

# The Cure for Christian Fear

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     Do you suffer from any phobias? Fears. Apparently one in ten adults suffers from some form of clinical phobia from the more well-known ones like claustrophobia or arachnophobia to some less common and lesser-known phobias such as obluthophobia, which is the fear of washing.
- Spectrophobia, which is the fear of mirrors. These are legitimate fears. Globophobia, which is the fear of balloons.
- And there's even, this is my favorite, phobophobia, which is the fear of being scared. There are many of these. That's just a sampling. There's many different phobias.
- There's many different things that people can fear in this world. But I've also observed another phobia that is unique to Christians.
- And it's not just one out of every ten. It's ten out of every ten Christians will experience this fear at some point. And it's the fear of telling your friends about Jesus.
- [ 1 : 1 3 ]     Even though this is the best news that the world has ever heard, Christians are often paralyzed with the fear of telling other people, especially the people close to us who aren't Christians.
- And if you've been a Christian for any length of time, you'll know what I'm talking about. The cold sweat, the palpitating heart of considering now broaching the topic of Jesus with your non-Christian friend or family member.
- Well, that fear, you're not alone. It's something that Jesus actually addresses in this passage in front of us with His disciples. As they're preparing for their mission, we've been seeing over the last few weeks, Jesus is preparing His disciples for their mission to take His news, the news from heaven that this whole world needs to hear, to take that out to the world, to tell people.
- And now what He does in this passage in front of us is He deals with the inevitable fear that His disciples, He knows, are going to face as they do that.
- But He gives them a number of reasons why they shouldn't fear. And there are such important reasons because they're reasons we need to hear as Christians as well why we shouldn't fear talking about Jesus with our friends, much as we instinctively do.
- [ 2 : 3 9 ]     These are reasons right here in this passage that we shouldn't. And so let's listen to what Jesus has to say, the reasons He gives us why we shouldn't fear. But before He does, He does something interesting and He actually starts with a bit of a reality check by saying to His disciples, don't think that talking about Jesus is going to have no effect on the people you talk to.
- And I think He's saying the same to us. Don't think that you shouldn't fear to talk about Jesus because it's not going to affect your relationship with your friend. It will.
- And that's the first bit of news, reality check, that we need to understand that He starts with. Before giving us reasons, why not to fear? He says, don't think it's not going to affect your relationship with people.

That's something you've got to come to terms with first. That it is going to, when you talk about Jesus to someone, it is going to somehow affect that relationship. You've got to accept that. You've got to come to terms with that before you'll be willing to open your mouth about the truth and be open about your faith.

So that's the first thing we see here. Talking about Jesus will get a reaction. And it's probably going to be negative. So look at what Jesus says in verse 24.

[ 3 : 58 ] A disciple is not above his teacher nor a slave above his master. It is enough for a disciple to become like his teacher and a slave like his master. If they called the head of the house Beelzebub, how much more?

The members of his household. So you see what Jesus is saying to His disciples here, right? He's telling them that when you tell the truth about Him, about Jesus, not everyone's going to like it.

And you've got to get ready for that. Jesus Himself already, we've been seeing in Matthew, has faced a lot of negative reaction. Even though He's been doing good things, like really good things.

He's been healing people. He's been teaching people really good stuff. And yet He's got this hostility, this irrational hostility. He's even been accused of being possessed by an evil spirit, Beelzebub.

That's what the religious teachers were saying about Him. Why? Well, it's obvious that they didn't want to hear what He had to say. And they were making reasons for themselves and fathers why they don't need to listen to it.

[ 5 : 07 ] That's what they were doing, by accusing this good man with good things of evil. It was obvious that they were looking for reasons not to listen to Him.

And it's the same today, isn't it? With Christianity and the world. Look at Christianity. Look how the world and society considers Christianity as a whole. And you see the same concept playing out.

Now, with the truth we carry as Christians, this truth, the truth of Jesus in the Gospel, we hold this. It's in our hearts. It's in our minds. It's in our Bibles.

But the world doesn't want to hear it. We follow the one that the world has rejected. So obviously, society does not want to hear what we have to say.

