

Learn to Disciple from Jesus, Part 4

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If you have your Bibles, turn to Luke 9, where we are continuing our series on discipleship, learning to disciple from Jesus and His example.

Robert Morgan, speaking of the English Reformation said:

It is a mistake to nail the English Reformation just to the door of King Henry VIII. While Henry broke relations with Rome, he still believed Catholic doctrine. He just wanted Catholicism without the pope.

The real English Reformation is better credited to a scholar at Cambridge University named Thomas Bilney who embraced Reformation truth after reading Erasmus' Greek New Testament. Bilney gathered a group at White Horse Inn for secret Bible study and prayer. He was eventually found out, and he perished in the flames at Norwich on August 19, 1531—but not before influencing Hugh Latimer, a spiritual giant who is known as the “Apostle to the English.”

Latimer had bitterly opposed the Reformation, but Bilney, hearing him preach a scathing sermon at Cambridge against Lutheranism, sought him out and succeeded in persuading him otherwise.

Soon Latimer was preaching the faith he had once labored to destroy. As a result, he fell from favor during Henry's reign and spent time in the Tower of London. When Edward VI came to the throne, Latimer was released for ministry; but when Edward died, Latimer was among those caught and condemned by officials of Queen Mary.

On October 16, 1555, he and Nicholas Ridley were tied back-to-back to the stake in Oxford and set aflame. "Be of good comfort, Mr. Ridley," Latimer cried. "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."¹

That is exactly what happened. These two men, by their deaths, lit the candle of the English Reformation. It's amazing but true that Erasmus was just a Roman Catholic scholar [who], for some strange reason, had it in his heart to make a Greek Testament. The New Testament was written in Greek, but Latin [had become] so accepted and was so popular that Greek had kind of fallen out of use. And so, [Erasmus] decided to get as many ancient manuscripts as he could, collect them all together, and then make his own Greek New Testament [that was] as close as he could [get] to the original Greek text. His Greek New Testament led Thomas Bilney to the Lord and opened his eyes to the gospel truth. Bilney, then, a professor at Cambridge, gathered a discipleship group together and they had Bible study and prayer at the White Horse Inn.

Now, what's interesting is that even though this led to [Bilney's] eventual capture and death by being burned at the stake, before he died, he led Hugh Latimer to the Lord. Hugh Latimer was a spiritual giant. This guy was scary godly. If you ever read the historical accounts, [you will see] he was impeccable. He was meek, he was humble, he was godly, and he was absolutely fearless. So was Nicholas Ridley. Latimer influenced and dis-

¹ Modified from Morgan, Robert J. *On This Day* (Nelson/Word Reference, 1998), October 16.

ciplined many other men before being burnt at the stake, and actually was discipling men and women *while* being burnt at the stake, and [as he was] going to the stake. As he walked to the stake, knowing that he was going to be tied up there and set on fire, he was calm, he was peaceful, there was not a hint of fear upon him. He and Ridley were tied to the stake and burnt to death while the crowds rent the air with applause, [marveling] that these two men, in their deaths, merely prayed and quoted hymns to God.

When you hear stories like that, it may seem kind of surreal to you, because after all, that was a long time ago, that was pretty barbaric, [and] people aren't being burned at the stake out here in the parking lot. You [may] think to yourself that, "This is never going to happen today." Well, if that's how you think, you need to change your thinking because it is happening today. In Muslim countries, in communist countries, in Hindu-controlled countries, people are dying by the thousands [every year] for their faith in Christ.

I'm no economist and I'm not trying to predict the future, but it could be that our country is on the verge of an economic collapse. It could be that through a series of divine-ordered events, our whole government system falls apart, there's anarchy, there's war, the laws are set aside, [and] evil men prevail and set up a society where Christians are to be hated. But even if that never happens, what do you read in the paper, what do you hear in the news? That our country is becoming more accepting of Christianity, of God, of gospel truth, and the Bible? Not on your life. Living as a Christian in the world—a real Christian—is dangerous. It's a dangerous proposition. All Christians have to suffer persecution for living the truth. The Bible guarantees it.

