

Fear of the Lord or Fear of Man

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[0 : 00] Let's turn in our Bibles to Daniel chapter 3. King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold 90 feet high and 9 feet wide and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisors, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up.

So the satraps, prefects, governors, advisors, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the other provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it.

Then the herald loudly proclaimed, This is what you are commanded to do, O peoples, nations, and men of every language, As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.

Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.

Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations, and men of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

[1 : 31] At this time, some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews. They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, O King, live forever. You have issued a decree, O King, that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and all kinds of music, must fall down and worship the image of gold, and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace.

But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who pay no attention to you, O King.

They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up. Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

So these men were brought before the king, and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up?

Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and all kinds of music, if you're ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good.

[2 : 47] But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter.

If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the god we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.

Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace.

So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans, and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

And these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace. Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisors, Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?

[4 : 23] They replied, Certainly, O king. He said, Look, I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.

Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, come here.

So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fire and the satraps, prefects, governors, and royal advisors crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed.

Their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them. Then Nebuchadnezzar said, Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants.

They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own god.

[5 : 29] Therefore, I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way than the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

Precious word of God. Let's hear it preached. Well, the book of Proverbs is teaching us wisdom, and it isn't just about giving us advice.

If we come to the book of Proverbs looking for advice, we will certainly find it, but we're going to find much more than what we were looking for. We're going to find something far deeper.

Proverbs is part of God's program to make us like Christ in everything, and it reaches down into our hearts, down to the very bottom of our being, to our priorities, and our fears, and our desires, and our hopes, and our loves, and our hates.

Now, wisdom teaches us nuance and discretion, so it teaches us to think carefully about things so we don't confuse matters, but wisdom at its very core is about making a choice between two very different heart's attitudes.

[7 : 10] The fear of the Lord or the fear of man, and that's what we just saw in the book of Daniel.

Just reminded of Daniel chapter 1. Daniel and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were elevated above all others in part because of their wisdom, and now in chapter 3, we get to see their wisdom when it comes to this question of the fear of the Lord or fear of man.

Proverbs is very clear, the fear of the Lord is the very beginning of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One, appreciation for who He is, commitment to who He is, is understanding.

But the fear of man is the exact opposite. It's to put the creature above the Creator, to put the unholy above the holy.

It's to put the temporal beyond the eternal. And so, we're going to exchange the forever changing, the forever withering, dust to dust, for the holy, holy, holy one.

[8 : 29] That is the choice between wisdom and folly. It's this basic heart distinction, this basic heart choice. And that's what we want to look at tonight.

So, turn in your Bibles to Proverbs chapter 29 and verse 25. 29-25 is where we're going to do most of our looking into the Word of God tonight.

29-25. And it is about this, the fear of man and trusting the Lord. I'm going to give you a chance to turn there. Proverbs 29-25.

Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe. So, there's the alternatives.

There's the basic distinction between wisdom and folly. It's the basic distinction between creature and creator. It's the distinction between what is unworthy and untrustworthy and unreliable and one who is completely worthy, completely proven.

[9 : 40] Psalm 25 says, no one who's hoping you is or will be ever put to shame. Now, if you put your hope in man, you're going to be disappointed.

Every now and then, yes, they come through for you, but sooner or later and then frequently, you will be put to shame. Now, so here's this verse, 29-25, and as I look at this verse, pretty soon, some questions start bubbling up.

Questions that shoot right through me like an x-ray. So I don't know if you've had an x-ray.

Probably most of you have. You go into that room and they shoot that thing right through you and then they take the picture. And what is unseen becomes seen.

Bones that you can't see will suddenly become visible. Well, that's what these questions that as you sit here and as I sat with this text, it starts to come through.

[10:41] Questions like, who are you serving? You're serving someone. Who are you serving? Who do you want to please? Whose smile do you want?

Whose praise do you want? We're going to see a little bit later to want praise simply is not wrong. It's who do you want this praise from? Who are you afraid of offending?

Who do you need to come through for you? Who do you need to come through for you? Who do you ultimately need saved from?

And who ultimately is going to be your savior? These questions. Now, the degree to which you answer the questions with the Lord, the Lord, who am I serving?

