

Matthew 10:26-27

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Jesus tells His disciples that they should not be afraid of what people say against them for following Him. Their words don't matter. God will reveal the truth. The disciples are to boldly proclaim Jesus's teachings.

The parallel gospel accounts of this teaching are found in Mark 4:22, Luke 8:17, and Luke 12:2-3.

Having told His disciples that they will be greatly persecuted for following Him and spreading the good news, Jesus tells His disciples what perspective they should choose regarding the threats and the pain they will suffer at the hands of their persecutors. He says *do not fear them*. This is a choice Jesus is instructing His followers to make. He begins this command with *therefore* as a way of connecting it to His preceding remarks. In His previous comments, Jesus foretold the persecution the disciples should expect for declaring the gospel. Those who will persecute the disciples for identifying with Jesus are the "*them*" the disciples are *not to fear*.

Fear is a powerful motivator that drives human behavior. *Fear* motivates people to act in such a way that they will avoid pain and suffering. *Fear* simply means letting the potential for pain or loss influence our choices. For instance, if a person is afraid of heights, he is fearful of the possibility of falling to his death. His *fear* motivates him to choose to avoid heights, or if he cannot, to cling to something that will give him an extra hold to prevent his falling. *Fear* can be directed or felt toward real or imaginary dangers. But as powerful a motivator as *fear* is, we always have a choice to exercise our will, and decide whether to obey or disregard its dictates. This is also true of any emotion or appetite.

In the disciples' case, the thing Jesus told them *not to fear* was real. The danger of persecution was real. It was not imaginary. Every one of the twelve who were faithful to Christ in sharing the gospel would be persecuted for doing so. Throughout their ministries they were threatened with and endured arrests, imprisonments, loss of property, beatings, torture, and death. They would ultimately suffer and die for Him. All the while they bore the ridicule, scorn and shame from men who despised the gospel. In spite of these realities, Jesus told His disciples *do not fear them*. The disciples were not to let their fear of what others might say or do to them control their behavioral choices. *Do not* do what they tell you to do. *Do not* follow their commands to stop proclaiming the good news. *Do not* be cowardly and avoid the painful consequences others will bring upon you for following Me. *Do not* be afraid *of them*.

Over the next several verses Jesus gives four assurances as to why His disciples are *not to fear them*.

1. God's opinions and judgment of their lives is perfect and far more consequential than the opinions of man (Matthew 10:26-27).

2. Men have no power over their “psuche” soul/life (Matthew 10:28). Men can create choices for our consequences, but they cannot make choices for us. We get to decide who we trust, how we look at things (our perspective), and what we do. No one else is authorized to make those choices for us.
3. If they are faithful, they will be confessed and not denied the reward of greatness at Christ’s coming (Matthew 10:32-33).
4. That their “psuche” soul/life and all that they have invested with it will be saved from the futility of wasting the grand opportunity of this life (Matthew 10:38-42).

The first reason His disciples are *not to fear them* is because they are not the Ultimate Judge. God is. Man’s approval or condemnation is not final. On the day of judgment, man’s opinions will not count. Everything that everyone does, including the disciples’ actions and their persecutors’ actions, will be evaluated by God. His judgment will be perfect and absolute. *For there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.* There will be no hiding anything. Every action, every word, every thought, every intent, every choice—it all *will be* laid bare before God. It all *will be* made *known*. *Nothing* is or *will be concealed* or *hidden* from His sight. The disciples are to live in such a way that they will not be ashamed at His judgment.

“Now, little children, remain in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not draw back from Him in shame at His coming.”
(1 John 2:28)

If we are faithful, we can find comfort and rest in these words. It is not necessary for us justify our actions to other people. We have no need to document every good deed or measure of suffering we endure to receive our reward. God already knows, all the way down to the *hidden* things of our hearts. But if we are not faithful, we should *fear*, because we won’t get away with anything. In Jesus’s words we find consolation that we will be fully understood and repaid for every trial we face. The disciples have no need to seek vengeance or even to harbor resentment toward *them* as their enemies, because God will perfectly deal with our persecutors according to their actions. Because God understands all our circumstances perfectly, Christ’s followers are free to live in such a way that their actions please the Judge and King of the Universe rather than cowering in *fear* to those who persecute them among the petty kingdoms of the earth.

Jesus continues, *What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops.* The twelve are accountable to spread the good news. They are to speak the truth fearlessly. They are to be shrewd, but courageous. Jesus has chosen them and revealed things to them that He does not share with everyone. In this context *what I tell you in the darkness* likely means in secret, away from the crowds. Jesus does not fully reveal Himself or His mission to everyone at this time. Jesus does everything according to its proper time.

Jesus has chosen the twelve and others to be His gospel messengers. As His disciples they will not only witness the miracles He performs; and hear the lessons and parables He teaches the crowds; they will also have access to Jesus to ask Him questions, hear His explanations of the parables, and experience countless moments of insight with the Lord. Many of the things they

learn from Him that He spoke *in the darkness*, in private, the disciples are to *speak in the light* and tell everyone else.

Likewise, *what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops*. When someone is close by there is no need to shout. One can speak quietly. Throughout His time with His disciples, Jesus whispers (tells) the disciples many things that He wants them to proclaim to the world. The phrase, *proclaim upon the rooftops*, is a reference to the fastest way to spread important news within an ancient city. When a message was yelled from a rooftop it was the quickest way to spread news throughout the town. By way of metaphor, Jesus is telling His disciples that they are to openly and enthusiastically declare the things He has taught them in quiet moments.

This is what they will do. Following Jesus's ascension into Heaven and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the disciples eagerly share and explain every detail of the gospel that they learned from Jesus. In Acts, we see regularly see Peter preaching. In his gospel, John details many personal conversations and intimate moments Jesus had with others. And in his first epistle, John opens with this acknowledgement:

“What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us— what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us;” (1 John 1:1-3)

John tells his readers that he has devoted his life to retelling every detail about Jesus and His teachings that He can remember. Indeed, even this very discourse is an example of Matthew's obedience to Jesus's command. It was originally spoken to the twelve, but Matthew wrote Jesus's message for them down and made it available for all to read and hear.

Jesus tells His disciples they are to unashamedly and without *fear* share the good news of the gospel. Tell them everything! *Do not* be afraid of *them* or their social stigmas for proclaiming the kingdom message. Jesus has selected them and charged them with the responsibility to teach everything He is telling them. He does not want His disciples to be afraid of the persecution (social or physical) that they might receive from *them*. God will evaluate and reward their faithfulness to this charge, and the reward He will give them for their faithfulness will be more than worth the cost.

Biblical Text

Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops.