

1. In today's text the controversy with and about the Pharisees continues. Jesus continues to warn His disciples concerning the extreme dangers of Pharisaical "leaven", that is, the "teaching" of the religious leaders of His day (Matthew 16:11, 12). Their doctrine will pervade all of an adherent's thoughts and actions. It introduces a faulty "worldview." Is such teaching prevalent today?
2. But the Pharisaical worldview is a big "cover up." It is a house of disguise and lies. Eventually it will all be uncovered, seen for what it is, and come crashing down. Adam is still trying to hide, but eventually there will be no hidden secrets. Every word whispered in private will be openly heard. The emperor will see his "new clothes."
3. Well, why in the world is this deception carried on with such diligence? How can it last? The answer is simple. It is founded on fear, the fear of men. **That is how Pharisaical "leaven" is perpetuated.** At the root of Pharisaical hypocrisy is the foremost desire to please people. If you please them, they will make you happy. The Pharisee's "leaven" consists in fearing, reverencing, pleasing, serving the approved personages.
4. Why is the fear of man such a potent force? Why is the world, and the church as well, so man-centered? Why is it so man-pleasing? Because we think that authority and the power to bless resides with mankind. My "salvation" resides in the hands of men? They would have you think so.
5. Jesus' warning is not a message new to the Bible. See, for instance, Isaiah 51. How does Jesus address the problem? With an eternal perspective.
6. **Do NOT be afraid of those who can do nothing more than kill your body.**

I mentioned last week that there will be a big price to pay if you live with a mask on. It will wear you out. Yes, but there are worse repercussions.

7. But, on the other hand, I will warn you Who to fear. **"Fear Him who after He has killed the body has authority to cast into hell. Repeat, Yes, I tell you, Fear Him!"**

Further reasoning: If God does not forget the sparrow... If the very hairs of your head are all numbered and known to Him... Fear not.

8. **So what should our confident lifestyle be?** Confess who Christ is and your relationship to Him in the presence of these men. Do not do the opposite, that is, deny Him in this public arena (2 Tim. 2:12).
9. **Is the Holy Spirit involved in this process?** How is that?

Are you afraid of being laughed at? Are you afraid of losing your job, your credibility, your friendships, your future, your very life? It is only the ones who know that they "don't have anything to lose" who can be free.

If you were put on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you? It is not enough to simply say, "I believe in God." What "god?" Is He the Lord Jesus Christ? How do you know the truth concerning who this God is? Would you also confess allegiance concerning the absolute truth of His Word, the Bible?

10. **The most important lesson to learn in life is to "fear God." The biggest obstacle to this effort is the debilitating fear of men.**