

Expository Thoughts On Matthew - Matthew

10:16-23

by J.C. Ryle

Transcript

The truths contained in these verses should be pondered by all who try to do good in the world. To the selfish man who cares for nothing but his own ease or comfort, there may seem to be little in them. To the minister of the Gospel, and to everyone who seeks to save souls, these verses ought to be full of interest. No doubt there is much in them which applies especially to the days of the apostles; but there is much also which applies to all times. We see for one thing, that those who would do good to souls must be moderate in their expectations. They must not think that universal success will attend their labors. They must reckon on meeting with much opposition; they must make up their minds to be hated, persecuted, and ill-used, and that too by their nearest relations. They will often find themselves «œi» ÿlike sheep in the midst of wolvesi» ÿ«œ■ let us bear this in mind continually. Whether we preach, or teach, or visit from house to house, whether we write or give counsel, or whatever we do, let it be a settled principle with us not to expect more than Scripture and experience warrant. Human nature is far more wicked and corrupt than we think: the power of evil is far greater than we suppose. It is vain to imagine that everybody will see what is good for them, and believe what we tell them: it is expecting what we shall not find, and will only end in disappointment. Happy is that laborer for Christ who knows these things at his first starting and has not have to learn them by bitter experience! Here lies the secret cause why many have turned back, who once seemed full of zeal to do good. They began with extravagant expectations; they did not «œi» ÿcount the cost.i» ÿ«œ■ They fell into the mistake of the great German Reformer who confessed he forgot at one time that «œi» ÿOld Adam was too strong for young Melanchthon.i» ÿ«œ■ We see for another thing, that those who would do good have need to pray for wisdom, good sense and a sound mind. Our Lord tells his disciples to be «œi» ÿwise as serpents and harmless as dovesi» ÿ«œ■ He tells them that when they are persecuted in one place, they may lawfully «œi» ÿflee to another.i» ÿ«œ■ There are few of our Lordâ€™s instructions which it is so difficult to use rightly as this. There is a line marked out for us between two extremes, but it is a line that requires great judgement to define. To avoid persecution by holding our tongues and keeping our religion entirely to ourselves is one extreme: we are not to err in that direction. To court persecution and thrust our religion upon everyone we meet, without regard to place, time or circumstances, is another extreme. In this direction also we are warned not to err, any more than in the other. Truly we may say, «œi» ÿWho is sufficient for these things?i» ÿ«œ■ We have need to cry to «œi» ÿthe only wise Godi» ÿ«œ■ for wisdom. The extreme into which most men are liable to fall in the present day is that of silence, cowardice, and letting others alone. Our so-called prudence is apt to degenerate into a compromising line of conduct or downright unfaithfulness. We are only too ready to suppose that it is of no use trying to do good to certain people: we excuse ourselves from efforts to benefit

their souls by saying it would be indiscreet, or inexpedient, or would give needless offense, or would even do positive harm. Let us all watch and be on our guard against this spirit; laziness and the devil are often the true explanation of it. To give way to it is pleasant to flesh and blood, no doubt, and saves us much trouble: but those who give way to it often throw away great opportunities of usefulness. On the other hand, it is impossible to deny that there is such a thing as a righteous and holy zeal, which is not according to knowledge. It is quite possible to create much needless offense, commit great blunders and stir up much opposition which might have been avoided by a little prudence, wise management and exercise of judgment. Let us take heed that we are not guilty in this respect. We may be sure there is such a thing as Christian wisdom, which is quite distinct from Jesuitical subtlety or carnal policy. This wisdom let us seek. Our Lord Jesus does not require us to throw aside our common sense when we undertake to work for him. There will be offense enough connected with our religion, do what we will; but let us not increase it without cause. Let us strive to walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise (Ephesians 5:15). It is to be feared that believers in the Lord Jesus do not sufficiently pray for the Spirit of knowledge, judgment, and a sound mind. They are apt to fancy that if they have grace, they have all they need. They forget that a gracious heart should pray that it may be full of wisdom, as well as of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 6:3) Let us all remember this. Great grace and common sense are perhaps one of the rarest combinations: that they may go together the life of David and the ministry of the apostle Paul are striking proofs. In this, however, as in every other respect, our Lord Jesus Christ himself is our most perfect example: none were ever so faithful as he, but none were ever so truly wise. Let us make him our pattern and walk in his steps.

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