

Foreword by Dr. Terry Dorsett

Principles of a Sent Life

*What to expect when
Christ says, "Go."*

Michael Duncan

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	XI
Foreword	XV
Section One: Called of God	1
Chapter One: A Personal Call	11
Chapter Two: A Powerful Call	17
Chapter Three: A Purposeful Call	23
Section Two: Stay on Target	29
Chapter Four: Go Where God Sends	33
Chapter Five: Speak What God Commands	37
Chapter Six: Trust in God's Supply	47
Chapter Seven: Stay on God's Target	53
Section Three: Facing Persecution	59
Chapter Eight: The Circumstance of Our Going	63
Chapter Nine: The Conflict of Our Going	69
Chapter Ten: The Comfort through Our Going	75
Chapter Eleven: The Continuance of Our Going	79

Table of Contents (cont.)

Section Four: Finding Courage	85
Chapter Twelve: Courage in the Revelation of God	91
Chapter Thirteen: Courage in the Security of God	99
Chapter Fourteen: Courage in the Providence of God	107
Section Five: The Great Divide	115
Chapter Fifteen: Positioned Against the World	121
Chapter Sixteen: Purposed to Love God	127
Chapter Seventeen: Pursuing the Real Life	135
Section Six: The True Reward	141
Chapter Eighteen: Of Receiving Christ	145
Chapter Nineteen: For Recognizing the Messenger	153
Chapter Twenty: For Responding in Kindness	161
Conclusion	171

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who are or have been a part of those fellowships even now serve as cities on hills (see Matthew 5:14) and have helped illuminate the gospel of Christ. But there are some notable mentions I would like to offer to you, the reader.

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No acknowledgement is complete without giving honor to the Sovereign Savior, the Lord of Glory and Prince of Peace, Jesus the Christ, the Righteous One. I pray, as David prayed in Psalm 19:14, *“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.”*

In His Grace,

Michael Duncan

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Foreword

Jesus commands us to “go into all the world” and preach the gospel. With that commission each believer is sent out by the Master. Yet in modern Christianity, far too few have accepted this very clear commission from God to go. This refusal to be sent has resulted in declining churches filled with consumers instead of the Spirit empowered lay missionaries we need to change the world.

Michael Duncan has been on mission for more than 30 years. During all this time he has answered the call and accepted the commission to share the gospel in a variety of settings. Having served across the United States, in South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Holland, Michael understands what being sent out means.

In this book Michael uses what the Lord has taught him to walk his readers through various scriptures to understand their own calling to be sent out ones. With challenging questions, the reader is confronted with the reality that they have been sent, and any refusal to go is disobedience to the gospel call.

This book will challenge some because they are quite happy for others to accept the call to go, but they are not willing to go themselves.

But we must all go, that is the gospel call.

Dr. Terry Dorsett

Executive Director

Baptist Convention of New England

www.bcne.net

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Section One: Called of God

As we look at the principles of a sent life, a couple of questions must be asked: “what does it look like to be sent,” and, “what are the principles and strategies of Jesus when He sends out His people into the world?”

Before we get into the primary text, it must be prefaced with what comes before, with what is found in the latter part of Matthew chapter nine. It is important to ramp up for this, to understand what Jesus is doing in regard to sending out His followers.

In chapter ten is the instructions of Jesus to His disciples before they actually go. The entire chapter is Jesus preparing them to go out on their own.

Jesus wants us to know the mission, and He reveals it in Matthew 9:36-38.

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

Does the Lord still send out His people? The obvious answer is: yes.

You are being sent out into the harvest field of this world to fulfill your part of that mission. There is one word in Matthew 9:36 that must mark the disposition of everyone who is sent by God: *compassion*. Let the concern and compassion of Christ guide you through the field.

What is your current view of the world around you?

Built on His compassion and His command to pray for laborers to enter into the harvest, the next action of Jesus is to send out His disciples, that they should enter into the world with the same desire to gather the shepherd-less sheep. The very people who pray are often the very people who go.

But so often we do just the opposite. We do pray that God will send laborers into the harvest field, and then pray that He would send someone else.

When Jesus saw the crowds, He had a compassion that compelled Him. What do you have when you see the crowds of people milling about in life? Do you see them as harassed and helpless, as sheep without a shepherd? Do you look upon them with compassion, even if they are causing you harm? No one understands that better than Christ Jesus. For even from the cross He cried out for the forgiveness of those who crucified Him.

