

Learning to Fear God (Kannada)

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of fearing God and the consequences of not doing so, highlighting the need for spiritual education and the blessings of fearing God.

Duration: 56:23

Scripture: Genesis 22:12, Psalm 34:7-9, Psalm 111:10, Proverbs 9:10, Isaiah 8:12-13, Matthew 10:28, Luke 4:1-14, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Hebrews 12:28-29

Topics: "Fearing God", "Christian Holiness"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of holiness among Christians, comparing it to a parent's concern for their sick or failing children. It highlights the need for believers to seek holiness, which is more significant to God than physical health or financial prosperity. The message stresses the necessity of fearing God, passing His tests in secret obedience, and seeking His blessings through a life of holiness.

Transcript

If we have even traveled a little bit in Karnataka or India and seen Christians in our country, one of the things that will make you sad is to see the low standard of holiness among Christians. And just like you would be very unhappy if you saw your children always sick, God is also very unhappy when he sees his children sick. Supposing you've got six children and all of them or five of them are constantly sick.

Frequently sick. Every year. You won't be very happy.

And if you see most of them, five out of six of them, failing, failing, failing in school every year, that's going to make you more unhappy. Many of you are fathers and mothers. How would you feel even if one of your children is frequently sick and always failing in school? When God looks at his children, he finds most of them spiritually sick.

Physical sickness does not disturb God so much because many people draw closer to him when they are physically sick. There are many believers who don't seek God, who begin to seek him when they are physically sick. Financial problems is also not a serious thing for God because many people seek God when they have financial problems.

All of us know that we turn more to God when we are sick and we have financial problems. I've seen many believers who sought God when they were poor. When they became rich, they went away from God.

I've seen healthy believers go away from God, sick believers turn to God. So sickness and money problems are not serious. Sometimes God allows it to make people turn to him.

So I'm not going to tell you that God is going to make all of you healthy and wealthy because that may not be good for you sometimes. But I'll tell you what the Bible says, that God wants every one of you to be holy. And that you can be if you want to.

If you are not more holy today, let me tell you the reason, you yourself don't want to be more holy. Study as far as you want to study. If you want to study only up to second standard and stop, that's up to you.

Or you want to get a master's degree and PhD, you can get that also. It all depends on you. It depends on me.

I can't help you and you can't help me. But God sees how much we desire. Just like there is a law in the Bible, according to your faith, be it unto you.

We can say also, according to your desire, be it unto you. Because that's the meaning of what Jesus said, if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. That means how much will you drink? You'll drink as much as you are thirsty.

Sometimes we are thirsty and one sip of water is enough. Sometimes we are so thirsty that even two glasses is not enough for water. So there are degrees of thirst for water.

In the same way, there are degrees of thirst for holiness. We can perfect holiness if we want to. But from beginning till end, in the school of holiness, there is a law.

We can call this the school of holiness. You enter the school in the kindergarten class when you are forgiven of all your sins. And you can go as high as you want to.

We parents are so eager that our children should join school and get a good education quickly. And we are very happy when our children study more and more and more. God also puts us into the school of holiness when our sins are forgiven.

But he finds that some people drop out in first standard or second standard. But he finds that some people drop out in first standard or second standard. If you want to know how God feels about that, how would you feel if your son dropped out of school in second standard? Supposing your son was never able to do a simple thing like addition.

He is struggling, struggling, struggling. Even simple addition of some numbers he can't do. I am sure you will feel very sad.

He won't get angry with him because poor child is struggling and he can't learn. You will feel very sad. I want to tell you, God is not angry but he is very sad with a lot of his children.

I want to tell you about a simple law which is very very important if you want to progress in the school. That is found in 2nd Corinthians chapter 7. That is found in 2nd Corinthians chapter 7. Here it tells us that we have some wonderful promises God has given us. The promise for example in chapter 6 verse 18, I will be a father to you and you shall be sons and daughters to me says the Lord almighty.

When you have such a promise, God will be your father and you will be a son or a daughter. What should you do? In the next verse it tells us what we should do. If you have such a wonderful promise, here is what you should do.

