

THE MESSIAH'S WARNING OF PERSECUTION MATHEW 10:16–23

Introduction

There is one thing true disciples must know as they go forth for Christ. They are as sheep in the midst of wolves. They can expect to be persecuted, severely persecuted. They must “be on [their] guard against men” (v. 17).

What Christ did in this passage was warn His disciples of persecution, and as He warned them, He counselled them on how to deal with persecution. (See and notes, Mt. 5:10-12; Lk. 21:12-19; 1 Pet 4:12-19; 4:14.)

- I. Counsel 1: know two facts (v. 16).
 - a. You are commissioned.
 - b. You are as sheep among wolves.
- II. Counsel 2: be wise and harmless (v. 16).
- III. Counsel 3: beware of men (vv. 17-18).
- IV. Counsel 4: do not worry about a defence (vv. 19-20).
- V. Counsel 5: know that families will be divided (v. 21).
- VI. Counsel 6: endure to the end (v. 22).
- VII. Counsel 7: flee persecution (v. 23).

I. *Mathew 10:16 Persecution is a Fact*

The first counsel is to keep two facts in mind when facing persecution.

1. The disciple is commissioned and sent forth by Christ. Note the words, “I am sending you out.” It is Christ, the Son of God, who sends us forth. There is great comfort in this fact, for Christ knows what is to face the disciple. He is fully aware of the persecution that lies ahead, yet He still sends His messenger forth. Why? Because the Son of God is able to use our persecution for several ends.
 - a. He is able to teach us about God’s care as He protects and delivers us.
 - b. He is able to teach us more and more trust, maturing us as believers.
 - c. He is able to take our suffering and touch the hearts of the persecutors, leading them to surrender their lives to Christ.
 - d. He is able to deliver us through death itself into the very presence of God.

Christ knows the importance of the message, the gospel of the kingdom. It is essential for man’s salvation. Therefore, despite the rejection and persecution by many, the message must still be proclaimed so that some might be saved.

2. The disciple is sent forth as a sheep in the midst of wolves. Being commissioned by Christ assures persecution. Christ sends His disciple forth in the midst of a world that *will* oppose the gospel; He knows that the disciple is to be persecuted. Therefore, the disciple...
- must know and expect persecution. He must not be caught off guard when it comes.
 - must know that his persecution is only “light and momentary troubles” in comparison with the glory that lies ahead. In fact, “our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that outweighs them all” (2 Cor 4:17).

Thought 1. Every believer must know that he will be looked at askance and suffer some abuse, ridicule and rejection.

II. *Mathew 10:16 Be Prudent and Harmless during Persecution*

The second counsel is to be wise and harmless — as wise or shrewd as snakes and as innocent or harmless as doves. To be as wise or “shrewd as snakes” means to manoeuvre quietly with caution and with intelligence; to manoeuvre with a planned strategy; to be quick in seeing danger and quick to escape from it. It means to be a person of vision and initiative. It means to know one's resources and to know when to strike and when to withdraw. It means to strike with one's attack and message when opportunity arises; it means to withdraw quickly when danger threatens.

The disciple is also to be like a dove: to be as gentle and innocent as a dove; to be harmless; to cause no damage; to be known as a symbol of peace; to be as pure, unmixed and unadulterated as doves.

Thought 1. The Lord's people and messengers are exposed to a world of evil men (wolves). Therefore, they are to do two things.

- 1) Be wise or shrewd as snakes. In facing danger, the snake acts wise. The snake...
 - tries to escape
 - is quiet
 - seeks preservation first of all
 - takes shelter out of sight if possible
 - does not expose itself needlessly
- 2) Be innocent or harmless as doves. The dove...
 - is mild and meek.
 - is innocent, harmless and inoffensive.
 - is a symbol of peace not of war.
 - bears no ill or hurt.

Thought 2. The Lord's witness is to have a snakelike mind and a dove-like spirit.

- 1) He is to be wise in sensing threats and to respond without passion.
- 2) He is not to provoke nor allow himself to be provoked.
- 3) He is to guard against being wronged and to wrong no one.
- 4) He is to manoeuvre out of harm and to harm no one himself.

III. *Mathew 10:17–18 Do not Trust Men*

The third counsel is to beware of men. Two significant points need to be studied by believers.

