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THE CONCLUSION WHEN ALL HAS BEEN HEARD

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“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: ‘Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.’”
Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

There is nothing more stable in the Christian life than truth. Emotions, fellowship and life circumstances cannot be the foundation of a quality relationship and life with Christ. Before being taken away in Gethsemane Jesus prayed for His disciples and sought the Heavenly Father saying, „Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.” (John 17:17)

King Solomon, writer of the book of Ecclesiastes, said in the book of Proverbs “Buy the truth, and do not sell it, Also wisdom and instruction and understanding” (Proverbs 23:23). This is why, as a pastor, I want to preach primarily from God’s Word because It is truth in Its entirety, which can free us from every kind of sin. It gives us true hope and a new life! This is why Christians, regardless of pride, need to always love the truth.

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As many adults look back in life the first thing they declare is that life is short; second that regardless of status, money and pleasure in the end it is all pointless and futile. Many today, who do not have God, feel empty; they lament in terror and fear of life after death. More than 3000 years ago, Solomon was one of these people. His book Ecclesiastes was a summary of his life experiences. The reason for writing this was simple – to protect future generations from bitter lessons in sin and primarily to confirm that life without God is meaningless. In this book, the king tells us that he tried everything, but in the end of it all wisdom, status, and pleasures produced in him emptiness. In looking at some of his proverbs we read: “For in much wisdom *is* much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.” (Ecclesiastes 1:18) “For all his days *are* sorrowful, and his work burdensome; even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also *is* vanity.” (Ecclesiastes 2:23) “Again, I saw that for all toil and every skillful work a man is envied by his neighbor. This also *is* vanity and grasping for the wind.” (Ecclesiastes 4:4) “He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also *is* vanity.” (Ecclesiastes 5:10) “Truly, this only I have found: That God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.” (Ecclesiastes 7:29) “‘Vanity of vanities,’ says the Preacher; ‘Vanity of vanities, all *is* vanity.’” (Ecclesiastes 1:2)

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All of our works on earth are empty if we do them outside of God’s will and outside of fellowship with Him. We must remember the words told by the person who had it all – indescribable wisdom, knowledge, power, and wealth; but none of it could fulfill him.

When Solomon became king, he sought wisdom from God; he studied, judged, and wrote; the kings of the nations around him came to see his wisdom and success. Nevertheless, in all those things he failed to listen to his conscience and he began to fall spiritually. At the end of his life, in repentance and humility, he left us these last words in hope that we would not commit the same sins he did. “Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13b-14)

In those days they had goads made of sharp metal pieces which were fastened on a cord used for leading sheep or cattle in motion. In other words, it is as if King Solomon is saying that these wise words, or important truths, can be unpleasant at first, but sometimes it is the only way we will move in God’s direction in understanding and knowledge.

► **1. THE FIRST KIND OF GOAD IS THE FEAR OF THE LORD**

We read in Proverbs 16:6 that “by the fear of the Lord one departs from evil” and that “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil”. (Proverbs 8:13)

It is impossible to love God without the fear of God. We cannot say that we love Him

if we do not have reverence for Him. We cannot claim to love Him without keeping His commandments. If we do not fear God then we cannot love him or listen to Him. This is summed up very easily.

In order to win over sin, have a clean heart, or become sanctified we must have the fear of God – it is required. When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, a people without the fear of God, he said of them, “Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.” (Romans 3:14-18) In other words, they are a people without the fear of God, a fleshly, soulish people whose hands and feet are soiled with evil.

The early church perhaps was built “... in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.” (Acts 9:31b)

In Proverbs Solomon said, “Fear the Lord and depart from evil.” (Proverbs 3:7) “In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence.” (Proverbs 14:26) “The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to turn one from the snares of death.” (Proverbs 14:27)

Jeremiah also disclosed the secret of Israel’s disobedience and backsliding – they did not have the fear of the Lord. “Your own wickedness will correct you, and your backslidings will rebuke you. Know therefore and see that it is an evil and bitter thing that you have forsaken the LORD your God, And the fear of Me is not in you,” Says the Lord GOD of hosts.” (Jeremiah 2:19)

In the Bible the fear of the Lord is important, yet today many believers talk more about God’s love while they present fear as something negative, as something that cannot inspire believers to service. We invite everyone to love and freedom as we say, “No one is under the law” and “Love covers a multitude of sins”. I don’t want to minimize the meaning of love or freedom; but these declarations are not entirely accurate; only in part. We need to speak about love as the motivation behind our works, but the problem is that we confuse human love with Jesus’ understanding of love.

