

Fear and Its Consequences

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[0 : 00] For those of you who are visiting, my name is Sean, and I'm one of the pastors of Trinity Cambridge Church. And I'm actually going to be preaching from 37 through 39, three chapters, but we just had asked Will to read 38, because it's a very long passage to read all together.

So turn with me to chapter 37, and we'll start there. And all of us have dealt with peer pressure to varying degrees.

We have experienced the perceived need to please others so that they think highly of us, and so that their opinion of us can bolster our self-esteem. Some of us are always dealing with over-commitment.

We promise more than we can deliver because we fear disappointing people. All these are manifestations of what the Bible simply calls the fear of men.

We fear people because they can expose and humiliate us, because they can reject and ridicule us, and because they can attack and harm us. And according to God's assessment throughout the book of Jeremiah, the primary reason for the people's idolatry and unfaithfulness to God is the fact that they fear men or fear the idols, but the fear of God is not in them, says in Jeremiah 2.19, 3.8, 5.22, and so on.

[1 : 32] At the end of even chapter 36 from last week, we saw the height of Judah's disobedience and defiance that affected even their king, Jehoiakim. And after the judgments of God that were written on the scroll of Jeremiah was read out loud, Jehoiakim the king cut up the scroll with a knife and burned it in the fire pot section by section.

And he said in chapter 36, verse 24, Neither the king nor any of his servants who heard all these words was afraid, nor did they tear their garments. That's the problem.

They should have feared. They should have had the fear of God instilled in them. They should have trembled at the announcement of God's judgment, but they did not. In this passage, we see Zedekiah, another king, who is controlled by this fear of man.

And he is contrasted in turn with two other men who are controlled instead by the fear of God, Jeremiah and Abed-Melech. And the contrasting outcomes for these men after the Jerusalem, after the fall of Jerusalem teaches us the main point of this passage, is that those who fear the Lord rather than men will be vindicated by God's judgment.

Those who fear the Lord rather than men will be vindicated by God's judgment. So in a few strokes, verses 1 to 5 of chapter 37, paint a fairly comprehensive picture of the historical context of the events.

[2 : 58] So verse 1 tells us, read with me, that Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, whom Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, made king in the land of Judah, reigned instead of Coniah, the son of Jehoiakim.

So during the first Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, King Jehoiakim died, and his son Coniah, also known as Jeconiah, took over and reigned as king of Judah, but only for three months. Because Babylon defeated Judah, and Nebuchadnezzar sent Coniah into exile, and put Zedekiah, his uncle, on the throne to rule Judah under his supervision.

So understandably, Zedekiah was not a popular king among the people of Judah. Even though he was from the royal line, he was seen as an appointee of a foreign intruder. And then verse 2 tells us that neither he nor his servants, neither he nor his servants, nor the people of the land, listened to the words of the Lord that he spoke through Jeremiah the prophet.

From top to bottom, the entire nation of Judah was disobedient to God and spurned the prophecies. But despite their disobedience, Zedekiah and his servants still shamelessly sought out Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Please pray for us to the Lord our God.

Even though they refused to worship and serve God, even though they were going after other idols and praying to them also, when faced with a crisis, they still wanted God to come to their aid.

[4 : 18] And so verse 4, it says, Now Jeremiah was still going in and out among the people, for he had not yet been put in prison. So we know that Jeremiah was banned from visiting the temple precincts during Jehoiakim's reign.

It seems that after Jehoiakim died, he was not free to roam again, at least until he became imprisoned, as we'll see. And then verse 5 tells us an important contextual information.

It says, The army of Pharaoh had come out of Egypt, and when the Chaldeans who were besieging Jerusalem heard news about them, they withdrew from Jerusalem. So after Zedekiah, even though he was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar, he failed to pay tribute to Babylon.

And because of that, Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem again, about 10 years after the first invasion. And this siege upon Jerusalem was temporarily lifted when Egypt's, Judah's ally, came to attack the Babylonian army.

And so this is taking place during that brief reprieve. And during that time, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet. Read verses 7 to 10 with me. This is what the Lord said to him. Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Thus shall you say to the king of Judah who sent you to me to inquire of me, Behold, Pharaoh's army that came to help you is about to return to Egypt to its own land.

[5 : 34] And the Chaldeans shall come back and fight against the city. They shall capture it and burn it with fire. Thus says the Lord, Do not deceive yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans will surely go away from us, for they will not go away.