As we look at Luke 9:1–11, a text that we've learned many great things from already, we're working through eight principles of discipleship that we can find from Jesus' example. Last week we looked at the first three [principles: first], that you need to train your disciples to do ministry; second, that you need to give your disciples opportunities to serve; and third, to teach them to trust God all the time while they serve, trusting in His all-

sufficient grace. We saw this already, and this morning we continue in our examination of what Jesus taught us in this text.

So follow along as I read [Luke 9:]1–11:

And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing. And He said to them, “Take nothing for your journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not even have two tunics apiece. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city. And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.” Departing, they began going throughout the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was happening; and he was greatly perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen again. Herod said, “I myself had John beheaded; but who is this man about whom I hear such things?” And he kept trying to see Him.

When the apostles returned, they gave an account to Him of all that they had done. Taking them with Him, He withdrew by Himself to a city called Bethsaida. But the crowds were aware of this and followed Him; and welcoming them, He began speaking to them about the kingdom of God and curing those who had need of healing.

This morning, we will examine one more discipleship principle that we all need to know, we all need to understand, and we all need to apply to our discipleship relationships. It is this: You must teach your disciples to expect and respond properly to rejection and persecution. Look at verse

5: Jesus has told the disciples to trust God to provide for them as they go about preaching the gospel and healing all manner of disease and sickness. He says, in verse 5: “And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.” The phrase “do not receive you,” means “who do not welcome you, do not accept you, reject your teaching, do not want to show hospitality toward you.” That’s what Jesus is saying here. Jesus says “as you go out from that city.” What does that imply? It implies that when they “do not receive you” [or] show hospitality toward you, when they do not want to hear the gospel from you, you leave them, you exit the city. In fact, you could paraphrase this to emphasize the verb tense [as] “you need to cause yourself to leave that city where no one is willing to receive you and hear the gospel of truth.”

This is an interesting evangelistic strategy, isn’t it? [It’s] a little different than [what] you hear today, where people say, “You know, you need to get some outside support, and you need to hunker down in [a] stronghold, and then you need to share the gospel surreptitiously, and blend in and tell people about Jesus whenever you can sneak it in. Then see what happens.” Jesus, though, says, “Leave. Leave them.” As a matter of fact, if you look [at the verse], he says, “shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.” I don’t know about you, [but] I’ve read quite a bit about discipleship, [and] I’ve never read a book that says, “You need to shake your feet in front of those who don’t want to hear the gospel.” You can see it at work. You know, [it’s] lunchtime, and you’re sitting with a guy there, and you say, “Hey, you know, let me tell you about my faith.”

He says, “Listen, I don’t want to hear that.” [So you get up and shake your feet off in front of him.] Have you ever read that? It makes you wonder, doesn’t it?

Vincent, in his *Word Studies in the New Testament* says:

The very dust of the heathen country wasn’t clean and it defiled by contact. It was regarded like a grave or like the putrescence

of death. If a spot of heathen dust had touched an offering, it had to be burnt. . . .

The apostles, therefore, were not only to leave the house or city which should refuse to receive them, but it was to be considered and treated as if it were heathen, just as in the similar case mentioned in Matthew 18:17.

And if you don't know that text, that is where we are told that after a person who falls into sin is confronted, if he doesn't repent, and two or more go and he doesn't repent, and the elders confront him and he doesn't repent, then you tell it to the whole church, and then if he doesn't repent, that person is to be treated as what? [He is to be treated like] a Gentile, a pagan, a godless person because he will not submit to the Word of God.

[Vincent] goes on to say:

All contact with such must be avoided. All trace of it must be shaken off. The symbolic act indicated that the apostles and their Lord regarded them not only as unclean, but as entirely responsible for their uncleanness.

So when Jesus says, "shake the dust off your feet," what he's saying is: 1) Don't even let a particle of their pagan, unbelieving, god-hating dust cling to you; 2) regardless of what they profess, let them know that they are rejecting God's truth and are really godless pagans; and 3) that by doing this you're telling them that [their] blood is on [their] own heads because [they] refuse to receive the Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel of [their] salvation. That's what that means.

