



...going “all in.” *Living it: Part 2*

**Mathew 10:16-23**

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Matthew 10:16-23 *"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. "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. "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.*

These “walking papers” that Jesus gives His boys herein were undoubtedly for them: *for them and for that time.* So how do these passages speak to us? How do they affect **our** lives and ministries?

There is a common core at the root of much prophetic thinking today that encompasses the idea that the way we are to look into the future before us is to look at the past behind us. That God...*in a great effort to operate with as much transparency as mankind could take without their heads exploding,* has shown us of Himself in so many ways. He has shown us how He acts and even, if we can put it this way, ‘*how he thinks.*’

We see what He does in so many diverse situations, and how He ‘feels’ about man and our sin. If we are willing to open our eyes to the world around us, we would also gain a great awareness of how the nations are behaving on the world scene today as well as the innate character of human behavior. Certainly Jesus Christ understood it all so very well! He soberly reflected on trends and conditions before the time of Noah’s Flood and plainly stated: “*As it was in the days of Noah, so will it be when the Son of Man comes.*” (Matthew 24:37)

The New Testament scholar William Barclay expresses it in his translation, “What happened at the time of Noah will happen all over again when the Son of Man comes.” If we continue the reading of what Christ had to say in Matthew 24, we read: “*In the days before the flood they ate and drank and married, until the day that Noah went into the ark, and **they knew nothing** until the flood came and swept them all away. That is how it will be when the Son of Man comes*” (Matthew 24:38-39)

In light of this exegesis, we must admit it would be a grievous mistake to pass this Matthew 10 directive off to some other...saying it has no bearing upon us personally or no application or dynamic upon our culture today. To do so would not be ignorance as much as it would be foolishness. No matter how bad we want the world to be otherwise, closing our eyes will not shut out the possibility that things could go very wrong for us personally as well as for our nation and world, and frankly it eventually *will!* We cannot stick our heads into the sand, and pretend not to see the telltale trends and events. We cannot say “This is not happening.”

Jesus told them “*I’m sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves.*” Now a lot of folks want to stop there and preach an absolute and overt doctrine of passivity in our lives and ministries. While love must be large and gentleness foremost, let us not miss the rest of the verse: *Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.* “Therefore”...or “**because** you will indeed be sheep out there in the middle of wolves, ... you had better smarten up.” Honestly, the “harmless as doves” can be difficult at times. Even Paul knew that saying in Romans 12:18 “*If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.*”

So Jesus speaks this directive and immediately slips in a warning in the form of a conjunction...**BUT**. Verse 17 says “**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...*” So I think it is safe to say that while Jesus wants us to be gentle, He also was telling us to wisen up and stay on your toes. Because the god of this world...Lucifer and his boys , **will** be coming for you. And Christian? **They are coming for you**. If we can gather anything from such a warning herein, it is that if we see all this stuff happening around us and we are still asleep at the wheel then we are to be seriously pitied because we are fools. In Mark, Jesus is articulating upon the events of the end of days and in finale says this: “*So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors!*” (Mark 13:29)

Yet as we approach the end, it seems that Christ is calling us to *lean in* on the battle, not to run and hide. If we believe that God is sovereign and all-knowing, then we must know that we have been born in this very special day to interact with **this** world in a very special way! Scary but exciting at the same time! For it seems that it won’t be long now before we too will be “*brought before governors and kings for (His) sake, as a testimony to them...*” For scripture is clear...despite the political efforts of the religious right and the protests of the conservative arm, it all WILL get worse and worse.

That is not meant to be a fatalistic appraisal, but rather a scriptural acknowledgement! We are to save the *people* not the whales, and protect human life not merely the ‘earth’, its trees and seas! So I ask you today what Peter asks in chapter 3 of his 2<sup>nd</sup> epistle letter... “*how then shall we live?*” How should we be living in light of all of this? How many of us will eventually sleep through the end of the movie? He says “*Since all these things are to melt away in this manner, what sort of people must we be...?*” How will we finish this race believer?

Notice the careful language of our Lord. He was sending them out as “*sheep amongst the wolves.*” Jesus praying in John 17 says to the Father “*I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth...*”

You see, Jesus sees those that are His as “not of this world.” But how many of us are still living like it is? Like the people we interact with each day... “they’re ok folks”... “they can be my buddies and my friends.” But Jesus says they are *wolves*. That doesn’t mean we don’t go out there...quite the contrary! But we must never forget that as kids of the King, that we are *different*. Jesus asked the Father to *sanctify* His followers. That means “set them apart” from the rest. Because, *and Jesus sees this clearly herein*, that we must “beware of men...”

The post trib folks love to point an accusatory finger saying us pre-trib people are just escapists...that we are just believing what we believe because we are trying to avoid trouble. Seriously? When have Christians ever avoided trouble? We have always been in the middle of it since the beginning. We have been persecuted, harassed, brutally killed, and maligned at every turn of history. If I was trying to avoid trouble I frankly just wouldn't be a Christian at all! Being at war is not an unusual state but rather the *normal* state for a Spirit-filled born again believer. Every day, *all the time*.

