

Fear This!

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But today right now we turn to the word of God which is the high point of our worship service, right? It's the high point, it's what we prepare our hearts to receive, an incredible blessing from God, right? People wonder why doesn't God speak, why doesn't God come down and say something and when you consider what we have, what we know from him, right, 66 books is what he has given us, the God of the universe. He hasn't left us in ambiguity to figure things out on our own, although we do wander around like sheep, confused, but we don't need to be because God has given us 66 books that we might know him and know how to please him. Amazing. So as we turn to that, let's prepare our hearts to receive what he has said and let's pray and let me pray for Max as well because I forgot to pray for Max and then we'll move on.

Father, we come to You because we want to know You. We draw near because You have bid us come so Father, we come expecting to receive from Your word Your truth and by Your Spirit to work in our hearts and in our life and, Father, I do pray for Max. I'm so thankful, Lord, for his profession of faith. I pray from here that he would grow and grow and grow into a man of God who is zealous for what is good, zealous for Your truth, for Your Gospel, and that You will use him to spread the good news of salvation in Christ to many many people, that through his testimony people would be saved. So Lord, I thank You for allowing us to witness his baptism this morning. So Lord, today soften our hearts and reveal Yourself to us we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Okay, today we're going to talk about a topic that none of us really enjoy and that's the topic of fear. Fear, obviously is common to man. It's as familiar to us as breathing. Everyone experiences fear of some kind and let's face it, there are many reasons to be afraid: fear of pain, fear of rejection, maybe fear of failure, losing relationships, loved ones, a job, livelihood, loss of your abilities through injury or deterioration, through disease. These are things that cause fear for us. Some of you fear sending your kids to college or even just letting them drive out of the cul-de-sac, right? Yeah, amen. That's a common thing, right? I'm scared of your kids leaving the cul-de-sac. Fear, terror and dread at some point in your life, you will experience some or all of these emotions and ultimately the fear of death hangs over all of us. It's out there. It's looming. And the older that you get, it seems, you know, that the older people get, the more fearful that they become because experience has taught them that there are things to be afraid of, right? Your grandparents usually are, you know, usually your grandma, I don't know maybe

women become more concerned and grandpas become less over time, I don't know, but fear, it's a common thing.

So it's not surprising that the Bible talks about fear frequently. In fact, it is the very first emotion that is described that Adam and Eve experienced after they disobeyed God and they heard the sound of God in the garden and they hid themselves because they were afraid. In the New American Standard Bible, the words "fear, afraid, frightened, anxiety, terror and dread," guess how many times those words show up? 672 times in the Bible. 672. Of the 66 books in the Bible, only 10 books don't include those specific words. One of those books is the Song of Solomon and some people are afraid to even read that book. The next is Obadiah which has three chapters of scathing prophecy against the Edomites who were arrogantly secure in their rugged mountain fortress and God basically says, "You shouldn't feel so secure. I'm going to destroy you by slaughter." That's one of the books that doesn't have the actual word "fear" in it, right? The next book is Nahum, which starts off like this, verse 2, "A jealous and avenging God is the LORD; The LORD is avenging and wrathful. The LORD takes vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies." So it doesn't have those words but it's a fearful and frightening book. Of the books that don't actually contain those specific words, only Philemon and 2 and 3 John don't contain or address something that is connected to the issue of fear and those books are each one chapter long. So three chapters.