I'm serving the Lord. Who do I fear? I fear the Lord. Who do I want to please? The Lord. Who do I desperately need to come through for me? Man or the Lord?

[11:50] Well, the degree that you're seeing the whole world as in I need the Lord to come through for me. And as far as ultimate salvation goes, I need to be saved from the Lord by the Lord.

So to the degree to which you are answering those questions, these x-ray questions with the Lord, I'm fearing the Lord, Proverbs says, then you are wise.

You're being renewed into the image of Christ. Now, we're all works in progress. We all begin completely oriented toward man, answering all of that questions with some version of man.

Sometimes it's me and sometimes it's other people. but when God saves us, he begins transitioning and changing our lives and our hearts so that more and more our hearts are now pointed to the Lord.

So those are the x-ray questions. And I want you to take out the x-rays and put them in the light and look at them. Who are you serving?

[12:59] This is where Christ is taking us. This is where the spirit of Christ in us is taking us to have a completely God-oriented heart and life and mind and priorities and desires and loves.

And that is what he is committed to working in us. And so we want to dig into this verse. It breaks down into four easy parts.

You see the, I mean, it breaks down into two parts quite easily and then each part has two parts, so four parts all together. We're only going to look at the first section today, these first two pieces.

The fear of man will prove to be a snare. And we're going to leave, Lord willing, the second half of trusting the Lord and you're kept safe for next week.

So the fear of man will prove to be a snare. The fear, that word means to tremble. So you tremble at man.

[14:02] And so most naturally we think of being you're very afraid of man, so you tremble at them. It also just can be the simple tremble of you respond when they are around.

So think of a cello, a stringed instrument, and I just picked a cello there. And a loud enough sound will make the cello strings tremble.

And you can start to hear something even though it's not being played by the musician. So that's a good picture of the fear of man. Your heart is tuned. It is turned to man.

So who is able to play you? Is it man or is it the Lord? Well, the fear of the man is when your heart trembles at their threats.

Your heart needs their praises. So men are able to play your strings as it were. Well, you get the picture. Your heart is all about what are they doing?

[15:08] What do I need them to do? What can they do for me? What do they want? What are they asking for? How can I get their smile? What are they saying? What are they saying about me?

How do they feel about me? What are they feeling about this situation? It's the exact opposite then. So your heart is completely oriented toward man.

And it's the exact opposite of trusting the Lord. And you can underline that in your notes. The fear of man is the complete opposite of trusting the Lord.

You can tell that just from the second half of the proverb. Whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe. So fear of man is opposite to trusting the Lord.

It's trusting yourself to men. It's depending on men instead of God. The very next verse, verse 26, is a prime example.

[16:05] And it's showing us this basic dichotomy that you see throughout the book of Proverbs. So look at verse 26. And as you look at it, can you see the fear of man versus trusting in the Lord?

Many seek an audience with a ruler. But it is from the Lord that man gets justice. So you see the situation. I've been wronged.

I need justice. I need vindication. I need this made right. Where do I go?

Lots of people. Their only direction, their only outlet for those concerns, their only possibility is to go to someone in charge, to rulers.

They want man to vindicate them. The only one who can vindicate them and say you're good, you're right, is man. To say they're right, they need that, they can't live without that.

[17:13] That's what it is to have the fear of man. It's your heart is needing men. So, do you have to have people approve of you?

Do you have to have people vindicate you? Can you live without someone saying you're right? Or do you crave it and you can't live without it? Another way this looks, is you can't say sorry. You can't appear to be wrong. You can't be wrong. Well, why is that? Because, well, you need man's approval.

You have to have it. You need man's vindication. So many seek audience with a ruler, but it is from the Lord that you get justice ultimately. Now, just think about what Jesus did in this regard.

He was getting accused. He was being misunderstood. He was being abused. People were mistreating and insulting and abusing him all so unfairly.

[18:20] Remember what he said in John chapter 10. He said, you know, I've done lots of good works. I've done lots of great miracles, miracles from the father. For which one of these are you going, are you stoning me?

I've done all of these good things. So which one are you stoning me for? So do you get the picture? For good, he was insulted. For good, he was threatened.

