

**Ecclesiastes 12: 13 and 14; “The Conclusion of the Whole Matter”,
Message # 84 in the series – “Remember Your Creator”, Delivered by
Pastor Paul Rendall on the Evening of January 9th, 2012,
in the Church Library Room.**

We have now come to Solomon’s conclusion and the end of the book. What a mighty book it has been! Here in these final verses, Solomon has been brought to the place, in his experience as an Old Testament believer and king of Israel, where God had taught him what was most important in life. What is most important in life is not having the most possessions, or having the richest earthly experiences of pleasure, or impressing others with the greatness of the things which you can build or cultivate. What is most important, is that you come to the place where you fear God and you keep His commandments. Since this is the most important thing, this evening we want to ask 3 questions. 1st – What does it mean to fear God? 2nd – What does it mean to keep His commandments? And 3rd – Are you ready for the judgment?

1st of all – What does it mean to fear God?

To fear God is to give Him your highest regard and consideration in relation to what you will think and say and do at any given time. To fear God is to have the right attitude towards God, an attitude of highest respect, reverence, and awe. To fear the Lord with a godly fear is the beginning of wisdom. It is something which comes from God Himself. It is based upon His revealing Himself and His will to you. Turn with me over to Psalm 111, verse 2. “The works of the Lord are great, studied by all who have pleasure in them.” “His work is honorable and glorious, and His righteousness endures forever.” “He has made His wonderful works to be remembered; the Lord is gracious and full of compassion.” “He has given food to those who fear Him; He will ever be mindful of His covenant.” “He has declared to His people the power of his works, in giving them the heritage of the nations.” “The works of His hands are verity and justice; all His precepts are sure.” “They stand fast forever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.” “He has sent redemption to His people; He has commanded His covenant forever; Holy and awesome is His name.” “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments.” So the fear of the Lord is the same thing as a good understanding in regard to God and His attributes and God and His will. The Lord is gracious and compassionate and He gives food to those who fear Him, and if you have the grace to see this simple truth, you can then go on to fear Him by studying His works which are honorable and glorious; the greatest of which, is the redemption of His people.

This holy settled attitude of highest regard for God and His Word does not come about in our lives by nature; by what we are in Adam. It only comes about by grace; the grace which was purchased for us by Christ, and our believing in Him. Turn to Genesis 3, verse 7. “Then the eyes of both of them (Adam and Eve) were

opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.” “And they heard the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.” “Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, ‘Where are you?’” “So he said, ‘I heard Your voice in the Garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.’” You can see from this, that in the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were afraid of God and hid themselves because they had sinned. They knew that they deserved his judgments which were coming upon them. And this produced a fear in them, but the fear of God’s judgments, the fear that God will punish us because we are not measuring up to the standard of his holy law is not the fear of the Lord which will bring us any nearer to honoring and worshiping God as He deserves. Instead, the tendency will be to fear, and to flee away. But after showing them their sinfulness, God graciously gave them the promise of Genesis 3: 15 so that they could be brought to a godly fear of Him through His grace in the promise of Christ. That we should fear God, is something which must be revealed to us, for godly fear is not the same as craven fear. In godly fear we do not run away from God, we seek Him to find this grace, and we run toward Him in faith to obtain it. When we have God’s promise of grace, we are not so afraid to be near to Him. Instead, we want to be near to Him because He has told us that He is gracious. This is something which we must prove, so turn with me over to Proverbs 2, verse 1. “My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes if you cry for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, 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.” So the key to fearing God, with a godly fear, is receiving God’s words, and treasuring up His commands within you. “This is man’s all,” as it says in the text that we are studying tonight.

The fear of the Lord is something that you must choose in relation to the presentation of the gospel and the word of God to you. Look up the page a bit to Proverbs 1, verse 22. This is wisdom personified speaking. “How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity?” “For scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge.” “Turn at my rebuke; surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you.” “Because I have called and you refused, I have stretched out my hand and no one regarded, because you disdained all my counsel, and would have none of my rebuke, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your terror comes, when your terror comes like a storm, and your destruction comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you.” “Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but they will not find me.” “Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord.” Once again we find that wisdom and the fear of the Lord are linked together. If a person will seek to be wise, and choose the fear of the Lord, then

they will find real blessing; real happiness. The fear of the Lord is recognizing that God has sovereign control over your life to give you true and lasting happiness. You will bring misery upon yourself if you do not heed His words, and He will stand back and laugh at your calamity, if you refuse His counsel. You cannot help but see here, that in finding wisdom by choosing the fear of the Lord, you are finding God Himself through wisdom personified who is Jesus Christ our Lord.

Turn with me over to Isaiah Chapter 8, verse 11. “For the Lord spoke thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying: ‘Do not say, ‘A conspiracy,’ concerning all that this people call a conspiracy, nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.” “The Lord of hosts, Him you shall hallow; let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread.” “He will be as a sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and rock of offense to both the houses of Israel...” Now, the Lord of Hosts here in this passage is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. He is your sanctuary. It is through Him that you learn the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God. It is Him you should hallow. It should be a matter of dread not to know Him and not to have Him as your Savior and Lord and teacher and friend. He was a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to many in Israel when He came to them, and in rejecting Him, they were rejecting the fear of the Lord, which was their all.

