

Lesson 4

Breaking Free of People Fear

Those Enemies of Yours Will Stumble and Fall

“When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?” (Ps. 56: 3-4).

We have seen in our study that there are three basic types of people fear. 1). We fear people because they can expose and humiliate us; 2). We fear people because they can reject, ridicule, or despise us; 3). We fear people because they can attack, oppress, or threaten us. In this lesson we focus on the third.

When someone has been the victim of physical or sexual abuse, there are conflicting emotions. There are times when the abused person craves a deeper relationship with the abuser, but at other times there is anger and the victim wishes her abuser was dead. At still other times she is terrified that every person she meets is a threat to her life, so the person who has been abused withdraws from all people.

I. Identify where your fear of man has been intensified by people in your past.

Has anyone sullied your reputation? Abused you physically? Has anyone lied about you to others? The Bible says, “Reckless words pierce like a sword” (Prov. 12: 18). Damage can be done with words.

(A). An example of fearing bodily harm in the Bible - Soon after God promised Abram he would be the father of a great nation, Abram went down to Egypt for food. As he was about to enter Egypt, he hid behind his wife (see Gen 12: 11-13) Abram’s fear was of the Egyptians, not God. Even though God rebukes Abram and tells him that He is faithful, Abram does it again (Gen. 20).

(B). God eventually brings His people to the place of fearing Him - In Genesis 22 God tells Abraham to sacrifice his son. We often tend to be more fearful (nervous) of our children than spouses. Abraham obeyed God and gave up his son and the Angel said, “Now I know that you fear God.”

II. The process through which God changes our fear of man is a changing of the mind.

You have heard the phrase “You are what you eat.” Even more truthfully, “You are what you *think*.”

In Numbers 13, a group of Israeli scouts had been commissioned to explore the land. In their report they said that it was the Promised Land, but there were many problems (see Num. 13: 27-28, 31, 33). The wilderness wanderings were not without purpose. They were in the wilderness learning. “Do not be afraid of him [Og, king of Bashan] (Deut. 3: 2) “Do not be afraid of them [all the kingdoms in the land] (Deut. 3: 22) “Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when he said to [Moses], “*Assemble the people before me... that they may learn to revere [fear] me*” (Deut. 4: 10) The mind is the area of learning (see Romans 12:2). Can you say Psalm 27:1-4 with heart conviction?

III. In those times in your life when fear of man will naturally arise, start playing new tapes.

When threatened it is natural to be afraid. In the course of daily living we all experience normal fear. *The fear of man is the sinful exaggeration of a normal experience.* Being afraid should be a trigger. Biblical healing comes from understanding that when fear begins to rise, you have a choice to make. Jeremiah 17 is the classic biblical text on the fear of man. It reduces the decisions of life to two options. **Will you trust in man or will you trust in God?** Listen: “Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD. He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots” (Jer. 17:5-8). In closing, take some time to memorize Matthew 10:28. Allow this verse to be played in your mind.