Here is what you should do. Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Not just a masters degree but a doctorate in holiness. That means you don't finish at 2nd standard, you don't finish at 10th standard. That means you don't finish at 2nd standard, you don't finish at 10th standard.

You don't even finish a master's degree. You go to perfection. Holiness is like a mountain.

Here he is saying let us go right to the top, not stop after climbing 100 feet or something like that. I will tell you something. I have seen believers for 47 years as a believer myself.

I have seen believers for 47 years as a believer myself. And I have found that very very few believers are interested in climbing this mountain. Very very few people are interested in what it says here, perfecting holiness.

They believe in chapter 6 verse 18. I want God to be my father, I want to be a son and daughter. The next verse says if you got this promise then you got a perfect holiness.

You got to be perfect holiness it says. And how do we perfect holiness? Here is the secret. Here is the secret.

In the fear of God. That is how we perfect holiness. If we don't have the fear of God then we cannot perfect holiness.

And that is the reason why many people do not progress in holiness. Right from the kindergarten class we have to learn the fear of God. And all the way the more you fear God the more you become holy.

So we can say like this. According to your fear of God you will be holy. If your holiness level is very low today it is because you fear God also only that much.

That is a very serious thing. In Psalm 111 we read in verse 10. It is a very well known verse.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. We go to school to get an education. And here wisdom is spiritual education.

And it says the ABC of spiritual education is the fear of the Lord. If you don't know the fear of the Lord you cannot progress in the school. You see that is like saying if you can't understand ABC then you can't study in school at all.

How much would you have studied in school if you don't know ABC? That's why in all schools when the children go the first thing they teach is ABC. Then you can read the books and you can study so much. But if you don't know ABC you can study nothing.

You can just go to school and come back. And that's exactly how many Christians go to church and go home. There is no change in their life.

There is no change in their family life. There is no change in their attitude towards the world and worldly attractions. And if you ask them about their inner life they are thoroughly defeated.

So I want to share with you the importance of fearing God. First of all let me tell you some of the blessings that will come if you fear God. There is a wonderful promise in the Bible.

It's in Isaiah chapter 8. And in verses 12 and 13 the last part of verse 12 it says you must not fear what other people fear. And verse 13 it's the Lord of hosts. He must be your fear.

And so here it says that basically what it's saying is that if you fear God you need not fear anything else in the world. That's really true. See we live in a world where the most serious thing today is fear.

If you look in your heart you will find there many fears. Fear of sickness when you grow older. Fear that you may run into some financial difficulties when you retire.

Fear that your children may not get good jobs. Fear that they may get sick. Or fear that your children may not get good marriage partners.

Fear that some of your enemies may come and harm you. In fact we can say that most Christians live in fear of many things all the time. They are anxious about so many things.

Anxiety is just another form of fear. And the biggest fear is the fear of death. Now here is a promise.

If you fear God you need not have any other fear in the world. That's an amazing promise. That we can live in this fearful world without any fear.

And that itself should help us, should stir us to learn the fear of God. Now I want to show you another verse in Psalm 34. Now many of us know this verse.

Psalm 34 verse 8. Oh taste and see that the Lord is good. That is a very well known verse. But many people don't know the verse that comes before that and the verse that comes after that.

Taste and see that the Lord is good. Everybody knows that. But here is the verse that comes before that.

Verse 7. The angel of the Lord surrounds those who fear him and rescues them. Do you know what God does for those who fear him? His angels surround them and rescue them from every danger. And what is the verse that comes after that? Fear the Lord you his saints, for those who fear him they will lack nothing.

I can tell you that from 47 years of my experience. I would say to you, fear God. And because this is so important, David says in verse 11.

When David wrote this, he was a young man. He was maybe 28 years old. 28 years old.

How do I know that? It is written at the beginning of the Psalm. When he wrote that Psalm, it was before he became king at the age of 30. He must have been around 28 years old.

And he calls people younger than him. He says, you children, come and listen to me. I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

A man who feared God, who knew that such a man will lack nothing, he says, you people younger than me, come to me, I will teach you the fear of God. Today, we have so many schools teaching the Bible. Teaching people how to preach.