1. There are the persecutors. The persecutors are three in number: men in general, religionists and the state. The believer is to beware, to be on guard and to watch — always. If he lives for Christ — really lives for Christ — he is subject to being persecuted: ridiculed, rejected, disliked, hated, murmured against, abused, physically attacked, jailed and martyred. Who will do such things to believers?
 - a. Men, people just like himself, will persecute believers. Men can, will, and do turn into brute beasts when they do not like something. Their depraved, wolf-like nature begins to manifest, itself. They become two-faced, deceptive, plotting and devious. They often attempt to hurt or destroy believers either by reputation or by force. The attack may be over a job, a position, an act or a belief.
 - b. Religionists, people in the synagogues and churches, will persecute believers. The church is full of people who have not really committed their lives to God. They just do not know Him personally, not in a real and personal way. Therefore, the believer who truly lives and teaches and takes a stand for God and His righteousness is sometimes persecuted by those within the church. They do not understand God nor His righteousness. They can become two-faced, evil speaking, gossiping, slandering, reviling and insulting. They can also scold, mock and attack face to face. They can go so far as to try to destroy a person's reputation and life, depending on the society in which he lives. The great tragedy is that persecution can and does too often take place within the walls of God's house.
 - c. Civil authorities within the state will persecute believers. Believers all over the world always have been and always will be dragged before state authorities and persecuted.

John 15:18-20 *“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.”*

Thought 1. Note three lessons about the character of religionists.

- 1) Religionists can be so deceived that they think they do God a service by persecuting the believer (Jn. 16:2).
- 2) Churches seldom like to be disturbed. When the gospel of God is preached or a real ministry for God is attempted, the church is sometimes so encrusted with formalism and the old way of doing things that it fails to see the truth. It persecutes the man of God.

- 3) Too often church members have persecuted the Lord's messenger and teacher (see notes, Mt. 5:10-12). They have sometimes destroyed the messenger's ministry and reputation in a particular place. But God has always proven faithful. He has continued to use His servant — marvellously so. He will always use His persecuted servant who remains true to Him.

Thought 2. The believer is to beware of men in high positions, whether in church, state or business. The higher the position the more persecution can be exacted.

Thought 3. Paul was lashed *five times* by religionists (2 Cor 11:24).

2. There are two reasons for persecution given in this passage.
 - a. The believer is persecuted for the Lord's sake or cause. The believer tries to live for Christ and to carry out His cause. The natural man, whether in the world or church, does not understand the things of God, so he opposes them (see notes, 1 Cor 2:14-3:4).

Mat 5:11 *"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me."*

Mat 10:22 *"All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved."*

Mat 19:29 *"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life."*

2 Cor 4:11 *For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.*

- b. The believer is persecuted so that he might be a testimony to the persecutors. There is no greater testimony for Christ than a believer's standing up for Christ in the face of persecution (see Acts 24:1f; 25:1f; 25:13f; 26:1f).
 - 1) Standing firm demonstrates the truth of the gospel. Its message of love and salvation is clearly seen by the persecutor.
 - 2) Standing firm gives the Holy Spirit a unique opportunity to reach the hearts of those standing by with the truth of the gospel.
 - 3) Standing firm is a testimony *against* the persecutors. It shows how deep the wickedness and evil of their hearts is. It shall stand as a testimony against them in the day of judgment.

Mat 25:45-46 *"He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."*

Rom 2:5-6 *But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God will give to each person according to what he has done.*

James 5:10 *Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.*

IV. Mathew 10:19–20 Do not to Worry about Defence

The fourth counsel is not to worry about a defence. A believer is never left alone defending himself against persecution.

1. God gives what is to be said. Note: He gives the answer in the very hour it is to be spoken.

Mat 10:19 *“But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say.”*

2. God's Spirit actually does the speaking “through” the believer.
3. God stands with the believer.

Luke 21:15 *“For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.”*

2 Tim 4:16-18 *At my first defence, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Thought 1. When a believer is called upon to defend himself, he is often nervous and apprehensive. He wonders how to speak in his defence.

- 1) Some may distrust their ability. They feel incapable. They have seldom if ever appeared anywhere to defend themselves (see *Moses*, Exo 4:10-12; *Jeremiah*, Jer 1:6, 10).
- 2) Some may distrust their emotions. They are nervous and extremely apprehensive about standing before people. Having to stand before others defending themselves doubles their nervousness.

Thought 2. We need to trust God for what is to be said. This does not mean we should not be praying and thinking, but it means that God is to be trusted for the defence. There is a reason for this: only God knows the hearts of the persecutors and any others who are present. Therefore, He alone knows what needs to be said to touch their hearts or else to serve as a witness against them in the future.

JOHN 16:13 GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

*“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.” **John 16:13***

The Holy Spirit guides believers through three things.