For even if you should defeat the whole army of Chaldeans who are fighting against you, and there remained of them only wounded men, every man in his tent, they would rise up and burn the city with fire.

So that's a hyperbole. An army of wounded Babylonians could not defeat Judah and destroy Jerusalem. But Jeremiah is using rhetorical exaggeration to convey the inevitability of the destruction of Jerusalem.

Even if only wounded men, only all the men of Babylon were wounded, and they were fighting against you, you would still be defeated, and Jerusalem will be set on fire.

The people of Judah were starting to get their hopes up because the Babylonians had withdrawn to ward off the Egyptians, but their hopes are all dashed by Jeremiah. He's devastating their morale.

[6 : 36] And you could see, after you hear what kind of message Jeremiah was bringing to the people, why people were up in arms and opposing Jeremiah and seeing him as a traitor and a threat.

Now, when the Chaldean army had withdrawn from Jerusalem at the approach of Pharaoh's army, Jeremiah set out from Jerusalem to go to the land of Benjamin to receive his portion there among the people.

So, yeah, this is kind of good here.

Yeah, try that. Huh. Excuse me, again. What was that?

So, verses 11 to 15. So, when, so Jeremiah, we don't know. I feel like I can't move. Maybe the connection's not secure.

[7 : 45] So, when, when the Chaldean army had withdrawn from Jerusalem at the approach of Pharaoh's army, Jeremiah went to Benjamin to receive his portion among the people. We don't know what's going on exactly there. It could be that a relative of his from the land of Benjamin has died and he needs to go and redeem the land.

It could be related to what we saw earlier in chapter 32, where his cousin, Hanamel, comes to settle an account about the land, right? So, it could be that that's what he was trying to do, but he couldn't accomplish that at this time because when he's about to do his, run his errand, it says in verses 13 to 15, when he was at the Benjamin gate, a century there named Ereja, the son of Shalameiah, son of Hananiah, sees Jeremiah the prophet saying, you are deserting to the Chaldeans.

And Jeremiah said, it is a lie. I am not deserting to the Chaldeans. But Ereja would not listen to him and sees Jeremiah and brought him to the officials. And then the officials were enraged at Jeremiah and they beat him and imprisoned him in the house of Jonathan, the secretary, for it had been made a prison.

An officer of the guard falsely accuses Jeremiah of deserting to the Babylonians and has them arrested. But Jeremiah had previously urged the people of Judah to desert to the Babylonians,

prophesying that only those who do that will be spared and will be able to stay in the land. So Ereja's accusation is not totally unfounded. But he's still wrong about Jeremiah because he wasn't planning on deserting himself. He believed that he needed to stay to proclaim God's word and warn God's people.

[9:16] So verse 7 tells us that after Jeremiah had spent many days in the dungeon cells, King Zedekiah sent for him and received him. And the king questioned him secretly in his house and said, Is there any word from the Lord?

Jeremiah said, There is. And he said, You shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon. The fact that Zedekiah questioned Jeremiah secretly in the privacy of his own house reveals something of Zedekiah's character.

Even though he was the king, he feared the state officials who despised Jeremiah, so he consulted Jeremiah secretly. Jeremiah, on the other hand, is a study in contrast, isn't he?

Even after he has spent many days in the dungeon cells, where, according to verse 20, he thought he would die because of the poor conditions, he is resolute in his proclamation of God's word. Changing his tune and prophesying some more positive things about Judah and the king would likely have drastically improved the state officials' treatment of him. But Jeremiah only knows one message because it's the only one God had told him to preach.

[10:23] He says to Zedekiah, You shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon. But Jeremiah is also shrewd, and he takes advantage of his audience with the king and makes a request in verses 18 to 20.

What wrong have I done to you or your servants or this people that you have put me in prison? Where are your prophets who prophesied to you, saying the king of Babylon will not come against you and against this land?

Not here, please, O my lord the king. Let my humble plea come before you and do not send me back to the house of Jonathan the secretary, lest I die there. The false prophets who had falsely prophesied peace certainly didn't have the best interest of Judah in mind.

But they, however, even though it was clearly proven that they were wrong and they were prophesying falsely, they were roaming freely, yet Jeremiah, the only prophet who prophesied truly, is in prison.

And so he's asking, What gives? What have I done? What have I done to deserve this? And he doesn't care what he said. He just doesn't want to go back to the dungeon cells at the house of Jonathan the secretary.

