

The King's Messengers Under Fire, Part II

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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

Hebrews 10:24 LSB

²⁴ And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,

Hebrews 10:25 LSB

²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Hebrews 3:13 LSB

¹³ But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called “TODAY,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Sermon Text

Matthew 10:16–23 LSB

¹⁶ “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷ “But beware of men, for they will deliver you over to the courts and flog you in their synagogues; ¹⁸ and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. ¹⁹ “But when they deliver you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given to you in that hour what you are to say. ²⁰ “For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. 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. 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.²³ “But whenever they persecute you in this city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not finish *going through* the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes.

Introduction to our Text

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

Review

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.”

John 10:27–28 LSB

²⁷ “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;²⁸ and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish—ever; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.”

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

Matthew 10:17-18 LSB

¹⁷ “But beware of men, for they will deliver you over to the courts and flog you in their synagogues; ¹⁸ and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

Persecution is like the goldsmith's hallmark on real silver and gold; it is one of the marks of a converted man. ~ J. C. Ryle

Ephesians 6:13 LSB

¹³ Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

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

Matthew 10:19-20 LSB

¹⁹ “But when they deliver you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given to you in that hour what you are to say. ²⁰ “For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

The Inevitability of Opposition

Acts 5:40 LSB

⁴⁰ So they followed his advice. And after calling the apostles in *and* beating them, they commanded them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and *then* released them.

Acts 6:11-12 LSB

¹¹ Then they secretly induced men to say, “We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.” ¹² And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes, and they came up to him, dragged him away, and brought him to the Sanhedrin.

Acts 7:57–58 LSB

⁵⁷ But crying out with a loud voice, they covered their ears and rushed at him with one accord. ⁵⁸ And when they had driven him out of the city, they *began* stoning *him*; and the witnesses laid aside their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.

Acts 13:7 LSB

⁷ who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.

Acts 13:12 LSB

¹² Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

Acts 16:20–21 LSB

²⁰ and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, “These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, ²¹ and are proclaiming customs that are not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans.”

Acts 18:12 LSB

¹² But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat,

The Promise of Divine Help

Matthew 10:19–20 LSB

¹⁹ “But when they deliver you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given to you in that hour what you are to say. ²⁰ “For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.”

Acts 6:9–10 LSB

⁹ But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, *including* both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and were arguing with Stephen. ¹⁰ But they were unable to oppose the wisdom and the Spirit by whom he was speaking.

James 3:17 LSB

¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruits, without doubting, without hypocrisy.

Matthew 10:20 LSB

²⁰ “For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

Psalm 46:1-3 LSB

¹ God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. ² Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change And though the mountains shake into the heart of the sea; ³ Though its waters roar *and* foam, Though the mountains quake at its lofty pride. Selah.

Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture or by clear reason... I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I can do no other. God help me. Amen. ~ Martin Luther.

That Word above all earthly powers
no thanks to them abideth;
the Spirit and the gifts are ours
through him who with us sideth.
Let goods and kindred go,
this mortal life also;
the body they may kill:
God's truth abideth still;
his kingdom is forever! ~ Martin Luther

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

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.”

As verified by the last two thousand years, believers find they are hated by all classes, races, and nationalities of mankind. ~ John MacArthur

When biblical doctrine and standards are compromised to accommodate fallen human nature, society has little argument with that kind of Christianity and will give little opposition to Christians.

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,

Romans 1:28–31 LSB

²⁸ And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them over to an unfit mind, to do those things which are not proper, ²⁹ having been filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are* gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, violent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;

1 Corinthians 4:9–11 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. 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! ¹¹ To this present hour we hunger and thirst, and are poorly clothed, and roughly treated, and homeless;

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.

James 1:2–4 LSB

² Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith brings about perseverance. ⁴ And let perseverance

have *its* perfect work, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

James 1:12 LSB

¹² Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him.

Hebrews 3:14 LSB

¹⁴ For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end,

Matthew 10:23 LSB

²³ “But whenever they persecute you in this city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not finish *going through* the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes.

Acts 16:22–24 LSB

²² And the crowd joined together to attack them, and the chief magistrates, tearing their garments off of them, proceeded to order *them* to be beaten with rods. ²³ And when they had inflicted them with many wounds, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely, ²⁴ who, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

Acts 17:5–9 LSB

⁵ But the Jews, becoming jealous, taking along some wicked men from the marketplace, and forming a mob, set the city in an uproar. And attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the assembly. ⁶ And when they did not find them, they *began* dragging Jason and some brothers before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have upset the world have come here also; ⁷ and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.” ⁸ And they disturbed the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. ⁹ And when they had received the bond from Jason and the others, they released them.

Acts 17:10 LSB

¹⁰ And the brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

Acts 17:13-14 LSB

¹³ But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, shaking up and disturbing the crowds. ¹⁴ Then immediately the brothers sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there.

Conclusion:

The Lord's Table

Romans 10:9 LSB

⁹ that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

1 Corinthians 11:27 LSB

²⁷ Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 LSB

²³ For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was being betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me." ²⁵ In the same way *He took* the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes.

Discussion Questions

The sermon opened with the story of John Rogers going to martyrdom “as if he was walking to his wedding.” What most stood out to you about that illustration, and why?

What do you think Jesus means when He commands His disciples to be “shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves”?

Why is it difficult to maintain both wisdom and gentleness at the same time?

According to Jesus, from what sources should believers expect opposition?

Why do you think Jesus prepares His disciples so thoroughly for hostility rather than shielding them from it?

How did the sermon distinguish between the direct promise to the Apostles and the abiding principle for believers today? Why is that distinction important?

In what ways does the Holy Spirit still strengthen believers today when they suffer for Christ?

What does Jesus mean by “the one who has endured to the end who will be saved”?

