



THE SENDING OF THE TWELVE IN MATTHEW PT 6: ENEMIES IN THE HOUSE?

FEBRUARY 10, 2019

HOLY TEXT: MATTHEW 10:34-39

In Matthew 10, verses 16-33 contain power encouragements and exhortations for the disciples, who were, as we've seen, sent on a difficult but prophetic mission to Israel. They were to be:

- Wise as serpents, harmless as doves (v16)
- Prepared for persecution (vv17-28)
- Encouraged, because the Holy Spirit would help them speak (vv19-20)
- Ready for betrayal on a deeply personal level (brother vs brother, parents vs children; v21)
- Prepared to endure hatred and hostility (vv22-23)
- Exhorted when called the names Jesus was called (vv24-25)
- Filled with courage; "Fear them not...!" (v26)
- Ready to speak what they learned from Him, preaching upon the housetops! (v27)
- More fearful of God (who can kill both body and soul in hell) than man (v28)
- Heartened despite their pending persecution God loves them; the very hairs on their heads are numbered! (vv29-31)
- Prepared to confess, not deny Jesus before men (vv32-33)

We also made the point that the Church, as the prophetic voice of God, must emulate these things as well, especially considering the increasing hostility towards the true Gospel and godliness in the western world.

Today, Jesus expands on this theme using a very difficult example, one with which many believers are sadly familiar.

ENEMIES IN THE HOUSE?

1. As I've read these verses over the years, it has been my understanding that they can be considered metaphorical...a way our LORD chose to set a standard of love. In other words, our love for Jesus is to be so high, so deep, and so wide as to make all other love pale by comparison.
2. The ultimate point, I believed, is that the cost of truly following Jesus might be high...very high. I still believe this is true.
3. However, was the LORD speaking in metaphor only?

A quick look at church history, beginning in the Acts of the Apostles, reveals conflict after conflict on every level: family, among religious leaders, in communities, and among nations and governments.

4. Let us take a closer look...

Matthew 10:34 (KJV) *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.*

1. Noteworthy, the verses just prior to this one speak of the confession the Twelve, and all disciples, must be prepared to make.

2. This confession is the cornerstone declaration of the Church: Jesus is the LORD; Jesus is LORD of all! (1 Cor 12:3; Acts 10:36)
3. *Romans 10:9-11 (KJV) That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.*
4. The singularity and exclusivity of this powerful confession...that there is salvation in none other...that there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12), continues to cause strife as it did in the Apostles' day.
5. The truth is, there is an environment where Christ brings peace and unity and an environment in which He brings conflict and disunity.
6. Among the Church, whether Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female, our LORD brings peace. Praise Him!
 - *Ephesians 2:14-16 (KJV) For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; 15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; 16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:*
 - *Galatians 3:26-29 (KJV) For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*
7. Between the Church and the world however, He brings a sword!
 - *Luke 12:51-53 (KJV) Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: 52 For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. 53 The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.*
 - Pretty much the whole book of Acts! A quick read will show that as a result of the LORD Jesus being preached, there were beatings, imprisonments, trials, riots, and executions!
 - There is a constant, ongoing battle between the LORD's church and the flesh, the world, and the devil.

Matthew 10:35 (KJV) For 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.

1. Believing in and following Jesus may set people "at variance" or against one another. Sometimes, this conflict can happen in the most intimate of relationships.
2. The examples Jesus used aren't meant to define specific relationships, but rather are meant to convey that ANY relationship might be affected....even husbands and wives (1 Cor 7:10-16)
3. Why would Jesus say that at least in part, He came to do this? Here are some possibilities:
 - Because of the nature of the heart of man: wicked with continual evil intentions (Gen 6:5)
 - Because of the nature of the Gospel: it is the narrow way (Matt 7:14)
 - Because of the nature of spiritual warfare: men are deceived by the enemy (2 Cor 11:3, 13-15)
4. Throughout the centuries, the scenario Jesus teaches in this verse has been all too real for many believers. And it still happens. The following was taken from a Nov 2018 article from the website advancingnativemissions.com:

Outcomes When a Muslim Becomes a Christian

In the most radical Muslim families, a convert is locked in a room and given three days to return to Islam. If they refuse, they are slaughtered. If they escape, they will be hunted by family for years. If children are involved when a husband comes to Jesus, they are considered bastards because they no longer have a Muslim father. They are either given to another family member or killed.

In a less religious family, the convert may be taken to the imam, who may lead the family in beating the believer. If the convert is a woman, her family may force her to marry a Muslim cousin to avoid shame and scandal. Many have been restrained with ropes, burned with acid or hot oil, and subjected to electric shocks. Sometimes families commit converts to mental institutions, thinking that leaving Islam is a sign of insanity. Others are forced to leave the home, family, and the community they know.