[11:31] The conditions must have been quite bad there. And at this point, Zedekiah really should have freed Jeremiah. He's been confronted by the prophet of the Lord. He knows that he's in the wrong to have him in prison.

But he doesn't quite have the courage to do that. He can't risk the outrage of the state officials who imprisoned Jeremiah in the first place. So Zedekiah commits Jeremiah to the court of the guard. So he's still under house arrest, but under more favorable circumstances. Now, if Jeremiah were trying to look out for himself only, he would have stayed low, kept a low profile, kept quiet in the court of the guard.

But we find out in chapter 38 that this was not what Jeremiah was doing. Turn to chapter 38, verses 1 to 3 with me. It says, Now, Shephethiah, the son of Matan, Gedaliah, the son of Pashor, Juchal, the son of Shalamiah, and Pashor, the son of Malchiah, heard the words that Jeremiah was saying to all the people.

Thus says the Lord, He who stays in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. But he who goes out to the Chaldeans shall live. He shall have his life as a prize of war and live.

[12:40] Thus says the Lord, This city shall surely be given into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon and be taken. He had been arrested earlier under the pretext that he was deserting to the Babylonians.

And here's Jeremiah telling the people of Judah to desert to the Babylonians. Jeremiah was clearly not deterred by the persecution he experienced. And this is a fulfillment of what God had promised him when he first called him and commissioned him for this task in chapter 1.

In chapter 1, verses 7 to 8, God said to him, Do not say, I am only a youth. For to all to whom I send you, you shall go. And whatever I command you, you shall speak.

Do not be afraid of them. For I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord. We see this command being fulfilled throughout the book of Jeremiah.

And Jeremiah overcomes his fear of men to declare the word of the Lord, trusting that God will be with him to deliver him. And the result of Jeremiah's preaching is even worse now than what we saw in chapter 37.

[13:49] Read verses 46 with me. Then the official said to the king, Let this man be put to death, for he is weakening the hands of the soldiers who are left in this city and the hands of all the people by speaking such words to them.

For this man is not seeking the welfare of this people but their harm. King Zedekiah said, Behold, he is in your hands for the king can do nothing against you.

So they took Jeremiah and cast him into the cistern of Malachiah, the king's son, which was in the court of the guard, letting Jeremiah down by ropes. And there was no water in the cistern but only mud and Jeremiah sank in the mud.

This time, instead of merely seeking Jeremiah's imprisonment, the state officials are seeking his death. And King Zedekiah appears to be a king in name only, doesn't he?

He lacks the courage and the power to oppose the officials so he simply concedes, Behold, he is in your hands for the king can do nothing against you.

[14:53] Not wanting innocent blood in his own hands, he doesn't command the execution of Jeremiah himself. He simply defers to his officials who want to kill him. And the officials want to kill Jeremiah but they probably don't want innocent blood on their own hands either.

They don't want to get their own hands dirty so they decide instead to just dump him into a cistern at the court of the guard. There was no water in the cistern at the time but only mud and Jeremiah sank in the mud which seems even worse than the dungeon cells that he was in before.

So it's like what Joseph's brothers did in Genesis, right? They dump him into a pit and expect him to die there and that's what the state officials did to Jeremiah.

And God delivered Jeremiah in the past and God will deliver him again and this time it's through an Ethiopian eunuch named Ebedmelech. Eunuchs were royal officials in the name Ebedmelech literally means slave of the king.

Read verses 7 to 13 with me. When Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, a eunuch who was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah into the cistern, the king was sitting in the Benjamin gate.

[15:58] Ebedmelech went from the king's house and said to the king, My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they did to Jeremiah the prophet by casting him into the cistern and he will die there of hunger for there is no bread in the city.

Then the king commanded Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, take 30 men with you from here and lift Jeremiah the prophet out of cistern before he dies. So Ebedmelech took the men with him and went to the house of the king to a wardrobe in the storehouse and took from their old rags and worn out clothes which he let down to Jeremiah in the cistern by ropes.

Then Ebedmelech the Ethiopian said to Jeremiah, Put the rags and clothes between your armpits and the ropes. Jeremiah did so. Then they drew Jeremiah up with ropes and lifted him out of the cistern and Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard.

King Zedekiah was unwilling to confront the officials himself because he feared them but his servant Ebedmelech calls them out and says, These men have done evil in all that they did to Jeremiah the prophet.

And not only is Ebedmelech more courageous than Zedekiah, he's also resourceful. He takes all dirty laundry from the storehouse and uses them to pad Jeremiah so that he can come up without pain on the ropes out of the cistern.