Now, you might be wondering, "Well, Jack, I understand that Jesus is telling [this to] the Twelve here, and they were apostles, but should we be doing this?" Well, turn over to Luke 10. In Luke 10 we have another instance [of Jesus sending out disciples]. (I know that this chapter is only one chapter away, but it kind of seems far away, doesn't it? It does to me.)

Instead of sending out the Twelve here, He's sending out seventy to do the same thing he's sending the Twelve out to do in Luke 9. In verse 10, we read this: "But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets," notice He doesn't just say, "Leave." He says, "Go out into the streets, into the main intersection of the city, into that hub of busyness and" do what? You go out there "and say, 'Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near,'" [implying] "and you rejected it" [10:11]. Verse 12: "I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city."

Think about that. You remember what happened to Sodom, right? Ah, nothing but fire and brimstone rained down out of heaven, totally annihilating the city. "More tolerable [for] Sodom. . .," which had righteous Lot in it and had the angels who would not hear. Jesus says, "When you're shaking the dust off your feet in that city, you're saying, 'Judgment is coming and it's going to be really bad for you.'"

Now, you still might be wondering, "Yeah, Jack, I understand [that] this is the Twelve, and I understand [that] this is the seventy, but really Jesus hadn't died yet, the Church hadn't started yet. I mean, come on, this is still kind of a pre-Church thing." Well, turn to Acts 13. (Don't you hate that? There's always a verse somewhere that teaches us a little bit more about something.) Acts 13:48–51—and by the way, this is one of the great texts on God's sovereign choice of those whom He chooses to save—[says], "When the Gentiles heard this," that's the gospel, [which] Paul and Barnabas are preaching at Antioch,

They began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region. But the Jews incited the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. But

they shook off the dust of their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium.

[Paul and Barnabas] did it in the Church as an example, and obeyed Jesus' command. Try it sometime. Because Paul and Barnabas were not welcome in Antioch, they said, "OK, we're leaving and may your blood be on your own head."

Look down at Luke 9:7–9. [Jesus] has just talked about not being received in verse 5, and [the Twelve] were sent out and started obeying [Him] in verse 6, but look at verse 7:

Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was happening; and he was greatly perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen again. Herod said, "I myself had John beheaded; but who is this man about whom I hear such things?" And he kept trying to see Him.

I don't know about you, but when I was studying this passage, I thought, "What is that doing there?" Doesn't that look kind of weird to you? I mean, we're talking about Jesus saying, "This is what you need to do," and then [the Twelve go] out, and then right after this, we're back [with the Twelve] and [it] says they returned. [So] what is this Herod thing doing in there? Couldn't [Luke] put it after? You know, wouldn't that have been better? Well, the reason Luke inserts this little bit of history into the text is to make this point: When Jesus was sending the disciples out to preach the gospel, they were in danger of death. We know this because Luke takes this little historical bit of information about Herod and he puts it in here out of chronological order.

At the time Jesus was talking to His disciples, right before sending them out, John had not had his head severed from his body. That didn't happen

for a while still. But Luke, wanting to make the point that Jesus was sending the disciples out into grave danger to preach the gospel, takes an event that he knows—because he’s writing after the fact—happened later and he inserts it into this discussion of Jesus with the Twelve and their being sent out and returning.

Mark gives us quite a bit of detail about John’s execution in Mark 6, and tells us that what happened was [that] John was preaching, Herod was interested, went to hear [John], and John confronted [Herod] about his sin and [Herod’s] adulterous relationship with his brother Philip’s wife. Of course, [Herod] didn’t like it, and his wife, Herodias, *really* didn’t like it. And, you know, hell hath no fury like a woman scorned, and so she worked it out so that [through her daughter] John’s head would be severed from his body.

That’s why Luke reaches forward, out of chronological order, grabs this historical incident, [and] puts it in the text here: to let us know that right after Jesus said, “And [they] do not receive you” [Luke 9:5], that the “do not receive you” means not just [that] they don’t want to hear the truth, but [that] they may kill you for the truth, like they did John.

