

# Facing the Fear of Witnessing

## Matthew 10 part 3

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 8-1-2010

Covered in last message

- I. Know The Cost Of Being A Witness: We Should Expect That Soldiers Are Sent Into Danger (vv. 16-26)
- II. Know The Vision For Being A Witness: Our Goal Must Be To Win, Not To Passively Die As Martyrs (vv. 15-26)

### Introduction

This is my third sermon in Matthew 10 on the subject of evangelism by non-experts. Before we look at this passage, I want to give a brief review of what we looked at two weeks ago. We saw that there is a cost involved in being a Christian witness (verses 16-26). In fact, the cost is so big that some people might think, “Why would I ever be a witness?” But we saw that the cost is what every Christian faces. The cost is *not* what makes Christianity attractive. In fact, when you clearly articulate the cost of following Christ, many will decide not to follow, just like many left Jesus when He was here on earth. In this chapter Christ said that He was sending some of His disciples to their deaths, some to be imprisoned and scourged; they would be hated and betrayed. But even if they avoided such persecution, every disciple was being called to take up his cross and follow Christ in a life of self-denial.

What kind of marketing is that?! Why would any person be willing to deny himself what he naturally wants? Well, we’ll look at the perks next week, but in part it is through vision, and so we looked not only at the cost of being a witness but also at the incredible vision that was set before these disciples in verses 16-26. And the greater the vision, the greater the willingness to give your all.

And that’s true even in the natural realm. We are made to be creatures of vision. Think of the war for independence. Why were the founding fathers of America willing to lose their fortunes and their lives in the first war for independence? Some of them lost all the money that they had, and considered it worthwhile. Why? They had a vision of what true spiritual liberty and political liberty could give to a country and they said that they would rather die than see their children growing up under the bondage of a humanistic culture. They were men and women of vision.

One of the reasons that many Christians in our country are not willing to deny themselves sacrificially is because they are not really convinced that there is anything worth sacrificing for. And in one sense I can’t blame them.

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No vision that has been cast before their eyes. Scripture says that for lack of vision the people perish. The Word of God has not shaped their political thinking and so they aren't willing to take the sacrifices necessary to restore liberty to America. So they have no vision for culture. Likewise the Word of God doesn't shape their vision of what family covenantal succession could look like, so they have no vision for their grandchildren and our great-great grandchildren. Instead, they have a bumper sticker that says, "I'm spending my children's inheritance." You've probably seen that bumper sticker. I am convinced that the Word of God has not adequately shaped what the church is supposed to be about. The church has often been seen as a *place* of activities where someone can go for worship, refreshment, stimulation, entertainment, and perhaps for learning (though that rarely happens). But there is no gripping vision as to why we must be committed to the church come hell or high water. All of those things involve sacrifices that are driven by vision.

The reason Christ could call for any sacrifice in the realm of witnessing was that these disciples were convinced that they were fighting for a vision of utmost importance, and that the losing of that spiritual war was an unbearable thought. Our generation needs to recapture a vision of Christ's plan to transform every area of life and culture, and to recommit itself to any cost that is necessary to fulfill that Biblical vision. You see, the truncated vision of the 21<sup>st</sup> century church has brought about a truncated willingness to sacrifice. It has brought about a truncated message of the Gospel. Jesus did not just commit his disciples to proclaim a message of how to get a free ticket to heaven. Yes, that's involved. But in Matthew 9:35 He commissioned them to start bringing the Gospel of the Kingdom. It's a comprehensive good news.

As the Great Commission words it, "**All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.**" It's a message of Christ's universal authority over all of life, the universal spread of His kingdom to Christianize all nations, the teaching of everything found in the bible, and the confidence that His power will achieve this all the days of our age. Once you understand the Gospel of the Kingdom that they brought in this chapter it makes the truncated message of the modern look church insipid and insulting to majesty of Christ's sovereign goals. So two weeks ago we dealt with the cost and the vision.

