

## John 18.12-27—The Tale of Two Fears

### I. Introduction

- a. There are two categories of fear: fear of the Lord or fear of anything else. Within the fear of anything else category, there are some good and some evil. Not all are the same.
- b. But what does it mean to fear the Lord? Let's start with this verse: (Prov. 28:14) <sup>14</sup> Blessed is the one who fears the LORD always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity.
  - i. The fear of the Lord is in contrast to a hard heart. The hard-hearted person rejects the supremacy of God and rebelliously decides my way is better than God's way. To fear the Lord loves all that God reveals Himself to be and all His ways are perfect and worthy of gladly obeying for His glory. The Name is held in honor and a good healthy fear of dishonoring Him and His discipline leads us to resist temptations and pursue holiness. Yet, when we do fail, we also know that God forgives us with no hesitation if we are His children. Repentance is an ongoing thing for us who believe.
- c. A quick survey of those who did not fear the Lord:
  - i. Who did Adam and Eve fear? Let me ask it like this: who did they obey? SELF not Satan. He merely suggested that they do what they want.
  - ii. One clear example of a man who did not fear the Lord was Pharaoh. Early on in the exchange, it says in (Exod. 7:16) <sup>16</sup> And you shall say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, "Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness." But so far, you have not obeyed.
  - iii. Aaron's sons offered unauthorized fire before the Lord and they died.
  - iv. In (Num. 12:1) Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses. Miriam becomes leprous.
  - v. Again in (Num. 16:1-3) Now Korah's rebellion <sup>2</sup> ...rose up before Moses, with a number of the people of Israel, 250 chiefs of the congregation, chosen from the assembly, well-known men. <sup>3</sup> They assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.
    1. (Num. 16:31-34) the ground under them split apart. <sup>32</sup> And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the people who belonged to Korah and all their goods.
  - vi. Uzzah. Ananias and Sapphira.
- d. I could go on and on with stories about those who did not fear the Lord. Fear reveals what we love most and who we obey.
- e. Our text this morning contrasts the tale of two fears. The story switches back and forth between Jesus and Peter. One fears God and the other fears man (or should I say a slave girl). We need to see this to help us fear rightly.

### II. Main Point

- a. The main point is the contrast between the wise, god-fearing Son who stands fast under trial and the foolish man-fearing Peter who denies his Lord and Master.

### III. Outline

- a. Scene one: Jesus arrested and bound is taken to Annas
- b. Scene two: Peter follows Jesus but denies him
- c. Scene three: Jesus is questioned wrongly and struck wrongly
- d. Scene four: Peter's fear controls him and he denies Jesus the second and third time

### IV. Exposition

- a. Let's jump into the first scene. Jesus, arrested and bound, is led to trial. Let's take notice of who fears the Lord and who doesn't in the following scenes.
  - i. The band of Roman soldiers and their captain (which is a word that means a commander of 1000) arrested and bound him.

1. We don't know what the Jewish officials told the Roman soldiers and their captain. As will be the case with Pilate, their story changes from theological to political. I can only assume the soldiers were told something that made Jesus appear to be a threat even though he had given them no indication of that.
2. Certainly, these men are acting on the misinformation given to them. They do not question Jesus to hear his side of the story but simply transport him back to those making the indictment. In some ways that's fine. They are not judge and jury.
3. But do they fear the Lord? Well, no. They are Romans. Later in Acts we hear of a commander named Cornelius who is (Acts 10:2) <sup>2</sup> a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God.
  - a. No such description was given of this commander and company.
4. Yet, Jesus fears the Lord and goes willingly without saying a word.
  - a. Again, he fulfills (Isa. 53:7) <sup>7</sup> He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.
  - b. You might be wondering—Jesus feared God? And the answer is, yes. We talked about that Promised Child last week from Gen 3:15 but later we are given more details about who and what he will be like.
    - i. In particular it says of him in (Isa. 11:1-2) There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. <sup>2</sup> And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.
    - ii. Jesus, the God-Man, gladly submitted to the Father's will, to the point of death, even death on the cross. He honored the Father perfectly.
    - iii. If we compare Adam with Jesus, we can say this with Paul: (Rom. 5:18-19) <sup>18</sup> Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. <sup>19</sup> For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.
      1. No fear of God led to sin and condemnation.
      2. Fear of God led to righteousness and justification.
  - ii. The path to the one act of obedience, the cross, FIRST goes through Annas.
    1. Why Annas first? Because he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.
      - a. A question does come up. In verse 19 the high priest questions Jesus and it must be Annas who does this. Because, after questioning him, he sends him to Caiaphas in verse 24, the high priest.
      - b. So, which one is it? Annas had been the high priest previously but was removed by a Roman governor. Many probably continued to see him as the high priest because an appointment to the high priest was a life-long term and many would not have recognized Rome's authority. But officially, Caiaphas was the high priest.
      - c. It seems Annas "retained a considerable amount of authority and he was the power behind Caiaphas." That's why he goes first.
    - iii. One more thing from this first scene. We are reminded of the statement Caiaphas made in chapter 11 here in verse (Jn. 18:14) <sup>14</sup> It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people.