Why is this important?

Because, when you view the crowds with compassion then you are set to enter the crowds in the same way as our Lord. When we view them with contempt, we will despise the crowds and turn away from them and deny them the message of the gospel and the hope of salvation in Christ.

Do not forget: when Jesus came to you and revealed His salvation to your understanding, you were one in the crowd. You were a sheep without a shepherd and, perhaps, one who even stood in opposition to Christ (consider the apostle Paul for an example). Remember, Jesus had compassion on you. And that same compassion you experienced was given through those whom Jesus sent to you. God used that person or persons to be a “sent one” in your life that you should hear of the grace and compassion of Jesus.

We must never look at the crowd with any other view than with the same compassion as that of Christ Jesus. It does not mean we look upon them with “rose-colored glasses.” We don’t see them with a distorted view. On the contrary, Jesus never once minimized the reality of mankind’s sinful condition. It was just for that reason Jesus proclaimed the gospel! Mankind is sinful,

separated from God, bound over for judgment. And Jesus came to seek them.

The Apostle Paul understood what it meant to be on mission for the Lord Jesus. Though he would prefer to be with Christ, he knew that there was still more to accomplish here on earth. Consider what he wrote to the Philippian church:

I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. ~ Philippians 1:23-24

Did you know that there is nothing better for you than to be in Heaven? There is nothing on earth that should warrant your desires so much that you would prefer to remain here. Consider some things.

Worship is better in heaven. Music is better in heaven. Your home is better in heaven. Food is better in heaven. Relationships are better in heaven. Unless your desires are sinful, everything that could possibly attract your desires on earth is better in heaven.

The one thing that you or I cannot do in heaven, which can only be done on earth, is to reach the lost with the gospel of Christ—to be on mission for the Lord Jesus.

There are no lost people needing salvation in heaven.

At the moment of salvation Jesus could snatch us up, and bring us into His glorious presence where everything is better. But for the sake of the lost He leaves us down here on earth that we should be His sent ones, accomplishing His mission of proclaiming the gospel.

If you cannot view the world with compassionate eyes, you will never hear the call of God to be sent into the world and bring the message of salvation to the lost. So if you're going to be sent by God, it will be in the same manner that the Father sent Jesus.

Consider what Jesus said in the gospel of John:

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." ~ John 20:21

So, we go with the same purpose and focus of our Lord Jesus Christ: to proclaim the truth and seek the lost (see

John 18:37 & Luke 19:10). And we go with a promise from our Lord:

*And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. **And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.**" ~ Matthew 28:18-20*

Jesus is WITH us... we do not go alone.

So Jesus gives us the marching orders and the parameters of what it means to be sent by Him and fulfill the mission. And he begins with the call... that we are called of God.

Text: Matthew 10:1-4

Being on mission for the gospel must be built upon the understanding that it is Jesus who commands and sends. We go at His command and serve at His discretion. Paul gives a great illustration to this truth when he writes to Timothy.

No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. ~ 2 Timothy 2:4

As a soldier in the U.S. Air Force I was subject to every lawful order from my commanding officers. I did not have the latitude to disobey them, for the task or the mission was in their control and I was merely a small part of a much larger purpose. Though I knew there was a much larger picture, I was not given any more information than was necessary to do my duty. However, I also knew that if I failed to accomplish my portion of the mission, someone else would have to do my work and I would be reprimanded for my lackadaisical attitude.

Thus it is with our being sent by God. We are merely a part of the entire work, and God alone has the totality of the mission in His hands. We respond in obedience to His commands and become participants in His plan, doing our part to fulfill the mission. To dismiss His call and ignore the mission will leave others to fill in where we fail and bring God's sharp rebuke to our lives (see Matthew 24:45-51 & Matthew 25:24-30).

There is one great difference between my commanders in the Air Force and our King of kings: Jesus gives us a view to His mission – and it's found in His word.

Consider what it says in John 15:15, *“No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.”*

What does it mean to be called of God? There are three pertinent points that we will examine. They are: **A Personal Call, a Powerful Call and a Purposeful Call.**

So let us begin with an obvious question: Does God still call and send out His people? The answer, of course, is a resounding: YES! And the principles of this are unveiled for us in Matthew chapter 10.

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Chapter One: A Personal Call

This beginning principle is found in the simple statement of Matthew 10:1a:

“And he called to him his twelve disciples.”

How did Jesus call His twelve disciples? He called them by name!

