

Mind of Christ - Lesson 113

July 2, 2021

Welcome, again, to The Mind of Christ. We're making our way through everything Jesus said and did. We're taking our tour through the life of Jesus Christ according to A. T. Robertson. A. T. Robertson wrote "A Harmony of the Gospels" and we are using it as our guide in this journey through The Mind of Christ.

We are in a section (section 70) that basically covers three of the gospels, but the majority of this is section is in Matthew 10. This is when Jesus sent His apostles out on what we call "the limited commission". The "limited commission" means that they were being sent to Israel, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. They were to travel through many towns until they found as many worthy people, it says, as possible, and they were to stay there and share the Gospel with them, and then come back and report to Jesus. So it was going to be an adventure for them; it was going to be something that would train them how to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. In considering the instructions that Jesus is going to give His apostles, we have broken this down into some sections.

Today we're going to start in **Matthew 10:24** and this is going to be a section on "*discipleship*". We'll probably not finish this section today but I want to read to you just a little bit of what is being said here. Again, just remember that we probably won't cover all of what I'm going to read to you, today. I am using the New American Standard Bible for our translation. You can hear the lesson at <https://www.centralsarasota.org/>.

Matthew 10:24- 32

²⁴ "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for the disciple that he becomes like his teacher; and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more (will they malign) the members of his household!

²⁶ "Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be made known. ²⁷ What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops. ²⁸ Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows. ³² "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.

We'll stop right here. I don't think we'll get through quite all of that today.

We're going to be talking about *discipleship* today in this section; what it means to be a disciple. Jesus makes a series of statements that tell us the nature of discipleship. These were directly linked to the preparation He is giving His disciples for this mission. Jesus provides at least **7 truths** that define the nature of discipleship. That's what we will be looking at today.

The **first thing** that Jesus says is that a disciple is not *above Jesus*. A disciple is not *above Jesus*. Now remember, He said “a disciple is not above his teacher”, and of course, Jesus is the teacher because every disciple needs a teacher. So, a disciple is not above Jesus. It might be easy for us to ‘think’ that *we are immune* from what Jesus had to endure ... somehow *we won’t have to face what He faced*, we think. Children might think that their lives are to be inherently better than their parents’ lives, but why is that necessarily so? It’s not! Disciples are subject to the same abuse and persecution that Jesus experienced.

Jesus uses disciple/teacher and slave/master to describe this truth. A teacher and master might try to protect their subordinates, but it does not mean that they will not be attacked. Paul’s students were attacked. Jesus’ disciples did see Jesus arrested and killed while they watched, but with fear that they would be next; and though it didn’t happen immediately, it happened eventually except for John, of course, who lived a full life and died a natural death, we believe.

In **John 15:18ff** there is a section there where Jesus warns His disciples that they will face the same kinds of persecutions that He faced. In verse ²⁰ He says, “Remember the word I said to you. ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you ...” There is no reason for the follower of Jesus to think that they do not have to suffer as Jesus did. I don’t know where we get this idea and this thought that somehow we, as Christians, will not be made to suffer in the same way Jesus did, but we certainly can and many times we as Christians do suffer in similar ways to Jesus; some in very similar ways to Jesus in different parts of the world.

The **second discipleship** truth that we find in this section in the idea of being like Jesus is that the student is not above his Teacher but when he has been fully trained, he will be like his teacher. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher; to become as His teacher, and the salve to become like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebub; *how much more*, the members of his household? Is it really enough for one to be like his teacher, or do we want to be **more than** our teacher? Do we want to be **above** our teacher? Jesus did say that His Apostles would do even greater things than He did (**John 14:12**). But are we content to be as He is?

In **1 John 3:2** it says, “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. *We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.*” This hope leads us to purify ourselves *just as He is pure*.

