

Confidence for Disciples
Matthew 10:24-33

Introduction

For the last couple of weeks we have been examining Matthew 10 in which Jesus gives instructions to the apostles prior to sending them out on their first independent mission to spread throughout Israel the news that *“the kingdom of heaven is at hand”* (10:7). While many of the things Jesus said to the apostles were specifically to them, there are also principles in Jesus’ instructions that do apply to us such as: Ministry should be focused; The message should be clear; Your life should be one of ministry with a heart that trusts the Lord; There should be a concentration on those who respond; And there should be a departure from those who are firm in their unbelief.

Last week we examined Jesus’ warning to the apostles that they were being sent out as *“sheep in the midst of wolves.”* If they were to survive and accomplish their mission, they would have to be as *“wise as a serpent and innocent as a dove”* and have full trust and confidence in the shepherd who was sending them. They would face great danger at the hands of false religion, ungodly governments, the society at large and even from family members. Those same dangers still exist for us and so we should also beware and be as wise as serpents and innocent as doves.

This morning our study will begin with verse 24 of this chapter. The grammar of Jesus’ instruction changes from being mostly specific to the apostles to more general statements that apply to believers of every age. He begins to use the indefinite third person (a disciple, a slave, everyone, whoever, etc.) along with the second person (you, your) which clearly indicates that He is speaking about every true believer and not just the apostles. What we will examine this morning applies directly to us!

We have already seen in the past weeks that persecution will come to those that live righteously. The world hates Jesus and therefore anyone else that is truly reflective of Him. Jesus will point that out again in this morning’s text, but at the same time He also points out the great hope that is given to His followers. The disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ can be confident. We do not need to fear the future regardless of the strength and intensity of any persecution that may come upon us because God has given us eternity. There is no cause for us to worry about our Savior’s love, for God is personally and intimately involved with us. His love for us is infinite in keeping with His own character.

Those who are true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ can have confidence in five areas: Confidence in the purpose of their life, Confidence in being used by the Lord, Confidence in the midst of persecution, Confidence in God’s intimate care for them, and Confidence when they stand before God.

Confidence in the Purpose of Life - Matthew 10:24-25

What is the purpose of life? That is a question that I often ask people to consider and I ask you to consider it this morning. If you do not understand what your life is about, then you are doomed to reach the end of it and see it as a waste. That was even the conclusion of Solomon when he was living his life apart from God. To those who live to gain fame, Solomon said, *“For there is no lasting remembrance of the wise man as with the fool, inasmuch as in the coming days all will be forgotten”* (Ecclesiastes 2:16). To those that live to gain riches, Solomon said, *“He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income”* (Ecclesiastes 5:10). He also pointed out *“all the fruit of my labor . . . I must leave it to the man who will come after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool?”* (Ecclesiastes 2:18,19). To those that live to enjoy pleasure, Solomon’s warning was that it too was *“vanity”* (Ecclesiastes 2:10) and also cautioned that though it is pleasant to rejoice

and *“follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things”* (Ecclesiastes 11:9).

Paul stated the purpose of the Christian’s life clearly in Romans 8:29, *“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.”* You were saved for the purpose of becoming like Jesus Christ. That is the same principle we find in the opening verses of our text this morning. Matthew 10:24, *“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become as his teacher, and the slave as his master.”* Stop there for the moment.

Remember that a disciple is simply a learner, a student of a teacher. The goal of the student is to become as the teacher. This does not mean that the disciple will become equal to the teacher, but like or similar to the teacher. The disciple develops the same qualities and skills as the teacher. The same statement concerning the slave has the same point. The slave will not become the master’s equal, but he will take on the master’s qualities so that those who meet him will know to whom he belongs. Luke 6:40 also states this same truth, *“A disciple is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.”* If you are a true Christian, then you are a disciple by definition. As we shall see next week, not all disciples are true Christians, but every true Christian is a disciple and the purpose of the Christian’s life is to become like Jesus Christ in character.

The analogy of pupil and teacher speaks to the volitional aspect of man. A disciple willingly and purposely chooses to give himself over to the teacher in order to become like him. The analogy of a slave speaks about the volition of the master for the slave’s choice is subjugated to that of the master. Both of these analogies speak to our relationship to God. By choice disciples of Jesus strive to be like Him, but believers are also chosen of and purchased by Jesus so that *“we are not our own, but bought with a price.”* We choose to follow Jesus, but we are also His slaves who are subject to His will. The purpose of our lives then is to learn and become like our master. When people meet us, they should be able to tell to whom we belong.

