

# Fear God and Keep His Commandments

Ecclesiastes 12:13

In the days Jesus walked the earth irreverence was widespread throughout Israel. There were many who praised God with their lips and honored Him in public, but in their hearts there was no regard for the righteousness of God. Jesus rightly said concerning such men, *“These people draw near to me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from me”* (Matthew 15:8). Sadly, the situation has not change in the past two thousand years. A recent survey shows that approximately 64% of our nation’s “religious leaders” do not believe in Hell. The ramifications of this can be seen in the numerous false doctrines and vain philosophies that are being taught in place of God’s word. The fact that they do not believe in Hell shows that they do not fear God’s wrath or the judgment to come. As a result, they see no need to obey His commandments. They honor God with their lips, but they do not obey His word.

This irreverence is the very thing that God’s people must strive to overcome. Jesus purchased His people with His own blood so that they may serve Him lovingly and reverently. It is for this reason that we must be ever mindful of the exhortation given in Ecclesiastes 12:13, *“Fear God and keep His commandments.”*

## What does it mean to Fear God?

There are many ways in which the word “fear” can be used. It can be used of a person shaking fearfully in a corner, too petrified to move. It can refer to a man fighting for his life. It can refer to a person who avoids a fallen power line for fear of being shocked. It can also refer to the respect children show their parents when they are obedient. However, if we are to understand how to *“fear God and keep His commandments,”* we must search out the meaning Go places on this word.

In Hebrews 10:31 it is written, *“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the mighty God.”* Thus, we learn that we must fear God’s wrath. This sounds much like the fear that a person has for the fallen power line. Because of their fear they avoid the power line, and so we must strive to avoid God’s wrath. But how? In Hebrews 12:28 it is written, *“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.”* In this passage we learn that we must serve God with reverence and godly fear. How do we avoid God’s wrath? By serving Him. We should also note the use of the word “reverence,” for this too is a kind of fear.

Both of these passages illustrate the kind of fear we must have for God as we keep His commandments. It is a fear that children should have for their parents and servants should have for their masters. Our reverence for God is what drives us to honor Him with our lips and with our deeds. It is the respect that we show our God through humble submission to His commandments. But even as we serve God in reverence, so we must be aware of the wrath that awaits those who are not obedient. God is our Lord and Creator. He is also our Judge. Therefore the Psalmist proclaimed, *“Holy and reverend it His name”* (Psalm 119:9, KJV).

## Our Need to Fear God

In order to walk with fear before God we must realize is that we are always in God’s presence. As the Lord’s church we are His temple. As such God dwells among us for we are His house (2 Cor. 6:16-7:1). Christians are always in the presence of God and therefore must revere Him every moment of thier lives. When the priests in the Old Testament entered the temple to offer up sacrifices before the Lord they were always mindful of His presence and power. They were taught to fear His wrath and therefore respect His law (Lev. 10:2, 3). *“Also let the priests who come near the LORD consecrate themselves, lest the LORD*

*break out against them*” (Ex. 19:22). Christians are priests of God in His kingdom today (Rev. 1:5, 6). Therefore we have the same responsibility to “consecrate ourselves” when we are in the presence of God. Unlike Nadab and Abihu, we must be reverent. No, we are not under the Law of Moses. Our sanctification is different than theirs, and our sacrifices are different. The Levitical priests offered sacrifices only when they went into the temple. Christians are the temple of God. Levitical priests offered animal sacrifices. Christians offer themselves as living sacrifices to God. *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service”* (Rom. 12:1). Since our lives are a living sacrifice and we are the temple of the living God, we are always in God’s presence. Christ said it would be so (Matt. 28:20) Therefore the command of the Lord is as true today as it was in the days of Nadab and Abihu, *“By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified”* (Lev. 10:3). We are near God every moment of our lives. Every thing we do, every word we say, every command we fulfill, all things are to be done with reverence and godly fear (1 Pet. 1:17-21).

### **Making the Application**

As mentioned in the introduction the lack of fear for God has been spreading into the Lord’s church. God’s people need to be ever mindful of their works. Like any other sin, irreverence has a way of seeping in unnoticed by those who practice it. Slowly we begin to lag in our diligence, God’s holy word becomes “normal,” and we begin to overlook important details. We become too relaxed. Little by little, it will grow until a time comes when there is no reverence at all. How can we stop this? *“Examine all things”* (1 Thess. 5:21; Gal. 6:4).

- How much time do we spend in reading God’s word? When we do read is it with respect and reverence toward God, or is it just to get it out of the way so we can say we did our Bible reading for the day?
- When in the assembly how much time do we spend talking or thinking about worldly things versus pondering the sermon, the prayers or the Lord’s Supper?
- When we come to worship with the saints are we more concerned with how our job is doing, what our neighbor is wearing, or about offering up worship to God?
- How often do we consider whether or not our personal activities are pleasing to God? If we fear Him it will be always on our minds.

These are but a few of the many things we need to be examining in our lives. Brethren, let us strive to “fear God and Keep His commandments.”

### **Conclusion**

If you are not a Christian then you are not fearing God nor are you keeping His commandments. God has commanded that all be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. When we obey the gospel God has promised eternal salvation. But we must fear Him. Remember, *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”* (Psalm 111:10).