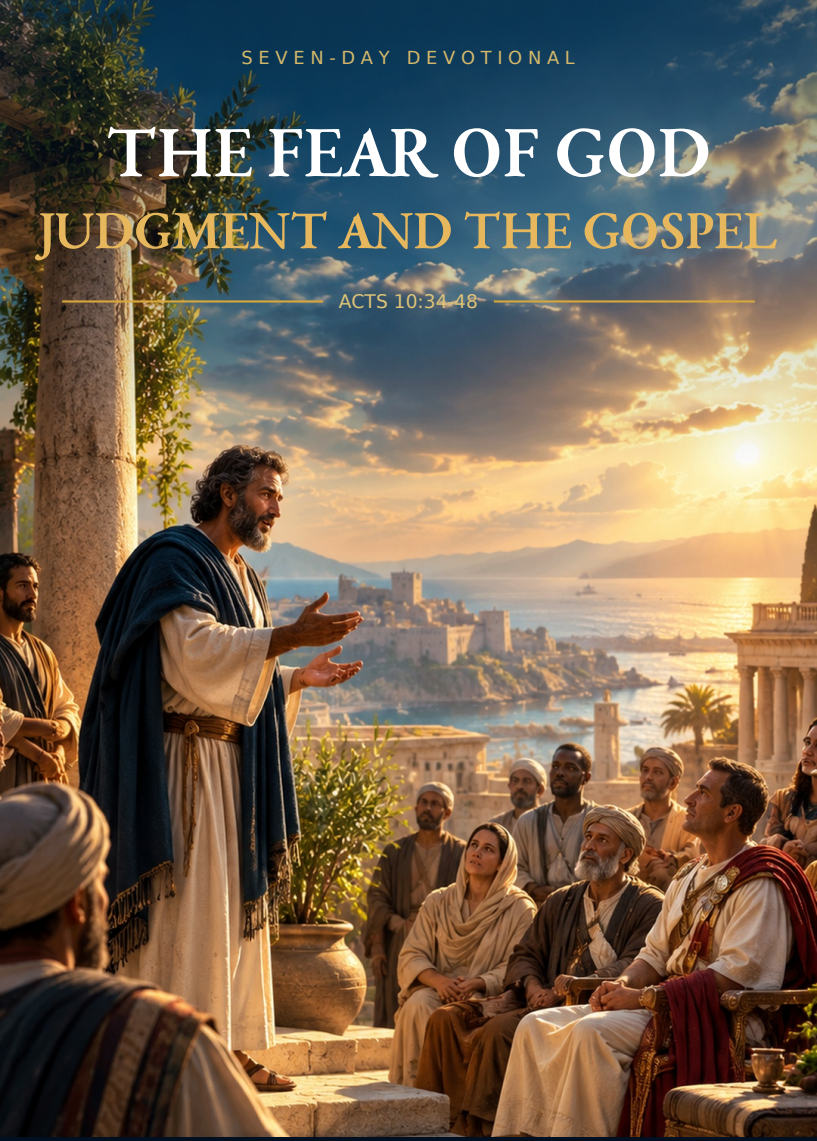
SEVEN-DAY DEVOTIONAL

THE FEAR OF GOD
JUDGMENT AND THE GOSPEL

ACTS 10:34-48



Werner Steyn

The Bridge Church

27 September 2026

ABOUT THIS WEEK

THE SERMON AND OUR SEVEN-DAY JOURNEY

Acts 10:34-48; Proverbs 9:10; Hebrews 9:27

Werner continued Peter's sermon in Cornelius's house from Acts 10:34-48. Peter is no longer speaking to a familiar Jewish audience, and his message places three weighty truths together: the fear of God, the judgment of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Werner's concern was not to make difficult doctrines dramatic, nor to avoid them because they are uncomfortable, but to return to what Scripture actually says.

The sermon first explored the fear of the Lord as part of knowing who God is. Werner moved from the danger of having no fear of God, through the carefulness appropriate before holiness and authority, toward a mature fear shaped by love for a precious relationship. He then turned to judgment: Jesus is appointed to judge the living and the dead, and the Judge of all the earth will do what is right.

Only against that background does the gospel sound like the good news Peter proclaimed. Jesus lived, died in our place, was raised from the dead, is Lord of all and offers forgiveness to everyone who believes. Werner ended with a call to true faith, readiness to speak the gospel and a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit.

