

Fear Nothing But God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 29 December 2024

Preacher: Bill Story

- [0 : 00] I haven't sung that one in a while. Take out your Bibles with me, please, and turn to Luke chapter 12.
- Look at that, a new chapter. Luke, Gospel of Luke chapter 12. You'll find it right after Luke chapter 11.
- As is our tradition, I want to read the text and then ask the Lord to give us His spirit to understand, and then we'll dig into it.
- So if you have it, and if you're able, please stand as I read from Luke chapter 12. We're just looking at the first 12 verses, verses 1 through 12. In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together so that they were trampling one another, He began to say to His disciples first, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.
- Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Therefore, whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the mountaintops, on the housetops.
- [1 : 37] I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after have nothing more they can do. But I warn you whom to fear.
- Fear Him, who after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear Him.
- Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And that one of them is forgotten before God. And even the hairs on your head are all numbered.
- Fear not. You are of more value than many sparrows. And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God.
- But the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven.
- [2 : 46] But the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. And when they bring you before synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say.
- For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say. So reads the Word.
- Let us pray. Father, as always, Father, we pray you would send your Spirit to give us guidance, to give us minds, to open the eyes of our heart with understanding.
- As we walk through what Jesus says here, Father, to His disciples, help us to understand the seriousness with which He brings up these subjects, the eternal perspective with which He couches these things.
- help us to take heed to these words. Because they are a matter of life and death. We ask this in Christ's name.
- [4 : 06] Amen. Please be seated. Amen. Remember the old commercial, got milk?

Got fears? That's not the same, is it? Got fears? The word fear here in our text that's used five times in our text, fear, is the Greek word phobia.

So phobia, that kind of puts a nuance on it, doesn't it? There are lots of phobias. Fears. Fears can paralyze us. They can incapacitate us, weaken us, undermine our confidence.

Fear can debilitate you, hamper how you live. If you fear others because they might hurt you, reject you, betray you, it will keep you isolated from other people.

If you fear the exposure of your sin, if you fear people really seeing who you really are, it will cause you to hide, to pretend, to act like you're okay when you're not.

[5 : 27] If you fear, as a Christian, to speak up for Jesus when called upon, when necessary, if you fear to speak up about Jesus, you will keep silent.

And by keeping silent, you may indicate that you are not a true Christian at all. Fear. But, but, if you fear God, you will fear nothing else.

If you fear God, you will be set free from every other fear. This is what Christ is going to talk about in these passages.

In, in Luke chapter 12, following what Jesus has done in the, in the section right before, at the end of chapter 11, where he talks to a Pharisee and he confronts Pharisees and scribes, these religious leaders.

He confronts them with their hypocrisy and their spiritual abuse. following that now. Now he's going to talk about beware of hypocrisy.

[6 : 55] And now, following that conversation with the religious leaders, he is going to focus on his disciples.

And give to them, I believe, a cure for hypocrisy. So, notice in, in verse 1 of chapter 12, it opens with this big crowd, a huge crowd, in fact.

It says, in the meantime, when so many thousands of people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, Luke actually uses the word, not thousands, but myriads.

Myriads, innumerable. The crowds were so big and thick that they were crushing one another, or they were trampling on one another. They're pushing and crowding together.

Interesting. And in that context, it tells us that Jesus focused on the disciples. Even though they're surrounded by these crowds, he began to say to his disciples first.

[7 : 58] Notice that. Right? The priority of the disciples. That Jesus is not overwhelmed with crowds. He's going to deal with the crowds. He's going to speak to the crowds.

He's going to teach the crowds. But he will constantly be returning to his focus, to his priority, to his mission. He is going to keep training his disciples.

Because what he has to say now in these opening verses of chapter 12 are about mission. They're about those who are serious about following Jesus.

It's not words for the crowd. It's not words for the populace. It is words for those who are devoted to follow Jesus. Because they are very serious words.

So, he's going to, we see 12.1, he's talking to other disciples. Verse 13, he'll talk to the crowd again. Verse 22, again, back to the disciples.

[8 : 58] Verse 54 in chapter 12, again, back to the crowd. So, it's going to go back and forth, you see. But the priority will always be in the midst of all the crowds, teaching his disciples.

Now, the other thing I want you to observe just kind of in the big picture in these 12 verses is there are several issues brought up. And each issue has a contrast.

So, there's several contrasts. So, in verses 2 and 3, nothing covered that won't be revealed, hidden that won't be known. What's set in the dark will be made known in the light. What's whispered in private will be proclaimed on the house top.

There's a contrast. Concealed versus revealed. Verses 4 and 5. Verse 4, the fear of man. Verse 5, the fear of God. Verse 6, sparrows.

Verse 7, you compared to sparrows. Verse 8, confessing Christ. Verse 9, denying Christ. Verse 10, what's forgiven, what's not forgiven.

[10 : 01] And finally, verse 11 and 12, anxiety about defending your faith. Confidence, verse, of defending your faith. So, we have all these contrasts, but all these subjects.

So, what is going on? What is Jesus teaching? I do believe these are a unit of his teaching. I don't think he's just kind of hitting on various subjects.

I think he is a central subject. So, even though there's several contrasts here, there is one theme. And the theme is fear nothing but God.

Fear nothing but God. So, we need to ask the question then. What is the fear of God? And how does fearing God impact my life?

What difference does it make? And I want to talk about this. Well, for one, because I truly believe it's the emphasis of this text.

[11 : 04] Jesus says, fear God three times in verse 5 and 6. He uses the word fear five times in verses 4 through 7.

Fear is an issue. And then as you see the eternal implications of those that are not forgiven, those that are not acknowledged in heaven, the eternal consequences of this.

That's about a fear as well. So, what is fearing God? And I think fear of God is often misunderstood. It's either underdefined as simply a reverence and awe.

It certainly includes that. But it's much bigger than that. Let's be honest. Or it's over-negativized as fear of God, as fear of punishment, dread of God's punishment.

Right? Scare me into heaven. That's a misunderstanding as well. So, what is fear of God? How do we understand that? Well, of course, to understand it, let's try to gather how it's presented in Scripture.

[12 : 11] So, in terms of this passage, how does the fear of God impact us? I think there's two ways. In verses 1 through 7, in terms of a present impact.

And then verses 8 through 12, in terms of a more of a future impact. So, the fear of God has an impact on me right now in the present. And the fear of God has an impact on me in relation, in view of the future.

So, first of all, fearing God, first way that fear impacts us. Fearing God, first of all, transforms how we live in the present.

That's how it impacts. It transforms how we live in the present. So, in verses 1 through 3, it purges hypocrisy.

Verses 4 and 5, it trains us to an eternal view. And verses 6 and 7, it assures us of God's care, that fear of God. So, first of all, verse 1, Jesus says, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.

[13 : 22] More literally, the way Luke wrote it, or the way Jesus said it, is not simply beware of the leaven. He said, Take heed to yourselves against the leaven of the Pharisees.

So, in other words, guard yourselves against the leaven of the Pharisees. Which is hypocrisy. So, what's leaven?

Leaven is something, right? Like yeast, you put in bread and it blows up, right? It pops up. It spreads and permeates the bread and it makes it expand. So, that's a positive way.

But leaven here is being used in a negative sense as a negative influence. Hypocrisy. The leaven of the Pharisees is hypocrisy. So, in other words, hypocrisy is something that is dangerous because it can spread.

It can infect others. It can permeate others. If you're not on guard, you can easily become a hypocrite like others. It's easy to copy.

[14 : 26] It's easy to go along with. It's like leaven. It can explode. And so, a whole church can become hypocritical. A whole group of people can become hypocritical.

By hypocrite, we mean what? A hypocrite is an actor. A play actor. They're a pretender.

They're playing a part. They're pretending to be something they're not. So, they look like something on the outside, but in the inside, they're not that at all. It's simply a pretense.

And to play the hypocrite as one who professes to believe in God. To play the hypocrite means that you have a very low view of God.

That you think you can play the part and not be exposed before God. Look at what he says in verse 2.

[15 : 27] He says, take heed against the leaven of hypocrisy. Why? Because nothing covered, nothing hidden now, nothing, I'm hiding who I really am inside and I'm pretending on the outside.

Nothing covered up will not be revealed. Nothing that's hidden now won't become known. Therefore, whatever you said in the dark, whatever you whisper in the dark that nobody else can hear, who am I when I'm alone, shall be heard in the light.

And what you have whispered in private rooms will be proclaimed in the housetops. In other words, do not think that your hypocrisy will not be exposed. It will be exposed.

Why? Because God is all-knowing. God is all-knowing. You know the omnis of God? Omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, right?

These three things relate here. God is all-knowing. He's all-knowing. Who are we to think that I can play the game and it won't affect me? That God won't expose me?

[16 : 33] That's the first thing. If I have a fear of God, if I recognize and take seriously that God is all-knowing, that He knows everything about me, through and through, that should purge my hypocrisy.

I might be able to pretend before others because they can't see my heart. I might be able to do that for a while, but I can never do that before God.

Secondly, verse 4. Fear of God as an all-powerful God, an omnipotent God, will train me to have an eternal view.

He says in verse 4, I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body and after that have nothing more that they can do. Have no fear of man. What's the most that man can do?

They can attack your body. They can hurt you physically. They can cause pain and suffering. They can even kill you and take your life. But that's it. That's it. They can't touch your soul.

[17 : 45] They can't touch your eternal state. So why fear man? Jesus says, fear not those who kill the body, but I'll tell you who to fear, verse 5.

Fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I say to you, fear him.

Three times, fear, fear, fear. Don't fear, fear, fear, fear. Don't fear. Fear him. What does that mean? Fear him.

Well, as an all-powerful God, he has authority to cast you into hell. He has authority to do what no one else can do. He affects your life to come.

So what's hell? Well, it's the word Gehenna. And except for one time in the book of James, Jesus is the only one who uses this word, Gehenna, which is translated hell.

[18 : 49] It's to be distinct from the word Hades, which refers to the grave. Sometimes, like the King James, translates the Greek word Hades as hell, not right translation.

It's the word grave. This is the word for hell, Gehenna. And Jesus uses it on four different teaching occasions.

What is Gehenna? Well, it referred to a historical place. It was the, it was, Gehenna means, is a combination of Greek word that means, actually Hebrew word that means Valley of Hinnom.

It was a valley out just south and, south and, west, east, west of Jerusalem, down in the valleys.

And it belonged to a guy by the name of Hinnom, originally. And then it had become a place in, in Israel's really, really bad time when they were serving other gods, when the god Moloch, the detestable god Moloch was worshiped in that valley.

[20 : 05] And they worshiped him by offering children in a burning sacrifice. That's how detestable that place was. So that's one picture of that, a burning place.

In Jesus' time, it was a, it was a trash heap that was constantly burning, constantly burning. So the trash would be thrown there and burn. And, and as well as criminals, because criminals didn't deserve to be buried, they were thrown into that fire.

That's the picture of Gehenna. Okay. And it becomes, Jesus used that picture as a picture of eternal punishment. Okay.

Because it was a visual that everyone in Jerusalem, near Jerusalem had a strong view of. Okay. So fear God, who can cast you into Gehenna, cast you into the everlasting fire.

Fear God. What does fear God mean? What does phobia of God mean? Is it paralyzing? No, it's not like other fears.

[21 : 14] But it certainly means at the very least to take God absolutely seriously. I believe to fear God is to know God, to know God, truly know God, not redefine God, but to know God as he is revealed, is to fear him.

It is a clear recognition of who he is. And if you have that, it will cure any tendency toward hypocrisy.

It will be a recognition that God is not just my friend. He is holy. He is almighty. He is fearful. Remember, I always remember this.

Remember how the disciples felt toward Jesus. They loved Jesus. Jesus is a friend of sinners. He is kind and gracious, right? He is forgiving. He heals people. He's compassionate. And remember, the disciples have been following Jesus around and listening to him and watching him work miracles.

And they're out on the boat. Remember, they're out on the boat and they get into the middle of the sea and the storm comes. Remember, the storm comes. And these professional fishermen think they're going to die because the water's coming over.

[22 : 33] Okay? They're not near shore. They're out in the middle. And remember, Jesus is asleep. Remember the story? And he's sleeping during the storm. What's with this guy?

They wake him up. Lord, don't you care? We're dying. And they get him up. And what does he do? Hush! Still! Hush wind, still waves.

