

The Fear of Man Lays a Snare

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[0 : 00] Let me begin by telling you, I guess I can share with you a little bit about myself, and some of you may know some of these things, some of these things about me know a little bit about my life story, but I'm a man who has spent most of his life controlled by fear.

Really controlled by fear. And the thing about that is that I didn't even know it. I was controlled by fear. I didn't know I was controlled by fear.

And this particular sort of fear, it became, over the course of my life, became just sort of this slowly growing, slowly increasing background radiation that you don't notice.

But it's in the air you breathe, it's in the water you drink, it's in everything you eat. It contaminates and poisons everything about you. And that's what it did to me.

It poisoned my relationship with my God. And it poisoned my relationship with my friends and my family. And this radiation deformed me from the shape that God made me to be as his image bearer.

[1 : 10] And the fear that I'm talking about, maybe you could call it a monster with a dozen heads. Except it's more than just a dozen. It seems like it has hundreds of heads. And each head of this monster has its own name.

Jealousy, resentment, cowardice, people-pleasing, hungry for love. In our text this morning, from Proverbs chapter 29, it gives this monster a name.

The monster's name is the fear of man. The monster's name is the fear of man, or the fear of other people. And here's how this showed up in my life. I wanted other people to like me.

More than that, I wanted them to affirm me. I wanted them to love me. Most of us, we know someone who can... Most of us know someone who can walk into a room, and immediately the whole room will light up.

And I wanted to be that guy. Right? And I knew... And I knew a guy who was like that. Right?

[2 : 16] I was jealous of him. We didn't get along very well, actually, until the Lord brought this to my life, because I was jealous of him. Because I wanted to be like him. And I resented the charisma that he had.

I sharpened my sense of humor. I found ways to show off what little artistic skill that I have. I snatched up opportunities to show that I was the smartest person in the room.

It might not surprise you to know that none of it worked. Right? All of my efforts actually had the exact opposite effect of what I intended. It turns out people don't like a guy like that.

Right? I... A lot of my jokes went... A lot of my jokes, they went too far. They were... They were offensive.

Or inappropriate. Or they were appropriate in a certain context. But then I told them in front of... I told them in other contexts where it wasn't appropriate. And so I offended people with the jokes that I was telling.

- [3 : 22] I undermined other people. Because I was in a position of leadership. And in my church. And by using my position of influence on a church staff, I used that to try to show off my plans and ideas and how good they were.
- And I ended up undermining other people's leadership and opportunities to lead. I alienated other people. And I did that by correcting them or dismissing their observations when I sensed that they didn't have my expertise or they didn't have a clear knowledge of what was true.
- And I put people down that way. And I had a couple friends in my life. Friends who loved me enough. Friends who were bold enough.
- To sit down with me one day. And pretty much call me out on all of this. And they were much better friends to me than I felt like they were at the time.
- I'll tell you what. It was hard to hear. I was crushed. I was absolutely crushed. To the point of tears. To learn how much I had offended. How much I had undermined.
- [4 : 25] How much I had alienated the people whose approval I craved. And so my pastor at the time, he recommended a book for me by the biblical counselor Ed Welch.
- And the book is titled, When People Are Big and God Is Small. Overcoming Peer Pressure, Codependency, and the Fear of Man. When People Are Big and God Is Small. Overcoming Peer Pressure, Codependency, and the Fear of Man. And before going, I'll say real quick, I've got a couple extra copies of this on my shelf. So if you're thinking, man, I need to read this book. I've got it for you.
- So just come up and talk with me afterwards, right? We're going to spend the next three weeks learning a lot about what the Bible says about the fear of man. What the Bible says when it comes to the way that we look at other people and think that they're big and God is small.
- Learning what the Bible says about the counterproductive strategies that the world has taught us to fight the fear of man. Because the world recognizes that this is a problem. But the strategies it gives us to fight it are at best not very helpful.
- [5 : 33] And at worst, put us even deeper into the fear of man. And then God's Word, the Bible, also gives us the only real way to overcome this.
- By fighting fear with fear. By fighting fear with fear. And so that's why we're doing this series. We've got two reasons why we're doing this series. And if you weren't scared before, you didn't have fear before, you do now with that big eyeball staring at you.
- We're doing this series, Fighting Fear with Fear, for two reasons. The first reason is this. In every church where I've been in some sort of leadership position, it becomes clear to me very quickly.
- And I'm trying not to sort of project my own problems onto other people. But no matter how hard I try, it becomes very obvious that, okay, this is not just a me problem. This is a serious problem that's going through the whole church.
- In every church I've been in, it becomes very clear very quickly, there is an epidemic going on in that church. An epidemic of the fear of man. This epidemic, it is devastating individuals in our church.
- [6 : 35] It is devastating families in our church. It is crippling the church itself. And Squamish Baptist Church is not an exception. I could specifically name a few of you.
- Quite a few of you. Probably all of you, actually. And myself. I would name myself, first of all. We're people who are sick with this disease. We're slaves to this sinful mindset.
- This mindset that thinks that people are big and God is small. And we need to confront this monster. We need to confront the fear of man. Even if it hurts.