1. The Holy Spirit guides by speaking the truth. Christ said that He had many things to say to the apostles, but they were not able to “bear” (handle, grasp) them, not yet. He would share them later through the Holy Spirit. Christ tells the Spirit what to say and how to guide believers. Christ, of course, is the One who knows the weaknesses and the needs of men. He knows by personal experience (Heb 4:15-16). Therefore, He is the One who is appointed by God to instruct the Spirit in His guiding ministry. This should cause our hearts to leap with great joy and confidence, for the Lord knows exactly what we face — knows by experience.

Rom 8:14 *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”*

Psa 48:14 *For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end.*

Psa 73:24 *You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory.*

Isa 30:21 *Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.”*

Isa 42:16 *I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them.*

Isa 48:17 *This is what the Lord says — your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: “I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go.”*

2. The Holy Spirit guides by leading into all the truth. The Holy Spirit is called “the Spirit of Truth.” He speaks only the truth and guides “into all truth”. The truth, of course, is Jesus Christ Himself. The Spirit leads the believer to Christ, the Truth, and teaches him “all the truth” about Christ. (See *Jesus the Truth*, Jn. 14:6.)

John 15:26 *“When the Counsellor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.”*

1 John 4:6 *We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.*

There is victory through the Holy Spirit (Jn. 15:26-27). He is the believer's Counsellor, his Comforter through persecution (Jn. 14:16). He is the believer's Spirit of Truth through persecution. The truth will prevail through all persecution. (See Jn. 14:17.)

Mat 10:19 *"But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say."*

Luke 12:11-12 *"When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say."*

Luke 21:15 *"For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict."*

3. The Holy Spirit guides by showing (announcing, declaring) things to come. After Jesus arose, the Holy Spirit was the One who led the apostles to write the New Testament and to foresee the things revealed in its pages. Since that day, the Holy Spirit is the One who takes the things revealed in the Word and shows (declares, announces) them to the heart of the believer.

1 Cor 2:9-10 *However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" — but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.*

1 Cor 2:12 *We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.*

Thought 1. Note two critical facts.

- 1) The believer must be dependent upon the Holy Spirit's leadership in learning the truth.
- 2) The believer's growth is progressive, coming only from the Holy Spirit's opening up the Word to him.

1 Cor 2:13 *This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.*

1 John 2:27 *As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit — just as it has taught you, remain in him. □*

V. *Mathew 10:21 Families will be Divided*

The fifth counsel is to know that families will be divided. A person's own family can become his greatest persecutor. Why? There are three reasons.

1. Because of the believer's commitment to Christ and His righteousness. The family often lives a worldly life and cannot understand a godly life. The family, therefore, opposes a family member who ceases to participate in certain functions and traditions (2 Cor 6:17-18; 1 Jn. 2:15-16).
2. Because of the family's orthodox religion or church. The converted family member may wish to change religions or churches. The family opposes such a move.
3. Because of the believer's commitment to Christ. The believer should become a dynamic witness sharing the graciousness and love of the Lord. Such an active witness is sometimes an embarrassment to a family.

Mark 10:28 Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!"

Luke 5:27 After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him.

Luke 14:26-27 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters — yes, even his own life — he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."

Luke 18:29-30 "I tell you the truth," Jesus said to them, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life."

Thought 1. A true believer is a man of conviction, believing that Jesus Christ is truly the Messiah, the Son of the living God. He adheres to this truth, living and bearing witness to it. Such conviction and unswerving testimony are seldom understood and often opposed. Because of this a believer sometimes has to choose between obedience to Christ and obedience to his family.

Thought 2. Nothing hurts more than having our own family oppose us when we make a decision to follow Christ. When our families oppose and persecute us, it hurts us deeply.

Thought 3. In some cases the most severe opposition comes from family members. The reason is twofold.

- 1) They feel their influence should be respected.
- 2) They feel that the whole family is affected by what its members do.

These two feelings are normal for a family, but the believer knows and has committed his life to the truth of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the believer is convinced that what is needed is for the family to be converted, not for him to deny his faith. (See outline and notes, Mt. 10:34-37).

VI. *Mathew 10:22 Endure Persecution to the End*

The sixth counsel is to endure to the end. Again, the believer must expect persecution. All men of the world will oppose him. Why? "Because of me [Christ]." The genuine believer lives and witnesses to the name of Christ which is the name of righteousness and self-denial (see *Cross and Discipleship*, Lk. 9:23). The world and its people oppose any life style that demands total self-denial.

The person who endures to the end shall be saved. Note several things.

1. There is an end to persecution. It is only temporary; it will end.
2. Endurance is possible. A believer can endure. God will bear him up through the persecution.