Days 1-6 follow that sermon in order. Sunday gathers the whole journey without adding a new message. Read the Scripture slowly, work through the three questions, and let the prayer and carry-thought shape your response.

How will knowing the Holy One change the way I fear Him, trust the gospel and speak about Jesus?

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MONDAY
DAY
1

The Message Peter Opened His Mouth to Speak

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERMON

Werner picked up where last week ended: Peter had been brought from Joppa into Cornelius's Gentile home, and God had already been changing Peter's understanding of who the gospel is for. Peter now opens his mouth and speaks about Jesus to people outside his familiar world.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Acts 10:34 (NIV)**
> *34 Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Werner began with Peter standing in a place that would once have felt uncomfortable. He was in the home of Cornelius, speaking to Gentiles after God had patiently dismantled the idea that the good news belonged only to one group. Peter adjusted the way he spoke because his listeners did not share the same background in the Hebrew Scriptures. He began with what they already knew about Jesus - His public life, His works, His death and the reports of His resurrection. Werner noted that these events had not happened in a corner; Peter could appeal to realities his hearers had already heard discussed.

[1]That matters because Peter did not keep silent while waiting for a more convenient audience. He opened his mouth. Werner drew attention to that simple action. God had done the arranging, but Peter still had to speak. The gospel is for anyone who will hear, and God has chosen ordinary believers to carry it into real conversations with real people.

Werner then named three themes that rise directly from Peter's sermon: the fear of God, the judgment of God and the gospel itself. Two of them are difficult. They have sometimes been overplayed until they become distorted, or underplayed until they almost disappear. Werner's appeal was not to avoid hard subjects, but to ask what Scripture actually says and to seek their correct use.

That requires humility. Werner told us not merely to believe him, but to be like the Bereans and search the Scriptures. A devotional can help us listen, but it must never replace the Word. The invitation this week is to allow God to correct our categories, just as He corrected Peter's.

We therefore begin by asking whether our picture of God is large enough to hold together holiness, judgment, grace, forgiveness and love. Peter's message will not let us choose only the parts that feel comfortable. It leads us toward a fuller knowledge of the Holy One - and toward the good news that becomes truly good when we understand what Jesus has done.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REFLECT AND REMEMBER

1	Where might I be tempted to stay silent when God has given me an opportunity to speak about Jesus?
2	What difficult truth about God am I tempted to avoid instead of searching the Scriptures carefully?
3	What category in my thinking might God need to rearrange as I follow Peter's sermon this week?

PRAYER

Father, open my heart to Your Word. Give me humility to search the Scriptures, courage to face difficult truth and readiness to open my mouth when You give me an opportunity to speak about Jesus. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

I will let Scripture shape my view of God, and I will be ready to open my mouth.

TUESDAY
DAY
2

The Fear of the Lord - Knowing Who He Is

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday we stood with Peter in Cornelius's home and saw that the gospel is for anyone who will hear. Werner introduced the three themes that shape the week: the fear of God, the judgment of God and the gospel - and urged us to search Scripture rather than avoid difficult truth.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Proverbs 9:10 (NIV)**
> *10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Werner did not allow the phrase "fear of the Lord" to be reduced to a neat definition and then filed away. He pointed out how often Scripture returns to it and how many things are associated with it: wisdom, life, obedience, worship, safety, strength, mercy, friendship with God, walking in truth and being kept from sin. The fear of God is not presented as a spiritual inconvenience. There is safety in it. Werner noted that the theme runs through Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, with many references even in the New Testament, so it deserves more than a quick label such as "reverent awe."

[1]Proverbs 9:10 gives Werner a key: the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the parallel line speaks of knowledge of the Holy One. Fear grows out of knowing who God is. If our understanding of Him is small, casual or over-familiar, our response will also be small. If we begin to see His holiness, power and authority, carelessness no longer makes sense.

Werner used everyday pictures. Gas and electricity have protocols because the power involved is real. A lion may allow you close, but you do not treat it as harmless. Even meeting an earthly king carries an expected way of approaching. These pictures are limited, but they make the point: we do not define reality by how relaxed we feel about it.

