**Fear’s Snare and Faith’s Haven**

*Proverbs 29:25*

**Introduction**

1. ***“The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.” (Proverbs 29:25)***
	1. **Objective reading** – fearing other men, i.e. what they can, or may do to you.
	2. **Subjective reading** – fear within man, i.e. any fear that man may harbor within himself.
	3. **Snare** – i.e. by which he is caught and destroyed.
	4. ***“shall be safe”*** – lit. set on high – i.e. in a secure, unreachable place far from danger, with God.
	5. **Fear** – cowardice condemned – **Revelation 21:8**
		1. Leads to negligence – **Matthew 24:12-13** (concerning destruction of Jerusalem)
	6. **God doesn’t give fear** – **2 Timothy 1:7** – He empowers us with His word, emboldens us by the love He provokes, and settles us by His truth and hope.
		1. Leads to faithful obedience – **(v. 8**)
2. “The fear of man plunges him into yet greater suffering than that from which he would escape; confidence in God, on the other hand, lifts a man internally, and at last externally, above all his troubles.” (Keil and Delitzsch)
3. “He who, through fear of what man may do to him, think or say of him, does what he knows to be wrong, lets his moral cowardice lead him into sin, leaves duty undone,—such a man gets no real good from his weakness, outrages conscience, displeases God. See our Lord’s words. Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe (Pro 18:10). Such trust carries a man safe through all dangers; fearing to offend God, living as always under his eye, he feels Divine protection, and knows that whatever happens is for the best.” (Pulpit Commentary)
4. We cannot let fear of man alter what God’s will dictates. We cannot live with any fear within, for it will consume us, and lead us away from the narrow path.
5. We must put our faith in God – such will be a haven of victory in the Lord (**cf. 1 John 5:4)**.
6. Identity – Fearing exclusion or trusting in God’s love?
7. Servants of God are called to distinctiveness in devotion to God. This separation from the majority can be intimidating, though it is a blessing.
	1. **Exodus 19:4-6** – a blessed relationship through the sanctification of the covenant.
		1. **1 Samuel 8:4-5** – desire to be like all the nations.
	2. **1 Kings 19:10** – Elijah in despair from solitude. (**v. 18** – yet 7,000 are reserved)
	3. **Psalm 73:1-3** – Asaph became envious of the ungodly.
	4. **1 Peter 4:3-4** – they think it strange that we do not do these things.
	5. Fear of distinctive identity from the world will lead to negligence and compromise.
	6. We must not fear being different, what others think, or them not appreciating or understanding the true value in what we stand for as children of God, but we must trust in the Lord and our identity with Him – will lead to faithfulness, and reward.
8. **Psalm 139** – the blessing of identity with God.
	1. NOTE: **Psalm 138** addresses the Lord’s condescension in help of the faithful – **(v. 6)** – He has regard for the lowly (especially in spirit – faithful).
		1. **Psalm 139** expounds on this regard and care.
		2. Speaks of one whose identity is with the Lord, and finds solace and strength in that fact, drawing ever near Him.
	2. Guiding and Supporting Omniscience and Omnipresence of God (**vv. 1-12**)
		1. Relationship
			1. ***“Lord”*** – *yhwh* (Jehovah) – personal name related specifically to His covenant people.
			2. Me, my, etc. – personal, not generic.
				1. God’s regard and care for one of His own – **Psalm 138:6**
				2. God’s loyal love (mercy – *hesed*) toward one of His own **– Psalm 138:7-8**
			3. **(vv. 1-4)** – Intense interest in His people.
				1. ***“sitting down…rising up…path…lying down”*** – whole round of activity – life.
				2. **(v. 3)** – ***“comprehend”*** – ***“scrutinize” (NASB***) – *zârâ* – “to scatter, fan, cast away, winnow, disperse, compass, spread, be scattered, be dispersed” (Brown-Driver-Briggs)

“He scattered all that was chaff, or all that was valueless, and saw what there was that was real and substantial.” (Barnes)

He truly knows you (others may not understand).

