

## Cease Ye From Man

The language of the prophets can be terribly plain, painful and yet wonderfully poetic. Thus was the sense in which Isaiah declared that God one day "...arise to shake terribly the earth..." (Isaiah 2:19). He said, "And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down..." (Isaiah 2:17). The command God gives to man in view of that day is as relevant today as it was in Isaiah's time and the Day of the Lord that is to come. God says, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" (Isaiah 2:22). In other words, desist from man as your source of Who meets your needs. Stop letting he who is so fragile as the air he breathes overly-influence you. There are three influences of man over man that I want to caution you about:

### 1. The Fear of Man

"The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe" (Proverbs 29:25). The fear of man will trap you like an animal. This is the antithesis of the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7) and the beginning of wisdom (Psalm 110:10, Psalm 9:10). In Brown, Driver, Briggs' Hebrew definitions the word we translate "fear" is the word: יראָה, "yir'âh" which means: 1) fear, terror, fearing 2) awesome or terrifying thing (object causing fear) 3) respect, reverence, piety.

On one hand, fear means to trust with reverential awe. When we behold the glory of God in creation I am in fear! To gaze into the deep purple sky encircled by a multitude of stars that dwarf our earth and sun, I am caught up in wonder and worship. When I behold the acts of God in judgment I am in fear of the terror and might of His power. When I contemplate salvation by grace, I am in fear of the consequences of not embracing Him through Jesus Christ. Then I am also in fear as I meditate on my unworthiness and His sinlessness that in love drove Him to the cross to be forsaken of the Father for us! This kind of fear should only be given to God alone! At the grave of John Knox in the churchyard of St. Giles, the Earl of Mortoun, the regent of Scotland, in the presence of an immense funeral procession, who had followed the body to its last resting-place said, "Here lyeth a man who in his life never feared the face of man...." Mary Queen of Scots said of John Knox's imprecatory prayers, (prayers that call down the curses of God on false religion and the promoters of it), "I fear these prayers more than all the assembled armies of Europe." A man who fears not other men but only the face of God can evoke fear in the hearts of some of the most cruel and base in the earth. One biographer said of the death of Knox: "During that fortnight of leave-taking of friends, of colleagues, of life itself, he asked that two Scripture passages be read: his beloved seventeenth chapter of John, 'the place where I cast my first anchor;' and the ninth psalm, a singularly fitting testimony of his own age, and a sobering word to our own. The last four verses state: 'The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever. Arise, O Lord; let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in thy sight. Put them in fear, O Lord: that the nations may know themselves to be but men.'" Make note that one of Knox's favorite passages in the Bible is a prayer for man to fear God and that peoples of the earth would know themselves to be just man. This is another way of saying, "Cease ye from man."

### 2. The Favor of Man

The Bible says, "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42,43). Many court the favor of man at the cost of offending God. Paul said, "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10). Paul had to stand up to Peter, our Lord's right-hand man, but he did so because he was dominated by pleasing God rather than man. In Galatians 2:6, the Apostle said, "But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in

conference added nothing to me” (Galatians 2:6). Those considered to be kingpins were respected, but no man competed for first place in Paul’s life.

When we seek to please God, declaring Him as our Source, the blessings follow. The Psalmist said, “LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong...” (Psalm 30:7). So, let us “cease...from man,” choosing the favor of the Lord.

### **3. The Fellowship of Man**

It is good to have godly friends with whom we may fellowship. “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed” (Proverbs 13:20). If godly friends are not available, it is needful to understand that alliances with the wrong friends will have a polluting nature to our spiritual existence: “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (I Corinthians 15:33).

John Bunyan spent twelve years in jail rather than succumb to pressure from ungodly men. He was a Baptist preacher imprisoned for his faithfulness to Christ and refusal to be a Church of England priest. He was temporarily released and imprisoned again. It was in this period of isolation he wrote Pilgrim’s Progress. Other than the Bible, it is the most widely read book. It has been published in at least eighty different languages. Bunyan chose fellowship with God rather than fellowship with man.

In the world of soccer, known as “football” in other countries, the Sydney Swans had the worst players, worst record, and worse fans of any team in the world. Then one season everything turned around and they became an incredibly winning team. The grandstands that were formerly vacant were now filled to capacity. While one camera was scanning the immense crowd, the lens focused on one faithful fan that declared his undying loyalty to the Swans. The man was holding a placard that simply said, “I was here when nobody else was.” “Cease ye from man...” Far better to be the friend of God than have the fear of man, favor of man or fellowship of man. Let us walk in the fear of God, with the favor of God and constant fellowship of God. Let us “be there” when nobody else is!-

- Pastor Pope -

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