Disciples of Jesus can be confident that their lives are meaningful and worthwhile because the Scriptures clearly state their purpose. A follower of Jesus Christ is to be reflective of the Savior and strive to accomplish His will. However, before we can go on to the next area of confidence, we must look at the warning Jesus gives in verse 25, *“If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household.”* Here Jesus transfers to a family analogy and tells us plainly that if we become like Him and they called Him Beelzebul, then we can expect no less.

Beelzebul (also translated Beelzebub) is a reference to a Canaanite deity which came to be used as a common reference term for Satan. As we have seen in previous sermons the last few months, the Jewish religious leaders, the scribes and Pharisees, did call Jesus that name as their conflict with Him escalated. We must take note that if Jesus was called Satan, then those who are identified with Him are certainly going to be called similar things. Jesus previously warned His followers that they would be insulted, persecuted and have all kinds of evil said against them falsely on account of Him, but He added at the same time that we are blessed when that happens and should rejoice and be glad for that is the way the prophets were persecuted before us and our reward in heaven would be great (Matthew 5:10-12).

Confidence in Being Used by the Lord - Matthew 10:26-27

The thought of suffering is never pleasant, but in the midst of persecution that may arise against the righteous, Jesus’ disciples can be confident that they will be used by the Lord to accomplish His will. They will be able to fulfill the purpose of their lives. Notice what Jesus says in verses 26-27, *“Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops.”*

There was much that the disciples were learning from Jesus as they began to understand the Hebrew Scriptures correctly, but there was also new revelation being given. The reference to the things that are “covered” and “hidden” were to mysteries that were coming to light which include the following: The mystery of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 16:25; Ephesians 3:3,4,9; 6:9, etc.). The mystery of the resurrection of the body (1 Corinthians 15:51). The mystery of the husband and wife relationship being reflective of Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:32) The mystery of the branches of Israel being cut off and the church being grafted into its roots (Romans 11:24-25) resulting in the wall that had previously divided Jew and Gentile being broken down. All these various things that had previously been covered and hidden were revealed and made known. From the book of Revelation we know that there are still things we do not understand that are yet to be revealed and one day they will be revealed.

The phrase, “*what I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light,*” is a reference to the private lessons Jesus had taught the apostles were now to be told publically. The phrase, “*what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops,*” refers to the practice the Jewish Rabbis of the time had in training their students. The rabbi would stand next to the student and whisper in his ear, the student was then to speak out loud what he had heard. The specific reference to shouting it from the housetops was the common Middle Eastern method of making both official and personal announcements. The Islamic practice of announcing prayer times from a minaret is reflective of this custom.

Jesus personally taught and spoke in the ears of the Apostles and they in turn were to publically proclaim His teaching. In our own time, we are taught the word of God through the Scriptures, and we are to proclaim His message publicly with nothing held back. That also means we are to teach the whole counsel of God and not just the parts we like. A person that selectively proclaims Jesus’ teachings is not a true disciple for he is not like the master.

A classic example of this is John 3:16-21. Everyone likes verses 16 & 17, “¹⁶*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him.*” Those are great and precious words, but they are only part of the message. It is seldom that the rest of Jesus’ message is also taught. “¹⁸*He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the judgement, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. ²⁰For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deed should be exposed. ²¹But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.*”

The gospel is wonderful news of God’s mercy and grace, but the whole gospel is also a message of His judgment. Remember, that Jesus Himself preached “*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (Matthew 4:17), and He told His apostles to proclaim the same message giving a blessing to those that received and stern warning to those that did not (Matthew 10:5-15).

Let me quickly stress here the point that Biblical Christianity does not have any secrets. Everything we need for life and godliness is revealed to us in the Scriptures (2 Peter 1:3-4). For that reason Christians have no business belonging to any group, society, fraternal order or lodge that claims secret spiritual knowledge. Most such organizations, such as the Masonic Lodge, also have secret rites and ceremonies. Such groups are cultic and do not proclaim the Biblical gospel, therefore, they can in no way assist a Christian in fulfilling the purpose of his or her life. If you are part of such an organization, then it is past time to leave it. Stick to the open proclamation of God’s word and quit wasting your time or worse with such secretive groups for they are contrary to the Scriptures.

Confidence in the Midst of Persecution - Matthew 10:28

I realize that my last statement could make people involved with such groups upset and mad. I had a friend who was asked to pastor a small Baptist church out in the country in western New York. He was

there a couple of months when one of the Deacons asked him to go to a meeting of the local Free Masons. He then found out that all of his Deacons belonged to the group, and when they found out his opposition to the Masons because of their many teachings which are contradictory to the Bible, he was forced out.

