

The Fear of Man

by Mason Vann

The sermon emphasizes the importance of not fearing men, but rather fearing God and trusting in His power and provision.

Scripture: Exodus 20:19-20, Matthew 9:37 - 10:16

Topics: "Persecution", "Evangelism"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares stories from Christians in Bangladesh who face persecution for their faith. He describes how these believers become Christians, get baptized, and then face rejection and violence from their families and communities. The speaker then moves on to discuss the mission of the sent out ones, as described in Matthew 10:1-15. He emphasizes the need for workers in the harvest and instructs them to preach the kingdom of heaven, heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and cast out demons. The sermon concludes with a discussion on the fear of man and the importance of not being afraid, as nothing concealed will remain hidden.

Transcript

Well, it's good to be with you here today. As Brother Bob said, maybe I could share a couple of things about you from my recent trip with HeartCry to India. You may remember if you get the HeartCry magazine that James Dawley and Joseph Kennedy are over that work and there are various different places where HeartCry is in India and kind of that area of the world in Bangladesh and Nepal and a couple of places around there.

And the purpose of the trip was to go over there and to encourage the missionaries and to really talk about some foundations of what missionaries are and what missions is all about. And so to talk about what is a missionary, what are the qualifications for a missionary, how should you proceed. I mean, India, it's just almost suffocating the need that's there.

The greatest strip of unreached people, that is the most people per capita in a given location of unreached people is actually in India. And it's in a place, I believe it's a strip from Delhi to Calcutta, a whole area through there that is just totally void of the Gospel. And so with need like that, it's very easy to fall into pragmatism.

And so we were there encouraging in that respect. And there's more that could be said about India, but maybe some of the things that could be edifying for you was what happened in Bangladesh. We went over

to Bangladesh to encourage the Christians.

They're very persecuted there, which I had no idea that that was going on in Bangladesh, but they are very persecuted. And they called us, they want us to come to this village. There was an older man and an older woman in this village, and they were husband and wife, and the wife had died.

And it was causing all kinds of problems because both of them were Christians. And the Hindus, which is what the villages consist of, did not want the Christian woman buried in the community graveyard, so the man had to bury her in his garden. Well, that also caused problems because of their superstitions.

They thought that the deals with the spirits coming back and haunting the village and all kind of just wacko stuff from Hinduism. And so they called us out there to encourage this man and to encourage the church because the church is just under a lot of pressure. So we walk into this little bitty deal that's where they meet, and it's, of course, dirt floors and bamboo and just a roof, just all kinds of stuff.

It looked like whatever they can find, they just kind of nailed it up there to the roof to try to keep the elements out. So we sit down with them, and they start sharing their testimony. And so you get to the first guy, and he starts sharing that when he became a Christian, the standard thing that happens is that they get kicked out of their house, and they're made to live in this kind of little shanty shack right in front of the house, and it's a shameful thing.

It's a shaming technique. And then they get beaten in the square. So this is what happened.

The first Christian, he shares this. Well, you come to the next guy, and his mom is actually a Christian, and his dad's died. So they basically have Christians in their house, so when people get kicked out of the little shanties and they're out on the street and they don't have anywhere to live, they take them in.

And so it's like that verse there in Hebrews that says, you know, the Hebrews were suffering shame partly by being persecuted and all these things and partly by becoming partakers with those so treated. So it's a perfect picture of what that verse is all about. And so they just keep walking on down the line, and basically their stories were a broken record.

They become a Christian. They get baptized. They get kicked out of their house.

They can't eat with their family, and they get beaten. And that's life in Bangladesh as a Christian, at least in that village. And there's good reason to believe that that's the way it is in a lot of places.

And so we went from there just to try to encourage them. For instance, they would tell us what the villagers are saying. And so one guy says that the villagers all came to him and said, what good is it going to do for you if you become a Christian and you lose all your friends? So how did Christ rebut that? Well, what's it going to profit you if you gain the whole world and lose your own soul? And it was amazing.

As they marched down the line, every single one of them, the Hindus would be saying right the opposite of something Jesus said verbatim. I mean, it was incredible. And so we were able to share some verses in that respect.

And as we were there, there's a king of the village, which I don't know how it works. He calls himself a king. And the village, I guess, has maybe 700 to 1,000 people in it or something like that.

But he had his assistant call one of the Christians and basically say, if you don't stop evangelizing, then we're going to beat you or kill you. And so that happened while they were sharing their testimonies. He left and came back and shared that.