[2]Werner then made a striking observation about grace. If we have not walked perfectly before God and are still standing, that does not mean His holiness is unimportant. It means we have received mercy. Grace is not permission to become careless; it is reason to recognise how patient God has been with us. [3]The natural response to seeing who He is is repentance. Werner described the way our best works and most impressive thoughts look different beside the purity of God. Fear begins to put us in the right place: not pretending God is ordinary, but learning to walk before Him with reverence, gratitude and a growing knowledge of the Holy One.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REFLECT AND REMEMBER

1	How does Proverbs 9:10 connect the fear of the Lord with actually knowing who God is?
2	Where have I mistaken God's patience with me for permission to be careless?
3	What would reverent, grateful carefulness before God look like in one area of my life today?

PRAYER

Lord, give me a truer knowledge of who You are. Keep me from casual familiarity that forgets Your holiness, and let Your patience lead me to repentance, gratitude and wisdom. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

The fear of the Lord begins with knowing the Holy One.

WEDNESDAY
DAY
3

When Fear Becomes Precious

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday we saw that the fear of the Lord is connected to knowing who God is. Werner used the pictures of dangerous power, a lion and royal protocol to show why careless familiarity is unsafe, and he reminded us that God's patience with us is grace.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

1 John 4:18 (NIV)

18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Werner was careful to say that fear does not have to remain where it begins. Being afraid of punishment may be a safer starting point than having no fear of God at all, but it is not the destination. The fear of the Lord can mature as our relationship with Him becomes precious.

To explain that movement, Werner spoke about meeting his wife. At the beginning there was a fear of rejection: perhaps she would not want him, perhaps he was not good enough, perhaps his flaws would be seen. After many years of marriage, the fear is different. It is not mainly fear that she will reject him; it is carefulness with a relationship he deeply values. He does not want distance, unresolved tension or anything that damages what has become precious.

That picture helps us hear 1 John 4:18. Perfect love drives out the fear connected with punishment. Werner did not use that verse to erase the fear of God. He used it to describe a migration. Fear moves from simple dread toward a love-shaped carefulness: "I do not want to break this. I want to be close. I want this relationship restored when something has come between us."

[2]This gives new meaning to walking before God "in fear and trembling." Werner described a person who becomes careful because God Himself has become precious. Obedience is no longer only an attempt to avoid consequences. It begins to flow from love: I want to please Him; I do not want sin to create distance; I treasure nearness to Him.

[3]Werner's questions were direct: Do you love Him? Do you fear Him? Has this relationship become precious enough that you want to handle it carefully? Those questions do not ask us to manufacture emotion. They invite us to examine what our choices reveal about the value we place on fellowship with God. Mature fear is not cold distance from God; it is a holy carefulness born in love. When distance appears, love wants reconciliation rather than pretending nothing has happened. That desire for restored closeness is part of the carefulness Werner wanted us to recognise.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REFLECT AND REMEMBER

1	How is fear of punishment different from the carefulness Werner described in a precious relationship?
2	What choices in my life show whether closeness with God has become genuinely precious to me?
3	Where do I need reconciliation or renewed obedience because I do not want distance in my relationship with God?

PRAYER

Father, move my fear beyond punishment into a love that treasures closeness with You. Make me careful with what is precious, quick to repent and eager to please You. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

Holy fear becomes careful love when the relationship with God is precious.

THURSDAY
DAY
4

The Judge of All the Earth

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday Werner showed how fear can mature from dread of punishment into careful love for a precious relationship with God. Today Peter's sermon takes us to the difficult truth that makes that first kind of fear understandable: God's judgment is real.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Hebrews 9:27 (NIV)**
> *27 Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Werner said he had often read Peter's sermon without noticing one of its strongest statements: Jesus was appointed by God to judge the living and the dead. If we were editing the gospel for ourselves, we might choose love, grace, kindness or forgiveness before judgment. Peter does not. He includes judgment in the message he was commanded to preach.

¸Hebrews 9:27 makes the certainty plain: death is followed by judgment. Werner pressed the weight of that truth personally. We will give account. Our words matter. Our actions matter. Even motives hidden from other people are not hidden from God. That is sobering precisely because the Judge is perfectly holy and perfectly informed. He cannot be bribed, confused or outwitted by a clever explanation.

Werner did not present judgment as one isolated line that can be ignored. He described it as a major biblical theme and warned against avoiding it because it makes us uncomfortable. The right response is not panic for its own sake, but a renewed "knowledge of the Holy One." The One before whom we stand is righteous, just, merciful and good.