What does it mean to be “like Jesus” in this context, if not to being subject to the **same persecutions** He was subject to? Are we willing to wear the same names He was given by the world? Am I willing to be called Beelzebub? Am I too good or too important to be called a devil? Jesus identifies Himself as the “head of the house”, #3617. The word is “oikodespotes”, (οικοδεσποτεω). The first part, “oikos” means “house”, and, of course, “despot” means *Lord* or *master*. Despot in English has an inherently bad connotation to it. But let me show you some places where this phrase is used and draw some conclusions about that.

In **Matthew 24:43** it says “*if the head of the house*” had known what time the thief would have broken in, then he would have prevented it from happening!

Mark 14:14 says “*the owner of the house.*” It’s the same phrase; or “the head of the house”, or “owner” of the house. It was the one who was approached by the disciples to tell him that this is where Jesus wanted to eat the Passover.

In **Luke 13:25** says “Once *the head of the house* gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, ‘Lord, open up to us!’ then He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know where you are from.’ The head of the house shuts the door on those people who are late coming into the banquet.

In **Luke 14:21** the “*head of the house*” invites, and is angry when folks don’t come. He is the one who sends out the invitations, but when people don’t come, the head of the house is angry at them.

In **Matthew 13:27** the “*landowner*” or in this case, the “*head of the house*” plants a field, so he is the one who actually manages the planting of a field.

In **Matthew 20:1**, it is the “*head of the house*” who hires the workers to go into the vineyard.

Notice the kinds of things that the “*head of the house*” does.

1. He protects the home
2. He can shut people out of the home
3. He can invite people into the home
4. He can provide for his household by using commerce, in other words, by running a business

These are four things that the “*head of the house*” actually can do. This is how Jesus thinks about being the “*head of His house*”. This is a model for us and informs us of the meaning of “*head of the body*” in Paul’s writing as well.

What I’m saying is we learn something about how Jesus understands this idea of “*head of the house*”. It is interesting to note Jesus’ awareness as to His identity within the family. He knows who He is and His role in the home. He knows He is the “*head of the house*”. He is able to tell others Who He is and to act out His identity with consistency. He is not merely “a Rabbi” to the Apostles. Now, He’s not merely a teacher. He is also the “*head of this new household*”. **They** are His family. He protects them. He tells them who is ‘shut out’... those who will not receive the Apostles; and who is invited in ... all who will receive Him will be invited in.

He provides for those in the same hour, what they need, and provision for their journey. Subtly, given in this narration and easily missed if we do not *slow down* to learn to know Him; we might really miss these key points!

Remember, Jesus was accused of casting out demons by “the prince of demons” **Beelzebub** in **Matthew 12:24 ff.** Jesus calls this “blasphemy; against the Holy Spirit.” ***Those who deny the power of the Spirit must be unworthy*** of salvation merely by ***denying the power by which it comes.*** Now, that’s number two.

The **third thing** ... the third principle of discipleship found in this section, and this one is a little bit longer, is that Jesus begins a series of several **do not fears**. There are certain things that you should not fear.

As a disciple of Jesus Christ, there are certain things that we learn *to fear*, and those things we learn *not to fear*. That's part of our discipleship training.

1) He says '*don't fear those who call you Beelzebub*' or 'assign the Holy Spirit's power to him'. The truth will be made known in due time. *These folks cover up the truth with lies*, but the truth was coming. When Jesus was raised from the grave it became clear; *this was not of Satan ... this had to be of God*.

Jesus knew He would get the last word in the matter. Jesus was sending these disciples out 'armed with **truth**', and they were to speak it. **Truth** is made for *light* and for *housetops*. In other words, it's to be spoken in the light; not in the darkness; and it is to be proclaimed from the housetops. **Truth** is also made to be *spoken*. The antidote for fear is to speak boldly knowing that God lives in truth.