And people will find reasons not to hear, and the reasons they find will be focused on you. Don't take it personally. That's what Jesus is saying here. Listen, it happened to me. It's going to happen to you if you follow me, if you believe in the same truth.

[ 6 : 08 ] That people don't want to hear the truth about God and about judgment and about sin and about the inevitability of them facing judgment for their sin.

And so they will make reasons not to hear it by focusing on you and criticizing you, Christians. They'll accuse Christians of all kinds of things, being bigots, being intolerant, or just people who have kind of lost touch with reality.

You know, those Christians, what they believe. It's just all superstition. They're not scientific. Or at least, if none of those things, at least your non-Christian friends will see you as a bit strange.

It's the negative reaction we get for the truth we carry. And that is why we fear to tell people. That's why we feel the fear when it comes to telling our friends about Jesus, because of the negative reactions we know we'll get.

Whether it's an outward negative reaction of arguing against us or an inward negative reaction of them just thinking that you're a bit of a wacko. That's what we fear, don't we?

[ 7 : 24 ] Let's be honest. The reaction of society to Christianity is by and large negative. And so anybody in that society that we tell the truth will share that negative reaction for us.

And you don't want people to think negatively of you. You don't want your friend to think that way of you. And that's why we keep quiet. But here Jesus says, you've got to realize that's inevitable.

It's unavoidable. If people thought that about Him, people will think that about you if you're one of His. It's inevitable.

You can't avoid it. If you can, live as a Christian without any negative reactions.

You're probably not one. Because it's inevitable, Jesus says here. So, you've got to come to terms with that. You've got to accept that before you're going to open your mouth about Jesus. And so, you know, you might say, well, why risk the friendships then?

[ 8 : 27 ] It's so hard for me to find friends. Like, I've only got a few. Why risk those few friendships with non-Christians that I have to tell them about Jesus when I know now that I'm going to get a negative reaction?

Probably. Why risk it? Well, Jesus goes on to tell us with the first reason and that is that the truth will come out anyway.

That's why risk it. Because they're going to find out sooner or later. Look at verse 26 to 27. And therefore, don't be afraid of them since there is nothing covered that won't be uncovered and nothing hidden that won't be made known.

What I tell you in the dark, speak in the light. What you hear in a whisper, proclaim on the housetops. Okay, what does he mean by that? Well, what he's saying is you can't hide what is true.

That's the nature of truth. It eventually comes out. All right, and if this news of the gospel is true, your friend will eventually find out sooner or later.

[ 9 : 31 ] That's what he's saying. People will find out this truth sooner or later. And it's true, isn't it? Truth always has a way of coming out in the end. No matter how much people try to hide it or cover it up, we've seen, of course, in many government scandals over the years, we've seen in our own country the whole, remember, state capture, Zuma and the Guptas.

Now, that, for many, many years, they kept that under wraps and they managed to do a lot of corrupt activities, but it eventually came out. Took a while, but it eventually came out.

Truth has a way of not staying hidden. And truth in your own life, too. You know, you might be covering something like that that you don't want anybody to find out. It'll eventually come out. That's the nature of truth and it's the nature of this truth as well.

These truths that Jesus brought to this world about the kingdom, about sin, about judgment, about salvation, they are hidden now.

The world wants to keep them hidden. The world does not want to hear about those things. Society does not want to hear about those things. Society wants to be free to live true reality, who we really are, and it doesn't want to hear.

[ 10 : 49 ] People, by and large, do not want to hear about sin and judgment and these truths that Jesus came to bring. They are hidden, but they will eventually come out in the open because it's true.

And if you didn't tell your friend about them, when they find out, they'll know you didn't. And what will they think? Because they will find out about these things sooner or later.

Either from another Christian, another Christian who's bold, will share the gospel with them, with your non-Christian friend, and they'll wonder why you never mentioned this stuff to them.

Wait, I thought you were a Christian. I just learned about all these amazing things, and we've been working together for 10 years. Why did you never tell me? So either it's another Christian that's going to tell them, or if not, they will find out on that day when Jesus comes back.