But today I want to answer the question of who can be used by Christ in this grand evangelistic outreach. Sometimes people feel so inadequate. “Yes it’s a great vision, but I am so lousy; I can’t really be of much use!” Like Moses they think that they can’t talk too well. Like some of these disciples they feel like they aren’t educated enough, or do not command the respect of crowds, or lack certain skills. These disciples had the coarse speech of Galileans that *wasn’t* respected. People said, “Oh, those Galileans – they are hicks! They are rednecks. They don’t even know how to talk right.” And yet God used them to turn the world upside down.

Who can be used as a witness? And Christ’s answer is simple: anyone who is sold out to the cause of Christ. You don’t need to be in positions of power; you *only need to submit to the God of all power*. You don’t need to be wealthy; *you only need to submit to the One who owns the cattle on a thousand hills*. You don’t need to be an expert witness; *you only need to submit to the God who saves people and be willing to be a witness*. *God* is the critical factor, not you.

### III. Know How to Put Off Fear

#### A. *The command to put off fear (vv. 26,28,31)*

And it’s in that light that I want you to view point A: You need to be bold to speak the truth. Don’t say, “Well, that immediately rules me out, because I’m not bold. I’m scared. I can’t be used by God’s kingdom.” Well, if you feel that way, you have a lot in common with the disciples. Verse 26 says, “**Therefore do not fear them.**” This is not an option. And this is obviously not being addressed to people who have no fear. Verse 28: “**And do not fear those who can kill the body...**” Verse 31: “**Do not fear therefore.**” Why does He say that? Because they were fearful just like some of us are. And in this passage, Christ gives seven antidotes to fear of witnessing. There are other Scriptures that give more antidotes to fear, but we will restrict ourselves to these seven that *Jesus* related to fear of witnessing.

#### B. *Tactics for handling fear*

##### 1. Trust God’s work & witness (v. 26)

First of all, trust God’s work and witness. Convicting people is God’s work and God *will* convict men, either in history, or before the judgment throne. Verse 26 says, “**Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.**” Notice how universal that is: *nothing* will escape from God’s convicting

power. And the important point is not the timing, because we don't know who is elect and who is non-elect. The non-elect will be convicted at judgment day. But the point that takes away fear is that this work of conviction of the hidden things of the heart is not our work; it's God's work. When it is time for people to be convicted, it doesn't matter how lousy our witness might be, or how resistant those people might be, *they will not be able to hide themselves from God's searching gaze*. Ours is the outward call; His is the powerful inward call. Ours is the outward witness; His is the inward witness. We can go into witness with the knowledge that God produces the results. Trust His conviction, witness, and call.

## 2. Step out in the obedience of faith (v. 27).

Of course faith without action is called a dead faith in the book of James. Faith that doesn't lead to obedience is a counterfeit faith. So the second step that Jesus gives for overcoming the fear of witnessing is to step out in the obedience of faith and proclaim the truth even though people don't want it proclaimed. And I know what you are thinking: "That's the problem, not the solution. The reason I am scared of witnessing is because people hate it when I tell the truth. What God wants me to preach and tell others, they want hidden in the dark. And their attitude is going to make for conflict, and that stirs up fear in my heart."

Well, Christ knew that when He gave verse 27. After saying, do not fear them because I am doing the convicting work (v. 26), He goes on to say, "In light of the fact that I am pressing the claims of truth to people's hearts, I want you to start talking. **Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops.**" *Don't keep it secret*. What God reveals in the dark of your devotions is totally hidden from the view of unbelievers. That doesn't do them any good. Christ wants this secret news taken out into the world. And it is in the act of obedience that fear is often conquered.

Let me illustrate this a couple of ways. Turn with me to Galatians 2:11-13. Fear of speaking the truth can come before unbelievers, it can come when I sit before the session, it can come when I preach the Word. Spiritual boldness is not natural, and Peter shows how the old fears can resurrect themselves in the most unusual places. Verse 11 begins, **But when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.** [Fear kept Peter and the other apostles from boldly telling the truth and living the truth. And it

says...] **And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel...**[and Paul proceeds to confront Peter].” What gave Paul that boldness when nobody else had it? Well, there are several things he mentions in this book. Paul mentions finding our sense of approval in God. He mentions being convinced of God’s love for us. Being convinced of His sovereign control of our circumstances.

