

The Antidote to Insecurity

Matthew 10:26-33

One of the experiences common to all mankind is that of fear. Some seem able to deny fear, living with a courageousness that we often call fearless, but ultimately, at the end of the day, to some degree or another, every man alive knows the reality of fear. Some, far greater than others.

We are afraid of the unknown, to be sure. The greatest unknown is that of death, and the fear of death is a very common experience; also the fear of the whole process of dying. Then there is the fear of failure, the fear of hardship, perhaps. And the fear of danger. In a certain sense, the whole of our lives are governed by the possibility of failure, since we are mere mortal men. There will always be the existence of hardship, for we live in a world existing under the curse of God due to our sin. And we cannot escape the reality of danger, for we have an enemy without, the devil, and an enemy within, the flesh. Danger lurks, therefore, in the very recesses of our heart and it threatens in every situation and outward circumstance of our lives.

It is that fear of danger that I want to focus upon this afternoon, as we continue on in our study in Matthew 10. Jesus has just told his disciples some troubling news.

v.16-18

v.21-22

And to conclude the whole matter,

v.24-25

So the disciple will not be above his master. The disciple will not escape the danger of his master. But, Jesus encourages them, “do not fear,” verse 26. Have no fear of those who will persecute you, and while that seems a bit presumptuous and

perhaps hollow, Jesus provides good reason for his encouragements, and that will be our focus today.

Note, however, how similar this is to Moses as he speaks to Joshua, and I want to bring that to your mind before we go further.

Josh. 1:5 “No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. 6 Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. 7 Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. 8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

Joshua, too, had good reason to fear. But the word of God to him was clear and unmistakably encouraging. “Be strong and of good courage. do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” We can assume that same context for Jesus giving these instructions to his disciples. And his point is simple.

I. NO FEAR NEEDED HERE.

v.26a

Why? How is that possible? To ask those questions is to make all of this very applicable and helpful for us as well. The reasoning Jesus provides is helpful for each one of us when we

face all the particular dangers that might cause us to fear. And I want to use that word “insecurity,” for so often our fears are not external threats to our health and life, but they address matters of the heart and soul. And I used the word “insecurity” to mean just that. Insecurities are the fears of your heart, the anxieties of your soul. They are the response to the danger and trouble and that is so prevalent in our everyday existence. Jesus provides the antidote to insecurity; the solution to the problem of fear.

First of all,

A. No fear needed because God is all-knowing.

Don’t you hate it when someone says to you, “I know it will all work out all right.” How do they know that? And how can they guarantee it? They can’t. And they don’t know it. Things might not work out all right. When someone gets sick, they might die. That’s the reality of the circumstances of our lives in this fallen world. Things don’t always work out all right, not according to a definition that we determine ourselves, according to what we define to be good.

And you and I simply cannot know what happen in the future. That’s why we fear, isn’t it? That’s the root of our insecurities. The things of the future are secret to us. But they are not secret to God. In the words of,

Deut. 29:29 “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”

God knows the future. The secret things of the future belong to him. He knows everything, with good reason, for he has decreed everything. We read in,

Eph. 1:11 “In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.”

God has a purpose, an eternal purpose. An eternal decree. And according to that purpose, he “works all things according to the counsel of his will.” People of God, that is the source of your strength! That is the source of your courage. That is the antidote to your insecurities. God “works all things according to the counsel of his will.”

And God will make that will and purpose known. Look at Jesus’ words in our text.

v.26

God knows all things, and God will make known all things. So those dangers that come to you will not remain in secret. Those fearful circumstances of your own life are not kept hidden in your own experiences. Everything is fully known before God, and God will make everything fully known.

So you are not a victim of fate. You are not suffering in secret, that your ways would be hidden even from God. Nothing is hidden from him, and ultimately he will leave nothing in secret. There is courage, especially the courage of a gospel witness in the context of trouble and persecution. Jesus tells his disciples,

v.27

You will suffer in this world, but don’t hide. You will face persecution in this world, but don’t keep silent. No fear needed here, because God is all-knowing. And even further, says our Lord,

B. No fear needed because others can only harm your body.

This is quite a powerful encouragement. You need not fear those who can harm you, because, after all, all that they can do is to harm your body. They can only cause physical harm, which

isn't your greatest danger at all.

v.28

So if you are persecuted, the very worst that your enemy can do to you is to kill you. And by comparison to those who can harm your soul, that's not very bad at all. I don't mean that flippantly. We need to preserve that perspective, and especially for those who are persecuted, that is a necessary outlook in order to endure. As bad as it sounds, as harmful as it can be, those who can harm your body do not pose a very great danger. So these words are not simplistic. They are not naive, but very profound. The one whom you really need to fear is the one who can harm your soul. "Fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell." Fear the one who has the authority to judge your soul. Fear God.

