

**Matthew 10:16-23:** Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. <sup>17</sup> Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, <sup>18</sup> and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. <sup>19</sup> When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. <sup>20</sup> For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. <sup>21</sup> Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, <sup>22</sup> and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. <sup>23</sup> When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

**Intro:** Last week, we began to meditate on the instructions Jesus gave to His 12 Apostles before He sent them out for this first, short-term mission. They were to go to a specific people with a specific message and perform miracles; they were to be content with what God provided and not pursue riches and money, and yet they were to be provided for by those to whom they ministered. And finally they were to extend peace and blessing to those who received their message, yet pronounce judgment on those who rejected their message. Today, we continue to meditate on these instructions Jesus gives, and we see a series of warnings and encouragements focusing on facing persecution and opposition to them and their message. Christ's messengers will suffer for His sake.

### **1. Jesus Sends His Apostles Out In A Dangerous Environment**

**Matthew 10:16:** Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves

**a. Sheep are weak and helpless:** They need protection & guidance. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who guides!

**b. Wolves are dangerous and kill and eat sheep:** Declaring Jesus is King kills; False teaching also kills:

**Matthew 7:15:** Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

**Acts 20:26-32:** Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. Pay careful attention to yourselves & to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; & from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

### **2. Jesus Encourages His Apostles To Be Wise And Pure**

**Matthew 10:16:** Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.

Jesus calls for wisdom here, but this seems utterly foolish! Sheep among wolves?! Wolves eat sheep!

**1 Cor. 1:22-25:** For Jews demand signs & Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews & folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews & Greeks, Christ the power of God & the wisdom of God. **For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, & the weakness of God is stronger than men.**

Jesus encourages His Apostles to be wise and prudent – to have street smarts – not to be gullible and naive.

**William Hendriksen:** The keenness here recommended as a human quality involves insight into the nature of one's surroundings, both personal and material. It involves circumspection. It involves sanctified common sense, wisdom to do the right things at the right time and place in the right manner. It involves a serious attempt always to discover the best means to achieve the highest goal, and earnest and honest search for answers to such questions as,

“How will this word or action of mine look in the end, how will it affect my own future, the future of my neighbor, and the glory of God? Is this the best way to handle this problem, or is there a better way?”

Jesus also encourages His Apostles to be innocent: to walk in purity, honesty, integrity, and righteousness.

**Greg Nichols:** You want to be shrewd or keen, but not to the point of being deceitful. And you want to be innocent or harmless, but not the point of being naive. The combination of innocence and harmlessness without naivete, and shrewdness or keenness without deception.

**J. C. Ryle:** There are few of our Lord’s instructions which it is so difficult to use rightly as this. There is a line marked out for us between two extremes, but it is a line that requires great judgment to define. To avoid persecution by holding our tongues and keeping our religion entirely to ourselves is one extreme: we are not to err in that direction. To court persecution and thrust our religion upon everyone we meet, without regard to place, time or circumstances, is another extreme. In this direction also we are warned not to err, any more than in the other. Truly we may say, “Who is sufficient for these things?” We have need to cry to “the only wise God” for wisdom.

### **3. Jesus Warns His Apostles Of Persecution**

**Matthew 10:17-18:** Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues,<sup>18</sup> and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles.

**Men are evil:** Romans 3:23; Ephesians 3; Romans 3:10; God’s enemies: **GOSPEL!**

- **Acts 5:27-33, 40-42:** And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them,<sup>28</sup> saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us."<sup>29</sup> But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men.<sup>30</sup> The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree.<sup>31</sup> God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.<sup>32</sup> And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."<sup>33</sup> When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them . . .<sup>40</sup> and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.<sup>41</sup> Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.<sup>42</sup> And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

- **Paul & Barnabas: Acts 14:21-22:** When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch,<sup>22</sup> strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that **through many tribulations** we must enter the kingdom of God.

- **2 Timothy 3:12:** Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus **will be persecuted**

- **Luke 6:22-23:** Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!<sup>23</sup> Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

**D. A. Carson:** Where the church is not persecuted, it will either be because it is so strong as to dominate the opposition, or because it has become so domesticated by the surrounding culture that it no longer presents a threat to it. And in that case, the church’s condition is even more perilous, for God Himself will judge it since judgment begins with the family of God.

