

Applying Scripture to Life

Topic 10 – Fear

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Review/Introduction

We have looked at several truths related to addressing difficult life issues and sin in ourselves and in the lives of those to which we seek to bring care.

1. You must be freed from sin and connected to the source of transformation – Christ.
2. You must make a decision of the will that your highest purpose is to glorify God. The commitment to glorify God must be your greatest desire, your highest purpose, more important than anything.
3. You must walk in the Spirit as a moment-by-moment decision to recognize, repent, and confess sin; yield your will to God’s moral will as set forth in His word; and allow the word to richly dwell within you.
4. You must cultivate a deep understanding of God, His character, and His will through a study of His Word.
5. You must be actively involved in a local body.
6. You must cultivate a biblical view of trials and suffering.
7. You must follow biblical methods of putting off sin – walking in the Spirit, putting off sin, renewing the mind through a vibrant relationship with Christ, and putting on righteousness.

You are driving in the snow and your car starts to spinout and you become afraid. You are on a ladder putting up Christmas lights and you wobble, and you become afraid. You make a serious mistake at work and your boss calls you into their office to “discuss” it and you become afraid. You get a serious medical diagnosis and you become afraid (anxious). You don’t know what the future holds and so you become afraid (anxious). You are with a group of people that you wish to fit in with and one of them starts to speak negatively about Christ and the Bible and you become afraid to speak. You understand at the heart-level God’s excellencies, and you live in “fear” or reverential awe of God. There are many types of fear and many types of responses to fear.

Today we will start to look fear, and specifically the fear of people.

Fear Defined

“Phobos” is the Greek word for fear from which we get “phobia”. It refers first to flight, alarm, fright, or terror. It speaks of the terror which seizes one when danger appears.

²⁶When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in **fear**. (Matt 14:26)

²⁵“There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, ²⁶men **fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world**; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. (Luke 21:25-27)

³¹It is a **terrifying thing** to fall into the hands of the living God. (Heb 10:31)

❖ **What is the difference between good and bad fear?**

“Phobos” can also carry the meaning of respect of people and their position.

⁷Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax *is due*; custom to whom custom; **fear to whom fear**; honor to whom honor. (Rom 13:7)

❖ **Whom should you respect?**

“Phobos” can also refer to reverence, respect, honor, reverential awe. It describes the attitude we should have toward our holy God.

⁴²They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone kept feeling a sense of **awe**; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. (Acts 2:42-43)

³¹So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and **going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit**, it continued to increase. (Acts 9:31)

¹Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the **fear of God**. (2 Cor 7:1)

¹²So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with **fear** and trembling; ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure. (Phil 2:12-13)

❖ **In what ways do you demonstrate the fear of God?**

There is godly fear and ungodly fear. Godliness is living with pervasive thoughts of God, His will, His glory, and dependence on Him. Ungodliness is living with little or no thought of God, His will, His glory, or dependence on Him. Godly fear is a fear (reverential awe) of God and a reasonable fear of danger or difficulty. Ungodly fears are unreasonable and irrational in light of our relationship with Christ and are not rooted in an abiding trust in God.

Fear of Man Defined

“Phobos” can also be used to describe someone who fears or pleases people instead of God.

⁴²Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing *Him*, for **fear** that they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³**for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God**. (John 12:42-43)

⁴⁴I say to you, My friends, do not **be afraid** of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. ⁵But I will warn you whom to **fear**: **fear** the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, **fear** Him! (Luke 12:4-5)

¹⁰For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ. (Gal 1:10)

❖ **Are you a people-pleaser or God-pleaser?**

The word “man-pleaser” is used in Ephesians 6 and Colossians 3 referring to the service that slaves render their master (or employees render their employer).

⁵Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; ⁶not by way of **eyeservice**, as **men-pleasers**, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. ⁷With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, ⁸knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. (Eph 6:5-8)

²²Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with **external service**, as those who *merely please men*, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. (Col 3:22)

“Anthropareskos” means to cause people to be pleased with the implication of being in contrast to God or at the sacrifice of some principle. This describes one who tries to make an impression on others, doing things to be seen.

❖ What are some principles you sacrifice to please people?

The Scriptures condemn of the fear of man. The fear of man brings a snare to your life in contrast to trusting in God.

²⁵The **fear of man brings a snare**, But he who trusts in the Lord will be exalted. (Prov 29:25)

A person who trusts in people is cursed. They make people their strength and their heart is turned away from the Lord. Instead, blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord and whose trust is the Lord.

⁵Thus says the Lord, “**Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind And makes flesh his strength, And whose heart turns away from the Lord.** ⁶“For he will be like a bush in the desert And will not see when prosperity comes, But will live in stony wastes in the wilderness, A land of salt without inhabitant. ⁷“**Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord And whose trust is the Lord.** ⁸“For he will be like a tree planted by the water, That extends its roots by a stream And will not fear when the heat comes; But its leaves will be green, And it will not be anxious in a year of drought Nor cease to yield fruit. (Jer 17:5-8)

Interestingly, by comparing the results of the person whose trust is the Lord with Psalm 1, we find that the person who trusts in the Lord and not in people is someone who has made the Word of God their delight.

¹How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! ²**But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night.** ³**He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers.** ⁴The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away. ⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. ⁶For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish. (Psa 1:1-6)

Biblical Examples of Fearing Man

There are many Biblical examples of people-pleasers. They had an ungodly fear of people.

All Scripture are from the NASB '95 Update unless noted.

Most word studies are from preceptaustin.org, blueletterbible.org, and biblehub.com

Abraham lied about Sarah being his wife because he feared people.

¹Now Abraham journeyed from there toward the land of the Negev, and settled between Kadesh and Shur; then he sojourned in Gerar. ²Abraham said of Sarah his wife, “She is my sister.” So Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. . . . ¹¹Abraham said, “Because I thought, surely there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife. (Gen 20:1-11 see also Gen 12:10-20)

Herod killed John the Baptist because he was afraid of what his dinner guests might think of him if he broke his rash oath.

⁶But when Herod’s birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before *them* and pleased Herod, ⁷so *much* that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. ⁸Having been prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist.” ⁹**Although he was grieved, the king commanded it to be given because of his oaths, and because of his dinner guests.** ¹⁰He sent and had John beheaded in the prison. ¹¹And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. (Matt 14:6-11)

The Jewish religious leaders who believed in Jesus were afraid to publicly confess Him because they feared being ostracized from society.

⁴²Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing *Him*, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³for **they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.** (John 12:42-43)

Pilate had Jesus killed because he was afraid of the crowd and how that might look to Rome.

²³But they were insistent, with loud voices asking that He be crucified. **And their voices began to prevail.** ²⁴And Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand be granted. (Luke 23:23-24)

¹⁵**Wishing to satisfy the crowd,** Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified. (Mark 15:15)

Peter denied Jesus because he was afraid for his own life and what the crowds might think.

⁶⁹Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came to him and said, “You too were with Jesus the Galilean.” ⁷⁰**But he denied it before them all,** saying, “I do not know what you are talking about.” ⁷¹When he had gone out to the gateway, another *servant-girl* saw him and said to those who were there, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” ⁷²And **again he denied it with an oath,** “I do not know the man.” ⁷³A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “Surely you too are *one* of them; for even the way you talk gives you away.” ⁷⁴**Then he began to curse and swear,** “I do not know the man!” And immediately a rooster crowed. ⁷⁵And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, “Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly. (Matt 26:69-75)

Peter withdrew from the Gentile believers because he feared what the Jewish believers would think.

¹¹But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹²For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, **he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.** ¹³The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. (Gal 2:11-13)

❖ **Do these examples represent you?**

Biblical Examples of Fearing God

There are also many examples through the Bible of people who feared God above people.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego feared God over the Nebuchadnezzar.

¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. ¹⁷If it be *so*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸But *even if He does* not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.” (Dan 3:16-18)

Peter and John continued to heed God instead of fearing people.

¹⁸And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; ²⁰for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:18-20)

Moses feared God over his adopted life.

²⁴By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, ²⁵choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, ²⁶considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. (Heb 11:24-26)

Paul feared God over pleasing people.

⁴but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. (1 Thess 2:4)

❖ **Do these examples represent you?**

Understanding the Fear of the Lord

The fear of the Lord refers to reverence, respect, honor, and reverential awe. It describes the attitude we should have toward our holy God. We can think of the fear of the Lord as awe of God’s glory, apprehension of His wrath, and appreciation of His love.

Solomon with his great wisdom came to this conclusion.

¹³The conclusion, when all has been heard, *is: fear God* and keep His commandments, because this *applies to* every person. (Eccles 12:13)

The fear of the Lord is essential to a walk with God.

¹How blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, Who walks in His ways. (Psa 128:1)

¹⁰**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom**; A good understanding have all those who do *His commandments*; His praise endures forever. (Psa 111:10)

⁷**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge**; Fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Prov 1:7)

¹⁰**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom**, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. (Prov 9:10)

¹Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the **fear of God**. (2 Cor 7:1)

¹²So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation with fear and trembling**; ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure. (Phil 2:12-13)

The Lord takes pleasure in those that fear Him.

¹¹but **the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him**, in those who hope in his steadfast love. (Psa 147:11 – ESV)

Those that fear the Lord will hate sin.