Even if it hurts us. That's the first reason why we're doing this series. The second reason is that I think the timing is right. We've just finished the first 15 chapters of the book of Exodus.

And we've learned three things about God from the book of Exodus. Three main ideas about God. That God is great. God is good. God is with us.

[7 : 38] In the book of Exodus, I mean, those three ideas are all sort of mixed together, but it kind of focuses on them one at a time over the course of the book. And in the first 15 chapters, that emphasis, that focus falls on the truth that God is great.

God is big. And even the emperor of the world's preeminent superpower, Pharaoh, king of Egypt, he is small. And we close the curtain on act one of Exodus as the people of Israel are standing on the far shore of the Red Sea, fearing the Lord and praising the Lord as the army of their old master Pharaoh washes up dead on the shore of the sea.

And they know he is not one to be feared. The Lord fought their fear with fear. By teaching them that Pharaoh was small and that the Lord God was very great.

Now, lest we think that that fear of man, that was a historical problem, that's something that God's people experienced in the past when they were in Egypt, but now we've moved on.

Now, lest we think that we have words for us from that old treasure house of wisdom, from the Old Testament book of Proverbs. And take a look with me at Proverbs chapter 29.

[8 : 55] Proverbs 29, verses 25 through 26. That's on page 550 if you're using one of the blue Bibles that our ushers provided. And here's what Proverbs chapter 29, verses 25 and 26 have to say about the fear of man.

The fear of man lays a snare. But whoever trusts in the Lord is safe. Many seek the face of a ruler. But it is from the Lord that a man gets justice.

Now, this pair of Proverbs, what it's going to do is it is going to set the stage for us as we seek to identify, to recognize, and to escape the fear of man.

So let's start with that first line in verse 25. The fear of man lays a snare. Now, that's supposed to put an image in our mind.

We're supposed to mull over that image. Hmm, you know, what does this mean? And this image, as I was thinking about it, turned up, you know, it's, it's, I thought, you know, well, let's look at it. What's a snare like?

[10 : 02] And so what I did was I, of course, opened up Google image search and I ran a quick image search for snares. And that was a mistake because the first thing I turned up was snare drums. That's all, that's, that's, everything was snare drums.

And I was like, okay, this is not helping me very much. So I inserted, I searched and said for snare trap because I'm good at Google. And so it turned up all sorts of clever little traps that are used to catch wild animals.

And there was a nice little line drawing of this. So this was a, a first nation string trap, if I remember correctly. And as you can tell, it was used to catch birds.

And that poor little guy, man, he has no idea what he's in for, right? But this, this, this little bird is going to be our, a little bit of a sacrifice for us because he's going to help us to answer our first question about the fear of man that lays a snare.