Heb 12:3 *Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

3. Salvation and deliverance are waiting for the person who endures: a life of glory and reward.

James 1:12 *Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*

2 Tim 4:6-8 *For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*

Rev 2:10 *Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

Thought 1. Note the words, "All men will hate." This means the whole world, everyone in the world: religionists (v. 17), the state (v. 18), and the family (v. 21).

Thought 2. It hurts to be the object of talk, ridicule, slander, gossip and abuse. The believer must remember three facts.

- 1) It is for Christ's sake.
- 2) It assures salvation.
- 3) It assures a glorious reward (Jas 1:12).

Thought 3. Persecutors are mere men. They can oppose and cause trouble; they can even kill the body. However, several things need to be remembered.

- 1) Persecutors cannot kill the soul.
- 2) The body will soon die anyway. Why sacrifice eternity for what amounts to just a little more time?

- 3) The persecutors are *mere men* who shall die themselves. And then they shall face the eternal judgment of God (Heb 9:27; see Isa 51:12).

VII. *Mathew 10:23 Flee Persecution*

The seventh counsel is to flee persecution. Note what Christ had already told His disciples.

1. If the disciple's message was rejected, he was to leave the house or the city. He was to get out quickly and quietly.

Mat 10:12-14 "As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town."

2. He is to be as wise as a serpent in sensing and fleeing danger (Mt. 10:16).

Now, for a third time Christ says: "When you are persecuted... flee." There are at least three reasons why Christ instructs us to flee.

1. Christ cares for us, for our safety.

1 Pet 5:7 *Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*

2. Christ wants other people to hear the gospel. Some are receptive. It is better to minister to those who are receptive than to cast one's pearls (the gospel) before swine or to have the wolves destroy one's life.

3. Christ wants a witness against all rejecters. They need to know just how terrible their sin and shame, coldness and hardness, bitterness and enmity are against God. If they can see their true heart in this life, perhaps they will surrender to God and His love. If not, then they will see the witness of their persecution stand against them in the terrible day of judgment.

Thought 1. Courage and conviction for a cause is not a common thing, but it is not rare either. Some are courageous and some are committed to a cause; we often hear of such courage and commitment to causes. Note two significant points.

- 1) In life there are two types of commitment among men.

=> First, there is reasonable and rational commitment. Such commitment can be so strong that it will endure persecution to death.

=> Second, there is fanatical and hysterical commitment. Such commitment can be so unreasonable that it flings itself into martyrdom.

- 2) There are several things that make the believer's courage and commitment different and distinctive.

=> First, believers suffer for a commitment to *the truth* as revealed by God in His Son (Jn. 3:16).

1 Pet 2:20 *But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.*

=> Second, believers attempt to escape persecution and to prevent it. They obey Christ and flee if possible. They do not court danger and recklessness.

=> Third, believers stand against persecution only when they cannot escape it. At that point, they stand firm for the Lord and His faith, trusting God to bear him through all.

Phil 1:29 *For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him,*

2 Tim 3:12 *In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,*

Thought 2. The genuine believer will accept martyrdom for his faith, but he does not seek it. He seeks life and freedom so that he can continue to proclaim Christ. His message is a message of life and the sanctity of life. How then can he invite death? ■

THE MESSIAH'S ENCOURAGEMENT NOT TO FEAR PERSECUTION MATHEW 10:24–33

Introduction

Believers are often persecuted. They are bypassed, shunned, withdrawn from, isolated, talked about, ridiculed, mocked, considered strange and joked about. The persecution can go even farther, involving physical abuse and murder, depending on the society and the laws under which the believer lives. This passage is a great encouragement to the believer in facing persecution. Christ said three times, “Do not be afraid” (vv. 26, 28, 31). He was encouraging His disciples not to fear persecution. They must expect persecution, for He Himself was persecuted.

- I. Do not ignore persecution (vv. 24-25).
- II. Do not fear persecutors (vv. 26-27).
- III. Do not fear men who kill the body (v. 28).
- IV. Do not fear, for God cares (vv. 29-31).
- V. Do not deny Christ: loyalty is essential (vv. 32-33).

I. *Mathew 10:24–25 Do Not Ignore Persecution*

The fact of persecution.

1. There is the warning: the disciple is not above persecution. No disciple is above his master; no servant is above his lord. The Lord suffered persecution, so will the disciple. The disciple must expect persecution, for he shall be persecuted even as his Lord was persecuted.

