



Bethel Sunrise Sermon Notes – “*The Fear of God Over the Fear of Man*”

Speaker: Ps May Dobbins

Series: Awesome God

Scripture: Proverbs 29:25, 1 Samuel 15, Galatians 2:11–14

Main Idea

The fear of man traps us when the opinions and approval of people become more important than obedience to God. Freedom comes when we develop a greater fear of the Lord, knowing that His voice, His approval, and His pleasure matter most.

Beware of Casual Christianity

It's easy to show reverence toward God on Sunday morning and then live differently throughout the rest of the week.

Casual Christianity happens when our choices, behaviors, and words become indistinguishable from the world around us and we begin tolerating things that God hates.

The fear of the Lord isn't being afraid of God.

It is a posture of:

- **Reverent awe**
- **Humility**
- **Honor**
- **Obedience**

When we truly fear God, we recognize that our lives, bodies, and choices belong to Him.

Our reverence for God should affect how we live every day, not just how we behave at church.

The Fear of Man Is a Trap

Proverbs 29:25

“Fear of man will prove to be a snare...”

The fear of man happens when what people think, say, or do carries more weight in our lives than what God has said.

It can look like:

- **People-pleasing**
- **Constantly needing affirmation**

- **Avoiding difficult conversations**
- **Compromising convictions to avoid rejection**
- **Changing who you are depending on who is around**
- **Allowing people's opinions to determine your decisions**

The fear of man doesn't always look obvious.

Sometimes it simply looks like caring more about keeping people happy than keeping your heart obedient to God.

Insecurity Gives the Fear of Man Room to Grow

When insecurity goes undealt with, it becomes fertile ground for the fear of man.

If our identity depends on affirmation from other people, their approval begins to control us.

Instead of asking:

“What has God told me to do?”

We begin asking:

“What will everyone think if I do it?”

When people's opinions become louder than God's voice, compromise is never far behind.

Saul: Partial Obedience Is Still Disobedience

God gave King Saul a clear instruction concerning the Amalekites.

But Saul allowed the voice of the people to influence his obedience.

He spared what God had commanded him to destroy and then attempted to justify his actions.

Eventually, Saul admitted:

“I was afraid of the men and so I gave in to them.”

Saul's problem wasn't that he didn't know what God wanted.

He knew God's command but valued people's approval more.

His partial obedience was still disobedience.

The fear of man ultimately cost Saul his kingdom, his calling, and his anointing.

We cannot allow people's opinions to rewrite God's instructions.

Peter: No One Is Immune

The fear of man isn't only a struggle for spiritually immature people.

Peter:

- **Walked with Jesus.**
- **Walked on water.**
- **Witnessed miracles.**
- **Saw the resurrected Christ.**
- **Became a leader in the early Church.**

Yet in Galatians 2, Peter changed his behavior when a certain group of people entered the room.

He knew the truth, but fear caused him to behave contrary to what he knew.

Paul confronted him publicly because his compromise was affecting others.

Spiritual maturity doesn't make us immune to the fear of man.

We must continually guard our hearts against it.

The Fear of God Breaks the Fear of Man

Freedom from the fear of man doesn't come from becoming cold, arrogant, or unconcerned about others.

It comes from developing a **greater fear of God**.

The bigger God becomes in our view, the smaller people's opinions become.

When we know we are loved and approved by God:

- **Rejection loses its power.**
- **Criticism doesn't define us.**
- **Affirmation doesn't control us.**
- **Obedience becomes more important than popularity.**

We don't have to live constantly wondering what everyone thinks about us.

We can live for an **audience of One**.

Final Challenge

Ask yourself honestly:

Whose voice has the greatest influence in my life?

Whose approval am I chasing?

Is there an area where I already know what God has asked me to do, but I've compromised because I don't want to disappoint someone?

Don't allow the fear of people to keep you trapped.

Bring your insecurity, people-pleasing, and compromise before God. Repent where the approval of others has become more important than obedience to Him.

Make the decision to fear God above everyone else and live for an **audience of One**.

Discussion Questions

1. Ps May described “casual Christianity” as showing reverence toward God at church while allowing our everyday lives to look no different from the world. Where are we most vulnerable to becoming casual in our relationship with God?
2. Proverbs 29:25 describes the fear of man as a trap. Which expression of the fear of man—people-pleasing, needing affirmation, avoiding difficult conversations, fear of rejection, or something else—do you find yourself most susceptible to?
3. Saul knew exactly what God had commanded but allowed the opinions of people to influence his response. Where can partial obedience disguise itself as obedience in our own lives?
4. Peter's example shows that even spiritually mature believers can struggle with the fear of man. What can we do to continually guard our hearts against allowing different people or environments to change our convictions?
5. Ps May challenged us to live for an “audience of One.” What is one area of your life where choosing God's approval over people's approval would change the way you currently think, speak, or act?