

Thought For The Week

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Fearing God

Biblical Insights on Reverence, Obedience, and Redemption

The sermon “Fearing God,” delivered by Steve, delves deeply into a timeless biblical theme, rooted in Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 and Hebrews 10:9-25. As the congregation heard the readings – Ecclesiastes concluding that fearing God and keeping His commandments is the essence of life, and Hebrews detailing Christ’s superior sacrifice – Steve posed probing questions: Do we fear God? To what degree? And what does it truly mean?

Fearing God, Steve explains, transcends being awestruck or merely wondering if we’re pleasing Him. It’s a profound reverence that shapes our behavior, much like the “fear” children have for parents. Growing up, many of us avoided misdeeds – foul language, smoking, lying – not just from punishment but to avoid embarrassing or angering our parents. We wanted to reflect well on them, allowing them to boast, “My children don’t do those things.” Similarly, God desires righteousness and truth in us. He knows our every action, and true fear means constantly striving to please Him, even in hidden moments.

To illustrate, Steve shares a personal pet peeve: obeying traffic laws. God commands obedience to earthly authorities, yet many speed, justifying it as “what the police enforce.” This, he argues, shows incomplete fear of God. If we can’t consistently follow simple laws, how can we claim full reverence? Mankind, he notes, rarely achieves 100% obedience, highlighting our need for self-reflection.

Setting the stage with Hebrews 1:1-4, Steve emphasizes God’s communication. In the past, He spoke through prophets; now, through His Son, the radiance of His glory. This Son, Jesus, purifies sins and sits at God’s right hand, superior to angels. The point? God has always guided humanity on respect and worship, starting with Adam and Eve.

In Genesis, God placed them in Eden, granting everything except the tree of knowledge of good and evil, warning, “In the day you eat of it, you shall surely die.” It’s akin to parents leaving a child home, saying, “Don’t touch the stove – you’ll get burned.” Did Adam and Eve fear God? Initially, no. Satan, as a serpent, tempted Eve with lies: “You won’t die; you’ll become like God.” Attracted like someone to drugs promising enlightenment, she ate, then gave to Adam. Their eyes opened, they saw their nakedness, sewed fig leaves, and hid upon hearing God – like children caught after disobeying.

This fear was misplaced: terror of consequences, not reverent awe. God confronted them: “Where are you? Who told you you’re naked? Did you eat from the tree?” Yet, in mercy, He promised redemption in Genesis 3:15 – enmity between Eve’s seed and Satan’s, with her seed (ultimately Jesus) crushing Satan’s head, though bruised in the heel. Eve believed, naming Cain hopefully as the avenger, though it was Christ who fulfilled this.

Next, Steve examines Cain and Abel. Both offered sacrifices, implying God had instructed proper worship. Abel, a shepherd, gave fat portions from his firstborn flock – accepted. Cain, a farmer, brought some fruits – rejected. Why? Cain knew the right way but didn't follow, showing no fear. Angry and downcast, God asked, "Why are you angry? If you do right, won't you be accepted? But if not, sin crouches at your door; you must rule over it." This affirms our control: We can choose obedience.

Instead, Cain's unfettered anger led to murdering Abel. This rift echoes humanity's separation from God, like Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden. God, angry, declared to disobedient Israelites in the wilderness, "You will not enter my rest." Yet, He always provided paths back, communicating through various means.

Under the Old Covenant, God selected Abraham's descendants, marked by circumcision, as His people at Sinai. He gave the Ten Commandments and more – Leviticus details lifestyle, priesthood, tabernacle, altars. Priests mediated, offering sacrifices for sins, as Hebrews 5:1-10 describes: Selected from people, they represent in God-matters, dealing gently with the ignorant, offering for their own sins too. No one self-appoints; God calls, as with Aaron.