Thought 1. It is impossible for a disciple to be above his master or for a servant to be above his lord. If our Master and Lord has suffered persecution, so shall we. Why? He is our Master and Lord; that is, we are His. We belong to Him. All that He is and all that He stands for is what we are and what we stand for. Whatever caused men to persecute Him, *the same is in us*. They will persecute us for the same thing and for the same reason they persecuted Him.

2. There is the privilege of persecution. The believer shares in the sufferings of Christ. Note the words, “It is enough.” God has done enough for the believer. He has exalted the believer to an unbelievable height. The believer is now *just like his Master and his Lord*. God has accepted the believer as an *equal* to His own dear Son (Rom. 8:16-17; Gal. 4:4-7; Eph. 1:5-6).

What does this mean? It means that persecution is a privilege. When we are persecuted we are walking in the highest and most noble company possible — the company of God’s dear Son.

Thought 1. Imagine! We are *called* by God's very own Son, the Master and Lord of the universe. To have God's very own Son as our Master and Lord is the highest privilege imaginable. Thus, it is a high privilege to suffer for Him. No higher call could come to a man. Christ calls us to live righteously in a world that does not want righteousness. The fact that the world reacts against us does not do away with our high calling. It only enhances our call and sets it even higher. The *evil* behaviour of the world shows just how precious and how greatly to be desired our high calling is.

Phil 1:29 *For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him. (see Acts 5:41-9:16; Rom 8:17; Heb 11:25)*

Thought 2. Living righteously in a world that does not want righteousness assures persecution.

2 Tim 3:12 *In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (See Mat 5:10-12)*

3. There is the surety: believers are more likely to suffer persecution than Christ was.

Some believers must expect harsh persecution just as Christ suffered (1 Pet. 4:11-12). Note the words, "the members of His household." We are of His household. If the Master and Lord was abused. His disciples and servants will be abused. If the world dragged the Master out to kill Him, they will drag the servant out to be killed. Whatever the world did to the Master of the house, they will do to us. Christ was persecuted terribly. They called Him Beelzebub, the god of flies and filth, the name given to describe the chief of devils (see Mk. 3:22-23). Consider three things.

- a. The terrible wickedness of some men: to be so encrusted in wickedness that they curse the Son of God.
- b. The unbelievable patience and forbearance of Christ: that He would allow Himself to be cursed and abused.
- c. The strong lesson for us: no matter how severe the persecution, Christ has gone before us. He is our forerunner; He has already suffered the depth of indignity and ridicule.

Heb 12:3 *Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (see Heb 2:17-18, 4:15-16)*

II. **Mathew 10: 26–27 Do Not Fear Persecution**

The first word of encouragement is this: do not fear persecutors. There are two major points in this statement of encouragement.

1. The truth shall be revealed: *the truth* will someday be known. God will reveal *the truth* in the day of judgment, if not before.

- a. The cloak that the persecutors put upon their evil will be stripped off. The truth of their evil will be revealed. It will no longer be able to be disguised. Their true character will be revealed by God and shown to all who stand in that day.
- b. The cloak that the world puts upon the believer's witness will be stripped away in that day. God will reveal the truth of the believer's witness. His testimony will be vindicated, and the persecution will be seen to have been but "light and momentary troubles" in comparison to "eternal glory" that will be ours (2 Cor. 4:17).
- c. The cloak that the world puts upon the gospel will be stripped away in that day. God will reveal that the gospel is true, and true in its entirety. The gospel will be vindicated. It will be seen and known to have been true.

The believer is not to fear what his persecutors say. He can rest assured: the day is coming when the truth will be known. The accusations, the talk, the dislikes, the cloaks, the disguises, the secrets of all men shall be stripped and unveiled for all to see (Rom. 2:2, 6, 11, 16).

Thought 1. Note three lessons.

- (1) Believers will be vindicated. All the talk and abuse inflicted upon believers will be handled by Christ. The shunning, sneering, isolation, coldness, ugliness, abuse and mistreatment by neighbours, fellow employees, church members and carnal believers — all will be dealt with by God. Christ is emphatic; He speaks to the point: "Fear not persecutors: the truth is to be revealed" and dealt with.
 - (2) We are not to fear the damage of our *character and reputation* by men. What is really in our hearts and lives — what we really are despite all our shortcomings and failures and sins — is known to God. He is going to deliver and vindicate us. He is going to restore our reputation and character and see to it that we "have [the] praise of God" (1 Cor. 4:5). Therefore, we are not to fear persecutors.
 - (3) Many believers are made *spectacles* by unbelievers both within the church and the world. But the day is coming when the truth is to be known.
 - a) The true believer will be exalted with an "eternal glory" (2 Cor. 4:17).
 - b) The true believer will "have his praise from God" (1 Cor. 4:5).
 - c) The true believer will "shine like the sun in the kingdom of [his] Father" (Mt. 13:43).
2. The message must be preached. The meaning of this verse is full of meaning for the messenger of Christ. Note the words, "What *I tell you* in the dark...What is whispered *in your ear*." Christ is saying three things.
 - a. Christ gives the message that He wants proclaimed. Christ says that it is "what I tell you" that the messenger is to hear and proclaim.
 - b. Christ gives His message in the quietness of being alone with His messenger. It is "in the dark...in the ear" that Christ gives His message to the messenger. That is, Christ

