

The Hallmarks of Discipleship, Part 1

Scripture: Matthew 10:26-31

Code: 2282

In Matthew's gospel he has one purpose, and that is to affirm to man that Christ is King. His desire is that there be no question in the heart and the soul of a man or a woman but that Jesus Christ is the King. And from beginning of Matthew to the end of the gospel of Matthew, that is his thrust. He knows that men raise up other monarchs, that they are unwilling, basically, to submit to the Kingship of Christ, to the sovereignty of Christ, that they are unwilling to submit themselves to His total and sovereign Lordship, and that there's always this battle. And he is calling, as it were, on the Abners of the world to abandon their petty monarchs and establish themselves as subjects to Jesus Christ. That's his message. And as we've seen in studying Matthew, over and over and over again, he affirms the Kingship of Christ. And implied in all of those affirmations is a call for people to submit to that Kingship.

Now, when you come to chapter 10 it really takes a form that is easy to perceive. Here you meet twelve men who had said Christ is our King. Here you meet the twelve disciples, the twelve apostles, and they have committed themselves to being the followers of Christ. They have given everything. They have sacrificed their ideals, and their careers, and their families, and their lifestyle, and their homes and their jobs, their self determination, their selfwill, and they have said We submit ourselves to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. They then become in a real sense, the epitome of realization of Matthew's goal. And so as we're looking at chapter 10, we're really seeing people responding to the message of Matthew.

Christ is the King, and here are some men who have responded to that Kingship, and who have said we will follow Christ, we will be His subjects. He will be our King. We will be His servants. He will be our Master. We will be His students. He will be our Teacher.

Now, having said that. the Lord then takes them, trains them, and sends them into the world. And pretty much directs them as to the nature of their ministry through verse 25 of this chapter.

But then in chapter 10 of Matthew, verse 24, we find general teaching on this whole matter of discipleship. The generalized teaching of our Lord, dealing with what it means to be a subject to the King.

Listen, beloved, when you became a Christian, if you said nothing else you said this I accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Master and King and I submit myself to His sovereignty. That's what you said, or you weren't saved. That's what you said. And when you said that you took yourself right into Matthew chapter 10.

And here the Lord instructs those committed to His sovereignty.

And He gives them, I believe. the greatest teaching on the stuff of which discipleship is made, in verses 24 to 42. That's where we're looking.

Thomas Huxley once said, and I think it's such a good statement: "It doesn't take much of a man to become a Christian, but it does take all of him."

That is really what Christ is asking. That is what the King is asking. And in this marvelous chapter, the twelve have been called and they have responded and they are following. and they are being trained as they will be sent to reach the world. And off of that very special sending that He gives them, He moves into verse 24 and begins to teach general principles that apply to all of us who name the name of Christ...all of us who are His disciples.

We can see the general nature of the text, as we noted last week. by the word disciple that's a very general word in verse 24.

And also in verse 24 is the word servant, a very general word. Three times in this text it says Whosoever. And nine times...nine times it says He that. In other words, whoever comes to Me, whoever follows Me, whoever identifies with Me here are the principles he commits himself to obey. Now it all begins in verse 24, let's remind ourselves of what it says:

"The disciple is not above his teacher, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be like his teacher, and the servant like his lord."

Now just stop there for a moment. And I told you last week that basically is the bottom line in all discipleship...that we are to be like Him. We are to be like our Teacher. We are to be like our Master and our Lord and our King...that is our commitment. We are called to be like Him. That's what it means, to have His values, to have His commitments, to have His priorities, to be given utterly over to His will, and His purposes, and His kingdom. We are to be like Him.

Now, we said last time that if we are like Him, we will be also treated like Him. Right? Verse 25: "If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub," and that was their name for Satan, "if they call Him the devil, how much more shall they call them of His household?" In other words, if we are like Him we will be treated like Him.

That's part of it. That's the bottom line of discipleship. The whole goal of being a subject of Christ, of being a disciple which is mathetes. it means learner, the whole objective of learning, the whole objective of following, of being a subject is to become like the King. And the more we're like Him the more we'll be treated like He was treated. And the world treated Him this way. They called Him the devil.

Now if they were not hesitant to call Him that, they won't be hesitant to call us that. And He uses the analogy of a master of a house. Now the master of the house has dignity. He's the guy whose in charge. He has status. He has reputation. He's a man of honor in the community. He's got money.

