

THE FEAR OF MAN

"The fear of man bringeth a snare, but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." Proverbs 29:25.

Every one of us knows that that statement is true. We have seen it fulfilled many times. Many people have been snared by the fear of man. What is the fear of man? It is a reverence of human authority and customs, and a dread of the censure and reproaches of our fellow-creatures.

I. The Fear Of Man Ensnares Christians.

1. Into a guilty silence and inactivity.

Some people want to speak to the unsaved. They would like to help some one to find Christ. They know it would bring great joy to them. They say, "But, suppose they don't like it; they laugh at me; they should say something unkind to me." Well, suppose they do laugh at you. They spat in your Master's face. They won't spit in yours. They struck Him with their fists. They won't strike you. They nailed Him to the cross. Are you not willing to be laughed at for a Master like that? Probably the fear of man is doing far more to hinder the work of Christ than any other one thing in the lives of professed Christians.

2. Into a guilty compromise with the world.

How many of you professed Christians are doing things in family life, in social life, in business life, that you know are wrong? Your best moral judgment condemns you for them every time you do them, but you say, "Well, everybody does them. I will be considered odd if I don't do them. I will be ostracised from my set." Be willing to be ostracised rather than compromise. Be brave enough to stand for modesty, purity, and God. The fear of man has entangled you in a snare which has robbed you by your compromise of every bit of real power for Jesus Christ.

3. Into not going on for Christ because somebody discouraged you.

If there is a deeper spot in hell than any other it is for the person who dares to discourage the young convert in his first aspirations toward God. When you start out in the Christian life, no matter who approves or disapproves, you are right so go on in spite of everybody.

4. Into a denial of the Lord.

It did that for Simon Peter. After he had just told the Lord that though all might forsake Him, he never would, there before the servant-girl who accused him of being a follower of Jesus, he said, "I don't know the man." Then a few moments later, he repeated his denial, and an hour later, with oaths and cursings, he denied his Lord.

When hard things are said about the Bible and Christ, you are not man enough or woman enough, to stand up and say, "I am a Christian. I believe in that Bible you are laughing at. I believe in that Christ whom you are ridiculing." You are afraid to be laughed at, and the fear of man has ensnared you into a denial of the Lord who died on the cross for you.

II. The Fear Of Man Ensnares Those Who Are Not Christians.

1. Into the rejection of Jesus Christ.

Hundreds would like to be Christians. They know it is the worthwhile life. They see the joy of it. They see the Christian life is the better life for the life that now is, as well as for the life that is to come, but they are afraid that if they accept Christ somebody will laugh at, make fun of, or ridicule them, and the fear of man is shutting them out of the acceptance of Jesus Christ. Probably more are kept from accepting Christ by what they think that some one might think, say, or do, than by anything else.

2. Into not making a public confession of Christ.

Jesus Christ said distinctly, "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father Who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father Who is in heaven." Matt. 10:32-33. Paul said, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Rom. 10:10.

3. Into eternal ruin.

Many have been laid away in Christless graves, and will pass through a Christless eternity, because the fear of man kept them from the acceptance of Christ. To those of you who are on the verge of a decision for Christ, don't let the fear of man frighten you out of taking your stand tonight.

III. The Results Of The Fear Of Man.

The fear of man is a deadly foe to a consistent, godly life. It stops many on the very threshold of the Kingdom. It often leads to downright, positive sin. It keeps many from a decision for Christ. The fear of man and the fear of God are absolutely inconsistent, and cannot subsist together.

IV. The Remedy For The Fear Of Man.

It is regard for God, reverence for God, and trust in Him. Why should every person accept Christ and publicly confess Him before the world?

1. He is such a glorious Lord and Master.

There is nothing to be ashamed of in Christ. You may have cause to be ashamed of yourself, but you will never have any reason to be ashamed of Christ. Many are ashamed of Christ who ought to be ashamed of themselves.

2. For the sake of your influence.

- (1) Every person has some influence -- for or against Christ.
 - (2) Every person is responsible for his influence.
 - (3) Every person must give an account for his influence.
 - (4) Every person's influence will go on after he or she is gone.
- Exert it for Christ while you have opportunity.

3. For decency's and self-respect's sake.

When you stop to think of what Christ has done for you and me, and then you refuse to accept and to confess Him, how can you retain your self-respect? A father and mother worked and skimped in order that they might send their son to the University.

The boy did well. His letters delighted his parents. The father said to his wife, "Mother, I cannot stand it any longer; I just must see the boy." He loaded his wagon and started on the journey from the farm to the university. He thought the boy would be surprised and also delighted. Driving up the hill to the college, he met the boy and his gay companions. He rushed up to greet his son. The son was ashamed of his poor father and said, "I don't know you. There must be some mistake." The father turned away with broken heart. It would break the heart of any father for his child to treat him like that.

That boy was an infamous ingrate. But he was not so ungrateful as those of you who know that Jesus poured out His life for you on the Cross of Calvary, and you won't accept and stand up and confess Him.

Another boy, the son of a poor woman, who washed clothes in order that she might send him to school, sent her son to school. He did well and came out at the top of his class, and was valedictorian, and got a gold medal for special excellence in study. On graduation day he urged his mother to get ready to go to church where the exercises were to be held. She said, "Son, I cannot go up there. I haven't anything fit to wear. You would be ashamed of me if I went." He assured her that he would never be ashamed of her, to whom he owed everything, and told her he would not graduate if she did not go. He helped her to get ready. He pinned an old faded shawl round her and tried to make it look as good as possible. She put on a plain old bonnet. They went and when they reached the church he took her down the center aisle and seated her among the finest people in town. When the time came, he went up to deliver his valedictory address and to receive the gold medal amid the applause of his companions; and when he had received it he walked straight down to where his mother sat, and pinned it on her old faded shawl, and said, "Mother, that belongs to you; you earned it."

That is a boy worth having. Now let me ask you a question? Do you mean to be like that ingrate, who was ashamed of his old father and broke his heart, and be ashamed of that glorious Christ who died for you; or will you be like the other boy, and knowing that you owe everything to Christ, stand up and confess Him tonight, and pin all your honors where they belong, on Jesus Christ?

Throw away your fear of man tonight. In the place of it, put your trust in Jehovah. Be out and out for God. Fear not what anybody says, but stand up and come right down to the front, accept Christ, and confess Him before the world tonight. Throw away your fear of man, and put your trust in the Lord and be saved tonight.