gives His message when the messenger gets all alone and draws close to the Lord in prayer and study of the Word.

c. The messenger is to proclaim the message "from the roofs." Two things are meant by this.

=> The message is urgent. It is to be proclaimed loud and clear for all to hear.

=> The message is to be buzzed about, always shared and proclaimed. In the day of Christ, people sat upon their roofs (flat roofs) in the quiet of the evening and buzzed about with conversation. This is the picture Christ is painting for His disciples.

Mark 16:15 *He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."*

Luke 9:60 *Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."*

Acts 5:20 *"Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people the full message of this new life."*

III. **Mathew 10:28 Do Not Fear Men**

The second word of encouragement is this: do not fear men who kill the body. We are not to fear men (persecutors), but to fear God. The reason is simple and understandable: men can kill only the body; God can destroy both body and soul "in hell" (see *Destroy*, Mt. 10:28; *Hell Fire*, Mt. 5:22).

There are several reasons why men are not to be feared.

1. Men can kill only the body, not the soul. Their power is limited, and they can go no further. They cannot touch a person's soul, a person's real being.
2. Men can only send us out of this world, not out of heaven. "To be with Christ...is better by far" (Ph. 1:23; 3:20-21).
3. Men can only separate us from this world, not from life. We have eternal life; death is not part of the experience of the believer. The believer does not *taste* death. Christ *tasted*, that is, experienced death for the believer (Heb. 2:9). The believer has already passed from death to life and is in the process of living forever (Jn. 5:24). He is merely transferred from this world, the physical dimension of being, into the next world, the heavenly or spiritual dimension of being (see Tim. 4:18).
4. Men can only cut us off from worldly men and the earthly redeemed, not from the love of God and the saints in glory.

Rom 8:35 *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? (see vv 36-39; Prov 29:25; Isa 51:12)*

Thought 1. Fearing men causes several things.

- (1) It causes a person to become disturbed within heart and mind: the loss of peace.
- (2) It causes a person to lose his fervour and his sense of commitment.
- (3) It causes a person to be sidetracked and to give up what he knows to be God's will: the loss of mission and meaning and purpose.

Thought 2. There are two primary reasons why we should not fear men and persecution.

- (1) God has given us a great and glorious cause: to reach men for Christ. Very practically, some men do not want to be reached; therefore they rebel and react and become our persecutors. But some do want to be saved. The fact that they are saved to live forever is so glorious that it is worth whatever suffering we have to bear.
- (2) God has given us a great hope (see thoughts, Mt. 10:26-27).

Thought 3. There is a remedy to keep us from fearing men: God. God is to be feared (see *Destroy*, Mt. 10:28).

- (1) God can destroy us, both body and soul, and put both "in hell" (see *Hell Fire*, Mt. 5:22). The word "destroy" does not mean that our body and soul would cease to exist but that they would live a worthless existence — be ruined and suffer in ruin forever (see *Destroy*, Mt. 10:28).
- (2) Christ was speaking to believers in this passage. God is to be feared much more and much sooner than men. The terror of men pales into insignificance in comparison to God's terror. Imagine this one fact alone: man's terror is but for a short time, but God's terror is *forever*. It never ends. The point is clear: before caving in to man's persecution, we need to remember the "fear of God."
- (3) The destruction of the soul comes from God, not from man. The power to destroy the soul is God's power alone. How fearful we need to be of God, even we who are believers! (See *Destroy*, Mt.10:28.)