And remember the response of the disciples? They were terrified. They were terrified.

Phobia! And then they said, why? Who is this? Who is this?

Who commands the wind and the waves and they obey him? Who is this? Is that just awe?

[23 : 35] Is that just reverence? Oh, let's understand the content. No, that's terror. Yet, they know that's not all he is.

But it did open up a big box they had him in, right? They blew open that box as to how big he is. Does that make some sense?

Is your view of God like that? He is a kind, gracious, forgiving, compassionate, loving God.

But he's bigger than that. And that's kind of what he's getting to here, Jesus is getting to.

Don't fear a man that can just kill your body. Fear God. You're the one who after he kills you, yeah, he can kill you too, casts you.

[24 : 41] That's a healthy fear. So, that's an eternal view, though, see? That's an eternal view.

That's, that's, that's not just view of God, here he is now, but who he is when I die. Then, thirdly, we see fearing God transforms how we live because verse 6 and 7 talks about how he is present and he's caring.

It assures us of his care. He gives us a comparison between sparrows and, and ourselves. He says, are not five sparrows sold for two pennies?

Five sparrows for two pennies? That's pretty cheap. Well, as a matter of fact, sparrows were the cheapest thing you could buy in the market. That's what poor people bought for food.

You could get five for two. It's not a hearty meal, but it's a meal. That's the cheapest you could do.

[25 : 46] So, he says, so they're the most insignificant, they're the cheapest thing in the market, yet, verse 6, yet not one of them is forgotten before God.

Not one of them is neglected by God. Not one of them is, is, is indifferent to God. It's like, God cares about the cheapest thing in the market.

He cares about the cheapest animal. Yeah. Yeah. He cares. He cares.

He's not indifferent to it. So, by comparison, verse 7, even the hairs on your head are all numbered. Now, I, I, I, I, that's easier for some people than others.

But, but it, but, I mean, he knows the, the most insignificant detail about you. How many hairs you have? The most insignificant, who cares?

[26 : 47] Well, if you don't have any, then you probably care. But, but, but, even you, who, who, who, who have some very insignificant qualities, he knows every detail about that.

See, there is that all-knowing God again. But he's also an all-present God because he says, fear not. Compared to sparrows, you are of more value.

You are, and more literally, Jesus said, you are distinct. You're not just of more value. You are distinct from many sparrows.

So, put all the many sparrows together that God doesn't forget even one of them, and then compared to the many sparrows that he doesn't forget even one of them, you are distinct.

If he cares about sparrows, imagine what he thinks about you. It's like, really? I don't feel that. But see, that's also part of the fear of God.

[27 : 53] Fear of God is not an all-negative dread kind of thing. It is a recognition of who God is. Let's take a couple of Proverbs that talks about the fear of God.

What does it mean to fear God? I want you to notice the parallels in Proverbs 3. Remember, Proverbs is poetry. There's parallelism, right? And so, with the parallelism, it's giving different thoughts on each line, right?

But they are parallel. They are explaining each other's thoughts. So, here's the thought. So, Proverbs 3.

You know these verses. If you've been around a while, you've read the Bible for a while, you absolutely know these verses. They might even be some of your life verses. They're mine. Proverbs 3.5.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart. What does that mean? And lean not on your own understanding. See the parallelism? In a positive sense, trust in the Lord with all your heart.

[28 : 56] In a negative sense, not leaning on your own understanding. Trusting Him, not myself. In all your ways, acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

Don't be wise in your own eyes, but fear the Lord. Don't be wise. Fear the Lord. Don't be wise in your own eyes. Fear the Lord. And turn away from evil, and it will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.

What is fear of the Lord, according to those verses? Fear of the Lord is trusting in the Lord. Fear of the Lord is not leaning on your own understanding. Fear of the Lord is acknowledging Him in everything.

Not being wise in your own eyes and turning away from evil. Look at all those explanations, all those parallelisms. See, fear of the Lord is not something by itself.

It's full. Proverbs says it's the beginning of knowledge. It's the very beginning of wisdom. It's where you start. Fear of the Lord.

[30 : 03] Which leads into trust and not leaning on my, et cetera. Here's another proverb. Proverbs 14, 26 talks about more positive blessings that come in fearing the Lord.