Now, if you’re looking there [at Luke 9:7–9], and you’re thinking, “I’m following your bit of logic, but are you sure? I mean, can we read that much into ‘do not receive’? Is it really there?” Yes, and I’ll show you why. Turn to Matthew 10. This is the parallel account of our text in Luke 9, where Matthew gives us quite a bit more information about what Jesus said in between Luke 9:5 and 9:6. [Luke] 9:5 is when [Jesus] says, “If they do not receive you, leave, shake the dust off your feet.” Verse 6 says, “They went out and preached the gospel and healed the sick.” In between the white spaces, we have this section in Matthew 10:16–38, where Matthew tells us a whole bunch of detail about what Jesus said on that day before sending [the Twelve] out.

Look at Matthew 10:16: “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.” Think about that. “Sheep in the midst of wolves.” I don’t know if you know anything about sheep, but when I used to go fishing in the mountains of Idaho, I would

run into flocks of sheep. They are dumb. If somebody wasn't there to herd them out of the road, they would just let you run over them. They don't run fast, they don't have sharp teeth, they don't have sharp claws, they're usually clueless [about] danger, and often panic and hold still when scared. A wolf can walk right up to a sheep and bite its neck and kill it. Wolves, on the other hand, are fast, and ferocious, and cunning, and they eat sheep—rip them to pieces and devour [them]. Jesus encourages His disciples by saying, "Listen, this is all it's going to be like. You're going to be like sheep in the midst of ravenously hungry wolves. That's all."

Look at [Matthew 10:]17–18: "But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues; and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles." Here Jesus tells us that the wolves represent men who will arrest the disciples and try to use the courts against them because of their faith in Christ. And why? Because Christians go about loving people, doing good, submitting to the government, proclaiming the gospel, warning people of sin and judgment, trying to see them saved from the eternal torments of hell. The world, because it is controlled by Satan, *cannot* stomach the proclamation of the truth or a holy life. They can't handle it! You're committing a hate crime if you tell somebody, "Hey, drunkenness is a sin. Homosexuality is a sin. Abortion is murder." That's a hate crime!

But if you kill people, that's OK. If you do drugs, if you lead people astray, if you let people perish, that's fine. Keep your views to yourself. Don't talk about doctrine—it's divisive. There is to be toleration. Accept people, they're different. We all have our own views, we all have our own things we like to do. I mean, come on, toleration is important—*except* with biblical Christianity. Except with Christians who strive to live a holy life and confront sin and preach the gospel. Those kinds of people are hated. Oh, you can be a Christian, and blend in, if you want. You can be a liberal Christian—do social work, give to charity, be a moral, upstanding citizen. Never speak the truth, never proclaim the gospel, never confront sin, and they will *love* you. But [if] you live like Jesus is telling us to live in this text,

they will censor you, and ridicule you, and condemn you, and not show any tolerance for you, because you are a fanatic: You actually live like you say you believe!

In [Matthew 10]:19–20, Jesus promises [the Twelve] that they will be given divine revelation during those times they are in trial so they will know what to say. Look at verses 21–22:

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. 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.

Here we see that becoming a Christian is not just a ticket to health, wealth, and prosperity. It's not just an easy way to live. "Hey, man, become a Christian. You can come to church, sit in an air-conditioned room, get a cool little pep talk, eat doughnuts. I mean, being a Christian is great, man—a whole bunch of people gathered together—[you could] find a wife! Find a husband! They don't smoke, drink, cuss, or chew—it's fun!" That's not what Jesus says. Jesus says here that the closest people in family relationships will lobby to have each other put to death.

[In Acts 14:22], Paul, as he was traveling around on his missionary journey after that text we just read when he was driven out of Antioch [and] went to Iconium and all those cities, says he made it his practice as [he was] going through those cities, to tell his disciples, "Through *many* tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" [emphasis added]. You must go through tribulations in order to enter the kingdom of heaven.