And He's simply saying If they will take that, the highest level guy, and call him Satan, what do you think they'll do with his slaves? If they're willing to speak evil against a man of dignity. honor, and respect, they certainly won't hesitate to speak evil against people who don't have any dignity to start with. So, the bottom line then comes out like this Discipleship is a process by which you become like Christ, the more you become like Him, and the more the world treats you like Him, and you can expect it because if they treated Him that way, and didn't pull any punches with the very Christ of God, what makes you think they'll treat you any better?

Now you say Well, that's not a very inviting prospect in calling people to discipleship. But that's the fact. The goal is to be like Christ, and there's a price to pay for that.

So, He lays that bottom foundation, as we saw last week, in verses 24 and 25. Now, having assumed that as the beginning assumption Being like Me means being treated like Me. He then gives them five hallmarks of true discipleship. And, folks, they are just thrilling. Five hallmarks of true discipleship through this chapter. This morning we're going to look at one.

And then when I get back we'll get the rest. But this morning we're going to look at one. And it's such an important one we have to spend the whole time doing that.

The first mark of a true disciple, one who really is a subject of the King. one who has eliminated the Ishbosheth of his life and affirmed his allegiance to Christ, the first principle HE FEARS NOT THE WORLD. Did you get that? He fears not the world. That is the mark of a true disciple.

Verse 7: "Fear them not."

Verse 8: "Fear not them."

Verse 10: "Fear not therefore."

And from verse 12 to 14 He says don't be afraid of the world.

Because naturally, having heard verses 7 to 10, the response is going to be that they're going to be afraid.

Verse 12, He says "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves."

Verse 13, He says "Beware of men, they'll deliver you to the councils, and scourge you in the synagogues."

Verse 14, He says "You'll be brought before kings and governors."

Verse 15, "They'll deliver you up." That is the idea of a prisoner brought before trial.

Verse 16, "Your own family will put you to death."

Verse 22, "You'll be hated by everybody."

In verse 28, "You'll be persecuted."

Now with all of that don't be afraid...don't be afraid.

Even the Old Testament says, "The fear of man bringeth a...what?...

a snare." I think the fear of man strangles effective witnessing.

It strangles evangelism. We don't want to get into something we fear might become psychologically difficult for us. We don't want to create a problem. We don't want to be thought little of.

We don't want to be persecuted. Last of all, we certainly don't want to be killed for our faith. We want to preserve ourselves.

And in this overemphasis on selfpreservation we tend to bail out of a confrontive ministry. But the Lord is saying here they're going to do it to you, but don't be afraid. Face it. Be bold.

Don't be afraid.

Now, if you're afraid and you bail out, and you're not interested in witnessing for Christ, you're not going to pay the price, no matter what you say you're probably not a Christian. Because if you love the world, and you're of the world, then you're not of God. First John says, "If you love the world and the things that are in the world, you're not of the Father." And if you bail out, "They went out from us because they were not of us, and it was made manifest they were not of us when they left." But the folks who stay, and they're willing to follow through and be courageous are the ones who give evidence of being truly the disciples of Christ.

So, first of all, we're going to be like Christ. And being like Christ means we're going to be treated like Christ and as we're treated like Christ there's going to be a temptation to be afraid and pull back your testimony, and shut your mouth, and not be confrontive, and not say what ought to be said. And so He says Don't be afraid. Fear has absolutely strangled testimony. people are afraid to say the truth, they're afraid to be confrontive. And all of us have had illustrations of that times when we just couldn't get it out for fear we'd be thought to be silly or rude or obtrusive.

or uneducated, or stupid, or whatever. Or we didn't want to get into a fight with somebody. So He says Don't be afraid.

Now this is something the Lord said all the time to the disciples, by the way. Because it was so tough for them. "Fear not, little flock," He said. "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." And even after the resurrection He appeared to them a couple of times and He said "Don't be afraid." Basically, we're afraid. That's right. That's why we are constantly needing to be sort of enjoined to

get out and get at it. We're not afraid to talk to a group of Christians in a Bible study, that's why, I think, Christians just love Bible studies. Us four no more shut the door.

This is glory. We all agree. We sit there and affirm each other.

But send them out into the world and they get paralyzed with fear.

Somebody said "Most Christians' mouths are like the Arctic River....Most Christians, rather, are like the Arctic River; frozen over at the mouth." You know...when...there's a coldness, and a...

a sort of a deadness, a fearfulness that makes us just clam up.

But we don't need to be afraid. And that's what He's saying.

But, you know, it's amazing how the Lord never says anything in a vacuum. He doesn't just stand up and say Don't be afraid....

don't be afraid...don't be afraid. He says Here's why.... and He gives them three fear nots, and three reasons not to be afraid.