Now most, not most but many references in the Scripture, many of these references to fear are just statements of fact. Someone feared something, for instance, Lot feared living in Zohar. God told Noah that the animals would be afraid of him. Jacob feared that some harm might befall his youngest son Benjamin. These are just statements of fact, someone feared something. But it's very interesting to observe that most of the time that fear shows up, it is in the form of a command. The command "do not be afraid or fear not," or something like that occurs frequently. Genesis 15:1, God told Abram, "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield." Then he says to Isaac in chapter 26, "I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not for I am with you and will bless you." To Hagar he says, "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not for God has heard the voice of the boy," for Hagar was afraid of her son, afraid that her son was going to die of starvation and he says, "Don't fear." To Jacob he says, "I am the God, I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt for there I will make you a great nation." The Israelites in Exodus are commanded not to fear the Egyptians and Joshua was commanded at least four different times, "Do not be afraid," as he was about to face his enemies on the battlefield, as he was taking the Promised Land. And many more times in the Old Testament you see God saying, "Fear not, I am with you," or something similar to that. Jesus said it to his disciples, he said it to the Apostle Paul before he was about to go in to preach in Corinth. He says it to the church at one of the churches in Revelation, I can't remember which one, Sardis maybe. "Fear not. Do not fear the tribulation that you're about to go through, the trouble, the suffering you're about to go through. Don't fear that."

But the command to fear not is not the only command that contains fear. Many times we are commanded to fear. Listen to Deuteronomy 13:4, "You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve

Him, and cling to Him." Ecclesiastes 12:13, "The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person." 1 Peter 2:17, "Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king." Leviticus 25:17, "you shall not wrong one another, but you shall fear your God." Leviticus 25:36, "Do not take usurious," I think that's how you pronounce it, "interest from him," that's usury, right? Don't charge people an exorbitant amount of interest. Why? You shall fear your God, you shall "revere your God, that your countryman may live with you." Deuteronomy 6:13, "You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name." So as you can see, we are commanded to fear God and many more times we are commanded to fear God. That's not, I mean, it's really incredible how much this shows up in the Scripture.

Then there's this kind of interesting passage in Exodus 20:20, "Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin.'" So do not be afraid, God is here to test you in order that you would fear him. Don't fear, don't be afraid because God's here so that you would fear him. Interesting combination. Interesting how those things are supposed to go together. We are not to fear because God wants us to fear him.

What does this fear mean? What kind of fear is this? Have that in mind, what does it mean to fear God? We're going to cover that over the next two weeks. Today we want to talk about why should we fear God and next week, how, how do we fear God, what does it look like to fear God, how do you know that you fear God? So this interesting combination of fear, don't fear, shows up again in Luke 12:1 through 7. Jesus says this, "Under these circumstances, after so many thousands of people had gathered together that they were stepping on one another, He began saying to His disciples first of all, 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed upon the housetops. I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!'" Then he says this, "Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? Yet not one of them is forgotten before God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows." It's the same word for "fear," by the way. He's not switching words on you here. There's not some magical Greek thing going on here behind the scenes. It's fear. Fear and fear. Fear, don't fear.

So we are commanded to not fear man, not fear death, not fear enemies, not to worry about what we will eat, drink or wear, but we are told that we ought to fear the Lord. So why should you fear him? Well, let's get a little bit of a definition here. In recent years, people have sought to take the edge off of this concept. In recent years especially, people want to make this a little softer than it is. They want to say that to fear God is merely to have a good respect for him, to just kind of have a reverence for him, that to fear the Lord is simply an issue of respect. Do you know what? That's where my heart wants to go with this. I want it to mean that. It just means be respectful of God? But when you look at the

Scripture and you let it say what it says, it means so much more than that. It is so much more heavy than just respecting God and I don't care what anybody says because the Scriptures are very very clear on this. People can't imagine that a good God is someone to be feared. They can't imagine that, that there should be anything frightening about a good God. We can't imagine how love, a loving God could also be a fearful God. What's your concept of God? What is your, do you fear him? What is your sense of awe? How big is he to you? How prominently does he figure in your thinking? How much does pleasing him factor into the decision of the moment, how you respond to a situation? How concerned are you about your life what you eat, drink or wear in comparison with whether or not I am pleasing to the Lord? What are you more concerned about?

