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Matthew 10:21 - 10:25



Gospel of Matthew - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses Matthew chapter 10, where Jesus gives additional instructions to his disciples. Jesus tells his disciples that they will face persecution and hostility from even their own families for their new identity as followers of Christ. However, Jesus also teaches that total loyalty and allegiance to him transcends even family allegiances. The message concludes with a warning that if one does not take the risk and step up to follow Christ, they will depart without leaving a legacy.

Transcript

We'll pick up our study of the life of Jesus now at Matthew chapter 10. And we are in this chapter looking at the things that are associated with the sending out of the 12 apostles on their first short-term mission. Now, these apostles were not fully trained and they were not being sent out on their permanent mission, which they later were after Jesus had risen from the dead and he gave them what we call the Great Commission and told them to go and make disciples of all nations.

At this point in time, they were simply being sent out on a temporary excursion to preach the kingdom of God in a number of villages in Israel. We do not know how long this outreach endured. We don't know when Jesus met with them again, but it may have been weeks.

It probably was a number of weeks. We don't know. There's no indicator how long it was, but he was giving them instructions on this occasion.

And Matthew extends these instructions much further than does Luke. Luke has the instructions that Jesus gives that parallel pretty much only the first 15 verses of Matthew 10, but Matthew 10 goes on for almost another 30 verses with additional instructions. Now, these additional instructions come, for the most part, it would appear, from other occasions when Jesus spoke on similar subjects because we find all of these later verses in Matthew paralleled in the other Gospels in other contexts.

That is, not in the context of his sending out the 12. So, this is one of those cases, it would appear, where Matthew seems to have gathered relevant data on a topic that

Jesus had spoken on many times and gathered the sayings of Jesus on that topic into one place and created a rather large discourse where the actual discourse material given on this particular occasion may not have been the whole amount that we have here. There are parallels elsewhere.

For example, in Luke 21 and Matthew 24, which we usually call the All of It Discourse, some of this material has its parallels. Today, we're going to be picking up at Matthew chapter 10 and let's start at verse 21. Although we did read this last time, we didn't have much time to discuss it.

In Matthew 10, 21, beginning there, it says, Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father will deliver up his child, and children will rise up against their 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. But 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. A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master.

If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they call those of his household? So, Jesus is preparing the disciples for not exactly a warm reception of their message. They are to go and preach that the kingdom of God is at hand. And, of course, we don't have any reason to believe that they received this harsher reception on this particular occasion when they went out for this short outreach.

After all, what they were sent out to do was to heal the sick and raise the dead and cast out demons and to preach that the kingdom of God was at hand. That's precisely the very things that Jesus had been doing in this same general region, and Jesus was being very well received. There's a good chance that the disciples were very well received also at this particular time on this outreach.

But, Jesus is projecting out to their later ministry after he would be gone, and they would be sent out to all nations. This is exactly the kind of treatment that they were to receive. Now, when he said that families would be divided so that he says a brother will deliver up his brother to death and a father will deliver up his child and children will rise up against their parents and cause them to be put to death and you'll be hated by all for my name's sake, we can see that what Jesus is saying is that persecution of Christians will cross all other identity boundaries.

Most people identify with some larger group than just themselves. It's almost impossible to function and feel secure in this world, feeling like you're an island, it's just you against the world. And so, most people find security in identifying with some larger solidarity, whether it's the people of their own race, the people of their own gender, people of their

same political party, perhaps people united in a common cause, maybe a social cause or even a religious cause, or sometimes people who are united only by the fact that they share the same hobbies.

They all surf or they all ride motorcycles or they all play tennis or golf or something like that. People are always looking for some larger group to be a part of. And you can tell when people have found their identity in such a group by the fact that they're very defensive of that group and they feel very insecure if that group comes under some kind of criticism or is weakened in terms of its credibility by some scandal within the group.

Now, Christians, of course, have a solidarity also, and that solidarity is the solidarity of Christ. We are to identify ourselves as being members of Christ, and when one member of Christ suffers, all suffer. And when one is exalted, all rejoice.

Paul said that, of course, over in 1 Corinthians 12. This is the solidarity of which we are a part. But prior to becoming Christians, the most fundamental group that we found our security in and our identity in was that of our family, our parents.

We were born bearing their name. We were raised under their household and associated with them. And that is why so many little kids are offended if someone insults their father or their mother.

I mean, it might be in some cases the child simply has tremendous love for his father and mother, as he should, and honors them and wants to honor their name. But it's also the case that if a child is finding his security in his family relations, then if those relations are called into question or their credibility is challenged, that makes the child himself feel somewhat threatened. And so the most basic solidarity in which people find identity and security is that of the family.

As they get older, they may find it in some other grouping of people. But Jesus is saying that in following Christ and preaching his gospel, the disciples are going to have to face the fact that this solidarity, this identity in their families is going to be challenged. There are those who are in their very family who will persecute them for their new identity, which is that they are followers of Christ.

Many members of their family are likely to consider them traitors to the family. If certain family members do not follow Christ and others do, that divides the family. It's interesting how Jesus calls all people to either be for him or against him.