And every eye will see him. But that will be too late. Just imagine, imagine your friend on that day, and you never mentioned anything.

[ 12 : 05 ] And now they're seeing it all playing out in front of them, and it's all true, and it's all real. Jesus and judgment, they're seeing God, and they turn to you, and they knew that you were a Christian.

You went to church every Sunday. You heard about this stuff every Sunday, but you never mentioned it to them. How will they feel? The truth will come out. They will hear about it sooner or later. And that's why Jesus says in verse 27, what I tell you in the dark, speak in the light.

What you hear in a whisper, proclaim on the housetops. Don't treat your faith like it's a secret thing.

If you truly believe this stuff, don't be ashamed of it. Don't treat it like a secret. The world might want you to treat it, oh, it's your personal thing, I don't want to hear about it.

But Jesus says, proclaim it from the housetops. Speak about it. Be unashamed about what you believe. Speak about it in the open.

[ 13 : 13 ] That's what he means. Not inside your house and in your four walls, but stand on the rooftop. Now those Middle Eastern rooftops were flat and it was the best way to get a public hearing from your town is to stand on the rooftop.

That's what Jesus is saying. What you believe about these things, make it out in the open. That people know that you believe them in the office, in the sports club, at school.

People know that you're a Christian and you believe these things because you talk about it and it's natural. And do that so that your friend can never say to you that you kept the truth from them when they eventually find out because they will.

That's the first reason Jesus gives us because the truth will come out anyway. The second reason he gives us not to fear or keep quiet is to not fear people's judgment.

We shouldn't fear people's judgment. It says in verse 28, Don't fear those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul.

[ 14 : 20 ] Rather, fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Don't fear those who can kill the body.

Really? I mean, that's, of all the things we fear in life, that's probably one at the top, right? And for the disciples, this wasn't some hypothetical fear like for Christians today.

No, this was very real. The chances were very high that they would be arrested, they would be tried and possibly executed, at least imprisoned, for doing what Jesus is asking them to do.

And, you know, all of them but one did end up like that. and the one John, he was exiled on Patmos anyway. The rest of them were killed for this message.

And Jesus himself was, of course, for this truth. And so, what he's saying here is not a hypothetical scenario. It's very real for his disciples then.

[ 15 : 27 ] And yet, despite that, Jesus says, ah, don't worry about it. Ah, it's not as bad as you think. excuse me? Jesus, we could be killed for this.

We could be killed. And Jesus is like, yeah, but not permanently. So, don't worry about it.

Only God can do that. Did you know that? Did you know only God has the right to kill you permanently? Nobody else has?

the ultimate judge of the universe. Only he has the authority to kill a person permanently.

No one else does. That's what Jesus means when he says, rather fear him, God, who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. No one else can do that to you.

[ 16 : 27 ] No one else controls your ultimate destiny but him. And so, Jesus tells his disciples once they have that perspective, whatever people can do to you and they can do a lot of stuff, they can't ultimately judge you.

They can't affect your ultimate fate. And so, don't fear them ultimately. Don't worry about their judgment of you. Just worry about God's judgment of you because that's permanent.

That's what you should be worried about. that's what he's telling his disciples. And so, how does it apply to us? I mean, we're, you know, in our country it's not yet illegal to tell the gospel.

Thankfully, we've got great freedoms to be able to tell the gospel and therefore we should use the freedoms while they last. And so, what is this? How does this apply to us?

Well, the principle that Jesus, the challenge that Jesus is giving of what they fear is still just as applicable to us. The principle still applies.

[ 17 : 36 ] In other words, don't fear people's judgments of you. Don't fear how people judge you. Then it was formerly in the courts. Now it might be people judging you in the office.

People judging you, you know, as they talk to you because you're a Christian. and we, let's be honest, we care about their judgments.

We fear people judging us badly, people having bad opinions of us, people speaking to other people about us in negative ways. We all fear that as social creatures.

And so, the challenge of what Jesus is saying here is the same to us as Christians. Ask yourself, whose opinion actually matters in your life?

