

## **Persecution: Matthew 10:16-26**

### **Chet Bitterman who was held and shot in Colombia said:**

- I find the recurring thought that perhaps God will call me to be martyred for Him in His service in Colombia. I am willing.

There is no doubt that there are people here this morning that are suffering and going through trial for no other reason than because you are following Jesus.

- ✠ The only thing you have done was to get saved or start to follow Jesus in a better way. And because of that decision you have tremendous difficulty in your life.

Jesus is going to touch on why we suffer and briefly touch on the purpose of it.

But other passages in the scripture tell us very clearly that God will use our suffering for our good.

- ✠ Our suffering is not in vain. Nothing God is in vain.

If you are here this morning and you are a Christian you should love Jesus. Amen. You should love Him for what He did for us on the cross.

And if you are here this morning and you are not a Christian you should start to love Jesus because He gave His life for us by dying on the cross.

Think of it this way: we have the greatest Man doing the greatest act.

- ✠ And the bible tells us that the main reason why we go through anything that we go through is so we can be like Jesus. Amen!

So if you are here this morning and you are going through a trial or suffering or persecution keep going to God with it, and remember that everything we go through is making us more like Jesus. Amen!

Now this morning we are picking up again in Matthew 10 and I stated last week that this chapter is a job description of the ministry.

Last week's message was one of encouragement of how Jesus will use anyone for the ministry; and He said He would take care of our spiritual and material needs while we laborer for Him.

And who wouldn't go into the ministry not having to worry about having talent or money.

- ✠ Imagine seeing an opening for a job where you need no talent or skill, all of your needs will be met, and there is great benefits and security.
- ✠ Resumes would come in by the thousands now thank to the internet.
- ✠ But then you read the fine print and it says, once you accept this position, you will be hated because of this job and people will try and kill you.

Jesus is going to give us the full picture of what it means to serve Him.

- One thing we can say about Jesus is that He always tells the truth and never sugar coats the message.
  - ✠ He speaks the truth in love.

### **V16 read-slow;**

Jesus now wants us to know that as we go out we are going into a dangerous and hostile world.

- Obviously nothing has changed since the time of Jesus, the world we live in is a very dangerous place.
- And we know from the bible the world will continue to grow darker as we get close to the end.

Sending sheep out in the midst of wolves gives a very descriptive picture of how dangerous the world truly is.

- It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out what happens when you send sheep out in the midst of wolves.

**Spurgeon:** Here you see sheep sent forth among the wolves, as if they were the attacking party, and were bent upon putting down their terrible enemies. It is a novel sight, such as nature can never show, but grace is full of marvels.”

So right off the bat Jesus is telling us its not going to be easy going out and laboring for the kingdom. Amen! We must understand that.

- If we think laboring for Jesus is going to be full of comfort and ease we are seriously mistaken.
- Jesus is sending us out into a hostile world.

He is sending us out into a world that needs the message of the gospel desperately but the fact is they don't want us to come to them.

For some reason we as Christian go into frenzy when we hear that the government is kicking God out of the schools and the court system.

- We get upset when they want to remove crosses and not allow Nativity scenes, or when a store will not let the Salvation Army stand outside their store and receive donations.

Just this week there was a report about the new Governor of Alabama and how he was saying that only Christians are his brothers and sisters.

We have to realize that even though the world needs the message of the gospel so desperately, the reality is if they don't want us to come.

**But notice Jesus sends us out anyway.**

- Praise God that Jesus doesn't give the world what it wants but what it needs.
- Even though it's a dangerous mission Jesus is sending us out He sends us anyway.

If you guys would have heard the way I was talking the night before my friend shared some of the bible with me. You would have been like this guy is a wolf and he is absolutely, positively never going to be saved.

- But I praise God that a sheep went into the midst of this wolf. Amen!
- And Jesus is calling us to go into the midst of wolves because some will become sheep.
- So don't be afraid of the wolves' just give the message and let God do the work.

**Serpents and doves:** Even though Jesus is sending us out in a dangerous world He still wants us to be wise.

- He is not looking for us to be devoured but to reap a harvest.

As we go out into the world Jesus wants us to be wise, but He also wants us to be innocent.

**Figure of speech:** Jesus uses a figure of speech in order to demonstrate the type of attitude we need to have as we go out.

