

Preaching in the Face of Persecution

Matthew 10:16 Behold, **I send you forth** as sheep in the midst of wolves: **be** ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. 17 But **beware** of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; 18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. 19 But when they deliver you up, **take no thought** how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. 20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. 21 And the **brother shall deliver** up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against *their* parents, and cause them to be put to death. 22 And ye shall be **hated of all men** for my name's sake: but he that **endureth to the end** shall be saved. 23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the **cities of Israel**, till the Son of man be come.

- This passage deals with the apostles and the nation of Israel
- Much of it will not be fulfilled until after the church age during the tribulation period
- Two famous sayings are in this passage that have been severely misunderstood 19 But when they deliver you up, **take no thought** how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.
- All of my life I was taught that when you preach you do not need to prepare anything just open your mouth and the Lord will fill it. That is not what this verse is saying
- The other is 22 And ye shall be **hated of all men** for my name's sake: but he that **endureth to the end** shall be saved.
- Many make like salvation is depending on you hanging on but salvation isn't about you hanging on but Jesus hanging on to you
- The enduring to the end refers to the tribulation period and if the Jews could endure to the end of it that they would be rescued
- It refers to us enduring the tribulation and mistreatment because it can't last forever and we will be rescued

- This passage will help us understand our missionaries and much of what those in certain countries are going through or will go through

1. Persecution was to be expected from the first mission

Jesus gave His apostles 16 Behold, **I send you**

forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: **be** ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

- a. It comes as a shock to many Christians that we would be persecuted in this world
- b. It surprises us when our missionaries face opposition and persecution
- c. It surprises us when people react harshly towards us because of our faith
- d. The apostles were sent out as sheep among wolves
- e. Notice in the verse that He is not warning that the church will be attacked but rather that He is sending them right into the wolf pack
- f. Jesus knew that He was putting His men in harm's way and warned them of that publicly Romans 8:36 As it is

written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

g. They know that they are going out to die. They were to prepare for the fact.

2. Notice how they were to handle the persecution 16

Behold, **I send you forth** as sheep in the midst of wolves: **be** ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

a. They knew that they were going into harm's way

b. As they went they were to be as wise as a serpent

i. That meant to be smart and cunning

ii. It meant to seize the opportunity Colossians 4:5

Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

iii. It means to say the right thing at the right time and place

iv. It meant to be appropriate

v. It would be foolish just to try to anger the Jewish or Roman leaders

vi. Jesus showed us how when He was asked about paying taxes Matthew 22:21 They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

vii. Tell the truth, do right, but don't just try to start trouble

c. They were to be as harmless as doves

i. They were to treat people right

ii. No reason to be mean and judgmental

iii. No reason to just try to anger people

iv. Adapt to people and culture as much as you can

I Corinthians 9:19 For though I be **free from all men**, yet have I made myself **servant unto all**, that I might gain the more. ²⁰ And unto the Jews I **became as a Jew**, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, **that I might gain them that are under the law;** ²¹ To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but

under the law to Christ,) **that I might gain them** that are without law. ²² To the weak became I as weak, **that I might gain** the weak: I am made all things to all *men*, **that I might by all means save some.**

- d. Going out witnessing and sharing Christ brings risk
 - i. They may make fun of you
 - ii. They may curse you
 - iii. Your job is to do your best that only the gospel is offensive and not you
 - iv. Work at being kind, treating people right.
 - v. Don't change the gospel but do work at changing you

3. What would the persecution look like ¹⁷ But **beware** of men: for they will **deliver you up** to the councils, and they will **scourge you** in their synagogues; ¹⁸ And ye shall be **brought before governors and kings** for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

