

Lesson 6: Overcoming The Fear Of Man

Memory Verse:

2 Timothy 1:7

for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Homework

1. Search for the free sermon, "Overcoming the Fear of Man" at www. SovereignGraceStore.com by C.J. Mahaney (Outline is included in handouts)
2. Read the attached sermon by John Piper, "The Gospel is the Power of God unto Salvation" (You could also listen to it online at www. DesiringGod.org)
3. Watch the interview with an atheist at www. MarkCahill.org/news/0209news.html
4. Complete the questions from the homework

I. *What Is The Fear of Man?*



Definition: *The Fear of Man*

C.J. Mahaney says that the fear of man is:

1. An excessive (sinful) concern about what others think of us
2. An inordinate desire for human approval or an intense fear of being rejected.

Ken Sande, the author of the book *The Peacemaker*, says this about the fear of man:

“Fear of Man. This can take many forms. Sometimes it involves an actual fear of what others can do to us (Prov. 29:25; Luke 12:4-5), but it is most commonly seen as an excessive concern about what others think about us. This can lead to a preoccupation with acceptance, approval, popularity, personal comparisons, self-image, or pleasing others (John 9:22; 12:42-43; Gal. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:4). This idol can make us reluctant to confront serious sin. The constant desire for approval and acceptance can cause us to gossip or keep us from speaking out on moral issues. It can also make us do things we really know are not right, eventually leading to guilt and resentment. Furthermore, if we fear what others may think of us, we may also be reluctant to admit our wrongs or ask for help, which often prolongs conflict.”
(from a sermon outline by C.J. Mahaney located at www.sovereigngracestore.com)

John 2:42-43

many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue;

⁴³ for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.



List some of the implications that could have happened to the Pharisees if they confessed Christ? Do you see any similar sins in your life?



What was the ultimate reason for why they wouldn't confess Christ?

The Fear of Man Test

Your Fear Factor

As you answer the following questions give yourself the appropriate number of points: Never or hardly ever (5 pts), seldom (4 pts), frequently (2 pts) always or almost always (1 pt) true of you

1. I listen with anxious attentiveness when others discuss that which pleases or displeases them.
2. I strive to be politically correct more than biblically correct.
3. I go fishing for compliments.
4. I gossip about others to people whom I believe will be pleased with me for giving them such luscious tidbits of information.
5. My desire for a good reputation is based predominantly on how such a reputation will benefit me in some way, rather than on how such a good reputation will serve as a means to a greater end such as the glory of God, the good of others, or some other similar unselfish objective or motive.
6. I value the approval of certain individuals from whom I expect to receive certain honors more than the approval of others from whom I expect not to receive such honors.
7. I worry about what people think of me.
8. I am willing to sin rather than face the rejection of certain individuals.
9. I struggle with being a respecter of persons.

10. I believe that being rejected is one of the worst things that could possibly happen to a person, one of the worst things that a person could possibly experience.
11. I avoid conflicts rather than trying to resolve them.
12. I take unnecessary precautions in order to protect my good name.
13. I become angry when I am contradicted by others, especially when publicly contradicted.
14. When meeting a new person, I spend more time thinking about how to impress him or her than how to minister to him or her.
15. My fear of being rejected paralyzes me to the extent that it keeps me from getting close to others.
16. I forget that being rejected by others is a part of the suffering for righteousness sake that is my reasonable service to God and a part of my calling as a Christian.
17. I long to be noticed more than I long to be godly.
18. I give in to peer pressure rather than standing up to what is right.
19. I do not witness to others as I should due to my fear of being criticized or rejected.
20. I over react to criticism by dwelling too long on it or allowing it to depress me unnecessarily.

Rating scale:

- 96-100 no problem with man pleasing
- 90-95 free from the inordinate love of approval
- 80-89 too concerned with the approval of others
- 70-79 probably a man pleaser
- 69 or below probably a besetting sin

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If you desire, discuss your answers with the class

II. Overcoming the Fear of Man

1. Knowing our Position in Christ

Romans 8:15-17

¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

¹⁷ and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.



Application: What Can Man Do To Me?

At the heart of the Christian faith is adoption. We were once children of wrath (Eph. 2:1-3), but now we are children of God (1st John 3:1). Nothing can separate us from Christ's love (Rom. 8:31-39). We are forever freed from the fear of man, death, condemnation, demons and Satan. Forever!

J.I. Packer says this about adoption: "If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all. For everything that Christ taught, everything that makes the New Testament new, and better than the Old, everything that is distinctively Christian as opposed to merely Jewish, is summed up in the knowledge of the Fatherhood of God. 'Father' is the Christian name for God." (J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*)

Receiving a deep revelation of who we are in Christ will free us up to witness, even to the death. Knowing our eternal position in Christ will bring security to our souls. We will say with the Psalmist, "The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me (Psalm 118:6)?"

Do you have a deep revelation of your position in Christ? God desires to set you free from the fear of man by coming into a deep revelation that you are His child and that nothing can separate you from Him. This is the power that we need in our evangelism witness!

Romans 8:31-39

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died--more than that, who was raised--who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

³⁶ As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,

³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.



In Romans 8:31-39, list all of the ways that God displays that He is for us and not against us?

2. The Empowerment of the Holy Spirit

Act 1:4-9

⁴ And while staying with them he (Jesus) ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father (Luke 24:49), which, he said, "you heard from me;

⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

⁷ He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses (martus) in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

⁹ And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.



What is the first command in this passage that Jesus gave to His disciples?
How can we apply this to our lives?



According to verse 8, what is the purpose of receiving "power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you?"



Application: Asking For the Holy Spirit When Witnessing

Witnessing can be intimidating and even frightening. For this reason, many Christians are forfeiting deep joy and are being disobedient to Christ's calling to "go and make disciples (Matt. 28:18)." But God desires to give us power, not fear, in our evangelistic encounters. Jesus promised us that He would not leave us as orphans (John 14:16-18). Acts 1:4-8 tells us that we need to wait for the promise of the Father; the baptism of the Holy Spirit. When we receive this "baptism" we will be empowered to tell others about Christ.

Do you have fear when you are about to tell someone about the Good News? We need to ask God the Father to give us His promise. It's a promise. He will fulfill it. Ask God, today, if He will fill you with His Holy Spirit. Ask Him for power to tell others about His Son, Jesus Christ. I've found that God honors this prayer and that He has never left me as an orphan. He promises us that He will "be with us until the end of the age (Matt. 28:20)." Bank on it and then open your mouth with Gospel proclamation!

3. There is Joy in Suffering for Jesus

1 Thessalonians 1:1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

² We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers,

³ remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴ For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you,

⁵ because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

⁶ And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit,

⁷ so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

⁸ For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything.

⁹ For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.



Paul says in 1:4 that he is confident that God has chosen them. Why?



According to 1:6, how did these believers receive the Word (Gospel)?

1.

2.



According to 1:8, what were the Thessalonian believers doing throughout Macedonia and Achaia?



Application: The Path of Paul and Jesus

The Church in Thessalonica was facing severe persecution. Paul says that they became imitators of him and of Jesus in their sufferings. They walked the same path of Paul and Jesus. They walked the path of suffering. But this suffering wasn't a killjoy. Though the Thessalonians faced severe suffering, they still received the word (i.e. Gospel) "with the joy of the Holy Spirit." This was the same joyful path that led Jesus up Calvary Hill. Hebrews 12:2 tells us that "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross."

When we enter into suffering for the Gospel we enter into the sufferings of Christ. We become partakers with Him in His death (Colossians 1:24). This is not a curse, but a blessing because God the Holy Spirit strengthens us, fills us and empowers us with resurrection power to suffer for Christ's name. The result is overflowing "joy in the Holy Spirit."

God desires to give us fullness of joy. He desires to fill us with strength and resolve to suffer for Christ. Will you resolve to tell others about Christ no matter what the cost? If you will, God promises that He will fill you with His abounding joy.

