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## The Call to Fear God & to Fellowship with the Saints (Mal 3:16)

*(This message was shared at the Pastoral Fraternal on 3 Nov 2020)*

We often neglect the minor prophets in our study of the word of God. Although Malachi was the last prophet of the Old Testament at around the time of 430 BC, he was certainly not the least important. He has practical admonition and instructions for the post-modern church. The relevant call to tithing is normally taken from the book of Malachi, but there is another equally important subject in this book; it is the summon to fear God and to fellowship with the saints. We are familiar with John 3:16 but let us also acquaint ourselves with Malachi 3:16. Amongst all the lifeless formalism and apostasy of Malachi's day, there remained a faithful remnant. Three things were said about this group who feared God.



The first was that they **“spake often one to another.”** Literally, it means that the group who feared God made a constant habit of coming together and sharing together. There is a uniqueness about Christian fellowship that has its own inherent blessing and we impoverish ourselves if we stay away from beneficial Christian meetings with true believers. While there have been exceptions made during the lockdown or circuit breaker in the pandemic, believers must desire to come back to the house of God whenever there is the opportunity to do so. The

Session of Sovereign Hope BPC prayed and decided that we would all be back together in the house of God for corporate sabbath worship on 28 June 2020 when the authorities allowed us to do so. By the sovereign will of God, we have been worshipping together since with safety measures in place. We had good fellowship with Maurice and Sandra Roberts a few years ago in Inverness in their lovely home. The Highlanders in Scotland would often meet in a member's home for prayer and discussion over doctrinal issues from the Word of God, sharing, praying, interacting, admonishing, and edifying one another. This is laudable and worthy of our emulation.



The second thing was that **they often prayed together as God hearkened or heard their intercession.** Those who fear God would often come together to pray and intercede for one another as in the church prayer meeting. It is consistent with our love for God that we also love to care and uphold one another before the throne of grace (Heb 4:16, 2 Cor 1:11).

The third thing we are told about this group is that they **“thought upon his name.”** “Quite literally it means to take inventory (or meditate and ponder upon) the name of Jehovah. They were taking an inventory of their wealth in the name of their God. The kings had gone, the priests were corrupt, and the prophets were silent, but they still had the name of God. To them, the name was Jehovah” (G Campbell Morgan, *Voices of Twelve Hebrew Prophets* [Baker, 1975], 158–159).

The **fear of the Lord** is mentioned at least 3 times in the book of Malachi alone (2:5; 3:16; 4:2). There is no grander theme here than to appreciate what the prophet had to reiterate to them so many times. Is it not uncommon to find people with irrational fears and morbid phobias of many things? Could the reason why we have so many phobias today be that we have not learnt to fear God? Fear God and we will be fearless for the work of God and we will fear less the things of this world that scare us. What then is the fear of God?



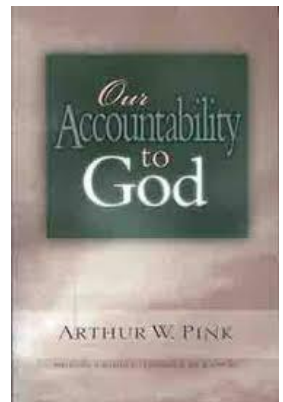
Let Joshua exhort us in Joshua 24:14, *“Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.”* Many would like to emphasize and amplify the love of God today. However, do not forget to balance it with the justice and the righteousness of God who will deal with evil and sinfulness justly. God will never condone evil or sin or else atonement would not be necessary. God is holy and just and He will deal with all false teachings, idolatry, infidelity to Him, lying, cheating, and other offences. This should create a fear in us for the holiness and righteousness of God. This fear will keep us away from sin. As Proverb 8:13 says, *“The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.”*

**Secondly, there must be a pervasive sense of the presence of God.** The presence of God has a purifying and edifying influence on us. The Psalmist in Psalm 139 reminds us that God is not only omniscient and omnipotent, but He is also omnipresent. He is everywhere. *“If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there”*



(v 8). This sense of the presence of God all the time and everywhere should build in us a right response to God and to sin. We would not do some things that we would like to do when we remember that God is with us. We will behave ourselves and keep away from all appearance of evil. The fear of God is to hate evil.

**Thirdly, we need a constant awareness of our accountability to God.** This is a neglected teaching today. We often forget that we are to be responsible and answerable to God one day. Look at Romans 14:12, *“So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”* In 2 Corinthians 5:10, we were told of the Judgment Seat of Christ, the *Bema* for the assessment of believers. We will all be judged by the Almighty Arbiter. Yes, we are saved by grace but we are judged by works. Are we conscious of the fact that we are accountable to God one day for all our actions, deeds, our daily walk with Him, and the way we deal with others and our lives? There should be a healthy fear of



God for this is what the preacher Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 12:13–14, *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”* We should fear God because everyone’s deeds will be revealed one day. This is a strong and basic reason to cultivate a fear for God.