And the first question is this, what is the snare? What is the snare that the fear of man lays? Because you see, if we think carefully about the nature of a snare, we realize, and as I was thinking about this, we, okay, what do all snares have in common?

[11 : 11] What do all these traps have in common? Well, I realize there's three elements in common to all snares, okay? First of all, a snare is concealed.

A snare appears to be part of the surroundings. Appears to be part of the normal order of things. And now this bird is, this bird is not very smart. There's a reason we call them bird brained, right?

So, you know, you and I will look at that and we'll immediately think, uh-oh, there is something not quite right about this situation. That bird doesn't know. You don't have to put a lot of effort into disguising a snare for a bird.

But you know what? The smarter the target, the more carefully the snare is concealed. That might work in a bird. I don't know if it would really work in a chimpanzee. And it certainly wouldn't work in a human being. If you're going to snare a human being, you're going to have to conceal your snare really well.

A snare that's used on a human is going to appear, and is going to appear normal, is going to appear uncontroversial, is going to look like it's just part of the scenery.

[12 : 19] And no one's going to think twice about it. So first, a snare is concealed, and second, a snare is enticing. So that bird, he's not just going to walk right into that trap.

Unless you put something inside of the trap. He's not going to go in unless you put bait inside. And once you put the bait in there, that snare is making a promise. It is promising the bird a reward.

And in this case, obviously it's some sort of Cheerio or Froot Loops, just like the First Nations used back in the day. Even highly intelligent, and here's the thing about it, right?

A snare used to catch a human being has to be very well concealed. The more intelligent the creature being hunted, the more you have to conceal it. Guess what?

When it comes to baiting a snare, you don't have to work that hard. Right? Even highly intelligent targets can be snared with very simple reward.

[13 : 16] You could use Froot Loops on human beings. It'll work. Give us any sort of bait that entices us with a promise of satisfaction and joy, and we will happily peck right at that thing.

We will go for it. So a snare is concealed, a snare is enticing, a third of all, a snare is paralyzing.

When you peck at that, Froot Loops. The trap will spring and we will be caught. A snare is paralyzing. Some snares kill their targets.

They're designed to do that. But, you know what? Most snares are just designed to do what? Hold their target in place. Keep it from getting away.

That bird, that snare isn't going to kill that bird. It just won't be able to escape. It won't be able to fly away. And that is what a good snare does.

[14 : 14] A good snare, no matter how intelligent you are, no matter how strong you are, no matter how clever you are, a good snare will leave you paralyzed. Your thoughts hopelessly swirling about your head, unable to translate them into action, unable to be effective.

So what is the snare in this proverb? The snare that is concealed, the snare that is enticing, the snare that is paralyzing. Well, the fear of man lays a snare, but you know what?

It is the fear of man itself that is the snare. Here's how. Like any snare, the fear of man is concealed. It's just a part of our lives. We don't even question it a lot of times.

We think that's just how people behave. This is just how people think. Everyone else around me is giving in to these thoughts and is thinking this way and is acting this way. It's concealed. It's part of the scenery. The fear of man is enticing.

It makes promises of security, favor, and justice for us that we can get from other people. The fear of man is paralyzing because it captivates us and it controls us. It captivated the people of Israel as they worked as slaves generation after generation for the cruel Pharaoh.

[15 : 31] And it's no wonder because fear, first of all, fear is, it is a necessary and essential part of all human experience. Right?

The problem is not that we have fear. We're human beings. We're made to have fear. We're supposed to. Everyone has experienced fear in some form or other. And fear takes on many different forms.

The word fear is one of the most common words in the Bible. And it's used, we tend to use it in our culture in such limited ways, just talking about just, you know, a sense of panic or a sense of terror.

And that's just about all we use it for. But in God's word in the Bible, it's a much broader, all-encompassing term. It covers a whole spectrum of different experiences, such as all the way from panic, horror, terror, worry, anxiety, trembling, awe, wonder, devotion, reverence, admiration, respect.