▶ 2. THE SECOND GOAD IS FULFILLING HIS COMMANDS

Love means to obey our Lord Jesus Christ; we must understand that there is nothing clearer in the Bible than this. Actually Jesus, himself, said that only the love he receives from us is when we obey every one of his commands, which actually means that the only true measure of our love toward Jesus is our obedience; love cannot be determined by the overflow of our emotions as much as obedience and fulfillment of His commands.

Here are a few verses to confirm this. “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” (John 14:15)

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"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." (John 15:10)

"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome." (1 John 5:3)

The definition of love before God is very simple – to love God means to obey and keep every one of His commands!

The emotion of love, or being in love, is never a constant emotion – neither in marriage nor in our love for God. After a few months those emotions leave and often when they leave we begin to feel condemnation because we don't understand the truth that love is not measured by the nice emotions we feel when worshipping or hearing a sermon. We can dance and sing, cry out from the very depths of our being and after that leave church and completely be disobedient to God. Jesus said that this type of behavior does not show our love for Him.

How to be continually obedient

There is one choice for continual obedience, and that is the fear of God! Obedience that

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begins in truth and godliness with fear of God is perfect love. In John we read, "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him." (1 John 2:3-5)

"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:28-29)

The Word clearly illustrates that obedience to God and His commands is perfect love, and fear of God is that which motivates us to keep His commands. If the fear of God really dwells in us we will obey His every word and love Him in the only way that is acceptable to Him.

If we fear Him and keep His commands we will not need to constantly ask ourselves if we love him or not because our love for Him will not come from our emotions. We will not measure our love for Him by our emotions, tears or lack of tears; we will simply be able to relax in His Word that tells us that our obedience to Him is our love!

God commanded us in His Word to leave our sin and the world behind; he commanded us to separate from evil company and to crucify our flesh and passions. Nowhere does the Bible give us an option to do these things when we feel the impulse. God will not accept our worship or anything else we do for Him while we continue living in sin. This is the condition of many Christians today and the

reason why we do not have revival; because we do not believe that God really means what He says. Because of that many do not have the fear of living unbridled lives, in which they live according to their own sentimental feelings, which lead them straight to hell.

Did Jesus seriously mean it when He said to His friends and disciples, "And 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 show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!" (John 12:4-5) Or perhaps, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (1 John 2:15) "Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death." (James 1:15)

When pastors want to raise the standard of the Christian life and begin quoting from the Old Testament, believers call them legalistic, because their own lives are in disarray. If we begin believing this way then we will destroy all of what Christ commanded. He commanded these things so that would repent and believe in Him; so that we can love our brothers and sisters and forgive those who have offended us.

When Jesus mentioned that we are not saved according to the law he was talking about our fleshly works that we do in order to earn salvation. This is what the religious leaders did in that day – they kept every religious custom; they washed their utensils, they were careful to count their tithe, and kept over 600 oral and written laws which they themselves created.

These laws, in and of themselves, are not bad, but no one will be saved by keeping them.

The truth is that people cannot be saved by works. But I ask how many of the 10 Commandments we can break and still get to heaven. Adultery, lying, idolatry? The New Testament clearly tells us that "fornicators and adulterers God will judge." (Hebrews 13:4) "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Revelation 21:5)

Therefore, we have no right to break even one of these commandments because Jesus did not come to do away with the law, but rather to fulfill it; and all who teach otherwise are living unbridled lives and teach others to do the same. It would be better for them to tie a millstone around their own neck and cast themselves into the Mississippi River!

I firmly believe that it is impossible to continually walk obedient and holy without having a fear of God in our hearts! Because if we do not have the fear of the Lord we will believe God will simply overlook our sin; we will think of him as a Heavenly Father who continually understands our sinful and rebellious condition. We will constantly be found in a cycle of sin and confession saying, "I can do whatever I want

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because Christ forgives all.”

Maybe this is what King Solomon thought when he allowed his life to be pulled into idolatry, materialism, and greed. Nevertheless, the consequences were unavoidable – they led him to spiritual failure!

