

# Fear & Pride of Rejection

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I want to speak to you today about rejection. No one likes to be rejected, but Scripture promises that, sooner or later, rejection will come upon us; so, how we handle it when it comes will make all the difference between whether we walk in holy bold righteousness, or shrink into a walk of fear and compromise.

We all want to be liked, but there are many ways that we can be rejected, and many people to whom we are especially vulnerable; from them, rejection carries an especially severe sting. Members of our close family for instance. Who has not ever received a hurtful word of rejection from a husband, wife, mother, father, son or daughter? It is a common occurrence, and very painful when it happens.

There are those outside our families to whom we are vulnerable as well. Being rejected by peers is unpleasant, to say the least, and especially to youngsters who yearn for peer acceptance. For others, being rejected by an employer is not only unpleasant, but carries financial consequences as well, of which I need not elaborate. According to Scripture though, the problem is not in our being rejected (as I have said, Scripture promises rejection), but rather in how we respond to it. There are godly ways to respond, and not so godly ways as we shall see.

Yeshua is our quintessential example of a man who was painfully rejected, yet received it bravely and with godly purpose. In Isaiah 53:3-7, we read these well-known prophetic words:

"He is despised and REJECTED by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, *our* faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth." (NKJ).

Jumping forward a few centuries to John 15:18-21, here is what Yeshua said about how His rejection is destined to impact us; he said:

"If the world hates you, understand that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, the world would have loved its own. But because you do not belong to the world- on the contrary, I have picked you out of the world- therefore the world hates you. Remember what I told you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you too; if they kept my word, they will keep yours too. But they will do all this to you on my account, because they don't know the One who sent me." (CJB).

And in John 16:1-2, Yeshua warned His disciples:

"I have told you these things so that you won't be caught by surprise. They will ban you from the synagogue; in fact, the time will come when anyone who kills you will think he is serving God!" (CJB).

It was especially painful for Yeshua because His own Jewish people rejected Him. We read in John 1:11:

"He came to his own homeland, yet his own people did not receive him." (CJB).

Yeshua was not the only "righteous" person in the Bible to suffer rejection. Joseph was rejected big time – once when he was sold into slavery by his brothers, and another when he was falsely accused and thrown into an Egyptian prison. But, with God's help, he overcame and rebounded to become second in charge of Egypt. Proof that he overcame, was his statement to his brothers:

"You meant to do me harm, but God meant it for good- so that it would come about as it is today, with many people's lives being saved. (Genesis 50:20 CJB).

During the time of Yeshua, many Jews who believed in Him feared rejection from the synagogue; we read in John 12:42-43:

"Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in 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. (NKJ).

Sha'ul (also known as Paul) was both rejected and ejected from synagogues with some regularity. We read of one such occasion in Acts 18:4-6:

"Sha'ul also began carrying on discussions every *Shabbat* in the synagogue, where he tried to convince both Jews and Greeks. But after Sila and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Sha'ul felt pressed by the urgency of the message and testified in depth to the Jews that Yeshua is the Messiah. However when they set themselves against him and began hurling insults, he shook out his clothes and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! For my part, I am clean; from now on, I will go to the *Goyim*!" (CJB).

The examples I have shown you so far were of righteous men who suffered rejection for their faith. There were other occasions though, where persons of faith suffered rejection that they justly deserved, mostly from God Himself. Examples are Moses when he exhibited arrogance by hitting the rock (instead of speaking to it) and was kept from entering the promised land; Moses' sister Miriam when she questioned Moses' authority and was inflicted by God with leprosy; and David when he caused Uriah the Hittite's death and subsequently lost his son, born of Bathsheba, to illness. But all of them were able to overcome because they did not blame God. Instead, they repented, and God received them back. God has always tempered justice with mercy, for as we read in 1 John 1:9:

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (NKJ).

Besides feeling bad, rejection can cause trouble in two ways. The first way comes from fear of being rejected, and our acting to avoid rejection in ways that are improper, sinful, or just plain unwise. An example of such an action is when we accept a dare from a friend or peer group to do something dangerous, illegal, or harmful. Fraternity and Sorority hazing often includes such elements, and young people are coerced to submit by their desire to belong, and by their fear of being rejected. Getting into trouble because of fear of being rejected need not be that organized. Drug habits often begin by a desire to be "cool" in the eyes of friends, and deaths all too often occur on our highways by those who drink too much in order to be social.

One way of being rejected is to be isolated or ignored, and another way is to be persecuted or harmed. When a social club rejects a person, the only harm done is to the person's feelings. When an employer rejects a person by firing him, the person is harmed in his ability to earn a living. Nevertheless Scripture calls upon us to not fear rejection because fear is the opposite of faith, and Scripture has much to say about fear:

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."  
(2Timothy 1:7 NKJ)

"I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." (Psalms 34:4 NKJ)

"The LORD *is* my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD *is* the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalms 27:1 NKJ)

"The LORD *is* on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" (Psalms 118:6 NKJ)

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. (1John 4:18 NKJ)

"Say to those *who are* fearful-hearted, 'Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come *with* vengeance, *with* the recompense of God; He will come and save you.'" (Isaiah 35:4 NKJ)

So far, I have spoken to you about "fear of rejection," and I have shown you why it is bad because it causes us to make bad choices in the ways we conduct our lives. I hope that I have persuaded you that the problem is not "rejection," since rejection is promised us in Scripture, and even great men of old endured it either as their holy obligation, or as a result of just punishment.