Fear of the Lord is not a dread of punishment. Fear of the Lord is a perspective of God. It is a recognition about God. So Proverbs 14, 26 says this.

In the fear of the Lord, one has what? Strong confidence. Not dread. In the fear of the Lord, one has strong confidence.

That sounds pretty good. And his children have a refuge. That's pretty good too. The fear of the Lord is what? A fountain of life.

Life. Not taking away life, but a fountain of life. It's a spring that gives new life. The fear of the Lord is that.

[31 : 02] That doesn't make sense to us. I think the fear of the Lord is a bad thing from a human perspective, right? And here's scripture saying, no, fear of the Lord, man, that's the bag.

That's the deal. That's the freedom from all of the fears. The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life that one may turn away from the snares of death.

Protects you. Protects you. It's a wonderful thing. Fear of God frees us from all other fears.

If I fear the Lord, I will fear nothing else. There's nothing else to fear. So why is the fear of God transforming?

It's not because we live in dread of punishment. That's not motivating or transforming at all. But the fear of the Lord is transforming because we know Him as the true God.

[32 : 13] I don't just make God what I want and ignore what I don't want. I don't redefine God into a God of my own making that makes me feel good. That's not fear of God at all.

That's dishonest. And it's blasphemous. Here's another proverb, Proverb 9, 10.

It says, The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. See the parallelism? The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the Holy brings insight.

In other words, the fear of the Lord is the knowledge of the Lord. It's the same thing. To know the Lord is to fear Him. To fear Him is to know Him. If I don't fear God, then I don't know Him.

If I don't have a robust fear of God, I don't know Him. Or I have forgotten Him. Or I have wandered from Him.

[33 : 23] If I don't fear God, I don't know Him. I have some kind of a lesser God. I have a false God. I have a man-made God. So, how does the fear of God transform?

Or how does it impact us? It transforms how we live in the present. Now, verses 8 to 12, we see a second perspective on this. Whereas in verses 1 through 7, it's more about the present impact.

Verses 8 to 12, we're about the future. It kind of gets into kind of when we stand before God and what's forgiven, what's not forgiven ultimately. So, the second impact is this.

How does fear of God impact us? Fearing God, not only transform how I live in the present, but fearing God emboldens my witness in view of the future.

Fearing God, a right knowledge of God emboldens my witness with a view to the future. Because what I do now affects my future.

[34 : 31] What I do now relates to my future. Is rewarded or not rewarded? Is forgiven or not forgiven? Is acknowledged or not acknowledged? So, again, three things.

Verse 8 and 9, it emboldens me to confess Christ. In verses, in verse 10, it's in a negative sense. The fear of God does not, if I don't have the fear of God, I will blaspheme the Spirit.

And then, thirdly, verses 11 and 12, the fear of God assures me that I can defend my faith because He's with me.

So, verse 8, He says, I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will acknowledge before the angels of God.

Everyone who acknowledges me, or more literally, confesses me, in other words, gives witness, speaks up about me. So, acknowledge sounds a little too passive to me because if I want to, I can translate that to me.

[35 : 42] No, I acknowledge Him, but I don't have to speak up. No, it's about speaking out. It's about confessing. It's the same word we have in 1 John 1, 9, right? I confess my sins, right?

I tell God, I speak out, I say the same, literally. So, here, to confess Christ is to say the same thing that Jesus has said about Himself, that God has said about His Son, to say the same.

I don't pick and choose what I want to say about Jesus, I like this about Jesus, I like this, I say what Jesus has said about Himself. I confess that.

And I speak it out loud, I say it to others. So, in other words, confessing Christ is vital to Christianity. It fulfills what a, it's the fullness of what a Christian is.

We're not called just to believe. We're not called to a Christianity that can just kind of be my own private thing. To think of believing in Christ as just my own private thing, just me and Jesus, me alone, is again, a poor view of God.

[37 : 05] It views God as if God doesn't care, doesn't know. Because, when we're called to Christ, what are we called to?

Am I called simply to, I'm called to be saved? Right? That settles my past issue, but what am I called to? I'm called from things, but what am I called to?

