

Matthew 10:16–23
Prepare to Be Attacked!

Saturday, July 20, 2024 ▫ Read Matthew 10:16–23

Questions from the Scripture text: As what does the Lord send the apostles (v16)? In the midst of what? As what, then, do they need to be wise? As what, must they be harmless? Of whom must they beware (v17)? To whom will men deliver them (v17a)? Where will they be scourged (v17b)? Before whom will they be brought (v18)? For Whose sake? As what unto them? And to whom? When this happens, what two things are they not to worry about (v19)? When will it be given to them what to speak? Who speaks (v20)? Whose Spirit is He? Who will deliver up whom to what (v21)? And who else whom else? And who will rise up against whom and cause them to be put to death? What sorts of people will hate believers (v22)? For whose/what's sake? Who will be saved (cf. Rev 12:11)? What are they to do when this death-persecution arises in one city (v23)? What will the Son of Man always keep doing, as they go through the cities of Israel?

How do you handle opposition? Matthew 10:16–23 prepares us for the morning sermon on the Lord's Day. In these eight verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **Christians should expect opposition, but also the help of Christ, and the effectual power of the gospel.**

Although this passage applies especially to gospel preachers in their ordained calling, the situations that it describes are faced by all Christians, and there is much help for all of us here.

Sheep gathering sheep (v16). They are not sent out as shepherds. Jesus is the shepherd, and He is using sheep to gather sheep to Himself. The problem is that there are wolves (v16). Jesus tells them not to be cunning as foxes but wise as serpents, which are very good at withdrawing from danger (thus, the instruction in v23a). They are also to keep in mind their sheep-status in how they interact with others (with the harmlessness, the gentleness, of doves).

Beware of men, and use your opportunities to witness (v17–18). Gospel preachers will be attacked by the judiciary (councils). Gospel preachers will be attacked by the church (scourge you in their synagogues). Gospel preachers will be attacked by the state (governors and kings). But all of these are for Jesus's sake. This does not just mean that they are attacked for representing Christ, but that Christ (Who rules all things) grants them to be attacked as opportunities. Believers are to be Christ's witnesses unto those who attack them!

Don't fret about this witness, but trust your Father and His Spirit (v19–20). Notice that v19 does not say "do not prepare." Certainly, the whole of the Christian's walk in reading, hearing, and meditating upon the Word is preparation for what might be said. And these are all, always, done in dependence upon the Spirit already. This Scripture must not be used to excuse laziness in any believer, let alone a gospel preacher, who must show himself approved as a workman who need not be ashamed. But it is in keeping with this preparation, and with the gospel in which we are prepared, to look not with fear, but with confidence, to these attacks and opportunities to witness. The Lord is bringing the gospel to the nations in this way, and the Father has given us His Spirit for our part in it!

Let Christ determine who your "family" is (v21–22). By comparing "Father" in the triune activity of v19–20, with the word "brother" just a couple words later in v21, we can see the connection. Our great family is in God, Christ, and the Spirit. We hope to have earthly family that are brothers to us in this other family, but v21 teaches us to expect that there will be earthly family that are hostile and hateful of us on account of Christ. Let believers not be surprised when increased closeness to Christ causes more than a little strife in the family; our Lord warns us here of strife unto death!

Indeed, there is no sort of unbeliever that will not hate Christians, and especially preachers, on account of Jesus's Name. "All" in v22 does not mean every last person, but all "without distinction." Just as any sort of person can be saved by God's grace, every sort of unsaved person will hate believers (v22a). Since you know this, overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and the Word of your testimony, and love not your life unto death (v22b, cf. Rev 12:11).

Use wisdom, and trust Christ to make the work effective (v23). As we see in several incidents in the book of Acts, the minister or the believer is not required to stay in a place where his life is under threat (v23a). There is plenty of gospel work to do, and Jesus gives instruction that goes beyond the initial "internship" that has occasioned this instruction. As they announce that the kingdom is at hand (cf. v7), they may be sure that the Lord Himself will come and attend the preaching with His power, by His Spirit (v23b, cf. v19–20).

By whom have you been attacked for the gospel? How were you wise as a serpent? How were you innocent as a dove? How have you made use of the means that the Spirit uses to prepare you for witnessing for Christ? Over which interactions are you tempted to worry and obsess?