So how did he handle that? How did he handle that predicament? That situation? Where did his heart take him? Did his heart take him to man?

And I have to convince them that I'm a good guy? Well, Peter tells us when they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate.

When he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

[19:23] He did exactly what Proverbs 29, 26 is talking about. He entrusted himself. That is such a beautiful word. He just, he put himself completely in the Lord's hands.

He gave himself entirely into God's hands. He didn't argue. He didn't fight. He didn't need their vindication. He didn't need their approval. His heart, you see, it wasn't tuned to them.

It was entirely tuned to his father. And he was saying to himself as he was crucified, as he was insulted, as he lived as a man of sorrows, he said to the, that the Lord will give me justice.

I can trust myself to him. And he left it at that. No threats. No retaliation. When he was put on trial, he had very, very little to say in his defense.

He didn't need to. It's exactly what we saw in Daniel chapter 3 of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Remember, they were just drugged before the king. And the king is saying, hey guys, you have to do this.

[20:33] And if you don't do this, we're going to throw you into the furnace. And I wonder, did you catch, maybe you didn't, but this is what they said.

We don't need to defend ourselves to you. What a strange thing to say. We don't need to defend ourselves to you.

Their answer and their response, they weren't desperate for the king's vindication.

They weren't desperate for the king's approval. They weren't desperate for the king's protection. It's almost like, and it really is, they didn't care.

They didn't care. We don't need to defend ourselves to you. We're trusting the Lord.

[21:34] And we're so committed to him, even if he doesn't save us from that furnace, we're still, we're not, we're not bowing down. The fear of man is where you need to have justice from men.

You have to have their approval. You want their praise. That's another way the fear of man looks. I want their praise. I'm afraid of their condemnation, their insults.

Now, you want their praise. It's not so much that it's nice when it comes, but it's the driving motive of your hearts. That's the, that's where the fool is at.

This is the driving motive of your heart. Wasn't this the Pharisees? Sin. everything was oriented for men, for men's consumptions, for men's eyes.

So their good deeds were done, not because they were good, not because they pleased the Lord, but they were done in order for people to see them.

[22 : 36] So their worst fear was that people wouldn't see them. Their worst fear was that people wouldn't, would suddenly start seeing, oh, maybe these guys are not as good as we thought, or maybe they aren't the best anymore.

They loved being considered the holiest and the righteous, the most righteous and the best of them all. And so what that worked in them was envy and hatred and hypocrisy.

Of course, they're hypocrites because they're really filled with dead men's bones, and that's the one thing you can't let anyone see. And so you hide it, hide it from others, you hide it from yourself, and it's all because they wanted and craved the praise of men.

And Jesus says, that's precisely why you can't see me. You can't understand me. You can't see glory when it's standing in front of you.

It's because of where you want your praise to come from. And again, it's not because you simply want praise. Wanting to be praised is not the bottom line problem. John 5, 44, how can you believe?

[23 : 50] This is a question of they are unable to believe. How can you believe if you accept praise from one another yet make no effort to obtain praise that comes from the only God?

See, it's not that you just want praise. It's where you want it from. God's and it had blinded them. Their hearts are facing the wrong way.

That's the point. Their hearts are completely facing towards men and so of course they can't see God and they can't understand God and they can't see glory when it's standing right in front of him.

They're too busy slapping each other on the back and themselves on the back in order to see the son of God, the God that they had longed for and wanted and they said they loved.

They couldn't see him. Fear of men. It's wanting praise from men. Fear of men is trusting men for success.

[24 : 56] Judah and Israel were constantly trusting in other countries to come through for them. So they're saying, hey, we're in big trouble here with Babylon. We need the other superpower to protect us.

So let's go down to Egypt and get their protection. And the Lord says Egypt is a splintered reed. You lean on that and it will just go right into your hand. It will break and you will be injured for it.

That's the fear of man. Where am I going to get help from? How am I going to succeed? Who's going to give me a leg up? Who's going to protect me? Who's going to keep me? Who's going to help me succeed?

And I'm looking all around me at other people. And not to the Lord. And you know what? Ultimately, the fear of man is choosing sides.