So we go out of the village and we're walking around and trying to encourage some of the Christians there. And we get to the man whose wife had died. And so we gather with him and we pray and we try to encourage him.

And as we're walking back out to the van, we notice that there's a mob of about 30 to 35 to maybe 40 Hindu men. And they're angry. And so they're just kind of pacing back and forth.

And I knew that there was going to be trouble. So we continue to walk out there and kind of make our way, kind of bending off like we would go towards the van. And they begin shouting.

And they're not really shouting at us. They're shouting at a younger guy. He's actually younger than I am.

And he had been passing out Bibles. And so he kind of makes his way out into this crowd of men. And they're just... I mean, one guy will shout something.

The other guy will shout something. And two or three guys. And I mean, it was just kind of a mob mentality type thing.

They were feeding off of each other. Well, that went on for a while. And eventually, the youngest... Well, he's not the youngest.

He's actually 30. But he's the most malnourished looking. I wish I had a picture of him.

But he's a Christian. And he's a native to Bangladesh. He comes walking out and kind of quietly makes his way into the crowd and says a couple of words.

And they just go wild. And the only thing that I can figure, as he said, is I'm your man. I'm the one who's been giving Bibles to your sons.

And so these guys are just going wild. And then the Hindu priest shows up. And that fuels them even more.

And these men, their sons were standing kind of on the edge. They weren't participating at all. They were 14 or 15, and they were scared to death.

You could see it on their face. The Hindu men would come over and grab their sons, drag them over, and kind of throw them down right before the Bangladesh Christian. And they were saying something like that.

And later I found out he was saying, is this the guy who's giving you Bibles that you're reading? And they would slowly nod their head. And then the men would throw them back out. And they would just go wild again.

So eventually, a long story short, what happens is they take this young guy, Malnourish, looks like he would just break by just looking at him. They move him to the edge of the mob, and they start marching him down the street. Now, you know, there's something really important here that you can see.

When you first become a Christian, sometimes you get these thoughts that just come out of nowhere. And you start hearing about these other religions, and you start thinking, you know, I mean, how do we know? How do we know? There are so many religions. How do we know that we've got the right one? You know, and you get these, especially you get these people that say, you know, that all religions are basically the same, and things like that.

Well, see, the problem is they've never had to live inside that worldview. They're like a bunch of kids that have tied up a rope swing on a broken branch. And the only reason that they still think that that was a good idea is because they've never got on it.

Because as soon as they put any weight on that branch, the whole business is going to come falling down. So you can get these professors in these colleges and friends and whatever who talk about, you know, all religions are basically the same. Well, they've never been to Bangladesh.

You tell Bangladesh Hindus that, you know, you're a lot like Christians, and they're going to kill you. And you go over there and you see the Muslim women who they've got that much cloth to look out of, and it's sweltering hot, and they're walking ten feet behind their husbands. And the Hindu women have these red marks down on their head because it's a sign that they must worship their husband.

All religions are not basically the same. And the only reason why people think that is ignorance. And I'm not saying that they're dumb, like that there's some kind of faculty that's missing in their mind.

It's just that you don't know. You've just never read their writings and you've never seen their worldview in practice. Well, right as this is happening, I honestly, because I was thinking, alright, we've got to get this guy out of here, and so I'm praying to the Lord and asking the Lord to do various things so that we can drag this guy away, get him in our van so they don't beat him.

The moment I prayed that, God brought to mind every instance of suffering in the book of Acts. And the Lord very clearly told me, no, my kingdom goes forth on the backs of people that suffer so that when everyone sees it, they'll know that it's not of man, it's of God. And immediately I knew, this guy's going to be beaten.

And so what do you do then? Well, you start praying, God, don't let his faith fail. But even with that prayer, God gave me assurance, no, blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and falsely say all kinds of things about you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for in the same way they treated the prophets who were before you.

Oh, the blessing of God on those people. The blessing of God. They don't know as much as we do doctrinally, but you can barely even look at their face.

They shine like the sun. And so here this little malnourished... I mean, honestly, the guy looks like he would break in half just as the wind blew, but here he goes marching out in front of this angry mob of Hindus that just wants to kill him. They're in just a demonic frenzy and all of the blessing of God is resting on this guy.

And it's a perfect picture of like a sheep led to the slaughter. He was silent. He's not making a lot of commotion.