And if we return to Proverbs 29, and you look at the verse right after verse 25, look at verse 26, you see an example of this.

[16 : 46] You see one telling way that fear might motivate someone to act. Many seek the face of a ruler. Now, there are several other translations that put this as many seek the ruler's favor.

Now, why? Why do people seek an audience with a ruler, seek the face of a ruler, try to get the ruler's favor, get them on their side? Why? Because a ruler is a man or a woman who possesses extraordinary significance and power.

Extraordinary significance and power. And if you believe that about a ruler, you will fear that ruler. You will. And you will seek his or her favor and help.

So this verse helps us answer that question. What is the snare? And the verse helps us because it helps us to describe the experience of fear and identify the behavior of fear.

So first, let's describe the experience of fear. So here's just sort of a bit of a working definition of the experience of fear. The experience of fear is the inescapable sense that someone or something else is great in power or significance.

[17 : 59] The experience of fear is the inescapable sense that someone or something else is great in power or significance. Now how would you explain that to a child?

If I were to explain this to a young child, what is fear? I would say fear is what you feel. It is what you experience when you encounter something big.

When you encounter something big. It might be that awe that you feel when you stand on the edge of the Grand Canyon and you look into it and you all of a sudden feel super tiny and it feels huge and massive.

It might be the terror that you feel when someone takes a load of a gun and points it at your head. It might be the thrill a young daughter feels as her big strong dad tosses her high in the air again and again.

Just that thrill, that excitement but knowing that her dad is big and her dad will keep her safe. The experience of fear is the inescapable sense that someone or something else is great in power and significance.

[19 : 11] And so in the case of the fear of man that means that you experience an inescapable sense that another person or other people are great in power and significance.

that's what it feels like. That's the internal experience of the fear of man. That's what you're thinking that's what you're feeling. The external behavior the external behavior of the fear of man flows out of that flows out of that internal experience.

People in verse 26 we saw people seek the face of a ruler why? Because they fear that ruler. So here's the behavior. The behavior of the fear of man is treating someone or something else as the ultimate source of or threat to security favor or justice.

The behavior of the fear of man is treating someone or something else as the ultimate source of or threat to security favor or justice. And this is where we're going to get into specifics.

You know, that's still a very general thing to say. Treating someone as the ultimate source of or threat to security, favor or justice. Right? Now that's maybe still not quite helpful yet but we're about to get into specifics about what that looks like.

[20 : 33] And here's where things are probably going to get very personal and very painful. because what we're going to do is we are going to follow the counsel of Proverbs chapter 14 verse 8 which reads the wisdom of the prudent is to discern his way but the folly of fools is deceiving.

The wisdom of the prudent is to discern his way to look at your life to look at the way you're living your life to examine it honestly and carefully. The folly of fools is just to be tricked.

It's just to have a complete misunderstanding of who you are and the way you're living your life and to think that you are something you are not. And we don't want to be deceived. Remember that's what a snare does is it deceives you.

We don't want to be deceived by the snare of the fear of man. We want to discern it in our own lives. We want to take that snare and uncover it and reveal it instead of conceal it.

We want to uncover it in our desires our thoughts our decisions our words our actions. We want to recognize the snare. So that brings us to our next question. How do you recognize the snare?

[21 : 46] How do you recognize the snare? Well, I was helped greatly by that book When People Are Big and God is Small. The very first chapter of the book is basically a lot of diagnostic questions on the subject.

And I remember as I look back at my old copy of the book I find I underlined almost every single one of them because they were almost all true of me. And since reading this book I've been fascinated that Ed Welch lays out three of the snares that the fear of man sets.

Three fears that captivate us. And what I found as fascinating is long after reading this book is I was studying Luke chapter 11 Luke chapter 12 and in fact I was doing it two years ago for when I was preaching here.