2) He says *don't fear those who can kill the body but who cannot kill the soul*. The word He uses here for soul is "psuche" (ψυχη). It means "breath", and by implication, it can mean "spirit". But this is not the same as the word as "pneuma" (πνευμα) which is also translated "spirit" which is the *eternal part of man*. So the "psuche" that He using here, "soul", is held in common with the animals ... they have "psuche" which is what animates a living being. So as in **1 Thessalonians 5:23** there are three parts that are mentioned for us as humans: "May your spirit and soul and body be kept complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The body is the 'hardware'; the soul is the 'power source', and the 'spirit' is more of the 'software'.

So Jesus is saying that God controls whether the plug is pulled which releases the spirit from the body. **James 2:26** says that death occurs when the body is separated from the spirit. *The spirit leaves when there is no more life source* or power to hold it into the body. God acknowledges another person can attack your body and inflict a blow that can kill this body, but God decides whether or not to disconnect *you* from the *life source*. Jesus is reminding His apostles that *no matter what things look like on the outside, God is the One who is in control*.

3) The **Third** encouragement to fear tells us that *we are valuable* to God. *He sees our worth*. He compares us to sparrows which are pretty small and there's not much meat there. Two sell for one penny ... a mere snack. But is the point here that *these sparrows are noticed by the Father*? I believe so. Literally, Jesus says, "yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father." Does this mean the Father has to allow even the sparrow to fall? "Without the Father"; that's the phrase that is used here. The word "without" is a 'governing preposition' and it's found in some other places as well. (We won't go into that). But it seems in both of these cases, there is an influence, there's *the word* and then there is the *complaining*.

Since Jesus' statement is double-negative it would mean that a sparrow *will not fall to the ground* without the influence of the Father. God has something to do with a sparrow falling. It is more than "His eye is on the sparrow and I know He watches me". Does God at least have to give permission for a sparrow to fall from the sky? If so, or even if God is aware of it happening, it means our God is intimately involved in His creation, He's a hands-on Father; not absent as the deists teach. God knows how many hairs are on our head.

Is there a purpose or is it just to show us that he knows us and He wants us to know Him too? Why does He say these things about this? I think it's that He wants us to know that He is intimately involved with us and when we complain that we're not worthy (there's the complaint part) when we complain that we're not worthy; we are *missing the point* of the sparrow; of what He is explaining to us about the sparrow.

So, how does this reduce our fear? Could it not increase it depending on how we view the Father? I mean, knowing that He's always involved with us, He's always "watching" us, if He is **not good**, that much attention could be dangerous! There is a difference between a "stalker" who watches our every move, *and a lover who just wants to know us*. The essence of eternal life is *to know the Father and to know the Son* ... **John 17:3**.

Jesus concludes by making the point that *we are more valuable* than *many* sparrows. Well, how many? How many sparrows? Well, I'm not sure he meant to say we have a 'sparrow' value...in other words there's a certain number of sparrows that equal "Rod Myers", but it's an interesting thought. I wonder how many sparrows it would take to equal me.

I just had another thought. God is the creator and the sustainer of the universe. Part of sustaining is to keep it all 'running'; that is, to keep the sparrows flying, but if God withdraws His sustaining power, they fall. Also, what reason would cause a sparrow to fall? What would cause a sparrow to fall; sickness, maybe a predator, maybe a hunter or maybe he runs into an immovable object. They don't just fall for "no reason". *Is God involved in the reason by suspending His sustaining power as a 'greater good' might be accomplished* ... that sparrow might feed a family or it might feed another animal? If God sustained every living plant and animal forever on the earth, then the earth could not sustain itself!

God is constantly making those choices, but His choices regarding man are much more serious because *they carry eternal consequences*; not just earthly ones. But He is God and one factor that governs His decisions is *the infinite value of a person*.

Let's go back to the idea of the destruction of the soul and the body in hell. The bigger question behind this is whether all people have eternal spirits, or spirits which can cease by God's power to exist. But in the text, a spirit or a pneuma is not being discussed; it is only 'body' which is "soma" (σῶμα) and "soul" psuche. Man can kill the body by rendering it unable to sustain life; that is no blood, damaged organs, etc. But man cannot directly touch the *life force* of man which is the power supplied by God.