He's not trying to stop them. He's not saying, well, you know, listen, I'm not really serious about this thing. No, he's just walking.

And right before he disappeared out of our sight, he turned around and right as he did, some guy hit him right in the face and his neck snapped back. And once again, he didn't say a word. He just turned the corner.

He knew exactly where they were going and he knew exactly what they were going to do. I thought maybe in sharing that, that there could be some stuff that we could bring out of the Word concerning the fear of man. Now that's a very stark picture of what could easily have become a play story.

You could subject yourself to the fear of man. You bend yourself because of what man is going to do to you or because of what man thinks about you. And so if you could turn with me to Matthew 10, verse 26.

Matthew 10, verse 26. Therefore, do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in darkness, speak in the light.

And what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul, but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both the soul and body and hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.

But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not fear. You are more valuable than many sparrows.

Let's pray. Father, these are Your people. A friend has come and I have no bread to set before them.

But You promised You would give the Holy Spirit to those who ask. Lord, I know I have nothing. But the disciples gave You the bread and You blessed it and You gave it back to them and they fed the people and everyone was satisfied.

God, would You carry Your people on this morning? Lord, would You conform them to the image of Christ? Lord, would You destroy idols in this place? God, would You let the fear of man appear as such foolishness and folly? Make us wonder why any man would ever fear men and not fear You. God, would You deliver? God, I ask for clear air this morning. Amen.

Well, maybe before we go into this text, I want to give you a little background because there's a lot here in this context that culminates in what Christ is going to say here. You don't have to turn back. I mean, you can if you want to, but back in 9.37-38, Jesus is talking about the need for workers in the harvest and this is what He said.

Then He said to His disciples, The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore, beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into the harvest. And so that's the backdrop that He's saying.

He's saying, listen, there is need. There is great need. Ask My Father to send out people into the harvest.

Then from chapter 10, verse 1-15, what He's doing is He is describing the mission of the sent out one. And He's telling them things. You know, He's saying, Go to the lost sheep of Israel.

Preach the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick. Raise the dead.

Cleanse the lepers. Cast out demons. Freely you have received.

Freely give. And He goes on and on. And so, first of all, He's saying, look, there's a need.

Then He sends them out and He describes what this mission is going to be all about. And then in verse 16, He says something very important. He says this, Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves.

So be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves, but beware of men. Basically, the rest of this chapter is what it is like to be a sheep in the midst of wolves. He describes it.

He gives antidotes against it. But basically, the rest of the discussion is going to center around, alright, this is what you are. So Christian, notice what you are.

You're a sheep. And notice what they are. They're wolves.

It's an either-or thing. You can't be one and the other. The closest a wolf ever gets to being a sheep is putting on sheep's clothing.

And we know what Christ had to say about that. It's an either-or thing. And this is what's amazing about it.

You know, we're going to go on to talk about the fear of men because in verse 26, Christ says, Do not fear them. But right here He says, Beware of men. So He says, Beware of men, but don't fear them.

That's very important. You know, the so-called early church fathers got it all wrong. They would live in these little caves for a while and then they decided they wanted to get martyred, so they'd march out in some square somewhere looking to be martyred.

They weren't bewareing of men. They weren't taking cautions against men. You know, it's pretty significant that Paul says he asked people to pray that he would be delivered from evil men.

Right down here in verse 23, he says, But whenever they persecute you in one city, flee to the next. Christ did not immediately go up to the feast. Paul was snuck through a hole in a wall.

So there is a sense in which we need to use sanctified common sense. We're not just going out looking to die. We're not going to make fools of ourselves.

Well, I'm just going to stand for Jesus. And so you do this thing that's just rash and you're not beingware of men and you make a fool of yourself and everybody's laughing and you think it's spiritual and it's not. Christ said, Blessed are you when you're persecuted and reviled and they falsely say all things against you because of Me.

Not because of your personality or because of your rashness. We need to use sanctified common sense. Beware of men, but don't fear them.

So he goes on. In 10, 16 through 25, once again, we're just giving an overview just so we can get the context. Jesus describes what life is going to be like in the midst of wolves.

And basically, He says this, your association with Me is going to warrant you the same treatment that I received. If they hated Me, they're going to hate you. And so He's telling you this is what it's going to be like.

