

Lesson 11 – 10 October 2010

Ambassadors for the King

Lesson Scope: [Matthew 9:35-10:42](#)

Lesson Focus

Jesus' ministry in Israel involved "teaching, in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease (Matthew 9:35). Seeing these multitudes of "sheep having no shepherd" moved Jesus to compassion. Being in the flesh, He was unable by Himself to reach everyone simultaneously. He called His disciples to pray "the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:38). Thus the disciples were conditioned by prayer for the work Jesus was about to give them.

Chapter 10 opens with the twelve being commissioned to help Jesus teach, preach, and heal. They were to go only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:6). As we move through the text, however, we see that Jesus' instructions reached beyond the present assignments of the disciples to the time when their witness broadened to include the Gentiles as well. These principles apply not only to the twelve but also to every disciple since then. To be effective as ambassadors, we must be moved by the compassion of Jesus, be conditioned for service with prayer, and be prepared to suffer for Jesus' sake.

Christ's followers are called to serve in a hostile world. Even though Satan tries to destroy them, their commitment to the kingdom entitles them to endure.

Are you an ambassador? Is your commitment of loyalty to Christ true-hearted and wholehearted? An honest evaluation of your life is in order as you prepare to study this lesson.

The resources of God are inexhaustible. They are all-powerful and available to each of His faithful ambassadors, but they are untouchable by any adversary.

A life of complete love for Christ, uncompromising obedience to His Word, and daily self-denial will be rewarded by the King.

Theme Verses: [John 17:14-15](#). I have given them thy word and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

Lesson Text

"As Sheep in the Midst of Wolves"

[Matthew 10:5](#)

These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

[Matthew 10:16-25](#)

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. ¹⁷But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; ¹⁸And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. ¹⁹But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. ²⁰For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. ²¹And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. ²²And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. ²³But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come. ²⁴The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. ²⁵It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?

"Fear Ye Not"

[Matthew 10:26-31](#)

Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. ²⁷What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops. ²⁸And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. ³⁰But the very hairs of your head

are all numbered. ³¹Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.

"He That Loseth His Life ... Shalt Find It"

Matthew 10:32-42

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. ³³But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. ³⁴Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. ³⁵For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. ³⁶And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. ³⁷He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. ³⁹He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

⁴⁰He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. ⁴¹He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. ⁴²And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

Questions for Study

"As Sheep in the Midst of Wolves"

1. What does it mean to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves"?
2. From what varied sources may opposition be expected?
3. On what conditions may we claim the promise in Matthew 10:19b?

"Fear Ye Not"

4. Why should God be feared rather than men?
5. How should we understand the statement that God "is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"?

"He That Loseth His Life ... Shalt Find It"

6. What actions prove a person "not worthy" of Jesus'?
7. What is the cross that each disciple must take?
8. Explain the paradox in Matthew 10:39.

Analyzing the Passage

Harmless (Matthew 10:16) means "unmixed, pure, and simple concerning evil" (see Romans 16:19).

To "take no thought" (1 Matthew 0:19) is to not be anxious or worried. Beelzebub (Matthew 10:25) is, the prince of devils (see Matthew 12:24). If Jesus, "the master of the house.*" was so maligned, "they ... of his household" (disciples) can expect more of the same.

Ambassadors of Christ need not fear those who hate them. All falsehood or pretense will be revealed (Matthew 10:26), either in this life or at the judgement bar. Jesus' followers are therefore to speak and preach revealed truth fearlessly. A proper understanding of truth imparts a proper fear of God. Destroy (Matthew 10:28) signifies not the cessation of existence but ruin and the loss of well-being. The soul is not annihilated as sonic erroneously teach.

The sword (Matthew 10:34) is used metaphorically to denote dissention and division to the point of violence. Truth divides decisively between those who accept it and those who reject it (Matthew 10:35-36).

Jesus closed His instructions with what is perhaps the defining quality of a true ambassador—how he receives the brethren and how he relates to these "little ones" who are coming to the light (Matthew 10:40-42).