[If] you side with Jesus, you are at odds with the world. I know many of you know this from personal experience. You've had parents get very angry with you, or children, or brothers, or sisters, or close, intimate friends. Why? [They get angry with you] because you love them and tried to speak the truth to them, and now they hate you for it. Imagine your own brother or sister standing on the witness stand, saying, "There that man is. There that

woman is. He/she condemned me. He/she said I would go to hell. He/she is intolerant. Put him/her to death!” That’s what Jesus says will happen. Some of you have experienced this to one degree or another. As a matter of fact, I am sure that all of you who have diligently followed Christ have experienced this to one degree or another.

Look at [Matthew 10]:23: “But whenever they persecute you in one 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.” This is very interesting. This is a whole hinge-piece in the text because Jesus says, “Listen, you can’t even go through the cities and the Son of Man is going to come.” Well, the Second Coming hasn’t happened yet, so what does that mean? What it means is this: Jesus has been addressing the Twelve, but now He is reaching forward through all the ages of the Church, through the Tribulation all the way to the Second Coming. That’s what it means. It means He has now left, “I want to talk to you Twelve,” to “I want to talk to *all* of my followers.” When Luke says, “they do not receive you, and so shake the dust off your feet,” Matthew reads, “flee to the next city.” Did you notice that though Jesus is speaking to the Twelve, He’s talking about the end of the Tribulation, the Second Coming when Christ returns? This is for us, now.

What’s for us? Look at [Matthew 10]:24–25:

A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!

Jesus’ reasoning is simple: “Listen, if they hate Me, and they persecute Me, and they want to kill Me, do you think they’re going to be nice to you because you are My followers? If they’re going to do this to the Lord and Master, what are they going to do to you?” That’s what He’s saying. Look at verses 26–27:

Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops.

Why does Jesus say that? Because Jesus knows that we tend to fear men, that we don't want to suffer persecution, that we don't want to hurt, we don't want to have [to be] inconvenienced, we don't want to be at odds with people, we don't like conflict (if we're normal). He knows all that. Aren't those the very things that make you not want to share the gospel when you know you should? "Oh!" you think, "I've got an opportunity. I should speak!" And then nothing happens. You're like a kinked hose! Nothing comes out.

Look at verse 28: "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Jesus' point is, "If you want to be scared of somebody, let me tell you who to be scared of. It's not your neighbor, it's not your boss, it's not the atheist on the street corner. It's God Almighty! Be scared of Him because He can kill you physically and then kill you eternally in a lake of fire [see Revelation 20:15]. Fear Him."

Verses 29–31:

Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

Why does Jesus mention this? [He mentions it] because it's a comfort to know. "Listen. Yeah, as a Christian you have to suffer. Yeah, it may put you at odds with Mom, or Dad, or brother, or sister, or best friend. Yeah, you may lose opportunities, [and] you may have to suffer inconvenience. Yes, it may even cost you your life. But God is always watching. He's always

there. You never go through any trial, any circumstance [when] He is not there. And guess what? He loves you. He loves you. He loves *sparrows!* Birds! Of course He loves you. He even has your hairs numbered.” Do you even have your hairs numbered? (Some of you probably could.) That’s huge!

But did you notice the three-fold command? Don’t miss it. Verse 26: “Do not fear [them].” Verse 28: “Do not fear them.” Verse 31: “Do not fear.” Now, what do you suppose is the application of that? Do not fear them! That is the application. Do not let the fear of the what-ifs, or of scorn, or hatred, or ridicule, or persecution, or intimidation stop you from living a holy life or from proclaiming the truth in love to people. That’s what [Jesus] is saying.

Do you know how terrorists operate? [They operate] by terrorizing people. That’s why they’re called “terrorists.” They scare people. And when people are scared, [the terrorists] use [that] fear against them. A terrorist wants something from you—the combination to the vault, or whatever—[and he says], “Tell me or I’ll kill you.”

But, you’re a Christian, you can’t wait to see Jesus, [and you say], “OK, then shoot me. I’m *not* telling you.” See, they have no power over you. So then what do they do? They try to scare you another way.

“Well, if you aren’t afraid of dying, and you don’t care if I kill you, what about your wife, or your child, or your family? What if I kill these other fifty people that you don’t even know? Huh? Are you ready to have their blood on your head?” What is he doing? He’s trying to use fear against you, to manipulate you. Listen, he’s lying. If a terrorist kills fifty people because you don’t give him the combination to the vault, *he* killed the fifty people, not you.