Just so you don't go into this thing thinking it's going to be glamorous and it's going to be easy and that you're going to be able to fit everybody. By definition of a Christian, of what He is, you will not fit into the world. And if you do fit into the world and you get along with the world, it is just evidence that you are not in Christ.

Christ comes and makes people new and when He makes you new, it's like this brand new fountain. Man, you're spewing out righteousness all over the place. You can't help it.

It's the Spirit warring against the flesh. And He takes over the flesh and He wins and righteousness begins to come out of you. And it's not like you have to really grit your teeth and if you don't, it's going to fail and you're eventually going to fall away.

No, God has done something to you. He has made you a different thing. And because of that, there's going to be a clash with the world.

So He's just describing that. And it's against this background. It's against the fact that Christ has said, look, we need laborers.

Ask the Father for that. I'm going to send you out and this is what it's like. They're going to persecute you.

They're going to revile you. They're going to make you feel awkward. They're going to make you feel isolated.

Like you're weird and nobody wants to be around you. And He says, even against this black backdrop, do not fear men. Do not fear men.

First of all, what we need to do is we need to understand what it means to fear because you can get some wrong ideas. And because you get wrong ideas, you may get discouraged. I mean, over there in India, I could tell that when those angry Hindu men or some of the Bangladesh Christians thought they were going to come after them, I could see that there was a little bit of fear in their eyes.

In other words, there was a sensation. Their heart was beating fast. There was a lump in their throat.

But yet, they were not caving in to the desires of these men. They were not denying Christ. And a lot of times, you can get discouraged and you can feel like that you're a failure because you go to witness to somebody and your heart starts beating faster.

And you thought, well, if I was a good Christian, that wouldn't happen. Well, that's not necessarily what it means to fear a man. So let's look at this.

In the realm of fearing God and fearing men, fear is what causes an action. I used this phrase last night and I'll use it again. Fear is not the thing.

Fear is the thing that causes the thing. Now let's step back and talk about that. Sometimes my parents have a condo down on the beach and a lot of people, they'll sell down in Alabama.

There's not any beaches in Missouri. There'll be people with sailboats. Well, when I see a sailboat moving across the water, I don't know much else, but I do know this.

The wind's blowing. Now how do I know that the wind's blowing? Well, because the sailboat's moving, obviously. It's a sailboat.

It moves by the wind. And so the wind is the cause. The effect is that the sailboat moves.

And so that's why I say that you can know more about the fear of man by what it does than what it is. So it's like with Joseph's brothers. You know, it says there in Genesis, it says they hated him and could not speak a word about them.

Now that's very important. Now was it the fact that somehow their tongues were clipped and their tongues had weights on them? And Joseph's brothers, they were really wanting to say something good about these men, but they couldn't get it out because they just could not. I mean, there was a weight on their tongue.

Is that what was going on? No, obviously not. It was an inward disposition. Because they hated Joseph, they could not speak a good word about him.

Do you see what we're talking about there? Do you see how an inward disposition controls your action? That's very important because that's moving very close to what we're trying to communicate here on what it means to fear men. It's this inward disposition and it controls what you do. That's why I say that a person can say, I don't fear men, but you can watch them for a week and anybody can tell whether or not they fear men.

You can just tell by the way they act because their actions tell you about their heart. Here's a general definition just to kind of maybe solidify these things some more. You don't have to turn there.

Luke 1.12 An angel shows up when Zacharias is ministering and it says this, Zacharias was troubled when he saw him, the angel, and fear gripped him. Now there it is again. See? Fear grips you.

It controls you. It makes you do things. It is what causes your actions.

So once again, it grips. It's this inward disposition and it causes these actions. That's why you'll often see the word and associated with fear in the Bible.

This person feared and they did this. They did that. In the realm of God, in Genesis 22.12, he said, and this is God speaking, this is Abraham and Isaac and in that whole context of offering up Isaac, and he said, this is the Lord, do not stretch out your hand against the lad and do nothing to him for now I know that you fear God.

Well, fear is an invisible attribute in a lot of ways. How did he know? Since you have not withheld your son, your only son from me. He says, I know that you fear God.

How did he know? Because Abraham did not withhold his only son. You see, fear is an invisible attribute, but it never stays invisible for long. It's going to come out.

How about this? Psalm 43. He put a new song in my mouth. A song of praise to our God.

Many will see and fear and will trust the Lord. Fearing wasn't necessarily trusting God. Fearing was what caused trusting in God.