- This analogy is not to be taken literally: The serpent and the dove figure of speech goes back many thousands of years.
- **Skeptics will come against the bible and say see a snake isn't wise.**
- One teacher said this in a class and a student responded by saying, if you don't think a snake is wise I would like to see how long you would survive crawling around on your belly without any hands or feet.

If we go out and minister the gospel and are totally innocent people will take advantage of us and we can put ourselves and others in harm's way.

**Car:** one time when I was working with Woman Helping woman ministry at Old Bridge my friend had donated a car to the ministry so we could give it to a mother in need.

- So the church found a woman so how and we went and brought the car to her.
- And we were so excited to help and we were upset when we heard her story.
- And while we were there a even gave her some cloths that someone had given me that I had not given away yet.
- And we left there totally blessed to help this woman and family out.

**But!** It turns out she was lying and she simply used the church.

**Secondly: Jesus wants us to be wise;**

- However we can be so wise that we become to skeptical and never really accomplish anything.
- And unfortunately some Christians become hard hearted because they acted to innocently and have gotten burned.
- Using wisdom helps in our lives and in the ministry.

What Jesus is telling us is that we can't be innocent and not be wise and we can't be wise without being innocent. **It's not one or the other it is both.**

**Harlem:** a number of years ago I went to Harlem to preach the gospel. And when my mother and her friends at work heard what I was doing they thought I was crazy.

- Now if I was going all alone that may be crazy, that would have been innocent but not wise.
- I was going to preach in Harlem, but I was going with other brothers, and that's wisdom. Amen.

**Woman and tools:** I had another situation where I was involved in ministry and I was involved with another family.

- And one time when I was over their house the mother asked me about my work and then asked if she come over and borrow some of my tools.
- And at that moment her daughter came in and said mommy you have tools in the basement.
- I didn't say anything I just kept it to myself and said I need to be careful here.
- And unfortunately a little while later she ended having an affair and leaving her husband and children.

As we go out and minister we need to make sure we are praying and seeking God in the process.

**Martin Luther said:** a preacher must be both soldier and shepherd. He must nourish, defend, and teach; he must have teeth in his mouth, and be able to bite and fight.

**Missionaries:** when we write letters to missionaries in hostile lands we have to write the letters in code so the missionaries don't get busted.

- Instead of saying we are praying for you, we would say we are talking to daddy for you.

### **V17-23 read-slow:**

Jesus is now telling us about some of the things that will happen to us as we go out and minister in a dangerous world.

And a main part of the rest of His teaching is going to focus on the persecution that will come to those who serve Him.

**Beware of men:** The phrase; beware of men ought to get our attention.

- In our day we have signs that say beware of dog; beware of this, beware of that.
- I actually was at a house this week where they had a sign beware of Rottweiler.
- But I don't think I have ever read a sign that said Beware of men
- But Jesus is telling us that is exactly who we need to beware of.

One of our greatest enemies as we go out and serve Jesus is man.

- And we need to be gender inclusive He means woman to.
- That old Jezebel gave Elijah a run for his money.
- A couple of weeks ago Paul mentioned Bloody Mary from England.
- So ladies just so you don't feel left out you are just as dangerous as the men! Amen!

Jesus makes it clear that the persecution is going to be very thorough and come from every area of life.

- Jesus mentions councils, synagogues, governors, and kings.
- Brother against brother, fathers against their children, and children will be against parents.

**Synagogues;** when Jesus says synagogue He is telling these Apostles that they will be scourged by their own people in their houses of worship.

**Churches:** right now in other places in the world churches are being burnt down and the Christians that are associated with those churches are being persecuted.

- We just had that incident take place outside one of the churches in Egypt.
- But see that persecution took place by non-believers who are hostile to the gospel.
- However in the end times when persecution because most severe it may be that true Christians will be tortured in the churches by other so-called Christians.

**All:** And to top it off Jesus says in v22 that we will be hated **by all**.

- Not some, not many, not by most **but all**.

Sometimes we think we are involved in a friendly venture when it comes to Christianity.

- But Jesus is telling us we will be hated by all for His names sake.

**Calendar;** just in the past week the EU or European Union just put ought a calendar that acts as an educational calendar for students.

