Messiah 2-12-2023

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Last week Pastor Nile spoke as a prophet to us as he had us look into the words of one of the minor prophets Habakkuk, which had a MAJOR message to us as the people of God.
- B. This morning I want to build on that message as we address what does it mean to live in THE FEAR OF THE LORD. I have shared with you in the past on this, but felt the Lord was leading me to emphasize these principles in light of what God is speaking today.
- C. Ecclesiastes is an interesting book. (Daryl pp. 174) Written numerous books including Just War Tradition and Natural Law and Religious Freedom. In his book Wisdom's Work he states...
- D. Ecclesiastes 12: 11-13 — *“Now when all has been heard here is the conclusion of the matter. Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”*
The Message puts it this way... ¹²*But regarding anything beyond this, dear friend, go easy. There's no end to the publishing of books, and constant study wears you out so you're no good for anything else.* ¹³*The last and final word is this: Fear God. Do what he tells you.”*
- E. If Proverbs 9:10 states that, *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding,”* then we cannot afford the luxury of being ignorant of that. What that fear is in both our understanding and personal experience.

II. DEFINITION

- A. Word “fear” in Hebrew (2 most dominant words)
 1. Pachad — Pak~had: “to make one shake, be afraid, sometimes translated “terrified”.
 2. Yare — yaw-ray' : a deep reverence, and respect. This is the most predominant word used when it says, “the fear of the Lord”.
- B. My brother Al has the most practical and Functional Definition of the Fear of the Lord.

“The continual awareness that I am personally in the presence of a holy, just, omniscient, and almighty God and therefore every action, every thought, every word and every attitude is open before Him and being judged by Him.”

 1. Psalm 139:2, 4, 12 *“You have search me and you know me...”*
 2. Proverbs 5:21 declares” *“For a man's ways are in full view of the Lord, and He examines all his paths.”*
 3. II Corinthians 5:10 *“We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each may receive what is due him for the things done in the body whether good or bad.”*
 4. Luke 12: 2-3
“There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed or hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the housetops.”

As we can see GOD IS LISTENING AND WATCHING

- I. God is calling his people today to get ready for some incredible times that are both exciting but also very challenging days ahead. We need to be alert like never before. Be discerning of false teachings and the perversion of God's truth.

2. James 3 declares: *“If you are wise and understand God’s ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your heart, don’t cover up the truth with boasting and lying. ¹⁵ For jealousy and selfishness are not God’s kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. ¹⁶ For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind. ¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. ¹⁸ And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.”*

5. In the midst of this we the church are called to be SALT, LIGHT. In essence we are to be the **COUNTERCULTURE**. However, in our effort to be culturally relevant we must be careful NOT to be drawn into compromise and then rationalize our actions in the name of being a **“Contemporary Christian.”**

a. What is happening in our culture today is just plain: **CRAZY**”

b. We are told today there are 16 different genders. Yet Genesis clearly states. *“God created people in His own image, God patterned them after himself; MALE and FEMALE he created them”* At work now we are told to use our preferred pronouns and we have a 16 page document on “Why pronouns matter”

c. Romans 8:7 declares, *“The sinful nature is always hostile toward God”* That hostility is becoming more intense.

d. AND, It is only going to become worse. Satan knows his time is short.

e. Some say, “This is just political or culture war.” NO, its **SPIRITUAL WARFARE!**

f. Some would say “Abortion is just a political issue. NO it’s a form of infanticide. Pagan cultures that would sacrifice their babies to please their gods. Proverbs lists “Those who shed innocent blood”, as one of the things God hates.

f. That’s why we **MUST** daily put on the **WHOLE** armor of God. Ephesians 6

¹⁰ A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. ¹² For we^[a] are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

¹³ Therefore, put on every piece of God’s armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. ¹⁴ Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God’s righteousness. ¹⁵ For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared.^[b] ¹⁶ In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil.^[c] ¹⁷ Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸ Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

6. To be **ALL** that God wants we **MUST** face some hard realities about ourselves that can dilute or even negate our influence to a dying world thus we **WILL NOT** as Paul says **“Shine like stars in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.”**

7. This morning I want us to look at several crucial principles drawn out of the life of King Saul. Then I would like to compare him to another Saul of scripture who we know as the Apostle Paul.

8. Turn with me to I Samuel 15

Israel called out to God, they wanted a king like other nations. God warned them. They insisted. God gave them what they wanted.

PRINCIPLE: Be careful what you demand or even persistently ask from GOD, He just may give it to you! And that may bring some consequences you didn't expect.

READ I Samuel 15 1- 27

II. KING SAUL TRIES TO APPEASE GOD WITH HIS SACRIFICES.

A. He knew he had failed the Lord and this wasn't the first time.

B. God wanted his OBEDIENCE **NOT** his excuses. And not just the outward form of going through the motions.

1. God desired his **obedience from the heart**. Psalm 40:8 declares: *I delight to do Your will, O my God, And Your law is within my heart.* Yes, sometimes the Lord asks us to do things that we just don't understand or a the time makes no sense.