See, it's this inward disposition that leads to faith in God rather than fearing man. How about in the realm of man? John 12, 42 and 43. Nevertheless, many even of the rulers believed in him, but because of the Pharisees, they were not confessing him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.

In other words, they feared man. Now listen to this explanation. For, or because, or what is causing this, what's driving this, why are the Pharisees not confessing Christ? For they loved the approval of men more than the approval of God.

Now that's even getting closer to what we're after here. Am I pleasing men? Am I living for the approval of men? Or am I living for the approval of God? If I'm still seeking the approval of men, I am not a bondservant of Jesus Christ. Whose approval are you living for? Who is it that bends your will? What are the factors and the things that cause the things that you do? Is it the approval of man and what man thinks about you and they beat you into this mold and so that's how you act? That's the way you order your life by what everyone else is thinking about you or what they're not thinking about you? Or is it what God has said about you and what God approves of? It's very important.

How about this? Luke 16, 15, And He said to him, You are those who justify yourself in the sight of men, but God knows your heart. For that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God. Once again, are you seeking the justification of men? Or are you seeking the justification of God? Because everything that man approves of is detestable in God's sight.

It's an either-or. It's not a both-and. You can't ride the fence on this thing.

You're either going to live for the approval of men and that they justify you and declare what you do is wonderful and you know you have this cozy existence among men with a very abrasive... I mean, you know you're not right with God or either you're going to be over here with God and you're going to have a good, wholesome, you're going to be right with God, you're walking with God, and it's going to be hard with men. You have to pick here. Are you going to live for men? And it's going to be hard with God? Or are you going to live for God and it's going to be hard with men? It will be an either-or.

Now, in light of these things, and just to paint a backdrop, and that's what we've been trying to do of what it means to fear and establish what it actually is, we need strong medicine. We need something strong to anchor onto, to hold onto, in light of what a grave matter this is. Now, Christ is not the great physician simply because He diagnoses the problem.

Christ is also the great physician because He writes the correct prescription. You don't go to a doctor just to find out what's wrong with you and then he tells you you've got some kind of sickness and so then you go out on your own and try to figure out what kind of medicine you ought to start taking. That's not how it works.

No, you go to the doctor. He diagnoses you and then He tells you what's going to be strong enough medicine to cure your sickness. We can't just be pragmatic here.

You don't take Tylenol to cure cancer. Neither do you severely treat your body when you have a sin problem. Neither do you let go and let God when you've got a sin problem.

No, the Bible specifically has remedies for these things that we need cured of. And that's why Christ is the great physician. He administers this medicine.

He says, listen, this is going to be hard because you are standing against a multitude and this is how you're going to overcome it. And so these are the things that He says. Look in verse 26.

He says, Therefore, do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed or hidden that will not be known. Now, what are some things that are concealed or hidden at this time? Well, Paul calls sin, quote, things hidden because of shame over in 2 Corinthians 4. And then he says, Don't go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will bring to light the things hidden in darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts. What are some other things? Well, interestingly enough, the law written on the heart is a hidden thing in a lot of ways.

It says this, For when the Gentiles who do not have the law do instinctively the things of the law, these, not having the law, are a law to themselves, in that they show. Now, why do you have to show things? Because they're hidden. You can't see it.

I can't see the law written on your heart in a physical way, but you're going to show it. You show the work of the law having written on their hearts their conscience, either bearing witness and their thoughts alternately, accusing or else defending them on the day when, according to my Gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus. So that tells me something.

There is not a man on the face of the earth that I'm going to meet that does not have the law written on his heart. He knows good and well that there's a God, and he knows that he's in defiance of Him. It's like when I walked up into this frat house about six or seven months ago and everybody was, you know, drunk and everything else, and I'd come there to witness.

Well, everybody didn't start cheering and saying, oh man, we are so glad that you've come here to tell us the Gospel. What happens? Nobody will make eye contact with me. Everybody's looking down at the ground.

Some people are kind of slowly slipping out of the room. Well, who told them that it was wrong to do all the things that they were doing? I hadn't even said a word yet. You know the law's written on their heart.

They know good and well that they're in defiance against God. So that's a hidden thing, but it comes out. What else? How about this? The evil words that people say.

This is written about the wicked in Job 20. Evil is sweet in his mouth, and he hides it under his tongue. It's a hidden thing.