Teaching people how to sing. Many churches have choir practice every week, one or two hours, how to improve your singing. I wish there were a few people who could say, come to me, I will teach you how to fear God.

If you have been a believer for even two or three years, just two or three years, you should be able to tell people younger than you, come, I will teach you the fear of God. The tragedy is, there are believers who have been believers for 15, 20 years who still cannot say that. I mean, if you don't know how to do addition, how can you teach other people addition? How can you teach the fear of God if you haven't learned it yourself? What does it mean to fear God? It's very important to understand it.

Because that is the way to progress from one class to another class all the way to PhD. Or to climb this mountain. Now, let me turn to Genesis 22.

I will say what David says. Come, I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Those who want to learn it, many people don't want to learn it.

You can sit and listen. But those who want to learn it, you can learn something today that will help you to progress all the way up. Why do I turn to Genesis 22? Because this is the first place in the Bible where God looked at a man and said, now I know that you fear me.

That is in Genesis 22 verse 12. See, if God says to a man, now I know that you fear me. Oh, you can't get a bigger certificate than that about the fear of God.

I mean, if God Almighty looked at me and said, now I know that you fear me. Boy, I won't bother about what anybody else in the world thinks about me after that. What does it mean for God to give that certificate to you? Let's read carefully.

In verse 1 of Genesis 22, it says, God tested Abraham. Before he gives you a certificate, he will give you a test. You can all get that certificate from God.

But he will test you first. If you pass the test, you get the certificate. If you don't pass the test, you won't get it.

Just like in an earthly examination, if you pass it, you get your degree certificate. If you don't pass, you don't get it. The Bible is full of examples of God testing man.

God can never do anything for a man without testing him. Just like in your school, the children get a promotion when they are tested. There is no school that promotes children without a test.

There is no college that will give a certificate without a test. But God is the one who first started testing man. What do we read in the beginning of the Bible? We read God created Adam and Eve.

And there is only one thing we learn about them. They were tested by God. We don't know how they lived.

We don't know how many days they walked in the garden. One thing we know, God tested them. We don't know anything about what they did in the Garden of Eden.

Only one thing is written, that when they entered that garden, God tested them. That's the first thing written about them after they were created. In the end of Genesis chapter 2, you read God brought them together and married them.

And then after that, next thing, God tested them. So, as soon as he created them, he tested them. The Bible begins with man being tested by God.

This is not only for Adam. You read the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke. You find even Jesus was tested by his father.

Why? Because God wanted him to be an example for us. Supposing God had said to Jesus, I know all about you. There is no need for you to be tested.

Then how can he be an example for us? So God said, even though you are my son, I want you to be tested as a man. And the Bible says, the Holy Spirit led him into the wilderness to be tested. Imagine Jesus Christ being tested.

There is no partiality with God. He tested Adam, he tested Jesus and he will test you and me. And, you know, there are a lot of results that come if we pass the test.

I want you to see a verse in Luke chapter 4. Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit at the baptism we read in Luke chapter 3 and verse 22. The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus when he was baptized. Now we go to chapter 4. Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit and he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.

Why did the Holy Spirit lead him into the wilderness? Because he had to be tempted by the devil for 40 days. And the devil tempted him, tempted him, tempted him. We don't know what all he tempted him.

But the last three temptations are mentioned here. But in the 40 days he was tempted with many other things also. And when he passed the test, see the difference.

Chapter 4 verse 1, he was full of the Holy Spirit. He was tested. And he came back from the test, verse 14, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

You know why many people don't have that power of the Holy Spirit? Yeah, they had some experience of being baptized in the Holy Spirit somewhere. Just like Jesus in Luke chapter 3. But they never come into the power of the Holy Spirit. Because when they are tested, they fail.

So, God tests us and that's good for us. Because at the end of your testing, if you pass, you will come in the power of the Holy Spirit into a ministry. So, we read in Genesis 22 verse 1 that God tested Abraham.

Just like in school, we are tested at 1st standard, 2nd standard, 10th standard, B.Sc., M.Sc., all tested all the way. All the time. Abraham was also tested.