[17:14] So the slave of the king accomplishes here what the king himself was powerless to do. After this, Zedekiah conducts one last interview with Jeremiah.

It almost seems like this is the second interview that he has with Jeremiah. It almost seems like he feels as though he has done Jeremiah a favor and perhaps he hopes that Jeremiah will give him some more favorable word as if the word of God can be changed.

So he summons Jeremiah and says, I will ask you a question, hide nothing from me. But Jeremiah already knows Zedekiah's character. He knows that he will not obey the word of the Lord. So he responds in verse 15, If I tell you, will you not surely put me to death?

You had just commanded these officials to put me into the cistern to die. Will you not put me to death if I told you the truth? And he said, If I give you counsel, you will not listen to me. But Zedekiah, once again, afraid of the officials who might overhear him, he swears secretly to Jeremiah, As the Lord lives who made our souls, I will not put you to death or deliver you into the hand of these men who seek your life.

Can't make that promise in public, does it secretly to Jeremiah. And upon Zedekiah's insistence, Jeremiah does prophesy again in verses 17 to 18, but the message hasn't changed.

[18:37] Thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel, If you will surrender to the officials of the king of Babylon, then your life shall be spared and this city shall not be burned with fire and you and your house shall live.

But if you do not surrender to the officials of the king of Babylon, then this city shall be given into the hand of the Chaldeans and they shall burn it with fire and you shall not escape from their hand. Zedekiah's response is predictable.

He says in verse 19, I am afraid of the Judeans who have deserted to the Chaldeans lest I be handed over to them and they deal cruelly with me.

So not only is Zedekiah afraid of his state officials, he is also afraid of the civilians who have already deserted to Babylon. He fears that if he also hands himself over to Babylon, his former subjects who have deserted to Babylon will now mistreat him.

And for that reason, even though he knew what was the right thing to do, even though he knew what the Lord required of him, he fails to act. And Jeremiah assures him, verse 20, you shall not be given to them.

[19:49] Obey now the voice of the Lord in what I say to you and he shall be well with you and your life shall be spared. But he also warns him sternly in verse 21 to 23, but if you refuse to surrender, this is the vision which the Lord has shown to me.

Behold, all the women left in the house of the king of Judah were being led out to the officials of the king of Babylon and were saying, your trusted friends have deceived you and prevailed against you. Now that your feet are sunk in the mud, they turn away from you. All your wives and your sons shall be led out to the Chaldeans and you yourself shall not escape from their hand but shall be seized by the king of Babylon and the city shall be burned with fire.

As a warning to Zedekiah, Jeremiah shares a vision that the Lord has shown him of what would happen if Zedekiah refused to surrender to Nebuchadnezzar and all the women and children of the king will be led out as prisoners of war to the officials of the king of Babylon.

Lord knows what they would do and then they would say of Zedekiah, your trusted friends have deceived you and prevailed against you. Now that your feet are sunk in the mud, they turn away from you.

[21:00] Remember earlier in chapter 38 verse 5 when the officials suggested first putting Jeremiah to death to Zedekiah, Zedekiah responded, Behold, he is in your hands for the king can do nothing against you.

A more literal translation of that would be the king cannot prevail against you at all. So the word prevail that's used there in chapter 38 is the same word that's used here.

Your trusted friends have deceived you and prevailed against you. So these trusted friends is a reference to the officials. He thought that he could entrust himself to them.

He thought that if he had their favor and they were on their side he would be okay. He would be better. He would be better off in their hands than in the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. But instead he would be deceived by them. They would prevail against him.

And before it was Jeremiah's feet that were literally sinking in the mud. Now metaphorically it's Zedekiah's feet that would be sinking in the mud. It's a picture of inescapable suffering.

[22:01] So Jeremiah's vision predicts that essentially Zedekiah will switch places with Jeremiah. Zedekiah who for the fear of the officials did not save Jeremiah from sinking in the mud will himself be betrayed by the very same officials and find himself sinking in the mud.

And you think that Zedekiah would respond to such a stark alarming vision but he is still a man governed by the fear of men. He says to Jeremiah in verses 24 to 26 Let no one know of these words and you shall not die.

If the officials hear that I've spoken with you and come to you and say to you tell us what you said to the king and what the king said to you hide nothing from us and we will not put you to death then

you shall say to them I made a humble plea to the king that he would not send me back to the house of Jonathan to die there.