Isaiah 55 (NLT) declares; *"For my thoughts are completely different than yours. And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts."*

2. Our Obedience must be **prompt**. God told him to do this. WHEN? IMMEDIATELY! We can't put God on OUR timetable because it's inconvenient.

4. Our Obedience must be **precise**. He had very clear and specific instructions (Vs. 3)

5. Our Obedience must be **unquestioning**.

(Saul questioned God's plan)

a. Many of us are willing to serve God BUT we want to do it in our own prescribed way.

b. Some people think heaven is a democracy. We won't vote on it!

c. Notice how Saul even put a spiritual twist to His disobedience.

d. So many times we want God in our lives but only in an **advisory capacity**. We want to determine those areas we want God to be involved with and HOW we want Him involved. HE IS THE LORD JESUS CHRIST!

6. There can be no true worship or service without dedicated and an **obedient heart**. Jesus said; "If you love me you will read you Bible an hour a day, you will witness to three people every day, you will fast every month. **NO!** *"If you love me you will keep my commandments."* And He goes on to say *and "they won't be a burden."*

7. He will not accept **SACRIFICES FOR OBEDIENCE**. Don't try and appease God. That was Jesus total disdain for the Pharisees. In watching The Chosen, it wonderfully shows this personified in the Pharisees

II. MANY OF US FAIL MISERABLY IN THIS AREA OF OBEDIENCE. We are doing major things but we are NOT obeying the Lord in many of the other areas He has spoken to us.

A. Saul knew what God wanted him to do and still didn't do it. **WHY?** Verse 24 has the key: ***"I feared the people and obeyed THEIR voice."***

B. Just like Saul we know what we are to do but we are more concerned about what those around us might say. **Why do we do this?**

1. We fear **rejection**. "They won't like me if I don't go along with what they are doing".
2. We fear **being laughed at**. ALL of us want to be accepted.
3. If the situation is at work or school we fear that **we might not get ahead**.
4. **But when all is said ultimately we FAIL TO SEE GOD FOR WHO HE IS!**

C. The Apostle Paul had the right perspective when he said in Acts 20:27 **"I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the WHOLE counsel (or intention) of God"** The TRUTH isn't always sweet!

1. Paul did NOT fear the faces of men. Even if what he said was unpopular, HE DECLARED IT! He was OBEDIENT to God's call in his life even though he paid some consequences for doing the right thing. When Paul came to town he didn't ask what the Sheraton or the Hilton like but rather, **"What's the jail like here in town, I'll probably be spending some time there."**
2. In Galatians 1: 9-10 the Gospel was being corrupted so Paul takes a stand *"If anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men or God? Or do I seek to please men for if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ."*
3. A.W. Tozer said "It is possible within the provisions of redemptive grace to enter into a state of union with Christ so perfect that the world will instinctively react toward us exactly as it did toward him in the days of his flesh." His book "THE PURSUIT OF GOD"

III. We can see a threefold perspective in the life of the Apostle Paul.

A. First perspective we see it was **"CHRIST HAS CALLED ME."**

1. He expressed it this way...Galatians 1:1 *"Paul an apostle sent not **from** men nor **by** man but by **Jesus Christ** and God the Father."*
2. I Thessalonians 2:1-4 In NLT states: *¹You yourselves know, dear brothers and sisters, that our visit to you was not a failure. ²You know how badly we had been treated at Philippi just before we came to you and how much we suffered there. Yet our God gave us the courage to declare his Good News to you boldly, even though we were surrounded by many who opposed us. ³So you can see that we were not preaching with any deceit or impure purposes or trickery. ⁴For we speak as messengers who **have been approved by God** to be entrusted with the Good News. Our purpose is to **please God, not people**. He is the one who examines the motives of our hearts."*

3. “I am His servant” was his perspective. Do you know that Christ has called you? EVERY ONE OF YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED! Have you heeded that call? Pastor Marty is no more called than you are. Secular vs sacred work. (Daryl’s words)

B. Second perspective Paul had was “GOD’S EYE IS UPON ME”

1. II Corinthians 2:17 *“Unlike so many, we do not peddle the Word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God.”*
2. II Corinthians 4:2 *“We have renounced secret and shameful ways: we do not use deception, nor do we distort the Word of God. On the contrary, by setting for the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.”*
3. We must learn to live in the awareness that we are under the eye of the Lord
4. It was that very awareness that aided Paul in not succumbing to the flattery of men, nor did he use smoothness of speech to flatter men.
 - a. I Thes. 2:5 says, *“You know that we never used flattery nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed, God is our witness. We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else.”*
 - b. *“Flattery like the bee carries honey in its mouth but has a sting in its tail”.*
 - c. King Saul liked the flattery of men.
 - d. Job 32:17-22 Job was compelled to speak straightforwardly. V21 *“I will show partiality to no one, nor will I flatter any man: FOR IF I WERE SKILLED IN FLATTERY MY Maker would soon take me away.”*