- This calendar is given out freely to anyone that is part of the 27 nations that make up the EU
- And they published this calendar and omitted the Christian holidays of Christmas and Easter but they kept Jewish and Muslims holidays on it.
- After this was found out they claimed it was a student error.

Now was this a student error, I guess we will never fully know, and the EU said they will put the dates back in the calendar.

- But this is merely just a picture of where we are going to go.
- When Jesus says all He means all.

**Apostles:** As I mentioned last week 10 out of 11 Apostles all suffered severe persecution and were martyred for their faith.

- It is believed that Paul was beheaded under the Reign of Nero around AD 67.

**Acts:** In the book of Acts we have Stephen being the first recorded Martyr of the church.

- And we also have the death of James the brother of John.

In the early church there is believed to be about 10 major persecutions of Christians.

- The first started with Nero in AD 64 and the final one which was actually the most severe was under **Diocletian and Galerius** (303-324).

**Tacitus:** According to the Roman historian Tacitus

- Besides being put to death they [the Christians] were made to serve as objects of amusement; they were clad in the hides of beast and torn to death by dogs; others were crucified, others set on fire to serve to illuminate the night when daylight failed. Nero had thrown open his grounds for the display.

**Justin Martyr said:** Though beheaded, and crucified, and thrown to wild beasts, and chains, and fire, and all other kinds of torture, we do not give up our confession; but, the more such things happen, the more do others in larger numbers become faithful."

**Get on fire:** One of the reason Jesus doesn't stop the persecution is because for some reason Christians seem to get more on fire for Jesus the more they go through the fire. Amen!

- Think of it this way: In order to get on fire for Jesus we need to go through the fire. Amen!

**For Jesus' sake:** Sometime we also think that people don't like us because of who we are. Sometimes we try and figure out what we may have done wrong.

- But people are going to hate us not because of who we are but because of Jesus.

**Samuel the prophet:** we have the story in the OT about how the people wanted a King to rule over them like the other nations.

- And Samuel the prophet thought it was his fault because they wanted a King.
- And God said to Samuel, they are not rejecting you they are rejecting Me.

The same is true with Jesus. People are going to hate us for no other reason than because we associate with Jesus!

**What you should speak:** there are some that are going to have to stand before Kings and councils and governors and testify about their faith.

- And being brought before a King because they found out you are a Christian could be a very intimidating thing.
- But Jesus assures us that should we ever have to stand and speak about our faith, the Holy Spirit would speak through us.

**Stephen:** we have the first instance of this with Stephen in the book of Acts.

- He was arrested and brought before the council because they accused him of blaspheme.
- And then starting in chapter 7 the Holy Spirit spoke through him just like Jesus said and he gave an awesome sermon.

- And we know it was the Holy Spirit because he ended the sermon speaking just like Jesus did on the cross.
- Acts 7:59-60 And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit. Then he knelt down and cried with a loud voice, Lord do not charge them with this sin.

**Barclay:** “It was not the humiliation which early Christians dreaded, not even the cruel pain and the agony. But many of them feared that their own unskillfulness in words and defense might injure rather than commend the truth. It is the promise of God that when a man is on trial for his faith, the words will come to him.”

### **V24-26 read-slow;**

Jesus has told us that we will be persecuted for His names sake. And now He is telling us we will be persecuted just like He will be.

One of the things that truly stand out in Christianity is that our savior suffered and died.

- Our faith is associated with a suffering Messiah.
- The most prominent symbol of Christianity is a cross. And a cross represents death.

When we speak to people about Jesus and try and share the gospel with them many people will utter that Jesus died for our sins.

- They don't fully understand what that means but they know that Jesus died on a cross for our sins.

**Earth:** Not only did Jesus die on the cross but His life on earth was one of constant persecution.

- No matter where He went and no matter what He did He always had the scribes and the Pharisees following Him around and harassing.
- We are told that early on His family and His hometown rejected Him.
- One time they even went after Jesus and wanted to throw Him off a cliff.

We also need to remember all of the false trials He went through.

- And as He was going through those trials both the Jews and the Romans spit on Him, and smacked Him in the face, they even put a bag over His face and hit Him and told Him to prophesy who hit Him.
- They took a reed and smacked Him in the head with it.
- They made a crown of thorns and put it on His in order to humiliate Him.
- And they plucked out His beard which in those days was also an act of humiliation.