The call of God is not a random call, as if God were generally issuing a “join up if you wish” approach. God’s call is specific, and it is personal. This is also not a call to

salvation but a call to service. These twelve men were already following Jesus (though we know that Judas will betray Him).

The call to service is also not a suggestion but a command and it must not be merely considered but obeyed. There is only one response, then, in regard to this call to service – obedience. God does not come to you with proposals or to ask your opinion on how you might serve Him. We are not hirelings, nor are we technical advisors for the King of kings. He is Lord and we are servants.

How have you heard God call you to Spiritual service?

Paul identifies his call as directly from the Lord Jesus Christ:

Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead. ~ Galatians 1:1

God calls you, personally, to a service and work for His kingdom. And you must get into the habit of saying “yes” to God.

Permit me to give you an example from my own history.

I first heard the initial call to service from the Lord through my pastor in California. He didn't invite me to a grand or outrageous task, he simply asked me to serve as a teacher in vacation bible school. It was at that moment I began to get into the habit of saying “yes” to the opportunities that came through my life.

Now, admittedly, not all of those opportunities were of the Lord, but through experience I began to discover how to identify when I was being called by God to serve and when it was merely an invitation to busyness.

When you begin to explore the opportunities that are offered to serve the Kingdom of Jesus, you will learn to discern which ones are from God. But do not think that the small tasks you're commanded to do are of little or no consequence. Often God will use small tasks to propel you to greater and greater opportunities to serve Him.

God will use you through your obedience to grow you and prepare you for greater works of service until you are fulfilling all that God has intended. Remember the words of our Lord in Matthew 25:21, that he who is faithful in the little things will be given charge over much.

Read Isaiah 6:8-13 and answer the questions below:

- 1. To what service did God call Isaiah?**
- 2. What was Isaiah's Response?**
- 3. How long would the calling last?**

Consider the twelve that Jesus called (see Matthew 10:3-4).

There was Matthew the tax collector and Simon the zealot (who, as a zealot would prefer to kill tax collectors). There was Simon called Peter who would deny Jesus three times. There was Thomas who became "doubting" Thomas. James and John, the sons of thunder who wanted to call fire down from heaven and burn a Samaritan village. These are the men who Jesus said would be the foundation of the church and the leaders of His mission on earth.

Speculate: What qualified them to the task for which Jesus called?

What qualifies you for the task?

The first disciples were not the “best and brightest” religious minds of the day. They were, on the surface, a rag-tag collection of unqualified men. They were considered “uneducated and common” (see Acts 4:13).

Though I have no idea where this phrase originated, there is a colloquial statement which says: “God does not call the qualified, He qualifies the called.” The promise of Christ in Matthew 4:19 is a promise of transformation for the fulfillment of the mission. So, are you in the habit of saying “yes” to God, even if you think you’re not qualified to the work?

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Chapter Two: A Powerful Call

The next principle we explore is found in Matthew 10:1b.

...and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.

When you are called of God, He will empower you to do that for which you are called. He gives you His authority, not to exercise it for your own benefit, glory or purpose, but to accomplish all that He has called you

to do. Put it out of your mind that you are given the power to do what others are doing, but He empowers you to fulfill the specific task assigned to you.

For a highlight on this, consider the various manifestations of the Holy Spirit through the body of the church. 1 Corinthians illuminates this:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. ~ 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Though we have a common mission, we do not have a common function. The varieties of service are

apportioned by the Spirit of Christ and empowered by Him. However, you do not have an empowered life to do your own thing.

Concerning that word “authority,” from Matthew 10:1b, it has become for some a word of selfish, personal interest that inflates their egos and hinders their work. That word is from the Greek word, “*exousia*” and it means to exercise influence or have power. Thus you are empowered to exercise influence over the harvest field to bring them to Christ.

Whose authority is being exercised?

Why is it important to know that we function only in the authority of Christ?

When Jesus dispenses His authority upon the church, He does so in order to accomplish His work through the church. In your calling, as you explore it further, you

will discover that there are aspects of work where you have no expression of Christ's authority.

What two areas of authority were given to the disciples?

1. _____

2. _____

How do you see evidence of the authority of God in the work you're called to do?

You are gifted and empowered to exercise influence for the sake of the gospel. Is there any evidence at all that God is empowering your life through the service that you perform? Is there any indication at all that God is using you to accomplish His mission in the world around you?

