

07-17-2016

**Message: Called to Witness to an Unwelcoming World, Part 1**

**Text: Revelation 10:1-11; (Ezekiel 2:3 - 3:4)**

## **Introduction**

- A. The church is Christ's prophetic voice to the world. If not us, who? We see throughout Revelation, including chapter 10, that believers are called to bear witness to Christ in a world that characteristically does not welcome this witness.

Revelation 10:11 And they said to me, "**You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.**"

Revelation 2:13 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and **you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith** even in the days of **Antipas, My witness (martyr), My faithful one, who was killed among you**, where Satan dwells.

- B. Christ uses different ways to encourage His people to overcome the world by a faith in Him that bears witness to Him, in spite of the opposition of the devil. It is important for us to understand and recognize these different forms of encouragement. Often He encourages us by telling us how good and glorious things will be in the future. Other times He encourages our perseverance by telling us how difficult things will be in the present under His control, so we won't become disillusioned, discouraged, and stumble.

John 15:20 Remember the word that I said to you, "A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" ... 16:1 "**These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling.**"<sup>2</sup> "They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God."<sup>3</sup> "These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me."<sup>4</sup> "**But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them.**"

- C. In the first 2 historical cycles in revelation we see the heart of Christ revealed in both kinds of encouragement. (Show historical cycles in Revelation slide.) Remember that in the first cyclical sweep of world history in chapters 4:1 - 8:1 we are encouraged by seeing God as the sovereign center around which all creation revolves. We see our once crucified, now risen Christ being given all authority in heaven and earth to execute all that God has appointed. The grand finale, our blessed hope being the glorious return of Christ, when God's kingdom comes, when He makes all things new, when His will is done on earth as it is in heaven. We see Christ's authority symbolically depicted by his breaking of 7 seals on a scroll that God handed to him, containing all that God has appointed for bringing the history of this present world to His victorious conclusion at Christ's return, depicted by Christ breaking of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> seals, where His wrath comes upon the whole unbelieving world, and all creation stands silent as He is about to render judgment.

- D. But in between these 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> seals there is an interlude of 2 visions to encourage believers that they will be protected and delivered from God's final wrath and inherit a new creation in the presence of the Lord's glory.
- E. Now in this 2<sup>nd</sup> historical cycle in 8:2 - 11:19 we have another interlude of visions in chapters 10 and 11 to encourage our perseverance in a different way - by telling us how unwelcome our witness to the world will be until Jesus returns in victory. See the heart of Christ in this by telling us in advance the predominant reaction to our witness - He doesn't want us to think He has abandoned us, or that there is something wrong with us.

## I. Our encouragement from the Lord.

- A. Though all of God's elect will by His grace repent and receive the gospel, we are being sent into a world that characteristically will not repent. Christ is unleashing judgments on the world, symbolized in this cycle by 7 angels at His command blowing 7 trumpets. The first 6 judgments, mostly using imagery from God's plagues of judgment upon Egypt in Exodus, are intermediate judgments, foreshadowing Christ's final judgment on the world at His return - the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet. But in spite of these warnings and giving survivors time to repent, they are unwilling to repent. This is the world into which Christ sends us to witness.

Revelation 9:13 **Then the sixth angel sounded**, ...<sup>15</sup> And the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released, so that they would kill a third of mankind. ...<sup>20</sup> **The rest of mankind**, who were not killed by these plagues, **did not repent of the works of their hands**, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk;<sup>21</sup> and **they did not repent** of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts.

Luke 10:3 "**Go**; behold, **I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves**.

- B. But this angel, a ministering spirit to the saints, reflects the glory and power of the Lord, indicating the Lord's power and glory are being brought to bear upon His people.

Revelation 10:1 I saw another **strong** angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud; and the **rainbow** was upon his head, and his face was like the sun, and his **feet like pillars of fire**;

Revelation 1:14 His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire.<sup>15</sup> **His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace**, and His **voice was like the sound of many waters**.

Revelation 4:3 And He who was sitting *was* like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and *there was* **a rainbow around the throne**, like an emerald in appearance.

Hebrews 1:13 But to which of **the angels** has He ever said, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET"?<sup>14</sup>  
**Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?**

- C. 10:2 He reflects the Lord's authority over all the earth, the land and the sea, to carry out all that the Lord has appointed for the nations and peoples of the earth.

Revelation 10:2 and he had in his hand a little book which was open. He placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land;

- D. 10:3-4 We don't need to know everything God has appointed or understand everything He is doing, in order to know what is necessary to serve His purposes. We don't have to know everything to know anything.

Revelation 10:3 and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; and when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices.<sup>4</sup> When the seven peals of thunder had spoken, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying, "**Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them.**"

2 Corinthians 4:8 *we are* afflicted in every way, but not crushed; **perplexed, but not despairing;**

- E. 10:5-7 The angel swears by God that when all that God has appointed is completed, the mystery of the gospel is completed and He will not delay to sound the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet and send Jesus to restore all things. The angel swears by the eternal God who created this present world and Who will bring this present world to an end. In the end, God wins!

