

Your World Desires You to Be Afraid

“The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all” (Psalm 103:19)

By way of review: (1). The fear of man is the biblical way of describing co-dependency. (2). The fear of man is caused by an absence of the fear of God. (3). The fear of man is a ball and chain in life (Pr. 29:25).

I. The culture around us encourages us to “fear man” and not God.

The fear of man is the notion that one needs man, is controlled by man, and reveres man’s approval.

(A). Victimization – when I am the victim, that means other people are controlling my entire life.

Without understanding God’s absolute and sovereign control there is no basis for fear of God.

(B). Humanization – (self-esteem) books say that one of the best ways to raise your self-esteem is to achieve some successes (which are then compared to what others do) or to surround yourself with people who affirm you (which leaves you dependent on their opinion). Without God giving us an understanding of His eternal, unconditional grace, we can never really be strong within.

(C). Secularization – the removing of God from any references in currency, school, politics, and life.

II. Some cultural assumptions about God propel us to fear man.

“Divine as the life of Jesus is, what an outrage to represent it as tantamount to the Universe! To seize one accidental good man that happened to exist somewhere at some time and say to the new born soul, “Behold thy pattern... go into the harness of that past individual, assume his manners, speak his speech,” — this is the madness of Christendom... I turn my back on these usurpers. The soul always believes in itself” (Ralph Waldo Emerson). When self is exalted over God, certain things become true:

(A). God as we understand Him versus God as He reveals Himself to be.

“There are myriad approaches to both prayer and meditation.” “No way is the right way... The real thing is the actual experience of God... Spiritual growth comes through deepening insight into my being.” “I have my version of God, and you have your version of God.”

(B). God becomes more and more like us and less like the God of revelation.

Some “clergy” and counselors actually encourage such angry people to “forgive God.” Anything that erodes the fear of God will intensify the fear of man in a group of people who know not God. (In Psalm 50:21 God speaks His complaint against Israel) *“You thought I was altogether like you.”*

III. Some cultural assumptions about us that propel us to fear man.

There is a foundational cultural assumption at work: *We must love ourselves in order to be healthy.*

This is false. The Bible makes the assumption that every person has too much self-love (Matthew 6).

(A). Culture teaches we are all morally good ... the Bible teaches that we are inwardly crooked (sin).

(B). Culture teaches that emotions are truth ... if it feels good for you, then it must be good for you.

Feelings have become the inarticulate mutterings of the divine soul. We feel; we do; we become.

(C). Culture teaches that are people are spiritual... but the Bible teaches nobody seeks God (Rom. 6).

The contemporary climate is therapeutic, not religious. People today hunger not for personal salvation, but for a feeling, the momentary illusion, of personal well-being, health, and security.

1. Where do you find the assumptions of the world in literature, art, movies, conversations?
2. Where do you see these assumptions in you?
3. What would missionaries say they see in the American church?