* + - * 1. **(vv. 2b, 4)** – you know it altogether.
		1. Guidance
			1. **(vv. 7-10)** – not a place you can go where God is not there to lead.
				1. His omniscience and omnipresence make Him the ultimate guide.
				2. We can trust His guidance.
			2. **(v. 11)** – darkness of doubt, despair, turmoil, etc. – may seem it will overwhelm, but God’s presence is light.
			3. **(v. 12)** – ***“shall not hide”*** – *ḥâšaḵ* – to be dark (STRONG).
				1. ***“Even the darkness is not dark to You” (NASB)***
				2. **Psalm 119:105** – His word always lights the path.
				3. **Ephesians 5:8-10** – sons of light who know the way (Lord’s will).
		2. Support
			1. **(v. 5, 10)** – He has ***“besieged” (YLT)*** us – not to conquer us, but to support/protect us.
				1. ***“hedged me” (NKJV***) – **Job 1:10**
				2. His hand is upon us to hold us – support us as we follow Him through life.
	1. Wonderful Purpose with God **(vv. 13-18)**
		1. God’s knowledge and presence (active) in your origin (creation) – **(vv. 13-16)** – poetic language describing the knowledge, presence, and creative power of God in human conception and gestation.
			1. **(v. 13)** – ***“covered”*** – *sâḵaḵ* – to weave together (as a fence or hedge is woven together, hence ***“covered,” NKJV***) – “to plait, interweave, viz., with bones, sinews, and veins” (Keil and Delitzsch) (**cf. Job 10:11**)
			2. **(v. 15)** – ***“frame”*** – bones
				1. ***“lowest parts of the earth”*** – metaphor for the womb (**v. 13).**
			3. **(v. 16)** – ***“my substance, being yet unformed***” *– g̱ôlem* – a wrapped (and unformed mass, i.e. as the embryo) (STRONG); formless, embryo (HALOT)
			4. **(v. 14)** – ***“fearfully”*** – what inspires reverence; ***“wonderfully made”*** – to distinguish.
				1. ***“because that [with] wonders I have been distinguished.” (YLT)***
				2. “I am distinguished among thy works by things which tend to exalt my ideas of God, and to fill my soul with reverent and devout feelings.” (BARNES)
		2. God knew you before there was a you to be known by others, and His thoughts concerning you were abundant – **(vv. 16-18**)
			1. **(v. 16)** – ***“The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them.” (NASB***) – not in the sense of predestination, or foreordination.
				1. Knowledge of life, personality, being – and the days which accompany such.
			2. **(vv. 17-18)** – thoughts of God regard me, and they are precious!
				1. **Psalm 8:3-5** – what is man that you are mindful of him?
				2. **Ecclesiastes 12:13-14** – the glorious purpose of God for man.
		3. **I.e. you are made special, in awe inspiring ways, and with precious invaluable purpose.**
	2. Passionate Fellowship with God **(vv. 19-24)**
		1. Passionate and righteous indignation toward those who oppose God – **(vv. 19-22)**
			1. **(vv. 19-20)** – knowledge of the result of those who dismiss such a God, and desire for separation from them.
			2. **(vv. 21-22)** – complete fellowship with God in the distaste for wickedness, and utter disgust with it – total opposition.
		2. Passionate plea for nurtured and sustained fellowship with God – **(vv. 23-24**)
			1. **(v. 23)** – request for God to continue to do what He already has been doing **(vv. 1-3).**
				1. **(v. 6)** – such knowledge is too high for Him – let God show him!
				2. **Psalm 119:17-19** – open my eyes that I might see.
			2. **(v. 24)** – Lead me to life.
1. **With God so invested in your life, with total knowledge of you – your strengths, weaknesses, needs, etc. – and with matchless eternal purpose for you, there is no reason to fear exclusion from those who exclude Him from their lives.**
	1. **We only need God. We only need Jesus – “You are my strength when I am weak, You are the Treasure that I seek, You are my all in all; Seeking You as a precious jewel, Lord, to give up I’d be a fool; You are my all in all.” (You Are My All In All)**
2. Evangelism – Fearing failure or trusting in God’s reward? (**1 Corinthians 3)**
3. Our blessed relationship with God (**Psalm 139**) is one which we should be eager to introduce to others, that they may have that same fellowship with God. (**cf. 1 John 1:3-4)**