I'm called to be a light. I'm called to be salt. I'm called to be a witness. That doesn't mean I'm a preacher, doesn't mean I'm talking, but it means I do speak up.

It means I am conscious and recognition, recognition, I can't, I don't have the right word.

Circumspect, that's what I was, I'm circumspect of where I am and who I'm around and how I can be a witness to them. I look for opportunities.

[38 : 09] I don't force opportunities, but I look for opportunities. I build relationships so that at some point I have an opportunity. Verse nine, on the contrary, the other side of that is the one who denies me before men.

Again, notice it's before men, before people. So, so, to confess him before men, that's to speak to others about him.

To deny him before men means to literally deny him before others. If I'm asked, I deny it. Now, Peter denied Christ three times.

And if you take a parallel between the gospel, the, the Matthew and Luke and Mark, if you parallel Mark, you can come up with six denials.

So, it doesn't matter. Do you deny him? Three times or six times, doesn't matter. He denied him. Flat out, denied him. So, does that mean Peter, he's out?

[39 : 30] No. No. It's not about, I did, you know, I blew it, I blew it, I blew it even three times, maybe even six times. Doesn't, Peter was forgiven.

Peter was recommissioned, wasn't he? Peter wept bitterly, right? And Christ, we recommissioned him. And Peter, we know, was a great witness for Christ. So, he was forgiven.

It's about a, a pattern of lifetime denial is what it is. I never speak up for him. I never speak up for him. How would I expect Christ to speak up for me before the angels?

And by the way, what's the thing with the angels? What's, what's that about? Before the angels is, the angels are always present when Christ is coming in his glory to sit on his throne.

When he comes in his glory to sit on his throne, he comes with the angels. Right? When he comes in judgment, the angels are there. The angels are there as witnesses.

[40 : 33] So, right, before he's gonna confess me, if I confess him, he's gonna confess me before those angels. Remember Revelation? The myriads of angels, right?

It's gonna be, woo, Bill! Are the angels gonna cheer? I don't know. Or deny? Oh, that could be horrible.

I can't, oh. Myriads of angels! Who would deny him? Who would deny him? Remember, the angels long to look into this gospel.

Okay. So, if we deny him before men, we will be denied before the angels of God. I mean, do we take that seriously?

Do we really consider what that means? Does it cause us to fear? It should. It should, if I'm in a state of denial, if the Holy Spirit is convicting me.

[41 : 35] Because I fear a God who is all-knowing. He's also all-powerful. Notice again the issue of authority in verse 10. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes, slanders, speaks evil against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

Unforgiven. So, interesting, I mean, you could say anything against Jesus and be forgiven. You can, you can speak against Him and be forgiven.

Interesting. But the Holy Spirit? So, why is the Holy Spirit singled out? Why is the Holy Spirit different than the Father and the Son?

They're equal, right? Triune God. It's not about their personhood that the Holy Spirit's offended. It's about the role.

So, consider the Trinity, right? You have Father, Son, Holy Spirit. What does the Father do? Well, the Father loves the world and He sends the Son, right? The Father is the planner. The Father is the one who initiates, the one who looks ahead and calls us children, right?

[42 : 55] That's the Father. He starts. Then what is the Son? The Son's the one who's sent, right? He's the one who comes, who accomplishes, who does the work the Father sends Him to do, right?

So, the Father plans, the Son performs. What is the work of the Spirit? How does the Spirit, yeah, oh, there's all kinds of stuff the Spirit does, right?

We read the New Testament, we say, oh, my goodness, He's doing all kinds of things. But the big picture in terms of the Father loves the world, He sends the Son, the Son saves the world, how does the Spirit relate to our salvation?

What's the work of the Spirit? Before that, see, now the Father sends the Son, the Son comes, what does the Spirit do in reference to the Son that affects our salvation?

John 16, 7 says, the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin and righteousness and judgment. And then Jesus expounds on that.

[44 : 08] This is the upper room, right? This is before Jesus leaves. He's talking about this Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does lots of other things. He teaches and encourages and helps us all that. But in reference to salvation, the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin that I'm a sinner.

Convicts the world of righteousness which Jesus defines as Himself. and of judgment because the ruler of this world has been cast out.