So if this sounds familiar to you there's a reason for that because I already preached on this. But I was studying it for an opportunity to preach here and I realized that Jesus talks about these exact same three fears.

So I said why teach them out of the book? I could teach them straight out of God's word. Because then we know it's true and then we know it has authority. Luke chapter 11 verse 53 through chapter 12 verse 12.

[23 : 03] We read these at the beginning of the service along with a little bit of background context. That's on page 870 and 871 in the Blue Bibles that our ushers handout.

But Luke chapter 11 verse 53 through chapter 12 verse 12. As you'll recall Jesus gets invited to a dinner party and Jesus does the thing he always does when he gets invited to a dinner party.

He makes everything awkward. That's just this consistent pattern in Jesus' life. And in this case Jesus does it. He makes everything awkward by insulting the host and insulting all of the guests of the dinner party.

He calls them out for their hypocrisy. And so in chapter 11 verse 53 through chapter 12 verse 3 Jesus speaks to his disciples who are afraid.

His disciples sense this threat that the religious leaders are going to, as we see in verse 54, catch him in something he might say.

[24 : 07] So they're trying to catch him in something he might say. Trying to expose Jesus and expose his followers as hucksters or deceivers or evildoers or heretics.

It doesn't matter. Just whatever they can. Whatever they can do to expose him for who he really is. And so the disciples' fear could be summarized in a simple sentence.

People will see me. People will see me. People will see through me. They'll expose who I am. People will see through my veneer.

fear of competence and decency. People will find out what I'm really like inside. That's why the Pharisees were hypocrites.

Because they didn't want to find out what they were really like inside. The outside of the dish was clean, but the inside was not. It's this fear that I will experience that horrible primal feeling of shame as I am exposed to the judging gaze of other people.

[25 : 16] The reason that big eye on the screen scares us is because it means that someone is seeing you, is looking through you, is finding out what you're really like.

It's like that nightmare, the common nightmare where you are standing in front of a laughing audience in your underwear. People are seeing you for who you really are.

People will see me. That is the first of the three fears. And if you ever want a case study in the fear of man, you can read the life story of Israel's first king, King Saul.

Because Saul was a king who was crippled and twisted by the fear of man. It controlled his life. And Saul experienced this first fear, people will see me. We're actually going to work backwards through Saul's life and start more towards the end here.

Specifically, Saul experienced the shame of inadequacy. He experienced the shame of feeling inadequate. Late in his reign, Saul found that his military commander, his new military commander, David, was receiving praise, was receiving accolades that Saul wasn't getting.

[26 : 28] In 1 Samuel chapter 18, we read, As they were coming home, when David returned from striking down the Philistine. So, you know, they're coming back from this battle, Saul and David and the whole army.

The women came out of all the cities of Israel singing and dancing to meet King Saul with tambourines, with songs of joy, and with musical instruments. And the women sang to one another as they celebrated, Saul had struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

And Saul was very angry. And this saying displeased him. He said, They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands.

And what more can he have but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day on. Now, when you and I, when we succumb to the fear of man, when we begin to think people will see me, we start to act like King Saul did.

You start comparing yourself and your achievements to other people. you start resenting other people for being what you aren't. For having what you don't have.

[27 : 41] For getting to experience the things that you don't get to experience. And this resentment builds into full-fledged jealousy. You become competitive.

You're always looking for an opportunity to upstage other people. people. Or to show that you're a really great athlete. To show your great intelligence.

To show off your prosperity. You become obsessed with what other people are thinking. Especially what they're thinking about you. You become obsessed maybe with politics.

And the secrets of government power. You may even give in to political paranoia or conspiracy theories. you find ways to protect your vulnerable self by lashing out in anger at a spouse or a child.

Ensuring your dominance. Even if it means verbal, emotional, or physical abuse. You become King Saul. Or maybe your fear that people will see me takes you in a bit of a different direction.