There are about four Hebrew roots, words, root words translated "fear." Any guesses about what they mean? They mean "to fear; to dread or to be afraid." There are a couple of Greek words that are translated "fear." What do you think they mean? "Fear; trembling; trepidation; to be afraid." As I read these passages, tell me what you think this fear, what kind of fear this is. Luke 12:4 as this is the parallel to Matthew 10 that we read earlier, "I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!" What kind of fear do you think that is? Do you think that's just a healthy respect? Do you think he says, "Don't fear those who kill the body but have a healthy respect for the one who after he has killed has the authority to cast you into hell. Yes, respect him." Is that what that means? What do you think that means?

Romans 11:17, listen to this, "if some of the branches were broken off," this is talking about how Israel, the Jewish people, they are the promised one, but not all of them have believed and been faithful to God and so God has broken them off, they are like branches of an olive tree, he has broken them off and thrown them away because they did not believe, right? So some of the branches were broken off, "and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree," the covenant people of God, that rich root. Verse 18, "do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you." He is speaking of the Gentiles who were grafted in. "Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either. Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off."

What kind of fear do you think that is? What kind of fear is that? What would be the result if you did not continue in this kindness, if you stopped believing the Gospel of Christ, if you stopped following his steps? What kind of fear do you think you should have? It's more than a respect, you should be terrified of that and you should be terrified for one another in that. This is not a benign thing. We like to craft our theology in a way that makes us feel comfortable, don't we? But look at this, the Scripture holds us between fear and do not fear. It holds us in this tension between the kindness and the severity of

God. It never leaves us in this complacent state of, "Everything's just fine and, yeah, I have a healthy respect for God." It is much more than that.

Listen to Acts 4:32, "And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them." So everyone got saved, these people were from all different parts of the world and they needed to help support one another to get by, okay? They'd come in for the Passover, for Pentecost, and people got saved and they didn't go back to their homeland, they stayed together, so they needed help supporting one another, besides the fact that the Jewish leaders there were not happy about that and persecution started, and so they needed to band together and so they pooled their resources and all things were common property to them. "And with great power," verse 33, "the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need. Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement), and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet."

So everything is happy, everything is great. This is, you know, this is a beautiful beautiful thing. God's grace, people are being saved, they are being in generous with one another, amazing stuff, but then you get to verse 1 of the next chapter, "a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet." So the intention here is that they were selling a piece of property, making a show of the idea that they were giving everything to the church, right, and that's what they were communicating. But he hid some of it. He kept some of it back and look what happens here, verse 3, "Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land?'" Okay, now is the problem here that he kept back some of it for himself? No, that's not the problem. Look what he says, "While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." So publicly he goes in front of everyone to make a show that, "I am giving all of my proceeds to you," even though he knew he was lying and holding back. He conspired with his wife to do this thing. The problem was the lie and the hypocrisy in order to gain prominence among the people there, in order to gain their good respect. "Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" Then verse 5, "And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it." What kind of fear do you think that is? Well, "The young men got up and covered him up," packed him out of there, "and they buried him. Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter responded to her, 'Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?' And she said, 'Yes, that was the price.' Then Peter said to her, 'Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out as

well.' And immediately she fell at his feet and breathed her last, and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. And great fear," megas, mega phobus, mega fear, "came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things."

What kind of fear is that? What kind of fear is that? Is that just reverence? Is that just a healthy respect? No, it is fear. It is fear, real fear. How do you think that impacted those people? How do you think it impacted those people who just saw two people lie and die for it, killed by God? This is, by the way, after the cross. This is the New Testament. This is the early church. This is, you know, the grace of God has been poured out on all of them. Do you think God takes sin seriously? Do you think it's okay to lie and steal and commit adultery and give yourself to controlling substances? Do you not fear? Do you not fear God?

It's not in my nature to confront people, to be honest with you. I much prefer to encourage. I much prefer to build up and fill you with courage to move forward, but this concept is so deficient in our culture, in our Christian culture and in our church, and even in our Reformed circles with such an emphasis on the grace of God, which is good, but which loses its meaning without the fear of God. And I'm not speaking to you as somebody who fears God as he should but this is intense, right? What we've been called to is not a lazy, easy, complacent Christianity.