The victory has been won by Christ. So every time the gospel goes, the Holy Spirit is convicting. He is convicting.

He is convicting. He is convicting. He is convicting. Now, He decides how effective that conviction is. Right? But He is convicting.

He is convincing. So in other words, when someone rejects what the Holy Spirit convicts of and if they do that all their life, it's unforgivable.

[45 : 18] Why is it unforgivable? Because they won't repent. If they repent, it's forgivable. Okay? I can resist the Holy Spirit for years, decades, and then come to repentance, I'm forgiven.

Correct? But if I never repent, I cannot have forgiveness. There's no way. It's unforgivable. If I blaspheme the Holy Spirit, if I speak evil of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit gives me all this conviction, I say, whatever.

something evil, something born out of the rebellion of my heart and the stubbornness of my spirit, if I say that to the Holy Spirit, I say that to the Son, He'll forgive me.

I say that to the Holy Spirit, I'm done because of His role, not because of His person, because of His role, because He specifically applies all that the Father and the Son have done, the Holy Spirit takes and applies and puts upon our heart.

That's why I believe with all my heart, there's no such thing as an atheist, there's no such thing as an agnostic. They know. They know. They've just pushed it, suppressed it, redefined it, whatever. Same thing with Christ.

[46 : 47] Same thing. If they've heard the gospel message, if it's been clearly presented. And the Holy Spirit takes that and says, yeah.

Okay. I mean, this is serious stuff, isn't it? Blaspheme in the Holy Spirit, I would define it this way. It is the persistent, decisive rejection of the Holy Spirit's conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

People are, they wonder, have I committed the unforgivable sin? What is the, you know, have I done something?

If you have and you don't care, you might have. But if you think you have committed the unforgivable sin and are worried about it, you're probably not even close.

Okay. You know, if you're hoping you can still repent, you have not committed this sin. Because it's only unforgivable if you're unrepentant.

[48 : 02] And to be unrepentant is to reject the work of the Spirit. Okay. One last point he makes here in verses 11 and 12. Fearing God emboldens our witness. And so even when we're, when in the future we might be brought before others to give an account of our faith, the Holy Spirit will help us defend it.

Do you worry about defending your faith? Do you worry about, you know, if you have the opportunity, how you share? Do you worry that you don't have the words or you won't know how to explain it?

Yeah, of course, that's a normal thing to worry about that. He's not talking about your normal witness here. Your normal witness, 1 Peter 3, 5 talks about, you know, sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready for a defense of the hope within you to Him who asks you.

There's a readiness we have. We should know what our faith is. We should know how to, how to clearly define or explain that in basic terms. I can share the gospel.

God, man, right? Christ, response. I can share the gospel. I can share my own experience. I can give an answer for the hope that is within me if I've thought it out a little bit.

[49 : 18] Here, He's talking about a specific place where you're brought in and challenged and threatened. And more specifically, He's preparing these disciples who in the opening, well, all through the book of Acts are going to be going into these situations.

Peter and John are going to be dragged in before the elders and the councils and the authorities and they're going to be told, stop preaching in this name. They're going to be asked, by what authority are you doing these things?

Right? And then Stephen. Stephen's going to be stoned. But first, he's going to give a defense by which he starts way back in Genesis, right? He goes all the way, which is a pretty cool defense.

And then Paul. I mean, the last half of Acts is about Paul and his mission and then his defense.

He's on defense for years. Talk about a long trial. Waiting to see Caesar. So, so these verses specifically are, are about the, about being brought in and in our situation in America, we don't really have this kind of situation where we'd be brought in to a court about our faith.

[50 : 44] Now, it's possible, but it's not generally a threat for us. But this could still apply to us in a very general sense that, that when I'm challenged about my faith, right?

I didn't expect it, but now all of a sudden I'm challenged about my faith. Maybe somebody attacks my faith. What, how do I answer that? Well, this is where the promise is. Holy story. All right?

God knows. He's all knowing, right? He's all present. He's with you. And in that very hour, he'll tell you what you need to say. Okay. I remember when I was, first year college, I had to take bonehead English because I didn't know how to read or write.

Graduated high school, didn't know how to read or write. So I had to write a paper and so write a paper on something you're passionate about. So I wrote ignorantly, you know, just this dumb kid, I wrote about the authority of the Bible.