### **4. Jesus Encourages His Apostles That The Spirit Of The Father Will Speak Through Them**

**Matthew 10:19-20:** When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour.<sup>20</sup> For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father **speaking through you.**

When Jesus’ Apostles were arrested, they did not need to be anxious – the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of your Father) was with them and spoke through them. And He is with us, and will speak through us!

**Acts 4:7-14:** And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" <sup>8</sup> Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, <sup>9</sup> if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, <sup>10</sup> let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead - by him this man is standing before you well. <sup>11</sup> This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. <sup>12</sup> And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." <sup>13</sup> Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. <sup>14</sup> But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition.

This is not an excuse for pastors and Bible teachers to be lazy and not prepare sermons and Bible studies.

### **5. Jesus Warns His Apostles Of Division And Hatred**

**Matthew 10:21-22:** Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, <sup>22</sup> and you will be hated by all for my name's sake.

**a. There will be bitter division, even within families, that leads to death: Luke 12:51:** Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.

**News Article (08/23/2021):** The Muslim father of a 20-year-old convert to Christianity in Uganda on Sunday killed him for refusing to recant his faith, sources said. Kawona [the father] of Bupalama village . . . was not charged with murder but a lesser charge of manslaughter because he killed his son in anger for leaving Islam, sources said. His son, Tefiuro, put his faith in Christ in 2019. At that time his father drove him from their home, and he went to Kampala, where he worked in a hotel, relatives said. His mother later spent several months trying to convince him to return home to reconcile with his father, which Tefiuro resisted until consenting to come back . . . His father was away from home until Saturday, when he called a family meeting to question Tefiuro about whether he had come back to Islam, relatives said. "I am mature enough to join any religion that I feel like because I am above 18 years old," Tefiuro told him . . . "I want to confirm that I am saved by the grace of God. I can't renounce my Christian faith now or in the future." Kawona became angry but remained silent as he left the house . . . Another relative said that the next day, Kawona returned with a knife and hoe and started hitting Tefiuro, who managed to escape to a neighbor's house. "He followed Tefiuro and forcefully entered the house and removed him back to the homestead, where he tied him up and started beating him with the hoe," said the relative, whose identity is withheld for security reasons. "He fell down unconscious. He then hanged him up." The wailing of Tefiuro's mother and other relatives at the home where Kawona had hung his son with a rope by the neck brought neighbors rushing to the home, sources said "When I arrived at Kawona's house with other neighbors, we found the father outside the house," the area chairperson . . . told Morning Star News. "He told us that he had killed his son who had disgraced the Islamic religion by becoming a Christian."

**Sheikh Muhammed Salih Al-Munajjid:** If a Muslim apostatizes & meets the conditions of apostasy . . . then his blood may be shed with impunity [with no punishment]. He is to be executed by the Muslim ruler or by his deputy, such as the qaadi or judge, & he is not to not be washed (after death, in preparation for burial), the funeral prayer is not to be offered for him & he is not to be buried with the Muslims. The evidence that the apostate is to be executed is the words of the Prophet: "Whoever changes his religion, execute him." (al-Bukhaari, 2794). What is meant by religion here is Islam (i.e., whoever changes from Islam to another religion). The Prophet said: "It is not permissible to shed the blood of a Muslim who bears witness that there is no god except Allaah and that I am His Messenger, except in one of three cases: a soul for a soul (i.e., in the case of murder); a married man who commits adultery; and one who leaves his religion (al-Bukhaari, 6878; Muslim, 1676)

**b. You will be hated by all: D. A. Carson:** "All men" (v. 22) does not mean "all men without exception," for then there would be no converts, but "all men without distinction" – all men irrespective of race, color, or creed. **(A lot!)**

**c. V. 22: hated by all for my name's sake: V. 18:** you will be dragged before governors & kings for my sake; What kind of man speaks this way? The God-Man! Jesus is worthy to suffer for, be hated for, & ultimately die for!

## **6. Jesus Encourages His Apostles To Endure To The End**

**Matthew 10:22:** But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

**I thought salvation was by faith alone?** Justification is by faith alone!

1) Saved (Justified): Ephesians 2:8-9: For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

2) Saved (Sanctification): 1 Corinthians 1:18: For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. **Philippians 2:12-13:** work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

3) Saved (Glorified): Romans 13:11: For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.