As you look through your life right now, you need to see that you have opportunities to already invest into the lives of others, to have influence, and to stand in the authority of Christ in order to accomplish that for which you are called.

Can you name at least three aspects of your life where you already have influence?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Never discount even the smallest moments of opportunity to be an influence for the gospel.

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Chapter Three: A Purposeful Call

The final principle is found in the Matthew 10:2a, and it is found in one word: *apostle*.

The names of the twelve apostles...

A transformative moment takes place between verse one and verse two. The **disciples** suddenly became **apostles**. The students who followed and learned were now going to be the sent ones who spoke and taught. These twelve were stepping right into the purpose for

which God had called them. These men had gone from being a learner at the feet of Jesus to being a “sent one” (for that is what the word “apostle” means) in the authority of Jesus Christ. They will, forever, be the apostles of the church for the Lord Jesus. This is a dynamic change that identifies their purpose and it will forever be their priority.

God’s call will change you!

Every Christian is a disciple, a learner at the feet of Jesus. But true learning will change you and then translate into action focused upon the calling of God. Merely learning facts and information that doesn’t lead to transformation will ultimately leave you unfulfilled in the mission God has purposed for you.

Where have you seen God transforming your life?

God is making you into a person who will accomplish His purpose.

Here's a hard question: what are you purposed by God to do?

How do you see that purpose currently being fulfilled?

We don't step into God's call because we have some great plan that we think He must initiate. God's calling is completely founded and built upon God's purpose alone. Remember what Jesus said in John 20:21.

"As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."

You must understand that the same mission that Jesus gave His followers then, He is still giving to us today. We must never think that there has been a shift in the purpose of God. Jesus spoke of His great purpose.

But he said to them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose." ~ Luke 4:43

Answer this question:

Does God have a purpose for you? _____

Many Christians have situated themselves on the sidelines of the purpose of God, believing they don't have much to offer the Kingdom. And, truly, independent of the Lord Jesus, no one has much to offer. Jesus said it Himself.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." ~ John 15:5

Paul said it this way:

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. ~ 1 Corinthians 15:10

The phrase "not in vain" can also read, "not without effect." That is to say, God's grace has an effect on everyone who encounters it. God's grace is transformative.

How does God's grace affect you?

You are called of God. And you must embrace this truth or run the risk of waiting in the spiritual bleachers when you are meant to be fully engaged in the Father's plan.

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Section Two: Stay on Target

Text: Matthew 10:5-15

There are many in this world pursuing a path that is leading nowhere. False religions, secularism, and even atheism boast of roads that will take humanity to a better wisdom, a greater insight or more enlightened view. Millions climb and climb up those well-travelled lanes, anxiously hoping to reach the summit and

discover spectacular vistas of undiscovered glory. Yet, like the iconic bridge in Alaska or the stairs in the Winchester Mansion, it will always and ultimately lead to a dead end.

Nowhere was this made clearer to me than when I was part of a two week mission team in Taiwan. The primary mission focused on two goals: reach out with the gospel and support the work of those who served as full-time missionaries and ministers. Though I had been in Far East nations before (Japan and South Korea), this adventure proved to be very eye opening.

As we took a day to explore and visit various sites around that island nation, we entered into a large temple where hundreds of presumable worshipers were gathered. All around the circumference of the inner wall, booths of various gods and idols were on display. The “parishioners” would move from one false god to another and offer their various sacrifices or make chants or prayers to the idolic representatives. I didn’t see much loyalty to any one particular deity, but that didn’t seem to matter.

So, why do I mention this experience?

I share this story because these people are following a path that is leading nowhere, and they think they're going somewhere. Yet God has called us to follow a path of faith that ultimately leads us to glory. And along this journey, He has commanded us to step out by faith and stay on target. Where the entire world follows the variant paths of cultural identity, religious idolatry or secular indemnity, we, as Christians, are called to follow Jesus. Consider the words of Jesus in Matthew:

*“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.” ~
Matthew 7:13-14*

There is only one gate, one way and that way is hard and narrow. The broad road that the world travels will have many on it. The believer has but one road – and that is our target.

As you begin this section, can you describe an experience where your choices took you on a dead end road?

There are five aspects of staying on target that we will explore in this study. They are: **Go where God sends, speak what God commands, share what God has given, trust in God's supply and stay on God's target.**

Many times we take a speculative view of our walk with Christ, hoping that what is pleasing to us will also be pleasing to God. But that's not how it works. God does not give you the option for such conjecture. Being called of God gives no room for a speculative approach concerning the target. Like an arrow notched in the string of a bow, God is aiming you at His purpose.