Whose opinion actually matters in the world? Those people, does their opinion matter really, ultimately, what they think of you? Because when you think that and you realize that actually at the end of the day only God's opinion matters, not people's, because God is my creator and God is my judge, not them.

[ 18 : 55 ] Only his opinion matters in the end. When you realize that you know something happens, and by the way, that's what it means to fear him. Jesus says, fear God, fear the one who's your ultimate judge.

Fear him doesn't mean like trembling, it means realizing that his opinion is the only one that matters. and when you do that, when you learn to properly fear God and revere him above people and his opinion above people's opinions, then something happens.

You get liberated from worrying about what people think of you and let me tell you, that is a great freedom. That is a great freedom and we all still have to feel that freedom because we all still worry about what people think about us, don't we?

And yet, what a freedom it is to fear God and not man so that we eventually, and we should all be aiming towards this, we eventually don't need, we can be free of worrying what people think about us.

What a freedom and how that will mobilize us and equip us to do the work Jesus has given when we finally stop worrying about what people think. And it only comes from having this perspective.

[ 20 : 11 ] Who do you really fear? Because in the grand scheme of things, think of your friend. Now you might like them and get along with them, your non-Christian friend and that's great and God's put them in your life for a reason, but does it really matter what they think about you in the end of the day, in the grand scheme of things?

Their opinion doesn't last, God's does. And so focus on pleasing him rather than your friend. Because actually pleasing God is the best thing for your friend.

Yeah, but the relationship with that person is still important to me, right? I don't want to lose it. We've been friends for so many years. It's a good friendship.

I don't want to lose that. I need it. Well, then we need to hear the next thing Jesus says, which is that God will give you what you need.

because he does actually care about your friendships and all the other circumstances of your life. Look what he says in verse 29 to 31.

[ 21 : 24 ] Aren't two sparrows sold for a penny? In other words, they're, you know, sparrows are worth nothing. And yet not one of them falls to the ground without your father's consent.

But even the hairs on your head have all been counted. So don't be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows.

Now, it's a very encouraging thing that Jesus is saying to people here. It's very comforting. It's a great little verse to you, you know, stick on your fridge. But he's doing it in the context of telling them not to fear.

What's the connection? How does this help me to not fear telling people about Jesus? Well, remember the original context.

He's telling his disciples to do something that is going to get them in trouble. But he says despite the danger they're going to face, they need to remember as they do that God does care for them.

[ 22 : 25 ] And he won't let anything happen to them outside of his control. And they need to remember that. Look at verse 30 again. But even the hairs of your head have all been counted.

Now notice here in verse 30, it doesn't say you'll never lose any hairs. As I can see many of you have already discovered.

Just like it's no guarantee that the disciples are not going to lose their lives. for this work that Jesus is giving them. But that does not mean that God is not in control.

Still, even no matter what happens to them, it doesn't negate the fact that God is overseeing their situations. He's overseeing the lives of his children. Just as much as he oversees creation and the sparrows and all the things that happen in creation.

and he makes sure that orbits happen and sun rises and the stars and the moon and God is managing all of that by his mighty providence. Jesus is saying by the same providence and by the same care he is managing and overseeing the lives of his children.

[ 23 : 42 ] And he cares for them. He cares for those circumstances. Each and every circumstance and situation that his children are in, he oversees, he cares for.

And it's the same, the same promise goes for you if you are a child of God. And you become a child of God through faith in his son. Through uniting with Jesus Christ his son you enter into his family and become his child and God's care for his son Jesus comes to you as well when you are in Christ.

And it's an amazing blessing to know that, that we have a God who is a father as well. When we come to Christ that's what we can know.

When we enter into faith in Christ then we become part of God's family and what that means, that's a guarantee that God cares about you because you are his child.

You are valuable to God. Valuable. What can be valuable to the one who owns the whole universe? Well Jesus says you are worth more than many spirits.

[ 25 : 04 ] You are worth something to God if you're his child. You're valuable. He cares about your life. He looks at it. He cares about what happens in your life, the circumstances of your life and your relationships as well.

The relationships you have, the ones that you rely on, the ones that you need and you don't want to risk by talking about Jesus. He cares about those relationships. He knows what you need.