But walking by faith is key. In chapter 3 he seeks to convince the church that they cannot live one iota of the Christian life in their own strength. And in effect he is saying, of course I’m not bold. I am inadequate to have anything that contributes to the Christian life. He says in Galatians 3, **“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain - if indeed it was in vain? Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”**

When we say, “I’m not good enough to be a witness” we are implying that witnessing can be done by the works of the law. We are implying that receiving God’s power by faith is not enough. When we say, “I have to become more bold, and then I will witness, we have it backwards.” That implies that boldness precedes walking by faith. But where does the boldness come from? It comes from the Holy Spirit. Paul was nervous too. He says, **“I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling.”** (1Cor. 2:3). Well, if that was true, how did he get his boldness? It was when Paul by faith stepped forth and did the right thing that the Spirit provided the boldness. He didn’t have the boldness to start with. The boldness was wrought by faith. But it was a faith that acts.

A couple of other illustrations: Who parted the Jordan, God or the priests? The priests in themselves had no power to part the water. But on the other hand, God chose not to part the Jordan until the people trusted Him enough to get their feet wet. In Matthew 10:26 God says in effect that He will part the Jordan by doing the work of grace, but in verse 27 He tells us that we need to get our feet wet by witnessing before He will part that Jordan. And your problem of fear will not be conquered so long as you stay in the barracks. God’s boldness takes over in the action of the battlefield.

Let me give you another illustration: When was the man with the withered hand healed? Christ commanded him to do the impossible: “Stretch forth your hand.” The man could have said, like many of us do when we are fearful of witnessing, “Lord, I can’t stretch forth my hand. You heal my hand and then I will stretch it forth.” “Lord, you give me boldness and then I will witness, but I can’t witness Lord. Please don’t make me witness.” But if the man with the withered hand had done that, no healing would have come. It was when he by faith attempted the impossible that Christ’s healing power was seen. That, I think is what Christ is getting at in Matthew 10 verses 26-27.

So the first remedy for fear is trusting God’s witness through our witness. The second remedy is the obedience of faith; it’s stepping into the Jordan.

### 3. Daily embrace an eternal perspective (vv. 28,32-33)

But the third remedy for fear is to put all danger into an eternal perspective. Verse 28 says, “**And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.**” He is saying, “Stop thinking about the problems in the present. Think about eternity.” Look at verses 32-33: “**Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.**” What will it be like to be confessed before the Father? What will it be like to have Jesus say, “Father, this man and this woman confessed Me before men. I’m not ashamed of them. I’m proud of them. Receive them.” Daniel 12:3 says that those who are engaged in evangelism and lead people to righteousness will shine like the stars forever and ever. If we only think about present consequences, we will not have the motivation for witness. Remember the cost? If all you focus on is the cost it will not be enough. The life we live on earth is less than a second in comparison to eternity. Trillions of years from now, if we could remember our life on earth, we would shake our heads in amazement that we weren’t willing to be uncomfortable for a speck of time so that we might have eternal reward for ever. An eternal perspective, when it grips our hearts, helps us to face any unpleasantness on earth.

### 4. Develop the fear of God as the answer to the fear of man (v. 28)

The fourth remedy Christ gives for the fear of man is also in verse 28: it is the fear of God. That one may surprise you, but over and over the Bible

presents the fear of God as the answer to the fear of man. Verse 28 tells us to “**fear Him.**” 278 times the Bible calls us to fear God, and yet according to Dr. Robert Morey, the fear of God is almost never preached in churches. 43 of those references are in the New Testament.