4. With Fear and Trembling, but Not Afraid or Ashamed
	1. Christ sent Paul to preach the gospel – **1 Corinthians 1:17-18, 23-24** – foolishness to the world, but he is not ashamed knowing it is the power of God. (**cf. Romans 1:15-16** – not ashamed, but eager to preach)
	2. Though he describes his presence among them in this way – **1 Corinthians 2:3**
	3. In Corinth – **Acts 18:9-11** – after the Jews opposed Paul, and he went to the Gentiles.
		1. Tensions were high, and it apparently affected Paul.
		2. Jesus told Him to preach anyway, but he would be protected.
		3. **Acts 18:12-17** – the Jews would try to accuse Paul before Gallio, proconsul of Achaia, but Jesus providentially protected him.
		4. ***(v. 9) – “Do not be afraid any longer” (NASB)*** – verb, present – “The Greek prohibits the continuance of something already going on.” (Reese, 645) (beginning)
		5. **(v. 11)** – then for 1.5 years he boldly proclaimed the gospel.
	4. ***“in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling” (1 Corinthians 2:3).***
		1. Initial climate in Corinth might be a consideration here, but only in part.
		2. ***“fear and trembling”*** (Paul’s writing 3x more):
			1. **2 Corinthians 7:15** – reception of Titus knowing he has authority of God – “obedience of you all, how with…”
			2. **Ephesians 6:5** – Bondservants obeying masters – fear and trembling before God – reverence.
			3. **Philippians 2:12** – a deep reverence for God.
		3. Context – **1 Corinthians 2:1-5**
			1. **(vv. 1-2)** – not with self-inflating wisdom and excellence of speech. (Like some in Corinth are doing).
			2. **(vv. 4-5)** – not with words that would put faith in man’s wisdom, but in inspired words of the Spirit to put faith in God and His power.
			3. **(v. 3)** – this is ultimately reflective of His fear of God – approached his preaching in a way that would not interfere with God’s work.
				1. This was how he was with them – **Acts 18:11** – after Jesus strengthened him.
	5. Outward pressure in evangelism, whether from persecution, or disdain/mockery/appearing foolish, is combatted with a fear of God – **1 Peter 3:13-17**
		1. **(v. 14)** – quoting Isaiah 8:12 – **Isaiah 8:12-14** – let the Lord be your fear, and He will be a sanctuary.
5. With the Power of God
	1. We shrink in fear from evangelizing at times because we think we cannot be effective.
		1. Disciples make disciples – **Matthew 28:18-19; Acts 8:4** – this is your duty, and God does not appoint us to something impossible.
		2. Such shows focus on self, not God – **1 Corinthians 2:3-4** – **he did not approach preaching with self-confidence, but CONFIDENCE IN GOD/CHRIST.**
	2. Contrast – **1 Corinthians 4:6-7** – some in Corinth were thinking themselves better than others.
		1. **(v. 8)** – even than the apostles according to Paul’s evaluation of the situation.
		2. **(v. 6)** – What he has written about figuratively concerning himself and Apollos was to teach them not to think beyond the word.
			1. I.e. that the power/emphasis/significance is not on himself or Apollos or any other (**cf. 1 Corinthians 3:3-4**).
			2. The power, emphasis, and significance is on God!
				1. So, Paul preached Christ – **1 Corinthians 2:2**
	3. Who is Paul and Apollos (and us)?
		1. **1 Corinthians 3:5-9** – Paul describes himself and Apollos as mere ministers (servants) and fellow workers of God.
			1. **(v. 5)** – preachers are merely ministers.
				1. **Luke 17:10** – unprofitable, simply have done our duty.
				2. **(1:13)** – It was wrong to elevate the preachers above what they actually were as servants. Paul didn’t do anything worthy of praise, but Christ and God did.
				3. ***“through whom you believed”*** – i.e. merely the messenger who brought the message.
			2. **(vv. 6-7)** – God is the one to be praised. God is the one Who has the power to save, and does save.
				1. The Corinthians placed too much emphasis on the preachers.
				2. **The glory should have been directed toward God – HE GIVES THE INCREASE (CAUSES THE GROWTH).**
			3. **(vv. 8-9)** – The preaching of the gospel is a good work – with the goal to save souls. Preachers are working WITH God, but it is GOD’S POWER.