¹³**The fear of the Lord is to hate evil**; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverted mouth, I hate. (Prov 8:13)

There is confidence and refuge and security and contentment in fearing the Lord.

²⁶**In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence**, And his children will have refuge. (Prov 14:26)

²³**The fear of the Lord leads to life**, So that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil. (Prov 19:23)

¹⁶**Better is a little with the fear of the Lord** Than great treasure and turmoil with it. (Prov 15:16)

God promises that for those who fear Him, there is no need of want (including the approval, affection, acceptance, and praise of other people).

⁸O taste and see that the Lord is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!

⁹O fear the Lord, you His saints; **For to those who fear Him there is no want**. (Psa 34:8-9)

This is the kind of fear that must replace the fear of man. If a believer is fully committed with heart level belief that he/she must fear God over people, then he/she has won the battle against being a people-pleaser.

❖ **What is your biggest obstacle to fearing God?**

Addressing Fear of Man Biblically

General principles to address the fear of man.

1. Mediate on your freedom from sin through regeneration by grace through faith in Christ alone. Understand that righteousness is now a choice for the child of God.
2. Determine that glorifying God is your highest priority. Make a commitment of your will to do whatever it takes to glorify God.

¹⁷Do not let your heart envy sinners, **But *live in the fear of the Lord* always.** (Prov 23:17)

3. Walk in the Spirit, allowing the words of Christ to dwell richly in you.
4. Labor to renew your mind through a dynamic, intimate relationship with God through the intake of the word and prayer, cultivating a deep understanding of God's character.
5. Make a commitment of the will to repent from fearing people over fearing God. Throw away fear like a sewage-soaked garment (Eph 4:20-24).
6. Make a commitment to put on righteousness. As your mind is renewed, put on the opposite of the fear of people – truth and power and love and self-control.

¹¹**Teach me Your way, O Lord; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name.** ¹²I will give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, And will glorify Your name forever. ¹³For Your lovingkindness toward me is great, And You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol. (Psa 86:11-13)

⁷for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. (1 Tim 1:7 ESV)

7. Are you involved in close fellowship in the body to encourage and challenge you to walk in the fear of the Lord?
8. As often as you sin, repeat this cycle.
9. Praise God for His work to save and sanctify you.

Apply It

Yourself #1: You are at your child's soccer practice (or whatever activity you may be involved with). You are wanting your child to have a good experience and you enjoy meeting other parents that are about your age. One of the other parents is outspoken, particularly about religious things. Today, he/she goes on and on about the failings of religious people and all things related to God. He/She is getting many sympathetic ears among the other parents. You stay quiet and try not to make eye contact so you don't get pulled into the conversation. But he/she calls your name and asks, "What do you think?" What precepts, principles, and promises from today's study can be encouraging to you?

Yourself #2: At work, you are striving for a promotion/pay raise. You know from water cooler chatter that several have gotten performance raises recently, but you have not. You feel that you are due, after all, you are great worker. Now, you are in a meeting when your boss praises you for a great idea that will save the company money and certainly cement your raise. The problem is that the idea isn't yours, it is a coworker's. What precepts, principles, and promises from today's study can be encouraging to you?

Someone Else #1: A dear friend at church looks exhausted. He/She has had health problems recently but continues full steam ahead with family, work, and church responsibilities. What are some questions you might ask to understand why he/she refuses to give up some responsibilities during this season? In thinking about bringing Biblical care to your nervous friend, what is the first thing you need to know? What precepts, principles, and promises from today's study can be encouraging to him/her?

Concluding Thoughts

The fear of man brings many snares into a person's life. God's desire for His children is that they walk in the fear of Him. He wants us to have a reverential awe. As the Spirit applies the Word to our heart, we can be changed and fear God and desire to please Him over other people.

Additional Study

The “put on” for the fear of man is to fear the Lord. Read the following verses and note what is said about the fear of the Lord.

Psa 33:8 _____

Psa 34:11 _____

Psa 64:9 _____

Psa 86:11 _____

Psa 112:1 _____

Psa 119:38 _____

Psa 128:1 _____

Psa 147:11 _____

Prov 1:7 _____

Prov 1:28-31 _____

Prov 3:5-8 _____

Prov 8:13 _____

Prov 9:10-11 _____

Prov 10:27 _____

Prov 14:2 _____

Prov 14:26-27 _____

Prov 15:16 _____

Prov 15:33 _____

Prov 16:6 _____

Prov 19:23 _____

Prov 22:4 _____

Prov 23:17-21 _____

Prov 24:21-22 _____

Prov 28:14 _____

Prov 28:25 _____

Prov 29:25 _____

Prov 31:30 _____

Eccl 12:13-14 _____

What are some ways to put into practice the things gleaned above? _____
