

“A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!

²⁶ “So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. ²⁷ What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. ²⁸ Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. ³⁰ And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

³² “Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. ³³ But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven. (NIV 84)

Theme: Do Not Be Afraid

1. To Spread the Gospel before men.
2. Of Eternal Condemnation.

Peter—crucified upside down in Rome around 68 A.D. Andrew—hung from a tree in Greece. James—the first of the disciples to be killed; the only one recorded in the Bible was beheaded by Herod Agrippa I around 44 A.D. Philip—crucified upside down. Bartholomew—perhaps flayed alive before he was crucified upside down in Armenia. Thomas—killed with spears in India. James, Son of Alphaeus— was stoned to death by the Jews while preaching in Jerusalem. Judas, the Son of James, otherwise known as Thaddeus—murdered in Persia. Simon the Zealot— also killed in Persia along with Thaddeus.

This is what Church tradition tells us about demise of the disciples. We didn’t mention all of them. Judas Iscariot, of course, killed himself after he betrayed Jesus. We aren’t exactly sure what happened to Matthew. And John, he was exiled for many years to the island of

Patmos; it seems as if he is the only disciple to have died of natural causes.

All these martyrs, these followers of Christ who were killed for their faith. We can add others—Stephen, who is referred to as the first Christian Martyr; and John the Baptist who beheaded by Herod during Jesus’ ministry. Thinking about all these martyrs might scare us a little bit. If all of these Christians were killed, what is going to happen to us?

But today Jesus tells us three times to not be afraid to spread the gospel before men And of eternal condemnation.

Our text begins with Jesus saying, **A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.** Jesus is the teacher, and we like the disciples, followers of Christ, are his students. And we aren’t better than Jesus. And look what happened to him. Betrayed by those closest to him. Arrested and tried by his own country men. Beaten, spit upon, crowned with thrones, and flogged. Put to death on a cross—together with two common criminals. They mocked him for calling himself a king. They accused him of blasphemy when he referred to himself as the Son of Man.

If they said those things about Jesus, what is the world going to say about us? The same thing. **If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!** And if they thought those things about Christ, what do they think about us? The same thing. A few verses before our text Jesus warned his disciples, **All men will hate you because of me.** In John 15 Jesus gives a similar warning. **If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.** A student isn’t above his teacher.

The disciples—students of Jesus, were nailed upside down on crosses. They were beheaded, hung, and stabbed with spears. Others were stoned to death. Paul and other followers of Christ were imprisoned, beaten, flogged, exiled, and much more. The Apostles and the other early Christians—and Christians for centuries and faced all sorts of persecution. Even Christians throughout the world today still face persecution—many are murdered because of their faith. And we do face some persecution. We are mocked and ridiculed. Perhaps we might lose a friend or two, or might lose some respect at your job, or

might be made fun of by a professor. They call us stupid, gullible, or intolerant. We all face persecution in one way or another. But let's be honest. The persecution we face is nothing like the persecution that the Apostles faced. They faced all kinds of physical pain. They died many painful and agonizing deaths. Each and every time they opened up their mouths and mentioned Christ, they were putting their lives on the line. What we face today is nothing like the Apostles faced. What we face here in America is nothing like what other Christians have to deal with in other parts of the world. And yet, sadly we often keep our mouths shut. How embarrassed we ought to be. How ashamed we often are at ourselves. We look back at a situation we were in and we have no excuse. You had the perfect opportunity to tell someone about Christ, but you blew it off. Or you changed the subject. You kept your mouth shut and your faith to yourself. It was almost as if you were acting like you weren't a Christian. And so you hang your head in shame and disgust.

“Why,” you ask yourself. “Why didn't I share with them the message of Christ and his love?” You tried to make excuses at first. It wasn't the right time or place, or you had to get going, or you just couldn't think of the right words to say. But you know the real reason. You kept your mouth shut because you were afraid of how they might react. You didn't want people to make fun of you, you didn't want to cause an argument with a relative, or get into one long conversation with your neighbor who is slightly annoying. What were you afraid of? Your reputation or maybe a friendship. You were trying to spare yourself of a potentially awkward conversation. It's not like you were trying to protect your life. Or the lives of your loved ones. And even if you were, that would still be a bad excuse. For then you would be choosing your life or your family's lives over Christ and his Word. You failed to share the message of forgiveness and eternal life with someone so that you could have an easier life.