In all cases it is a perilous passage. Following Jesus definitely costs a former Muslim. The Bible says in Matthew 10:34–35, “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.’”

5. May the LORD comfort and strengthen those whose good confession costs them the love of family.

Matthew 10:36 (KJV) And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

1. The context hints that a prolonged conflict among family members rather than a simple disagreement is possible. Spiritual conflicts tend to be such: long and difficult to overcome.
2. The word “foes” or “enemies” (ESV) is *echthros* in Greek, and it means “(to hate); hateful (passively odious, or actively hostile); usually as a noun, an adversary.” (Strong’s)
3. Although it can describe a physical enemy, it is used in the epistles to describe spiritual enemies...people hostile to Christ and His Kingdom.
4. Love and believing in Christ can totally transform a household once peacefully united in sin and rebellion! All of a sudden, light enters and disunity ensues!
5. By extension, this is also possible within friendships, at a job, or in a church!
6. As off-putting as it sounds, the idea of “intimate enemies” is one we see again and again throughout the Bible...
 - The first two brothers, Cain and Able, fought to the death
 - Isaac and Ishmael were (and still are) at odds
 - Jacob and Esau fought over their birthright
 - Joseph’s own brothers sold him into slavery
 - Moses’ older brother Aaron and his sister Miriam rose up against him, resentful of his leadership (using his marriage to an Ethiopian woman as a pretext; Num 12)
 - In the time of the Judges and Kings, several family members rose up against family
 - Saul rose up against David
 - Jesus’ own brothers did not initially believe Him (John 7:5)
 - Judas, who walked and lived with Jesus, betrayed him
 - Paul warned the Elders at Ephesus that “of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” (Acts 20:30)

- Jude warned of men in the church who would chose the “way of Cain.” He called them “spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds *they are* without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.” Jude 1:12-13 (KJV)
- Even Satan (or Lucifer), an angelic “son of God” (Job 1:6) who may have been symbolically called “the anointed cherub” (Eze 28:14) and who many believe was involved in the intimate worship of God, rebelled against the LORD.

Matthew 10:37 (KJV) *He 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.*

1. When our LORD gives us the Greatest Commandment, He means it!
2. Scripture declares:

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (KJV) Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: 5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Deuteronomy 10:12-13 (KJV) And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, 13 To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?

Matthew 22:36-37 (KJV) Master, which is the great commandment in the law? 37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

3. For our sovereign God is reserved our highest love, our deepest devotion, and our most persistent passion! The love and adoration we are to have for our King must eclipse the love we have for one another. Only then can we rightly love one another!
4. We must have no other gods before Him and serve no other king as we serve Him. It is a love that overcomes fear and causes one to rejoice in the face of death.
5. In context, this is the sort of love that will see a disciple through persecution, conflict, and tribulation!

Matthew 10:38 (KJV) *And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.*

1. In case the hearer was confused, Jesus makes it excruciatingly plain: love for Him must be not only sacrificial, but also must be unto torture and death if that is His will.
2. I use the word *excruciatingly* on purpose. As Ravi Zacharias said, “The very word *excruciating* comes from two Latin words: *ex cruciatus*, or out of the cross. Crucifixion was the defining word for pain.”
3. John MacArthur said, “For a disciple of Christ to take up his cross is for him to be willing to start on a death march. To be a disciple of Jesus Christ is to be willing, in His service, to suffer the indignities, the pain, and even the death of a condemned criminal.”
4. The word “worthy” here can mean “suitable” or “befitting.” It is not suitable for a disciple to be unwilling to follow in the footsteps of his master. Therefore, one unwilling to do so isn’t a true disciple.

Matthew 10:39 (KJV) *He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.*

1. Here is the great news! Willingness to lose your life for Jesus is to truly find or possess true life!

2. What a remarkable truth! The world says “hold on.” Jesus says “let go.” The world says “Get it done.” Jesus says, “You can do nothing without me.” The world says “Be the man or woman.” Jesus says “You are nothing unless I abide in you.” The world says “Find yourself.” Jesus says “Lose yourself in me.”
3. In context, this is a call to surrender all, lose all, and forsake all for Jesus, and to do so joyfully! It is an admonition to refuse to love the world or anything in the world that one might truly love Jesus.
4. Mark wrote it this way:

Mark 8:34-38 (KJV) And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. 36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? 37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? 38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Let us be willing to lose all for Jesus, giving Him our lives and trusting Him to do with them what He wills, for His own glory.

Amen.

APPLICATIONS AND QUESTIONS:

1. Are you willing to lose your life for Jesus? Set your goals aside? Endure mocking and family trouble? Be persecuted?
2. Have you endured the “variance” our LORD mentioned? Have you recovered?
3. Have you ever been the source of it? Have you repented?
4. Examine your love for Jesus. Is it greater than love of wife, husband, or children? Do you see how keeping Him first would increase your love for others?