So, take a moment and pray. Ask the Lord to help you discover the target He has purposed for you. These next directives given by Jesus will help you to understand what it takes to respond to His call.

Chapter Four: Go Where God Sends

This first directive from Jesus is found in verses 5-6:

These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

After reading the text above, did you wonder why Jesus told them to avoid the Gentiles and Samaritans? I did. Why not just send out the twelve in random directions

to encounter whomever they should? There is a rather practical reason our Lord commanded them in this way. Jesus doesn't send them to those other cultures because they were unprepared to engage them with the gospel. The Lord sent them to those people with which the apostles were already familiar. Another reason is the fulfillment of God's plan: that the nation of Israel would first hear the gospel and encounter the Messiah.

Who are the potential people God might first send you?

Where has God sent you? To who are you called to minister? Children, seniors, homeless, drug addicts, doubters and all other segments of humanity need the church to respond to God's call to go. But be careful not to go beyond the call of God.

Consider three identifiers that may help pinpoint to whom you're prepared to go:

- **What are my experiences up till now? -**
- **What groups can I identify with? -**
- **Where am I currently at? -**

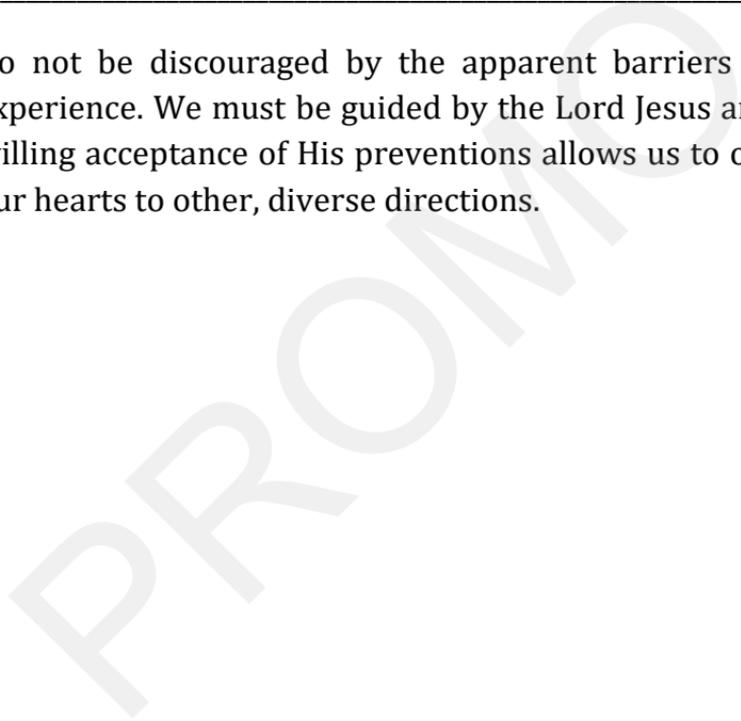
Consider the Apostle Paul's experience when he was trying to figure out where God was sending him and his companions.

*And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, **having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit** to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, **but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them**. So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. ~ Acts 16:6-10 (emphasis added)*

Has God given you some sense concerning where He wants you to go and how He wants you to serve Him and the gospel? Or, perhaps, there is a group or population of people that God has targeted your life to reach. It could be just this simple: as you walk into the door of your house and see the people who live there, God says, "Here is your group."

What roadblocks have you experienced in trying to serve the Lord?

Do not be discouraged by the apparent barriers you experience. We must be guided by the Lord Jesus and a willing acceptance of His preventions allows us to open our hearts to other, diverse directions.



Chapter Five: Speak What God Commands

In verse seven we read the next directive and this parameter is crucial, for God sends us out with a message – His message!

“And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”

There is only one message that saves – the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Go and preach it. Don’t waste words trying

to convince people of your philosophical points or your theological prowess. Tell them, warn them and call them to come to the Kingdom of Christ. That's it... bottom line.

Take a moment and imagine yourself as one of the apostles that Jesus sends out to the children of Israel. For hundreds, even thousands of years the Jewish people were waiting for God's kingdom to come to earth. Now, with a message that will resonate with every heart, Jesus sends out the disciples to tell the people that the kingdom has arrived.