Three times in our text Jesus tells us not to be afraid of men. The second time is found in verse 28. **Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.** Don't be afraid to spread the gospel before men. What can they possibly do to you? They can make fun of you. They can never want to talk to you again. They can

imprison you. They can torture you. They can even kill you. But they can't touch your soul. So they can do you no real harm. They might be able to cause you troubles the rest of your life. But they can't do any long-term damage—any eternal damage.

And no matter what may happen to us God is still with us. He still is watching over us and protecting us. As he pointed out, **Are not two sparrows sold for a penny ? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.** God knows us more than we know ourselves. He knows the harm that others may cause for us. Just as he knows the sparrows. And if he knows and protects sparrows, he will certainly protect you. So what is there to be afraid of? We can say along with the author of Palm 118, **The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?**

We don't have to be afraid of men. But he does warn us to, **be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.** Man can only harm the body; but God can send the soul to hell. Plus Jesus says in verses 33, **whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.** Those who don't profess Christ will be condemned. Jesus won't plead their case before God. He won't help them out in anyway.

And we constantly fail to profess Christ. We disown him again and again. And if we disown Christ, he will disown us. That is what we all deserve then. We all deserve to face God without the help of Christ. We all deserve his wrath and punishment. Eternal condemnation is the price we ought to pay.

And yet, we don't have to be afraid of eternal condemnation. For that is what Christ suffered through on the cross. He took all our sins upon himself on the cross. And since he was numbered with the sinners he was forsaken by God. He was rejected by his Father who wanted nothing to do with him. Jesus suffered through hell as he was separated from God and his love. The eternal punishment that we deserved to pay Christ paid during the few hours he was on the cross. And he gave us his perfect obedience. His life is now credited to us. When God looks at us he sees not what we did or didn't do—but what Christ did and didn't do. Every time that Christ spread the gospel is

credited to you. Every time he taught someone the truth, or told others about what would do or did do, every time that put his life on the line by spreading the gospel, has been given to us. He makes us perfect and holy in the eyes of God.

But Christ doesn't just take away our sins and give us his perfect obedience. He also pleads our case before God. **Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.** Right now Jesus is speaking your name in heaven. He is bragging to the Father about all the things you have done. He tells the Father about the time you invited your neighbor to Church. Or comforted your friend with Christ's love and forgiveness. Or how you spent hours teaching your children prayers, reading devotions to them, or taking them to Sunday School and worship services. Or he tells him about the offerings you have given to support mission work.

And when the Father responds with a listing of your sins and all the times you have failed to profess him before men, Jesus responds with the times that he did. For he has covered over your sins. He has professed the gospel for us—in our place. And so when God looks at us, he sees the good we have done. And he sees the good Jesus has done for us. And so we don't have to be afraid of eternal condemnation. It has been taken care of by our Savior, Jesus Christ.

And so we can't help but respond. We can't help but tell others about the love of Christ. So we profess him. From the rooftops, on the street with our neighbor, in the living rooms of our friends. We just can't help ourselves. He watches over us and protects us. He forgives us and gives his perfect life to us. He proclaims our name before the Lord.

So let us profess the name of the Lord before men. And worry about the consequences later. Or don't worry about the consequences at all. What can man do to us? They can only kill us. But they cannot touch our soul. But God can. And he has sent his Son to save us.

Jesus prophecy to his disciples that **all men will hate you because of me**, certainly came true. They put their lives on the line for the sake of Christ and his gospel. They professed the Lord even to the point of death. Let us follow their example. For even if they kill us as they did

Christ, like Christ we will rise from the dead. And through faith in him we won't be condemned; but we'll be in heaven professing his name forever. Amen.