It's choosing a side. And I think there's a connection again to the last proverb in this section. You see verse 27, the very last of all of the regular proverbs.

[26 : 02] and it's about choosing sides. It's about picking teams. It's about what are you going to do? The righteous detest the dishonest and the wicked detest the upright.

there is a mutual, ongoing, and irreconcilable difference between the righteous and the wicked. Man fears and God fears. Man trusters and God trusters. it goes all the way back to the garden of Eden.

This is part of God's saving a remnant. He says, I will put enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. This is something the Lord does because naturally we're all in this wicked and we all love wickedness and he's saying, no, I'm going to separate a group out of that group and guess what?

There is going to be an ongoing enmity. Just as the seed of the woman, Jesus Christ, has enmity towards Satan, so all the children of the seed of the woman will have enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.

[27 : 28] And so the fools hate the wise. You see that in Proverbs. The fools are not just nonchalant about wise people. They don't like them.

And when they cross paths and the wise people get in their way, they don't like them. They take it personally. The fools hate the wise. And you know what? In certain ways, the feelings are mutual. The wise say stone is heavy and sand a burden, but provocation by a fool is heavier than both. When the fool is provoking the wise person, the wise person just isn't no big deal.

This weighs on him. There's enmity. So what I'm saying is there's no real getting along ultimately between man fearers and God fearers, man trusters and God trusters, because fearing man is choosing a side.

Do you see that? You're choosing the creature. You're choosing Satan, the creature, who would put himself above God.

[28 : 39] It's to make man your God, to make man your goal, to make man your hope and your salvation. And James makes it very clear the friend of the world is the enemy of God.

You can't serve two masters. You're either going to have one master or you're going to have hundreds of masters.

You're going to either have God or man, but you are going to choose. You'll hate one or the other. And so to fear man is to functionally worship man above God.

And Proverbs says that is the very heart of folly, to exchange the glory of God for the creature. It's the height of insanity to put the creature above God. And from that choice, all folly follows. That's the fear of man.

[29 : 42] So let's move on. The fear of man will prove to be a snare, a trap. Fear of man will paralyze you. Fear of man will catch you. It will hold you. It will control you.

That's the idea behind the snare. Have you ever seen in real life, not like even on TV, but in real life, an animal in a trap.

And I'm not even talking about one of those nice little rodent traps where they're in that box and they're just sitting there. I'm talking about one of the old fashioned, like in the claws of the trap. One time I saw a possum in a trap.

and it was a terrible thing to see. The animal was beside himself with terror. It was frantic and it was desperate and soon it was dead.

It couldn't escape. It couldn't go back in time and rethink its actions. It was stuck and it was doomed. Now that's the picture that this verse is putting.

[30 : 49] This is where the fear of man will do. It will prove to be a snare. A catch. A trap. And so inside of that, just get inside for a moment of what it's like to be that possum.

Frantic. Beside yourself. Not in your right mind. Hopeless. Desperate. And that's where the fear of man will take you. It promises life.

That's the that's the problem with all sorts of traps. It's because it promises something. But it's death. So the fear of man is not a growing thing.

It's not a living thing. It's not how humans thrive and survive. It is a dying thing. We saw that today that selfishness is something that just withers you away.

love grows you. Love makes you expansive. And so your life and your love expands into lots of people and selfishness withers you down to nothing.

[31 : 57] Well, that's the same thing here. Trusting the Lord becomes an expansive, growing, safe, beautiful thing. But the fear of man is a dying thing, a shrinking thing, a withering thing.

So the Pharisees thought that the praise of man was what was going to give them life to satisfy them, but there was real glory right in front of them. The God that they said they loved and the God they said they would serve came to them and talked to them and they hated him and they killed him.

The fear of man had so trapped them and twisted them and shrunk them that Jesus says you can't, how can't you believe? You can't be saved.

The fear of man can so work on you that you can be so turned away from God that when even Jesus comes to you, you don't see him. Fear of man will keep you from saving your own soul.

If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, that's fear of man. The son of man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his father's glory and with the holy angels.

[33 : 14] Jesus is trying to out scare the world. The world says you give yourself to Jesus and we are so going to embarrass you. And Jesus says if you give yourself to the world, I will so embarrass you in front of the angels.