Sample prayer: Lord, thank You for the privilege of being used to gather others to Yourself. Forgive us for our surprise and distress when we are attacked for Your sake. And forgive us for worrying about what we will say when challenged. Grant that we would gladly suffer for You and witness for You, with confidence that You Yourself will make it fruitful, we ask in Your Name, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP67 "O God, Give Us Your Blessing" or TPH130A "Lord, from the Depths"

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. **PLEASE BE AWARE** of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Matthew chapter 10 verses 16 through 23. These are God's words. Behold I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men for, they will deliver you up to councils. And Scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before Governors and Kings for my sake.

A testimony to them and to the Gentiles. It's okay. Just leave it. You will be brought before Governors and Kings for my sake as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour, what you should speak.

For it is not you who speak. But the spirit of your father. Who speaks in you? Now, brother, will deliver up brother to death and a father, his child And children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all.

For my Name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you. You will not have gone through the cities of Israel. Before the son of man comes. So far, the reading of gods inspired don't Put an erring toward.

Will we see the Lord Jesus here? Treating his Apostles in a way that he treats us. For, he also tells us That we will have trouble in this world and he tells us that Through much tribulation, we must enter the kingdom and That everyone who desires to live Godly in Christ Jesus.

Must suffer persecution. And so just as he does with all believers generally, so also he does here with his Apostles specifically which gives us an opportunity to consider what it is that Christ is doing and what he says for them to beware of that is something that applies not only Two Apostles in their specific case, but contains principles And what we are to be aware of.

Themes of what will happen to all Christians. And not just what to be aware of, but what to do? As he tells them what to do as they preach, there's also Much application, of course, to those. Who are called to preach still. but even to all believers in their various callings and particularly When you must stand up for the faith and when you are Attacked.

And then in the last place, we'll consider. What Christ will ultimately do. Well, what is he doing now? He's telling them beforehand. About what they are to expect and what he is doing, says behold. I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. If the Is preparing them.

For what they will face. Both, what they are to be. Sheep who act as serpents and doves and Get to that in a moment, but Also, how they can be expect expect to be

received. He's just told them that even when they go to a town and there's one, who is a reputation for being worthy.

They may not turn out to be worthy. They not turn out to be so welcoming. The gospel and of those by whom. The Lord brings the gospel to them. They may turn out to be. Begrudging or resistant. And he says even attacking. And so he prepares them beforehand, this will be a comfort to them when it happens.

Because they won't be taken by surprise. They will have already had their hearts turned to Christ. ways that we're going to continue to see throughout the passage. They will be already prepared with things to watch out for and instructions for what to do and all of that will be a comfort and a help when they are attacked, but then whenever they are attacked, it will also be a confirmation of Of their faith since their faith is to take Jesus at his word.

whenever something the Lord Jesus tells us In advance proves true. Our faith is strengthened for we have again, even more evidence. Of the faithfulness, the truthfulness of our Lord, Jesus. So that's what he's doing. In this passage and he gives them several things to be aware of. First Civil judicial attack, beware of men.

For they will deliver you up to councils. And in the second place. Not just civil judicial attack, but judicial attack. And not just judicial in that case, but In the public. nature of the scourging, and the humiliating nature of the scourging. That is. Prophesied in verse 17. And they will scourge you in their synagogues.

It's not only Church judicial attack, but turning the hearts of the against them. And why then attack through the state, and through the church, one of course is so that they can get away with it. but another reason is that when You for being a Christian.

For standing with Christ. Go to effort. They go to Great Lengths. To feel Justified in their hatred, so that they won't feel. Ashamed before God and ashamed. Before men. And so they Design cases. Against Those whom they hate. So that they can feel Justified not only in the attack, but even Their hatred.

Trying not to be ashamed. So, Beware of civil attacks and civil judicial attack Church, judicial attack. Beware of attack from those who are nearest. Verse 21. brother will deliver up brother. To death the father, his child. Well, he will deliver up to death. Children will rise up against parents.

And cause. To be put to death. The Lord Jesus during his Earthly Ministry. Experienced unbelief and ridiculed attack from. His own family. His death came at. Betrayal. Of one of the 12. And we, Must beware not just of. Civil and church judicial attack. From others in the church. But even from those who are nearer to us in the church, And even from family.

So, attack from those who are nearest attack that is The severest. In the three different relationships described in verse 21 of those nearest ones. it is the saphirist attack. The attack of of death. So, not just attacking those who are nearest to us and attack. Than the severest way.