Number one, and I'll use the word vindication.

Verse 28: "Fear them not, therefore: for, or because, there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; and hidden, that shall not be known." That's an interesting statement. And by the way, a very common statement. Our Lord uses it several times. I told you this is some of His favorite teaching because the little parts of this whole passage here that He gave, are all over the place in the gospels. He used these principles again and again in different context. So He says Look, don't be afraid because what is covered will be revealed and what is hidden will be made known.

Now, just a couple of notes in the grammar. The word therefore looks back. The word for looks forward. Don't be afraid therefore, looks back to the statement in verse 25. "If they treated the Lord this way, they're going to treat you this way, so you're not going to get any treatment that's any different or any more than your Master received. Therefore, don't be afraid." He endured it...

He went through it....so don't be afraid.

The for then looks forward. Don't be afraid either because there's nothing covered that shall not be revealed and there's nothing hidden that shall not be known.

Now you say What in the world does that phrase mean? It's a kind of a proverbial, obscure statement at first, what does it mean? It simply means this. that someday God is going to take the lid off everything and all things will be made right...just. That's not the way it is now. Christians are looked on as anti-intellectual, we're looked on as the outcast, Paul called the off scouring of the world. The world is successful. The wicked prosper. Christians are persecuted. Christians are put down.

The more you stand for the right, the more the system hates you...and the less you're rewarded.

But someday it's all going to change. "And the truth will be made known." That's what that statement means. God is going to show who the real heroes are. God is going to cover...uncover the real heroes.

God's going to reward and vindicate His own. And when the lid comes off the evil people are going to find out that all they have left for them is vengeance. Your enemies cannot prevent your vindication.

That's what He's saying.

Look, people, look you've got to live with an eternal perspective.

You see? That's what He's saying. If you're stuck on worrying about what the world is going to say you're looking at the wrong thing. What you want to be looking at is what God's going to say in the end. Right? Why do you think the Bible over and over talks about rewards? "Behold, I come quickly, My reward is with Me to give to every man according to as his work shall be." Why do you think the Apostle Paul wrote about the fact that someday we'd face Christ at the bema seat? And He would reward us for the things done in the body. Why do you think it says in I Corinthians 4 that in that time when God reveals the secrets of the heart, then shall every man have praise of God? Why does He promise a crown of life and a crown of righteousness, and an incorruptible crown...and a crown of rejoicing?

Why does He promise us these things? To give us the eternal perspective so that we're not looking at being popular, or looking at being vindicated in this life as...as the wise and the noble, and the heroes of society, but rather we're willing to confront an evil society and let God reward us in eternity. It's hard to get that perspective...isn't it? But that's it. You've got to live, not for the moment when all the values are backwards, but for the future when God unveils the reality and reveals the hypocrites and shows who the real heroes were, and rewards them forever.

And a lot of Christians will trade....will trade in, get this one, a little momentary popularity for an eternal reward. Right?

That's what it comes down to.

Look with me for a minute at Luke 12. and I think by the...

couple of other passages where Jesus used this same little statement you can see the significance of it...Luke 12 verse 1:

"In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they stepped on one another."

Now that's a crowd. "Jesus began to say to His disciples, first of all, Beware of the leaven of the

pharisees," and what is the evil influence in the pharisees? "It is hypocrisy." They are phonies. You know what that means? The truth is covered.

They're wearing masks. They're fake. Then He uses the same statement, verse 2: "For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed, neither hidden that shall not be known." And there is that same little phrase. And what it means is, some day the truth is going to be told. The hypocrites will be unmasked and the truly righteous ones will be rewarded.

Back to chapter 5 of Luke, and the same phrase is used again.

Verse 18: "No man, when he has lighted a lamp, covers it with a vessel." That would be stupid to light a lamp and then stick a pot on top of it so nobody could see the light. They set it on a lampstand so that people can come in and see the light.

And that is exactly what God is going to do. "Nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither anything hidden that shall not be known and come to light." God is going to bring everything to light in the future, people, and it's going to be told then what the real value of your life was.

Now, you can save your reputation here and lose your reward there. That's your choice. But someday the values are going to be reversed. You don't need to be afraid of the world, is what our Lord is saying. You can turn back now....Matthew 10. You don't need to be afraid of the world. This is so temporary.

Whatever they may say about you, whatever they may do to react to you someday God is going to vindicate you.