[2]That is why Werner went to Abraham's question over Sodom: will not the Judge of all the earth do right? We may ask about the person who has never heard, or about situations whose justice we cannot see clearly. Werner's answer was not that we know every detail. It was that God is more qualified to judge than we are. He does not confuse the righteous and the wicked, and He will do what is right.

[3]The uncomfortable part is personal: Werner said, in effect, "I know I am not that innocent person." Once judgment stops being an abstract argument and becomes a mirror, we are prepared to hear why the gospel matters. We do not need a loophole. We need rescue. Werner then summarised the issue from John 3: belief in the Son brings life, while unbelief leaves a person under God's wrath. Judgment therefore presses us toward the next movement of Peter's sermon - the gospel.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REFLECT AND REMEMBER

1	What changes when I treat God's judgment as a personal certainty rather than an abstract doctrine?
2	How does Abraham's question - that the Judge of all the earth will do right - shape the way I face difficult questions about judgment?
3	Where am I tempted to look for excuses when what I really need is God's rescue?

PRAYER

Righteous God, keep me from treating judgment lightly or using it to judge others proudly. Help me trust that You will do what is right, and show me honestly how much I need the rescue You provide in Jesus. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

I do not need a loophole before the Judge; I need the rescue God provides.

FRIDAY
DAY
5

Good News Worth Speaking

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday we faced the certainty and fairness of God's judgment. Werner reminded us that the Judge of all the earth will do right and that, when judgment becomes personal, we stop looking for loopholes and begin to understand why we need rescue.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Ephesians 6:15 (NIV)**
> *15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Werner said that if we do not understand the fear of God and the reality of judgment, the word "gospel" can become bland. Good news is only truly good when we understand what we are being saved from and who the God is who saves us. Peter's journey to Cornelius mattered because God was bringing a saving message to people who needed to hear it.

¸Werner then turned the responsibility toward us. Angels were involved in bringing Cornelius and Peter together, but the gospel itself was spoken by a person. God has given believers the privilege of proclaiming this good news. Peter opened his mouth. He did not wait for some force to make him speak. Ephesians describes feet fitted with readiness - a willingness to go and a preparedness to speak when the opportunity comes.

That readiness matters because the gospel, not general self-improvement, is the power of God for salvation. Werner mentioned a helpful book full of good ideas and immediately separated those ideas from the gospel. Better habits can be useful. Moral choices can be good. But they cannot stand in our place at judgment. The saving message is about Jesus.

[2]Werner also prepared us for mixed responses. He used Paul's picture of an aroma: to some, the message of Christ is beautiful; to others it is offensive, like the smell of something dying. Not everyone will welcome what we say. That does not remove our responsibility to live and speak faithfully for the sake of the people God has placed in our path.
[3]So Werner asked practical questions: Are you willing to go? Are you ready? Have you equipped yourself to speak when a conversation opens? Or do you assume this task belongs to somebody else? Gospel readiness is not aggressive pressure. It is a settled willingness to speak clearly about Jesus when love gives us an opening. Werner's point was not that every response will be positive, but that the possibility of rejection should not make us hide the only message he described as able to save.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REFLECT AND REMEMBER

1	What makes the gospel genuinely good news when I remember the fear of God and coming judgment?
2	What keeps me from opening my mouth when a natural opportunity to speak about Jesus appears?
3	How could I become more ready this week to explain the gospel clearly rather than only offer good advice?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, make me ready to carry Your good news. Give me courage to speak, wisdom to listen and love for the people You place in my path. Keep my message centred on You. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

The gospel is not merely good advice; it is good news worth speaking.

SATURDAY
DAY
6

Paid in Full

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday Werner moved from judgment into gospel readiness. Peter opened his mouth, and we were challenged to be willing and prepared to speak. Today we come to the heart of what Peter proclaimed: who Jesus is and what His finished work means for us.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Acts 10:43 (NIV)**
> *43 All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Werner carefully separated the gospel from a testimony that is mainly about our own improvement. Changed habits can be part of a transformed life, but they are not the message that saves. Peter's gospel is about Jesus: His life and ministry reveal the Son of God; He truly died; God raised Him from the dead; He is Lord of all; He is the appointed Judge; and everyone who believes receives forgiveness through His name.