And when people make the choice to be for Christ, it essentially transcends all other loyalties. And when people choose to be against Christ, it seems to transcend all other hostilities. For example, we read that Pilate, who is, of course, the Roman governor who condemned Christ to be crucified, and Herod, who was also a Roman appointee as king up in Galilee, that they were hostile toward each other.

They were enemies of each other until the day came that they both condemned Christ. And on that day, it says, from that day forward, they were friends with each other. It seems that whatever hostilities they had formerly nursed against each other were transcended by their mutual rejection of Christ himself.

And likewise, in Christ, those who accept him find that their union with Christ transcends all other loyalties, including family loyalties. And families sense this. Many times, parents will try to make their children feel very guilty because the children are following the way of Christ rather than the way that their mother or their father had always hoped they would.

Now, we need to understand that Jesus does teach that we are to honor our father and our mother. But he also teaches that there is no human loyalty that is equal to our loyalty to Jesus himself, and that where father and mother may stand in the way of one's following Christ, on a case like that, the person must respectfully part company from their father and mother and do what Jesus calls them to do. Well, that is what we see here.

He wants the disciples to be prepared for that. Even those who were once part of the group that you belong to, where your identity was formerly found, will now be rejecting you. And you will be very clearly in another camp, and they will be persecuting you, or sometimes even rising up to put you to death.

He even speaks of a time when children would rise up and have their parents put to death. This is, of course, a great atrocity and quite a violation of the debt that is owed to their parents of respect and love. But it is sometimes the case that people are extremely hostile toward Christianity, and they are hostile toward anyone, even close relations, who take the side of Christ.

This often means that they have, in fact, come to understand what Christianity is. A lot of people think that people would not reject Christianity if they only understood what it is that Christianity really is. And sometimes we think that people reject Christianity because of their misconceptions about it.

But I suspect that those who really understand what Christianity is about are the ones who are most prone to persecute it. Not because Christianity is bad and something that should be persecuted. Of course, I believe the opposite is true.

But because Christianity lays claim to things that are very dear to people. When you come to Christ, He demands that you come on His terms, not your own. And His terms mean that all other loyalties, all other loves, we might say all other idols in your life, have got to go.

And that touches people at a very tender spot. And when people fully understand that

Jesus is calling them to give Him their total loyalty and allegiance, and that this transcends even national and family allegiances and other things that once were very dear to the heart of people, this is very offensive to some people who are not willing to make that step. Jesus is not some kind of innocuous, harmless, neutered option that people can make where they can sort of embrace Christ and keep all their other loyalties too.

Following Christ is a call to die to all other idols, all other loyalties, and to follow Him even unto death. And when you do this, those who formerly felt that they had the right to your loyalty, and your family would be chief among them in many cases, they often deeply resented and in some cases have been known to deliver their own offspring up to death. Examples of this, of course, would be found in Islam, where in many countries of Islam, if a person becomes a Christian, their own families will put them to death for it.

And that's pretty much what Jesus told His disciples to expect. And the Jews, generally speaking, do not kill their young when they become Christians, but they do something sort of equivalent in many cases. It has been customary in many cases for Jewish people, when their children become Christians, to actually have a mock funeral or to declare that their children are dead to them.

I'm not sure that this is done so much in modern times anymore, but it has been done many times in the past. And Jesus was talking to Jewish men who were possibly going to experience this kind of rejection from their families, because they were now following Jesus instead of following their family's ways. Now, at the very end, or maybe it's not the very end of this, but when He is talking about this hostility and even the danger to their lives that they would risk by taking up His cause, He makes this statement at the end of verse 21.

He says, or I guess it's actually at the end of verse 22, He says, But he who endures to the end will be saved. This is also found elsewhere in Matthew. In Matthew 24, in verse 14 or so, He says, or 15, He who endures to the end shall be saved.

Now, what does it mean, he who endures to the end shall be saved? Certainly it doesn't mean he who survives to some period of time. It almost certainly means that the person who endures and remains faithful under persecution until the end of his time of testing, which is his lifetime, will be saved. The Bible does indicate elsewhere that all of life is a time where our loyalty to God is under test, is under proof, and we are tempted to separate from Christ, we are tempted to follow other loyalties, and if we do so, we have failed the test.

If we throw off all of these temptations and follow Christ faithfully to the end, until we die, we have made it. We've finished the course. We've run the good race.

We've fought the good fight. We've been faithful unto death. All of these things the Bible

tells us to do.

And it is such people who actually resist every temptation to defect from Christ and who remain faithful to Him that Jesus is speaking of when He says, He who endures to the end will be saved. Now, this suggests, of course, that a person who does not endure to the end will, in fact, not be saved. Now, there may be many listening to my voice right now who have followed Christ in the past, maybe during the Jesus movement or maybe during some time in your childhood or maybe some time in the past.

You can remember following Jesus Christ. You made a commitment to Him. You gave up many things for Him.

You might have even suffered some persecution for Him and remained faithful. But as time went on, something happened, and you drifted. Maybe you were very disappointed with God, with His dealings, with something He allowed to happen to you or some test that He brought into your life, and you simply failed the test.