What is the end result of a healthy fear for God? We will keep His commandments. This is very true if we love God and fear Him. We will obey God and abide by what He teaches in His Word. This is the positive benefit or effect of the fear of God in our lives. Check and examine ourselves today (2 Cor 13:5). Can we say that we have a fear of God and a fear for God? Think of the three points mentioned and really digest them so as to cultivate them in our daily lives.



The fear of God has also to do with the fellowship of the saints. Do we relish and cherish Christian fellowship and the joy of sharing, praying, encouraging and comforting one another in the Lord? As a young Christian in school, I have always looked forward to sabbath worship every Sunday. Today, sad to say, TV programs, videos, music, handphones, Netflix, Youtube, and computer games have substituted fellowship for some Christians. We would rather sit in front of the TV or the computer for a few hours than to meet up with God in prayer or with the brethren. We have forfeited ourselves of the privilege and joy of Christian fellowship and worship of God.

It is a strange thing when believers do not delight to come together regularly to exhort, edify, admonish, and encourage one another. It is a strange demeanour incompatible with status. We need to learn to consider one another and to provoke one another unto love and good works (Heb 10:24–25). We should be encouraged by the sheer energy and godly zeal of the reformers in their love for God and the truth in defending it. The indefatigable spirit of John Calvin and others in preaching, teaching, and writing of edifying books have been a great blessing to many people.

Those who fear the Lord also thought upon His name. What saturates our mind? What consumes our energy and time? Is it money, work, leisure, pets, plants, pastimes, or our children? The frenzy of the World Cup in France caused a drastic loss of many man-hours world-wide. Even Presidents and Congressmen postponed national business meetings to watch their country played against another in football games as was reported in the news. Christians are not spared of this addiction. We have to be vigilant and to watch against excesses in our lives. If there is one addiction that is acceptable to God, it is the addiction to the ministry of saints (1 Cor 16:15). When we are so enthralled and zealous about blessing and edifying God's people and to pray and seek God together in corporate intercession, the Lord will hear and will definitely bless and prosper our time together.



Dinner Fellowship at Pastor's home.

John Calvin, the 16th century Reformer, said that the first elementary principle in Christian piety is the fear of God. Spurgeon placed a very high value on reverence and awe for God. When the fear of God rules our hearts, there will be conscientious care to keep His Word and to practice it. The problem with us is, as said in Romans 3:18, "*There is no fear of God before their eyes.*" Learn to submit one to another in the fear of God. When we are filled with the Spirit as mentioned in Ephesians 5:21, we fear God and we have fewer interpersonal problems.

### Conclusion

Finally, remember Hebrews 12:28. This is the kind of attitude with which we should serve God. "*Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.*" Why? Because our God is a consuming fire (v 29). Know that and live with that knowledge always. The Psalmist rejoiced with trembling and served the Lord with fear (Ps 2:11). This is a healthy mix of both joy and fear of God in the service of the God most High. There is no fear of God for those who laugh uncontrollably in senseless delirium and reckless behaviour, in so-called worship of a thrice holy God, without any regard for His majesty and holiness. Remember all these for they are vital in the practice of true religion.

May the Lord enable each one of us to grow and cultivate a holy fear and reverence for the living and true God, as well as have a desire for fellowship among the saints as a church, even in the midst of a global unprecedented health crisis (with responsible safety precautions and social distancing as required).

*Jack Sin*



## Memory Verse

*Isaiah 40:31* But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

## Announcements

1. Welcome to our Worship Service! For our visitors, do leave us your contact numbers in our guest book before you leave.
2. Rev Jack Sin speaks today on “**The Almighty Comforter for Souls & Patience**” (Isa 40: 1-14, 28-31), the Oct to Dec series on “*Prophetic & Practical Insights from Isaiah for Today*”.
3. Rev Jack Sin speaks next Sunday on “**Fighting Phobia with Courage in God**” (Isa 41: 1-14).
4. Sunday School classes continues in church after the worship service:
  - Catechism Class – Pastor Jack
  - “Rules for Walking in Fellowship by John Owen” – Dn Choo Siang
  - Studies in Leviticus – Dr Kwong Leen
5. Chinese Fellowship meets on Sunday night at 7pm via Zoom.
6. Do send your prayer items to Pastor and join us for Church Prayer Meeting on Wed at 8pm via Zoom. Rev Dr George Skariah, Covenant BP Church of India, Bangalore, will be sharing the exhortation and his ministry on this Wed 18 Nov.
7. The Pandemic book can be purchased through Dn Yue Kay (Hp: +65 97450311) or via email at sovereignhopebpc@gmail.com.
8. Those who would like to help with the cleaning or safe management procedures of the church, please see Dn Yue Kay.
9. Those who have a testimony to share may submit to Pastor for the weekly.
10. Pastor is still available for counselling via WhatsApp, Email or Mobile.
11. Love gifts, Offering and Tithes to the Lord can be given in the following ways:
  - **Cheque** payable to **Sovereign Hope Bible Presbyterian Church** and mail to church address. (Kindly write the full name of the church as indicated.)
  - **Fund transfer** to Church **UOB** Account **392-308-825-1**
  - **PayNow** to Church UEN: **T19SS0116FSOV**