I now want to familiarize you with a term that I never heard of before I received it from the Lord a few days ago, while seeking Him prior to writing this message. The term is "pride of rejection." "Pride of rejection" is similar to "fear of rejection," in that it is the pride and not the rejection that is the sinful problem; and if we act out of pride instead of repenting from it, our actions resulting from it are likely to also be sinful.

"Pride of rejection" comes in two flavors. The first does not seem like sin but it is. It is being proud of being rejected, causing us to do things and present ourselves in ways that invite rejection. Examples might be showing up to a wedding in jeans or playing loud dissonant music on a boom box for all to hear. These actions are saying "Look at me! I am what matters – not what I wear." and "This is my space. If you don't like my music, then: "Too bad!" Sometimes, this kind of pride of rejection is accompanied by fear of rejection – e.g., wanting to be accepted by a group that is itself rejected by those outside the group. People who wear green spiked hair seek acceptance in punk society that is proud of being rejected by the majority of people who dress conservatively. That kind of "pride of rejection" can result from thinking too highly of oneself, but it is often also mixed with thinking too little of oneself, and therefore seeks attention and affirmation from kindred souls. Yes, we can actually think too highly of ourselves and too little of ourselves at the same time.

The second flavor of "pride of rejection" is somewhat like the first, but it is the reverse of the first in the way it manifests. This kind of pride of rejection causes a person to become easily hurt when he perceives rejection, to become angry (although sometimes the anger is suppressed), and to withdraw from others and from situations as a result of the hurt. I say "perceives" rejection, because often he is not really being rejected but imagines that he is. What goes on in his mind is something like this: "I am worth more than the way he or she is treating me. I don't deserve to be treated that way." An example of this kind of "pride of rejection" is when an employer questions an employee about the way he is doing something or tells him to change something he is doing, and the employee's eruptive response is: "You don't think I know what I'm doing? Fine! Get someone else! I quit!"

As I have said again and again, being rejected is never the problem. The problem is either one's fear or one's pride. I gave you several examples of what the Bible has to say about fear, so now let's see what Scripture has to say about pride. There is so much there, especially in Proverbs, that I can share only a few verses as illustrations:

"The fear of the LORD *is* to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate." (Proverbs 8:13 NKJ)

"When pride comes, then comes shame; But with the humble *is* wisdom." (Proverbs 11:2 NKJ)

"Everyone proud in heart *is* an abomination to the LORD; *Though they join* forces, none will go unpunished." (Proverbs 16:5 NKJ)

"Pride *goes* before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall. Better *to be* of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud." (Proverbs 16:18-19 NKJ)

"A man's pride will bring him low, But the humble in spirit will retain honor." (Proverbs 29:23 NKJ)

Pride is a sin, much like other sins; so why (one might wonder) is pride so offensive to God? I believe the answer is revealed in Deuteronomy 8:11-18, when God instructs the Israelites and says to them:

"Be careful not to forget *ADONAI* your God by not obeying his *mitzvot*, rulings and regulations that I am giving you today. Otherwise, after you have eaten and are satisfied, built fine houses and lived in them, and increased your herds, flocks, silver, gold and everything else you own, you will become proud-hearted, forgetting *ADONAI* your God – who brought you out of the land of Egypt, where you lived as slaves; who led you through the vast and fearsome desert, with its poisonous snakes, scorpions and waterless, thirsty ground; who brought water out of flint rock for you; who fed you in the desert with *man*, unknown to your ancestors; all the while humbling and testing you in order to do you good in the end – you will think to yourself, 'My own power and the strength of my own hand have gotten me this wealth.' No, you are to remember *ADONAI* your God, because it is he who is giving you the power to get wealth, in order to confirm his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as is happening even today." (CJB).

So we are told in Scripture to expect rejection, and are warned against fearing it. We are also warned against pridefully inviting rejection or allowing pride to dominate our thoughts and actions when we actually are rejected. Fear and pride of rejection are sinful bondages that have no redeeming value, and must be expunged from all believers in order for them to be set free.

Sometimes we don't realize that we are bound and not free but, thankfully, there is a simple diagnostic test for it. The test is, do we feel offended when we are rejected or think about being rejected? If the answer is yes, then we are in bondage and need to be set free. But isn't it natural, you say, to feel offended if we have been wronged? Natural yes, but in Yeshua we are able to transcend things of the natural world and aspire to Kingdom heights. To the extent that we do we are free, and to the extent that we don't we are enslaved.

If I have persuaded you that fear and pride of rejection are bad, the logical next question is, "How can we avoid them or get rid of them if we have them?" Of course pray for God's deliverance, but sometimes He will only act if we act first. The nature of fear of rejection is that those who have it are not trusting God with every area of their lives. The nature of pride of rejection is that we tend to think more highly of ourselves than we ought. And the nature of both of them is that we turn inward with self-concern instead of turning outward to love our neighbor as our self (Leviticus 19:18) as we are commanded. The remedy requires a complete makeover of our attitude, from one of self-indulgence, to that of serving others. It is a choice of obedience that is best expressed in Deuteronomy 30:11-14 when God said to the Israelites:

"For this *mitzvah* which I am giving you today is not too hard for you, it is not beyond your reach. It isn't in the sky, so that you need to ask, 'Who will go up into the sky for us, bring it to us and make us hear it, so that we can obey it?' Likewise, it isn't beyond the sea, so that you need to ask, 'Who will cross the sea for us, bring it to us and make us hear it, so that we can obey it?' On the contrary, the word is very close to you- in your mouth, even in your heart; therefore, you can do it!" (CJB).