

Part 44: Hypocrisy, Fear, and How to Save Your Life

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Yesterday my three-year-old came to me upset, and he was accusing my 5-year-old of doing something to him. And my 5-year-old was close behind denying any wrongdoing. And I couldn't get a straight answer out of my 5-year-old about what happened.

I tried to be as specific as possible. I asked him if he had touched his brother at all – “No.” Then I thought maybe I needed to be specific about what “touch” means. You know how words seem to get redefined by kids when they are in trouble. Like: “I didn't hit him. I just affectionately patted his arm.”

So I asked him if in any way he came in contact with his brother. “No.”

Meanwhile my 3-year-old is standing there dramatically reenacting what looks like being stabbed in the back with a knife

So finally, the truth came out. My poor victimized 3-year-old had been stealing food off of his brother's plate. To which my 5-year-old angrily started jabbing his fork in his brother's direction to deter further theft. Finally, the 3-year-old risked another attempt at his brother's plate – and thus the aforementioned stabbing.

Now neither of my boys had been completely forthright with what happened. They each felt it was safer to present themselves more positively than reality because they both feared that if they were honest there could be consequences. It was safer to keep certain information about themselves in the dark.

What does it mean to be safe? We all desire safety. We want to spare ourselves pain and protect all the things that make our lives easier or more enjoyable.

And one of the things that can threaten our sense of safety is how much other people know about us. It isn't safe for other people to know certain things about us. It could damage our reputation – we might lose opportunities – it could cost us relationships. So we try to keep things about ourselves in the dark. We fear being known because if other people really knew us, it could harm our life.

Well in our passage today, Jesus is going to challenge our ideas of what we should fear and what it means to be safe.

And our main point today is this: **You save your life not by hiding what's inside but by confessing who keeps you safe.**

And we're going to look at this in **three points**:

1. The Fear of Being Known
2. The Comfort of Being Known
3. The Safety of Making Jesus Known

First we're going to look at The Fear of Being Known.

1. The Fear of Being Known

Let's read **v.1**.

Looks are Deceiving

So in the last chapter the crowds were increasing. And here the crowd is described as bigger than ever. And at first we might think that this is a good thing. But in these chapters Jesus refers to the crowd negatively. In the last chapter, Jesus told the crowd that they were an *evil* generation. Remember that they were skeptical and unbelieving. Despite all the clear evidence of who Jesus is they still won't truly come to him and repent. He warned them "be careful!" The problem is not with him but is inside of them.

Then Jesus addressed the religious leaders. Their problem is inside as well. Jesus exposed their love of praise rather than love of God, their harmful sham of "holiness," their ignoring the problem in their heart. There was no inner transformation – no real change of character. They were hypocrites.

Now our world hates hypocrites. But hypocrisy is easier than ever. None of us are strangers to presenting ourselves more positively than reality.

And the Pharisees are likewise playing a part. But that's not the real them. So Jesus warned the Pharisees.

And next Jesus is going to warn his disciples. He doesn't want *them* to be hypocrites. But between the warning to the Pharisees and the warning to his disciples, Luke makes this comment about the crowd. He wants to draw our attention to the distinction Jesus makes between the crowd and his disciples.

You see Jesus causes division. Necessary to Jesus coming as savior is the division he causes between those who believe and those who don't believe. There are only two camps. You will either be against him like the Pharisees or with him as one of his disciples. It isn't enough to simply be in the crowd. Simply joining the crowd doesn't have any saving advantage. There's a difference between wanting to get *close* to Jesus and wanting to *come* to Jesus.

So the sight of this crowd compels Jesus to turn to his disciples and give them the warning: "Beware the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."

Leaven was fermented dough that you added to each new lump of dough to cause it to rise. And so here it's a picture of the corrupting influence of the Pharisees. The Pharisees' hypocrisy is contagious.

And you can see their influence over the crowd. The crowd is focused on external things just like the Pharisees. They want a sign from Jesus. Next week we'll see someone in the crowd wants worldly gain from Jesus. They want their version of "peace on earth" from Jesus. Jesus calls them an evil generation and hypocrites because they aren't turning to him from the heart out of a sense of their need for him. They aren't turning to him for cleansing from what's inside. They won't acknowledge him despite the obvious evidence that God's kingdom has arrived in Jesus.

