

## A VERY DANGEROUS, BUT UNRECOGNIZED ENEMY

A. Proverbs 29:25 – read out of several versions - NASV shall be exalted; also ESV – The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe, NKV The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe; Jay Adams – The fear of the Lord lays a trap, but the One who trusts Yahweh is safely set on high.

**B. Regardless of which version you use, the Proverbs 29:25 uses the word fear. Let me begin by giving you 9 general Biblical facts about the emotion or attitude of fear.**

1. For one thing, when it comes to this subject of fear, it's significant that **the emotion or attitude of Fear is mentioned more frequently in the Bible than any other emotion or attitude.**
2. Still further, **in the Bible you will find this emotion described by a number of different words.**
3. **It's an emotion that is mentioned first in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Genesis and mentioned the last time in Rev. 19<sup>th</sup> and 21:8 (KJV).**
4. 4<sup>th</sup>, it's significant that **fear is an emotion for which there are many biblical examples of people who experienced it.**
5. 5<sup>th</sup> the emotion or attitude of **fear is an emotion before which the word "don't"** is placed more than any other emotion or attitude in the Bible.
6. 6<sup>th</sup>, **a study of the subject of fear will reveal that it is an emotion or attitude that God at times tells us not to have and at other times tells us we should have.**
7. 7<sup>th</sup>, **It's an emotion that comes in many different forms – sometimes it is referred to as a positive and wholesome and even righteous emotion and sometimes it is mentioned as a sinful and wicked emotion.**
8. 8<sup>th</sup>, **It's an emotion that always motivates the way people think and behave.**
9. 9<sup>th</sup>, **sometimes it is obvious to people that they are experiencing fear and being influenced by it, but sometimes it's an emotion that people experience it and are influenced by it but they are not even aware that they are being affected and influenced by it.**

**C. In today's study I'm not going to be focusing on the kind of fear that is easily recognized, but rather on the kind of fear that is real and dangerous, but often unrecognized.**

**D. Now having said that - I want to go on and do 3 things:**

1. Define the fear of which Proverbs 29:25
2. Tell you why this kind of fear is so dangerous.
3. Want to make some applications from the text to our own lives

**I. FIRST OF ALL, LET'S SEEK TO DEFINE THE NATURE OF THE FEAR OF WHICH THIS TEXT IS REFERRING .**

**A. Important to note that the fear mentioned in the first part of this text is contrasted with trusting in God in the latter part of the text .**

**B. Well what does it mean to trust God?**

**In his commentary on this verse, Robert Alden writes, “In this verse the author speaks about the universal human malady of wanting to please men rather than God. And since most of the rewards we seek in life do come from and through men it follows that we exert most of our efforts to please men.” (203)**

**And in his commentary on this verse Bruce Waltke helps us to understand what the fear of man is by drawing our attention to the connection of our text in v. 25 with the verse that follows which says, there are many who seek the ruler’s favor.**

**Perhaps the best biblical commentary on what it means to trust God and also what it means to fear man is found in Jeremiah 17:5 - 8.**

**What does it mean to fear man rather than trust God? \*Well in the Scriptures we have many examples but today - want to mention a classic example of a man who did not trust God but feared people -**

**a. This classic example is found in I Samuel chapters 13 - 31 where we have the story of Saul, the first king of Israel - as read find numerous examples of what it means to fear man rather than trust God.**

**C. HOW CAN WE TELL IF THAT IS TRUE OF US? WELL ONE WAY WE CAN TELL IS BY ASKING OURSELVES SEVERAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1. One question that will help us to determine whether and when we are guilty of being a man fearer is to ask ourselves the question, From what is it that I get the most joy and satisfaction? Is it to know that we are pleasing and honoring God or is to know that another human being is pleased with me?**
- 2. Second evaluative question that will help us to determine whether and when we are guilty of being a man fearer is to ask ourselves the question, what is it that brings me the most grief? Is it when I know that I have not pleased others? Is it when someone else is upset with me?**
- 3. 3<sup>rd</sup> evaluative question to determine whether and when we are guilty of being a man fearer is to ask ourselves the question, what do I do when I know I have been too concerned about pleasing people and not enough concerned about pleasing and trusting the Lord?**

**II. WELL THERE YOU HAVE AN EXPLANATION AND APPLICATION OF PART OF PROVERBS 29:25, BUT LET'S COME BACK TO OUR TEXT AND NOTICE SOMETHING ELSE THIS TEXT SAYS - THIS TEXT NOT ONLY WARNS US AGAINST FEARING MAN AND ENCOURAGES US TO TRUST IN THE LORD - ALSO GIVES US SOME INFORMATION ABOUT THE DANGER OF FEARING MAN AND THE BLESSING OF TRUSTING GOD.**

**A. Text warns us against the danger of fearing man by telling us that the fear of man brings a snare and it reminds us of the blessing of trusting God by telling us that the person who trusts the Lord will be lifted up, secure, safe, protected or delivered - to be kept from ultimate disaster or destruction.**