Principles and Applications

"As Sheep in the Midst of Wolves"

1. Heavenly ambassadors move with prudence in the midst of antagonistic forces (Matthew 10:16). We are "wise as serpents" as we avoid confrontation when truth is not at stake. It is right to be informed as to what we might need to face yet in this wicked world. But we must be "harmless as doves" in our motives when antagonism arises. "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without" (Colossians 4:5).

2. Christ's messenger's expect opposition from the world and use it to testify for Christ (Matthew 10:17-20).

To "beware of is to be cautious in trusting them." "Informers" may sometimes pose as believers. By simply trusting God, we can avoid anxiety about how things will work out. We dare not, however, take a careless attitude toward Jesus' promise to give us the needed words to speak. The Spirit will not bring to mind truths that we have neglected to learn before the crisis hour. In our diligent study of the Scriptures, the Spirit gives wisdom to

know how we ought to answer every man (Colossians 4:6).

3. Christ's followers are prepared to suffer at the hands of evil men just as He suffered (Matthew 10:21-25).

A commitment "to [endure] to the end-will keep us prepared to suffer. Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, served Christ for eighty-six years. Under intense pressure, he refused to deny his Lord.

Evil men may even be those of our own acquaintance who express open opposition or Subtle influences to compromise. "Forasmuch then as Christ bath suffered for us in tile. arm yourselves likewise with the same mind" (1 Peter 4:1)

"Fear Ye Not"

4. Heavenly messengers proclaim the truth (Matthew 10: 26-27). Paul did not shun to declare the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). Peter's hold preaching brought conviction to his listeners (Acts 2:37). The truth Of Stephen's powerful message incurred the wrath of-his enemies. Thank God for faithful men among us today who preach the truth without fear or favor of man.

5. Christ's followers draw strength and courage from the porter and providence of God (Matthew 10:28-31). His power gives courage to endure the threats and opposition of men which are limited to this life. In His providence, God superintends each minute detail of His children's lives, "so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Hebrews 13:6).

"He That Loseth His Life ... Shalt Find It"

6. Heavenly messengers are not ashamed to identify with their King. (Matthew 10:32-33). He is the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent One. The Gospel standard is "a workman that needeth not to he ashamed (2 Timothy 2:15). Faithful men gladly hear the Shame and reproach that comes by identifying with Jesus.

7. Christ's messengers place loyalty to their King above all other loyalties ties (Matthew 10:34-37). Business interests, hobbies, friends, and even close family ties all hold a lower priority. The call to love and serve the Lord must supersede all other interests and relationships. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matthew, 6:33). Loyal messengers accept this mandate from their Sovereign King.

8. Christ's followers both preach and practice personal cross bearing (Matthew 10:38-39). Life brings many difficult circumstances, in each of them,

the cross is not the circumstance itself but the self-denial that it requires. The practice of self-denial becomes the acid test of every messenger of Christ. Jesus is our perfect example. If we are unwilling to follow Him in self-denial, we are unworthy of identifying with Him.

9. Heavenly messengers understand their tie with their King and with their fellow ambassadors (Matthew 10:40-42). No man is in Christ without his brother. God works through the church in our time. One who isolates himself from the church severs himself from the body of Christ.

10. Faithful ambassadors are promised a reward (Matthew 10:42). "God is not Unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love" (Hebrews 6:10). He will render to every man according to his deeds. Even the smallest deed of kindness will not be overlooked.

Important Teachings

1. Heavenly ambassadors move with prudence in the midst of antagonistic forces (Matthew 10:16).

2. Christ's messengers expect opposition from the world and use it to testify for Christ (Matthew 10:17-20).

3. Christ's followers are prepared to suffer at the hands of evil men, just as He suffered (Matthew 10:21-25).

4. Heavenly messengers fearlessly proclaim the truth (Matthew 10:26-27).

5. Christ's followers draw strength and courage from the power and providence of God (Matthew 10:28-31).

6. Heavenly messengers are not ashamed to identify with their King (Matthew 10:32-33).

7. Christ's messengers place loyalty to their King above all other loyalties (Matthew 10:34-37).

8. Christ's followers both preach and practice personal cross bearing (Matthew 10:38-39).

9. Heavenly messengers understand their tie with their King and with their fellow ambassadors (Matthew 10:40-42).

10. Faithful ambassadors are promised a reward (Matthew 10:42).

Answers to Questions

1. What does it mean to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves"?

To be "wise as serpents" is to be discerning and cautious, avoiding unnecessary confrontation. On the other hand, Christ's followers do not hesitate

to defend the truth. Those who are "harmless as doves" are pure in their motives, following Christ's example of nonresistance in their responses to those who oppose them.

2. From what varied sources may opposition be expected?

Jesus warned of opposition from religious leaders (heads of Jewish councils and rulers of the synagogues), from civil leaders (kings and governors), from close relatives (parents and children), and from evil men (wolves). Jesus said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:16). Every spirit must be tried by God's eternal Word.

3. On what conditions may we claim the promise in Matthew 10:19b?

The Spirit will bring to our mind those things that we have learned prior to being brought before an authority. Scriptural absolutes and principles for life are learned in personal Bible study and prayer, in consistent collective worship, and in fellowship and counsel with faithful brethren. A careless attitude toward God's promise in Matthew 10:19 is presumptuous and may leave one lacking in the crisis hour.

4. Why should God be feared rather than men?

Heavenly messengers are not to fear evil men. They can kill only the body. After that, they are powerless. God can destroy both soul and body in hell. He is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent.

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5. How should we understand the statement that God "is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"?

Some would infer from this Scripture that the soul is annihilated. But destroy here means "ruin and loss of well-being." In Mark 9:44-48, Jesus plainly taught the eternal existence of lost souls "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." The tenor of all other Scriptures related to soul destiny are consistent with Jesus' teaching here.

6. What actions prove a person "not worthy" of Jesus?

Refusing to confess Jesus before men, placing higher priority on earthly relationships, failing to take the cross and follow Jesus, neglecting to receive the brethren, and failing to minister to the "little ones" prove one unworthy of Jesus.

7. What is the cross that each disciple must take?

The cross is self-denial. Life brings many trying circumstances. The circumstance in itself is not the cross, but the self-denial that needs to be ex-

exercised in the circumstance constitutes the cross. Jesus is our perfect example in giving up all to do the will of His Father. He calls us to the same commitment in order to be accepted of Him.

8. Explain the paradox in Matthew 10:39.

He who lives for self, protecting his self-interests, will have his sins follow him to the judgment. He will lose everything—his earthly possessions and his eternal soul.

He who loses his life for Christ's sake denies self and lives for God. He believes that the sufferings of this present world are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed. He is committed to endure to the end, even if that means dying as a martyr. His sins are confessed, cleansed by the precious blood of Jesus. His sins go on before to judgment. In this way his eternal soul is saved. He gains everything God has prepared for them that love Him—eternal life, joy unspeakable and full of glory, forever in the presence of the Bridegroom, KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS!

Research Guide

1. Read about Polycarp, who suffered as a faithful ambassador of Christ (Martyrs Mirror, pages 112-114).
2. Meditate on the song "Jesus, and Shall It Ever Be" (Church Hymnal, #552).
3. Read the chapters titled "Christian Service" and "Self-denial" in Doctrines of the Bible.
4. Study the parallel Scripture in Luke 12:1-12.

Summarizing the Lesson

Go, labor on; spend and be spent,
Thy joy to do the Father's will:
It is the way the Master went;
Should not the servant tread it still!
Go, labor on; 'tis not for naught;
Thy earthly loss is heavenly gain;
Men heed thee, love thee, praise thee not:
The Master praises:—what are men?
Go, labor on; enough while here,
If He shall praise thee, if He deign
Thy willing heart to mark and cheer;
No toil for Him shall be in vain.
Toil on, faint not, keep watch and pray;
Be wise the erring soul to Will:
Go forth into the world's highway:
Compel the wand'rer to come in.
Toil on, and in thy toil rejoice:
For toil comes rest, for exile home;
Soon shalt thou hear the Bridegroom's voice,
The midnight peal, "Behold, I come.-
—*Horatius Bonar*