The word “duty” is not in the original Hebrew in verse 13 of our text. Having the fear of the Lord is your all-in-all. It is the one thing that is absolutely necessary in this life. Look at Job 28, verse 24 – “For He looks to the ends of the earth, and sees under the whole heavens, to establish a weight for the wind, and apportion the waters by measure.” “When He made a law for the rain, and a path for the thunderbolt, then He saw wisdom and declared it; He prepared it, indeed, He searched it out.” “And to man (laadam) (Adam) He said, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.’” So the fear of the Lord is wisdom; wisdom comes from God and is found in seeking God to receive His words of truth, and especially the revelation of Christ in the Scriptures, and by asking Him to give you the grace in Him which will teach you how to live godly.

Secondly – What is it to keep the commandments of God?

“Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all.” The fear of God is to have the right attitude toward Him. To keep His commandments is to do what is right according to the commandments of the Bible. The first and greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all of your heart; the second is to love your neighbor as yourself. In order to do either, you must repent and find Christ, but neither the fear of the Lord or keeping God’s commandments are something which is inherently found in ourselves. To have the fear of the Lord and to keep God’s commandments means first of all to turn away from evil. It means that you repent. You depart from evil. Look over at Proverbs 16: 6 – “In mercy and truth atonement is provided for iniquity; and by the fear of the Lord

one departs from evil.” The mercy and truth mentioned are that which is inherently found in Jesus Christ our Lord who God has sent to work out our redemption. God has provided an atonement through Jesus Christ our Lord. The only basis of your having regard for this atonement is God’s work of grace through Christ. God looks upon Christ’s obedience to His law, and He imputes righteousness to you the believer. God looks favorably upon Christ’s sacrifice at the cross and He communicates the grace of repentance to your heart, so that you are able to depart from evil. Listen to Matthew Henry – “How the power of sin is broken in us.” “By the principles of mercy and truth commanding (now reigning) in us, the corrupt inclinations are purged out.” (...so may we take the former part of the verse) “However, by the fear of the Lord, and the influence of that fear, men depart from evil; those will not dare to sin against God who keep up in their minds a holy dread and reverence of him.”

Then next, we must understand that in order to fear God and to keep God’s commandments we must have the grace of Christ and be continually satisfied by His precious grace. Proverbs 14, verse 26 and 27 – “In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge.” “The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death.” Psalm 36: 7-9 – “How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!” “Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings.” “They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, and You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures.” “For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light.” The life of God in the soul of man is a fountain springing up to eternal life. How it satisfies and refreshes the believer. How it strengthens him to do God’s will. “Verse 10 says, “Oh, continue your lovingkindness to those who know You, and Your righteousness to the upright in heart.” This is how we come to keep the commandments of God, and pursue righteousness and holiness; by prayer and hoping continually in the grace of God through Jesus Christ. The Lord knows that our strength to keep His commandments is not found in ourselves (in our flesh); even if our inclination to keep them is now present within us because of Christ. Psalm 147, verse 10 – “He does not delight in the strength of the horse; He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man.” “The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope for His mercy.” This is what every god-fearing man often does; he hopes for God’s mercy.

And then finally, let me ask: Are you ready for the judgment of God?

“For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.” I think that this is a text which can easily be read only in the negative way, rather than in the positive. It is a warning, to be sure. Those who do not prepare themselves for the judgment which is most certainly coming, are fools indeed. Look at how extensive this judgment will be. God will bring every work into judgment; everything that a person has done will be scrutinized, even every secret thing. But it will not simply be the evil works that will be looked at; it will

also be the good. Nothing will be overlooked. If you fear God you will live your life in light of the judgment to come. The object will be to live in light of the fact that Christ will be your judge on that day. Sometimes we are overly worried about what people will think about us if we live our life out and out for Christ. It is all too easy to be controlled by the fear of man, rather than the fear of God. Turn with me over to Matthew Chapter 10. Jesus is teaching his disciples what they should expect from men as they go out to preach the gospel to people. He says this in verse 24. "It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master." "If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!" "Therefore, do not fear them." "For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known." "Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops." "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul." "But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Don't fear, don't give your highest consideration to the opinions and observations of people around you as to how you live your life. Fear God. Give Him your highest regard; give Him your highest consideration in all that you say and do, and you will be ready for the Judgment Day. Cast all of your cares upon Him for He cares for you. Listen to verse 29 of Matthew 10 – "Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin?" "And not one of them falls to the ground apart from Father's will" "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." "Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows." Live your life, as a Christian, remembering that God will bring to light all the secret prayers, all the secret works of love and care, and all the thoughtful deeds that you did for other believers, and family, and even strangers, in Jesus' name. This is the conclusion of the matter.