How about Matthew 12? But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they will give an accounting for in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned. That's somewhat hidden now, but it's coming out.

It's coming out. How about the hypocrisy in the false professing church? Or you can just say false religious people. It says this, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed and hidden that will not be known. If you're just a nominal religious person that comes to church, that's coming out. It can't be hidden.

It's going to come out. And if it doesn't come out here when time is going on, it's going to come out when time is finished. How about this? What a Christian is in Christ.

Now there's a lot on this, but just one. Colossians 3 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you will also be revealed with Him in glory. Now why do you need to be revealed? Because a lot of what you are in Christ is currently hidden.

The world can't see it as much. But there's going to come a day when God is going to point to that little Bangladesh Christian who's frail, who's falling to pieces, who all these Hindus are persecuting, and He's going to say at the end of time, I don't think you all have met my Son. And He's going to shine so bright that it's going to blind their eyes.

What you are in Christ is mostly revealed right now, but there is coming a day when it's going to come forth and the entire world is going to know. So don't fear men. How about this? Basically everything.

I mean, these verses could go on. 1 Timothy 5 The sins of some men are quite evident. I mean, they're evident.

Going before them to judgment, for others their sins follow after. Likewise, deeds that are good are quite evident, and those which are otherwise cannot be concealed. Well, what's the conclusion of this whole thing? Ecclesiastes 12 The conclusion, when all has been heard, is fear God and keep His commandments because this applies to every person.

For God will bring every act to judgment. Everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil, it's all coming out. Everything that's hidden is going to be revealed.

Well, what does this have to do? What is Christ saying here to us? Why is this strong medicine? And I'm going to be arguing throughout this little section here that these are not random at all. As a matter of fact, they're building on each other. But in this first one, about things that are hidden that are going to be revealed, basically it's this.

You know, it's a fearful thing that maybe those that are falsely accusing Christ and saying He has demons and calling Him all sorts of things, that these men could so persuade people of their lies that the truth is never known. And it's a fearful thing that you could live for the Lord the rest of your life and everybody around you just thinks you're an idiot and a fool and you're isolating yourself and you're sectarian because you don't go along with the rest of the religious world that's going to hell and you don't do all the things that they do. And it's a fearful thing that these people that are making these accusations could so persuade everyone else and the truth is absolutely never known.

But this is what Christ comes to you and says. He says, next verse, what I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light. And what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops.

Let them make fun of you. Let them mock you. Let them think that you're strange and that you're awkward, that you look like an alien and a stranger because this is all going to come out.

There's going to be a day like it says in Romans 8 when God marches His children forth and says, I want you to meet My Son. You laughed at Him. You mocked Him.

You called Him a liar. This is My Son. And that's the last thing they're going to see before God puts them in hell to make them an example of justice to what happens when people mistreat His children.

It's all coming out in the light. Everything's going to come out. If you're in a situation right now where you feel like I'm being inundated to be conformed to the image of everybody else around me, especially young people, I wish I could just move this back here and just talk to you because you are going to face this a lot more than most people.

But even people that are older, old-fashionedness can be because of the fear of man. Customs and rituals, all these things, all that can be because of the fear of man. But I want to encourage you.

It's all going to come out. Give yourself to God. Let them mock you.

Let them think you're dumb. Let them isolate you. Lose all of your friends.

There is a day that's going to come when God is going to vindicate every bit of it. Every bit of it. It's going to all come out.

Nothing's going to be hidden that's not going to be revealed. It's all coming out. And that should be a warning to lost religious people.

It's coming out. Well, what's the connection? Because Christ goes on and this is what He says. He says, Do not fear those who can kill the body but are unable to kill the soul, but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both the soul and body in hell.

Well, what's the thought here? Well, like I said, He's building. This is not random. These are not verses on an island.

He's progressing to something. He's saying this. You know, as a Christian, you're associated with Me.

And by definition of your association, you can't get along with the world no matter how hard you try if you're a Christian. You just can't do it. And so everything that you do in righteousness, when they mock you, that's all going to come out.

Everything that's hidden is going to be revealed. And it's not just going to be revealed on an island somewhere. It's going to be revealed before an Almighty God.

And since these things are so, don't fear man who can kill the body, but fear the One who can kill the body and soul in hell. In other words, everything that's hidden that's going to be revealed is coming out before the Almighty One with whom you have to do. He's the God of all creation.

He's the One that's commanding the dawn. He's determining the weather. He is the One whose breath you just borrowed.

