

# Expository Thoughts On Matthew - Matthew

## 10:1-15

by J.C. Ryle

### Transcript

This chapter is one of peculiar solemnity. Here is the record of the first ordination which ever took place in the Church of Christ. The Lord Jesus chooses and sends forth the twelve apostles. Here is an account of the first charge ever delivered to newly ordained Christian ministers. The Lord Jesus himself delivers it. Never was there so important an ordination! Never was there so solemn a charge! There are three lessons which stand out prominently on the face of the first fifteen verses of this chapter. Let us take them in order. We are taught in the first place, that all ministers are not necessarily good men. We see our Lord choosing a Judas Iscariot to be one of his apostles. We cannot doubt that he who knew all hearts knew well the characters of the men whom he chose; and he includes in the list of his apostles one who was a traitor! We shall do well to bear in mind this fact. Orders do not confer the saving grace of the Holy Ghost: ordained men are not necessarily converted. We are not to regard them as infallible, either in doctrine or in practice; we are not to make popes or idols of them, and insensibly to put them in Christ's place. We are to regard them as men of like passions with ourselves, to the same infirmities, and daily requiring the same grace. We are not to think it impossible for them to do very bad things; or to expect them to be above the reach of harm from flattery, covetousness, and the world. We are to prove their teaching by the Word of God, and to follow them so far as they follow Christ, but no further. Above all, we ought to pray for them that they may be successors, not of Judas Iscariot, but of James and John. It is a serious responsibility to be a minister of the Gospel! Ministers need many prayers. We are taught in the next place, that the great work of a minister of Christ is to do good. He is sent to seek «lost sheep,» to proclaim glad tidings, to relieve those who are suffering, to diminish sorrow, and to increase joy. His life is meant to be one of giving rather than receiving. This is a high standard, and a very peculiar one. Let it be well weighed and carefully examined. It is plain, for one thing, that the life of a faithful minister of Christ cannot be one of ease. He must be ready to spend body and mind, time and strength, in the work of his calling: laziness and frivolity are bad enough in any profession, but worst of all in that of a watchman for souls. It is plain, for another thing, that the position of the ministers of Christ is not that which ignorant people sometimes assign to them, and which they, unhappily, sometimes claim for themselves. They are not so much ordained to rule as to serve; they are not so much intended to have dominion over the Church, as to supply its wants and to wait upon its members («2 Corinthians 1:24»). Happy would it be for the cause of true religion if these things were better understood! Half the diseases of Christianity have arisen from mistaken notions about the minister's office. We are taught in the last place, that it is a most dangerous thing to neglect the offers of the Gospel. It shall prove «more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the judgment day» than for those who have heard

Christ's truth, and not received it. This is a doctrine fearfully overlooked, and one that deserves serious consideration. Men are apt to forget that it does not require great open sins to be sinned in order to ruin a soul forever. They have only to go on hearing without believing, listening without repenting, going to church without going to Christ, and by and by they will find themselves in hell! We shall all be judged according to our light; we shall have to give account of our use of religious privileges: to hear of the "great salvation" and yet neglect it, is one of the worst sins man can commit. (1) John 16:9

What are we doing ourselves with the Gospel? This is the question which everyone who reads this passage should put to his conscience. Let us assume that we are decent and respectable in our lives, correct and moral in all the relations of life, regular in our formal attendance on the means of grace. It is all well so far as it goes, but is this all that can be said of us? Are we really receiving the love of the truth? Is Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith? If not, we are in fearful danger; we are far more guilty than the men of Sodom, who never heard the Gospel at all; we may awake to find that in spite of our regularity and morality and correctness, we have lost our souls to all eternity. It will not save us to have lived in the full sunshine of Christian privileges, and to have heard the Gospel faithfully preached every week. There must be experimental acquaintance with Christ; there must be personal reception of his truth; there must be vital union with Him; we must become his servants and disciples. Without this, the preaching of the Gospel only adds to our responsibility, increases our guilt, and will at length sink us more deeply into hell. These are hard sayings! But the words of Scripture, which we have read, are plain and unmistakable. They are all true.

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