Oh, I love that statement of our Lord in Revelation 22; "Behold, I come quickly and My reward is with Me to give to every man according as his work shall be." Paul says For some it will be wood, hay, stubble. For others it will be...

what?...gold, silver, precious stones.

Even human wisdom tells you to have that perspective. The preacher writing in Ecclesiastes perceived this. He says:

"Rejoice, O young man," in Ecclesiastes ii:g, "in thy youth; let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine own eyes."

He says Live it up. Do your thing, man, you're young do it.

Then he says this: "But know this, for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

In other words, if you decide to sow your wild oats now, just realize that someday you're going to pay.

And in the next chapter, chapter 12 verse 18, he says:

the whole conclusion of the deal is this; "Fear God, keep His commandments, this is the whole duty of man." Why? "For God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing."

God's going to open it all up. Everything covered will be uncovered...everything hidden will be made known.

So, beloved, that's the perspective we want. Someday God's going to look at the record of our life. God's going to expose everything. And those who have looked like they were the winners will turn out to be the eternal losers. And the losers who have been persecuted for their faith are going to be the winners forever. That's the plan. So, we aren't afraid of what the world does because we are looking for an eternal vindication at the hands of God. You see?

There's a second word in this passage that I would call to your attention, it's the word veneration. Not only vindication, but veneration.

John Calvin was actually banished from ungrateful Geneva after giving them the truth of God. And he said this: quote "Most assuredly if I had merely served man, this would have been a poor recompense: but it is my happiness that I have served Him who never fails to reward His servants to the full extent of .

His promise." end quote.

What he said was Hey, when they threw me out of town, if I was serving man that would have been a bad situation. But I was never serving man anyway. I was always serving God. And God will keep all His promises and bring all His rewards. And that is essentially what this second point means....veneration.

In other words, if you really worship God and fear God then you won't fear man. Right? Look at verse 27. He says: "What I tell you in darkness, speak in the light; what you hear in the ear, proclaim on the housetops. And fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." What He is saying is Don't fear men, fear God. And if you fear God enough and you honor God enough and you revere God and you venerate God enough, then you're not going to be concerned about men. If you have enough fear of God, you'll have no fear of men.

Now let's back up and look what He says in verse 27, most interesting. "What I tell you in darkness, speak in light; and what you hear in the ear, proclaim on the housetops." The whole idea is this the Lord says I've been telling you the secrets in your ear, and I want you to tell the whole world. There are no secrets in Christianity....did you get that?

I don't like that term, in a sense, the Christian's secret of a happy life...I don't like that. This is no

secret. Whenever there's a group that comes along like the Royal Order of the Goats, or the Lodge of this or that, and they say we have secret rites.

There are no secrets in Christianity...that's not a Christian perspective. Nothing in Christianity smacks at all of anything secret. "What I tell you," He says, "in the darkness, you speak in the light; and what you hear in your ear, you shout it from a housetop." There are no secrets. We are to give the message as we receive the message.

You know, there was a custom in the time when our Lord was teaching this, the Rabbis would train their pupils to speak and teach by standing beside them and they would speak in their ear and then the young man learning would speak what the Rabbi told him. And so they taught them by rote to speak. And the Lord is sort of identifying that simple technique and saying I've been training you to preach and teach and speak, and I've been telling you whispering in your ear, speaking to you in the darkness, and now I'm telling you you say it in the light.

Now, there's two things here that you're to note. And I want you to note them carefully. Number one, what I tell you in darkness, speak in light; and what you hear in the ear, proclaim...no restrictions. Whatever I tell you, whatever you hear, you say.

That's the first thing you need to remember is we are to hold back nothing. There are no secrets.

I've had people say to me You know, you just...you came on too strong. I think you alienated all the unsaved people. You've got to...you've got to find a different approach. And you know, that's our...that's our style, isn't it, today? We want somebody to become a Christian so we go up and say Would you like to be happy? Would you like to have joy, peace, all your problems solved, go to heaven forever? Would you like to have love in your life? You know. And by the time you're getting through all this list they say where do I sign? Where do I sign?

See? I mean. if you were to go in your office, up to a guy, and lovingly and kindly say You know something, my friend?

Do you know that you are in danger of hell, fire forever if you don't give yourself to Christ? I think he'd probably react.

Don't you think so? He'd say What??? Yeah, you're going to go to hell forever. Where the weeping and the wailing and gnashing of teeth. I think you might get a little persecution.

But, we don't want to talk about that. See, we want to guard it, we've got to have a few secrets, cause those will scare people. But, He says Whatever you hear, hold nothing back.

