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SESSION 2 | The Fear of Man: A Universal Sin

PART 1—OVERVIEW OF THE STRUGGLE

I. Fear – The Big Picture

A. How do we define fear?

- a. Fear is a sin response to our blind understanding of the future. Here's why:
- b. "Fear quickly hits the default switch and opts for independence, control, and self-protection."¹

B. Fear Chases Us

- a. Throughout our childhood
- b. Throughout our adolescence
- c. Throughout adulthood

C. Fear Surrounds Us

- a. Psychologists will suggest there are primarily 3 to 5 main fears we all struggle with.
- b. From those categories there are at last count 530 listed phobias.
- c. Welch says: "Fear is natural to us. We don't have to learn it. We experience fear and anxiety even before there is any logical reason for them."²
- d. Common to us all

D. Fear Reminds Us—Fear speaks to us.

- a. Fear is a reminder that we are finite. "They (our fears) remind us of our smallness."

"Fear is the voice reminding us we are less powerful than we want to believe."

¹ Edward T. Welch, *Running Scared*. Pg. 63

² Ibid.

E. Why Does Fear Come So Naturally?

- a. Is. 8:11-14

- b. Mt. 10:28

- c. Proposition

F. What is our hope?

- a. The gospel has given us a new identity in Jesus Christ that frees us from fear. Rom. 8:15; 2 Cor. 5:17; 2 Tim. 1:7
- b. The fear of the Lord replaces every other fear. Pr. 14:26; 19:23; Acts 9:31
- c. Our God understands our frame, and He loves us anyway! Ps. 78:39; 103:14
- d. God is committed to comforting us. Ps. 23:4; 46; 119:50; Is. 40:1
- e. We have a heavenly Father who cares for us. Job 7:17; Ps. 8:4; Zech. 10:3; 1 Pet. 5:7
- f. He has promised to be faithful. Dt. 7:9; Ps. 31:5; 1 Cor. 10:13

“If you really want to fight fear, learn to fear Someone who captures your attention in such a way that your other fears suddenly seem pedestrian and unimportant.”³

PART 2—FEAR OF MAN

II. How is this fear unique?

A. Biblical text related to the fear of man:

- a. Prov. 29:25 - The fear of man is a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.
- b. Gen. 12:12-13; 20:2, 11; 26:7 “...But when the Egyptians see you, they will kill me...”

³ Edward T. Welch, *Running Scared*, pg. 192

- c. Jn. 12:42-43 "...they loved the glory of men more than the glory that comes from God."
- d. Nu. 14:9; Dt. 7:18; 20:23; Gal. 1:10

B. How do we define the fear of man?

- a. The experience of one who replaces an awe of God with an awe of People. The idea of the fear of man includes being afraid of someone as well, but extends to holding someone in awe, being controlled or mastered by people, worshipping other people, putting your trust in people, or needing people. ⁴
- b. A Biblical Response
 - 1. 1 Cor. 3:21-4:7
 - 2 Cor. 4:3, man's judgment of him is of little importance.
 - 2 Cor. 4:3 Self-perception is of little value. (cf. 1 Jn. 3:20-21)
 - Rather, it is the Lord who judges him.

III. The biblical solution to the fear of man

A. Grow in the Fear of the Lord

- a. Grow in the fear of the Lord –
 - 1. Definition- The fear of God in which godliness consists is the fear which constrains [completes or powerfully produces] adoration and love. It is the fear of which consists in awe, reverence, honor, and worship, and all of these on the highest level of exercise. It is the reflex in our consciousness of the transcendent majesty and holiness of God.⁵
- b. "Let fear point us to the knowledge of God, and let the Spirit of God, by way of the Scripture, teach us the knowledge of God."⁶
- c. Regain the biblical awareness of the greatness of God (1 Chr. 16:25; Ps. 35:27; 78:14-16; 96:4)

⁴ Edward T. Welch, *When People Are Big and God Is Small*, pg. 14

⁵ Jerry Bridges, *The Joy of Fearing God*, pg. 25

⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 64

d. Grow in Humility

1. Recognize and repent of sinful fear as an act of pride⁷
 - Consumed with what others think of me.
 - Being honest and open about the areas in which you struggle.
2. When tempted to fear, remember that, though there is no grace for the imagination, there *is* the promise of future grace for every experience.
3. Grow in trusting the LORD
 - Recount His faithfulness!
 - Commit yourself to living for His glory instead of your own.

B. Take comfort in knowing that, through the Gospel, our identity isn't tied to what others think of us, or even how we view ourselves – our identity is hidden in Christ.

- a. Diagnosing fear is an invitation to receive grace through dependence on God.

It is only in the gospel of Jesus Christ that you get the verdict before the performance...I perform on the basis of the verdict.⁸

⁷ Stuart Scott, From Pride to Humility, pg. 8, 21

⁸ Timothy Keller, The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness, pg. 39,40