Why is perseverance evidence of salvation rather than the cause of salvation?

Which is more challenging for you personally right now:

- Being wise/discerning in a hostile culture?
- Remaining gentle while speaking truth?
- Trusting the Spirit in moments of pressure?
- Enduring faithfully over time?
- Why?

Have you ever experienced opposition because of your commitment to Christ or biblical truth? How did you respond?

Are there areas where you are tempted to compromise truth in order to avoid rejection or conflict?

The sermon emphasized that persecution often purifies the church. Why does suffering tend to expose genuine versus superficial faith?

How can our small group better prepare one another now for future suffering or increasing cultural hostility?

[Hebrews 10](#) and the sermon stressed encouraging one another as “the day draws near.” What practical ways can this group stir one another up toward endurance?

How does Christ’s endurance in suffering strengthen and motivate our endurance?

Why is it important to remember that our perseverance is rooted in Christ preserving us, not merely our effort?

If following Christ became significantly more costly in your life this year, what area of your faith would be tested first?

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.

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Additional Quotes

The doctrine that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners is no more to be wounded by the sword of persecution than is the ocean to be scarred by the keels of navies. ~ **Charles Spurgeon**

The fire of God can't be damped out by the waters of man's persecution. ~ **A. W. Tozer**

The martyrs were bound, imprisoned, scourged, racked, burnt, rent, butchered—and they multiplied. ~ **Saint Augustine of Hippo**

Persecutions are in a way seals of adoption to the children of God. ~ **John Calvin (French Reformer)**

Against the persecution of a tyrant the godly have no remedy but prayer. ~ **John Calvin (French Reformer)**

The weight of glory makes persecution light. ~ **Thomas Watson**

Persecution is the legacy bequeathed by Christ to his people. ~ **Thomas Watson**

People remark how favored the church is in this country. It does not have to face persecution and rejection. If the truth were known, our freedom from persecution is because we have taken the easy, the popular way. If we would love righteousness until it became an overpowering passion, if we would renounce everything that is evil, our day of popularity and pleasantness would quickly end. The world would soon turn on us.

We are too nice! We are too tolerant! We are too anxious to be popular! We are too quick to make excuses for sin in its many forms! If I could stir Christians around me to love God and hate sin, even to the point of being a bit of a nuisance, I would rejoice. If some Christian were to call me for counsel saying he or she is being persecuted for Jesus' sake, I would say with feeling, "Thank God!" ~ **A. W. Tozer**

Take care if the world does hate you that it hates you without cause. ~ **Charles Spurgeon**

If you were not strangers here the hounds of the world would not bark at you. ~ **Samuel Rutherford (Scottish Presbyterian Divine)**

You can kill us, but you can't hurt us. ~ **Justin Martyr**

Let us therefore become imitators of His endurance; and if we should suffer for His name's sake, let us glorify Him. For He gave this example to us in His own person, and we believed this. ~ **Polycarp**

The servant of Christ must never be surprised if he has to drink of the same cup with his Lord. ~ **J. C. Ryle**

“Eighty and six years have I now served Christ, and he has never done me the least wrong; how, then, can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?” ~ **Polycarp**

Never have any princes been so famous for their victories as the martyrs were for their sufferings. ~ **Thomas Watson**

It is preferable to have the whole world against thee, than Jesus offended with thee. ~ **Thomas à Kempis**

Avoid heretics like wild beasts; for they are mad dogs who bite in secret. You must be on your guard against them; their bite is not easily cured. ~ **Ignatius of Antioch**

I wonder whether we are prepared to face the fact that the Church of God in this age and generation may in a sense have to go back to the catacombs. We may have to face that; there are people who are facing that, and it is the position in many countries today. ~ **David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (Welsh Preacher and Writer)**

If they are blessed who die in the Lord, are they not blessed who die for the Lord? ~ **Thomas Watson**

Trials from the enemies of Jesus confirm our faith. Those who are never tried usually possess a poor, tottering faith. But trial, especially persecution, is like the rough March wind which goes howling through the forest. While the young oaks are almost torn up by the roots at first, it loosens the soil for them, and they send out more rootlets, till they get such a firm grip that they defy the hurricane. That which shakes them at first strengthens them afterwards. ~

Charles Spurgeon

Christ's followers cannot expect better treatment in the world than their Master had. ~ **Matthew Henry**

The Word of God never yet prospered in the world without opposition. ~ **Iain Murray**

God sometimes raises up many faithful ministers out of the ashes of one. ~ **Matthew Henry (Nonconformist Biblical Exegete)**

Look at old Ignatius. He is brought into the Roman circus, and after facing the taunts of the emperor and the jeers of the multitude, the lions are let loose on him. He thrusts his arm into a lion's mouth, poor aged man as he is, and when the bones are cracking, he says, "Now I begin to be a Christian." ~ **Charles Spurgeon**

A whiff of persecution sometimes puts backbone into otherwise timid Christians. ~ **D. A. Carson**

Persecution is simply the clash between two irreconcilable value-systems. ~ **John Stott**

Never did the church so much prosper and so truly thrive as when she was baptized in blood. The ship of the church never sails so gloriously along as when the bloody spray of her martyrs falls on her deck. We must suffer and we must die, if we are ever to conquer this world for Christ. ~ **Charles Spurgeon**

These verses neither encourage seeking persecution nor permit retreating from it, sulking, or retaliation. ~ **D. A. Carson**

If persecution should arise, you must be willing to part with all that you possess, with your liberty, with your life itself, for Christ, or you cannot be his disciple. ~ **Charles Spurgeon**

The church of Christ has been founded by shedding its own blood, not that of others; by enduring outrage, not by inflicting it. Persecutions have made it grow; martyrdoms have crowned it. ~ **Jerome**