Here's how I would define the fear of the Lord and it's not short, so I'm sorry about that. Here's how I would define the fear of the Lord. It is a realization of the holy majesty of God that results in a sense of profound awe, admiration, reverence, honor and terror at the thought of displeasing him; a fear of his wrath that leads to repentance from sin and a fear of displeasing him because you love him. Fear of God leads one to obedience, trust, love, confidence and courage. It leads one to love what God loves and hate what he hates. It leads to treating others in a way that would please him.

So in the time we have remaining, I want to talk about the reasons to fear God and we're just going to talk through these things here. Why is it reasonable to fear God? 1. And this just makes sense, right, in light of reality, 1: God is all-powerful. God is all-powerful. You think about the power of the sun to heat an entire galaxy and when there is a sunspot or a solar flare, we get a heat wave and people die from overheating in Arizona, right? Just a little flare and it's millions of miles away. Can you imagine as this powerful sun would draw nearer, what impact would that have on you knowing the power that is involved in that and God spoke that into existence?

He is powerful over all of the kings of the earth. 1 Kings 19 talks about how God delivered Jerusalem from the Assyrians, the most powerful empire at that time. They were wiping out kingdom after kingdom, going in, razing the cities to rubble, burning them, torturing the inhabitants. These were the Assyrians, right, and they were arrogant and the Assyrians were coming to take over Jerusalem and they were taunting them saying, "Don't say that Yahweh is going to save you. Don't say that the Lord is going to save you. You're going to be just like all these other people. All these other people

thought their gods were going to save them." And so then Hezekiah calls out, "Lord, save us! This guy is taunting You." So then God shows up and he wipes out, and I would love to read the whole passage, I would recommend it to you, 1 Kings 19. The king of Assyria and God says this to him, "I know when you rise up and when you lie down, king. I know when you get up in the morning and I know when you go to bed and listen up, you're going to show up with your army and then you're going to leave here by yourself and then you're going to last about three years." He shows up, he sends an angel of the Lord into the middle of the night, 185,000 men wiped out by the angel of God in the middle of the night. One night. The most powerful army camped just outside of Jerusalem completely wiped out overnight by God. Then that king went home and while he was worshipping in one of his temples, he was killed by his own son. God says, "I know when you rise up, when you lay down, and I control everything that happens to you. I raised you up," he says to him, "I raised you up to deal with these wicked people but you have grown arrogant and now you're done." That's God, right? That is God. He is all-powerful.

2. God is all-knowing. Psalm 139. I want you to turn there. Psalm 139. God is all-knowing. Verse 1, "O LORD, You have searched me and known me." Okay, stop and think about that. God searches you, he searches your heart. He knows what's there. Can you imagine how would you feel? I mean, people get nervous when they get pulled over by the cops whether they've done anything wrong or not, right, because the cop is searching, looking for something wrong, right? This says, "God, You have searched me and known me."

Verse 2, "You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways." God knows exactly everything that's going on in your life. Everything. Every step. Every thought before you even think it.

Verse 4, "Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, You know it all. You have enclosed me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is too high, I cannot attain to it. Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?" I can't get away from you. So this all-powerful God, this all-powerful Creator who owns you and knows you, you can't get away. There is nowhere you can go to get away from God. You can't run to another country. You can't run from the church to get away from God. You can't run from your Christian friends. You can't go to another religion and another state. You can't go downtown to the bars and all of that to get away from God. You can't get away from God in your drunkenness and in your drugs. You can't get away from God in your cutting and in your lying. You can't get away from God by divorcing yourself from your personality and splitting your personality and blaming that other personality for all your problems. You can't get away from God.

"If I ascend to heaven," verse 8, "You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol," in the earth, in the dirt, "behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me. If I say, 'Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, And the light around me

will be night,' Even the darkness is not dark to You, And the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You." Beyond that, verse 13, "You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works." So he goes on and on but you can't get away from God. He knows everything. Why should you fear God? He knows everything about you. Everything is exposed.

