

The Lord Exhorts and Encourages His Disciples

Matthew 10:24-33

Matthew 10:24-33 - *"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household! ²⁶ Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.*

Speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. ²⁸ And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. ³⁰ But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

³² "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. ³³ But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven."

Background Notes

In the first section of Matthew 10 the Lord sent His disciples on a mission to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom throughout the cities of Israel. They were given power to do miracles – even to raise the dead: *"And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give" (v7-8)*. The disciples continued to have the power to do sign miracles even after our Lord's death and resurrection. For example, Peter raised Dorcas from the dead (Acts 9).

These "sign miracles" in the days of our Lord and in early church times were **signs** that were meant to confirm the truth that Jesus was the true Messiah, and that His teaching, carried on by the apostles, was truly the word of God. Remember the **historical context** of these verses: the mission to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom and the power to do these "sign miracles" was given to the twelve apostles at that time. So let's be careful not pull verse 8 out of its context and say that in this verse the Lord Jesus gave Christians today the power to do these same sign miracles.

We can certainly apply this verse today in our care and concern for those who are sick. Occasionally Christians may be called upon to cast out demons. And God can certainly do miracles today. So let's not limit God! But this verse is not a guarantee that Christians today should be able to heal illness and raise the dead with miraculous power. And by the way, if Christians are not able to do these miracles today, the reason is not that they don't have enough faith. It's because they pulled this verse out of its context and thus applied it improperly!

Notice that the end of verse 8 says, *"Freely you have received, freely give."* It always amuses me to see how most current ministries that claim to do healings and other sign miracles today, do **not** freely give. Rather, they **ask!** They're always looking for money for themselves. They claim the powers of verse 8, but they don't obey verse 9: *"Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts..."* One sign of a true disciple of Christ is that there won't be an emphasis on collecting donations and funds, but on freely **giving!** **The Lord will provide for the needs** of His followers when they're doing what He calls them to do!

Doctrinal Points

1. Disciples of the Lord Jesus will be persecuted for their faith.

2 Timothy 3:12 says, *"...all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."* Notice - that verse doesn't say all Christians will be persecuted; it says all who **desire to live godly lives** in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. You can become a Christian and get to heaven without undergoing much persecution for your faith. There are many secret believers who are not speaking out for the Lord. But living a godly life in Christ Jesus means more than just becoming a Christian. It means being a disciple of the Lord Jesus. And you can expect persecution. Disciples of the Lord Jesus will be persecuted for their faith.

Why would the disciples of the Lord Jesus be persecuted for their faith? The Lord gave the answer: *"It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!"* (v24-25). Beelzebub (or Baalzebub, or Beelzebub) was a demonic deity of the pagan people of Ekron, a Philistine city. The Jews used this name as a synonym for Satan. If this terrible name is what unbelievers called the Lord, how can His disciples, then and today, expect any better treatment?

This world hates the difficult teachings of Christ. For example, the Lord Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"* (John 14:6). The world **hates** the teaching that **Jesus** is the **only way** to God - and the more you teach this message and stand for this truth, the more you'll be persecuted. If you're not persecuted now and you're wondering why, just begin to speak out for Christ. Tell others that Jesus Christ is the **only** means of salvation, and you **will** experience persecution.

Remember, some persecution is not physical persecution. For example, Christians have been fired or passed over for promotion and advancement in the workplace because the world around us hates their testimony for Christ. The secular press will not publish the work of most Christian writers who refuse to water down the Christian message in their manuscripts and express their "tolerance for all faiths." Disciples of the Lord Jesus **will** be persecuted for their faith.

2. Disciples of the Lord Jesus will be encouraged in their faith.

Three times in these verses, the Lord told His disciples not to be afraid! *“Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known” (v26).* And, *“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (v28).* And, *“Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows” (v31).* Now that’s very encouraging isn’t it? “Do not fear!!” three times in this one short passage of Scripture. And this message, “Don’t fear,” is certainly as important for disciples today as it was then for the twelve.

In verse 26, we see that we don’t have to fear because of the message that we’re preaching. Although right now it seems that the enemy is winning, we know that ultimately **Jesus Christ is victorious!** Right now that truth is hidden from this world. It’s taught quietly, or “in the dark.” *“Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops.”* But a day is coming when we will be vindicated. The world doesn’t know it yet, but the truth that we proclaim will be fully revealed when the Lord returns. So be encouraged, and don’t be afraid!

Another reason that we should be encouraged and not fear is that **the enemy has no power to kill the soul.** *“Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.”* Persecution can only kill the body. It can’t kill the soul, so we don’t need to fear. Our present earthly bodies are dying anyway! It’s unbelievers who should be afraid, because God has the power to both destroy both soul and body in hell. Notice, the “Him” (v28) is not Satan, but God! *“...fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”* The Greek word that’s translated “destroy” here does not mean annihilation, but “ruin” and “lose.” So be encouraged! God is with us! The enemy can’t touch our souls no matter how great the persecution.

A third reason that we should be encouraged and not fear is that **the Lord knows every detail of our persecution and He cares for us.** *“Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”* If the Lord knows and controls the details of the life of every little sparrow in the world, and knows every hair of every head in the world, does He not know and control every event in our lives? Including persecution? Of course He does! And He says that His disciples are more valuable than **many** sparrows! So the Lord cares for us as His valuable possession!

So be encouraged - and don’t fear! Disciples of the Lord Jesus will be encouraged in their faith.

Practical Application

Is He Lord by my lips **and** my life?

“Therefore, whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven” (v32-33).

What is the true test of whether or not you’re a true Christian? It’s not just what you **say** with your lips. It’s how you **live** your life!

These verses are not talking about a one-time confession of faith, like a raising of a hand or walking up an aisle at an evangelistic service. And these verses are not talking about a momentary denial of the Lord, like Peter’s denial at the time of the Lord’s trial. No, these verses are talking about **the overall pattern of your life**. Do you confess Jesus as Lord with your lips **and** with your life?

I’m sure you’ve heard the following question before, and it’s a good one. “If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?” Even secret believers leave telltale signs that they’re true believers. You don’t have to be a walking martyr to be a true believer - but there should be **some** evidence. If you’re unwilling to publicly confess Jesus as Lord with your lips, or if your life in no way reflects what you say you believe, then there is a good reason to put a question mark over your profession of faith.

“If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?” That’s a good question for **all** of us, isn’t it? We should examine our own hearts and our own lives before the Lord.

Is He Lord by my lips **and** by my life?