Everything depends on Him. All things are upheld by the power of His Son's Word. That's power.

He commands all things. Nothing escapes His grasp. He knows all things exhaustively.

Nothing is outside of His control. So who should you fear if all things are going to come out before this One? The psalmist says this, Psalm 56, verse 4, In God whose word I praise, in God I have put my trust, I shall not be afraid. What can mere man do to me? It's man or it's God.

Who are you going to fear? Who are you going to bend your life before? Whose approval are you going to seek? Now, I think this next verse is pretty amazing because it tells us something. Like I said originally,

you know, you can even have... You know, when I witness sometimes in the gas station or whatever, it's not like my heart rate is as low as it's ever going to be. There's times when I get nervous.

There's times when I get a lump in my throat. And maybe as I grow in grace, my heart rate is going to drop some when I witness. But as of where it's at right now, I still get nervous when I'm telling people about the Gospel.

But you can have a carnal sense, a sensational, something that's purely superficial of a little bit of fear and still not fear men. Now, I think we can prove this from Exodus 20, 19 and 20. Let me just read this.

He says, Then they said to Moses, Speak to us yourself, and we will listen, but do not let God speak to us lest we die. And Moses said to the people, Do not be afraid, for God has come in order to test you, in order that the fear of Him may remain upon you. Okay, Moses says, Don't be scared.

God came to make you fear Him. That's pretty amazing. He's saying, listen, yeah, I mean, this is sensational.

Sinai is just shaking like a leaf in a hurricane. Lightning is clashing down. Thunder is clapping.

All of these sensational things are happening. But Moses is saying, Look, don't be afraid. God's come so that you would fear Him.

So that you would bend towards Him. That your affections would be wrapped around His will. That His desire and your desire become one.

You love what He loves. You hate what He hates. Don't be afraid.

God's come to make you fear. That's pretty amazing. Henry Schugel, I don't know if I'm saying that right, he said this, He said, It's the highest folly to regulate our actions by any other standard than that by which they must be judged.

If everything is coming out before the One with whom we have to do, God Almighty that commands the dawn, who should you fear? Even if you do still get nervous around people and you think, man, there's a decision that I need to make, and when I make it, everybody's going to think I'm an idiot. And you feel your heart start to race, and you feel your mind starts to get cluttered, and your palms get sweaty. There's in one sense that that's okay, but don't submit to the fear of men.

Don't bend towards their approval. Stay fast on God. Stay fast on God.

Well, he goes on to say this, Are not two sparrows sold for a cent, and yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your father? But the very hairs on your head are numbered, so do not fear, for you're more valuable than the sparrows. Now what does this have to do with anything? Well, there's basically three things I need for sanity. Well, there's a lot more than that, but there's three things that are really key ingredients in my life that when I start feeling shaky, I go back to.

Number one, I need a God that knows everything. I need Him to know everything, because if He doesn't know everything, there may be something that escapes Him that He doesn't take into factor when He tells me what it is that I need to do to beat this thing, to walk with Him. Well, we know we have a God like that, but even if you did have somebody that knows everything, let's just suppose you had a God that knows everything, but He doesn't have the power to change things.

In other words, He can see this thing coming at you, and He knows what needs to happen, but He just doesn't have enough power to affect it. Well, we know we don't have a God like that. Don't fear Him who can kill the body.

Fear Him who can kill the body and soul and hell. He's the God that has all power. But there's also something else that I need.

I need to know this One loves me. There's a sense in which you can have a person, a God, because you can't have a person that can do this. You could have a God that knows everything exhaustively and has all of the power to do whatever it is that needs to be done, but here's the terrifying thing.

What if that God's not good? What if that God uses His omniscience and His omnipotence, His all-knowingness and His all-powerfulness to affect evil? What if He sees something coming and He tells me what's wrong so that I'll fall into the snare? Well, that's where Christ is going here. He's saying, listen, everything that's hidden is going to come out into the light. And it's not going to come out on an island.

It's going to come out with Him to whom you have to do. The God that commands the dawn. The God that puts the stars in the sky.

The God that makes the grass grow. The God that knows when sparrows fall. Well, that's the one who it's coming out before.

But don't fear, because this all-powerful God before whom everything is coming out, this is the one who has set His love on you. And He has simply said, I love this one. And I'm going to see this one through.

That's power. That's power. Now, this is pretty amazing.