God can cause man to run off battery and keep the spirit hovering ready to return as soon as the body is ready to receive it again. But God is able to cast a body with His power supply into Hell; into Gehenna totally destroying them both. They will cease to exist. And "this" is what man cannot do. He cannot cause anything to cease to exist. He can neither create nor destroy. Only God can do this. Clearly, understanding the limits of man's power and the unlimited nature of God's power is meant **to reduce our fear**.

Actually there are four "Do not fears statements" in this section. Now, these also can be called "becoming anxious" statements. If we go back to **Matthew 10:19-20** there is another idea of "do not fear".

“But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. ²⁰“For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.”

The idea of “belonging” is significant in two ways in this text. The first has to do with the sparrow that is so insignificant yet is noticed and affected by God’s influence. They are part of His life; they belong in His presence because He created them and committed to sustaining them. But secondly, and more importantly, the fact that we are much more *important* and *invaluable* than many sparrows, is also significant because they are free-ranging creatures; no family identity. As humans know about this idea of being “family”, in the “family of God” even, so what of those in this world who have *no family to speak of on earth*? How is their “belonging” established and made known?

It is through their inherent value! We keep what is valuable and we throw away the rest. God keeps us because He wants us. And He wants us because we are valuable!

4) Now let’s move to **number four**. (We’re still looking at those things that characterize discipleship). The **Fourth** idea here is *when fear is reduced the way is opened up for us to make a confession*. Now, I want to preface this by saying that in the first Century, a confession was exactly what got you killed! A confession was often the thing that would get you crucified or beheaded, or your property confiscated. So, the confession would usually not be made of a person was too afraid. So we confess openly when we are not intimidated by what others can and will do to us.

As my mother used to say, and I’m not exactly sure what she meant, “They can kill you but they cannot eat you.” Basically she was saying that there is always a limit as to what man can do to you, and when we know that, we will speak.

The word “confess” #3670 is “homologeō” (ὁμολογέω). It means “to ascent”, it means “to make a covenant”, or to “acknowledge”. Literally it is to speak or say “the same thing”; as with another. It means to have an accord with someone, or to agree with someone. It can be either about confessing sin or confessing some ‘one’ ... like Jesus. In **Acts 24:14** in speaking to Felix, Paul did not agree or confess to the charges against him, but he did admit, or confess that he served God. “*But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets.*” He agreed with the way in which it couples with Old Testament **truth** and New Testament **realities**.

1 John 1:9 is about *confessing* sin which God already knows we have and which we must admit that we have to secure forgiveness. “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous, so that He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” To do otherwise is to call God a liar.

In **Matthew 7:23** the word “declare” in the New American Standard Bible is our word for confession that we just saw, “homologeō”. And this is Jesus’ confession of those who say, “Lord, Lord”. They say “Lord, Lord”, but they don’t do what He says.” **He declares or confesses**, “*I never knew you; Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.*”

In **John 9:22** the Jews agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus as “the Christ” would be put out of the synagogue. In **John 12:42** here, many Pharisees believed but would *not confess* lest they would be put out of the synagogue. Well, why? They wouldn’t confess, it says “because they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God” per verse 43.

In **Acts 23:8** the Pharisees acknowledged the resurrection, angels and the Spirit! In other words, they confessed that those things were **true** even though they didn’t acknowledge Jesus as being resurrected.

In **Romans 10:9** we’re told, “that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” Verse 10 continues, “For with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”

In **Hebrews 11:13** says that some “having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.” So *we can agree that “we are strangers in exile on the earth.”*

Hebrews 13:15 speaks of this word where it says, “the sacrifice of praise, the fruit of our lips that gives thanks or ‘confesses’ to His name”. When fear is reduced, when a disciple doesn’t live in fear, he begins to open his mouth and he begins to confess Jesus openly before men.