But attack that is the most hurtful attack that comes from hatred. Verse 22, you will be hated. For my name's sake. And so we must be resolved. That the Lord Jesus and his name. Are worth it to us and sticking. sticking to the Lord Jesus's way notice In verse 17.

When he says that they will Scourge you in there synagogues. This is a way of talking that actually comes from the Old Testament prophets. He doesn't refer to the church's, my synagogues are God's my church, or God's church, or my city, or my temple. But he refers. To their Temple.

When God. It goes from referring to the worship and the places of worship. As his own or just generally speaking to their own, Is even by the language that he uses. Highlighting. Man likes to have. His religion, the way that he likes it. And, Those who are the Lords.

Should be especially wary of attack. From those who are trying to have religion the way they like it. Instead of according To God's word.

So then we'll be Attacked by those who are nearest, they will be attacked unto death. They will be attacked out of hatred. By those who, Have already set their hearts up against God and now are setting their hearts up against Those who belong to him. They have already set their hearts against Christ.

And now they're setting their hearts up against Those who belong to Christ. It's His namesake. That they will be hated. And so that's the most hurtful and and then attack that can really come from anyone or anywhere Music says, you will be hated by all. For my name's sake.

Obviously, this isn't all without exception. There are those that are worthy. There are those that are his. There are those that he is saving. But it is all without distinction. They'll be hated by people from all different. walks of life. All different ethnicities. All different classes. They will be hated by all attacks that can come from anywhere.

So Christ is preparing, then. For these attacks by men of whom they are to beware and especially preparing them for all these different types of attack. And he's giving them practice now and not just preparing them, but giving them practice, In some small ways. at this time in the nation of Israel before resistance to him has become very severe Because the the sort of resistance and unwelcomeness, and begrudging that they're going to experience.

In a small way, during this sending out of the 12, Is preparation for what's going to happen to them in greater ways as Verse 18 describes You will be brought before Governors for my sake, you will be brought before kings for my sake. And so the Lord Jesus has planned that as he spreads the gospel, he is going to give even Governors and Kings opportunity to hear the gospel especially by way of judicial trial Where those who belong to the Lord Jesus whom he has sent us, preachers are going to be attacked but when they are attacked and they're brought before a governor or before a king

It's going to be the, for the sake of evangelizing, that Governor or evangelizing.

That King And that this is even going to happen. in all the nations and to the Gentiles. And to the Nations, he says, And of course, we see that in the book of Acts, don't we? And it has continued to happen now. for 2000 years. So the Lord was not just giving them preparation, he was also giving them practice and then he promises also.

That they're going to have help. In the moment. So the Lord is helping them before he sends them. And after the sending of The Twelve, of course, He's gonna continue teaching them. And he promises that though when he leaves the holy spirit was going to come and continue to keep teaching them.

And the Holy spirit is not only going to bring to mind all the things that Jesus has previously taught, but is going to give them the things that remain for the Lord Jesus to teach. And then the same Holy Spirit who does all of these things. In the moment, when they are on trial, is going to help them.

So, he says, when they deliver you up, do not worry about how, or what you should speak for, it will be given to you in that hour, what you should speak. Now, notice he does not say, do not prepare, he does not say, do not train. He does not say do not study.

In fact, his training them right now and preparing them right now and promising them, that they will have everything eventually that he has, for them to teach and that through them, the church will have a completed Revelation from him, the Bible. So everything that the Lord Jesus is doing here is actually opposite the idea.

Of not preparing not planning. Not studying. not training. But what he does forbid isn't training or study or Preparation or planning he forbids worrying. That as we study his word as we train, as we plan, as we prepare, we don't do so out of fear. about what's going to come in those situations, if the Lord, Jesus is putting you in the situations in your life because he has planned how he's going to use those situations and how he's going to use.

you in those situations. And if the Lord, Jesus is the one who has given you his word by his spirit. And if the Lord, Jesus is the one who has given you his Spirit to help you, as you learn and study in his word, and grow in your knowledge of scripture and grow in your knowledge of theology.

Why would you not think that the Lord Jesus is the one who will give you his Spirit to continue helping you and particularly in the moment? When you do have an opportunity, And so, if we are trusting in the Lord Jesus to help us in that moment, we also want to trust the Lord Jesus to help us by the means that he has appointed between.