As a Christian, you don't need to be insecure in the face of the dangers of life, even persecution. But you do need to fear the judgment of God. So you don't need to worry about the physical dangers of this world; no fear needed in that context. So the Psalmist declares,

Ps. 56:9 "Then my enemies will turn back in the day when I call. This I know, that God is for me. 10 In God, whose word I praise, in the Lord, whose word I praise, 11 in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me."

Ps. 118:5 "Out of my distress I called on the Lord; the Lord answered me and set me free. 6 The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? 7 The Lord is on my side as my helper; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me."

The first antidote to the insecurities of this life, due to the dangers of this world, is an awareness of God's omniscience. Thus no fear is needed in the face of physical threats and

persecutions. The second antidote to insecurity is a full and right understanding of God's providence.

II. PROVIDENCE TRUMPS FEAR.

In other words, the security of resting in God's sovereign government over all the circumstances and affairs of your life triumphs over fear. Jesus makes that point this way,

v.29-30

Surely,

A. God watches over and orders every detail of your life.

The doctrine of providence, for me, has never been a merely intellectual concept. It has always been practical. As are these words. The idea is so simple, but if you are given to fears, fully grasping this doctrine will be life-changing. Jesus explains it this way. Consider the sparrow. Not very valuable, worth only a half-penny. Insignificant in the broader scheme of things. But just look at how carefully God takes care of the sparrow. "And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will."

Again, the doctrinal statement of Paul in Ephesians 1 becomes so personal and practical. All the circumstances of your life come to pass "according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will." That's providence. And that's the antidote to fear.

A second illustration.

v.30 "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

Every hair. Every single one. Numbered by God, catalogued. Now, that's not hard for some people, as some of you might often joke about yourself or others whose bald head is shaven entirely and completely. But for most of us, that's a lot of hair. And the point is, every single strand of hair falls under the order and

control of God's providence. Every hair on your head is numbered. Every single one.

So, now what do you have to fear? If God numbers every hair, if God orders every small and seemingly insignificant detail such that nothing escapes both his attention and his sovereign control, what could possibly cause you to fear?

Psalms 27:1 "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? 2 When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall. 3 Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident."

That is why good doctrine is so important, and so helpful for the experiences of your life. That is why this doctrinal proposition of providence is such a bit deal. Because God watches over and orders every detail of your life, you can say with David, "Of whom shall I be afraid?"

In the familiar words of,

Psalms 23:4 "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

Or, as the Apostle Paul would put it,

Romans 8:5 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." 37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing,

shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Those verses, of course, join together the doctrine of God's providence with his love and kindness. So not only does God govern and control every detail of your life, not only does God number and decree every hair upon your head,

B. God exercises loving care of his children.

v.31

This verse isn't a proof text for the modern doctrine of our infinite self-worth, but rather it is the proof-text for the biblical doctrine of God's goodness. Again, just look at that sparrow, sold two for a penny. And God takes care of the sparrow. You are of more value than many sparrows.

Fear and worry are close cousins, among the dangerous and destructive emotions of our fallen human experience, and Jesus says much the same thing about worry. Remember,

Matthew 6:26 "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? 28 "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; 29 and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all

these things shall be added to you. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

So, people of God, look at the birds of the air. Look at the lilies of the field. Look at the sparrows. Look at how perfectly, and lovingly, God takes care of all of them. Now, draw the proper conclusion. God will take care of you, too, for as a human being you are far more important than all of them. So it isn't just God's power that is our security, but his love. And remember those words I just read from Romans 8, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”

No one. Nothing. Ever. So great is the sovereign power of God's providence. And so great is his eternal love. So what should you fear? And when? What should be your experience of,

III. TRUE FEAR.

I've already made mention of one such expression of fear. His judgment.

A. You should fear the righteous judgment of God. v.28b

“Fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” Fear the one who has the authority to judge your soul. Fear God. So we read this in,

Heb. 10:26 “For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. 28 Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. 29 How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the

Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

This is what you ought to fear,

Mat. 7:21 “Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ 23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”

Thus,

B. You should fear Jesus' rejection. v.32-33

Similarly,

Luke 12:8 “And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, 9 but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God.”

So we acknowledge Jesus. We confess Jesus. And he acknowledges us. But if you deny Jesus before men, he will deny you before the Lord who is in heaven. If you reject Jesus, he will reject you, and that is what you ought to fear most of all. For you cannot stand before God and survive, not without the benefit of Jesus as your mediator and advocate. You cannot see God and live, not without Jesus. And you cannot stand in the presence of God on the day of judgment, unless Jesus stands with you and intercedes on your behalf.

That's what you need to fear, you who reject Jesus, that he will reject you.

2 Tim. 2:11 "The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; 12 if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us."

So you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord. You believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead. And you will be saved.

Rom. 10:13 "For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

So what about the dangers of this life? What about your fears regarding the circumstances of this life? There is nothing to fear in any of them.

Rom. 8: 37 "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

So may this faith be yours,

Ps. 118:6 "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"