

OUR MISSION AS DISCIPLES

Matthew 10:1-39

Christians are required to be engaged in Christ's threefold ministry of preaching, teaching, and healing. They should have such a love for and sympathy with others that they would be moved in their innermost beings and respond obediently when they observe their conditions and needs.

I. The Call. Matthew 10:1-4.

After Christ had issued the command to His disciples to pray that laborers might be sent forth to gather the harvest, He gave twelve of them a specific call. Christ always calls people to Him ere He sends them forth to work for Him. Having previously called the twelve to discipleship and to intimate fellowship with Him, Christ called them to apostleship. After they had received the proper training from Him, the Master wanted them to go forth and put into practice what He had taught them. They were to go forth two by two, thereby encouraging each other, as well as supplementing each other in the Lord's work.

Those whom our Lord calls into His service, He always endows and empowers for the task. He never sends them forth in the world on their own. He knows full well that they would be helpless in the face of the tremendous forces arrayed against them unless His power is operating in them. Having called the Twelve, Christ gave them sufficient power to heal all the maladies that afflict the human body, even reaching to the control and expulsion of demons.

II. The Charge. Matthew 10:5-8.

Christ gave the Twelve specific instructions as to the field in which they should work. The place to which He directed them to go is of special significance also. He told them both where not to go and where to go. He forbade them to go to the Gentiles, and then commanded them to go "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The message which He charged them to proclaim as they went was that "the kingdom of the heaven is at hand."

III. The Cost. Matthew 10:24-25.

In expressing the relationship between the Twelve and Himself, our Lord used two figures, namely, disciple and Master, and servant and Lord. The disciple is a learner, and the servant is the one who is faithful in carrying out the will of the Lord. If the Twelve were to take their proper place, it was necessary for them to sit at Christ's feet and learn from Him. Upon learning what their duties were, they were obligated to serve Him faithfully.

Before sending forth the Twelve to preach the gospel, Christ made it clear to them that they would encounter the opposition of those who did not have any consciousness of their need of it and did not want it. To keep them from being discouraged when they encountered this opposition, Christ sought to prepare them for it by warning them of its inevitability, by assuring them of His identification with them, and by suggesting to them certain ways to meet it effectively. He wanted them to know that their lot as His followers would be similar to His own, so they need not expect any favorable consideration from His enemies. To this day true Christians, who make the will of God supreme in their lives, are held in disdain by the enemies of Christ.

IV. The Courage. Matthew 10:26-27.

Courage was needed if they were to overcome the opposition which they were about to encounter. Christ certainly did not leave them in the dark regarding the coming persecution which they should suffer for His sake. But, it was one thing for Him to warn them and it was another thing to get them to be courageous. He did not hesitate to remind them that their efforts to testify for Him by word or by life would meet with persecution from a hostile world. However, such persecution was no more than He too had suffered. They certainly were not any better than their Master, and since it was His lot to endure persecution, how much more should they also expect to be persecuted. Christ's followers have no right to expect to be borne to glory on flowery beds of ease.

With reference to special revelations from God, He told them that when He spoke to them in secret, it was their duty to speak forth the message in order that all might hear. What He spoke into their ears, they were to preach from the housetops. Whatever message they received from Him they were obligated to proclaim openly, far and wide. We must never forget that Christianity is not something to be hidden in one's own soul, but rather it is to be proclaimed to all.

V. The Conflict. Matthew 10:34-37.

Christ admonished His followers to recognize that there is a real price to pay for loyal personal devotion to Him. Instead of bringing peace on the earth, the immediate effect of His coming was widespread bitterness and warfare. Of course, He did not come to stir up needless strife between members of the family, but He well knew that as the result of true discipleship certain divisions would be inevitable. In fact, loyalty to Christ frequently separates some from the other members of their families. But, no human tie, regardless of how intimate or precious it may be, is to be permitted to stand between the Christian and his devotion to Christ. In every case Christ must be given the first place. Anyone who denies Christ His rightful place in his life is not worthy to be called His follower.

VI. The Cross. Matthew 10:38-39.

Each one who follows Christ in the pathway of Christian service will have a cross to bear.

Christ told the apostles that they would be tried before religious councils, scourged in synagogues and arraigned before governors and kings. He comforted them with the assurance that the Holy Spirit would prompt them what to say in their defense and as a testimony when the time came. They were sustained in the knowledge that the love, wisdom, and power of God would be available to them when the need arose. Moreover, Christ informed the apostles, as well as those who might become Christians in the centuries to follow, that some of them would experience ostracism at the hands of members of their immediate families. Inasmuch as Christ was slandered and persecuted, His followers should not be surprised when they are misrepresented and opposed by His enemies for "the disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord."

While it may seem almost paradoxical to say it, it is nevertheless true that

if you keep your life for your own personal interests you will lose it, whereas, if you will give it wholeheartedly to the Lord you will receive it back from Him transformed, enriched, and glorified by His marvelous blessing. In the end, you will discover that instead of a seeming loss there will be a real gain, and instead of regret there will be a great joy. This plain teaching of God's Word is corroborated by the experience of multitudes.