



ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE

LIVE A STRONG LIFE

Matthew 10:16-31

- Jesus - *“Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves. But beware! For you will be handed over to the courts and will be flogged with whips in the synagogues. You will stand trial before governors and kings because you are my followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell the rulers and other unbelievers about Me. When you are arrested, don’t worry about how to respond or what to say. God will give you the right words at the right time. For it is not you who will be speaking - it will be the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”* (Matthew 10:16-20)
- **After Jesus calls His disciples to follow Him and sends them out on their mission, He prepares them for the persecution that will come their way.**
- *“Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”* (2 Timothy 3:12)
- **Following Jesus is not an easy endeavor.**
- Jesus - *“You can enter God’s Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.”* (Matthew 7:13-14)
- **When we follow Jesus we will face increased attacks from the culture and from the Devil.**
- Jesus - *“If the world hates you, remember that it hated Me first. The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you.”* (John 15:18-19)
- **Persecution is to be expected, but can be overcome by anyone who is prepared to stand strong for the Lord.**
- *“God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.”* (James 1:12)
- **What instructions did Jesus give His Disciples when facing persecution in this life?**

When Facing Persecution Jesus Tells His Disciples:

DON'T BE SURPRISED

- Jesus - *"Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves. But beware! For you will be handed over to the courts and will be flogged with whips in the synagogues. You will stand trial before governors and kings because you are My followers."* (Matthew 10:16-17)
- **Since we go out as sheep among wolves we shouldn't be surprised when we encounter wolves in this world.**
- Jesus - *"The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life."* (John 10:10)
- **A shrewd disciple understands that it is better for God's Kingdom the longer we stay alive in this world and on mission for Jesus.**
- Paul - *"For I fully expect and hope that I will never be ashamed, but that I will continue to be bold for Christ, as I have been in the past. And I trust that my life will bring honor to Christ, whether I live or die. For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better."* (Philippians 1:20-21)

When Facing Persecution Jesus Tells His Disciples:

DON'T BE CONFUSED

- Jesus - *"But this will be your opportunity to tell the rulers and other unbelievers about Me."* (Matthew 10:18)
- **Even though persecution is bad for us personally, it is always a powerful opportunity to witness for Christ.**
- Paul - *"Each time He said, 'My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.' So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong."* (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)
- **Nothing converts the world like faithfulness in the midst of persecution and opposition.**
- *"A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem; and all the believers except the apostles were scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria...But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went."* (Acts 8:1-4)

When Facing Persecution Jesus Tells His Disciples:

DON'T BE WORRIED

- Jesus - *"When you are arrested, don't worry about how to respond or what to say. God will give you the right words at the right time. For it is not you who will be speaking - it will be the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."* (Matthew 10:19-20)
- **The key is to learn to rely upon the Holy Spirit for wisdom, for worship, and for the words to say.**
- *"But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don't worry or be afraid of their threats. Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if*

someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it.” (1 Peter 3:14-15)

- **Worry is always a marker that we are not living a Spirit-Filled life.**

When Facing Persecution Jesus Tells His Disciples:

DON'T BE ARROGANT

- Jesus - *“Students are not greater than their teacher, and slaves are not greater than their master. Students are to be like their teacher, and slaves are to be like their master. And since I, the master of the household, have been called the prince of demons, the members of My household will be called by even worse names!”* (Matthew 10:24-25)
- **It is arrogant to think that we will be able to avoid, escape, or be protected from suffering, persecution, and reputation attacks.**
- Jesus - *“God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.”* (Matthew 5:11-12)
- **Persecution is easy to talk about but hard to go through.**
- *“If you are insulted because you bear the name of Christ, you will be blessed, for the glorious Spirit of God rests upon you.”* (1 Peter 4:14)

When Facing Persecution Jesus Tells His Disciples:

DON'T BE AFRAID

- Jesus - *“But don't be afraid of those who threaten you. For the time is coming when everything that is covered will be revealed, and all that is secret will be made known to all. What I tell you now in the darkness, shout abroad when daybreak comes. What I whisper in your ear, shout from the housetops for all to hear! ‘Don't be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell.’”* (Matthew 10:26-28)
- **Fear comes upon us when we have an improper perspective.**
- *“We can rejoice when we run into problems and trials, for we know they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because He has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with His love.”* (Romans 5:3-5)
- **We shouldn't ignore the magnitude of the circumstances, but we should shift our focus to how they compare to the magnitude of the Lord.**
- *“Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean He no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (As the Scriptures say, ‘For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.’) No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.”* (Romans 8:35-37)
- **We can ultimately take refuge in God's protection and God's perspective when it comes to His children.**

- Jesus - *“What is the price of two sparrows - one copper coin? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.”* (Matthew 10:29-31)
- **Andrew was crucified, Bartholomew was skinned alive, James was beheaded, Jude was stoned, John was marooned, Matthew was staked and speared, Peter was crucified upside down, Simon the Zealot was sawn in half, Thomas was speared, Mark was dragged to death, Luke was hanged, Paul was beheaded, and James the brother of Jesus was thrown off a wall 100 feet in the air.**
- **Every original follower of Jesus ultimately faced significant persecution, but their faithfulness in its midst was the seed that planted what is now a forest of Jesus followers.**
- ***What is the Lord saying to me through this message, and what steps do I need to take to apply it to my life?***