How to fear of the Lord

It is simple – we must learn the fear of the Lord. God will teach us if we are willing. In Psalms we read, “Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.” (Psalm 34:11)

God will teach us to fear Him through His Word. Let’s take the example of Moses. Before he died he left directions for the Israeli kings on how to walk in obedience. The prophet saw into the future and knew that Israel would choose for herself a king according to her own desires. In Deuteronomy 17:15a, 18-19 we read, “you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses... Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from *the one* before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes,”

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Every king needed to constantly feed his spirit with God’s law; he constantly needed to learn to fear God, observing how God blessed obedience and how He completely destroyed and cursed all who were disobedient to His Word. This is the best way to learn to fear God! When we read and see how God works. When the kings did that which was good and just in God’s eyes God blessed them, and when they forgot the law and ceased to fear God He destroyed them and gave them over to their enemies. It’s very simple – those who do that which is right-God blesses; those who forget God-He leaves.

Moses also commanded Israel to read God’s law to every new generation. Every seven years the people would gather together in order to learn about the workings of God through their fathers. Once again Moses prophesies, “Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who *is* within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, and *that* their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess.” (Deuteronomy 31:12-13) In other words, Moses was saying that there would arise a new generation of children who would not know the fear of the Lord. They would not be motivated to obey and be holy. This is why God’s people had to teach the new generation the ways of His Word.

I believe that Moses spoke also of these days. Before us is a younger generation that knows nothing about responsibility and morality.

A generation that is completely lost. If the church does not raise its voice who else will? If the church is no different than the world what will become of them and their culture? It is not strange that people have pulled away from us and have left our congregations.

Do not think that you are so special that God will overlook your secret sins, lusts, and disobedience. Be sure your sin will find you out!

If we desire the fear of the Lord we must seek Him with all our hearts

God does not give His fear to those who are lazy and uncaring. The Proverbs tell us, "If you seek her as silver, And search for her as *for* hidden treasures; Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, And find the knowledge of God." (Proverbs 2:4-5) If we want to learn to fear the Lord we must begin with what we know – to be obedient in light of what we know; and God will lead us step by step in obedience to Him. We will not need to dream up legalistic ways to remain obedient, rather obedience will come naturally.

▶ **3. IF WE ARE OBEDIENT, WE WILL BE BLESSED IN MORE WAYS**

We will be blessed with Jesus' revelation in the inner man

"He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him" (John 14:21)

God has a special love and affection for those who are obedient to Him. We know that God loves the entire world, but in His heart He has a special affection and love for those who are

obedient to His Son. He does not just love us, rather He will be revealed to us; not in just the historical Jesus, rather He will be real to us each and every day. "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." (John 14:23)

We will be blessed with special strength; we will clearly hear His voice

"But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him." (1 John 2:27)

When the fear of the Lord floods our soul; when we listen to Him we are resisting the devil; we are fleeing from immorality and the sin that so easily ensnares us. I believe that it is then that we receive the anointing and clearly hear God's voice. Our spiritual eyes are opened. If we are living in sin and disobedience we hear the voice of our flesh, or even perhaps the enemy, that pushes us further; the voice assures us that God is with us but in reality it is leading us to destruction. Believers in this condition, however, are blind and do not understand even simple things. Jesus used the Jews as an example, "Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of *your father* the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do." (John 8:43-44a)

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we want to hear what God is speaking to us we must be honest about our sin; we must surrender the desires for this world and allow God to work in our hearts.

We will be blessed with answers to our prayers

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that* your joy may be full.” (John 15:7, 11)

“It shall come to pass That before they call, I will answer; And while they are still speaking, I will hear.” (Isaiah 65:24)

“The LORD *is* far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous.” (Proverbs 15:29)

God will hear our prayers. It is impossible to expect God to work if we are living in disobedience to His Word. But if we are living in the fear of the Lord and fulfilling His Word we will soon see His works in our midst.

Jesus is coming soon; all people will need to stand and be judged in the end for all they have done in their life. “...it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.” (Hebrews 9:27) We cannot be victims any longer; we cannot constantly pull away in difficult situations. Without God our lives are empty; which is why we must put Him in the first place in our lives. Let’s clothe ourselves with His fear; take care to keep His commands – “...for this is man’s all”

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