[1]Werner lingered over the death of Jesus in deeply personal language: He died in my place. He took my sin. He paid for me. The cross is not merely an event that happened to someone two thousand years ago. The good news says that the debt we could not settle before a righteous Judge was taken up by Christ.

Then came Werner's courtroom picture. The resurrection means the payment is finished. He imagined standing at judgment with a slip that says, "Paid in full." [2]That is why the resurrection is not an optional detail added to the gospel. Jesus was raised because the work was completed, and His resurrection gives the believer hope of resurrection and new life. The verdict does not rest on our best behaviour; it rests on what Christ has done.

Werner then returned to the lordship of Jesus. The One who saves is also Lord of all. He has authority to direct our lives, and His authority explains why He is Judge. Faith does not simply ask Jesus to solve a problem while leaving us in charge. It recognises who He is. Werner connected this authority with the biblical pattern of rulers who also judged - Moses deciding cases, Absalom trying to win hearts from the judgment seat, and Solomon exercising royal judgment. Lordship and judgment belong together.

Finally, Peter's words were followed immediately by the Holy Spirit coming on those who heard and believed. Werner ended with an invitation: believe the gospel, receive forgiveness and ask God to fill you with His Spirit. Fear need not remain only fear of judgment. Through the finished work of Jesus, we are drawn into the precious relationship Werner described earlier - rescued, forgiven and brought near.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REFLECT AND REMEMBER

1	Why is a story about my improved behaviour not the same thing as the gospel about Jesus?
2	What does Werner's "paid in full" picture help me understand about the cross and resurrection?
3	What would it mean for me today to trust Jesus as both the One who saves me and the Lord who directs me?

PRAYER

Jesus, thank You that You died in my place and that Your work is finished. I trust Your death and resurrection rather than my own record. Forgive me, rule my life and fill me afresh with Your Holy Spirit. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

In Jesus, the debt is paid, forgiveness is offered and new life has begun.

SUNDAY
DAY
7

Know Him, Fear Him, Follow Him

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday we reached the heart of Peter's gospel: Jesus died in our place, God raised Him from the dead, He is Lord of all, and everyone who believes receives forgiveness. Werner ended by inviting us to true faith and to the filling of the Holy Spirit.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Acts 10:44 (NIV)**
> *44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message.*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

This week has followed the movement of Werner's sermon rather than trying to make its difficult themes easier than they are. We began with Peter in Cornelius's home, speaking across an old boundary because God had taught him that the gospel is for anyone who will hear. Peter opened his mouth, and his message held together truths we are sometimes tempted to separate.

[1]We first considered the fear of God. Werner would not let us reduce it to a definition and forget it. The fear of the Lord is tied to knowing the Holy One. It brings a needed carefulness before the God who is holy, powerful and worthy of obedience. Yet that fear is meant to mature. The fear connected only with punishment gives way to the holy carefulness of love when fellowship with God becomes precious.

[2]We then faced the judgment of God. Jesus is appointed to judge the living and the dead, and every person will face Him. Werner's appeal was not to make us experts in every difficult question, but to trust the character of the Judge of all the earth. He will do right. At the same time, judgment becomes personal when we stop discussing somebody else's guilt and recognise our own need for rescue.

That is where the gospel shines as good news. Peter proclaimed Jesus - His life, His death, His resurrection, His lordship and the forgiveness offered through His name. Werner's "paid in full" picture gathers the week together: we do not stand before God trusting our best works, our improved habits or a clever defence. We trust the finished work of Christ. Acts 10 ends this part of the story with the Holy Spirit coming on those who heard the message. Werner's closing prayer asked for true faith, deeper relationship and a fresh response to the God who has come not only to judge, but to rescue. This week's final question is therefore simple and personal: do I know Him, fear Him, believe His gospel and follow Him as Lord?

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REFLECT AND REMEMBER

1	How has this week changed or deepened my understanding of the fear of God?
2	Why does the reality of judgment make the gospel of Jesus more clearly good news to me?
3	What response of faith, obedience or gospel readiness do I need to carry into the coming week?

PRAYER

Father, thank You for showing me more of who You are. Teach me to fear You with holy love, to trust Your righteous judgment and to rest in the finished work of Jesus. Fill me with Your Spirit and make me ready to follow and speak. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

Know Him. Fear Him. Trust the gospel. Follow Jesus as Lord.