Three questions:

- **Is the kingdom of heaven still at hand? -**
- **Do people still need to hear it? -**
- **Will you tell them? -**

In the current climate of the modern world, the defection of many Christians has moved away from the clear and unique call of the gospel toward a motivational/self-help message from spiritual gurus that speak a type of Christianity. They have obscured the message of the kingdom of Christ.

Instead of preaching “the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” which is meant to be a warning and not just a statement of fact, the message today is some obscure amalgam of psychological therapy and positive reaffirmation of God’s love. But for the apostles to enter a town and proclaim the kingdom would be like the heralds of old who would enter a town and declare that the king is coming – be prepared!

And this proclamation of the kingdom is also a promise! The kingdom is here... it is now... you can enter the kingdom of heaven by the grace of the King of kings. Through repentance of sin and faith in the Lord Jesus and His work of redemption, God’s kingdom is open to all who will come.

The modern message from many would-be proclaimers of truth often does not speak what God commands but what, as Paul would say, “itching ears” want to hear:

For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions. ~ 2

Timothy 4:3

We cannot invent a message for ourselves. And this is, perhaps, one of the greatest failings of modern

evangelicalism. Instead of preaching God's truth, they change the gospel to make it more palatable to the world. In order to keep the crowds around, modern preachers make the message agreeable to them.

So when you go into the world, when you are sent by Jesus Christ, you must stay on target and speak His message. No other message will do.

The gospel will not be agreeable to all people, even as Paul states:

“For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” ~ 1 Corinthians 1:18

Remember, the world will not have the final say. They might consider the message of the cross folly now, but who is the fool in the end?

Again, in Romans it is written:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ~ Romans 1:16

We must never be influenced in our proclamation of the gospel based upon the reaction others might have. To

change the message because the world demands a more tolerant or comfortable gospel will put us in the category of being ashamed of the true gospel in favor of a worldly one.

In your own words, what is the essential message?

The apostle Paul laid it out quite clearly for the Corinthian church:

For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ~ 1 Corinthians 2:2

We will do well to make this the central core of our message. We do not have the right or the authority to change the message given to us by Christ Jesus.

Share What God has Given

The next principle found in verse eight is borne out of the wondrous grace God bestows upon us:

“Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You have received without paying; give without pay.”

The apostles (as seen in Matthew 10:1) were given authority to do all the work that Jesus commanded. That is, they were empowered by the Lord to function as His representatives, doing what He had commanded them to do. Jesus freely gave His power to them, and now they are required to give it away.

All of God’s children are gifted to accomplish His mission. Just as the apostles were given authority to do all that Jesus commanded, so you are given what you need to do all that Jesus sends you to do. You must be willing to share it. Whatever it is that God has given you to do go and do it, for the Lord will give you what you need to accomplish His purpose.

One of the challenges in our modern, prosperous society is the idea of personal gain. The question: “What do I get out of it?” resonates within the heart of many. Even Peter was challenged by the thought when he asked this:

Then Peter said in reply, “See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?” ~ Matthew 19:27

Imagine for a moment Peter walking into a village and telling them to bring to him the sick and demon possessed, and the saying: “for a hundred dollars I’ll heal them for you!” Immediately you recognize the ludicrous nature of such a statement. For the Lord Jesus empowered them to accomplish these things, what a travesty if they sought to do so for their own personal profit.

The authority given to the apostles to perform such signs and wonders in the sight of the people of Israel is not the same as what Jesus has given us. But the gospel is the same. The people of this world have nothing by which they can possibly purchase the gospel of Christ! It is received freely; let it be given away in the same manner.

Jesus has given authority to the church, even today. But that authority is to do His work, His way, for His glory. Anything outside of that is a presumption on the part of the believer.

Knowing that Jesus has given His authority to freely give the gospel, what holds you back?

Consider what the Apostle Paul had to say to Timothy:

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life. ~ 1 Timothy 6:17-19

It's more than just financial generosity that you need to be aware of concerning the gifting of God in your life. Have you been blessed with the ability to organize? Perhaps God has blessed you with the talent for hospitality. Maybe you are able to create works of art or even sew a button back on a shirt. Whatever it is, make sure you use it as the vehicle to carry the message of the gospel into the lives of others.

What things has God given you that enable you to share His word?

It doesn't matter what you have or think you lack, what matters is the willingness to give freely that which God has freely given: the gospel.

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Chapter Six: Trust in God's Supply

Trusting in God to provide for your journey is the hallmark of the faithful. This is the principle we find in verses 9 and 10.

“Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics or sandals or a staff, for the laborer deserves his food.”

As you respond in faithfulness and go in the manner God sends, He will provide for you along the way. When

God sends you out, He has already taken care of the means to keep you going. Whether it is through your own personal labor (Acts 18:3), the generosity of others (Philippians 4:18) or manna from heaven (Exodus 16:35), God will show you that He does provide for His faithful workers.

Certainly God doesn't send you out to accomplish His will and then hold back from you everything you need to fulfill it. That would be in direct opposition to His revealed truth that God will supply your every need. It would be as if I told my son to go out and fix my car, but then I kept from him any access to my tools.

One of the great challenges to this comes from the issue I call: *spiritual hoarding*. Instead of being a flowing channel through which God can pour out His resources, we become like the Dead Sea, taking in all He gives without giving anything away.

Can you identify any “spiritual hoarding” in your own life?

It is probably a safe bet to assume that God wants to use our lives far more than we want our lives to be used. However, God loves you so much that He has promised that He will give you everything you need for life and godliness in this present age (2 Peter 1:3).

If God has enriched your life, if He has given you the measure of His Spirit and gifted you to serve Him, if the Lord has provided for you the means to accomplish His work, then by all means pour it out! Don't hold back your life from faithful service to the King.

The question often comes up in response to this: "what about being wise stewards?" The idea often floated on that ship is simple: *store up for a rainy day*. Certainly the story of Joseph and the famine in Egypt gives precedent to make sure supplies are available for those times when resources are scarce.

I won't debate the wisdom of being good stewards of God's resources. However, when God has given an open door to His purpose and the only reason we fail to enter is from an unwillingness to use the resources available, we are at that point living as spiritual hoarders.

The story of the man who wanted to bury his father before he obeyed Jesus is a telling statement of an unwilling heart to be faithful.

Another of the disciples said to him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." And Jesus said to him, "Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead." ~ Matthew

8:21-22

Having heard Jesus tell the first man that to follow Him would mean to subject his life to hardship, this other man wanted to make sure he secured his inheritance before he obeyed. Simply put, he wouldn't follow Jesus until he believed he could afford it!

Describe a time when you obeyed even before the supply was available.

Can you describe a time when you were reluctant to obey Jesus because you imagined you couldn't afford it?

Don't follow the Lord only at those points where you can afford it. Sometimes the Lord will have you work to provide, sometimes He will provide through the assistance of others, and even as if it were manna from heaven at other times.

Consider this encouraging word from 2 Corinthians:

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. ~ 2 Corinthians 9:8

At all times God will call upon you to be faithful and He will make sure that you are sufficiently supplied in order to abound in every good work.

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Chapter Seven: Stay on God's Target

This might seem like an obvious point, but there is a target to hit – and it is marked by God. We look at verses 11 and 14 to understand this point.

“And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart... And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town.”

During the time of our Lord, it was a common occurrence to host an itinerant rabbi and show hospitality to those travelers who brought a message from God. Often times these itinerants would find a home that welcomed them and then they would remain in that home while preaching and teaching in the region.

However, it did happen that sometimes they grew popular and other, wealthier residents would seek to host them. And the rabbis who were seeking their own popularity and personal gain would abandon the first home for the next. Ultimately, their target was not the proclamation of God's word but the prosperity of their own lives.

Jesus didn't guarantee that they would be received in the various towns and villages. The apostles "likeability" wasn't the target. The singular target wasn't even necessarily the various people to whom they went, though Jesus did come to seek and save the lost. The primary target for the apostles was to proclaim the word of God.

Have you ever served God with the hope of being “liked?” Describe it below.

Whether or not you are received, you have a purpose to fulfill. Your witness of Jesus Christ is not dependent upon the reception of others. If you find an open heart, praise God! If not, stay on God’s target and do not shrink back from the proclamation of Jesus Christ.

This is the part I fear where a lot of Christians shrink back. Not knowing if they will be well received, they do not take aim at what God has given them to accomplish. “Will they like me” is not the test as to whether or not you should faithfully obey God’s directives in your life. Your obedience to Christ should never be dependent upon another person’s reception.

Consider how Paul and Barnabas handled the rejection of the Jews in Acts 13:46-47.

And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy

of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth."

Describe a time when you stopped serving the Lord because of rejection.

What target has God placed in front of you?