I will ignore you. I will act as if I never knew you. fear of man can trap you in fear of man.

It's a trap. Fear of man can keep you from heaven. We talk about the dangers of peer pressure and things like that.

Let's just extrapolate that, pull that out. The greatest danger of peer pressure and giving into it is you end up in hell. the fear of man can trap you in other situations, into situations where you never wish you were.

You remember the very, very first lesson that the father had to teach his son in Proverbs chapter 1. It went something like this, my son, if sinners entice you to do not give in to them, if they say come along with us, don't do it.

[34 : 27] And it was more or less this lesson about don't join a gang of thugs and robbers. And most people would say, well, that's kind of obvious.

Maybe, maybe it is, but you know what that picture is doing? It's putting in big, large letters this, this lesson. It's making this lesson clear.

It's getting to the heart of the struggle. There's this choice. You're going to choose to go with them or you're going to fear the Lord. It's putting that choice in very stark terms.

And his lesson is simple. Don't join them. And it's interesting what he says is going to happen.

Because really, they're setting a trap for themselves.

He says, they're spreading a net for their own feet. How useless it is to spread a net in full view of the birds. These men lie in wait for their own blood. We're talking about traps and snares.

[35 : 27] And what ends up happening? They're caught. trapped. They're trapped. And they are their very own undoing. Now, look at the verse, verse 24, 29, 24.

This talks about this exact kind of situation that you're going to get yourself into. The accomplice of a thief is his own enemy. That's Proverbs chapter one.

It's his own enemy. He's put under oath and dare not testify. He's caught in a complete legal bind. No matter what he says, he's in trouble.

You know, no one's ever had to say, well, I'm innocent and I don't want to defend myself, but this guy is so guilty, he has nothing that he could possibly say that will help himself out. It will only make things worse.

And the point of this is he wasn't even the ringleader. He's just the accomplice of the thief. He's going along with this guy. And now he can't even dare to defend himself.

[36 : 33] My point is, the fear of man will put you into situations where you never want to be. Like this, in a complete legal bind with nothing to say to defend yourself.

But how about other things? How many young men and young women and older men and older women trapped themselves because they give in to the fear of man?

So a young lady does something that she knows she shouldn't because she wants that guy to like her and when she's pregnant, he's gone and she's trapped. Or people get caught spending money they don't have to impress People and now they're caught and they're trapped in debt.

They're so high in debt they can't breathe. Why? Because they want to impress these people. The trap could be as simple as your whole life you are just too busy.

It's too hectic. Why? You're running yourself ragged. Because you can't say no. There's this person and they just can't say no to anyone.

[37 : 49] Can't say no to people and so now they're overwhelmed. They have a million things to do. And they're starting to cut corners. And priorities are starting to slip.

And they're starting to mess with things they shouldn't be messing with. And the fear of man has you. Because you can't say no. It can be in other ways.

It can be, it can just make you ineffective in the service that God has called you to do. So Israel is outside of the promised land.

The calling, the job in front of them is clear. Go up and take it. And they won't.

They don't. They can't. They're not there. Why? They're afraid of the giants. They're afraid of the men, the cities. They see all of these things. And so now they're paralyzed. They're completely ineffective.

[38 : 55] That's what the fear of man will do. It will do that even in Christians. God calls us to do something. And we're so bound up in the fear of man that it makes us unable to do it. It makes us ineffective.

I think that was part of the danger that Timothy was facing. You know, Timothy was probably, we don't know a whole lot about him and we don't want to read too much into it, but he was probably not a naturally courageous, confident, dynamic personality.

And he's in Ephesus, I believe, and suffering is starting to break out. And this is 2 Timothy. And Paul is now, Paul is getting taken away from him. Paul is now in the last months or so of his life. And I think all of that is enough really to put Timothy out of sorts. I know it would be enough for me. Now there's this fear of what they're going to say, what those people are going to do, or the fear of, oh no, I'm left without my mentor.

I'm left without someone I can talk to. And Paul says to Timothy in 2 Timothy, brother, I love you. I cry for you. Your mom and your grandmother and now you all have this living faith.

