

BIBLE STUDY ON SOCIAL ANXIETY– THE FEAR OF MAN

Session 4 - Keys to Overcoming Fear of Man: Thinking Biblically

Key Verses: II Corinthians 10:1-5; Romans 12:1-2; Philippians 4:4-9

Review:

THE BIBLICAL DEFINITION OF SOCIAL ANXIETY

- Social anxiety = the fear of man
- Proverbs 29:25 *“Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe”*
- II Timothy 1:7 *“For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”*

SOCIAL ANXIETY IS ROOTED IN THE HEART

- Relationship of heart (attitudes, beliefs, motives) to actions, words, emotions.

Luke 6:43-45 (NIV)

⁴³ *“No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. ⁴⁴ Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. ⁴⁵ The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.*

THE WORD OF GOD ALONE CAN EXPOSE THE HEART

- The Word is a sword that exposes the heart

Hebrews 4:12-13

“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”

CLEANSING STARTS BY RECOGNIZING AND CONFESSING HEART IDOLS

- Idols of the heart – trust, allegiance, affection, desire, fear, praise other than God.
- We need to agree with God, admit and confess to be cleansed

I John 1:9

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

THE FEAR OF MAN IS OVERCOME FEAR BY PLACING CONFIDENCE IN AND SEEKING SECURITY IN GOD ALONE

- Fear of man has source in finding security in other's acceptance
- True confidence and security from our relationship with God Romans 8:28-39
- We are God's elect – purchased by the life of His Son
- He protects us from all harm, condemnation, judgment
- As we believe this, affirmation of others loses significance.

THE FEAR OF MAN IS OVERCOME BY FULFILLING RESPONSIBILITY

- Attention needs to turn away from what others think, and toward pleasing God
- Every child of God has responsibility to others (gifts)
- Determine to obey God (function in gifts) regardless of feelings

1 Peter 4:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ *Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.*

THE FEAR OF MAN IS OVERCOME BY LOVING GOD AND OTHERS

- Motivation for service is love of others
- Maturing in love will overcome all fear

1 John 4:16-19 *And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.*

- Because we are secure in God, we can love others (be vulnerable)
- We are to love others as we have been loved
- We are to follow Jesus; He loved despite the reaction of others for the joy set before Him
- Such love is the fruit of the Holy Spirit
- We need to choose to love others despite how it makes us feel.

End of Review

THE FEAR OF MAN IS OVERCOME BY THINKING BIBLICALLY

We are in a battle – not against people, but against spiritual foes that wage war in the arena of the mind. We will win or lose based on what we allow in our minds, and what we choose to think about and meditate on.

The Scriptures present the Christian experience as spiritual war waged on the battleground of the human mind. Victory over spiritual foes is rooted in learning to think Biblically. This principle is expressed throughout the Bible.

II Corinthians 10:1-5

By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you—I, Paul, who am “timid” when face to face with you, but “bold” when away!² I beg you that when I come I may not have to be as bold as I expect to be toward some people who think that we live by the standards of this world.³ For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does.⁴ The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.⁵ We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Paul was waging a spiritual war. He was being accused by false teachers and apostles of lacking authority and validity. False teachers followed behind him and brought false ideas about the gospel and how to have a right standing with God. They also propagated lies about the Apostle Paul’s authority and integrity. They were undermining his ministry, and this letter is largely Paul’s defense against these attacks against his apostleship and the truth of the gospel. In this passage Paul makes it clear that the fight that we are in is not against people, but against false ideas, doctrines, and heresies. And what is the weapon given to Paul and to us to fight this battle? It is the sufficient Word of God ministered by the power of God’s Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:1-4

¹When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God.² For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.³ I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling.⁴ My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power

Paul did not fight against these false ideas and lies with his own intellect and reasoning. He did not depend on his own eloquence and wisdom to try to stand against the attack. Rather, he depended on the power of the Spirit of God. Paul viewed himself as fearful and weak, and rested in simple faith on the power and wisdom of God to fight these battles.

In our Christian experience, we are facing the same foes. Our enemy is false belief and wrong doctrine, which are enemies that attack our minds and thinking. According to verse 5 in II Corinthians 10, our fight is against strongholds and fortresses of false thinking, understanding and beliefs that have exalted themselves above the truth. Our calling is to expose and subdue these thoughts and ideas by submitting our minds to the Word of God. This is the means of spiritual victory.