See, now he is about 125 years old. God first tested him when he was 75. He said, leave your home, leave your family.

Then many other tests. I don't have time to tell you about all the tests. Now, the last test.

After 50 years, God is still testing Abraham. I have been a believer for nearly 50 years now. And you know, I have discovered God testing me even in the last week in new areas.

See, other people don't know about these things. Because it's always in secret. You know, in the kindergarten and all, the tests are very simple.

But as you go higher, the tests become more and more difficult. And if some 10th standard student talks about his tests to a kindergarten student, kindergarten student won't understand what he is talking about. But we are always tested in higher degrees.

And God cannot give you a certificate unless you pass the test. Now see what the test is. The test came to him when Abraham was sleeping at night.

How do we know that? Because it says in verse 3, he rose up early in the morning after that. He got up at 4 o'clock in the morning. So what happened in verse 1 and 2 happened before that.

In the middle of the night, maybe at 2 o'clock at night, Abraham and Sarah are sleeping there in the tent. God wakes up Abraham at 2 o'clock. He says, Abraham.

And Abraham got up and said, here I am. Take your son to the land of Moriah. See, Moriah was maybe 100-150 kilometers away.

Some distance. In fact, it says it took Abraham 3 days to reach there. How much can you walk in 3 days? Maybe 100 kilometers.

Or at least more than 50. Long distance. And go there.

Take your son with you. On one of those mountains, I'll tell you which one, you must offer your son to me. Sarah was fast asleep.

She didn't hear anything. Nobody heard what God said to Abraham. That's the first thing you need to learn.

When God speaks to you, nobody else hears it. For example, right now. God is saying something to you and even the person sitting next to you cannot hear what God is saying to you.

I'm not talking about my words. That everybody can hear. But when I speak, God is reminding you of something in your life that needs to be set right.

And what that is, only you know. Your neighbor sitting next to you doesn't know. God may be pointing out some area in your life where you don't fear Him.

Something you said or did last week, which shows that you don't fear God. Some place where you did not humble yourself. Some debt you have to repay.

Somebody you have to go and ask forgiveness from. Some dirty, lustful thought or action which you have not repented of. And as you hear the word of God, you are reminded of it.

And you know what God is saying to you. It's personal. God does not humiliate you by publicly speaking your sins so that everybody can hear it.

No, because God doesn't want to humiliate any of us. Men humiliate us. God will never humiliate us.

God will always speak to you silently in your heart. He is speaking to you right now. Just like Sarah sleeping next to Abraham could not hear what God was saying to Abraham.

God is asking you to do something, just like He told Abraham. Maybe He is telling you, you have to give up something in your life. In Abraham's case, he had to give up his son.

Maybe it is some habit that you love very much. God is calling you by name. Whatever your name is.

Just like He said Abraham. I am not speaking to everybody here. You Abraham.

God is speaking to you by name. When you say, Lord, here am I. Speak to me. He will tell you what you are supposed to do.

You have to give up something. And He is testing you like it says. He tested Abraham then and He is testing you now.

What did Abraham do? Early next morning, he could have got up and pretended nothing happened. Because nobody else heard what God had said to him. Everybody already respected him as a great man of God who has been walking with God for 50 years.

People would have continued to respect him even if he had disobeyed God. After you have been some years in a church, you earn a little respect from other people. Whether you are 3 years, 4 years, 5 years.

You earn a certain amount of respect. People say, that is a good steady brother in our church. Sometimes God speaks to these good steady brothers and sisters.

And they don't obey. But all the other people in the church don't know. So they can still keep their reputation in the church even though they are disobedient in their private life.

See, supposing Abraham next day never took his son to Mount Moriah. And he never did it. Next day, next week, next month.

Do you think he would have lost his reputation as a man of God? No. People respected him and they will continue to respect him. Because nobody knew that God had told him something in secret he has got to do.

For example, right now God may be saying something to you, you got to do. Nobody knows about it. Nobody knows.

You can continue in the church and keep your good testimony and nobody knows that God told you to do something and you never did it. But God tested you. Now, if God had tested you by shouting at you publicly.