What gave the church of Acts such boldness to witness? It was the fear of God. Acts 2:43 says that “**fear came upon every soul.**” What was the result? Witnessing, and the huge growth of the church. They spoke the word of God with boldness. Acts 5:11 says, “**So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.**” What was the result? Boldness of speech and the multiplication of the church. Acts 9:31 says, “**And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.**” I want you to notice that the fear of God is not incompatible with the comfort of the Holy Spirit. Indeed it is the prerequisite to such comfort. And you could keep going through Acts and see that the fear of the Lord was the answer to the fear of man. The fear of God is one of the most important things that you could develop in your Christian walk. John Murray calls it the central feature of Christian piety.

Have you ever walked up to the Grand Canyon and had a sense of awe overpower you? I was awestruck when I stood at the Grand Canyon; absolutely awestruck! And the closer I get to the edge of the cliff, the more the sensation transitioned from awe to a sensation of fear. And when I get within a couple feet of this majestic canyon I couldn't stand up because there was such an overwhelming sense of fear. But I loved it so much that I wanted to see more, so I was on my knees peering over (like the picture of the guy in your handout), and if the wind was blowing at all, I was flat on my stomach.

That to me is a picture of our fear of God. It is ordinarily a sensation of awe and wonder that brings delight. But the closer we get to God, the more that awe and wonder begins to transition into what Philippians calls the “**fear and trembling**” that every Christian should have. If you have never trembled before God, you have not gotten close to the edge of the Grand Canyon of God's nature. Now this fear doesn't mean that we run away from God. No. On the contrary we are attracted to God. We boldly approach God just as we boldly gaze at the Grand Canyon, or gaze at a roaring fire. But we do not trifle with God or with the fire. This is why Hebrews 12 says, “**Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire.**” That's the same book that calls us to boldly approach God. It tells us to have fear and trembling as we approach Him. Hebrews that says that when Moses boldly approached

God he was exceedingly afraid and trembling. How do those two concepts fit together? Just think of the Grand Canyon. Moses was getting close to the edge because He so wanted to see God's glory.

Now, I cannot get into this in depth in this sermon, but it is my prayer that every one of you would have a Grand Canyon view of God. I highly recommend this book by Dr. Robert Morey, titled, *Fearing God: the Key to the Treasure House of Heaven*. I believe the church of Jesus Christ would be turned upside down if it could once again experience this fear and trembling. The fear of God would solve almost all the church's problems. I believe our people would be turned upside down if they would read this book. I personally purchased a number of these books and will give you a copy for free if you read it within three weeks and write a report for me of what it has meant to you. And I've got plenty here and at my office for everybody. If you don't get the report done in time, I will still give it to you for 75% off (that's \$5). But here is the opportunity for you to get a free book from your pastor.

But it is a much-needed corrective to the false views of the Gospel, and the false views of family, church, and culture. Morey traces the history of the loss of the fear of God from the Puritans to the present and points out that as we have lost the fear of God we have lost almost everything. It's no wonder that the church is so carnal and filled with heresy. The feminized church fights against the fear of God, and there is a reason for that. Liberalism fights against the fear of God, and its for the same reason. The self-esteem movement has moved as far away from the fear of God as you can get. The psychologized church cannot preach the fear of God. Modern teaching on training children is totally absent of the fear of God. On page 95 Morey says, "The fear of the Lord should permeate every aspect of life. No part of our private or public life is to be left untouched by the fear of God." (p. 95)

Brothers and sisters, if you are plagued by insecurity, read this book. If you are plagued by arrogance and pride, read this book. If you are plagued by the fear of man, read this book. Most of you in this congregation have very little fear of God, and I believe this is a key to turning things around in your lives.