But this doesn't look like the kingdom they're looking for. This doesn't look like the life they're looking for. So they won't come to Jesus and repent.

What are *you* at church for? It could be because "I know I'm supposed to" – "I don't want to feel guilt" – "for a place to advance myself," – "for community" – "because I follow my spouse here." Have you come to Jesus or do you just come to church? Proximity to Jesus is not a substitute for coming to him.

They're willing to trample one another to get close to him for the spectacle. But will they come and stand with Jesus? Will they risk the wrath of the Pharisees? And that choice ultimately comes down to this: what do you believe will save your life? And your answer to that question depends on what you believe you need saving *from* and what you need saving *to*.

So Jesus warned the crowd. He warned the Pharisees. And now he warns his disciples because he doesn't want them to be hypocrites.

Everyone Will Know

Let's read **v.2-3**.

So in the immediate context, what is hidden that Jesus has just made known? Well we just saw last week that it's what's inside the Pharisees. They don't want the truth about themselves to be broadcast. Because they like their greed. They like their status. Hypocrites hide what's inside. They don't want to be exposed because they don't want to lose the life they love.

Our hypocrisy protects us. *Self-presentation* serves *self-preservation*. We want to save face. We want to be perceived a certain way. But your hypocrisy can only keep you safe if no one will ever know about it – if you can keep it hidden. But if God is omniscient – if he knows everything – then there is nothing hidden that won't be revealed.

Because God knows everything, what's hidden inside will be exposed to your shame. There's a lot about ourselves that we don't want to go public. But Jesus says that is *exactly* what's going to happen. It is short-sighted to trust hypocrisy to preserve your life.

The Pharisees' religion has infected people with hypocritical priorities. They have no idea that their decisive problem is final judgment. The crowd has been trying to use Jesus to solve the wrong problem. The Pharisees are pressing him to get what they want – protecting the life *they* love. The people are trampling one another in case Jesus can give them the life *they* want. But the real problem for the Pharisees, the crowds, and us is that what's in our hearts will one day be exposed.

We all have things we keep hidden because they are embarrassing. But for the one who has repented, Paul says that you can actually have no regret in the sense that remembering what you've done can produce praise to Jesus for forgiving you. But you can't do that with ongoing sin that you haven't actually repented of.

Does a hidden area of your life come to mind when you hear these verses? Maybe it's a porn issue, an inappropriate relationship – something you rationalize and keep in the dark but you know it's wrong. "You can't save your life by hiding what's inside." We're afraid of being known, but we're only delaying

the inevitable. *Everyone's* going to know. But when it comes out will it be a source of shame or will it be an occasion to praise God for his mercy?

So Jesus prioritizes what's inside – what's hidden – and if the inside is truly offered up to God then we won't have anything to hide. And our words – rather than presenting ourselves as something other than what we are (in order to preserve our life) – instead our words will be consistent with the reality of true inner transformation. True disciples don't need to be ashamed of their words being broadcast. Unlike the Pharisees, disciples have an inward reality that will match their lives and their words.

Jesus doesn't want you to be a hypocrite. So he gives us the next two sections to help you make sure you're *not* a hypocrite. And in order to do that he's going to redefine what it means to save your life. Seeing Jesus changes how you see everything. And here we're seeing what we really need saved *from* and what we really need saved *to*.

This leads us to our second point: **The Comfort of Being Known.**

2. The Comfort of Being Known

Let's read **v.4.**

So if we're afraid of being known, then how much more should we be afraid of people who want to kill us? The whole point of the outward façade is to *protect* our lives. But Jesus says "Don't be afraid, they can only kill you."

And why does he transition to talking about people killing us? Well in the immediate context, Jesus just told the religious leaders that they are complicit in the murder of all of God's representatives. Even the non-committal crowd are part of "this *evil* generation" that will be held to account for the blood of the martyrs. Already the Pharisees are lying in wait for Jesus. It's not looking very safe to stand with Jesus right now.