Do you think on Judgment Day when [the terrorist] stands before Christ, Christ is going to [say to you], “It’s your fault, not [the terrorist’s].” Come on! [The terrorist] is manipulating you. He’s using terrorist tactics. He’s trying to use fear against you. Jesus says, “Do not fear them” three times in a row to make [the] point that when you go into the world as a Christian,

you're going to experience fear, and you need to train your disciples [in] this. It's scary standing up for Christ when the world hates Him, when the world doesn't want to hear about Him, they don't want to hear God's law, they don't want to hear God's truth, they don't want to be told that they're going to hell, that judgment is coming, they don't want anybody messing with their seared consciences. They just want to live their lives, enjoy their sins, and just die and hope that evolution is true.

Perpetua was born in Carthage, North Africa, [around] AD 176. Her father was a wealthy unbeliever. Perpetua was intelligent, she was attractive, had a good education, a husband, and a baby boy. In AD [202], Emperor Septimius Severus began to persecute Christians. Perpetua was arrested for her faith in Christ. Her father begged her to recant, and she pointed to a water pot and asked, "Father, do you see this vessel? Can it be called by any other name than what it is? So also, I cannot call myself by any other name than what I am: a Christian." In prison, her father begged her with sobs to renounce her faith. She refused. Perpetua and a handful of other believers were tried in the open marketplace, where again, her father appeared, carrying her infant son, holding him out, and begging her to deny Christ for the sake of her son. She refused, was sentenced to execution by torture, and was dragged back to prison.

When she asked to see her baby a final time, she was refused. On the night before her death, she wrote, "I saw that I should not fight with beasts, but with the devil; I knew the victory to be mine." On March 7, [202], the Christians were marched into the arena, where Perpetua was gored and thrown about by an enraged heifer. Though wounded, she survived, fixed her hair as she stood up, and covered herself [because] her garment had been torn, and to maintain her modesty. She stood up with

dignity and courage, and looked the enraged heifer in the face. It would not charge her.

So a gladiator was ordered to strike her down with a sword. And though he was trained to kill, he walked up, pulled out his sword, and could not put her to death [because] she was so courageous. So she grabbed the tip of his sword, placed it on her throat, and said, “Obey your order.” And he ran her through, and she fell down dead. All [of] this happened as her unbelieving family watched. All [of] this happened in front of huge crowds of pagans, who watched in awe and wonder that this frail Christian woman could have so much courage in the face of death. At that very moment, the jailer, Pundens, repented and gave his life to Christ.²

Satan will use your husband, your father, your mother, your brother, your sister, money, loss of promotion, loss of popularity, loss of fame—whatever he can—to get you to not speak the truth. He hates the truth; he hates the gospel with the utmost hatred. In [Matthew 10]:32–33, Jesus adds one more motivation [for preaching the gospel]. Now, think about the list He has already given. *Why* should you preach the gospel as [His] disciple? One, [you are to preach] because you will be given what to say if you get into a hard situation. Two, that if you endure to the end you will be saved. Three, that He—that is, Christ—will come again to rule the earth and rescue you and you will rule and reign with Him. Four, you are not to be above your master—if [Christ has] to suffer, you have to suffer, too. Five, that everything will be brought out on Judgment Day and no one will get away with any false accusation because all will be brought to the truth and [will be] judged accurately. Six, that Jesus commands you not to fear men but to fear Him, to live a godly life, and to proclaim the truth. Seven, Jesus reminds you that men kill the body, but God can kill both body and

² Modified from Morgan, Robert J. *On This Day* (Nelson/Word Reference, 1998), March 7.

soul in hell, so you better fear Him. Eight, be comforted, knowing that no matter what you suffer on behalf of Christ, God is watching, Christ is watching, His grace is sufficient, and it never happens to you without a good purpose. Only heaven will tell the impact that Perpetua's death had on all those people who watched that day.

