

# ACTS | The Fear of the Lord | Story 7

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## Introduction

### A. Brief Acts Review / Today's Reading

- 1) The coming of the Spirit, the miracle of the lame man, persecution of the church; and last week Pastor Rob added to the persecution story by talking to us about what God is doing in us in the midst of His shaking.
- 2) Acts is one of my very favorite books in the Bible. I've enjoyed it since I was a late teenager, as a missionary with Youth with a Mission – our youth ministry was called "Acts 2."
- 3) If you haven't heard this before, a great 40,000 foot view of Acts is pulled off the book's key verse:

#### **Acts 1:8**

*"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

The Book of Acts can be broken down by the three locations — Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and the end of the earth.

- a. Chapters 1-7 – Jerusalem
  - b. Chapters 8-12 – Judea and Samaria
  - c. Chapters 13-28 – The Ends of the Earth
- 4) Today we are going to pick up in chapter 5 following the dramatic story of Peter with Ananias and Sapphira.
  - 5) Follow along with me as I read...

#### **Acts 5:12-42**

"Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life." And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach.

Now when the high priest came, and those who were with him, they called together the council, all the senate of the people of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported, "We found the prison securely

locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them we found no one inside.” Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them, wondering what this would come to. And someone came and told them, “Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people.” Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people.

And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us.” But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. And he said to them, “Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!” So they took his advice, and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.”

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## The Fear of the Lord in Acts

- 1) Here in **Chapter 5** we encounter the Fear of the Lord within the church.
  - a. Ananias and Sapphira – **vs. 11**: *“And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.”*
  - b. We see it here in **vs. 29** when Peter and the apostles respond to the high priest, *“We must obey God rather than men.”*
  - c. Expressions of the Fear of the Lord in Acts include:
    - Shortly after Saul, who became Paul, joins the church in **Acts 9:31**, *“So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.”*
    - In the story of Peter and Cornelius, we find this is part of the way, Acts’ author, Luke, describes Cornelius in **10:22** – *“Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say.”*

While speaking to Cornelius' household, Peter adds in **vs. 35**, "...but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him."

- Paul, while preaching in Antioch of Pisidia, in **Acts 13:16**, says, "So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said: "Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen." Later in the same chapter, in **vs. 26** he goes on to say, "Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation."
- And, in **Acts 19:14-20**, when Paul encounters some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists who undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits:

*"Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?" And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily."*

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## What is the Fear of the Lord?

- 1) My journey as an 18–20-year-old young missionary, learning the Fear of the Lord.
  - I sat under the teaching of godly men and women who lived it and taught it
  - Those discipling me made it a point to shape my life around it
  - It began to inform the motivations of my heart; what came out of my mouth, and what I did and didn't do; how I walked with a right attitude under authority, and how I led when I was given authority; it also shaped how I viewed people and related to those around me.
  - How has The Fear of the Lord shaped your life, motives, words, actions, relationships, leadership?
- 2) Let's take a closer look at The Fear of the Lord that was so central to the lives of disciples of Jesus, and at the core of the community of the Church and its leadership in Acts.
- 3) First, a definition for you: **Reverencing and Referencing God in all that I do**
- 4) In making this practical to our lives today – as it was for the Church in Acts – I want to share with you three things of how a Jew, at the time of Acts, would have understood The Fear of the Lord.

### ***a. Reverencing: The Fear of the Lord is Taking God Seriously***

- It is standing in deep respect and awe of who God is...

#### **Isaiah 40:12-31** (portions)

Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? Who has measured the Spirit of the Lord, or what man shows him his counsel? Whom did he

consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales; behold, he takes up the coastlands like fine dust. All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.

Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in; who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness.

To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing.

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.

- It is the recognition that God is God and I am not (**Psalm 33:8-9**).
  - Moses encountered God and the ground became holy – bowed (**Exodus 3:1-6**).
  - Isaiah saw a vision of heaven where God was holy – undone (**Isaiah 6:1-8**).
  - John had a revelation of Jesus – became like a dead man (**Revelation 1:12-20**).