People don't like their self-righteousness exposed. If you forsake the empty, outer religion of others and confess that there is no solution for you apart from Jesus – people will hate you. You forsaking your hypocrisy is a threat to other people's hypocrisy. You confessing that there is no solution for the darkness inside of you apart from coming to Jesus indicts every other religion, every self-help scheme, every system of man with "self" at the center. You're claiming it's all useless. The cross is foolishness to man because there's nothing more offensive than saying that mankind is so far gone he can't do one thing to contribute to his own salvation - that mankind is so bad only the slaughter of the Son of God on the cross is sufficient to pay for our sins.

The Pharisees want to preserve *their* life. And if your confession of Jesus is a threat, and if they're complicit in the death of prophets, then what's to stop them from killing you too?

What is worth putting yourself at odds with people who can kill you? If you're focused on saving *this* life, then it won't make sense to risk offending Pharisees.

We fear man for far less than the possibility that they will kill us. Here Jesus is talking about literally being killed. But we try to save small aspects of our lives all the time. Fear can motivate how we

position ourselves in conversations, back pedal, lie, or maybe we change our personality depending on who we're with. Maybe you're in a situation where you're at the mercy of other people's decisions. You don't have any control, and the choices they make might cost you. You're afraid of how it might alter your life. We might not fear being *killed* by man but we still *fear* man.

If Jesus has something that can eliminate fear of being killed then how much more might there be relief for everything short of death that we fear.

Jesus says, "Do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do."

This makes no sense – unless you believe that your life is more than your body.

Your soul will live eternally. And one day it will be reunited with a resurrected body. If you want to save your life, you need to be concerned about your soul. Your life is only safe if your soul is safe.

And Jesus says "don't fear man" because man can't reach beyond the grave. They can't touch your soul. And then Jesus says one of his most frightening statements in the book of Luke.

Let's read v.5.

This is the only specific instance of the word "hell" in the book of Luke. So this is significant.

First, hell is a real place. If there's anything more offensive than believing that all other religions and self-help schemes don't lead to heaven - it's saying that they all lead to hell. And the only thing more offensive than *that* is to say that God himself is the one who kills and rightfully casts into hell.

But remember God is omniscient. We can't fool God. I can feel secure ignoring what's inside and keeping a religious front if I don't believe judgment is coming. But nothing we've covered up won't be revealed.

And God is also omnipotent – he's all-powerful – only *he* determines the fate of our soul. Hypocrisy might help us preserve our earthly life – it might help us save face before family, classmates, or coworkers – we can join the charade and keep the status quo. But only fear of God keeps our soul safe. And the opposite is true. Fear of God doesn't keep you safe before men – they can slander you, and cancel you, they can even kill you. But hypocrisy can't keep you safe before God.

And so fearing man who can only temporarily kill your body is extremely short-sighted.

Fear of God is at the heart of Jesus' teaching here. But it's actually the key to *removing* fear.

You can see a pattern in the text. He starts and ends the paragraph in v. 4 and v. 7 by saying "do not fear" and at the end: "fear not." Then in the middle he says "whom to fear." He says "fear him" twice. This structure is intentionally set up so you don't miss what's at the heart of Jesus' warning. If you want to save your life, then the only thing to fear is God himself. Jesus tells us *who* to fear. The solution isn't to try to get rid of fear – fear is universal. You *will* fear something. But the fear that saves removes all *other* fears.

Jesus bookends the heart of this passage with removal of fear. If you get the fear of God, then your life will not actually be characterized by fear, but by comfort.

Let's read **v.6-7**.

First we see a further illustration of God's omniscience. Despite how trivial a sparrow might be – not one of them is forgotten by God. God knows every sparrow. Then he talks about the trivial hairs on your head. God has numbered every hair on your head. Nothing escapes him. This seems to be consistent with what we saw earlier. Nothing covered up won't be revealed. Nothing hidden won't be known. God sees and knows everything. This is reason to fear.

But the next thing he says takes it in a different direction. It shows us he's actually after something entirely unexpected. He says, "Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows."