The idea of covenant in confession is interesting. I think we normally use the word “*profess*” instead of “*confess*”; but “confess” is good because it is the verbalization of an inner reality. This reality is a belief and a feeling of *devotion mixed with conviction*; and inescapable reality expressed by Peter in **John 6:68** when he said, “To whom shall we go?” Now **fear** overcame Peter later when he denied instead of confessing, and this is where, again... if we’re a fearful people, *we’re not going to confess when confronted* and that’s what happened to Peter (**Matthew 26:72**). His commitment was growing to match his desire “*to covenant*” with Jesus. Man has a lot of trouble “covenanting” (making a covenant) in every field ... marriage, church, other partnerships and so forth.

Jesus knew that man can say words of confession and covenant and *not mean them with actions!* And these actions need to be *deliberate* and *concrete*; thing like showing up, not quitting, following through, supporting, seeing it through *even when it is hard*. Our confession is the basis of our entire relationship with Jesus. We simply must mean it. *This confession is before men; not just between us and Jesus*. Why? Well, Jesus knew that we **love the praise of men more than we do the praise of God**. We fear what men can do to us. And this is what Jesus has just addressed.

For some, it was fear of being excluded from the synagogue. Why was that such a big deal? Synagogue is and was a place to belong. It was tied up with a person’s identity. Who we are and where we belong is a part of our well-being. Jewish identity was huge; Abraham’s children. They wanted to be identified as Abraham’s children, and if they got kicked out of the synagogue, how could they maintain that identity? *Where do his children belong?* Well, they belong in Israel; they belong in the Temple; they belong in the Synagogue. So, what does one do if they are excluded from the Synagogue? Well, they have a crisis! We seek to avoid a crisis; especially when it is a crisis of faith, identity and belonging.

When Jesus says “before men” it is a true test of our covenant! *Does our sense of belonging or identity come from our covenant or our circumstances?* But what about those whose natural covenants have been broken, like a parent-child or a husband-wife relationship? What do they do? Well, they have to find a more permanent covenant; an everlasting one, one that never changes at least on God’s side of the equation. Salvation provides in this, that God changes our identity and our place of belonging.

But I find another crisis arises if in places of belonging which are supposedly ordered by salvation covenants; for instance in our homes or in our local churches, if they are volatile and unstable and cannot be relied on and it creates instability in our hearts. In other words, what I’m saying is that ‘when we confess that Jesus is Lord, we confess His name before men’, and we have been given a new sense of belonging; a new sense of identity, we have to maintain these within our home, and within our churches, our local churches. Otherwise our life is going to be too volatile, it is going to be too unstable, it won’t be relied on and it will create instability in our hearts because we’re so linked to these institutions if you will, of the home and the church. *We should be able to rely on family and church*, brothers and sisters to help keep us okay ... homeostasis. But when they are ‘not there’ or ‘move away’ or ‘desert’ or ‘will not work through problems and they leave from one church to another; even though we have our salvation; that does not change. And even though we make covenant with *new family* or *churches*, those left behind are affected and the new bonds are not nearly as strong as the old ones were. *This is serious business*, I believe.

Confession, I believe, carries a huge responsibility in our having a sense of belonging and maintaining that sense of belonging within our homes and within our local churches. *Jesus’ acknowledgment of us before the Father should encourage us.* We need an invitation, an endorsement to see the Father. Jesus provides both. We risk confessing Him before men in order to get **His** confession of **us** before the Father. It sounds like we get the best out of this. What could be better than Jesus telling His Father, the God of the Universe, about “me”? But what is the nature of this confession? What does Jesus tell His Father about me?