- **Our obedience to God is directly related to how much we fear the Lord**

**Genesis 22:11-12**

But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.”

- When we see God for who He really is, which moves us to take Him seriously, it becomes a ridiculous thought to disobey God.
- God wants to bring us to the place where *what He tells us to do* is not nearly as important as *Who tells us to do it*. The commands pale in the glory of our majestic King.
- The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom – “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.*” (**Proverbs 9:10**)

**b. Reverencing: The Fear of the Lord is the Hatred of Evil**

- “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...*” – **Proverbs 9:10**
- God has absolutely no tolerance for sin (**Genesis 6:6-7; Genesis 19-20; Leviticus 19:2**), loves sinner.
- To the degree we Fear the Lord is the same degree that we hate sin.
- We are only as holy as our thought lives are holy (**Psalm 19:14, 51:6; Philippians 4:8**).
- We are to have the Fear of the Lord on our tongues...

### **Psalm 34:11-14**

*“Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is there who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.”*

- We are to have the fear of the Lord in how we view those around us, and in the way we relate to people (**James 4:11-12**).
- We are to walk in the Fear of the Lord in the way we relate to those in authority (**Numbers 12:9-10; 1 Samuel 24:1-7; 2 Kings 2:23-24; Psalm 105:15**).

#### **c. Referencing: The Fear of the Lord Leads to Seeking God in Everything**

- Those who fear God reference Him in their daily lives, in everything they do, **Psalm 25:14** – *“The friendship (secret) of the Lord is for those who fear him...”*
- **Those who fear God avoid the sin of presumption—they avoid doing things without referencing God (Psalm 19:13).**

### **5) The Fear of Man**

To serve God, one must place no other gods before Him. Concerned more for man’s reactions than God’s reactions indicate a greater respect for man than for God. Rather than a righteous fear of God, this represents an unholy fear of man. The fear of man is present when we determine what we will or won’t do based on anything other than God’s truth and His leading in our lives.

- The fear of man brings a snare...

### **Proverbs 29:25**

*“The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.”*

- The fear of man leads to people pleasing.
- The fear of man hinders our obedience to Jesus

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## Scriptural Promises to Those Who Fear the Lord

- 1) Fruitfulness (**Exodus 1:17-21**)
- 2) Deterred from sin (**Exodus 20:20**)
- 3) Blessings on us and our children (**Deuteronomy 5:29**)
- 4) Prolonged days (**Proverbs 9:10-11**)
- 5) Guidance (**Psalm 25:12**)
- 6) The confiding of God (**Psalm 25:14**)
- 7) Angelic protection/deliverance (**Psalm 34:7**)
- 8) Provision for needs (**Psalm 34:9**)
- 9) Wisdom (**Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9:10**)
- 10) Earned respect (**Nehemiah 5:9**)
- 11) Blessing related to family life (**Psalm 128**)
- 12) Companionship (**Psalm 119:63**)
- 13) Wealth, honor, and life (**Proverbs 22:4**)
- 14) Fulfilled desires (**Psalm 145:19**)
- 15) Abundant goodness (**Psalm 31:19**)
- 16) Preservation of life (**Proverbs 19:23**)
- 17) Honor of women (**Proverbs 31:30**)
- 18) A heritage (**Psalm 61:5**)
- 19) Blessings from God (**Psalm 112:1-10**)

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## Discussion Questions

1. How does a Christian walk “in the fear of the Lord”?
2. How is our obedience to God directly related to how much we fear the Lord?
3. Discuss: the degree we fear the Lord is the same degree that we hate sin.
4. Discuss: those who fear God avoid the sin of presumption—they avoid doing things without referencing God in everything they do.
5. Do you ever determine what you will or won't do based on anything other than God's truth and His leading in your life — i.e. based on the “fear of man”?
6. How has The Fear of the Lord shaped your life, motives, words, actions, relationships, leadership?

# NOTES