Now, if Jesus stopped here, you would think, "Whew! Whew! That's enough! That's plenty." But He is not through yet, and in verses 32–33, He pulls out the granddaddy of them all, which is kind of a two-edged sword. He says this in verse 32: "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven." Think about that. Get your mind off of this world, off your job, off your stuff, go all the way past death, after that, to the Great White Throne Judgment. Think about this. There you are, a sinner saved by grace, and all the holy angels—"myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands" [see Revelation 5:11]—are all around the throne of God, and the saints of all the ages from Adam all the way up through this time, all the way past this time, all the way through the Tribulation and the millennium, all of them are standing around the throne of God. And all the demons, and Satan, and the antichrist, and the Beast [are there as well]. They're all watching, and Jesus, with the voice of a tumult, with a voice like thunder [see Revelation 14:2], makes all the heavenly hosts look at you. He says, "Do you see this man? Do you see this woman here? He/she was faithful to me. He/she did not deny me before men." He says, "Father, I am welcoming him/her into my kingdom." Can you imagine that? Are you going to be sitting there going, "Oh, but I lost my job!" when Christ professes you before the Father in heaven?

But what if you fear men? What if you get scared? What if you don't proclaim the gospel, you don't witness, you just call yourself a Christian? Then what? [Matthew 10:]33 [says]: "But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven." Things are different now. They're way different. Christ comes in glory, you're all fearful but excited because, after all, you've been involved in church, you gave quite a bit of money to church, you spent a lot of time serving in church, and being

involved in social programs, and doing a lot of religious deeds. It's true, you never told anybody about Jesus, preached the gospel, [or] lived a holy life, but for the most part you've been religious. As you stand there before the bar of God and you look in the face of Jesus, who is on the throne, His eyes are like a flame of fire [see Revelation 1:14], and inside of Him this holy anger and hatred toward you burns. He looks at you and you know He knows everything about you. He knows your hypocrisy, He knows that you did not follow Him during your hypocritical life here on earth, and He says, "Depart from me, you worker of iniquity, I never knew you" [see Matthew 7:23]. Two brawny angels carry you and pitch you into the lake of fire, where you will be tormented forever. That is something to think about in this life—before that happens. You *do not* want to be there.

If you have never given your heart to Christ, you need to do it now. You need to cry out to God now, and not wait a moment longer. Today is always the day of salvation [see 2 Corinthians 6:2]. Christ died to save sinners. [If] you give your life to Christ [and] trust in His death, and burial, and resurrection He will save you. He will change you. He will turn you into the kind of soldier He wants you to be. Then you will follow Christ because He will *make* you that way.

[If] you look at your life now, and you realize, "This isn't me." Are you Christ's? "My sheep hear My voice... and they follow Me" [John 10:27]. What did we just read here? "But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven" [Matthew 10:33]. What does that mean? It means that when you're saved and you have given your life to Christ, you cannot but speak. Is it scary? Yes. Do you have to suffer? Yes. Do you like persecution? No. Do you like suffering? No. But do you love Christ more? Yes!

Now you think, "OK. All right. I know I love the Lord. I don't love Him like I should, and I don't share the gospel like I should, but is He [done]?" No. He's not. [Christ] anticipates another false concept that people will have about Him. Many know that Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and many know that [in] Matthew 5, in the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount,

Jesus says, “Blessed are the” what? the “peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” [Matthew 5:9]. [People] know this, and they interpret that to mean that the ultimate goal of Christianity is to not cause any waves, to lay down, to lay low, to blend in, to not get dogmatic. There are other ways to heaven. There are other saviors. Everybody with good intentions will get there. God isn’t *that* angry about your sin.

But this is not what Jesus meant. Jesus is not saying, “Blend into the world that hates Me. Become friends with the world so it likes you,” which is what many churches are doing today. James speaks straight at us when he says in James 4:4: “You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” Jesus doesn’t want you blending in. Jesus wants you sticking out—white, pure, courageous, noble, humble, fearless—not timid. That’s what He wants for you. Haven’t you read in your Bible that the Christian life is a war, is a fight, is a battle, is a struggle? Do you think that only applies to people who lived 2,000 years ago, or during the Reformation?

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10:3–6:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.