My friend faced opposition and some minor persecution. When it arose, he had a choice to make. Would he strive to please God and risk unemployment, or would he please man and gain their favor and financial support. Jesus makes it clear in verse 28 that we can have confidence in the midst of persecution because we serve the sovereign God. *“And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”*

The very worst thing that men can do is kill your body. They can not touch your soul. The most Satan can do is kill your body for even he cannot touch your soul if you are in Christ. Remember, Satan is not the ruler over hell now nor will he be in the future. Satan will become a captive who is tormented in hell (Matthew 25; Revelation 20). The only one that has power over both the body and the soul is God. He is able to destroy both. And I must be quick to point out that the word destroy here (*ajpovllumi / apollumi*) in this context means kill, great loss or ruin and not annihilation in the sense of ceasing to exist.

I point this out because it is becoming more popular to teach soul annihilation because it removes the negative reaction people have to the idea of eternal suffering in Hell. However, Jesus made it clear in Matthew 25:31-45 that Hell is just as real as Heaven and both are eternal. Revelation 20:10-15 describes this as a lake of fire that continues forever and ever into which will be cast the devil, the beast, the false prophet and all whose names are not written in the book of life. 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 explains that these are those *“who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”* We need not to fear men or Satan and his hosts. Non-Christians do need to fear God in the sense of dread and trembling. Christians need to fear God in the sense of awe, respect and honor.

Fear is a real emotion that can lead us to do all sorts of things, but if we keep our eyes on the truth and hold to the promises of God, dread of man or Satan will not control us, but awe and respect for God will. When Hugh Latimer was to preach before King Henry VIII he reports that he said to himself, *“Latimer! Latimer! Remember that the king is here, be careful what you say.”* Then upon reflection he said to himself, *“Latimer! Latimer! Remember that the King of Kings is here, be careful of what you do not say.”* Because of such unflinching faithfulness to Christ, he was later burned at the stake. Latimer’s proper reverence for God was greater than his dread of what would happen if he offended men. You must approach life the same way, and your confidence in doing so is that while man can bring about suffering in this life and even kill you, no man or even the devil himself can harm your soul.

Confidence in God’s Intimate Care for Us - Matthew 10:29-31

As a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, you can also have confidence to face what lies before you because of God’s intimate care for you. Jesus illustrates that personal concern in verses 29-30, *“Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Therefore, do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows.”*

Sparrows then are like sparrows now, a very common and practically worthless bird. At that time they were served roasted as a very cheap finger food. They sold for the value of an assarion (*ajssavrion*), the smallest coinage in circulation which was worth about 1/16 of a common labor’s daily wage. Yet God is even aware of the activity of such inconsequential animals. God is so intimately involved with you that he even knows the most trivial information about you such as the number of hairs on your head. This statement also shows it is a continued intimacy for people lose hair throughout life and God keeps a running count.

The point of Jesus' statement is that if God takes notice of such mundane things as sparrows and the number of hairs on your head, then how much more does he consider your life and soul which is of such greater importance. You are worth more than sparrows, so you can be confident of God's intimate care and love for you.

Confidence When We Stand Before God - Matthew 10:32-33

As you fulfill the purpose of your life in carrying out the Lord's will and being changed into His image, then you will also be able to stand firm against any challenge against you. You can be confident that you can carry out the Lord's will even in the midst of persecution while taking refuge in the fact of His intimate care for you. You will also be able to be confident when you stand before Him as stated in verses 32, *"Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven."*

The idea of confession is to *"say the same thing as another,"* to *"voice agreement with him."* Confession of Jesus means to agree with Him about who He is. This is more than a simple acknowledgment of facts. It is a declaration of your true belief which carries with it the dedication to live according to your belief. I have said it before, I will say it again. You can say anything you want, but your true beliefs will be demonstrated by your actions. The idea of confessing Jesus is an affirmation of your true belief. *"Shall confess"* is in the future indicative case meaning it is an ongoing affirmation and not a confession that happened just once.

In addition, confession, this affirmation of your belief in Jesus, is to be public. Notice that it is *"before men."* Since the context here contains persecution, this is the willingness to confess that Jesus is your Lord and to continue to do so even when you will suffer for it. Even if it should cost you your life. Jesus states that for those who will do that, He will confess them before the Father in Heaven.

But Jesus states the flip side to this too in verse 33, *"But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will deny him before My Father who is in Heaven."* People do not like this verse because it is frightening. They quickly go to the doctrine of eternal security and claim *"once saved, always saved."* They also quickly point out and claim that since Peter denied Christ and was saved, then they must also be safe.