[28 : 52] You're easily embarrassed by situations that put you in a bad or awkward life. You experience low self-esteem as you dwell on what a loser you are. You feel smothered in shame.

You feel like you're dirty and you're contaminated. You feel self-loathing. You wish you could just shrivel up and disappear. Or maybe on the outside you look successful.

Other people seem to approve of you, but inwardly you feel like you're an imposter. You feel like it's just a matter of time before people discover what a fraud you really are.

Maybe you tell a few little white lies here and there to cover up some of the unpalatable things that you've said or done or failed to do. And maybe you've even been exposed and been shamed in the past and you're sensitized and terrified that it will happen again.

people will see me becomes the unspoken, even the unconscious mantra of your daily life and your relationships.

[30 : 04] That's one down, two to go. The second fear, that second snare is found in Luke chapter 12 verses 4 through 7. And in verse 4 Jesus warns, do not fear those who kill the body.

do not fear those who kill the body. Jesus is identifying the second fear. People will harm me. People will harm me.

People will tell lies about me to damage my reputation or worse they'll tell the truth. I'll tell the truth about me and that's what's going to harm me.

Maybe they'll say discouraging and heartless and cruel and even abusive words to me, words that feel less like sticks and stones they feel a lot more like sledgehammers against my bones.

Maybe the government or maybe powerful businesses will oppress me and others like me. Maybe another person will physically or sexually assault me. People will harm me.

[31 : 05] That is the second of the three fears. And once again King Saul, he's the case study in this. If you've grown up in a church going family, maybe even if you haven't, you've almost certainly heard the story of David and Goliath or at least heard those names before at some point.

And everyone loves that story. It's such an iconic story for a reason. The story of this young man who's empowered by the Lord to stand up to, to slay a powerful giant warrior when no one else would do it.

Well, one thing that we often miss in this story, there's actually a lot of things we often miss in this story, but one thing we miss is who is supposed to be slaying that giant man. Who is supposed to be doing it?

Well, in 1 Samuel chapter 17, we hear Goliath's challenge to the army of Israel. He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, Why have you come out to draw up for battle?

Am I not a Philistine? And are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves and let him come down to me. When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

[32 : 18] There's a reason Goliath calls the Israelites the servants of Saul. Saul is their king. And here's a fun fact, if you look back at 1 Samuel chapter 9, you'll learn something interesting about Saul.

Saul is unusually tall for an Israelite. Saul is a very tall man, head taller than anybody else. And Goliath knows this. Mr. Tall Goliath knows this.

And he is goading Saul to fight him. But Saul is afraid. And that's why Goliath is having so much fun with this, because he knows that Saul is not going to do that.

He knows that Saul will not fight him. Saul is afraid of Goliath, and he won't fight. And when David arrives on the scene, we read, David said to Saul, let no man's heart fail because of him.

Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine. And Saul said to David, you are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him. For you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth.

[33 : 28] Saul is certain that no one, that he can't defeat Goliath, Saul is certain that no one can defeat Goliath. And so he's telling David, don't even try. Don't even try. And when you and I succumb to the fear of man, when we begin to think people will harm me, we start to act like King Saul.

You recognize that someone you know, or someone you see is doing something wrong. But you don't want to rock the boat. You don't want to ruffle any feathers.

You don't want to get them mad at you. You say nothing. You take no action. You shrink back in cowardice.

Even though you know that you're right, you quickly and easily apologize, or you give in to defeat when someone who seems powerful or significant opposes you. Or perhaps your fear that people will harm me maybe takes you in different direction than those attributes of King Saul.

Maybe you withdraw into your shell. You start shutting down when you're faced with a difficult conversation or a difficult situation. Or you simply avoid the other person in the first place.

[34 : 48] Maybe you avoid other people in general. Maybe you start to learn over time that the best defense is a good offense. offense. So you start lashing out in rage and even violence when you feel threatened.