Revelation 10:5 Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven,<sup>6</sup> and **swore by Him who lives forever and ever, WHO CREATED HEAVEN AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE EARTH AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE SEA AND THE THINGS IN IT, that there will be delay no longer,<sup>7</sup> but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished,** as He preached (euangelizo) to His servants the prophets.

## II. Our commission to prophesy from the Lord.

- A. Take and absorb all of God's Word into your very heart and soul. Like eating food, make all of it part of who you are - both the blessings and judgments, the promises and warnings, for all reveal the glory of the Lord.

Revelation 10:8 Then the voice which I heard from heaven, *I heard* again speaking with me, and saying, "**Go, take the book** which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land."<sup>9</sup> So I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he said to me, "**Take it and eat it**; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey."<sup>10</sup> **I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter.**

Ezekiel 2:8 "Now you, son of man, listen to what I am speaking to you; do not be rebellious like that rebellious house. **Open your mouth and eat what I am giving you.**"<sup>9</sup> Then I looked, and behold, a hand was extended to me; and lo, **a scroll** was in it.<sup>10</sup> When He spread it out before me, **it was written on the front and back, and written on it were lamentations, mourning and woe.**

1. God's Word should taste sweet to all of His people.

Psalms 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.<sup>8</sup> **The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart**; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.<sup>9</sup> The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.<sup>10</sup> They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; **sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.**<sup>11</sup> Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward.

a. even the rebukes and corrections

Psalms 141:5 Let the righteous **smite me in kindness and reprove me; It is oil upon the head**; Do not let my head refuse it, For still my prayer is against their wicked deeds.

b. even the judgments on the wicked

Revelation 16:4 Then the third *angel* poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood.<sup>5</sup> And I heard the angel of the waters saying, "**Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things**";<sup>6</sup> for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it."<sup>7</sup> And I heard the altar saying, "**Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.**"

Revelation 19:1 After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "**Hallelujah!** Salvation and glory and power belong to our God;<sup>2</sup> **BECAUSE HIS JUDGMENTS ARE TRUE AND RIGHTEOUS; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and HE HAS AVENGED THE BLOOD OF HIS BOND-**

**SERVANTS ON HER.**"<sup>3</sup> And a second time they said, "**Hallelujah! HER SMOKE RISES UP FOREVER AND EVER.**"

2. Yet the bitter side is either ...

a. ... what the righteous must still suffer until Christ returns,

Habakkuk 3:16 I heard and my inward parts trembled, at the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, and in my place I tremble, because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, for the people to arise *who* will invade us.

b. ... or that neither God nor we take pleasure in the death of the wicked.

Ezekiel 18:30 "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, each according to his conduct," declares the Lord GOD. "Repent and turn away from all your transgressions, so that iniquity may not become a stumbling block to you."<sup>31</sup> "Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel?<sup>32</sup> "**For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies," declares the Lord GOD. "Therefore, repent and live."**"

Romans 9:1 I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit,<sup>2</sup> that **I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.**<sup>3</sup> **For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,**<sup>4</sup> who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the *temple* service and the promises,

B. Proclaim all that the Lord has said to the nations.

Revelation 10:11 And they said to me, "**You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.**"

1. God's Word is spoken to all - no one, not even kings, are above God's law.

2. Like in the days of God's prophet Ezekiel, from which this imagery is drawn ...

a. We are to speak to a rebellious people.

Ezekiel 2:3 Then He said to me, "Son of man, I am sending you to the sons of Israel, to a rebellious people who have rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day."<sup>4</sup> "I am sending you to them who are stubborn and obstinate children, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD.'

b. It will cost us to bear witness to Jesus if we speak the whole counsel of God - all that is in "the book." Yet we are not to be intimidated or discouraged when our witness is rejected by the world.

Ezekiel 2:6 "And you, son of man, neither fear them nor fear their words, though thistles and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions; neither fear their words nor be dismayed at their presence, for they are a rebellious house. <sup>7</sup> **"But you shall speak My words to them whether they listen or not,** for they are rebellious.

2 Timothy 4:2 **preach the word; be ready in season and out of season;** reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

c. Whether people accept or reject our witness to Christ Jesus, God will be glorified by the proclamation of His Word. God will be glorified in the saving of souls by His Word or in the righteous judgment of souls by His Word. There is no wasted witness.

Ezekiel 2:5 "As for them, **whether they listen or not--** for they are a rebellious house-- **they will know that a prophet has been among them.**

John 5:24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, **he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life,** and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

John 12:48 "He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; **the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.**

**Conclusion:** Christ does not tell us that bearing witness to Him will often be difficult and costly to discourage our witness, but to keep us from discouragement, from thinking He is not with us or something is wrong with us. Take, eat, and proclaim His Word, believing His word of promise to us ... Matthew 10:32 "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. (In the end, God wins!)