Let me point out two things about this. First, while I believe in eternal security, I also believe there are a lot of people who have a false security because regardless of their claim to believe, they are not saved. Jesus made that point in Matthew 7 in stating that though some people claimed to do all sorts of things in His name including prophesy, miracles and casting out demons, He did not know them for they practiced lawlessness and He sent them away. Second, Peter denied Christ prior to his receiving the Holy Spirit and Peter confessed his denial as sin. He also spent the rest of his life professing Jesus publicly even though it meant time in jail, persecution and eventually martyrdom.

Jesus' words here are plain enough. The grammar and context specifically indicate Jesus is talking about false disciples who fear men more than God and deny Jesus in order to gain favor with men, or at least to avoid their disfavor. The commentator Lenski put it this way, *"Jesus is here . . . [referring to] disciples who, because of men, fail to confess him . . ."* People fear to lose the favor of men and the profit and the advantages that gives them, and then their own self-deception veils their motives and gives excuses for their actions. The consequences are terrible beyond description. Jesus will deny those who deny him. Confusion, dismay, consternation, and eternal misery will overwhelm them for eternity. The warning is serious and the wise heed it, but the self-deceived remain oblivious.

Conclusions

If you are a disciple of Jesus, then you know your purpose in life is to become like Jesus Christ and do His will. You can be confident that God will enable you to carry out the work that He has given you. You can be confident even when persecuted because neither men nor the devil can affect your soul. You can be confident of God's intimate care for you for He even numbers the hairs on your head. You can be

confident when you stand before God because your confession of Jesus will result in Him confessing you to God.

This kind of confidence is seen in the story of the “Emperor’s Wrestlers.” In the days of Nero there was a band of soldiers called the “Emperor’s Wrestlers.” They were hand picked from the best and bravest of the land. In the great amphitheater they upheld the arms of the emperor against all challengers. Their song before the throne was, *“We, the wrestlers, wrestling for thee, O Emperor, to win for thee the victory and from thee, the victor’s crown.”* At one point in time this band of brave soldiers was sent to Gaul (modern France) where they proved to be the bravest and most loyal of all Rome’s armies. But news reached Nero that many Roman Soldiers had accepted the Christian faith. Nero sent a decree to Vespasian, the Centurion in charge of the band, that said, *“If there be any among your soldiers who cling to the faith of the Christian, they must die!”*

The decree was received in the middle of winter where the band was encamped by the shore of a frozen lake. Vespasian called the soldiers together and called on all those who held to the Christian faith to step forward. Instantly, 40 wrestlers stepped forward, saluted and stood at attention. He read the decree and told them they would have until sundown to make their decision as to whether they would deny Christ and live or hold to Him and die.

At sundown Vespasian once again called the soldiers together and asked those who held to Christ to step forward. All forty stepped forward again. Vespasian pleaded for them to deny the Lord and live, but none were persuaded. He was unwilling to have their comrades carry out the emperor’s decree, so he ordered them to strip and march to the center of the lake where they would be at the mercy of the elements. The men took off their clothes and formed into four columns and marched to the center of the lake singing a new version of their wrestlers song, *“Forty wrestlers, wrestling for Thee, O Christ, to win for Thee the victory and from Thee the victors crown!”*

Through the long hours of the night Vespasian watched and waited by the fire as the wrestler’s song became fainter and fainter as the elements did their work. As the morning drew near, one lone figure, overcome with exposure, crept to the fire. In the suffering he had renounced his Lord. Faintly but clearly from the darkness came the song, *“Thirty-nine wrestlers, wrestling for Thee, O Christ, to win for Thee the victory and from Thee the victor’s crown!”*

As Vespasian heard this and saw the tragic figure by the fire something happened within him. Perhaps he saw clearly for the first time. He took off his helmet and clothing and sprang onto the ice crying, *“Forty wrestlers, wrestling for Thee, O Christ, to win for Thee the victory, and from Thee, the victor’s crown!”*

Where do you stand today? There is confidence for true disciples, but tragedy await those who are false. Are you out on the lake or by the fire?