Or maybe instead of your anger blowing up, maybe you clam up. You keep your anger bottled up inside of you for days, weeks, months, years until it festers and congeals into bitterness in your soul.

Or you simply decide the best way never to get hurt is is never to depend on people. Never ask for help from anyone.

And any offers for help that people give you, you turn them down. Don't depend on other people. They could hurt you. And maybe you've been harmed or abused in the past.

And now you're sensitized. And now you're terrified that it is going to happen again. People will harm you. That becomes the unspoken, even the unconscious mantra of your daily life and relationships.

[36 : 02] That's the second of three fears. People will see me. People will harm me. And the final one, you'd think that people can harm me would be the worst, but sometimes it's this final one that's even worse than that.

The third fear, the third snare, is found in Luke chapter 12, verses 8 through 12. And here Jesus warns his disciples that they face a terrible temptation to fear man.

To give into pressure, he says, he talks in verse 9 about the one who denies me before men. This terrible temptation to give into pressure and to deny Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, because they want to save themselves from the disapproval and the judgment of other people.

people will reject me. People will reject me. People will laugh at me and ridicule me, or they'll ignore me and shun me.

They will no longer love me. They will no longer respect me. They will no longer affirm me. People will reject me. That is the last of the three fears. And once again, King Saul, he is a case study in this.

[37 : 20] Continuing to even earlier in his life, the fear of man plagued Saul long before David ever showed up on the scene of his life. The fear of man crops up in a story, and there's a ton of background to the story that's a bit complex to explain.

So suffice it to say, the Lord gave Saul specific instructions for a military campaign against the Amalekites. And the Amalekites, they are this dogged enemy of Israel. And we're going to encounter them in a few weeks in Exodus chapter 17.

That's the first time they show up. In Saul's case, though, he chooses to hand over the spoils of war, the spoils of victory, to his soldiers when the Lord had commanded him to destroy them.

And when the prophet Samuel, he calls Saul out on the carpet for this, here's what Saul tells Samuel in 1 Samuel chapter 15. Saul is afraid that the people will reject him.

So he gives in to their demands. And when you and I succumb to the fear of man, when we begin to think people will reject me, we start to act like King Saul.

[38 : 43] You give in to peer pressure. You do things that you know God has commanded us not to do. you appease people and enable their sinful behavior because you don't want to hurt their feelings and get them angry at you because they might reject you.

You become King Saul. Or perhaps your fear that people will reject me takes you in a different direction. You're indecisive, constantly second-guessing your decisions when you consider how they may be perceived by others.

Your life is this continual mess of over commitment because you're afraid of saying no. You need other people to respect you, to affirm you.

You hunger for their love. Sometimes it's not other people in general, sometimes it's one specific person in particular, maybe a spouse or a child, a parent, a close friend.

Ed Welch in his book described himself as, he called himself, a love tank with a leak because he longed for his wife and his peers and his students to love him, respect him, and affirm him, but nothing they gave was ever enough to fill up that leaky tank he was trying to fill up with their love.

[40 : 13] It all just seemed to leak out. No one could ever love him enough for him to feel good about himself. So you try to devise strategies, little tricks, little ways of talking to coerce or to manipulate other people into praising you or affirming their love for you.

Maybe you become something of a comedian or a clown in order to win their laughter and applause. make scenes. You say outrageous things so that you can be the center of attention.

You carefully craft your social media presence to put you in the best light possible. You try to project a good self-image to others by dieting and exercising, living a healthy lifestyle.

And even if none of those other things are true about you, maybe you don't, you're not exactly up front about the fact that you're a Christian. You don't tell people about the gospel of Jesus Christ because you're afraid of what they will think of you, what they will say to you, what they will say to others about you.

And maybe you've been rejected or ridiculed in the past and now you're sensitized, now you're terrified that it's going to happen again. People will reject me becomes the unspoken, even the unconscious mantra of your daily life.