He starts talking about hair. What does hair have to do with theology? Well, it has a lot to do with theology, actually. He says this, but your very hairs are numbered.

Now, what is He trying to demonstrate here? Well, I think it's this. He has to keep His promise. In Luke 21, 18, He says, not yet, not a hair of your head will perish.

Because He made that promise, God's telling you, look, not a hair on your head is perishing. It's going to be okay. I'm going to know because I numbered every single one of them.

Does that mean that there are going to be Christians in church history that don't lose their head? Well, obviously not. There's a lot of people who've lost a lot of hair in a physical sense. But God's communicating something to you.

He's saying, my love is so deep you can't even understand it. Just stand in it. Bask in it.

Because once again, we're right back to the crux of the issue, the central thing about this entire discussion. Are you living for the approval of men? Are you going to live what God has to? Now, if you're outside Christ, I think the advice can be the same thing. Are you going to live for men? Are you going to come and enter into this love of God through repentance and faith? Pour yourself out before Him and say, God, I have sinned.

I have feared men my entire life. My entire life has been dictated by what everyone else has said about me. But I am coming to You.

Would You do something for me? And God will do something for you, and you can enter into this thing. God has set His love on His children. Now, this can be illustrated several ways.

One of the most common ways it can be illustrated is just like with a dollar. Well, what's the difference between a \$1 bill and a \$20 bill? Well, you can obviously say \$20. But what if we just talked about it from a physical standpoint? I mean, we're not talking about value.

We're just talking about paper right now. You've got this paper that's about that big, and it's got some little scribbles on it. It's got some little figures and scribbles and things.

Then you've got this other paper, and it's about that big, and it's got different little scribbles on it. Well, what's the difference between those two? Well, there's not any difference at all. They're made up of paper and ink and whatever else the government uses for security.

But in one level of talking about it, you can say they're basically the exact same makeup. Well, what makes the difference? Well, some high official said, that right there is worth a dollar, and that right there is worth \$20. You see, it's outside of this paper and ink.

Paper and ink doesn't have anything to do with it at all. It's this official that has simply said, that right there is worth \$20, and that right there is going to be worth \$1. And that's what God's done to you.

You know the reason why, if you've failed in recent times on this deal of the fear of man, even as a Christian, a Christian can cave sometimes, it happens. You know the reason why you don't have to fear? It's because His love is outside of you. It's like Bunyan, he's struggling like crazy with assurance and whether or not God loves him, and then all of a sudden this phrase is impressed on his mind, Thy righteousness is in heaven.

Well, if it's in heaven, that means I can't do anything to it. If God's love is in heaven, if it is positioned through His Son, that means I can't do anything to it. If I fail, God still loves me the same.

If I don't fail, God still loves me the same. He has simply declared, I love this one. This one has value to me.

That's powerful. You do not have to submit to the approval of men. You can do better than that.

There's something so much more grand and glorious and fantastic than somebody else saying that you've got value, or that you fit into their mold and way of thinking. There's a God that everything's going to be revealed before. He has the power of everything, and for His children, He simply said, I love that one, and I'm placing my value on that one, and I'm going to see that one to the very end.

Well, in conclusion, the fear of man is a snare. It's a snare. It's what Proverbs says.

But Proverbs 25, 15 tells us how we are to deal with snares. My eyes are continually towards the Lord, for He will pluck my feet out of the net. So what do you do? Well, I need to start getting concerned.

I need to start looking at all these details, and I need to really plan out everything that's going on, and I've got to pull myself up by my bootstraps because I've got to stop fearing men. That's not the answer at all. You look towards the Lord.

You look towards the Lord, and as you are changed from glory to glory, as you begin to behold Christ, you don't need anything else. You don't have to have the approval of men anymore. You don't have to bend towards their will and have them stamp their approval in everything that you do because you see He is all-glorious.

He has paid for your sins. He is ruling and reigning at the right hand of God. He is coming to judge the world, and He is the One who has said, I love you.

You've got value. Don't worry about them. Let them do whatever they want to.

They're a bunch of wolves. You follow Me. You fear Me.

Father, I ask that You would be gracious to us. God, we need a vision of You. We need to see Christ.

That's our greatest need. Our greatest need this morning is not to hear a man, but to hear from God. Lord, would You change us and do what is needed.

Lord, I pray that You would be pleased to save someone out of the fear of men. Amen.

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