He says, “Listen, we aren’t using bombs, we aren’t using knives, we aren’t using swords, we aren’t going out there with picket signs. Our battle is a battle of truth. It’s a battle for the souls of men and women. It is a battle to take those who speak lies and who have been deceived by Satan, and to take their thoughts and try to bring them into subjection with the truth of

God's Word. These are the weapons of our warfare: a holy life, the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit. God empowers us and He drives us—compels us—to speak the truth. His Word is like the hammer that shatters rock, and a fire that consumes [see Jeremiah 23:29] so that people don't just blow God off because you won't let them. They're either going to come to reckon with who they are and who Christ is or they're going to hate you. You can guarantee it."

Look at [Matthew 10]:34–38:

Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 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; and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

Did you see that? If you're not willing to live for Christ, if you're not willing to share the gospel, if you're not willing to stand up for the truth, *you are not worthy of Christ*. He says it three times. Three times. Jesus came to save and raise up an army of spiritual soldiers who would go out into the world with holy living, speaking the truth of the gospel, confronting sin, calling sinners to repentance that those people might bring other people into the kingdom so that they wouldn't perish.

Part of your role as a discipler is to train those you disciple that this is what Christianity is about. It is a battle for truth and the souls of men. By His grace you need to stay in rank, hold the line, live the truth, proclaim the truth, be a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

All that we have just read and surveyed from Matthew 10 comes in between Luke 9:5–6. That’s what Jesus told them on that day before they went out and maybe quite a bit more—we don’t know.

Charles Spurgeon said:

The Christian will be sure to make enemies. It will be one of his objects to make none; but if to do the right, and to believe the true, should cause him to lose every earthly friend, he will count it but a small loss, since his great Friend in heaven will be yet more friendly, and reveal himself to him more graciously than ever.

O ye who have taken up his cross, know ye not what your Master said? ”I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother; and a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” Christ is the great Peacemaker; but before peace, he brings war. Where the light cometh, the darkness must retire. Where truth is, the lie must flee; or, if it abideth, there must be a stern conflict, for the truth cannot and will not lower its standard, and the lie must be trodden under foot.

If you follow Christ, you shall have all the dogs of the world yelping at your heels. If you would live so as to stand the test of the last tribunal, depend upon it the world will not speak well of you. He who has the friendship of the world is an enemy to God; but if you are true and faithful to the Most High, men will resent your unflinching fidelity, since it is a testimony against their iniquities.

Fearless of all consequences, you must do the right. You will need the courage of a lion unhesitatingly to pursue a course which shall turn your best friend into your fiercest foe; but for the love of Jesus you must thus be courageous. For the truth’s

sake to hazard reputation and affection, is such a deed that to do it constantly you will need a degree of moral principle which only the Spirit of God can work in you; yet turn not your back like a coward, but play the man. Follow right manfully in your Master's steps, for he has traversed this rough way before you. Better a brief warfare and eternal rest, than false peace and everlasting torment.

Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for men like Spurgeon who told Your truth and the way it is. We thank You for our instruction from Luke and the expansion from Matthew, from your inspired Word, which tells us very clearly and plainly that living for You in a world of unbelievers is a hard, but right way. That it is a battle, that it is a war, and we are called to be soldiers of the truth. And, Father, I pray that if there is anyone here who has never repented of their sins and placed their faith in Jesus Christ that right now, in their seat, they would cry out to You. That You would save them, that You would transform them, that they would cry out and admit that they are sinners and that Christ is the only Savior. That they would beg You to transform their lives, and deliver them from the wrath to come, and to make them good soldiers of Jesus Christ. For the rest of us who know You, Father, I pray that we would be so brave, so courageous, so godly that the world would not be able to disregard our testimony. That through living and speaking we would proclaim Your truth to the world, suffering whatever consequences may come, knowing that we are to fear You above anything this world can throw at us. We look forward to standing before You, holy and blameless, with great joy on Judgment Day, hearing You proclaim our name to the Father, to the angels, and all the saints of ages past, present, and future, because we, by Your grace, have followed after You. Help us to be this way, do not let go of us, help us to persevere that we might honor You. In Christ's name, Amen.

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