Second point, Say only what you hear from Me. Now you know what the sum of the verse is? You tell them what I told you, nothing less, and nothing ...what?... more. That's it. Very simple to define the ministry, people. Verse 27 says you go in the darkness, you find that secret place, you find that place of quietness, that place where you're alone with God, and in His Word, and you pour over the

Word and you pour over the principles of the Word, and you pour your heart out to God and out of that secret place is born the truth of God in your heart and you come out of there and you speak it. In those days announcements were made from housetops. The houses would have a little flat roof with a little short wall around the edge and that was the patio. People slept up there, ate up there, had their social events up there, sat under the stars up there. And if you wanted to make an announcement you just stood on the edge of your roof and hollered. And if you could find a high roof you could even accomplish more. And there were no cars making noise everywhere, like today. And people weren't locked in little boxes. They were out in the streets. And there were no windows, and no TVs and no stereos, and you could just yell whatever message you wanted to yell. And the Lord says Make it public. You go out and you just yell it from the housetops, and maybe the housetop today is radio, maybe its television. I don't know. But its got to be a public message. And we've got to get out of our little cloister with our message. We can't be standing around telling each other we need to get saved, and we've already been saved for years. We got to go where they are.

And so, He says I've been telling you in secret, and its a message that you're going to have to give to the world, nothing less and nothing more. So, we don't alter our message for fear of what the reaction is going to be.

There was a price to pay for this, sure. The Apostle Paul knew it, and they kept telling him You go to Jerusalem and preach that message, and you know what will happen? They're going to put you in jail, Paul. And he said I know that. And every city he went they kept telling him they're going to put you in jail. Agabus the prophet came out and gave him a demonstration, said Let me have your belt. Took his belt off, wrapped up his hands and said that is a demonstration of what's going to happen, you're going to be made a prisoner. And in Acts 20 he says Look, everywhere I go you keep telling me the same thing, but none of these things move me. I just want to do the work that God's given me. And finish what the Lord wants me to say. He's told it to me and I've got to tell it to them. And you can't pull the punches...nothing less, nothing more than what He told you in the darkness, what you heard in your ear, you shout it from the housetops. This is no secret organization. We seek a public place to preach Christ.

Now, you say if you do that though, boy, that's going to be a little hairy because people are going to react. That's right.

And by the way, the housetop was a typical Jewish way to do this.

The Rabbi sometimes would teach there. The Talmud tells how religious officials would climb up on a housetop with a trumpet at the approach of any religious holiday. The remnant of that today is the minaret used in the Moslem world where the guy goes way up in that tower and calls everybody to prayer. Only now they do it with a tape recorder.

Josephus writes about the time a mob was chasing him and he went up on the roof of a house while they were outside and tried to calm them from the roof. So, that was a very common thing and it simply seeks a public forum. You need to get the message out, people, we need to shout it where it needs to be heard. And we need to hold nothing back. You see? Nothing back. Say nothing less

and nothing more than what the Word says. Our message is limited. That is why it is so serious when Christians eliminate part of the message or when Christians get another message in addition to the one from God, and everybody gets confused about what our message is.

And you say Well, but we're going to get flack. Yeah, well, that's the next verse. "And fear not," again you can't be afraid or you won't do this. "But fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul."

Now, who is that? Who can kill bodies but not souls? Who?

Men. That's just a designation of men. Fear not men. The worst they can do is kill your body and that isn't the real you. Right?

That is not the real you. So, don't fear them. All they can do is kill your body and that isn't any big deal. "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is...what?...is gain." So that isn't a problem. Don't fear them.

"But rather, fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Whose that? That's God, that's not Satan. Satan will be being destroyed himself there. He doesn't have the keys to death and hell. Read Revelation 1 again, God does. Don't fear men, fear God. That's the issue. And He's only using the idea of killing the body and He compares it with destroying the soul...to show that God has so much more power. He's...it's a comparison. He's not saying That if you don't live the right kind of Christian life, God will send you to hell. That isn't the point. The point here is we are to fear the One who can determine the destiny of souls, not the ones who can only determine the destinies of bodies. You see? It is a comparison between men and God. Don't fear men, fear God.

You actually come down to that very issue. There's an occasion where you're given an opportunity to communicate Christ and to witness, and you say If I do this I know I'm going to get it.

Maybe it's in your own family, and they're going to get mad at you and kick you out of the house. And you say I don't want to do it. You have feared them more than you feared God. Right?