[41 : 40] And relationships. And so those are the three fears, those are the three ways that the fear of man expresses itself in our lives. People will see me, people will harm me, and people will reject me.

And that's how you recognize the fear of man. The behavior of the fear of man is treating someone or something else as the ultimate source of or threat to. Security, favor, justice.

fear of man. And it flows out of this experience of fear, this inescapable sense that someone or something else is great in power or significance.

And that is the snare laid by the fear of man. So now we know what the snare is. Now we know how to recognize it. How do you escape the snare?

How do you escape the snare? how do we stop fearing other people? How do we reach the point where we're no longer controlled by the fear of other people?

[42 : 41] And the thing is you can't just not fear. You can't just not fear at all. You can't be truly fearless. Like we said, that's just a part of the human experience. That's part of who we were made to be.

There will always be someone or something that you perceive as great in power or significance. There is always going to be someone or something great. So you will always fear someone or something.

And that's why in Luke chapter 12 verses 4 through 7 Jesus doesn't merely say, you know, don't be afraid, do not fear, don't fear man. And he doesn't just stop there, he keeps going. Notice the pattern of fear language that Jesus uses in these verses.

Verse 4, Jesus says, I tell you my friends, do not fear. And then in verse 5 he says, I will warn you who to fear. Fear him.

Yes, I tell you, fear him. And then in verse 7 he ends with, fear not. So Jesus creates this pattern that if you were just skimming through these verses and you weren't looking carefully, it would look like a contradiction.

[43 : 47] Do not fear, fear, fear, fear not. It's not a contradiction. Jesus is saying this, fear is inescapable.

You will always fear someone or something. That's the way it should be. That's the way you were made to be. Jesus is saying that you and I escape the snare of the fear of man by fighting fear with fear.

By fighting fear with fear. We overcome the fear of man by learning the fear of the Lord. We see and we behold the Lord God for who he is.

We see that God is great. We fear the Lord and our God no longer appears small to us. Our God appears big. And other people no longer appear big to us.

They appear small. So you see, Jesus came with this message because he knows that unless we fear the Lord, unless we fear him. This good news that he brings, this gospel that we're going to celebrate in communion, his body broken for us, his blood shed for us.

[45 : 00] If you don't fear the Lord, if you fear other people instead, the gospel will mean nothing to you. It meant nothing. It did not mean much to me at all. It didn't help me at all when I was trying to please and help other people.

Well, God is pleased with you. I don't care. I want other people to like me. I want other people to approve of me.

I want other people to love me. I want to be safe from other people. The gospel will start to seem irrelevant.

It'll become something that you talk about at church. But then you go back to your daily life. You go through your days worrying that other people are going to see you, they're going to harm you, they're going to reject you.

But if we fear the Lord, then we can know that our God, He sees us more deeply than we see ourselves, than other people ever will see us. God sees us.

[46 : 04] But we who believe in Jesus Christ, God does not harm us, and God does not reject us. He sent His own Son to be exposed, to be harmed, to be rejected.

to die for us, to make us righteous, to justify us, to wash us, because we have been united in faith with His righteous Son, and He cleans us by the sanctifying work of His Holy Spirit.

He frees us from shame, and He promises that He is going to welcome us into His glory as His daughters and His sons. That's why when we return to Proverbs chapter 29, we find hope there.

Those verses say, the fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe. Many seek the face of a ruler, but it is from the Lord that a man gets justice.

Our great God will provide us with safety, with favor, with justice. That's where we turn. Over the next two weeks, we're going to learn about that.

[47 : 13] We're going to learn how we can fear the Lord. and we're going to see how the fear of the Lord brings good to us. And not just good to us, but it brings good through us.

We become channels, bringing His grace and His goodness to everyone around us. Instead of trying to get other people to love you, you're free to start loving other people.

God's love. Because even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.

We'll learn how we can turn to the Lord as the ultimate source of our security, favor, and justice because we sense that He is great above all others in His power and significance. The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.

Let's pray.