[40 : 09] You have this, brother, remember that. And fan into flames the gift that God has given you. Don't let it die out. What was that suffering, that fear was threatening to squash Timothy's gift.

And that's when Paul says, for God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline, sober-mindedness. Later, he tells Timothy to keep your head in all situations.

Well, if you're all afraid and frantic, you can't keep your head. So why does Paul have to say all that to Timothy? Because no doubt there was a real danger that fear would completely sideline Timothy from his mission.

Fear would take him out. God had called him. He needed to act. He needed to keep teaching. He needed to keep preaching. He needed to keep going. But fear would sideline Timothy if he didn't find help in the Holy Spirit, help in the Lord.

Now, isn't that us? Isn't that our temptation? If it's not yours, it surely is mine. And moms, I think of you.

[41 : 24] God has given you this calling. And it's hard. God calls you to have those hard conversations. God calls you to knock on the doors and go into rooms and have difficult conversations with teenagers and that they might not be all that interested in talking to you.

And you want them to like you and you don't want to annoy them. And it's hard to do the right thing. But if you give into that fear, you're going to completely become ineffective as a mom.

You'll be trapped. You'll be paralyzed. paralyzed. And you won't be doing what God has called you to do. Now, it's a battle. It's a battle.

Now, what's the answer? We're almost done. What's the answer? How do you escape this trap? We're going to see most of it next week, but here's the answer. You have to trust in the Lord. Put on the gospel.

In the gospel, who do we most fear? We fear who's our judge? Well, there's only one judge. We answer to him. We don't answer to them.

[42 : 39] Who calls us? Not all these people. Them or him, ultimately. Who's our protector and our provider? God is.

Not them. Who is our righteousness? Who is our vindication? We sang it this morning in 429 about Jesus blood and righteousness.

This is all my glorious dress. We just sang his robes for mine. I wear Christ. So who will bring any charge against me?

He's vindicated me. In Christ, God has become your loving, compassionate father. And so his pleasure is your joy. We saw that this morning too.

His pleasure is in our welfare. That's the nature of love. That's the very nature of God to want to make others happy, make others joyful.

[43 : 41] So his pleasure is my welfare. He delights to do us good. Now do you see how drinking that in and putting that on and talking that into yourself that frees you in a very real sense?

I think C.S. Lewis said something like this, that the gospel makes us so we don't need people. We need people less, but we love them more.

We need them less to do the saving and the vindicating and the protecting and the providing. We need them less, but we can love them more.

So we don't need their smile, we don't fear their frown if God is for us, who can be against us. And so the gospel trusting the Lord moment by moment, calling down that blessing upon us, frees us to do hard things.

And it frees us to make wise decisions. Wise decisions that are good for us, even in our own best interest. To say no to people. To say no to I'm not going to spend my money, I can't do that.

[44 : 52] It frees us to make wise decisions. Well, why? Because there's the sense that the Lord's love is all over me in my life.

You see, it's that heart that's directed to him. It's tuned to him. He's playing the strings of our heart. So the gospel is the answer to the fear of man. Maybe you need to go home and put this on. Maybe you need to go home and think about this tonight. What are some of the ways, and there's probably others, that the fear of man is trapping me?

And now, how in Jesus is God setting me free? Where is he promising? What promises are mine that is setting me free? And then, you know, just to consciously, when you find your heart directed and fearing man, to pull it away and direct it to the Lord.

And you live to him. Well, let's pray. Lord, we confess that the fear man is very much an ongoing struggle in all of our lives.

[46 : 21] This manward direction, this manward concern, that's not out of love, but it's out of selfishness.

And we confess that to you. We are so far from where we want to be and we need to be. We're so far from where you are calling us to be. But thank you that you have called us and you are calling us forward into trusting you, calling us out of those traps that we found ourselves in, calling us out of that deadness of just living to men.

And you're calling us to life, you're calling us to freedom, you're calling us to wisdom, and you are not only calling us, you are helping us and you are leading us and you are holding us.

So thank you and we would pray just help us more, help us more, tune all of our hearts more and more to you.

That's my prayer in Jesus' name, amen.