1. Unknowingly, Caiaphas was right but not in the way he meant it. One of the amazing things about the Bible is that God sometimes interprets the events for us.
  - a. So, John tells us how to understand these words of Caiaphas. (Jn. 11:51-52) <sup>51</sup> He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, <sup>52</sup> and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.
2. The irony is that God's plan of redemption is unfolding exactly how He planned it.
  - a. What Caiaphas meant for evil, God meant for good.
  - b. Of all people, other than Jesus, the high priest should have feared God more than anyone else. It informs us that even the most religious can become very hardened and would have unmistakably thought that he was leading the Jewish people rightly.
  - c. There is a kind of fear that the Bible speaks of that seeks to control the world around us. Caiaphas's authority and position was being threatened. This Jesus was leading the people differently and many were following him and he didn't like it.
  - d. We must let lay down all of our desires for control and fear the Lord. Let us trust the One who is in control of all things.
- b. We switch scenes for a moment for the purpose of seeing a contrast. Scene two: Peter follows Jesus but denies him—fearing a servant girl
  - i. Before jumping into the details of this scene, let me make a brief comment about who this other disciple is.
    1. Many think it is John, the beloved disciple, who wrote this Gospel but never gave his name. I think he is doing the same thing here. Whoever it is, it doesn't change how we understand the passage.
  - ii. At first, it appears that Peter is boldly following the Lord with no fear. The other disciple is important to the story because he gives Peter access into the courtyard of the high priest. I'm not sure he would have denied Jesus standing in the shadows of darkness outside the gate.
    1. Remember, it's probably around 2 or 3 am Friday morning.
    2. After he is brought in, a servant girl who is the gate keeper said to Peter, "You also are not one of this man's disciples, are you?"
      - a. What is going through Peter's mind when he hears that question?
        - i. I think it should go something like this: they have arrested and bound Jesus and who knows what's about to happen to him and I, Peter, am a follower of Jesus. Therefore, if they find out who I am then I will be arrested and bound awaiting the same sentence as Jesus.
        - ii. No matter how undeveloped Peter's understanding was, he had some idea that this might involve dying. And death at the hands of the Romans was scary.
        - iii. Remember what he said back in (Jn. 13:37) <sup>37</sup> Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."
- b. The thing about we human beings is that we can be as bold as a lion one moment and suddenly move to crippling fear the next.
- c. We don't even know fear is near until we are jolted with a question like this. We are like a jar of water with sand settled at the bottom. As soon as that jar is jostled, the sand or fear that was just laying there clouds the entire jar of water.
  - i. We can't think rationally. We become so disoriented that we even tremble at a question from a slave girl who keeps the gate.