Let give you just a tiny introduction to the blessings you could have if you would learn to fear God in the crass way that Jesus told the disciples to fear God. He told these justified and saved children of God, "**fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.**" There are blessings to doing so. Psalm 128 says, "**Blessed are all who fear the Lord...**" and it talks about blessings in every area of your family-life. You are robbed of

blessings if you do not tremble before the Grand Canyon of God's majesty. Psalm 112:1 says, "**How blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in His commandments.**" The fear of God and holiness go hand in hand – but it comes with blessing. Psalm 111:10 says, "**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.**" Psalm 34:7-10 says, "**The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him** [Do you want God's warrior angels fighting on your behalf and protecting you? The only way that will happen is if you fear God. Let me keep reading: "The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him."] **and He delivers them. Fear the Lord, you His saints, for those who fear Him, lack nothing. Come my children, listen to me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord, whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days...**" and he goes on to record other blessings of fearing and trembling before God. Psalm 19:23 says, "**The one who fears God can sleep satisfied, untouched by evil.**" And there are lots of other results of godly fear that Scripture promises. But returning to our present subject, the fear of God is certainly the answer to the fear of witnessing. If you sense that you are walking hand in hand with the God who made the universe, why would you fear talking to mere men?

**5. Be convinced of God's providential control of all things (v. 29)**

A fifth remedy for fear of witnessing is being convinced of God's Providential control over every detail of life. He is not just a majestic Grand Canyon, but He is also *personally in control of everything for your good*. Verse 29 says, "**Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will.**" If God had to plan out even when and where each particular sparrow would fall, we shouldn't be worried about when and where we will die, or who is going to cuss us out. If God is in complete control of sparrows, shouldn't we be able to trust Him for the greater act of witnessing? Even though I won't be spending much time on this today, I think this was the most profound truth in helping me to conquer the fear of witnessing in my early twenties. When I became convinced of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, it became such a stabilizing influence in my life that I was able to face danger with boldness. I knew I could not die before it was my time to die. I knew that I could not fail in that which God wanted me to succeed. God's sovereignty is such a comforting doctrine. God knows every detail of the upcoming witnessing situation, and He controls those details for His glory and your good. You don't need to be afraid of witnessing. He is in control. Just relax.

## 6. Trust the wisdom of God for your situation (v. 30)

The sixth remedy Christ gives is the wisdom of God. Verse 30 says, “**But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.**” Think of that. Unless you are bald, no one other than God knows how many hairs you have from day to day. But God does. When we fear to do what God commands because we are afraid of the unknown, we are questioning God’s wisdom. God knows, and that’s the important issue. He’s got it all planned out, and we don’t need to worry.

## 7. Remind yourself that God values you more than He values results (vv. 29-30)

And then the final remedy given in this paragraph is that God values each one of you immensely. Verse 29 says that God cares about each individual sparrow, and verse 31 logically extrapolates by saying, “**Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.**” God values you more than He values the results. Why does He call us to witness? Is it because He can’t convert people without us? No. God could convert the whole world in the snap of His fingers without our help. He could send angels to come into the world in a flame of fire to convert people. The reason God sends us to witness is for *us* to grow; for *us* to learn to depend upon Him; for *us* to know Him and the power of His grace. It’s for *our* benefit that He gives all ministry. You will grow like crazy when you start to regularly witness. God has given you that task because He loves you; He values you.

### Conclusion

So, in conclusion - next time you become fearful of witnessing, realize that God is too good to let you down, too wise to make mistakes, too powerful to let things get out of control, too generous to deny you what you need. From start to finish, witnessing is God’s work, really. Christ said, “**I will build My church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.**” We just have the incredible privilege of being invited to be part of the process. God isn’t asking you to do *His* responsibility. All he asks is for you to be willing to get your feet wet and step into the Jordan River. Do so.

If you couple this week’s message with next week’s message you will have all the motivation you need to start witnessing. The steps we have looked at today will take the fear out of implementing the evangelism course you have just gone through, and the perks we will look at next week will make any costs all seem well worth while. May God be glorified through

your witnessing, and may *you* be encouraged as you see God's hand at work in your evangelism. Amen.

Next week    **IV.**    **Experiencing the Perks of Being a Witness**

Charge: Children of God, God has given you a mission impossible – to cross the Jordon River of your fears and witness to people. I charge you to step into the Jordon and watch God do the impossible through you. Amen.

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## Matthew 10 part 3

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 8-1-2010

Covered in last message

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### Conclusion

Next week

IV. Experiencing the Perks of Being a Witness