

Theme: Following Jesus (discipleship) is serious business fraught with danger from within and without. But we can live without fear in the world because of Him who is at work both in us and for us.

Background: Chapter 12 – instructions for Jesus’ disciples.

Introduction: Pam Gyang affirmed his faith in Nigeria. His wife prays for his murderers. Where does this kind of confidence and courage come from?

I. Danger Within (1-3)

A. Fame

- Would the crowds “get” to the disciples? Would they be tempted to maintain a certain image?

B. Hypocrisy

- We know it when we see it.

1. Danger #1?

- When crowds matter more than Christ!!

2. Danger #2?

- Having the *appearance* of faith, but none of the substance.

NOTE: How big is the gap between your outward appearance of godliness – and a true heart for God?

3. Leaven!

- a. Righteousness – apart from Christ’s work

- b. Permeates the whole lump

- c. It’s effects

- Superiority
- Seeing others “faults” but not your own
- Compassion dies

C. Discovery

- It is all revealed in the end (and sometimes long before)

1. Warning to believers and unbelievers alike!

2. Nothing will stay hidden.

3. Therefore, be men/women of integrity!

II. Dangers Without

A. Threat of Death

- The threat is real

B. Threat of Destruction! (The far greater danger)

1. Fear Man??

- a. Kill the body?

- Limited authority!

- b. Living in fear?
 - Fear can control us

NOTE: How much is the “fear of man” ruling what you say and do as a Christian?

2. Fear God!

- a. God’s power
 - Over body and soul
- b. Reverent fear
 - Comes from those who *know* Him
 - Reverent fears drives out worldly fears

NOTE: The great paradox is that if I fear God, I will have no fear!

C. The danger of denial. The danger of denying Christ before men!

1. Our identification

- a. Confess Him – and He claims me
- b. Deny Him – and you will be denied in heaven
- c. Confessing the Lord of the Covenant - Deuteronomy 30:15-20

NOTE: Am I faithfully confessing Christ in my words, my desires, my plans, my hopes?

2. Two types of “Denial”

- a. Situational
 - Driven by fear (Peter’s denial)
 - Driven by ignorance (Paul’s vain threats)
 - Both repented, both forgiven
- b. Settled unbelief
 - Denying the power and work of Holy Spirit
 - True blaspheme!

III. But Not Afraid (though there is danger ahead)

A. Fear not!

- 1. You are Precious to Him
 - He saves sinners, not sparrows!
- 2. You are not forgotten!

B. Don’t be anxious

- 1. You are not alone!
 - The Spirit will be with you and in you
- 2. He will provide

Let the fear of God – drive away all fear in life and in death.