1 Pet 4:18 And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

MATHEW 10:28 DESTROY (APOLEIA)

*"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.
Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell."
Mathew 10:28*

Loss of one's *well-being* (not loss of one's being), waste, ruin, worthless existence. To "destroy both body and soul in hell" does not mean that a person would cease to exist,

but that he would live a worthless existence. It means the loss of a person's well-being, not his being. It means that he would suffer waste and ruin forever and ever. □

MATHEW 10:28 AFRAID, FEAR (PHOBOS; VERB: PHOBEO)

“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”
Mathew 10: 28

Fear, dread, terror. In relation to God, it means to be afraid; to show reverence, to sense a reverential fear; to stand in awe because of a holy fear. It means we fear God because He is God: holy, righteous, pure, just. It means that we fear and stand in awe and reverence of God who shall reveal His holiness and execute His justice in some future day of judgment. □

MATHEW 05:22 HELL FIRE OR GEHENNA (GEENNA)

“But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.” **Mathew 05:22**

The word is used eleven or twelve times in the New Testament, and in every case it is spoken by Jesus except in the Epistle of James. It illustrates the terrible truth of the second death, of man's final separation from God. Jesus pointed to the burning, repulsive rubbish dump outside the city limits of Jerusalem and said that it was exactly what hell was like. The dump was called Gehenna. It was in the Valley of Hinnom which served as a public incinerator. Hanging over it was a layer of thick, smoldering smoke arising from what seemed to be an eternal flame. The smell and filth became a breeding cesspool for a loathsome worm that was difficult to kill (Mk. 9:44). Thus, Jesus found in Gehenna a description of just what it means to be separated from God eternally and to die the second death. Several facts are said about hell or Gehenna:

- It is the same as the lake of fire, a place of torture (Rev. 19:20; 20:10, 14-15).
- It has to do with the second death (Rev. 21:8; Jn. 8:24).
- It is Hell (Mt. 5:29-30; 10:28; 23:15, 33; Lk. 12:5).
- It is eternal fire (Mt. 18:8).
- It is the fire of Hell (Mt. 18:9; Jas. 3:6).
- It is unquenchable fire (Mk. 9:43-49).

The teaching of Jesus should always be remembered. Remembrance is critical in determining a person's fate. Hell is a definite place, a real place that is specifically located. It was originally prepared for the devil and his angels. But all men who choose to follow self and evil and to reject God shall also be sent to hell eternally.

Mat 3:10 *"The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."*

Mat 5:29-30 *"If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell."*

Mat 7:19 *"Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."*

Mat 10:28 *"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell."*

Mat 11:23 *"And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day."*

Mat 13:42, 50 *"They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth... And throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

Mat 16:18 *"And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."*

Mat 18:8-9 *"If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell."*

Mat 23:15 *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites: You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are."*

Mat 23:33 *"You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?"*

Mat 25:41 *"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'"*

Mark 9:43-48 *“If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.”*

Luke 3:9 *“The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”*

Luke 10:15 *“And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths.”*

Luke 12:5 *“But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.”*

Luke 16:23-24 *“In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’” □*

IV. Mathew 10: 29–31 God Loves and Cares for Man

The third word of encouragement is this: do not fear, for God cares. Christ is clear: if God cares for the common sparrow, how much more He cares for man! He cares for every event, every detail, even the most minute matter in a man's life. Therefore, there is no need to fear.

1 Pet 5:7 *Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*

Psa 115:12 *The LORD remembers us and will bless us: He will bless the house of Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron.*

Thought 1. There is something very precious here, yet there is a revelation of power as well.

- (1) There is a preciousness in the thought that every sparrow — no matter how common or forgotten or ignored — is very dear to God.
- (2) There is power and care in that God knows every single sparrow on the earth. Not a single sparrow falls that He is unaware of. The idea is that the injury to the sparrow causes pain and hurt which He feels.

Thought 2. Christ is pointing out five powerful yet precious facts.

- (1) God's providence: God sees, knows, cares and oversees all the events and happenings on earth — just as He knows all about the little sparrow that is so common and forgotten.

- (2) God's knowledge (omniscience): God knows every little happening and all that is, even to the most minute detail. He knows when a single sparrow falls to the ground. He knows every hair of a person's head, even the number of hairs.
- (3) God's power (omnipotence): God is able to control the persecution and events that happen to the believer, no matter how detailed and minute. He can control and work them out for good to such an extent that there is no need for the believer to fear.
- (4) God's love and care: God cares about every hurt inflicted upon the believer by persecutors, even to the most minute injury and hurt. The believer is not to fear but to put His trust in the love and care of God (1 Pet. 5:7).
- (5) God's purpose: God is able to take all the injuries and pain inflicted by the sin and shame of men and work them all out for the good of the believer. He is able to give purpose, meaning and significance to it all (Rom. 8:28f). Therefore the believer is not to fear.