4. Treasuring the Gospel above all else

1 Thessalonians 2:1 For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain.
² But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.
³ For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive,
⁴ but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.
⁵ For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed--God is witness.
⁶ Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.
⁷ But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.
⁸ So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.



According to 2:2, what gave Paul strength to “declare the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict”?



Paul says that he has been “entrusted with the gospel (v.4).” This is the highest responsibility a person can have. List all of the implications of being “entrusted with the gospel”:



According to 2:8, when Paul came to them he shared two things with them:

- 1.
- 2.

How can we do the same?



The Gospel: The Diamond in the Rough

We see from these verses that Paul wasn't concerned about gold from their pockets or glory from their mouths. He had something far more precious: the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul knew that God had "entrusted" him with the Gospel. God had given him the precious diamond of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Nothing can compare to this. There is no greater gift to man, and therefore no greater responsibility. Paul knew this and it radically affected the way he lived.

Beloved, when we come to a deep revelation of how precious this Good News of God's grace is, we will stand in awe that God has chosen us to be "entrusted" with it. The deeper it sinks into your heart, the more powerfully it will come out of your mouth. The fear of man will fade away when we understand the seriousness of being "entrusted" with this message. Gold, glory, glitz and girls will fade away when we peer into this precious diamond in the rough.

Have you come to a place of realizing that you have been "entrusted with the Gospel?" Are you willing to turn away from the glory of man for the sake of the glory of Christ? Would be willing to suffer financial loss for the sake of gaining Holy Spirit joy? God desires to give it to you, today. There is freedom when we treasure the diamond in the rough above all else.

4. The Goodness of God

Proverbs 29:25

²⁵ The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.



According to Proverbs 29:25, how do we escape from the "snare" of the fear of man? What does this practically look like before you witness, when you witness, and after you witness?

5. Fear God, Not Man

Luke 12:4-12

⁴ "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do.

⁵ But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!

⁶ Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God.

⁷ Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.

⁸ "And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God,

⁹ but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

¹⁰ And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

¹¹ And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say,

¹² for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."



What does it mean to "fear God"?



From Luke 4:4-12, list all of reasons why we should fear God?



In verse 8 it says, “everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God.” What does this mean?



What is the promise in verse 12 that Jesus says will help us when we testify about Him to others? What implications does this have on your witness encounters?

6. The Future Reward

Matthew 5:11-12

¹¹ "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.



Why is a person blessed when others revile them and persecute them and utter all kinds of evil against them falsely on Jesus' account?



Do you think about future rewards in heaven when you debating on sharing the gospel with someone?



Application: Seek the Heavenly Reward

Does it surprise you that Jesus enticed His disciples to suffer well for His name by placing their hopes in a future reward? Christianity has often been approached as if seeking a reward is corrupt and selfish. But Jesus didn't seem to think so.

Jonathan Edwards says this in one of his resolutions: "Resolved, To endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness in the other world as I possibly can, with all the power, might, vigor, and vehemence, yea violence, I am capable of, or can bring myself to exert, in any way that can be thought of."

Our goal should be to seek rewards in heaven. In fact, Blaise Pascal says that all people will seek a reward in everything that they do. He says, "All men seek happiness without exception. They all aim at this goal however different the means they use to attain it. . . .They will never make the smallest move but with this as its goal. This is the motive of all the actions of all men, even those who contemplate suicide."

God desires for us to seek a greater reward in heaven. So may we live by faith in God's reward and not by fear in man's rejection. For "without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him (Hebrews 11:6)."

(Quotations sited from an online article titled "Christian Hedonism" by John Piper. Go to www.desiringGod.org)

"In Christ Alone"

Words and Music by Keith Getty & Stuart Townend

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In Christ alone my hope is found;
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This cornerstone, this solid ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!

My comforter, my all in all—
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone, Who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save.

Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied;
For ev'ry sin on Him was laid—
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain;
Then bursting forth in glorious day,
Up from the grave He rose again!

And as He stands in victory,
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me;
For I am His and He is mine—
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death—
This is the pow'r of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.

No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home—
Here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand.