

Fearless Witness in the Face of Danger

Matthew 10:16-23

*“Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves,
so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Matthew 10:16*

1. Suffering is a certainty for disciples of Jesus

A. They will DELIVER you

17 Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues,

B. They will DRAG you

18 and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake...

C. They will DIVIDE you

21 Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death,

D. They will HATE you

22 and you will be hated by all for my name's sake.

E. They will PERSECUTE you

23 When they persecute you in one town...

The History of Persecution of the Church

- The Book of Acts and New Testament
- Foxes book of Martyrs - by [John Foxe](#)
- By their blood: Modern Day Martyrs by James and Marti Helfey
- Jesus Freaks by DC Talk
- Tortured for Christ by Richard Wurmbrand

Update on Persecution Today – World Watch List 2020 by Open Doors ministry (available at <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/2020-world-watch-list-report/>)

- 260 million Christians experience high levels of persecution in the top 50 countries on the world watch list (6% increase since 2019).
- 2,983 Christians were killed for faith-related reasons. On average, that is 8 Christians killed every day for their faith.

- Last year 9,488 Churches or Christian buildings were attacked.
- 3,711 believers were detained or arrested without trials. Arrested, sentenced, and imprisoned (these are just the ones that were reported).

2. Christ's instructions for fearless witness in the face of danger

A. Be WISE and INNOCENT

16 ...so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.

23 When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next...

B. Be WARE

17 Beware of men...

C. Be WITNESSES

18 ... bear witness before them and the Gentiles.

D. Be NOT ANXIOUS

19 When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. 20 For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

E. Be STRONG

22 ...But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Application for today

1. **Persecution is not the goal** – To be faithful, obedient, and joyful because of Jesus is our driving motivation.

For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. 1 Peter 2:20

Being persecuted means enduring hostility or unfair treatment because of your words or deeds in the name of Jesus Christ.

But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. Hebrews 10:3-342

“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation” 1 Peter 4:12-13

2. We will not be prepared for suffering for Christ tomorrow if we don't know how to sacrifice for Christ today

“One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. Luke 16:10

Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required. Luke 12:48

3. Prayer for the persecuted church is the greatest gift we can give

A. Pray that whatever the circumstances God will give them the right words.

Ephesians 6:19-20, Colossians 4:2-4

“Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.”

B. Pray that they will understand and find peace in the sufficiency of God's grace, even in their weakness. 2 Corinthians 12:9; Galatians 6:17

2 Corinthians 12:9 “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

C. Pray that when facing hardship they will draw from a source larger than themselves.

2 Corinthians 1:7-9; Acts 5:41; 2 Corinthians 1:8-9

2 Corinthians 1:7-9 “For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death.” But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.”

D. Pray that God would protect them according to His will. Hebrews 10:36; Hebrews 5:8;

Luke 22:39-45 Matthew 26:39, Acts 12:5, Philippians 1:19, Philemon 22, Romans 15:30-31

Matthew 26:39, “My Father, if it is possible let this cup pass from me, yet not my will, but yours be done.”

E. Pray their witness would inspire those who seek to harm them. Luke 6:27-31

“But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”

Discussion Questions

- Read Matthew 10:16 - 33. What observations or questions come to mind?
- Why did Jesus use the illustration of sheep and wolves? Have you had any experiences with sheep or wolves (real or metaphorical)?
- Why did Jesus talk about serpents and doves? Why are both wisdom and innocence important? Are they contradictory?
- Read John 15:18-20. Why would people hate Jesus? Why would they hate you?
- “Being persecuted means enduring hostility or unfair treatment because of your words or deeds in the name of Jesus Christ.” Bring that down to earth for 21st century Silicon Valley Christians. What does that look like for you today?
- Pick one of the top 25 most persecuted countries in the world from the Open Doors World Watch List. Read the description and pray for Christians in that country using the five prayer points at the end. Pray for the same thing for yourself in your work, family, school, or community.