Here we see the unexpected upside of fearing God. Suddenly, being known by God isn't meant to produce condemnation - but comfort.

You know our world insists on a different path to comfort. Comfort comes from minimizing our exposure to what's fearful. Comfort comes from insisting there's nothing wrong with me and inflating my view of self. Comfort comes from embracing whatever I want to believe so long as it doesn't disturb the status quo. But here comfort comes from fear of God. Comfort comes from being fully and completely known and valued by God despite him knowing all the things that are wrong with me that I want to hide. Comfort comes from being of more value to God than many other things he intimately cares about. We fear being known, and God knows all of our worst secrets and has authority to cast us into hell. Yet somehow being known by God is our greatest comfort. How can this be?

The language of casting into hell is graphic and frightening. And yet it is couched in comfort. Not only does he bookend the statement with saying not to fear, but if you pull back a little bit more, you'll find he bookends it a little further out with relationship.

Jesus starts by saying "my friends." Remember Jesus is speaking to his disciples. This hard saying is given in the context of your relationship to Jesus as his disciple and friend. If Jesus considers you to be his friend, then God knows you – not just indiscriminately but intimately. You are not forgotten, you are known, you are valued. The God who orders the universe *values* you.

Perhaps you've been hurt in relationships and are afraid to trust people and let them in. Or maybe you try to protect yourself by being dishonest or controlling or manipulative. Well if you have come to Jesus then God already knows everything about you intimately - he knows everything you've ever done and every way you have yet to sin - and yet of his own will he brought you forth. His invitation has never been based on the value you bring that might be lost - but the value he chose to place on you in love. All who have come to Jesus are known and will never be forgotten and that is good news for sinners like us.

Fearing God looks like trusting both his warning and his promises. It looks like living between friendship with the Son and being valued by the Father.

In listening to Foxe's Book of Martyrs, I noticed that several martyrs alluded to this passage before their execution. One of those martyrs was named Dr. Taylor. He was condemned as a heretic under Queen Mary for being a Protestant and not recanting his faith. Our passage in Luke has one of the

hardest statements of Jesus in it – he talks about hell and fearing God. And yet listen to what this martyr is characterized by as he clings to what this passage teaches:

This is **what he wrote** to his family before his execution:

"I say to my wife, and to my children, The Lord gave you unto me, and the Lord hath taken me from you, and you from me: blessed be the name of the Lord! I believe that they are blessed which die in the Lord. God careth for sparrows, and for the hairs of our heads. I have ever found Him more faithful and favorable, than is any father or husband. Trust ye therefore in Him by the means of our dear Savior Christ's merits: believe, love, fear, and obey Him: pray to Him, for He hath promised to help. Count me not dead, for I shall certainly live, and never die. I go before, and you shall follow after, to our long home."

He was burned alive at the stake.

Our relationship with Jesus eclipses our fear. Perfect love casts out fear. Now fear of judgment isn't our main motivation for sticking close to Jesus but the sweetness of being loved by Jesus keeps us close to Jesus. As one apologist said:

"I'm not primarily a Christian because I don't want to go to hell. I love God because he loved me enough to rescue me from hell."

Hell can be an uncomfortable topic. But you can't actually be someone who embraces and shares the love of God while being embarrassed that he has authority to cast into hell. God's love is turned into something infinitely less costly - into something unstable and stingy if it is based in anything less than the Father sending his Son to willingly take our judgment upon himself so that you could be called his friend. Don't be embarrassed of hell. We should be embarrassed of how small we make the love of Jesus without it.

So fear of God produces the opposite experience of fear of man. Fear of man encourages us to keep things hidden – to keep up a show – to protect ourselves. But fear of God attaches us to him. It assures us of his mercy.

Remember all the way back in chapter 1, it said : "his mercy is for those who fear him."

You don't need to clean up your outside – you need mercy. If he already knows all my secrets and yet values me - then hypocrisy can't do a *thing* for me. Whatever turns God's omniscient posture towards me from condemnation to comfort – that's what I need. So what is the mechanism that turns fear into comfort? How do I know Jesus' words of comfort count for me?

It comes down to how you relate to Jesus. Your relationship *to* Jesus is revealed by your words *about* Jesus. "You save your life not by hiding what's inside but by confessing who keeps you safe." If you have given up on hypocrisy – if you have embraced the fear of God and the comfort of Christ – then you will not deny Jesus no matter the cost.

That leads us into our final point: **The Safety of Making Jesus Known.**

3. The Safety of Making Jesus Known

Let's read **v.8-9**.

This is the point Jesus wants to emphasize. It all comes down to whether you will come to him and stand with him. If you trust him with your soul, then you will not be ashamed to identify with him – even if it costs you your life.

Back in chapter 9, Jesus said this (**Luke 9:26**).

To not acknowledge Jesus is to be ashamed of Jesus.

We see that both judgment and salvation are relationally tied to Christ. There *is* a legal transaction, but it is *relational* first and foremost. Judgment isn't impersonal. Salvation isn't impersonal.

How do you know you won't be forgotten before God? You won't be forgotten because Jesus will acknowledge that you're with him. You have an advocate in the divine courtroom. If you acknowledge Jesus in human courts then Jesus is going to represent you before his Father.

This is a costly confession, but it's worth it. Back in chapter 9 when Peter confessed Jesus was the Christ, Jesus quickly followed up with the cost of discipleship. "Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it." You want to save your life, don't you? This is the life that's worth dying for.

And this isn't just theoretical. The safety that we enjoy as Christians in this country is an anomaly. We have brothers and sisters around the world still today whose faith might cost them their lives. Their conversion risked not just being *cancelled*, but *killed*.

According to Open Doors:

- 1 in 7 Christians are persecuted worldwide
- Today, more than 360 million Christians suffer high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith.

We have Afghan refugees in Missoula. Do you realize how miraculous it is that we as Christians even get to interact with Afghans? Open Doors reports that in Afghanistan, Christian converts who have remained in the country are in deep hiding – and would likely face death if discovered. One secret believer said: "The Taliban are conducting a door-to-door search to find us...If they find us, they kill believers on the spot."

Last year, worldwide, 5,621 Christians were killed for their faith.

Where might you need to acknowledge Jesus before men? Perhaps it's before a professor who requires you to write from a conflicting worldview. Perhaps it's before a boss who wants you to participate in something unethical. Maybe it's a family member who pressures you to affirm their lifestyle. It could be not pursuing a dating relationship with an unbeliever – even though you worry you might not be able to find someone else.

Even though our life itself isn't on the line – opportunities and relationships are. It *is* a real question. Will we deny Jesus before men? Will we adopt a more acceptable, less offensive version of Jesus so

that others will affirm our beliefs? Or would the people around you be surprised to even learn that you *are* a Christian?

Is following Christ the life worth dying for to you?

Jesus went before us in this. In our passage, he's on his way to Jerusalem – to “Jerusalem, Jerusalem the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it.” He's already made two of his three predictions of his death in the book of Luke. Jesus is intentionally headed to persecution and death. Before the first Christian martyr ever cried out “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,” Jesus himself cried out on the cross, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” Nothing Jesus is about to do, none of the comfort he promises or of the things he's asking us to do in the face of death – none of it makes sense apart from understanding what *his* death accomplished.

Jesus had no need to fear judgment. He had nothing to hide before his Father. He was sinless. Jesus is the only person who ever rightly feared God and yet still faced his judgment. He lived the life you should have lived and yet he experienced the judgment you deserve so that from the moment you acknowledge Jesus, God's knowing of you turns from a frightful thing to a comforting thing because Jesus acknowledges you before God. Jesus says "He's with me. My sacrifice counts for him. My righteousness counts for him."

The crowds think Jesus is headed to Jerusalem to bring peace on earth, but through suffering he is actually going to bring peace with God.

Will you forfeit salvation *from* hell and *to* God in exchange for your own version of peace on earth? Of trying to preserve a life that you know will end?

So our assurance that this counts for us all comes down to our words. Our words will either deny Jesus or acknowledge Jesus. And so now he's going to dial in on our words. We'll look at this in two parts: **Words Against and Words of Witness.**

First Jesus will address Words Against.