**Of The Perseverance Of Saints:** We believe that such only are real believers as endure unto the end; that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors; that a special Providence watches over their welfare; and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

**1 Corinthians 9:24-27:** Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. <sup>25</sup> Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. <sup>26</sup> So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. <sup>27</sup> But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified. **(Todd: 49 years!)**

## **7. Jesus Instructs His Apostles To Flee When Persecuted**

**Matthew 10:23:** When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

**a. When you are persecuted, flee:** It's not always wrong to run away! Jesus fled: **Luke 4:27-30:** And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." <sup>28</sup> When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. <sup>29</sup> And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. <sup>30</sup> But passing through their midst, he went away.

**b. The Word of God spread through persecution: Acts 8:1-4:** And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. <sup>2</sup> Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. <sup>3</sup> But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. <sup>4</sup> Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.

**c. Other times, it's right to stay:** Jesus stayed (went to) Jerusalem. Jesus didn't speak of His disciples fleeing from Him as a good thing: **Mark 14:27-28;** And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." **Luke 22:31-32:** "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."

**Pastor Vasyl Ostryi** stayed in Ukraine with his wife & four daughters. He writes: "If the church is not relevant at a time of crisis, then it is not relevant in a time of peace . . . We have decided to stay, both as a family & as a church. When this is over, the citizens of Kyiv will remember how Christians have responded in their time of need."

**d. Our work of spreading the Gospel is never done until Jesus comes back: V. 23:** When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

**1) Dever:** You won't get through all the towns of Israel until we meet up again. Jesus is with them again in chap 12

**2) Ligon Duncan:** You won't get through all the towns of Israel until you see my resurrection.

**3) D. A. Carson:** [The disciples] will not have finished evangelizing the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes in judgment on Israel [in 70 AD].

**4) James Boice:** This is a difficult matter to solve. Although I have respect for Carson's critical judgment, I find it difficult to believe this verse refers only to work done before the fall of Jerusalem, which seems to me to be extraneous to the context. I think it is better to see verse 23 as stating a general principle: We will always have work to do and we will get to all the places we ought to go before Christ's second coming. Reference to "Israel" here would be an application of the principle to this particular setting. The disciples would not get to all the cities of Israel, just as we will not get to all the world's cities in our day, but we should get on with the Great Commission anyway. We need to keep moving.

**Consider Jesus: Brian Davis:** He endured hostility from sinners . . . all the while He came to die for them! Nothing made Him diminish His faithfulness! Nothing made Him turn from the mission of glorifying God in His sacrifice! Not when His friend betrayed Him! Not when His disciples abandoned Him! Not when Peter denied Him! Not when the guards arrested Him! Not when they wrongfully accused Him! Not when they asked for a base criminal instead of Him! Not when the crowds cried out "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Not when they beat him & divided His garments & stripped Him! Not when they mocked Him! Not when they spit on Him & flogged Him! Not when they staked His hands & feet as they pierced Him! Not as they accused him of lying & laughed at Him! All the while, He's laying His life down for them! And look, nothing made Him change course! [And He was utterly forsaken by God & bore the full measure of the wrath of God for sinners who treated Him so wickedly!]

**Hebrews 12:3-4:** Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

**2 Timothy 2:12:** if we endure, we will also reign with him

**Romans 8:18:** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Christ Jesus Came For His Name's Sake  
The Lion-Lamb Who'd Crush The Snake  
The Sheep Who'd Eat The Wolves And Take  
A People For Himself To Make  
A New Creation Wide Awake  
His Innocence Like Doves Partake  
The Wisest Man Who Ever Spake  
Yet Died And Rose Sin's Power To Break  
That Canceled Sin We Now Forsake  
And Die And Suffer For His Sake  
By Faith Alone We're Just And Ache  
To Live For Him E'en Though They Hate  
The Father's Spirit Stills Our Shake  
And Speaks Through Us Without Mistake  
Some Of Us They'll Kill And Take  
But Christ Is Worthy What's At Stake  
The Glory Of Our King Awake  
Endurance To The End Not Fake  
Is Done By Faith Though Mountains Quake  
Let's Live And Die For His Name's Sake!