Now and that moment in preparing and reading his word and studying his word, And so this is what it is to trust the Lord Jesus. And this is what it is to trust the spirit and this is what it is to trust the father. His Spirit, Jesus. Identifies him to be in verse 20.

That is not you who speak, but the spirit of your father, who speaks in you. This is not merely.

Promise that attends when you're on trial for the gospel. This is actually a principle of how the whole Christian Life is lived. That when we are born of God that which is born of God, our new nature from God, in Christ does not sin. That we are a new man united to Christ but we have that remaining flesh which is still within us.

That the devil can touch although he can't touch the new man. Yeah, and we are to live the whole Christian Life according to Principle. Or the dynamic that the second half of Galatians chapter 5, teaches us. That you are either living from your flesh or you are living by the Holy.

And he talks about the works of the flesh and he Compares them or contrasts them to the fruit of the spirit. So also we always want To speak, not from our flesh, but from the spirit, and not just when. But before Governors and gangs, Or evangelizing. We want to speak from the spirit with one another.

We want. Store our minds with the truths of God's word, we want to Interact with God and have our minds shaped by his mind. And as he works on us by the means of his grace. And then we want to by the spirit's help in the moment, with one another even Speak from that new man, that new mind.

That Christ likeness. In all of our speech. And so, the Lord Jesus makes an application here. Of the new man and of living out of our Union with Christ. And that is do not worry. Because it's not just. And trials and audiences with Governors and Kings. About which we might worry.

We might worry about ordinary conversations. We might worry about much in life, but if we know, That it is the spirit of the father who has been given us by Christ. Who helps us? Especially sustaining the new nature that we have. from him. and from Christ. Then we will not worry.

And so, he says, Do not worry. And so, what else are they to do? In addition to not worrying. Well, he says be wise as serpents. And harmless stuff. So the wisdom of serpents. Here is plural, he's not saying be as clever as the devil. Okay, it's not the serpenteer.

Serpents generally speaking in serpents. Were considered in ancient near Eastern cultures to be proverbially wise because They did not head into confrontation. And so there's Prudence not to seek. Confrontation. If you know that the world is as wolves, then you follow, Jesus's instruction which so far included, finding out those who have a reputation for being worthy.

you go to those who seem like the Lord is working on them who are being soft-hearted. You go and you preach the gospel especially to the poor. even though you understand that you may be attacked from anywhere, but because you understand that you may be attacked from anywhere.

You don't intentionally provoke. You don't intentionally seek out confrontation. And so be wise as circuits but also be innocent as doves. When you do end up in a confrontation, that you weren't that you weren't seeking but came to you, because Lord, Jesus just as the Lord, Jesus told you this would happen.

then in that situation, still, when you were attacked you don't attack in return. And, Reluctant to refrain from attacking when confrontation does come. Because you stand as a witness of Christ.

You want to continue? No, not so much in the wisdom of the serpent, but in, or in the wisdom of serpents, but in the wisdom of his word, of course, you defend the truth. You defend The. Even defend yourself. But you don't attack lovers.

And so you don't engage in the hostility. that they engage in. With you. You have a single-mindedness To stay on Mission. This word innocence or harmless? harmless as doves or innocent as doves single-minded simple-minded. Pure-Minded as doves. Means that we stay on Mission even when it exposes us to attack.

See there's a point at which although you were not seeking confrontation although you were acting in Prudence, you get attacked. Anyway at that point you stay on Mission. You don't say, oh no preaching, the gospel or sticking to Christ's name or remembering that it's Christ's Church, not their Has gotten me into trouble and you don't shrink back at that point.

You continue. To serve Christ. You stay, simple, you stay. Single-Minded. In that with the Simplicity. Of doves. And you endure you endure to the end. Verse 22. When he says, you will be hated by all for my name's sake explaining where this threat to even of death. Comes from says, but he who endures to the end will be saved.

Now, that doesn't mean Necessarily that you should be trying to die. For your faith. call to endurance. Here. Means to be willing to die. And to remember that even when Christians are killed for the faith, they win by dying. They overcome by the blood of the lamb. And the word of his testimony.

They love not their lives. even unto death Revelation, 12, verse 11. But note also that the wisdom of serpents and not seeking out confrontation. Also means that if you are able to escape with your life, do so, Because you will continue to have useful Ministry in other places.

So he says in verse 23, when they persecute you in this city, flee to another, for I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before, the son of man comes And so when when they were attacked, they're continuing being innocent to doves.