**B. This fact that the fear of man brings a snare tells us three things about the fear of man:**

**1. First, it tells us that the fear of man is deceptive in a number of ways:**

1). The fear of man is deceptive in that it **motivates people to do or not do something by the deceptiveness of what it seems to promise it will do for them.**

**2). But it is also deceptive in another way; it is deceptive in that it uses different methods to deceive different people.**

**3). And it is also deceptive in that the fear of man is so subtle that many times we don't even recognize that we are being motivated by the fear of man when we really are.**

**\*Think for a moment of the example of Saul – I Samuel 13 - Israelites were going against the Philistines.**

**Want to give you a few specific ways in which the fear of man manifests itself in deceptively different ways with different people.**

**(1). Some people, for example, may be motivated to do what is wrong because they are afraid of people, but the fear of man is so deceptive that they don't even recognize that they are being motivated by the fear of man. people.**

**\* John 7:12, V. 13 - No one spoke openly of Jesus for fear of the Jews. So the deceptiveness of fear of man may manifest itself in the form of people doing the wrong, but not recognizing that the real reason for their behavior is the fear of man and they may give another explanation for doing the wrong thing.**

**(2). Or the deceptiveness of the fear of man may manifest itself in the form of doing what is right because they are afraid of people.**

**(3) Or still further the deceptiveness of the fear of man may show itself in the form of people who refuse to use their talents.**

**(4). Or the deceptiveness of the fear of man may manifest itself in the form people who over commit themselves - never say no to any request.**

**(5). Or the deceptiveness of the fear of man may manifest itself in the form of people who run away from relationships - keep everyone at a distance; avoid people;**

**(6). Or the deceptiveness of the fear of man may manifest itself in the form of being overly dependent on people - or by being pushy pushy, domineering, overly demanding, loud, boisterous, babbling mouth, smile all the time, constantly joking around ...**

**(7). Or the deceptiveness of the fear of man may manifest itself in the form being indecisive ... not wanting to accept responsibility - not willing to make a commitment ... constantly second guessing - reviewing ...**

**2. Second, the fact that the fear of man is likened to a snare indicates that the Fear of Man is Distracting. Remember Hebrew dictionary defines a snare as something that lures a person away. ? Question = away from what?**

**a. Distract a person away from what He is designed to do, which is to glorify God.**

**b. Fear of man also distracts us from thinking about what God wants us to do in a particular situation - causes us to forget - causes our minds to be muddled.**

**c. Fear of man distracts us from considering the real needs of others.**

**\*3. BRING US TO THE THIRD WAY IN WHICH THE FEAR OF MAN IS A SNARE, NAMELY IT IS A SNARE BECAUSE IT IS INCREDIBLY DESTRUCTIVE.**

**a. Going back to the purpose for which a person sets a trap with a snare in it for an animal we know that the real purpose of the snare is to catch and destroy the animal.**

**b. So it with the fear of man in our lives. It is incredibly destructive. And what does it destroy?**

**>1). For one thing, it destroys a person's joy and contentment.**

(1) See this clearly **illustrated in the life of King Saul.**

(2) **Fear Factor – page 76 – Fear of man is like a tornado in your soul, wreaking havoc on your inner man.**

**>2). Fear of man is destructive in that it leads to compromise –**

**(1) Think of what the fear of man caused Abraham to do – Genesis 12.**

**(2) Think of what the fear of man caused Ananias and Sapphira to do in Acts 5.**

**>3). Fear of man is destructive in that it produces hypocrisy.**

(1) **Matt. 6: 1 – 7.**

(2) **Matt. 15:7 – 9.**

(3) **Matt. 23:2 – 13, esp. v. 13, 14.**

(4) Think again of Saul.

>4). Fear of man is destructive in that it stirs up jealousy, anger, bitterness, cruelty and can end up destroying relationships.

(1) Go back to our Saul case study.

(2) Think of how it affected his family relations.

(3) Think of how it affected his relationship with David.

(4) Fear Factor – page 78

**D. CONCLUDE WITH SOME ADDITIONAL APPLICATION QUESTIONS THAT WILL HELP EACH OF US TO FURTHER ASSESS OUR FEAR OF MAN QUOTIENT. HERE ARE THE QUESTIONS:**

1. WANT EACH OF US TO THINK ABOUT THEM – IF ASK MANY PEOPLE IF THEY HAVE ANY PROBLEM WITH THE FEAR OF MAN – ANSWER NO.
2. BUT AS SAW EARLIER – FEAR OF MAN PROBLEM IS SO DECEPTIVE THAT OFTEN WE DON'T EVEN RECOGNIZE WE HAVE A PROBLEM.
3. IN MY JUDGMENT TO ONE EXTENT OR ANOTHER ALL OF US STRUGGLE WITH THIS PROBLEM
4. IN THE FUTURE – IN ANOTHER MESSAGE I WANT TO TALK ABOUT HOW TO OVERCOME – BUT RIGHT NOW I WANT TO SAY THAT THE FIRST STEP IN OVERCOMING ANY PROBLEM = RECOGNIZING HAVE IT.