In the next few verses, Jesus goes on to say "...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..." And then He says something profound that should effectively 'stop us in our tracks.' He says "But he who endures to the end will be saved." Excuse me? Hey...I thought once I was born again I was saved? Ahhh...but consider the context Christian!

If you ARE really born again, you **will** endure because Jesus who forever endures is living inside you. If He is not, then you will not endure, only proving that you never knew Him and are not one with Him. Much can be said about the correlation between consistency, faithfulness, and steadfastness and the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit within us or the lack thereof! Scripture herein is saying that endurance is a hallmark of genuine salvation. Those who are really saved survive. I have consistently stated that what you REALLY are is what you will be as you take your last breath!

Verses 19- 20 tells us that "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." Therefore you can see the critical need for the Holy Spirit in us! How lightly we consider the Spirit of God, and how often we treat Him like an optional accessory that is nice if you can afford it but it's not really **crucial**. It's crucial only if you want to finish this race in one piece!

We all hate persecution and trials, but the fact remains that such has the effect of purging the chaff. Certainly when all this becomes real, the phonies get out. I mean really...why die for something you're only playing games with? Jesus says, "In the middle of it all, hang in there. Be one who endures to the end, one who is truly saved." Paul spoke the same ideal in Romans 2:7 "To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life." You see, people aren't saved by doing good deeds, but they do prove the validity of their salvation in their lifestyle and moreover continuing such when it's no longer convenient or comfortable. Lots of people have started this thing, but finishing says you are one of us. You're not saved because you endure, you endure because you are truly saved.

This issue is why I keep sending out the warning that we all need to be sure...very *introspective*, as to the reality of our stance before God. Surrounding oneself with all the trappings of salvation really means nothing. Judas did that, so did Ananias and Sapphira, and many others in scripture that won't be joining us at the 'marriage supper of the lamb' on the other side! The fact is many of us spend our lives looking for the 'middle-ground.' A way to live abundantly and have life eternal, while not really sacrificing in this life. We just kind of want to keep our heads down and stay out of the fray. But such only speaks of the lack of the Spirit of God because God would not behave in that manner, so what you are simply saying with such a lifestyle is that the Holy Spirit does not dwell in you.

A brother was telling me recently that he doesn't want to be an example so he was unwilling to step up. The irony of that is that he IS an example! We all are! That's not in question if you call yourself a Christian! There is no escape from that. The only question is an example of *what*? What is your Christian life an example of? What does the way you live your life say about Jesus, the church, and Christianity? The only way out of that light is to walk away from Christ completely, but in fact even that won't duck this as then you are just an example of a guy who once tried this Jesus and it all failed Him and the whole Christian thing is a failure!

We're not talking some sort of sinless perfection here...that's not going to happen. But our lives...if we are filled with the Spirit of God, should say something 'bigger than us' has a hold of us...pulling us forward, calling us, breaking us, making us, loving us, forgiving us, and passionately consuming us. Hebrews 3:14 says. "*We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.*" Therefore you can tell who is truly reborn because he or she is true to the end. Jesus said, "*If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.*" We must remember that John said, "*They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.*" So continuance is the proof of being a real Christian. The unstable and erratic life must be alarmed because it is God's warning that something is very wrong in us.

These men had given up everything. Their lives were left back at the fishing boats...back at the tax-collectors table...back at their old worlds. What we *don't do any longer* doesn't speak to our current state as much as *what we do now*. Being a Christian is more than just avoiding overt sinful acts. It is the engaging in the kingdom fight, and unity with the brotherhood in the commonality of the church.

Jesus was sending these guys out into the fray...into the chaos and into danger. And the only explanation...the only motivation that could be behind such an action is the love for Jesus and the possession of a different spirit than that of the world. NOT behaving in sinful ways can be motivated by a lot of things...the desire to stay out of jail, out of addiction, out of divorce court, or out of family angst. Such can be very much motivated by self and self-preservation. But going out into the conflict...moving into the positive action realm, that is a whole different thing. That speaks of a change at the core of our being. It means we are living for something else. We are living for *someone* else...

So I ask you today: are you "*all in?*" Or is your foot still in the door? You know...in case all this Jesus thing doesn't work out or begins to get too hard or doesn't give you what you want? Is your foot still in the door of the church? For the same reasons? When will Jesus begin to be able to count on you? When will we? God forbid we 'break a sweat' in this thing...after all, being a Christian should make me happy all the time, make all my dreams come true, and get the 'monkey' of a difficult world off my back, right? Wrong. It wasn't for Jesus. It wasn't for His disciples. And it won't be for a real Christian. Because Jesus is sending you 'out there'...a "sheep amongst the wolves."

**Are you ready?**