Thought 3. The believer is of much more value than many sparrows, for he is God's adopted son (see *Adoption*, Gal. 4:5-6). Just as God has His eye on the sparrow, He has His watchful eye on His "dearly loved children" (Eph. 5:1).

GALATIANS 04: 05–06 ADOPTION

To redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who called out, "Abba, Father." Galatians 04:05-06

The word *rights* or *adoption* (huiothesia) means *to place as a son*. The picture of adoption is a beautiful picture of what God does for the Christian. In the ancient world the family was based on a Roman law called "patria potestas," the father's power. The law gave the father absolute authority over his children so long as the father lived. He could work, enslave, sell, and if he wished, he could pronounce the death penalty. Regardless of the child's adult age, the father held all power over personal and property rights.

Therefore, adoption was a serious matter. Yet, it was a common practice to ensure that a family would not become extinct – by having no male children. And when a child was adopted, three legal steps were taken.

1. The adopted son was adopted permanently. He could not be adopted today and disinherited tomorrow. He became a son of the father – forever. He was eternally secure as a son.
2. The adopted son immediately had all the rights of a legitimate son in the new family.

3. The adopted son completely lost all rights in his old family. The adopted son was looked upon as a new person – so new that old debts and obligations connected with his former family were cancelled out and abolished as if they never existed.

The Bible says several things about the believer's adoption as a son of God.

1. The believer's adoption establishes a new relationship with God – forever. He is eternally secure as a child of God. But the new relationship is established only when a person comes to Christ through faith (Gal. 3:26; 4:4-5).
2. The believer's adoption establishes a new relationship with God as father. The believer has all the rights and privileges of a genuine son of God (Rom. 8:16-17; 1 Jn. 3:1-2).
3. The believer's adoption establishes a new dynamic experience with God as father, a moment by moment access into His very presence (Rom. 8:14, 16; Gal. 4:6).
4. The believer's adoption gives him a very special relationship with other children of God – a family relationship that binds him with others in an unparalleled spiritual union (See Eph. 2:11-18; 2:19-22; 3:6; 4:4-6; 4:17-19. See Acts 2:42; Mt. 12:46-50.)
5. The believer's adoption makes him a new person. The believer has been taken out from under the authority and power of the world and its sin. The believer is *placed as a son* into the family and authority of God. The old life with all of its debts and obligations are cancelled and wiped out (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 3:23-27; 2 Pet. 1:4; Eph. 4:22; 4:24.)
6. The believer's adoption is to be fully realized in the future at the return of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:19; Eph. 1:14; 1 Th. 4:14-17; 1 Jn. 3:2).
7. The believer's adoption and its joy will be shared by all creation on a cosmic scale (Rom. 8:21). There is to be a new heavens and earth (2 Pet. 3:12-14; Rev. 21:1-7). □

V. *Mathew 10: 32–33 Loyalty is Essential*

The conclusion is that loyalty is essential. Note a crucial point: Christ is talking about confessing Him in the most difficult moment imaginable – while being persecuted. We are sometimes called upon to confess Christ by those who reproach, sneer, mock, curse, question, slander, abuse and avoid us because of our witness for Christ.

Mark 8:38 *“If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”*

Rom 10:9 *That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

2 Pet 2:1 *But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them – bringing swift destruction on themselves.*

1 John 2:22-23 *Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist – he denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.*

Thought 1. Note three double things here.

- (1) There is a double confession: our confession of Christ before men, and the Lord's confession of us before His Father.
- (2) There is a double day of glory: the Lord's day of glory when He hears us confess His name before men, and our day of glory when we hear Him confess our name before His Father.
- (3) There is a double privilege: our privilege in confessing the Lord before men, and the Lord's privilege in confessing us before His Father.

Thought 2. Christ can be denied or disowned in three ways:

- (1) We can deny Christ by word. Our words either confess or deny Christ. Our ordinary conversation either witnesses for Christ and righteousness or for evil and unrighteousness. Our words either confess or deny that Christ is our Lord.
- (2) We can deny Christ by act. How we behave either confesses or denies Christ. We are not to be conformed to the world but transformed by the renewing of our mind (Rom. 12:1-2; see 2 Cor. 6:17-18; 1 Jn. 2:15-16).
- (3) We can deny Christ by silence. Failing to speak up for Christ to protest evil denies Christ. Silence is probably the greatest denial of Christ committed by believers.

Thought 3. Denying Christ is the most dangerous thing we can do. Why?

- (1) Because there is a day coming when we will need Christ to confess us before God.
- (2) Because Christ has already foretold what He will do if we deny Him: He will deny us. He will tell the truth – He never knew us (Mt. 7:23; 25:41). ■