

MATTHEW 10 THE 12 DISCIPLES SENT OUT TO PREACH

This chapter is one of peculiar solemnity. Here is the record of the first ordination which ever took place in the Church of Christ. The Lord Jesus chose and sent forth the 12 Apostles, and He delivered them a charge which is still applicable to newly ordained Christian ministers in our own day. Never was there such an important ordination, and never was there such a solemn charge! The great work of a minister of Christ is to do good. He is sent to seek lost sheep, to proclaim glad tidings, to relieve those who are suffering, to diminish sorrow, and to increase joy. His life is to be lived according to a high standard.

This passage also shows us that it is a very dangerous thing to neglect the offers of the Gospel! It shall prove “more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha” on Judgment Day, than for those who have heard Christ’s truth and refuse to receive it. What are we ourselves doing with the Gospel? We may be decent and respectable in our lives, correct and moral in all the relationships of life, and regular in our formal attendance upon the means of grace. That is all well, as far as those things go. But is this all that can be said of us? Are we really receiving the love of the truth? Is Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith? If not, then we are in fearful danger. We are far more guilty than the inhabitants of Sodom, who never heard the Gospel at all. It will not save us to have lived in the full sunshine of Christian privileges, and to have heard the Gospel faithfully preached every week. There must be experimental acquaintance with Christ Himself! There must be personal reception of His truth. There must be vital union with Him. We must become His servants and disciples. Without this, the preaching of the Gospel only adds to our responsibility and increases our guilt; and at length, it will sink us more deeply into hell. These are hard sayings, but these Words of Scripture are plain and unmistakable. They are all true.

To do good to lost souls in this world is very hard. All who try it will find this out by experience. It needs a large stock of courage, faith, patience, and perseverance. Satan will fight vigorously to maintain his kingdom. Human nature is desperately wicked. To do harm is easy, and to do good is hard. Jesus knew this well when He sent forth His disciples to preach the Gospel for the first time. He knew what was before them, even though they did not. And so He took care to supply them with a list of encouragements (verses 24-33), in order to cheer them up when they felt cast down.

In verses 34-42, the great Head of the Church declares three great truths to those whom He sends forth to make known His Gospel. In the first place,

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ The commission given to the disciples as they were sent out to preach – verse 1
- ❖ The names of the persons to whom this commission was given – verses 2-4
- ❖ They are given directions as to how they must labor for the Lord – verses 5-15
- ❖ The Lord warns them of the sufferings that they would undergo – verses 16-42

He bids us remember that His Gospel will not cause worldwide peace and agreement. "I came not to send peace, but a sword," He says. The objective of His first coming to earth was not to set up an earthly kingdom in which all would be of one mind; but rather, it was to bring in the Gospel, which would lead to sad strife and divisions. This is not because of any fault in the Gospel, but because of the deep corruption of the human heart. As long as one person believes, and another remains unbelieving; as long as one is resolved to keep his sins, and another is desirous to give them up – the result of the preaching of the Gospel can be nothing other than division. And for this division, the heart of man is to blame, and not the Gospel.

In the second place, our Lord tells us that true Christians must make up their minds to accept trouble in this world. Whether we are ministers or hearers, it makes little difference. We must carry "a cross." We must be content to lose even life itself for Christ's sake. We must submit to the loss of man's favor, we must endure hardships, and we must deny ourselves in many things; or we shall never reach heaven at last. As long as the world, the devil, and our own hearts continue to be what they are, these things must be so. Happy is the one who thoroughly understands that although Christianity holds out a crown in the end, it also brings a cross in the way.

In the last place, our Lord cheers us by saying that the least service done to those who labor in His cause is observed and rewarded by God. He that gives a believer something as little as "a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple" shall not lose his reward. There is something very beautiful in this promise! It teaches us that the eyes of the great Master are always upon those who labor for Him and try to do good for His Kingdom. They seem, perhaps, to work unnoticed and unrewarded. The doings of preachers, missionaries, and individual Christians may appear very trifling and insignificant in comparison to the movements of presidents, parliaments, armies, and statesmen. But they are not insignificant in the eyes of God! He takes notice of those who opposes His servants, and of those who help them. All the daily experience of His people is recorded as they labor on in His harvest. He never forgets any of His sons or daughters! On the resurrection morning, He will say to many who least expect it, "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink" (Matt. 25:35).

Lord Jesus, in the midst of all the persecution that we may be called to face for Your sake as we preach Your Gospel, we give thanks for the assurance that You give us, that You are with us always – even to the end of the world! Amen.