Could Matthew 25 offer some hints? I saw this person giving food and water, visiting prisons, taking in strangers and in doing so, serving Me. Or would Jesus speak of the person’s heart, and the fruit of the spirit growing in them? Perhaps it would be as simple as saying, *“I know this person”* as opposed to the horrible alternative, *“I never knew you. Depart from me, you who work unrighteousness”*? These are sobering words. We need Jesus to *know us and acknowledge us.* We need to be a little more focused on this word “deny”.

The word “deny” # 720 here is “arneomai” (αρνεομαι) meaning “to contradict”, “to disavow”, “to reject”, “to abnegate”, “to deny” or “to refuse”. It is used in **Luke 12:9**. Jesus says, ‘they shall be “denied” before the angels of God’. In **Acts 3:13** Peter tells the Jews that they have “disowned” Jesus in the presence of Pilate, which would be ‘before men’ so they *deny* Jesus before men with the implication that they will be “disowned” before the Father. In **Acts 3:14** they disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for (or confessed) a murderer to be granted to you, which was Barabbas. So, in a sense they denied Jesus and they affirmed Barabbas. In **2 Timothy 2:12**, it says, “if we deny Him, He will deny us.” In **2 Peter 2:1** these fake teachers will even deny the master who bought them, bringing swift destruction on themselves.

In **Jude 4**, among other things, the people hear discuss deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ. Notice both in Peter and in Jude, Jesus is referred to as Master, despotes (δεσποτης), the same word that's used here in Matthew 10 earlier. In **1 Timothy 5:8**, "the person who does not provide for his family has *denied* the faith and is **worse** than an unbeliever." In **Revelation 2:13** the church at Pergamum held fast to the name of Jesus; *they did not deny Him*. In **Revelation 3:8** in Philadelphia *they kept Jesus' word*, and have *not denied "my name"*. In **Luke 9:23** we are told to *deny ourselves* and take up our cross and follow Christ. In **2 Timothy 2:13** Jesus cannot deny Himself because *He knows who He is*. Jesus, before Pilate 'knows who He is'. They're denying Him before Pilate ... before men. Jesus is confessing who He is. It would be like lying. **Hebrews 6:17-18** says that "God cannot lie". It is impossible for God to lie. In **2 Timothy 3:5** some men deny the power of godliness by only holding to the form of that godliness. In **Titus 2:12** Grace 'teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires'. *For us to know who we are and where we belong, we must learn what to deny and what to confess; what to hold on to and what to let go of.* The cord of our relationship with the Father and the Son is **knowledge**, the essence of eternal life. **John 17:3** again; 'It's an intimate knowledge of one another, knowing the Father and the Son' is *eternal life*.

To deny this knowledge is a threat to "eternal life". In Peter's case, foretold by Jesus, eternal life did not seem to be forfeited, but Peter did *have to be restored* or he had to *turn*. However Judas affirms "he knew Jesus" with a kiss and a confession intended to snare Jesus or to merely identify Him to His captors.

It's ironic. One said "he knew Him" and was *separated from Jesus*. The other said he didn't know Jesus and was *restored only to be made stronger by the experience*. **That's something to ponder.**

Jesus continues to talk in stark contrasts; there is no "middle ground" for Jesus. It is either *confession or denial*. We are either all in, to borrow a very popular book that was out when I wrote this back in 2012.

I am finding that a lot of young people are all in "superficially" in other things. It's hard to explain. They are very committed to Jesus in a very uncommitted way especially when it comes to the faith and to the church.

We're going to stop right there for today. **We covered four of the discipleship truths** in this section. See if I can remember them all:

We're not above our Teacher.

We're supposed to be like our Teacher.

There are so many things that we as disciples should not fear.

And lack of fear of what man can do to us leads to this confession, this open confession of Jesus and of things that are true.

So those are four things that are true about all disciples of Jesus Christ. We'll look at three more when we come back next week.

Thank you for joining us. I hope you will go to our website <https://www.centalsarasota.org/> where you'll find links to other teaching there as well. God Bless and I'll talk to you later.