Rather than obeying God's word Zedekiah is concerned with hiding God's words he doesn't want the officials to find out that he is a closet Jeremiah sympathizer that is secretly consulting him he doesn't want the officials to find out that Jeremiah told him to surrender to Babylon and in order to get the sniffing officials off his trail Zedekiah orders Jeremiah to tell them that he was pleading with the king not to send them back to the jail at the house of Jonathan and that's an easy excuse to come up with because that's a conversation that they have already had earlier during Jeremiah's first imprisonment.

The officials do interrogate Jeremiah but they are satisfied with Jeremiah's answer because the conversation had not been overheard and Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard until the day that Jerusalem was taken.

[23 : 40] That brings us to chapter 39 where every step every word of the Lord is step by step fulfilled from chapters 37 to 38.

In chapter 37 verses 1 to 10 we were told that Babylonians had withdrawn from Jerusalem but that they would return and take Jerusalem. That prophecy is fulfilled in chapter 39 verses 1 to 2 where it says that they did return in camp against Jerusalem and in the ninth day of the month a breach was made in the city in the ninth day of the fourth month.

In chapter 37 11 to 21 Jeremiah prophesied that Zedekiah will be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon and in chapter 39 verses 4 to 10 though he attempts to flee Zedekiah is captured and brought to Nebuchadnezzar who then passes sentence on him.

Look at Nebuchadnezzar's sentence in verses 6 to 8. The king of Babylon slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah and Riblah before his eyes and the king of Babylon slaughtered all the nobles of Judah. He put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him in chains to take him to Babylon. The Chaldeans burned the king's house and the house of the people and broke down the walls of Jerusalem.

[24 : 55] Notice the cruelty with which Babylon punishes his rebellious subject Zedekiah. He slaughters all of his sons before Zedekiah's very eyes and then gouges out the eyes of Zedekiah so that the last image he ever sees is seared indelibly into his memory of his sons being slaughtered.

Zedekiah feared his own officials and thought that he would be better off by currying favor with them but the word of the Lord proves true and Zedekiah is far worse off for his disobedience because instead of fearing God he chose to fear men.

and then in chapters 38 verses 1 to 28 we saw Jeremiah put on trial by the officials of Judah and Zedekiah was powerless to stop them from harming Jeremiah and after doing his stints in the dungeon cells and the cistern Jeremiah was left in the court of the guards now in chapter 39 11 to 14 exact opposite of that happens by the Babylonian officials so these Jerusalem officials tried to put him to death and imprison them the Babylonian officials put him to trial put Jeremiah to trial in chapter 39 11 to 14 but unlike Zedekiah who is powerless to protect Jeremiah from his own officials Nebuchadnezzar orders his officials to do Jeremiah no harm Nebuchadnezzar on the other hand a pagan king has the authority over his subjects to protect Jeremiah and instead of keeping Jeremiah under custody at the court of the guards Jeremiah is taken from the court of the guards and free to live among the people right this narrative of

Nebuchadnezzar and his officials treatment of Jeremiah is intentionally contrasted with the way Zedekiah and his Judean officials treated Jeremiah and it serves to condemn Zedekiah and the Judean officials that they did not act as they should have with regard to Jeremiah God's prophet but those who fear the Lord rather than men are vindicated by God's judgment so Jeremiah is delivered and we find out that Abedmelech the Ethiopian eunuch who rescued Jeremiah from the cistern too will be delivered according to verses 16 to 18 he will not die he will be spared there were times of course throughout Jeremiah's ministry when the word of the Lord that Jeremiah preached seemed very far-fetched the invasion from the north will the Babylonians really come will they really come back after facing the Egyptians the word of the Lord in Jeremiah's day was never popular or well received and obeying the word of the Lord came at great personal cost and sacrifice loss of reputation ridicule but this passage teaches us that those who fear the

Lord rather than men will be vindicated by God's judgment and today as it was in Jeremiah's day the word of the Lord is despised and is rejected in many parts of this world if you're not yet a follower of Jesus Christ then let me ask you whose side are you on whom do you stand for whose word will you believe because the cultural trends and the wind of history the spirit of the time they

might all be against God's word but those who side with God will find themselves ultimately on the right side of history because those who fear the Lord rather than men will be vindicated by God's judgment and the judgment that Judah faced points to the final judgment that we will all face as humanity after our death and God's verdict will then decide our eternal fates have you aligned yourself with God's purposes and priorities for those of you already followers of Christ in what ways is the fear of man controlling you and making you unfaithful to God do you fear people's judgment and hesitate to share the good news of