Words Against

Let's read **v.10.**

It's ironic that this passage is one of the ones that has caused more anxiety for believers than any other. “Have I blasphemed the Holy Spirit?” “Have I committed the unforgiveable sin?” But it's ironic because I believe Jesus is actually saying this to provide clarity to his last statement – this is actually meant to *avoid* confusion – not cause it.

Our salvation *from* hell and *to* God hangs on whether or not we deny or acknowledge Jesus. So here Jesus is clarifying what it means to deny him. He doesn't want us to misunderstand his warning and miss the point. He doesn't want you to anxiously wonder if you've accidentally denied Jesus and are beyond saving. So he says that if you speak “a word against the Son of Man” you will be forgiven. But if you blaspheme “against the Holy Spirit” you will not be forgiven. So the issue in this verse is

forgiveness. And how do you get forgiveness? We've been seeing all along that it's by coming to Jesus in repentance.

A little later in Luke, Peter will deny Jesus three times. And afterwards it says he went out and wept bitterly.

But because Jesus died for our sins and rose again we can run to him for forgiveness. Just like Peter, the words you will hear will not be "you're beyond saving." Instead he'll say, "Peace to you."

So if denying Jesus before men doesn't mean that if certain statements come out of your mouth you are beyond saving, then what is it that you will not be forgiven for: for having the Holy Spirit reveal Jesus to you and you harden yourself against him and refuse to come to him for forgiveness.

The Spirit is the one who bears witness to Jesus and to persistently reject the Spirit's revelation of Jesus means you won't acknowledge your sin, you won't recognize your need for Jesus, you won't seek forgiveness, and so you won't be forgiven. No one will be forgiven apart from acknowledging Jesus in repentance.

This has been the problem with the religious leaders all along. They refuse to acknowledge their sin and their need to repent and they are seeking to silence Jesus. And yet, it's still not too late for them. Why does Jesus warn them with woes? You warn someone in order to illicit a response. He warns them not because they're beyond saving but because there's still time to repent. But if you've resolved to resist the Spirit – if you refuse forgiveness – then you won't be forgiven. Forgiveness is there if you will have it. Don't put it off. Respond to the Spirit now. Repent and receive forgiveness now.

You don't accidentally blaspheme the Holy Spirit. Fretting over this will actually distract you away from the relationship Jesus is calling you into. If you fear being too far gone - too unforgivable - Jesus guarantees there is forgiveness for *all* who turn and come to him.

And that leads us to Jesus' second clarifier: **Words of Witness**.

Words of Witness

Let's read **v.11-12**.

If the first cause for anxiety is the thought that maybe you've already or you'll accidentally deny Jesus, the second cause for anxiety is the thought that maybe you won't be strong enough in the face of opposition - that you'll buckle under pressure – you'll fail to acknowledge Jesus before men.

Notice that he doesn't say "if" but "when" you're dragged to court. Jesus anticipates that you're going to experience opposition and anxiety in the face of external threats. So it's coming, but he doesn't want you to be anxious.

It's interesting to note the imperatives Jesus gives us in this passage. He started with a warning: *beware*. Then he commanded us "do not fear," "fear him," "fear him," "fear not," and finally "do not be anxious." Fearing God turns warning into having no anxiety because God is at the center.

We see that there are two courtrooms between v.8-12. Every time you see the phrase “before man” or “before God” it’s either referring to a human court or the divine court. And we already saw that we have a helper in the divine court. Jesus will acknowledge us before the Father. And now we see we also have a helper in the human court. You don’t have to be anxious when you stand before men because the indwelling Holy Spirit will teach you exactly what you ought to say at the exact moment you need to say it.

The first time the Holy Spirit was mentioned we looked at how dangerous it is to resist him. And now we see more reason why. The Spirit that an unrepentant heart opposes is the very Spirit that sustains you in the face of opposition. You can’t make it without him. He keeps you safe.

But what kind of safety are we talking about?

Let’s look at a similar passage later in the book of Luke in chapter **21:12-19**.

