

## 31.

### Jesus Prepared the Disciples for Opposition

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to handle rejection by not taking it personally when people reject the message of the Gospel. In this topic, we will see that Jesus gave His disciples further instructions about other forms of rejection that they would experience as they served Him.

In Matthew 10:16-18, we read, “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, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.” In these verses, we see that Jesus gave His disciples a very visual picture of their need to depend on Him. Matthew 7:15 says, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.” In John 10:12, we see that the wolf catches and scatters the sheep. Then, in Acts 20:29, we read, “For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.” In all three passages, we see that wolves are compared to false teachers. They have the same goal as Satan and that is to steal, kill and destroy.

The fact that Jesus said He sent out the disciples as sheep among wolves meant that they needed to depend on the Lord at every moment. If you have a sheep and a wolf in the same place, the wolf has lunch and the sheep is lunch. In contrast, if you have a sheep, a wolf and a shepherd in the same place, you have a dead wolf. Jesus told the disciples what to do since they were sheep among wolves. He said to be wise as serpents. Genesis 3:1 says, “Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, “You shall not eat of every tree of the garden”?’” Among people in Biblical times, the serpent was known for cunning and wisdom. Christ knew that the disciples needed great wisdom. The dove or pigeon was known for being harmless. The disciples were to be harmless, while at the same time using great wisdom.

Jesus went on to tell the disciples some of the things that would happen to them in the future. Jesus told the disciples that they would be delivered up to councils. Among the Jews, every city and town had a council that would deliberate and pass judgment. Acts 5:40-41 says, “And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.” This is one of many times a council persecuted the leaders of the early church. Jesus also warned the apostles they would be beaten in the synagogues.

Jesus told the disciples they would be brought before governors and kings for His sake. Jesus said that this persecution would be a testimony both for these rulers and also for the Gentiles. Later, the Lord told Ananias that Saul would have these things happen to him so that he could be a

witness. Acts 9:15-16 says, “But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.’” In the case of Saul, who later became Paul, he even had the opportunity to speak to the Roman emperor and share the Gospel with him.

Jesus went on to explain to the disciples what they were to do when they were delivered to any group of leaders for their faith. Matthew 10:19-20 says, “‘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.’” Here, Jesus gave the disciples a key instruction for them and for every Christian since who has faced opposition for the Gospel. Jesus just said “do not worry.” Philippians 4:6-7 says, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” As we pray with thanksgiving, the Lord will guard our hearts and minds with His peace regardless of what kind of opposition we may face.

Jesus told the disciples they did not need to worry about how to speak or what they should speak when they were delivered to those who opposed the Gospel. Jesus said that when a disciple is delivered to any council, court or any other person or group who opposes the message of the Gospel, the Lord will give the words to speak at that time. Peter illustrated the fact that the Lord gives the words to speak, in Acts 4:7-10, where it says, “And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, ‘By what power or by what name have you done this?’ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: If we this day are judged for a good deed *done* to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.’” Peter was able to speak boldly because God gave him the words to speak.

That was an example of exactly what Jesus said, when He said in verse 20, “‘For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.’” The reason we do not need to worry, if we have to face a group or council that are opposed to the Gospel, is the fact that Jesus promised we would not have to speak our own thoughts. Instead, we see that the Holy Spirit is the One who will speak in us and give us the words to say. John 14:26 says, “‘But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.’” Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will bring to our remembrance the things that we have been taught from the Word of God. Then, we will be able to share the Word of God and explain what it means to those who are in opposition to the Gospel.

Jesus went on to explain to the disciples other forms of opposition that those who follow Him will experience. Matthew 10:21-23 says, “‘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.’” Here, we see that the disciples were

warned that there could even be opposition from within their own families. This opposition could come from a brother, a parent or even from children. We may also face opposition to the Gospel of Christ even from within our own families. Paul reminded us, in Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” We are to remember that the Gospel we share is so powerful that it is able to transform all who believe, including those who oppose at first.

Jesus warned the disciples that they might be hated by all for His name’s sake. Jesus gave a very similar statement to the disciples at another time. Mark 13:13 says, “And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.” However, in that passage, Jesus was talking about the time of the tribulation. Mark 13:19 says, “For *in* those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be.” That time is still future and talks about the opposition that will happen to those who become saints during the tribulation. Jeremiah 30:7 says, “‘Alas! For that day *is* great, so that none *is* like it; and it *is* the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.’” As Jesus was talking to the disciples, He was letting them know what would happen both in the near future and also in the more distant future.

The disciples themselves faced much opposition from the Jews. However, the Jews who become saints during the future tribulation described in Mark 13 will face equal or greater opposition. In fact, most Jews and Gentiles who become saints during the time of the tribulation will be put to death for their faith. Peter explained why both the disciples and the future tribulation saints are able to endure in times of persecution. 1 Peter 1:3-5 says, “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” In these verses, we see that any believer who experiences persecution at any time can look forward to our future reward because we are kept by the power of God. Nothing can separate us from His love.

Jesus also gave instructions to the disciples about what they should do when they faced persecution. He told them to flee to another city and continue their ministry. Jesus said that the Son of Man (Jesus) would come before they had gone through all the cities of Israel. That same thing will also be true in the time of the future tribulation. In Revelation 20, we see that Christ will return at the end of the tribulation to rule on the earth for a thousand years. We also want to prepare our physical and spiritual children for opposition as they share the Gospel with others. That opposition may come from their family, from various levels of government and especially from those in the world who do not want to hear the message of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As Jesus said, when there is opposition in one place, we can encourage them to be faithful and just keep moving forward as they share the Gospel. May the Lord richly bless you as you prepare your children for opposition.