[28 : 59] Jesus Christ with them when God's truth is maligned in the classroom do you refuse to speak up out of fear at a work social do you accept the third or fourth drink that you should have turned down out of fear of what your peers might think when a glaring sin in a brother or sister must be addressed do you ignore it out of fear of rejection because you fear them more than you love them because you fear their verdict more than God's verdict when the path of obedience is clear do you fail to obey because you fear the personal consequences as Zedekiah did because you're not willing to give up something your pride your preference because you trust the words of man more than the word of God the problem of course is that we've all done that none of us fear

God perfectly and all of us fear people though the way that manifests itself might look different for all of us what then will be the consequences what will be our final verdict when God's judgment comes Romans 6:23 teaches us that the wages of sin is death that's what we deserve physical death a permanent one from which there is no return and spiritual death an eternal separation from God the judgment of the Judeans in this passage point to God's ultimate judgment and this passage should make us wonder who then can deliver us Jeremiah could not deliver his people the people of Judah he could not pay the penalty of death on behalf of the people of Judah notice that there's a constant threat of death looming over Jeremiah in chapter 38:4 the Judean officials say to Zedekiah let Jeremiah be put to death for he is weakening the hands of the soldiers who are left in this city and in chapter 38:15 to 16

Jeremiah says to Zedekiah if I tell you will you not surely put me to death then again chapter 38 verse 25 Zedekiah anticipates what the officials will say hide nothing from us and we will not put you to death throughout these few chapters Jeremiah has constantly been under the threat of death but he is delivered from each threat because of what God had promised to do for his servant though Jeremiah is obedient to God and spared on that merit he cannot save anyone else the rest of Judah still falls under judgment that means guilty sinners like us we need another savior we need a better Jeremiah and God did send us such a savior in Jesus Christ and there are intriguing parallels between Jeremiah's trial before Zedekiah in chapter 38 and that of Jesus trial before Pilate in the gospels just as Jeremiah was brought to trial by the leaders of his nation who are seeking his death Jesus too is brought to trial by the leaders of his own nation and even though he knew that Jeremiah was innocent fearing the backlash from the people Zedekiah said behold he is in your hands for the king can do nothing against you and likewise Pilate though he found Jesus to be guiltless in his own words brought him out to the people after flogging him and he said behold the man John 19:5-6 and according to Mark 15:15 he wishing to satisfy the crowd he delivered Jesus over to their will this was all according to God's sovereign salvation plan the blameless son of God was declared guilty so that the sinful children of man might be declared righteous Jeremiah could not and did not die to save us but Jesus is the new and better

Jeremiah who was crucified on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins and he was raised from the dead for our vindication and if you would only confess your sins acknowledge that you are a sinner who cannot save yourself and profess Jesus Christ believe that he is the son of God who died and rose again to save you that instead of the defeat and death of sin you can partake in the victory and eternal life of Jesus Christ it is only when we believe in this good news of Jesus Christ that we can be transformed into people who fear the Lord rather than fear men and by the way by fear of God I'm not trying to teach you to be terrified of God the Bible used the word fear in relation to God in two different senses you can see that in Exodus 20:20 says

[34 : 23] God says to them after he appears to his people do not fear well this is Moses telling them after God's appeared do not fear for God has come to test you that the fear of him may be before you that you may not sin it sounds contradictory doesn't it don't fear that God's here because God has come to instill fear in you it's because the word has two different senses it's being used in different ways in each context the first fear that God's people were not to feel is the terror of God feeling threatened by God's judgment that leads us to hide from him that's the first kind of fear the

second fear that God's people are to have is the reverential awe that we've been singing about this morning that awe the fear of God that leads to humble submission and obedience when we see God's unwavering commitment to his holiness and justice displayed in all their power and glory on the cross when we see Jesus crushed under the weight of our own sins then we see his holiness and justice displayed and when we see God's unwavering commitment to his people to show grace and mercy to them when we see Jesus

Christ dying on the cross for us in our place that's when we are filled with the fear of God and the love for God it makes all other fears and all other loves insignificant by comparison that's what makes us revere him adore him worship him love and serve him so that God and not ourselves and not other people become the weighted center of our life and existence please close your eyes with me and reflect on this truth for a few moments look upon the cross may the spirit of God fill your heart with fear of God and if you've reflected for some time we'll respond by praying together