

The King's Messengers Under Fire

Brandon Phillips / General Adult

The King and His Glory / Persecution / Matthew 10:16–23

In Matthew 10:16–23, Jesus prepares His messengers for inevitable hostility by calling them to wise discernment, Spirit-dependent confidence, and faithful endurance to the end.

Pre-sermon Comments

Colossians 1:24 LSB

²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and I fill up what is lacking of Christ's afflictions in my flesh, on behalf of His body, which is the church,

Ephesians 1:13–14 LSB

¹³ In Him, you also, after listening to the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, unto the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory.

Introduction to our Text

“Eighty-six years I have served Him, and He has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?” ~ Polycarp

“Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out.” ~ Hugh Latimer

2 Timothy 3:12 LSB

¹² Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Review

Proposition and Outline

In [Matthew 10:16–23](#), Jesus prepares His messengers for inevitable hostility by calling them to wise discernment, Spirit-dependent confidence, and faithful endurance to the end. The King’s Messengers must:

- **Exhibit Wise Character ([Matt 10:16](#)) [Today]**
- **Expect Real Conflict ([Matt 10:17–18](#), [Matthew 10:21–22](#)) [Today]**
- **Entrust Themselves to the Holy Spirit ([Matthew 10:19–20](#)) [Next Time]**
- **Endure to the End ([Matt 10:22–23](#)) [Next Time]**

Micah 5:2–4 LSB

² “But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *Too* little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from everlasting, From the ancient days.” ³ Therefore He will give them *up* until the time When she who is in childbirth has borne a child. Then the remainder of His brothers Will return to the sons of Israel. ⁴ And He will stand and shepherd *His flock* In the strength of Yahweh, In the majesty of the name of Yahweh His God. And they will remain Because at that time He will be great To the ends of the earth.

Matthew 10:8 LSB

⁸ “Heal *the* sick, raise *the* dead, cleanse *the* lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.

The King’s Messengers Must Exhibit Wise Character ([Matt 10:16](#))

Matthew 10:16 LSB

¹⁶ “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.”

We are sheep with a Shepherd

Matthew 9:36 LSB

³⁶ And seeing the crowds, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd.

They, and the rest of His followers until He returns again, would be the real sheep. In that paradoxical truth Jesus graphically pointed out the tensions between our vulnerability and our invincibility—between our weakness in ourselves and our strength in Him, between the power of hateful persecution and the power of loving submission, and between the worldly power of the flesh and the supernatural power of the Spirit. ~ John MacArthur

John 10:28 LSB

²⁸ and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish—ever; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.

John 15:18–19 LSB

¹⁸ “If the world hates you, know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you. ¹⁹ “If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

Matthew 7:15 LSB

¹⁵ “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

Acts 20:29 LSB

²⁹ “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;

Romans 8:36 LSB

³⁶ Just as it is written, “FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE COUNTED AS SHEEP FOR *the* SLAUGHTER.”

Romans 8:1 LSB

¹ Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Act with Wise Character

Matthew 10:16 LSB

¹⁶ “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.

Colossians 4:5 LSB

⁵ Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, redeeming the time.

The basic idea is that of saying the right thing at the right time and place, of having a sense of propriety and appropriateness, and of trying to discover the best means to achieve the highest goal. ~ John MacArthur

It is neither wise nor loving to be needlessly accusatory or inflammatory. ~ John MacArthur

1 Corinthians 9:22 LSB

²² To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.

Ephesians 6:11–12 LSB

¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

The King’s Messengers Must Expect Real Conflict ([Matt 10:17–18](#), [Matthew 10:21–22](#))

Matthew 10:17 LSB

¹⁷ “But beware of men, for they will deliver you over to the courts and flog you in their synagogues;

Matthew 5:10–11 LSB

¹⁰ Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ “Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.

Religious Opposition

Matthew 9:11 LSB

¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw *this*, they said to His disciples, “Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?”

Stiff Opposition from Jewish Religious establishment

Matthew 10:17 LSB

¹⁷ “But beware of men, for they will deliver you over to the courts and flog you in their synagogues;

Deuteronomy 25:3 LSB

³ “He may strike him forty times *but no more*, lest he strike him with many more stripes than these and your brother be dishonored in your eyes.

Acts 22:19 LSB

¹⁹ “And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in You.

Stiff opposition from Pagan Religions

Acts 19:27 LSB

²⁷ “And not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be considered as worthless and that she, whom all of Asia and the world worship, is even about to be brought down from her majesty.”

2 Corinthians 11:24 LSB

²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews forty *lashes* less one.

Revelation 11:7–10 LSB

⁷ And when they have finished their witness, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them and overcome them and kill them. ⁸ And their

dead bodies *will lie* in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. ⁹ And those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations *will* look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. ¹⁰ And those who dwell on the earth *will* rejoice over them and celebrate and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

Government Opposition

Matthew 10:18 LSB

¹⁸ and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

Acts 12:1-3 LSB

¹ Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to harm them. ² And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. ³ And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread.

During modern times, communist governments alone have slaughtered millions of Christians and persecuted and imprisoned countless millions more. Because atheism is a central tenet of Communism, it has always sought to suppress and eliminate religion, especially Christianity. ~ John MacArthur

John 15:18-21 LSB

¹⁸ “If the world hates you, know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you. ¹⁹ “If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. ²⁰ “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. ²¹ “But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.

Every person who identifies himself with Christ through salvation becomes a potential target of Satan and his evil forces, including evil men. That it is Christ and not Christians themselves that the world opposes is seen in the fact the more Christ is manifest in us, the more we will be attacked. ~ John MacArthur

2 Timothy 3:12 LSB

¹² Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Galatians 6:17 LSB

¹⁷ From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

Colossians 1:24 LSB

²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and I fill up what is lacking of Christ's afflictions in my flesh, on behalf of His body, which is the church,

1 Peter 4:14 LSB

¹⁴ If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

Matthew 10:18 LSB

¹⁸ and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

Family Opposition

Matthew 10:21 LSB

²¹ "And brother will betray brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.

Matthew 10:35-36 LSB

³⁵ "For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; ³⁶ and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD.

Micah 7:6 LSB

⁶ For son treats father as a wicked fool; Daughter rises up against her mother, Daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; A man's enemies are the men of his own household.

Societal Opposition

Matthew 10:22 LSB

²² “And you will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.

Romans 1:18 LSB

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

1 Corinthians 4:9 LSB

⁹ For, I think that God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men.

1 Corinthians 4:10 LSB

¹⁰ We are fools for the sake of Christ, but you are prudent in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are glorious, but we are without honor!

1 Corinthians 4:11 LSB

¹¹ To this present hour we hunger and thirst, and are poorly clothed, and roughly treated, and homeless;

Conclusion:

Matthew 10:22 LSB

²² “And you will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.

Discussion Questions

Have you ever experienced tension or pushback because of your faith? What did that look like?

In [Matthew 10:16](#), what images does Jesus use to describe His disciples and the world?

What does it mean that believers are “sheep in the midst of wolves”?

According to verses [Matt 10:17–22](#), where does opposition come from?

What areas have you experienced persecution (religious, government, family, society)?

What commands does Jesus give in verse 16 regarding how we are to live?

Why do you think Jesus does not remove the danger, but instead prepares His disciples for it?

What does it look like to be: “shrewd as serpents” (wise, discerning) and “innocent as doves” (pure, gentle)?

Why is it important to possess both of these qualities?

The sermon emphasized that the deepest conflict is spiritual, not political. How does that shape the way we view opposition today?

How does understanding spiritual warfare ([Ephesians 6:11–12](#)) change how we respond to people who oppose us?

Where are you currently experiencing the most pressure for your faith? At Work? With Family? In social settings?

In those situations, are you more tempted to: compromise truth or respond harshly without gentleness?

What would it look like for you to demonstrate both wisdom and gentleness this week?

The sermon warned about being unnecessarily inflammatory (especially in public or online spaces): Have you seen examples of this and have you ever been guilty of it?

How can we be bold in truth without being abrasive?

Do you genuinely expect opposition as a normal part of the Christian life, or does it still surprise you?

What fears tend to surface when you think about being opposed for your faith?

How does remembering that Christ is our Shepherd ([John 10:28](#)) give you confidence?

Are there areas where you are currently avoiding faithfulness to escape conflict?

How did Jesus Himself model both wisdom and gentleness in the face of opposition?

How does His suffering strengthen and encourage us in our own?

Why is it important to remember that we are secure in Him even if we suffer?

The Gospel

God

Created and owns everything

[Gen 1:1](#)—*In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth*

[Psalm 24:1](#)—*The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world and those who dwell in it.*

Is Perfectly Holy

[1 John 1:5](#)—*This is the message we heard from Him and announce to you that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all.*

[Matt 5:48](#)—*Therefore you are to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

Requires perfect obedience to His Law

[James 2:10](#)—*for whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.*

Man

Has broken God's law

[Rom 3:10,23](#)—*there is none righteous, not even one...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*

Will pay the eternal penalty for his sin

[Rom. 6:23](#)—*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*

Cannot save himself by his good works

[Titus 3:5](#)—*He saved us not based on works which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.*

Christ

Came to earth both as God and sinless man

[Col 2:9](#)—*For in Him the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form*

Demonstrated God's love by dying on the cross to pay sin's penalty

[Rom 5:8](#)—*But God demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*

[2 Cor 5:21](#)—*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

Rose from the grave and is alive today

[1 Cor 15:4](#)—And that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures

Sinners

Must repent of all that dishonors God

[Isa 55:7](#)—Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

[Luke 9:23](#)—if anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

Must believe in Christ as Lord and Savior

[Rom 10:9](#)—that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.

Will you repent and believe in Christ?

[Acts 17:30](#)—therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance God is declaring to men that all everywhere should repent.

Don't hesitate to contact Pastor Brandon or Pastor Keith if you have any questions about this sermon or if you would like to know how to follow Christ.

Brandon.Phillips@gracegainesville.org

Keith.Kemp@gracegainesville.org

Next Time

The King's Messengers Must Entrust Themselves to the Holy Spirit
([Matthew 10:19-20](#))

The King's Messengers Must Endure to the End ([Matt 10:22-23](#))