

## They Feared Him

Mark 11:15-18

Charlie Brackett

Jerusalem merchants had set up their businesses in the temple. When Jesus saw them, He drove them out saying, "Is it not written, 'My house is a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" When the scribes and chief priests heard it, they considered how they might destroy Him.

It is a marvel how men sometimes arrive at the course of action they choose to take. The scribes and chief priests were Israel's religious leaders. It was their duty to teach and uphold God's law to the people. That law, the law given to them through Moses in the wilderness, carried the death penalty for what they planned to do. They, of all people, knew exactly what the law said, but somehow, they must have rationalized their position. No doubt, they discussed the matter together until they found some way to justify what they wanted to do.

Men can always find a way to justify what they really want to do, right or wrong, and some rationalizations are very easily made. I can almost hear the conversation those scribes and chief priests must have had.

One chief priest might have said, "This man Jesus is threatening our positions. If our authority is undermined, who will teach and enforce God's law? He must be stopped!" Some who lead and teach in the church may get the notion that God's system of government and the welfare of His people depends solely upon the control they exercise. It isn't so! It is God's system. They are His people. He has control, The greatest among us is no more than a servant. May God help us never forget it!

A scribe might have said, "We are experts in the law. It is up to us to interpret and apply it. This Jesus opposes the law, therefore, He is outside it. Surely we do not transgress the law when we seek only its protection. Let's kill Him!" How easy it is for one who administers God's law, helping others to obey it, to step over the line and think himself immune. God's law is for all. We are its subjects, not its judges.

Whatever the actual arguments of those scribes and chief priests, you can be sure they were motivated by fear. Verse 18 of our text gives the reason they wanted to kill Jesus: "for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching." Jesus threatened their control. He spoke with authority; they spoke out of selfishness. He pursued God's interests; they pursued their own. Selfish goals prompted fear, and fear drove them to twist and distort truth, rationalizing to achieve their selfish ends. God help us not do the same!