Listen to Hebrews 4:11, "Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest," he means be diligent to believe in Christ is really what he means, to hold onto our faith in Christ, "so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." God knows everything. He sees everything. Everything is exposed and open before him and one day, maybe we'll talk about this next week, one day everything that you have ever done will be laid out into the open. One day everything will be exposed. The thoughts and intentions of your heart, the motives, the purposes will be completely laid bare. How does that make you feel?

God is all-powerful, God is all-knowing, and number 3, the reason that you should fear him is he is good. The reason that you should fear God is because he is good. You see, the fear that we experience is not the fear of good people, not the fear that good people have of an evil malicious tyrant, it is the fear that a criminal has for an all-powerful justice system. It is the fear that a criminal has of a good and righteous king. That is the fear. That is the fear. You see, we think that it must be an evil God that should cause, that we would fear a God like this, a God that would bring wrath and terror. No, God is good. He is righteous. He is perfect. He is holy and he desires that we be like that, that we be holy and righteous and just and honest and faithful and true, and one day he is creating a universe, right, one day he is preparing it as we speak to create a universe in which righteousness dwells, in which there is no evil thing: no liar, no murderer, no adulterer. This is what Revelation says. It is a good King, a good and righteous Judge who is dealing with sin in this world so that he can re-create it and have a world that lives in the holiness of his character.

The problem with why we should fear God is because this all-powerful, all-knowing God is good and he does not play favorites. There is no partiality with him. He will deal with each one according to his deeds, it says many many times, and this God has commanded us to fear him. Now this is the kind of fear, now what do you do in this situation, right? An all-powerful righteous King, he is good, all-knowing, you cannot get away, you cannot run, you cannot get away from his justice, so what are you to do? What does the fear of God drive you to do? Is it to bow your neck, shake your fist at him, run from him? All of that stuff is insane. It's like standing on the beach in front of a tsunami and shaking your fist at it. It's like living in Haiti and trying to run from the hurricane. You will not get away. So what are you to do? You need mercy, right? You need forgiveness. You need a Savior. You need a refuge from the storm, the coming storm. The fear of God and

knowing who he is leads you to call out for mercy and help and it so happens that this good and righteous King who will deal with your sin, every last one of your sins, he will deal with it one way or the other, he has made one way of escape, he has made one way of salvation, he has given you one refuge and one hope, one place to go and he has made it extremely abundantly clear.

Look at Psalm 2. It says in verse 11, "Worship the LORD with reverence And rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!" So when you fear this God, when you know an all-powerful righteous Judge who you could never get away from and his wrath is coming, has provided one way of escape, the fear of God drives you to him. It drives you to him and nowhere else. The fear of God causes you to trust completely and only in Jesus Christ who absorbed all of the wrath for all who would believe. It's not the promise of a nice life. It's not adding happiness to your life that draws you to Christ. It is flee from the wrath to come. It is the firestorm that is coming because of the righteousness of God that drives you in fear to the cross like the Pilgrim with the burden on his back, and you run to that cross and you beg for salvation and mercy. Why? Because you actually fear God. You don't just have nice thoughts about God. You don't just think highly of him. You fear not being right with him, and if you fear God, if you truly fear God and you live in the fear of God, then you don't need to be afraid because those who fear God find mercy, and we'll talk more about that next week.

So knowing that he is the only way to avoid the wrath of God, the fear of God, genuine fear and terror, knowing that you're under his righteous judgment, drives you to the cross, drives you to Jesus Christ, you see, because this God has not left us in ambiguity. It is not this ambiguous fear that, "Oh, I don't know if I belong to him," right? "I don't know what to do." No, he has given us the exact things that we are to do to be right with him. What a good God. What a righteous Judge. So run to that.