He knows that they're valuable to you. He hasn't turned a blind eye. That's what Jesus is reminding his disciples here. Every circumstance of their life is overseen by a God who cares for them.

And so, what does that mean? It means whatever the consequences are of speaking up for Jesus to your friends or your family members or your work colleagues, whatever you fear by doing that, you know, whether it's losing that friendship, maybe that's what you fear, or losing the job opportunity.

If people at work knew I was a Christian, they wouldn't take me seriously and I wouldn't get the opportunities that other people get. Whatever you fear by talking about Jesus, whatever you fear is going to happen, remember it's not outside of God's control.

[ 26 : 27 ] And God will always make sure that you have what you really need in terms of your relationships, in terms of your job opportunities, whatever it is. If God is in control, then you actually don't need to fear the consequences of doing what he tells you to do, what he wants you to do.

You know, if that person, that friend of yours, that you broach the topic and you share what you believe about Jesus, if their worst happens, they never talk to you again, well then you didn't need them anyway.

Or you lose that job opportunity and you actually have to quit your job and you never get the career you wanted, well you know what, you didn't need that anyway.

God knows what you need, trust that. And if you lose something for talking about Jesus, you didn't need it. We've got to believe this about God.

If we're going to ever wake up and be mobilized and be effective as Christians, we've got to believe this about God, that he actually cares for my circumstances.

[ 27 : 36 ] If only we believed that. then we would be unleashed as a church, as Christians. I think because we continue to lack that God really cares about my circumstances, we try to control, we try to hold on, and you know what, that makes us ineffective.

No, God will give you what you need. Trust that and it will enable you to do his work effectively. But finally, there's one last reason Jesus gives in this passage for why we should not fear to talk about him.

And it is this. If you don't acknowledge Jesus, he won't acknowledge you. And that, you know, that's not a threat.

It's just a reality. Jesus is observing. Look at what he says in verse 32 to 33. Therefore, everyone who will acknowledge me before others, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.

But whoever denies me before others, I will also deny him before my Father in heaven. As I said, that's not some threat that Jesus is trying to scare us into talking about him.

[ 28 : 47 ] He's making an observation that if you're unwilling to talk about him, it means you don't actually have an effective relationship with him anyway. And he's just warning you what that means ultimately.

Your willingness to talk about Jesus shows the reality of your relationship with him. Now, there are lots of people who say they are Christians, but they never talk about Jesus to other people.

You know what that's like? That's like being married, but keeping it a secret from everyone. Never talking about your spouse. How would your spouse feel?

If you were married, but you never let anyone know you were. Well, that's what it's like to be saved, be in a relationship with the Lord of heaven and earth, but then keep it a secret.

Not tell anyone about it. How would Jesus feel? How does Jesus feel? The one who came down and gave his life to save you, who loves you, and yet you don't want to mention him to anyone?

[ 30 : 04 ] How do you think he feels? Well, here he says, verse 33, but whoever denies me before others, I will also deny him before my Father in heaven.

God bless you. Now, that's not talking about the odd missed opportunity or even the time that you were too scared and you failed to pluck up the courage.

Later in Matthew, we see Peter did just that and he was reconciled with Jesus, even though he denied him in that moment of pressure.

It's not talking about the odd missed opportunity. eternity. It's talking about a constant pattern in your life. Were you known as a Christian to the people around you? Did the people in the office, did the people that you cycle with, did the people that you play golf with, did they know you were a Christian?

Did they know you followed Jesus and that he was your king? Did it come out in how you lived and in what you said? because if it does, then it will bring negative responses from some people.

[ 31 : 17 ] That's unavoidable. But it will also bring salvation to others. And ultimate recognition from the one person whose opinion really matters.

Let's pray that would be true of all of us. Lord Jesus, help us not to be ashamed of you, but fill our hearts with your glory so that we would not fear.

Making the truth about you known to the people you've put in our lives. Help us also to shout that from the housetops, to make it an open truth in our lives so that people know who we are and that through that, Lord, you will give us opportunities to tell them the greatest news they could ever hear.

In Jesus' name. Amen.