So this is the safety that the Holy Spirit gives us. You will be persecuted - and some of you they will put to death - but not a hair of your head will perish. It doesn’t say the Holy Spirit will keep your *body* safe. But he promises he’ll keep your confession of Jesus safe. The Holy Spirit’s sustaining work is only a comfort if you’re trying to save the right life. If you see the key to life being Jesus acknowledging you before his Father then your greatest desire is that your acknowledgement of Jesus be kept safe.

Then the effect of v.2-3 is inverted. The fact that what has been said in the dark or whispered in private rooms is going to be proclaimed from the housetops – now this doesn’t produce shame but is cause for rejoicing. Your humble acknowledgement of Jesus in the darkness of persecution will be vindicated in the light before the angels of God. *Jesus will acknowledge you. And everyone will know.*

God knows every hair on your head and not one will perish – not because this life is safe, but because your confession of Jesus is safe. Don’t be anxious. They can kill you, but you will gain your lives. To live is Christ and to die is gain.

This is the opposite of hypocrisy. You can’t do this by just acting a part. It takes a real inner transformation through the Holy Spirit to drive away fear of being known, fear of man, anxiety over failure and instead cause you to cling to Jesus’ name, held by the Godhead, and counting death as gain.

If you have come to Jesus, you are indwelt and sustained by the Holy Spirit, comforted by the Father who knows and values you, and secured by the one who calls you “friend.” This is a very Trinitarian passage. Do you see how each the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all involved in relieving fear and anxiety and comforting, assuring, and keeping you safe? Do you see where a right fear of God takes you? This isn’t a God you’re afraid of being near but a God you don’t dare walk away from - of choosing the trite temporary “safety” of hypocrisy for over the reality of being known and loved by God.

Do you see how being a disciple of Jesus is worth facing persecution and martyrdom for?

Jesus’ disciples faced persecution and martyrdom, and they acknowledged Jesus to the end.

Here’s what happened to the 11 disciples according to church tradition.

1. James, the brother of John, was beheaded. Thus did the first apostolic martyr cheerfully and resolutely receive that cup, which he had told our Saviour he was ready to drink.
2. Philip was scourged, thrown into prison, and afterwards crucified in A.D. 54.
3. Matthew was slain with a halberd in A.D. 60.
4. James, the son of Alpheus, was stoned to death in A.D. 62.
5. Andrew was crucified on a cross.
6. Peter is supposed to have been crucified by Nero in Rome with his head downward, at his own request.
7. Thaddeus was crucified in Edessa in A.D. 72.
8. Bartholomew was cruelly beaten and then crucified in India.
9. Thomas preached the gospel in Parthia and India, where exciting the rage of the pagan priests, he was martyred by being thrust through with a spear.
10. Simon the Zealot preached the gospel in Africa, and even in Britain, which latter country he was crucified, in A.D. 74.
11. John, the "beloved disciple," was cast into a cauldron of boiling oil. He escaped by miracle, without injury. He was banished to the Isle of Patmos, where he wrote the Book of Revelation. He was the only apostle who escaped a violent death.¹

This is a small comfort if you want to save this life. It comes down to where you believe life is found.

If you don't have to fear death, how much more do we have reason to not fear everything else? We can't make ourselves safer through sin. How might the way you live and the focus of your thoughts - how might they better reflect that you are safe in Christ - that you don't have to fear anymore - that you have the comfort you need in knowing him?

And if your life is eternally safe in Christ then you are freed up to spend this life confessing who keeps you safe - to make him known instead of living for yourself. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. Is your life devoted to this one purpose - to live and die for Christ - to make Christ's name known whatever it costs?

Will you come to Jesus? If you love the praise of man, you won't come. If you prize worldly possessions, you won't come. If you try to keep your sin hidden and won't admit your need, you won't come.

So what life are you going to seek to save? Because if it is eternal life with *this* Jesus, then the guarantee that your confession will be protected to the end is the greatest comfort you can have.

¹ Fox's Book of Martyrs Or A History of the Lives, Sufferings, and Triumphant Deaths of the Primitive Protestant Martyrs (p. 8-11). Kindle Edition.