Because if you really feared God in the sense of awe and reverence of His infinite holiness and majesty. and of His blessed name, if you worshipped Him as He ought to be worshipped, you would speak for Him on His behalf with any threat that stood in your way. True? But whenever you opt out of that, you have said I fear men more than God, and that is silly, because the worse men could possibly do would be to your body and God is a God that determines the destiny of souls.

As a footnote, some people think that the verse at the end where it says Destroy soul and body in hell means that hell is where you get totally annihilated. That is not what the word destroy there means. And if you compare it with II Thessalonians 1:7 it says, "You are punished with everlasting destruction."

It is not a destruction of annihilation, it is an interminable, everlasting destruction in hell. And hell is

Gehenna which was the name of the city dump in Jerusalem where the worms were and the fire never went out, as all the garbage and refuse was burned, and that is the imagery. You will be in hell....and notice also, soul and body. The unsaved will be resurrected.

given eternal bodies which will dwell in that fire, so they will have actual bodies. people always say Is it an actual fire? Well, its some kind of a fire because its an actual body. I don't know what kind but body and soul.

But He'sHe's not saying to Christian disciples Boy, if you goof up, you're going to go to hell.....no, no, no.

He's saying Get your fear right. Fear the One who is really powerful. Fear the One who determines the destiny of souls.

Don't fear the ones who can only fool with the body. And there have been Christians through the years who have been that way.

paul would not disobey God because he...he honored God and he venerated God. That's what the word veneration means to worship. He worshipped God so much that he would never say no to God to say yes to men. That's why I say veneration eliminates fear. We don't fear because we so worship God that we would do what His will is and fear Him rather than men. I'd rather fall into the hands of men who are upset with me than God who is upset with me.

Latimer, that great, great English martyr, was preaching one day and King Henry was present. And he said to himself Latimer', Latimer! Latimer! Remember that the king is here, be careful what you say. And then he said to himself; Latimer! Latimer! Latimer!

Remember that the King of kings is here, be careful what you don't say.

You know what happened to Latimer? They burned him at the stake. They didn't want to hear what he said.

The one who faces the world comes out of a secret place, verse 27...comes out of a quiet place, a lonely place where Christ speaks to him. And then he speaks. And, beloved, if you haven't been in that quiet place, you haven't got a thing to say.

Colet, during the time of the birth of the Reformation, went to Erasmus, the scholar. And he invited Erasmus to come to Oxford to give a lecture. He wanted him to lecture on Moses, and Isaiah. Erasmus didn't think he was ready. And I think he gave a marvelous reply. He said: "You are not acting wisely, Colet. You are demanding water from a pumice stone. With what effrontery shall I teach what I have never learned? How am I to warm the coldness of theirs, when I'm shivering myself?"

He was right. If you don't have anything you haven't got anything to give. You go to the secret place,

and out of the secret place comes the fire lit in your heart by God and then you say what has to be said...nothing less, nothing more.

And you say Yes, but men might kill my body but don't be afraid of that. Fear the One who has eternal destiny in His hand. Fear God....fear God.

During the years of the martyrs in the Roman Empire, Christians fled into the underground caverns outside Rome. There are now, they can pretty well determine, 800 miles of catacombs that the Christians dug. Ten generations of Christians were buried in those over a period of nearly 500 years. And archaeologists estimate that up to four million Christians are buried in the catacombs in the time when they were, of course, being persecuted.

I will never forget being in a church down at the bottom of one of those catacombs...one that had been built out of the earth.

And one of the most frequent inscriptions is the sign of the fish. You can still see it...I saw it on a lot of the places where they laid the bodies. But there's another inscription that you see there in several places and it says this: "The Word of God is not bound. The Word of God is not bound.

In other words, we fear God too much to fear men. And so we speak.

It is estimated that more than 50 million Christians have died for their faith in the Dark Ages. That a million Christians died for their faith when the Communists took over China.

Thousands upon thousands upon thousands have died in the civil wars in rebellions of Africa.

How can they be so unafraid? Well, for one thing it's vindication. They're looking at an eternal reward. And for another its veneration. They worship God so much that it removes the fear of man.

Lord Laurence is buried in Westminster Abbey, and I've walked the aisles of that church. And on his grave it gives his name, and the date, and then it says "He feared man so little because he feared God so much." What a great testimony.

This week, the East/West News Service, which I receive, says that five Rumanian pastors are in imminent danger of being sentenced to from twenty years imprisonment, to execution. And the government of Rumania is going to sentence them to this because they accused them of failing to consult the government in spending church funds. And they've called it embezzlement.