Sermon Notes: *Confidence for Disciples*
Matthew 10:24-33

Introduction

Jesus is specifically instructing the Apostles, but the _____ also apply to us

As sheep among wolves, they would need to be as _____ as a serpent and as innocent as a dove

Jesus instructions become more _____ starting in verse 24

The world _____ Jesus and therefore those that follow Him, but we can be confident because of His love

Confidence in the Purpose of Life - Matthew 10:24-25

If you do not know the purpose of your life, you will find at the end of it that it was all _____ - Ecclesiastes

The purpose of the Christian's life is to become like _____ - Romans 8:29

A disciples is a student that it striving to become like his _____ - Matthew 10:24; Luke 6:40

A disciple chooses to strive to be like Jesus, but Jesus also chose and purchased him as a _____

A disciple can expect to be _____ the same way as Jesus was - Matthew 10:25

Jesus followers will be insulted, slandered and persecuted - but they also have a great _____ in heaven

Confidence in Being Used by the Lord - Matthew 10:26-27

The "covered" and "hidden" things were _____ that were coming to light - gospel, resurrection, marriage
reflecting Christ and the church, Gentiles grafted in so the walls between them and Jews was broken.

The private lessons Jesus taught the Apostles were to be proclaimed _____

What we learn from the Word of God we are to _____ proclaim with nothing held back

John 3:16-21 contains both good news for those who believe and strong _____ to those that do not

Biblical Christianity does not have _____ & the Christian does not need additional revelations - 2 Pet. 1:3-4

Flee from groups that claim _____ spiritual knowledge - stick to the open proclamation of God's word

Confidence in the Midst of Persecution - Matthew 10:28

The worst thing men or Satan can do to you is _____ you, but they cannot affect the soul of a Christian

Hell is a real place of _____ torment of unbelievers - Matthew 25:31-45; 2 Thess. 1:8-9; Rev. 20:10-15

Fear (dread) of man or Satan leads to sin while fear (awe and reverence) of God leads to _____

Confidence in God's Intimate Care for Us - Matthew 10:29-31

Sparrows were a common, very inexpensive bird - worth _____ of a common man's daily wage

God is so intimately involved in a believer's life he keeps a running _____ of the hairs on your head

If God takes notice of such _____ things, then how much more does he care for your life and soul?

Confidence When We Stand Before God - Matthew 10:32-33

To “confess” is to “say the same thing” or to “voice _____”

Confessing Jesus is an affirmation of true ongoing _____, not a one time acknowledgment of facts

Confession of Jesus is _____ and will be done even if it results in suffering for His name

Denial of Jesus can result in _____ denying you

True salvation cannot be lost, but there are many that have _____ professions of faith - Matthew 7:21-23

A person that _____ man more than he loves God will deny Jesus - and self deception excuses the actions

Conclusions

A true disciple of Jesus can be confident God will enable him to carry out the _____ God has given him

A true disciple of Jesus can be confident when persecuted because neither men nor Satan can affect his _____

A true disciple of Jesus can be confident of God’s intimate _____ and love for him

A true disciple of Jesus can be confident before God because Jesus will _____ him to God

Are you _____ enough in Jesus that you would suffer and die for him?

KIDS KORNER

Parents, you are responsible to apply God’s Word to your children’s lives. Here is some help.

Young Children - draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. **Older Children** - Do one or more of the following: 1) Count how many times a reference is made to confidence. 2) Discuss with your parents how you can be confident in God and before Him

THINK ABOUT IT!

Questions to consider in discussing the sermon with others. How can you make sure that you do not apply to yourself an instruction in Matthew 10 that is specific to the apostles? How do you develop a principle of ministry from those instructions that does apply to yourself? What will be the end result for a person that thinks life is about fame? Money? Pleasure? What is the purpose of the life of a Christian? Explain. What is a disciple? Why is that term used to describe a Christian? Why is “slave” a proper term to apply to a Christian? What do each of these terms suggest about choice and who makes what choices? What warnings has Jesus given His followers about how they will be treated by the world? Why then should they still rejoice? What “mysteries” have Jesus and the apostles revealed? What is the meaning of Matthew 10:27? Can someone truly be a disciple of Jesus if they are selective in which teachings of Jesus they will proclaim? Explain. Why would it be wrong for a Christian to be part of a secret society or organization such as the Masonic Lodge? Explain. Who can destroy both body and soul in hell? Why is the idea of soul annihilation heretical? What does the Bible teach about the nature and duration of Hell? What will fear (dread) of man result in? What will fear (awe and reverence) of God result in? What is a sparrow and what was its worth? How does God numbering the hairs of your head demonstrate His intimate care of you? What does it mean to confess Jesus? Why is intellectual acknowledgment insufficient? Eternal security of salvation is an important doctrine, but how can that doctrine be abused to give a false confidence? Why would a professing Christian deny Jesus? What danger does that bring? What is your level of confidence as a follower of Jesus? Would you willingly suffer and even die for His namesake if required?