				1. **(v. 8)** – they are one – not enemies but working together – not one greater than the other, but same level.
	4. **We do not reach a level of power for God to use us, but we reach a level of humility through proper self-evaluation before God for Him to use us – 1 Corinthians 1:26-31**
6. With the Foundation of Christ
	1. While a proper understanding of where the power resides is necessary to overcome fear in evangelism, faith is not expressed in a relaxed approach – it is not that we do nothing.
		1. **1 Corinthians 2:2-3** – he had determination, and fear of God in his preaching.
		2. Gospel success is not dependent on our power, but God’s. However, we can still hinder it – **1 Corinthians 9:12**
		3. **In proclamation there is preparation** – **2 Timothy 2:15; Ephesians 6:15**
	2. A Wise Master Builder
		1. **1 Corinthians 3:10-11, 16-17** – While the power is God’s – He gives the increase – Paul explains that the preacher still has the responsibility of preaching Christ – NO MORE, NO LESS.
			1. **(v. 10)** – Paul is a ***“wise master builder”*** because he ONLY preached Christ. (NOTE: ***“HOW he builds on it…FOR”***)
				1. **(v. 11)** – wise because he preached Christ.
				2. **(vv. 18-20)** – wise because he became a fool.
				3. **It would be unwise to preach any other thing than CHRIST – THE ONLY FOUNDATION.**
				4. Spoke wisdom – **(2:6-7, 12-13)** – wisdom of God revealed (once a mystery but now made known)
	3. Build on the Correct Foundation
		1. **(vv. 10b-11, 16-17)** – To preach any other message than that of Christ’s would be destructive.
			1. THE ONLY THING WE NEED TO WORRY ABOUT IS PREACHING THE TRUTH!
		2. **1 Peter 4:11** – speak as the oracles of God.
		3. **1 Corinthians 4:6** – not thinking beyond what is written – i.e. by appealing to man’s wisdom for success in evangelism.
7. With the Confidence of Reward
	1. At times we hesitate to reach out to others with the gospel because we fear failure by their rejection of it.
		1. Their rejection is of Christ – **Luke 10:16** – to the 70 tasked with taking the gospel to Jews.
		2. God is still glorified.
	2. Warning concerning materials:
		1. **1 Corinthians 3:10-13, 16-17** – take heed how you build…
			1. **(v. 10)** – shows we have a responsibility concerning HOW we build on the foundation.
			2. **(vv. 16-17)** – it is possible to defile the temple (church) through the material you use to build.
				1. **(v. 9)** – you are the building.
				2. **(vv. 12-13)** – material are people (converts) – will they last, or fail?
			3. Build separate from the word of Christ (worldly wisdom) – **1 Corinthians 2:5** – faith would be in the wisdom of men, and they would not endure faithfully.
			4. **(v. 17)** – consequence for such reckless building. (**1 Corinthians 2:2-4** – have fear and trembling before God)
	3. Encouragement concerning materials:
		1. **1 Corinthians 3:10-11** – take heed how you build, only preaching the word of Christ – following the foundation laid. (i.e. don’t lay a new foundation, but build off of the truth)
		2. **(vv. 12-15)** – if you have built wisely (by preaching Christ), then the quality of material will not affect your standing with God.
			1. **(v. 13)** – the day – of trials of fire (**cf. 1 Peter 1:7),** revealing of hearts in judgment (**cf. 1 Corinthians 4:5**).
			2. (**v. 14**) – reward – joy when one you led to truth continues – **cf. Philippians 4:1**
			3. **(v. 15a)** – loss – sorrow when they do not continue – **cf. 1 Corinthians 5:2**
				1. Paul’s deep concern for the Corinthians – **2 Corinthians 7:5-7**
			4. **(v. 15b)** – saved – regardless of the result, as long as you endure yourself – ***“yet so as through fire”***
	4. If we trust in Christ by preaching only His message we have nothing to fear, but can expect only positive and lasting reward of our salvation.

**Conclusion**

1. ***“The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.” (Proverbs 29:25)***
2. We must not fear others, and we must not harbor fear within.
3. If we trust in the Lord we will be lifted high, find strength to do His will by faith, and find salvation in Him.