The real issue is that these five Rumanian pastors are among the pastors of Rumania who cannot be bought by the government, they cannot be manipulated by the government, so the government trumps up a charge and throws them in prison or executes them.

One Rumanian writer living in Paris writes: "Except for official orthodox church, all the churches are persecuted.

Communist regimes have to maintain silence and fear among the people to keep their power." end quote. So, they just persecute the church.

They have halted all church construction in Rumania. You find the same thing in Russia. Valentina Zotova, a Russian Christian, is persecuted because of her bold faith. She is being harassed by the Soviet police, may be committed to a mental institution. Her husband has divorced her. She has been fired from her job and lost her children.

They can kill the body, but they can't touch the psuch?, the soul. That is the immaterial part of man...the real part..

what does it matter to lose the body? But what shall it profit a man if he ...what?...lose his soul? The soul here in verse 28 means the real part of the man...the real immaterial part...the substance. This is the dichotomous perspective. Man is body...

outside, he is soul...inside. This is the real person. They can't touch that. They can't touch it. And if going to heaven bothers you and you're not...you don't want to go, it's simply because you're too earthbound. If you really were heavenly perspective, you really had a heavenly perspective you'd be so concerned about that ultimate vindication in God's presence that you wouldn't have any fear. You'd so worship God that you could care less what men might do.

And I say that to myself too. Cause I hold to this world also. But we ought to fear God, and worship God, so that we don't fear men.

I must add that I think verse 2S also may have been directed at Judas. And there will always be in the church and in the group of disciples, the phonies and the fakes. And O what a warning this would be...to remind him that God is the one who destroys forever, soul and body in hell. All the Judas' of all time need to hear that.

Thirdly, finally, the third reason we need not fear is because of what I call valuation....vindication. veneration, and valuation.

Verse Si, and this is a beautiful balance. "Fear not, therefore."

why? Well, let's go back with the therefore...verse 2g: "Are not two sparrows sold for an assarion," and that's a...let's just say it's a penny, it's too hard to compute. It's a penny. Sparrows were two for a penny. Sparrows a word that refers to little birds, just little birds. And there are lots of little birds.

And they were actually bought for hors d'oeuvres. That's right.

They just take a little bird and make a bunch of hors d'oeuvres out of it, and you ate this little bird. They were bought and sold two for an assarion, two for a penny. I mean, that's a cheap bird. Right? Two for a penny.

In fact, Luke says you can get five for two pennies. In other words, if you bought four they'd throw one in for nothing.

And then they'd bring in a big plate full of these little birds.

They used to roast them, and they would eat them just like finger food. Cheap little birds!

And yet, verse 2? says: "Not one of them falls on the ground without your Father knowing it," and caring about it is implied.

You mean, God cares about a two for a penny hors d'oeuvre? You mean, God knows when a bird dies? I mean, you go along the road and you see a dead bird all the time. See, God has got a list of the dead birds. I mean, He knows. And some Greek texts indicate that the word fall may even mean hop. He not only knows when they die, He knows when they hop.

Oh, you say, wait a minute. Birds hop all the time. That's right. They hop all the time. God knows when they hop and they stop hopping. Nothing happens in the most simple insignificant element of life, cheap little nothing birds, God knows and He cares...that's implied. The smallest animal doesn't perish without God caring. He may those little birds. Your Father...tender, personal emphasis, isn't it? Your Father, He knows.

Verse SO, "And the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

Do you know that the average is 140,000 hairs per head? Some of you are really messing up the average, I hate to say that. But anyway, one hundred and forty thousand hairs per head. And it doesn't say that God counts them, He numbers them. Each one has its own number. Oop, there goes Sg!, oh, there goes 28. I mean.

He actually identifies every hair on your head. For some of you its not that big of a problem. As one guy said "Earth is receding.

and heaven is opening up before me." But, God knows the numbers of the hair.

You say Well, what does it say that...what is the point?

The point is this. If God is concerned about little birds, and God is concerned about numbering and knowing the hairs of your head don't be afraid, verse SI, "You're of more value than many little birds, and than a whole lot of hair." That's added by MacArthur. But that's the idea. You know why you cannot be afraid?