And you have departed from Him, and you no longer name the name of Christ nor follow Him with all your heart. You have not endured to the end. And those who do not endure to the end, it is implied, are not going to be saved.

Now, I want to say this to those of you who may fit that description. That does not mean that your hope is all gone. It does mean, however, that if you're not following Christ any longer, that were you to die today, you were not prepared to meet God, and you would not be saved.

But you are living. You are breathing. As long as you can hear this message, you are still alive.

And it is possible to turn back to God. It is possible to come to Him and to repent of your failure and to repent of your defection, and to ask Him to take you back again. And the amazing thing is, the Bible makes it very clear that He does that, that He is willing to forgive more than 70 times 7, the same sin.

And if you have sinned and fallen away, then you definitely need to come back to God, because if you do not follow Him to the end, then whatever following of Him you did at some earlier point will count for nothing for you. I would recommend that if you're interested in seeing this amplified more, that you turn to the book of Ezekiel, in chapter 18, because there Ezekiel makes it very clear, God makes it very clear through the prophet, that if a man does righteousness for a very long time, but then he turns from his righteousness and does wickedness, all the righteous deeds that he previously done will not be remembered anymore, and he will die in his sins. And yet, he says that the wicked, who has done wickedness for a long time, if he turns away and goes back to God, and returns from his wickedness, then all the wickedness that he did will not be

remembered against him.

So, God is going to really judge by the way things are in the end. When you die, whatever your state is at that time, then you will find that you're judged on that final basis, because you are really in a probationary period here. And to serve God for a little while and fall away is not going to cut it.

I was referring to Ezekiel 18. Let me just read you verse 24, for example, in that chapter. It says, But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered because of the unfaithfulness which he is guilty of, and the sin which he has committed.

Because of them he shall die. So, this is the way that God speaks about it. And yet, in verse 27, he says, Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness which he committed, and does what is lawful and right, he preserves himself alive.

Because he considers and turns away from all the transgressions which he committed, he shall surely live and he shall not die. So, this is how God speaks about it. If you are righteous and you fall away, and you die in that condition, all the righteousness before is forgotten.

You will not get any credit for that at all. If you are wicked, however, and you turn from your wickedness and follow Christ and endure to the end, then you will be saved. And that's what Jesus said, He that endures to the end shall be saved.

It's your condition at the end of your life that will be determinative of your ultimate salvation. Now, you might say, well, does that mean that we can't know whether we're saved or not? At this point, we can't know until we die whether we are saved? No, I believe that we can know that we are saved now by the fact that we have the evidence of salvation in that we have turned from our sins, and we're trusting in Jesus Christ for our salvation, and we're walking with Him. These are certainly the evidences that salvation is really here.

If the Holy Spirit is within you, and you love your neighbor, and you have those evidence of salvation, there's no reason to doubt that today you are saved. But if you turn from God, and do wickedly, and do not follow Him anymore, and die in that condition, then your salvation at that time will be, of course, forfeit, according to what Ezekiel says, and what Jesus implies, and what is said, in my opinion, in many places in the Scripture. Well, there are, of course, many Christians who disagree with that doctrine.

Frankly, I'm not sure on what basis they could possibly disagree with it, since the Bible teaches it rather bluntly, and it seems to me quite plainly. Well, in verse 23, Jesus says, But 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.

Now, there's an interesting thing. He tells them, first of all, not to stay around in a city where they're being persecuted, because there's more cities to cover, and they might as well concentrate on the cities that are receptive. Now, He says, you will not have covered all the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes.

And I think we need to understand here that Jesus is not referring to His second coming. He's speaking of something else. He's speaking of something that would happen within their lifetimes that would prevent them from finishing the task of evangelizing all the cities of Israel.

Now, He could be simply referring to the fact that He will come back and meet them at the end of this temporary outreach. When the Son of Man comes to them in that sense, they will not have finished with all the cities that are available. But I suspect that He may be referring to something more cataclysmic.

In this case, my opinion is that He is speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., which is sometimes figuratively spoken of as the coming of the Son of Man. Now, that's not the second coming. The second coming is still ahead of us.

But the coming of the Son of Man sometimes refers to things other than the second coming. And in this case, as in a few other cases in the Scriptures, I believe it may be referring to the destruction of the Jewish state in 70 A.D. because this, of course, brought an end to all opportunity of the Jews to reach these villages since the Jews were at that time deported from Israel and taken into foreign lands. And there are a number of reasons.

I don't have time to go into them all, of course, in this broadcast for my reaching this conclusion. Jesus said if they are persecuted, they are simply being treated the way that Jesus was persecuted. And the servant should not expect to be treated better than his master.

If they've called the master of the house Beelzebub, He says, how much more will they call you? Beelzebub is a name for Satan, and they called Jesus Satan. So if they call you bad names, don't think you're alone. Jesus was called the worst names of all, and His disciples should expect to be criticized and to be mocked and to be hounded and persecuted as well.

And that is what Jesus was preparing them for and teaching them on this occasion.