



Bethel Sonrise Sermon Notes – “*Can’t Love God & Keep Loving Your Sin*”

Speaker: Ps Preston Dobbins

Series: Awesome God

Scripture: Proverbs 8:13, 1 Peter 1:17, Titus 2:11–12, Genesis 4:1–7

Main Idea

The fear of the Lord is revealed in how we respond to sin and how deeply we desire to please God. Grace doesn't give us permission to remain in sin; it empowers us to turn from it and live a life that brings pleasure to the Lord.

The Fear of the Lord Changes Our Relationship With Sin

It's easy to assume we fear God because we have good feelings toward Him.

But feelings aren't the measure.

Scripture gives us something much more concrete:

"The fear of the Lord is to hate evil."

Proverbs 8:13

If we want to evaluate whether we truly fear the Lord, we have to honestly examine our relationship with sin.

True repentance isn't simply:

- **Feeling guilty.**
- **Being sorry for a few days.**
- **Taking a temporary break from sin.**
- **Returning to the same patterns later.**

Repentance means **turning away**.

The fear of the Lord doesn't make peace with the things God hates.

We Serve a Father and an Impartial Judge

God is our loving Father, but Scripture also describes Him as an impartial Judge.

These truths aren't contradictory.

Because God is holy, He doesn't change His standard depending on who we are.

1 Peter 1:17 tells us that if we call on God as Father, we should conduct ourselves with reverent fear during our time on earth.

The fear of the Lord brings a seriousness to the way we live.

We cannot pursue spiritual maturity while continually making excuses for the sin God has called us to leave behind.

Grace Is the Power to Leave Sin Behind

Grace is one of the greatest gifts we've received through Jesus, but grace can easily be misunderstood.

Grace is not:

"Everything is forgiven, so it doesn't matter how I live."

Biblical grace doesn't excuse sin.

Grace empowers us to overcome it.

Titus 2 teaches that the grace of God trains us to say "no" to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, godliness isn't reserved for heaven.

We can live differently **right now**.

From Avoiding Sin to Pleasing God

Turning away from sin is essential, but Christianity cannot become an endless obsession with everything we're *not* supposed to do.

If our entire spiritual life revolves around "Don't sin," we'll eventually become spiritually exhausted and overly focused on ourselves.

As we mature, our motivation begins to change.

The question moves from:

"How do I avoid doing something wrong?"

to:

"How can I please the One I love?"

When you deeply love someone, you care about what brings them joy and what grieves their heart.

Holy fear produces that same desire toward God.

We don't simply fear the consequences of sin.

We fear grieving the One we love.

Cain, Abel, and the Heart Behind the Offering

Genesis 4 gives us two very different approaches to God.

Abel brought God his first and his best.

Cain brought an offering, but it wasn't marked by the same honor.

When God did not regard Cain's offering, Cain became angry and discouraged.

God responded:

"If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?"

The issue wasn't simply the offering.

It revealed something about Cain's heart.

We can fall into the same pattern when God becomes an afterthought.

We give Him leftover:

- **Time**
- **Attention**
- **Energy**
- **Resources**
- **Affection**

Then we wonder why our relationship with Him feels distant.

Holy fear doesn't give God what's left.

It gives Him our first and our best.

Who Are You Living to Please?

At the heart of sin is a question of pleasure.

Who am I trying to please?

When we knowingly choose sin, we're choosing our desires over God's desires.

We're saying:

"What I want right now matters more to me than what pleases God."

But self-pleasing never produces the fulfillment it promises.

True satisfaction is found when God becomes our greatest pursuit.

When we live for His pleasure, we discover that His presence contains the fulfillment we were trying to find everywhere else.

Final Challenge

Take an honest look at your relationship with sin.

Don't simply ask whether you feel close to God.

Look at the evidence of your life.

Is there a sin you've already decided you'll continue entertaining?

Is there an area where you've been using grace as an excuse rather than receiving grace as the power to change?

Is God receiving your first and your best, or has He become an afterthought?

Bring those areas honestly before Him.

Turn away from willful sin, receive the empowering grace of God, and make pleasing the Lord the ultimate goal of your life.

Discussion Questions

1. **Ps Preston challenged us to evaluate our fear of the Lord by looking at our actual relationship with sin rather than our feelings about God. Why can our actions sometimes reveal more about our hearts than our emotions do?**
2. **What is the difference between feeling bad about sin and genuinely repenting of it? How can you recognize the difference in your own life?**
3. **The sermon described grace not as permission to keep sinning, but as the power to leave sin behind. How does that understanding of grace change the way you approach an area where you've struggled repeatedly?**
4. **Cain and Abel approached God differently with their offerings. In what areas of your life are you tempted to give God your leftovers rather than your first and your best?**
5. **Ps Preston said that spiritual maturity shifts our focus from simply avoiding sin to actively desiring to please God. What would change in your everyday decisions if your primary question became, "What would please the Lord?"**