- The bible says He was face was beaten beyond recognition.
- And Pilate had Him flogged.

**On the cross:** Even when He was on the cross they wouldn't leave Him alone.

- Both of thieves on the right and left of Jesus mocked Him.
- The bible says the people walked by and blasphemed Him, wagging in their heads at Him, and saying, if You are the Son of God come down from the cross.
- They also mocked Him saying, He saved others; Himself He cannot save.
- If He is the King of Israel, let Him come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.
- He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said I am the Son of God.

**Ironic:** you know what is very ironic about all of this is that **Isaiah 53:4** says, yet we esteemed Him stricken and smitten by God.

- In other words when the people looked at Him and mocked Him they esteemed Him stricken and smitten by God.
- But in reality we are the ones that are stricken and smitten by God.

He went through all of that not because of what He deserved but because of what we deserved.

**Luther said,** we all carry around His nails in our pockets!

**2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:21** For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

When we think about the suffering of Jesus we must always remember He went through all of that for us!

**Isaiah** also tells us that it pleased the Lord to crush Him. God crushed His Son for our good and His glory!

- Read John 3:16 in light of Isaiah 53
- For God so loved the world that He crushed His Only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Do we think we are above what He went through? Absolutely not!

**Because Jesus suffered we will suffer also.**

- Jesus life is associated with persecution and suffering and our lives are in some extent will be associated with persecution and suffering.

Jesus tells us we are not above Him, but we are called to be like Him

- We are to be like Jesus in wisdom and character and also in the way He was treated.

**Will I:** we may be wondering if I will be persecuted as a Christian?

- Jesus said, yes you will!
- But its not because we are so holy but because He was holy.

The devil has stirred up this word to hate the name of Jesus and to use His name as a curse.

- We can talk openly to people about God, but just don't bring the name of Jesus into the conversation.
- The name Jesus sends some people into a rage.
- And if we associate ourselves with His name they will come against us as well.

**Ministers to me:** one time when I was in the midst of a very sever trial and the Lord ministered to my heart.

- Even though I may suffer for Jesus and as Jesus did; the fact that I believe in a Savior that understands the suffering I am going through truly ministers to my heart
- When I cry out to Jesus in my pain I know I am crying out to someone that fully understands what I am going through, because He knows what it means to suffer. Amen!

**Other gods: I** remember saying to myself I would never believe in another god because they don't know what it means to suffer.

**Blue sky:** I remember driving one day thinking about the trial I was going through and as I looked into the sky it was a beautiful blue sky. And I said Jesus I don't understand I have done nothing wrong.

- ✠ Its hard to process that things are going wrong in your life when you done nothing wrong except trying to do what is right.
- And the thought popped in my mind that I didn't do anything wrong, but it was because of Jesus that I was going through that trial.
- You could say it was Jesus' fault. And it was.

Jesus is telling us here we will be persecuted simply because He was persecuted.

**Identification:** but you know what, when we go through suffering just because of Jesus, we may not like the suffering but one of the things that suffering accomplishes is that we can identify with Jesus.

- ✠ When we sit down and think about the fact that we are being persecuted and yet we have done nothing wrong it helps us to identify with Jesus.
- ✠ That same feeling we get for persecute for doing nothing wrong is that same feeling Jesus had because He was persecuted and He did nothing wrong

I have gone through so many things from Christians that have tried totally ruin my reputation and I can honestly say it is not a fun thing to go through.

- ✠ Yet as I was praying and thinking about what was going on in my life, which honestly was a very dark time for me.
- ✠ And yet during that time God showed me that Jesus willingly made Himself of no reputation.
- ✠ **I grew more in love with Jesus during that time because the very thing I hated going through was the very thing He willingly went through.**
- ✠ And yet He didn't do it for Himself He did it for us.

**Know Him:** The Apostle Paul said I glory in my sufferings.

- Paul also said the thing that he wanted most of all was to know Jesus.
- He said he wanted to know the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings.

Paul wanted to know everything he possibly could about Jesus and that included His suffering.

As humans we really fight the idea of suffering, but biblically it is a good and necessary thing.

**Biblically speaking:** Jesus said blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sakes.

- .Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven. Amen.

**Let's pray.**