This basic principle of spiritual warfare is the key to being set free from the fear of man to serve Christ. Look again at verse 4 in II Corinthians 10. There are strongholds in the mind that consist of ideas and thoughts contrary to Biblical truth. Satan binds and controls people by controlling their minds and thinking. Jesus said in John 8:32 “*Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*” For us to gain the victory over the snare of the fear of man, we need to know, believe and act upon the truth of God’s Word. It is the weapon that we have been given to overcome the enemy. It is through the renewal of our thinking that we are transformed into the image of Christ and set free to serve Him and love others.

Ephesians 4:20-24

²⁰ *You, however, did not come to know Christ that way.* ²¹ *Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.* ²² *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;* ²³ *to be made new in the attitude of your minds;* ²⁴ *and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Verse 23 says that we are to be made new in the attitude of our minds. This process of putting off of the old self and putting on of the new self has its foundation in changing our thoughts, attitudes, motives and beliefs. There is no mystical way to become a holy and righteous person. It happens as we submit our thinking and then our actions to the Word of God.

Colossians 3:1-2 (NIV)

¹ *Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.* ² *Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*

We have to choose to set our minds on heavenly things, godly things, truthful things, and not on earthly things – the philosophies and ideas of fallen men. Again, these things that we need to set our minds on are found exclusively in the Word of God.

Romans 12:1-2 (NIV)

¹ *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.* ² *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

How are we enabled to obey the will of God? We are enabled by God to change by allowing the Word of God to transform us from the inside out. Godly action starts with godly thinking. True spirituality starts in the heart; the motives, affections, desires, and thoughts. Again, the Word of God has the unique power to expose our vain and sinful attitudes and thinking, and replace that thinking with the truth that will set us free.

Philippians 4:4-9

⁴ *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!* ⁵ *Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.* ⁶ *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.* ⁷ *And the peace of God,*

which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸ *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.* ⁹ *Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you*

The thoughts that we allow in our minds should have these characteristics: Decent, honest, of good reputation, respectable, true, noble, righteous, just, pure, chaste, modest, free from fault, clean, pleasing, lovely, speak well of others, a good report, virtuous, morally excellent, praiseworthy.

This list should serve as our mind's doorkeeper. As thoughts approach our mind, from the newspaper, or a textbook, or the television, or a movie, or a friend, or a preacher, or just from our own musing, we need to evaluate them in light of this list of characteristics. And if they don't meet this criterion, they should not be allowed to stay.

Proverbs 4:20-23 My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body. Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

Our mind is the door to our heart, and what is in our heart determines who we are. There is a battle raging for the control of our minds.

Now let's apply this principle to this battle with the fear of man. Let's examine some examples of thoughts that come against our minds when battling the fear of man, and use God's Word to bring those thoughts into the obedience of Christ.

- I must be accepted by others to be safe and secure.
- I can only be confident if people appreciate and accept me
- I can't get involved with people because they might hurt me.
- If people don't like me, I just should stay away from them.

Psalm 27:1-3 (NIV)

The LORD is my light and my salvation— whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life— of whom shall I be afraid? ² *When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall.* ³ *Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident.*

Isaiah 51:7-8 (NIV)

⁷ *“Hear me, you who know what is right, you people who have my law in your hearts: Do not fear the reproach of men or be terrified by their insults.* ⁸ *For the moth will eat them up like a garment; the worm will devour them like wool. But my righteousness will last forever, my salvation through all generations.”*

Psalm 56: 1-4; 10-11 (NIV)

Be merciful to me, O God, for men hotly pursue me; all day long they press their attack. ² *My slanderers pursue me all day long; many are attacking me in their pride.* ³ *When I am*

afraid, I will trust in you. ⁴ In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?

¹⁰ In God, whose word I praise, in the LORD, whose word I praise— ¹¹ in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?

Hebrews 13:6 (NIV)

⁶ So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”

- I have nothing to contribute of worth to others.
- God hasn't called me to be involved in other people's lives
- I don't need other people.
- Other people don't need me.

Ephesians 4:7-8 (NIV)

⁷ But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ⁸ This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.”

1 Peter 4:7-11 (NIV)

⁷ The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. ⁸ Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. ⁹ Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰ Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

- The Lord would not want me to be uncomfortable or suffer; It is too painful for me to be around others, or, I can't witness or talk about my faith to others because they may not like it and try to harm me.

1 Peter 2:20-23 (NIV)

²⁰ But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. ²¹ To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ²² “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” ²³ When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

1 Peter 3:14 (NIV)

¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.”