C. Not only did He recognize that God had called him and secondly that God’s eye was upon Him, but **thirdly he recognized “GOD WILL JUDGE ME.”**

1. II Timothy 4:1-2 says, *“In the presence of God and of Christ who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and His kingdom, I give you this charge: PREACH the word: be prepared in season and out of season: correct, rebuke, and encourage with great patience and careful instruction.”*
2. II Corinthians 5: 8 – 10 states: *“We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the lord. So we make it our goal to please Him whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must ALL appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due Him for the things done while in the body either good or bad.”*
2. There is a healthy fear of God. What is that? Back to that functional definition my brother gave. gave me years ago. **“The continual awareness that I am personally in the presence of a holy, just, omniscient and almighty God and therefore every action, every thought, every word and every attitude is open before Him and being judged by Him”**
3. The apostle Paul had these three in operation in His life.

III. We are called to Freedom as God's children. Galatians declares, "Stand fast in the liberty where with Christ has set you free and don't entangled again in the yoke of bondage."

- A. We are only free as we are free before God.
- B. We can build mental and spiritual blocks to the truth. King Saul did this.
- C. It is not always pleasant to see ourselves before the eye of God.
- D. At some point there will be an Isaiah 6 experience. He sees the Lord and he says he is ruined. Yet what the throne detects, the alter touches. Yet the truth of that exposure was ultimately freeing. "Here am I, SEND ME!"
- E. Psalm 40: 11 says, *Do not withhold your mercy from me Oh Lord: may your love and your truth ALWAYS protect me.*
- F. We desire to see the world blessed.

1. We must be free FROM men to be free TO bless them.

- 2. Proverbs 29: 25 states *"The fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe."* Word snare was a term used for a noose that was used to capture animals. The more the pulled on it the tighter it got.
- 3. The MESSAGE puts it this way...*"The fear of human opinion disables: trusting in God protects you from that."*
- 4. In John 12: 42 - 43 it declares that as Jesus was ministering and teaching that even some of the leaders believed him. *"But because of the Pharisees that would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue. for they loved the praise from men more than the praise from God."*

E. Paul was a free man but that didn't mean he was harsh or obnoxious.

- 1. (I Thessalonians 2: 7 – 8) *⁷But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. ⁸So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.*
- 2. Paul had wisdom truth, love and compassion in balance.
- 3. He had tenderness and gentleness, but did NOT compromise the truth of God.
- 4. Jeremiah 3:10 the "weeping" prophet declares... *"Judah did not return to me with ALL her heart, but only in pretense."*

F. We need an ENCOUNTER with the living God not just experience (Movie Close Encounters of the Third Kind)

1. This man became so fixed on the vision that was in his mind that he would do anything to pursue it. Made a fool of himself to pursue that vision.
 2. WE NEED to have that type of PASSION in our pursuit of Jesus. BE A GOD CHASER!
- G. The sin of Achan - Joshua 7: 12-14 Get rid of those things which will cause us to not be able to fight.
1. Recognize that MY sin does effect and "infect" the rest of the Body.
 2. A Little leaven...

VI. GOD'S RESPONSE TO THOSE WHO FEAR HIM

- A. His love is toward them - Psalm 103:11,17
- B. He has compassion for them - Psalm 103:13
- C. He has mercy for them - Luke 1:50, Psalm 103:11
- D. He is a friend to them - Psalm 119:63
- E. He blesses them that fear Him — Psalm 115:13, 128:1,4
- F. He forgives them — Psalm. 130:4
- G. He will fulfill the desires of those who fear him.
 1. He knows their motives are right
 2. James, *"You have not...when you ask, you ask with the wrong motives."*
- H. He prolongs the life of those who fear him — Proverbs 10:27
- I. He remembers those who fear Him - Malachi 3:16
- J. He takes pleasure in those who fear Him - Psalm 147:11
- I. He will deliver them that fear Him - Psalm 34:7
- L. He protects them — Psalm 33:18—19

IV. CONCLUSION

- A. What has the Lord been saying to me?
 1. Have I been gripped with the fear of a person or afraid of not being accepted?
 2. Who have I been living in fear of or trying to gain approval from?
 3. Are there situations in my life where I have been a **"people pleaser"** at the expense

of being a **“God pleaser”**?

- B. Where have I NOT been obedient?
- C. Reinhart Bonke said... “Fear is the darkroom where we develop our negatives.”
- D. Remember we need to be free FROM men in order to BLESS men!
- E. “Courage is not the ABSENCE of fear rather it is the mastery of fear.”