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# SECURE IN CHRIST: BATTLING LEGALISM, CONDEMNATION, AND FEAR OF MAN

Seminar description: “Even the most confident leader can struggle at times with whether or not they’re living up to the expectations of God, themselves, and others. Success can easily lead to pride, while failure can result in discouragement that hinders our fruitfulness. Our hope is found not in looking more to ourselves but to the finished work of Christ. In this seminar you’ll learn how to fight your fears and inadequacies with the immeasurable grace of the gospel.”

## I. Introduction

- A. My first experience leading corporate worship
- B. The stage: a platform that magnifies our internal struggles. The source of our identity is revealed in how we think about our public leadership from the stage.

## II. The Believer’s core identity: “in Christ”

- A. True identity—Our union with Christ defines us.

“Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith- that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.”  
Philippians 3:8-11

Our justification defines us- “not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith...”



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The Sunday gathering is not about our performance. It is about Christ's performance.

B. Fear of Man

"The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe."  
Proverbs 29:25

1. The Language of "fear"

"'Fear' in the biblical sense is a much broader word. It includes being afraid of someone, but it extends to holding someone in awe, being controlled or mastered by people, worshipping other people, putting your trust in people, or needing people...However you put it, the fear of man can be summarized this way: We replace God with people. Instead of a biblically guided fear of the Lord, we fear others." (Ed Welch, When People are Big and God is Small, p. 14)

Proverbs 29:25 contrasts trusting God with fearing people. "Fear of man" is replacing God with people and thus it is a worship problem.

2. People-pleasing is another way of understanding the fear of man.

a. Desire for approval (see also Matthew 6:1-6, 16-17)

"They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others." Matthew 23:5-7

b. Fear of rejection

"Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God." John 12:42-43 (NIV: "they loved praise from men more than praise from God.")

3. Growing in the fear of the Lord

"The most radical treatment for the fear of man is the fear of the Lord. God must be bigger to you than people are. This

antidote takes years to grasp; in fact, it will take all of our lives." (Ed Welch, p.19)

"Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD." (Psalm 34:12)

4. Serving securely with God's approval.

#### **IV. Good Fruit of Grace-Based Service**

##### **A. Freedom**

"For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death." Romans 8:2

"In Christ" we are free from the impossible burden to earn God's acceptance through producing our own good works. We have the Spirit who lives in us and works through us (a significant emphasis in Romans 8)

"For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" Romans 8:15

Security in Christ provides freedom for serving Christ. Our goal is his glory, not his acceptance. We don't serve to earn God's favor, we serve having already received his favor in Christ. Nothing to earn. Nothing to prove.

##### **B. Growth**

Living in light of grace fosters growth.

"God not only accepts you, he wants you to know that he accepts you, because you will never see liberating breakthroughs to new levels of personal holiness except in the reassuring atmosphere of grace." Ray Ortlund

##### **C. Joy**

Servant leadership becomes a joy when we aren't serving to gain approval from others. When I lack joy in serving, I should ask, "Where is my focus?"

In fact, we are called to serve other so that they may experience joy in the Lord as well.

“Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith...” Philippians 1:25

D. Faith

When we are secure in Christ, we are far more likely to lead with faith confident that he is at work.

“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” Philippians 1:6

“What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.” 1 Corinthians 3:5-7

E. Love

When we are secure in Christ, we are empowered by the Spirit to love others with Christ’s love. We see our fellow believers as brothers and sisters who are justified and adopted just as we are. As we rest in the grace of God, we serve others with his gracious love.

**V. Cultivating Security in Christ**

At times multiple applications can overwhelm us so that we end up doing nothing. I will leave you with one simple life-changing application: Study Romans 8. You may even want to memorize it.

A most helpful study tool is the book, *Supernatural Living for Natural People: the Life-Giving Message of Romans 8* by Ray Ortlund Jr.