# Overcoming the Fear of Man

**Scripture References (ESV)**
Proverbs 29:25 | Matthew 25:24-30 (*Matthew 16:25)* | *Galatians 2:11-14 (*1 Peter 5:7)

**Proverbs 29:25**
**29** The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.

**Understanding the Fear of Man**
- To develop a comprehensive understanding of the fear of the Lord as Christ's disciples, we must reject the fear of man.
- The fear of man is letting people's opinions, approval, or rejection influence our decisions more than our obedience to God.
- In our focus text, Solomon characterizes the fear of man as a snare. A snare is a trap designed to capture and restrict movement. It doesn't always look dangerous at first. Sometimes it looks like an opportunity to avoid conflict, preserve a relationship, protect a reputation, or maintain a position.
- The fear of man is dangerous because it can influence our decisions without our recognizing its control.
- We may know what God has said, yet hesitate to obey. We may understand what is right, yet remain silent because we fear the consequences. We may have a divine assignment, yet become more concerned with how people will respond than whether God will be pleased.
- The fear of man is not simply being afraid of people. It is allowing human approval, disapproval, rejection, or threats to exercise disproportionate authority over our decisions.
- When we are ensnared by the fear of men, I believe we default to two defense mechanisms: ***self-preservation*** and ***external perception***. Let's take some time to look at two passages as case studies on how this happens and how we can overcome.

**Case Study #1 - When Fear Buries Faithfulness**

**Matthew 25:24-30**
**24** He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed,
***25 so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.’***
**26** But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed?
**27** Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest.
**28** So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents.
**29** For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.
**30** And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

**Synopsis:**
- This wicked and slothful servant feared for his life and, to preserve himself, buried the talent so he wouldn't lose it. Quick question: ***what talents have you buried in order to preserve life as you know it right now?***
- All the servants could have shared the same understanding of the master’s tendencies; however, the first two took the initiative to make the best of what they had, believing their obedient efforts would earn their master's approval.
- ***To be fully preserved, we must fully obey the Lord and trust that he will preserve our lives.***

- ***“For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” - Matthew 16:25***

**Case Study #2 - The Burden of Being Misunderstood**

**Galatians 2:11-14**
**11** But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.
**12 For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party.**
**13** And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.
**14** But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

**Synopsis:**
- While I'm sure everyone would like to go the gangster route, Paul checked Peter. I think it is most important that we recognize Peter's emotional state in this passage. Peter was undoubtedly transformed by his relationship with Jesus Christ and the gospel. He took his role as a holy apostle very seriously, as we see in the book of Acts and his own apostolic writings; however, this passage puts the challenge of external perceptions on full display. We can have complete certainty within ourselves concerning who we are and what we are called to do; however, we still have to wrestle with the perception that others have of us. ***To be free from the fear of man, we must accept that God's calling on our lives will inevitably lead us to do things that challenge others’ perceptions of us.***
- I would rather bear the weight of men's perception than God's judgment.

**Reflection**
- As we conclude with our focus text, although the fear of man is a snare, Solomon encourages us that if we trust the Lord, we will find safety.
- For those who are asking, how do you trust the Lord? It's really simple: you do to God the same thing you did to your seat when you entered this room. Put your weight on him. I promise you, God is more trustworthy than your chair.
  - **1 Peter 5:7 Cast all your anxieties on him [Yesua], because he cares for you.**

**Closing Prayer**
Father, in Jesus’ name, expose every place where the fear of man has become a snare in our lives. Forgive us for times we valued comfort over obedience, reputation over integrity, and human approval over Your Word.

Deliver us from fearing loss and from needing to control how others perceive us. Give us discernment to receive correction, humility to acknowledge our failures, and courage to remain faithful when obedience is costly.

Teach us to lead without intimidation, to serve without people-pleasing, and to love without surrendering our convictions. Establish our identity in Christ and anchor our confidence in Your faithfulness.

May we have the courage of Daniel, the conviction of the three Hebrew boys, the faith of Esther, and the boldness of the apostles.

Let our lives show that we trust You more than we fear people's opinions. And it is so.

In Jesus' name, amen.

+JRT