Not realizing this wasn't a Christian college or something, you know. And so the, so the professor decides she's going to take my paper and we're going to pick it apart in front of everybody.

[51 : 59] And I'm like, oh. Now I can write it down because I can copy notes and I can write, but this, to answer for my faith in front of this class where it's kind of challenging, I was embarrassed.

Not ready. I just thought the teacher greeted on her own. Whether she had good or bad intentions in that, I don't know.

But it was an experience. I'll never forget. I wasn't, in this sense, challenged or threatened, but I was challenged.

And I was threatened. Because everyone, I look around, I'm sitting up front, I don't know, I'm sitting up front, sitting up front, looking around, everybody's looking at me. Like, this guy's an idiot.

This guy's a fool. Maybe some are thinking, huh, that's really interesting. I don't know. We don't, and I simply share that because we don't know when our faith will be put into the light.

[53 : 24] We don't know. We don't know what relationship context will happen where suddenly I've not ever been able to share it. All of a sudden, this person wants to challenge my faith or ask about my faith.

Am I ready? So in one sense, do I have an explanation of my faith? That's 1 Peter 3. But in this sense, if I'm under threat and under challenge and kind of on my heels, Jesus is saying, don't worry.

I'm with you. And if you're supposed to say something, I'll give it to you. If you're not supposed to say something, guess what? I won't give you anything because sometimes we're to be quiet.

Amen. So Acts, in the book of Acts, we see lots of examples of followers of Christ who confessed Christ, who preached Him, who witnessed, who shared Christ.

And we also see through the book of Acts the work of the Holy Spirit because it was once the Holy Spirit came upon the church at Pentecost, right, that the power to proclaim the Word and the boldness came.

[54 : 34] And so the first example we see is in Acts chapter 4 where Peter and John are brought before the rulers.

Here we have Acts 4 verse 5. On the next day, the rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander.

They had the whole political forum going there. And all who were of high priestly family. When they had set them in their midst, right, so this is an inquisition.

When they had set them in their midst, they inquired, by what power or by what name did you do this? The previous day they had healed a man, okay? And it caused an uproar.

Then Peter, watch this, then Peter answers, filled with the Holy Spirit. There you go. In the hour that you need it, the Holy Spirit will teach you. Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom, by the way, you crucified, whom, by the way, God raised from the dead, by him, this man is standing before you, well, healed.

[56 : 02] This, and now he goes on. He's not going to just answer the question. He's going to push it. This, Jesus, is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.

And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Offend away, Peter.

Now, when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished.

And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. That's an interesting statement. In other words, I think we've seen this before.

We question and it comes back on us. Jesus did that over and over again. And now his followers are doing it and they're not even educated? See, Peter, Peter's view of God affected the way that he lived.

[57 : 18] He lived. He feared God. He knew Jesus. He had walked with him.

He had seen him. He had been terrified before him. He had been overjoyed before him. He'd been grieved before him. He'd been encouraged before him.

He'd experienced the gamut of who Jesus is. He was and that forever impacted the way that he lived.

And the way that he witnessed, it emboldened his witness before others. Does your view of God make any difference in the way you live today?

does it make any difference? Does it transform how you live now? Does it embolden you because of the future?

[58 : 22] Does it purge your hypocrisy? Does it train you to an eternal view? Does it assure you of his presence? See, to fear God means to know him.

To know him in all that he has revealed about himself. To be mindful that he is all-knowing.

That he is all-powerful. That he is all-present. He's God. to fear God is to fear nothing else.

It's to be set free from every other fear. Fear of man, fear of death, fear of others. To fear God is to fear nothing else.

Not man, not rejection, not grief, not death, not the future, not things present, not things to come. Because it is to know what Paul knew.

[59 : 31] I know whom I have believed and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted until that day.

I know. Let's pray. Father, thank you for the word of Jesus, the reminder of Jesus, the serious note, Lord, that our Lord takes for us.

Thank you. We need to hear the hard words, the serious words, the eternal words. We love to hear the hope, the compassion, the encouragement, but we also need, because of our tendency of our soul, we need to be awakened to who you are.

So open our hearts, revive our soul. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.