- ii. Peter's reply is a denial—"I am not." It's the opposite of how Jesus previously responded in the garden—"I am."
      - 1. It is certainly true of Peter and all of us—we are not God.
      - 2. But, on the other hand, he is a disciple of Jesus and he had denied his identity to preserve his life.
  - c. This next scene is in contrast to this one. Scene three: Jesus is questioned. Will he fear man or his Father? Let's see.
    - i. In verse 19, the high priest, Annas, questions him concerning his disciples and his teaching.
      - 1. Jesus' reply doesn't mention anything about his disciples. But what he does say clues us in on the failures of this kangaroo court.
      - 2. Jesus knows very well that witnesses are necessary and they should be found and questioned before he asks Jesus.
        - a. Why do we still hold to the fact that we have the right to remain silent? The fifth amendment makes clear there is a due process.
      - 3. I mention this because they should not be having a trial in the middle of the night. They should not be questioning Jesus without the due process of witnesses first. Innocent until proven guilty is not their goal.
        - a. Can you imagine law enforcement coming to your house and arresting you on a capital crime in the middle of the night and the death sentence is carried out a few hours later?
    - ii. Jesus makes three statements about his teaching: I have spoken openly (or publicly) to the world. I have always taught in a synagogue and in the temple, where all Jews come together. And I have said nothing in secret.
      - 1. In other words, there are plenty of witnesses to question about Jesus' teaching.
      - 2. And he doesn't fear the high priest because he has not followed the law of seeking two or three witnesses to confirm a matter. Jesus fears the Lord by holding the high priest to the law.
        - a. He does what is right even though he knows where this is headed. He even does what is right even though he intends to go to the cross. He doesn't let them do what is wrong in order to finish this. He holds them to the truth.
        - b. "Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard what I said to them; they know what I said."
    - iii. As is often the case, one wrong leads to another. When Jesus demanded that witnesses be questioned according to the law, one of the officials struck Jesus.
      - 1. The official was acting on this from (Exod. 22:28) "You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people."
        - a. Again, Jesus had done nothing wrong. What really happened was "how dare you demand that the high priest obey the law. He can do whatever he wants."
      - 2. Jesus certainly turns the other cheek while maintaining that God's word be obeyed. That's what fearing the Lord looks like.
      - 3. When Jesus gets squeezed, God's word comes out. He is the wise Son who obeys his Father even under trial and a false kangaroo trial at that.
    - iv. Annas then sends him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.
    - v. Annas along with the official, clearly display that they do not fear the Lord. How do I know that? Because to disobey God's word is to disobey God. To disobey God is the opposite of fearing the Lord.
  - d. Finally, the last scene contrasts Jesus with Peter again. Scene four: Peter's fear of man has control of him.

- i. There's not much to see here. Peter is standing by the fire with those in the courtyard. Another reason I think that John is the other disciple because the story is so detailed. It's as though the one writing this Gospel is with him.
  1. Notice Peter's fear of man, fear of death, fear of the unknown, fear of exposure, and the fear of identifying with Jesus revealed in two more denials.
  2. (Jn. 18:26-27) <sup>26</sup> One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" <sup>27</sup> Peter again denied it, and at once a rooster crowed.
  3. One thing we can conclude is that it happened exactly the way Jesus said it would.
  4. (Jn. 13:38-14:1) <sup>38</sup> Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.

#### V. Response

- a. This sermon was for those who professed to be Christians. We still struggle with fearing the wrong things and we need to see Jesus fearing the right thing.
  - i. We obey the one we fear. The provision of boldness is often given to the one willing to act in obedience to God's word.
  - ii. But if we desire approval of men when God already approves of us then we deny his amazing grace.
  - iii. Fear reveals what we love. God designed us this way, for it reveals who and what our heart loves. This fear comes right from the place where our heart's treasure is stored (Matthew 6:21). It is a fear of losing or not obtaining something we really desire, which is why it wields such power over us.
  - iv. "If God is small, peripheral, and relatively harmless, the shadows in the eyes of others will haunt us. Their expectations will corner us. Their disappointment will crush us. Their anger will undo us. To be free from the enslaving fear of others, God has to be big — bigger than their expectations, bigger than their disappointments, bigger than their anger, big enough to fear."
    - i. "Only when God becomes our greatest fear can he become our safest place."
- b. To the one listening who would say that you fear nothing, not even God. I would say that's not surprising to me. Your heart is so hard it feels nothing. I pray that God would remove your heart of stone and give you a heart that feels the safety of the fear of God. It is the only safe place.
  - i. (Lk. 9:23-26) <sup>23</sup> And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. <sup>24</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. <sup>25</sup> For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? <sup>26</sup> For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.