Now listen to Hebrews 10, though. If we know that Jesus Christ is the only way to be right with God, we need to run there now. Verse 19 says this, "Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." That's through Christ, through faith in him. Verse 23, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries." Again, what kind of fear do you think that is? A terrifying expectation of judgment for those who reject Christ. There is no other way. There's not another sacrifice that will allow you to come near to God. It is only through him and if you reject that, there is no other sacrifice. Now all you can expect is judgment.

Verse 28, "Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?" Are the stakes higher or lower in the new covenant? Is it a bigger deal to reject Moses or a bigger deal to reject Jesus? Will the punishment be worse for rejecting Moses or will it be worse for rejecting Jesus? Jesus Christ is far superior and to insult him requires a far more severe punishment than even the old covenant, and there is no other Savior coming.

Verse 30, "For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will judge His people.' It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God." And if you have a problem with that, you have a problem with God's word, not with me. I might be a jerk but this is the word of God and you can't explain that away. You can't soften that. You can't let the fear of man and being afraid of scaring them off cause you to adulterate the clear teaching of Scripture.

Again in Hebrews 12:18, "For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them." You know what he's talking about there is Mount Sinai when God came down and gave the law in the Old Testament. There was thunder and lightning and earthquakes and the blast of a trumpet and the people were terrified. So he's saying here, "You haven't come to a mountain like that. You haven't come to a physical mountain." Verse 20, "For they could not bear the command, 'If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned.' And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, 'I am full of fear and trembling.'" No, you haven't come to that mountain. Verse 22, "you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel. See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven. And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying," okay, so back then his voice shook the earth, right, but he has promised, "'Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven.' This expression, 'Yet once more,' denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude," okay, which indicates humility, right? You don't deserve this kingdom. Let us show gratitude "by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence," or fear, "and awe; for our God is a consuming fire."

We fear God because he is all-powerful, because he is all-knowing, and because he is good. He is a good Judge and he is a good Savior who will be faithful to his promise to save all who come to him. And he is a consuming fire. This is a God who though he is

terrifying, and he truly is, it says that it's a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God, it is a terrifying thing to be found outside of his good will, and so it's frightening in that way. So beyond that, how much more do we respect and honor and revere him knowing that we, ungodly sinners deserving of his judgment, barely avoiding his wrath and fury simply because the Lord has chosen to make known to us his word that we would be saved through his one refuge, Jesus Christ, how much more grateful and respectful and desiring to please him should that make us? Knowing this is so, what kind of people should we be? There is great respect, there is great great reverence but it is deep respect, it is fearful respect, it is trembling respect. It is the kind of respect that causes you to walk carefully and purposefully. It is the kind of respect that causes you to quickly turn once you know and realize that you are walking in sin. It is the kind of fear and respect that drives you to the word of God to know how you might please him, not believing that you already have it all figured out. And there is more and we'll get to that next week.

Those are the reasons why we fear God. That's what drives us to the cross. That's what drives us towards holiness. Next week we're gonna look at how, how do we do this? What does this show up as? Where in your life are you not fearing God and how can you change? Don't rest until you are right with him.

Let's pray.

Father, You are high and lifted up. You are majestic. You are holy. You are terrifying but, Lord, You are full of love and mercy and You desire to forgive all who would come to You in faith. So Father, I pray that rather than running from You, rather than hating You, rather than the defiant fear that causes us to hide, Lord, I pray that it would drive us into the open to expose our sin to Jesus, to let Him take it for us, and to walk in His ways, and out of love for You, a fear and a reverence and a respect and an awe, Lord, that we would draw near and walk in Your ways, seeking You with all of our heart. Lord, I pray that if anyone here and I know there are people here that don't know You, I pray that they would not brush this off for You are coming in an hour when we least expect. You are coming in a time that no one knows. For those, Lord, who are wallowing in sin and guilt, I pray, Father, that they would let go of every other fear that they have and fear Your name to follow You. Give them the power and the motivation and the conviction to do so and unite us, Lord, in the fear of You, that we would walk humbly and carefully in Your ways. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.