You don't have a thing to fear. If God takes care of little birds, and God numbers the hair of peoples' head, to take care of that and that's in the framework of His care, don't you think you fall into His care also? And you're never going to get into a situation where God can't sustain you in that situation.

psalm 91 says "A thousand shall fall at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee." Isn't that great? It all...it will all collapse around you but it will never touch you. God cares about you...tender, loving care, for His own marks our God. If God so clothed the grass of the field, if God cares for the lilies, if God cares for the birds, Matthew 8 says, shall He not also care for you? O ye of ...what?... little faith. You know, we're so afraid we might lose our reputation or our job, or we might get injured and we...and we get fearful and He says Look' God who takes care of little insignificant birds, and hairs on peoples heads, don't you think you're more value than that? Birds don't have souls. Hair doesn't either. But you do and you're eternal.

Oh, of much more value.

Listen, you're My disciple, He says. You've crowned King...

the Christ King of your life..and you've said I submit. Now you're going to face a world and you're going to be like Him and you're going to be treated like Him. And how you going to react to that? Are you going to be afraid? You don't need to. Because you'll be vindicated in the end, and have an eternal reward if you have an eternal perspective. And if you really worship God you'll transcend the fear of men, and if you understand how highly He values you, you won't be afraid of what they can do to you.

Where's your commitment?

My father told this story and I've heard it several times. I don't think I've ever related it to you but it is one of the greatest stories of commitment...to come out of the Roman era. Listen carefully. And I close with this.

Nero was Emperor. And Nero wanted around him some of the finest men of Roman stock. And so he identified his own personal wrestlers, known as the "Emperor's Wrestlers." And he wanted them selected from the bravest and the strongest and most stalwart of all of the Roman athletes. They were like the Olympic team of Rome. And they surrounded the Roman amphitheater.

They attended the arms of the emperor. They were around all the time. And they had a famous statement that they said, according to historians. "We, the wrestlers, wrestling for thee. O Emperor.

to win for thee the victory and from thee, the victor's crown."

That was their motto We, the wrestlers, wrestling for thee O Emperor, to win for thee the victory and from thee, the victor's crown.

On one occasion the Roman army, including these great wrestlers, was sent representing the Romans into Gaul, to put down some kind of rebellion. No soldiers were braver, or more capable than the wrestlers of the Emperor. They were led by a centurion under the name of Vespasian, who was also a brilliant man.

But while they were in Gaul, history tells us, that many of them were converted to Jesus Christ. Word came back to Nero that some of his personal wrestlers had become Christians, and he sent a message to Vespasian that said: "If there be any among your soldiers who cling to the faith of the Christian, they must die."

The decree was received in the dead of winter in Gaul. The soldiers were encamped on the shore of a frozen inland lake. And with a sinking heart, Vespasian, the centurion, read the message.

He called the soldiers together and asked the question: "Are any of you those who have embraced the Christian faith?" And forty of them stepped forward, and saluted him. He said, "I give you till sundown tomorrow to deny that or you must die."

At sundown the next day he asked the same question. The same forty men stepped forward. He said, "I cannot allow you to die at the hands of your fellows, I strip you naked and banish you to the middle of the lake and leave you to the elements." And so he stripped them bare and sent them to the middle of the lake in the dead of night...frozen in the winter.

Not long after they had arrived there, he heard this coming across the ice. "Forty wrestlers, wrestling for Thee, O Christ, to win for Thee the victory, and from Thee, the victor's crown."

And he heard it again and again through the night, and it grew fainter and fainter as the morning came.

Finally, near morning one lonely figure approached the fire who could not stand the coldness with the others and who did not hold to the faith in Christ that firmly that he should die, and he came to warm himself and admitted that he had denied Christ.

And then the cry came faintly across the ice; "Thirty nine wrestlers, wrestling for Thee, O Christ, to win for Thee the victory, and from Thee the victor's crown."

Vespasian by this time was utterly overwhelmed. And God did something in his heart at that moment, and he threw off his helmet and all of his armor, took off across the ice shouting at the top of his voice, "Forty wrestlers, wrestling for Thee, O Christ, to win for Thee the victory, and from Thee, the victor's crown."

Let's pray together:

Lord, You've called us to follow You at any price, be Your servants, be Your subjects, Your pupils. Make us faithful, first of all, to be marked by the hallmark of discipleship. We're like Christ and we don't fear the world. Lift us above that that we may say nothing less, and nothing more than You have whispered in our ear through Your precious Word by Your Spirit. Make us bold and use us in a mighty way. Thank You, Father, for our time this morning. What a good time. We pray, Lord, that You'll drive deeply into our hearts Your truth, make us faithful, bring those to the prayer room that You

would have to come. Bring us back tonight with excitement and expectation for a great evening. And we'll thank You for what You've accomplished this day in Jesus name.

Amen.

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