Abraham, you Abraham sitting there. Oh, take your son and offer him on Mount Moriah. Then he has to get up and go because everybody has heard what God is saying.

And if God were to tell you something publicly, call your name and say, hey, do this tomorrow. Then you would do it. That would prove your fear of man.

You are afraid what they will think of you if you don't obey God. But when God speaks to you in secret, then he tests the fear of God. That is why he has given all of us a private area in our life called our mind.

Even if you are married for 50 years, your wife doesn't know what is going on in your mind. You can be thinking of other women all the time. Your wife doesn't know.

But God knows and you know and that proves that you don't fear God. But outwardly, you keep away from other women. That proves what? It may prove that you fear your wife or you fear other men if they see you.

But when you are tested in your thoughts, that is the test of whether you fear God or not. You understood the difference between fear of God and fear of man. Fear of God and fear of your wife.

Very few people have the fear of God. You don't have to go and commit adultery with somebody. For example, if you have got some women working in your office, you sit talking to them and laughing and joking and all that.

And suddenly your wife walks in. Would you have to change the way you speak because of the fear of your wife? You never feared God. This is the trouble with so many believers.

If other believers are watching them, they behave themselves. When no believer is watching them, only God is watching them. They commit every possible sin.

And you can test that in your home. Think for example, one day you are very angry with your wife and shouting at her. Or the other way around, you are angry with your husband and you are shouting at him.

And suddenly the door bell rings. Or somebody knocks at the door. Everything becomes peaceful at home all of a sudden.

And you open the door with a smile. Some believer has come to see you. And you have suddenly become very sweet to your husband and wife.

Fear of man. Before that man came to your house, who was in your house? Only God. Who cares for him? This brother has come.

I don't want to lose my testimony before him. It is in secret that God tested Abraham. And in secret, he tests you.

And me. Even after 50 years. He will keep on testing us till the day we die.

And every test, if we pass, we go higher. Abraham passed the test. He didn't even wait 24 hours.

Only in the morning. He didn't consult his wife. He didn't consult anybody.

I know God has told me to do something. I get up and I do it. If I have to walk 50 miles, I walk 50 miles.

I don't have to question why God has told me to walk 50 miles and offer my son, when he could have told me to just go around the corner and offer my son. God, why do I have to walk 50 miles and offer my son, when I can't even go around the corner and offer my son? You have to walk 50 miles and go to a mountain. In that mountain also, he is alone.

He tells the young man in verse 5, you stay here. I am going to go up to the mountain alone with my son. The man who fears God, his obedience is in secret, without anybody watching him.

He doesn't want other people watching him. God has told me to do something. I am going to do it.

So you people stay here. I am going to go up. What are you going for? You don't have to know that.

I am going to worship God. He doesn't want any honor from men. He goes up and offers up his son.

Puts his son on the altar and takes the knife to kill him. God says stop. I was only testing you.

Verse 12. Middle. Now I know that you fear me.

What a certificate to get. From God himself. Now I know that you fear me.

Because nobody heard what I told you and you still obeyed me. Because nobody heard what I told you and you still obeyed me. I gave you 3 days to think about it, walking 50 miles and you still obeyed me.

And even when you came there, you didn't want anybody to see your obedience. You did it in secret. And even when you came there, you didn't want anybody to see your obedience.

You did it in secret. He goes on to say in verse 17. Now Abraham, I am going to bless you so much, the whole world will be blessed through you.

That's what happens when you fear God like that. There will be no limit to how much God will bless you. And the blessing of God brings holiness and purity in our life.

And the blessing of God brings holiness and purity in our life. So I want to tell you something. When you hear God whispering something into your heart, get up early in the morning and obey.

Immediately. Don't wait. And God will give you the certificate.

Now I know that you fear me. And there will be no limit to how much I bless you. And like that we can go step by step.

Let's pray. While our heads are bowed in prayer, I want you to ask God, Lord help me to fear you. Deliver me from this wretched life of the fear of man.

I want a perfect holiness in my life by the fear of God. Thank you Father. In Jesus name.

Amen.

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