- a. Men would call the religious police on them

- i. That is what happened with our friends in China
 - ii. That is often what happens in closed countries
 - iii. The religious people hate the message of grace
 - iv. If you believe in Jesus and what He did on the cross there will be no need for all the morality and psychological reprogramming done by so many
 - v. This was talking about what the Apostles could expect from those of their own country.
 - vi. They would beat them like they did Jesus before they got permission to have Him crucified
 - vii. This would mean being cut off from friends and family and even the new believers where they lived and worked
- b. Not only would the religious people be after them but they would get the regular police and government after them
 - i. They would be consider rabble rousers, and trouble makers
 - ii. They would be inciting to riot or civil disobedience
 - iii. They might be seen as preaching a message of hate so committing a hate crime

- c. Their standing firm would be a testimony against both the religious and political leaders
 - d. The apostles were not going out expecting all to be beautiful
 - i. They knew that they nor their message would be that well received especially after hearing these warnings
 - ii. They were well warned John 15:18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. ¹⁹ If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. ²¹ But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.
 - e. Even their family and friends would turn against them
- 21 And the **brother shall deliver** up the brother to death, and the **father** the child: and the children shall

rise up against *their* parents, and cause them to be put to death. 22 And ye shall be **hated of all men** for my name's sake: but he that **endureth to the end** shall be saved.

- i. Imagine the horror of this. Family members turning each other into the government or the religious establishment Matthew 10:35 For I am come to set a man at **variance against** his father, and the daughter **against** her mother, and the daughter in law **against** her mother in law. ³⁶ **And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.** ³⁷ He that loveth father or mother more than me is **not worthy of me:** and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is **not worthy of me.** ³⁸ And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is **not worthy of me.**

1. A brother who would turn his brother in so that he would be put to death
 2. Mothers and dads that would have their children killed
 3. Children that have their parents killed
 - ii. Those that would go out preaching knew that everyone was going to hate them and wish to do them harm
 - f. The people of God would be alone
 - i. This may help you understand why the church family would be so strong
 - ii. It may help you understand why in the book of Acts they ran to each other and shared what happened
 - iii. No one else understood them but their brothers and sisters in Christ
 - g. Your Christian brothers and sisters over seas know what it is like to have their families hate them for following Jesus
4. God would give them what to say 19 But when they deliver you up, **take no thought** how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what

ye shall speak. 20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

- a. They expected to be persecuted. They expected to have to speak to religious and government people
 - b. They were told that God would give them what to say
 - c. This obviously never spoke about not preparing to preach a gospel message
 - d. Obviously the idea was not that the believers would not share the gospel
 - e. They would be arrested for sharing the gospel and once arrested God would give them what to say to the authorities
 - f. They fully expected to have trouble. They were not hiding out
 - g. Being as wise as a serpent never meant figuring out how not to get caught. They expected to be caught
5. They were to run to preach another day 23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the **cities of Israel**, till the Son of man be come.

- a. This passage of Scripture is written primarily to the apostles
- b. They and the Jews that would once again serve in the tribulation period
- c. That is why so much of a mention of Israel and the cities of Israel
- d. That is also why it says 22 And ye shall be **hated of all men** for my name's sake: **but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.**
 - i. The truth is not about salvation as in going to heaven at all
 - ii. If you can make it through the persecution then you will live, be saved
 - iii. If you make it till the end of the tribulation period you will get rescued
 - iv. We are to endure the tribulation and never give up
- e. Enduring persecution doesn't save us but it will certainly reveal who really believes
- f. As Christians we do not look to be persecuted.

- i. You should understand when one of our missionaries needs to leave the country or change cities because of persecution
 - ii. Our missionaries shouldn't be so foolish as to stay too long and get hurt just to get hurt
 - iii. Paul ran to other cities when he was persecuted
- You can apply this to your life when you decide that Jesus is worth your life
 - When you decide that witnessing for Jesus might cause you friendships and business deals but He is more important
 - This truth can help you as you pray for our missionaries and what they suffer as they try to serve God in creative access countries
 - Be prepared to serve and honor Jesus this week by sharing a gospel tract with someone
 - Invite someone to church
 - Share the gospel with them