But if they had opportunity to escape death, Then they were to flee, the word flee implies imminent danger. This also, it's helpful for us that the spirit has given us the book of Acts so that we can see the Apostle Paul doing this. the Apostle Paul did not shrink.

From opposition to his gospel. And so he was innocent as Dove in that case. And yet, when the attack became Threatening of his life. He did. flee to another city on multiple occasions. And so, Whereas, we are to be willing to endure. even unto death. We know.

that the Lord would have us continue. Ministering elsewhere. That if there is threat upon us, it is not unfaithful from him to him. to withdraw. To another place. Because, The son of man. The Lord Jesus is going to. attend the preaching of his word and he's going to keep doing it until he even bodily returns.

In the last day. Now, there are multiple fulfillments of this. You will not have gone through the cities of Israel before. The son of man comes one is in the immediate fulfillment as he sends them out. He also is going to be going. And so he is going to As it were make good on their preaching.

Remember from last week's portion, In verse 7, he says, as you go preach saying the Kingdom of Heaven is a hand. So here they go through cities preaching, the Kingdom of Heaven as a hand, and as they're going through these cities, the Lord Jesus comes behind them. And, here he gives even in the logistics of it.

All a affirmation, a confirmation of what they had preached. But there's also a broader promise. That he is attending both them in their preaching of the word and others in the hearing of the word. They're not doing the their Ministry without the son of man coming. in and by, and in response to the preaching of the word.

And then in the last place. that there is enduring work. Even in the cities of Israel, there are still those who need to be evangelized There are cities not just in Israel but as we heard in verse 18 among the Gentiles so all throughout the world there is work for Christ for those who belong to Christ to do.

it's not like they're going to run out of ministry before the Lord Jesus comes. One of the last ones are evangelized the Lord Jesus will of course return. But there will continue to be evangelism to do even in Israel until Christ returns. So don't feel like you have to stay.

In a place that you cannot escape from, and where you Are being killed. because there was still work to do. In other places. So, the Lord prepares. Let his people and he prepares us. He often in our life, not only has told us in his word about the trouble that we will have and that it may come from those who are nearest, that it may come out of hate.

But he also does often in his Providence. Give us practice in small ways. In life before he brings us into more demanding situations. Just like you did for the apostles here. And we know that in the doctrine of Union with Christ, he gives all believers help. In every moment.

And so, he trains us to be those who do not seek confrontation. This isn't just for Apostolic breaching or ongoing preaching. He tells us if Apostle, if at all possible, as far as depends on you. Live at peace with all men. So that too, he applies to us.

And he tells us, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all in the name of the Lord. So we are to have the, the innocence, the simple-mindedness. that he describes and being harmless as doves. We're not to take Vengeance for ourselves. If your enemy is hungry, feed him if he's thirsty.

Give him something to drink. Do not avenge yourself. Vengeance belongs to the Lord. Leave room for God's Wrath. And the Lord Jesus of course has promised that. he will be with us by his Spirit. He will not leave us as orphans, he and the father will come and make their home with us.

surely he is always with not only those who go and make disciples and baptize them and teach. the disciples to keep all that Christ has commanded, but surely the Lord, Jesus is always with those who are baptized those who are taught to keep all that he has commanded Even to the end of the Age.

So, all of these things that he did for his Apostles in this, Admittedly unique and special. and specialized In verses 16 through 23 here. contained within them principles and themes. That belong to how he deals with all of us who are believers. And so, the Lord Jesus.

Give you confidence in himself. Than when you are attacked, May he by his Give you to be able to remember these things. And draw comfort in him. And depend upon him. And, As he is said to do here. Man, let's pray.

Our gracious God and our heavenly father. We thank you and praise you. For your perfect word. We thank you. Forgiving your son to be. Prophet who prepares Us by. your word to be. Priest. Through whom we draw near to you and know your favor towards us to be our King Who not only sends us out and attends Us by his power.

But also defends us and even avenges us, And so we pray that Christ would be glorified in our lives. That you would help us to. Have our faith confirmed. When we are attacked, and when we have difficulty, Since. It turns out that life is just like he said it would be.

Help us. We pray to be wise. But also to be innocent. And to endure help us not to worry. We thank you for. Such merciful commands as you give us here. We ask that by your spirit. Applying Christ to us, we would be able To do all these things as well.

Which we ask in his name, amen.