But this was temporary. Jeremiah 31:31 (quoted in Hebrews 8 and 10) foretold a new covenant, as God grew weary of Israel's unfaithfulness. A priesthood change necessitates a covenant change. Moses knew its transience; in 2 Corinthians 3:7-18, Paul notes the old ministry's fading glory – Moses veiled his radiant face to hide its end. The new, through the Spirit, brings lasting righteousness and freedom, transforming us into God's image.

Jesus embodies this transition. As high priest like Melchizedek, He offered prayers with cries and tears, learning obedience through suffering. His one sacrifice perfected the sanctified forever, unlike repeated priestly offerings. The Holy Spirit testifies: God writes laws on hearts, remembers sins no more. No more sin offerings needed; we enter the holiest boldly via Jesus' blood, a new way through His flesh.

The shift occurred at Pentecost, post-Jesus' death, burial, resurrection. His blood enacted the new covenant; the old faded. Now, Jesus intercedes at God's right hand. God endorsed Him at baptism and transfiguration: "This is my beloved Son; hear Him." Ascending, He invites all through Him, not old rites.

How do we respond? Fear God by worshiping as He desires: Through Jesus. As Mark 16:15-16 and Matthew 28 command, go into the world, make disciples, baptize in the Father's, Son's, and Holy Spirit's name – believers shall be saved. Baptism remits sins, allowing Jesus to advocate, entering God's presence not by hands-made temples but heavenly ones.

Steve urges: If unbaptized, respond publicly, confess faith, be immersed. Jesus wants to intercede, representing you in the Holy of Holies. For believers, hold fast hope, stir love and good works, assemble faithfully – especially as "the day" approaches.

In conclusion, fearing God means reverent obedience in all – from daily choices to worship. Like parents' pride in upright children, God delights in our righteousness. Amid excuses, we control our path: Rule sin, do right, be accepted. Through Christ, redemption mends the rift, offering eternal salvation. This fear isn't dread but loving submission, fostering community and hope.

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Fearing God

A Call to Obedience and Reverence

In a recent sermon titled “Fearing God,” preacher Steve explores the profound biblical concept of fearing God, drawing from Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 and Hebrews 10:9-25. He emphasizes that fearing God goes beyond mere awe; it involves deep respect, obedience, and a desire to please Him in every aspect of life. As the Ecclesiastes passage states, the conclusion of all matters is to “fear God and keep his commandments,” for God will judge every act, hidden or overt.

Steve illustrates this with everyday examples, likening it to a child’s fear of disappointing parents. Just as children avoid foul language or dishonesty to uphold their family’s image, believers should live righteously to honor God. He points out common failures, like speeding despite knowing it’s against the laws of the land, which God commands us to obey. This reflects a lack of true fear, as mankind often falls short of 100% obedience.

Turning to Genesis, Steve recounts Adam and Eve’s story. God gave them paradise but forbade the tree of knowledge of good and evil, warning of death. Yet, tempted by Satan, they disobeyed, showing no initial fear. Only after sinning, realizing their nakedness, and hearing God’s approach did fear strike – but it was the wrong kind: fear of being caught, not reverent submission.

Similarly, Cain and Abel’s offerings highlight proper worship. Abel’s was accepted because he followed God’s way, while Cain’s was rejected, leading to anger and murder. God confronted Cain: “If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?” This underscores personal control over our actions and the need to rule over sin.

The sermon transitions to God’s communication through prophets and ultimately His Son, Jesus. The Old Covenant, with its priesthoods and sacrifices, was temporary, as prophesied in Jeremiah and echoed in Hebrews. Jesus’ sacrifice established a new covenant, sanctifying believers once for all. He now intercedes as our high priest, enabling bold access to God.

Steve concludes with a call: To fear God today means accepting Jesus, confessing faith, and being baptized for remission of sins (Mark 16:15-16). This restores our relationship with God, allowing us to enter His presence. In a world of excuses, true fear means unwavering obedience, stirring love and good works among believers.

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