

3 Lent: Fearless Week Three: Fear of Disappointing God

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Rev Ken Wratten at St. Stephen's

Our close look at 'Fear' for this season of Lent is intended to help us all see more clearly how some fears are helpful and keep us safe, and some fears are debilitating, and keep us from becoming what God wants of us.

Today we are examining the fear of Disappointing God. I see two sides to this fear; a healthy side and a destructive side.

First, feeling this fear can mean that you have faith in God, feel remorse for something you have done or intentionally avoided doing, you want to make God proud, and you have a fear of failing at it. This is a healthy, helpful fear. This fear includes conversations with God during the day; "Lord, I know I was abrupt with this person yesterday because I was tired. I know that is no excuse. Can you make an opening for me today to talk to that person, so I can apologize in a way that will work?" That is the kind of fruit God wants you to bear.

Example: [John 21:15ff](#); Peter 'Do you love me? Feed my sheep.'

Peter denied his friendship of Jesus, even his knowledge of Jesus three times. After living with Jesus, learning from him, seeing the Transfiguration, witnessing healings, being invited to walk on water with him, Peter denied Jesus three times. After the resurrection, Peter is met by Jesus who asks, "Do you love me?" [How many times did Jesus ask that? Right; three times.] Do you think Jesus should have been disappointed in Peter? In this scene, did he express disappointment in Peter? Jesus empowered Peter to feed his sheep; to care for his people. Peter certainly knew the feeling of causing disappointment, and Jesus had to feel disappointed. But that didn't change his love for Peter, and it didn't change God's plan for Peter.

This fear of Disappointing God can also debilitate us if we don't understand or accept God's grace, and if we believe that we don't deserve God's help, or His being active in our life; and so we languish, we give up, and we miss the life with God that is available. This is a destructive fear.

In Lent 2009 we spent five weeks talking in detail about God's Grace. The sermons are still in our on-line archive if you want to read them or hear

them again. There are a few points from those 2009 sermons I want you to hear again. These points directly apply to us having a healthy fear that keeps us from disappointing God. The difference is knowing and accepting grace.

1. Grace is God's gift to you.

"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."

Romans 3:23, 24 (NASB)

2. Grace is received through faith.

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." **Ephesians 2:8,9** (NIV)

3. Grace comes through Christ.

"For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." **John 1:17** (NIV)

Grace is at the heart of our relationship with God. By understanding grace, you feel closer to God, you understand God's love better, and you are grateful to God. Now let's look at the affect grace has on our fear of disappointing God.

4. YOU ARE ACCEPTED.

The issue of being accepted by God is settled when we accept His grace.

Romans 15:7 "*Christ has accepted you.*" Notice that there is no condition.

Paul doesn't say, "Christ **will** accept you if you go to church every week."

Paul doesn't say, "Christ **will** accept you if you promise to be perfect."

Christ's acceptance is unconditional because it's based on God's grace; not on your performance. God has already accepted you just the way you are without any conditions through grace.

5. YOU ARE PRECIOUS TO GOD.

When you step across that line of faith and say, "Jesus Christ, I believe in you and I accept your gift of grace in my life," you become a member of God's family. From that point you belong to God. **1 John 4:4** "*You belong to God.*" Everybody is created by God, but not everyone belongs to God. If you have asked God to make you part of his family, you **belong** to God.

You are so valuable to God that He gave His own Son to die for you. In

Isaiah 43:4 "God says, 'You are precious to me.'" You're not just acceptable, you are precious to God because of His grace.

6. Because of God's grace YOU ARE FORGIVEN.

There was a time in my life that I believed anything that went wrong was a sign of God getting revenge for something stupid or bad I had done. But that is NOT how God works. The Bible says in Isaiah 43:25 "*I am the God who forgives your sins and I do this because of who I am.*" It's not based on our deserving forgiveness. It is based on God being a forgiving God. God says, "*I will not hold your sins against you.*" This says that God doesn't carry out revenge; God does not carry grudges.

7. With Christ in your life YOU ARE CAPABLE.

Have you ever found yourself saying that you had no skills, no talents that had any value? The Bible says that with Christ in your life you are capable.

Philippians 4:13 "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*"

You are capable ALREADY to begin the next plan that God has for you. Believe it!!

The Reflection Verse for this week is John 3:18, "Whoever believes in [the Son] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son." When I first read that verse for this series, it troubled me that it sounded like a threat of being condemned by God. But now I see this verse a very different way. By believing in Christ and his message, by accepting God's grace, we can escape feeling condemned to an existence without the love of God in it. Instead we choose to live with a healthy fear, living to please God, asking Him to work with us through every situation.

Grace and Peace be with you. Amen.