

Matthew 10:16-26. He Prepares Them for Persecution.

by Favell Lee Mortimer

Jesus prepares his disciples for the treatment they would receive from the world, warning them about hatred, persecution, and the importance of enduring to the end.

Scripture: Matthew 10:16-26, Acts 4:13, 1 Peter 3:15

Topics: "Persecution", "Discipleship"

Description

Favell Lee Mortimer delivers a sermon on how Jesus fully prepared his disciples for the persecution they would face from the world, likening ungodly men to wolves and his apostles to sheep. Despite the hatred, slander, and persecution they would endure, Jesus encouraged his followers to endure to the end to be saved. He assured them that the truth would be revealed and known, comforting them in the face of false accusations. Jesus instructed his disciples to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves, preparing them for the trials they would face for preaching the gospel.

Transcript

Our Savior fully prepared his disciples for the treatment they would receive from the world. He compared ungodly men to wolves, and his apostles to sheep. He described the manner in which these wolves would treat his sheep--in thought, word, and deed. The thoughts of ungodly men towards the apostles would be thoughts of hatred. Jesus said, "You shall be hated of all men." (verse 22.)

The world has ever hated the children of God. There is nothing more painful to our feelings than the ill-will of our fellow-creatures. No abundance of possessions can make amends for hatred; while love can console in the midst of trials. Jesus therefore warned his disciples against being turned back from him by the hatred of the world, saying, "He who endures to the end (in spite of these trials) shall be saved."

The hatred men felt in their hearts would lead them to utter hateful words against the disciples of Jesus. They had called the Lord Jesus himself Beelzebub. Ought his disciples to expect better treatment? Was it not enough if the servant was not worse treated than his Lord?

Christians have always been slandered; they have been accused of hypocrisy, as well as of secret crimes. Jesus comforts his disciples under their accusations by this assurance in verse 26--"There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; nor hidden, that shall not be known." Would it not comfort those who

are falsely accused, to know that the day is coming when the truth would be made known? Such comfort all Christians possess, when slandered by their enemies.

Men would not only speak words against the disciples, but would commit cruel actions against them. They would imprison them and scourge them, and even cause them to be put to death. Yes, parents would turn against their own children, and persecute them in the most unnatural manner.

All these trials did not come upon the disciples during their first journey; but as Jesus knew they would come upon them after his ascension, he directed them how to behave under these trials. They were to do everything to avoid persecution, except concealing the truth. In their characters they were to resemble serpents and doves; serpents in caution and prudence, doves in gentleness and inoffensiveness--they were not to be malicious as serpents, or silly as doves, but wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. Yet notwithstanding all their endeavors, they would be persecuted for preaching the gospel.

One great advantage would arise from their being brought before kings and judges; they would have an opportunity of declaring the truth to those high personages; as Paul did to Felix, who trembled on his judgment-seat. Jesus bade his disciples take no thought what they should speak when examined by their judges. Though they could not foresee what perplexing questions would be put to them, they were not to be disturbed with the fear lest they should not be able to answer well; for God would assist them with his Spirit.

Peter and John were the first among the apostles who were brought before rulers for their Master's sake. It is written, that when Peter was called upon to defend his conduct in healing the lame man, he "was filled with the Holy Spirit." He spoke with such power, that his judges could make no reply. "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled." (Acts 4:13.)

In later days many poor uneducated men have been questioned by learned judges, and have been able to give answers which have quite confounded their enemies. In Foxe's Book of Martyrs, there are accounts of many such men who suffered death in this country, because they would not worship the Virgin Mary and the saints, or profess to believe Roman Catholic errors. And it has been remarked, that some of the least learned of the martyrs spoke with the greatest power; because they relied most simply upon the help of God, and appealed only to his Word.

Though we may never be called upon to stand before an earthly judgment-seat, yet we must be willing to confess our faith whenever an opportunity occurs. It is written in the first Epistle of Peter, "' Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." We may trust in God to teach us on such occasions how to reply. Let us lift up our hearts to Him before we speak, and our answer may be made the means of converting the unbelieving inquirer.

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