(Warning: this is a trick question)

Keep going; stay on God's target. Do not deviate from the purpose of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ through the giftedness God has given you.

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If you are born-again Christian, you ARE sent by God. Like an arrow in the bow of a master archer, you are being shot out to the world by God and He has a specific direction for you. Wherever God sends you, there is one

specific target and that is the proclamation of His gospel to a lost world.

You may be young in your faith and fear that you don't have the wisdom or resources to go very far or fast in your faithfulness to Christ. Remember, Jesus started out His apostles going to just the people with which they were familiar. He won't put you in the deep end before you learn to swim in the shallow. Be faithful and He will guide your steps to opportunities that await your maturity.

But no matter where God sends you, stay on target. Stay true to the calling that God has given you. Trust that He will provide for you, and that He will provide everything you need to fulfill His calling in your life. And even if the world rejects you and think you're absolutely foolish believing what you believe, do not let that distract you from the mission.

Remember what Jesus said in Luke 9:62, *"No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."*

Have you put your hand to the plow? Then press on.

And whatever you do, stay on target.

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## Section Three: Facing Persecution

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**Text: Matthew 10:16-23**

The issue of persecution is often a topic that is overlooked in the culture of America because it hadn't happened much in our history. However, with the current climate of division and the "cancel culture" running rampant to try and silence any voice other than a worldly and sinful one, persecution is on the rise.

The Bible clearly states in 2 Timothy 3:12, “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” Now, before we go too deep into this, let me make some clarifying remarks.

- You’re not being persecuted because somebody doesn’t agree with your opinion.
- You’re not being persecuted because you have difficult in-laws.
- It is not persecution when your children disobey you.
- It is not persecution when someone doesn’t like your clothing.
- You’re not under persecution because you’re stuck in traffic.
- It is not persecution when you suffer the consequences of a bad choice.

Persecution is an attack on Christ in you for the purpose of defeating your faith while you live in this world. Real persecution comes against Christ. And, because as a believer you have “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27), you stand as a target of the enemy.

So, if you’re just going through a rough patch, having a hard day or facing some difficult times, do not simply

dismiss it as being persecuted. I've known too many believers who have failed to rightly face their circumstances merely because they wanted to believe all negative experiences harbored some form of persecution.

Some years ago, Starbucks™ introduced a new design of cup for their coffee. A multitude of Christians cried out against the color of the cup, claiming the company was persecuting them. That, my friends, is NOT persecution. If you walked into the coffee shop and they threw that cup of coffee in your face because you are a Christian, then that would count as persecution.

The Scriptures do teach that we will go through times of tribulation, difficult circumstances and hardships that will test our faith and grow us up in Christ. But those times are not necessarily persecution. Persecution IS real. But remember, persecution comes against Christ in you. It is not persecution otherwise.

So what does persecution look like? Jesus gives warning to His apostles as He's preparing them to go out into the specific harvest field.

**What have you considered to be persecution in your own life?**

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## Chapter Eight: The Circumstance of our Going

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We begin our look at the text with a view to the circumstances of our going found in verse sixteen.

*“Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.”*

Never imagine that Jesus will send you out only into calm seas and gentle winds. He sends His followers out to a world that is opposed to the message and living in

rebellion against the King. You are the sheep, destined to venture into a den of wolves.

The image of “sheep in the midst of wolves” is quite telling. You are the prey venturing into the den of predators to actually rescue His other sheep even though they currently dwell in the midst of those who would devour you! Imagine for a moment what the apostles must have been thinking when they heard this illustration. At this point there is no doubt that they would face persecution.

But, my friends, these are the circumstances that every believer must face. They are what they are and there is no escaping the truth that everyone who names the name of Christ is behind enemy lines and subject to persecution. Jesus could have sent us into our “comfort zones” but no one gets rescued there.

Jesus will send us into those places desperate for the word of God and yet hostile to the ones who bring it. But if you and I don't go... who will?

**Can you describe a time where you experienced circumstances hostile to the gospel?**

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**List three places you routinely go that are antagonistic to the message of Christ.**

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2. \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In these circumstances you face them, endure them, persevere in them and though we will get to this aspect of it in a bit, remember that it is Jesus who sent you there! There is a mission to fulfill and souls needing saved in lands and locations that will be opposed to the truth.

Unless you have a martyr complex, most Christians won't choose to go into circumstances that are hard or hazardous. It is in obedience we venture into those places and suffer those conditions because the call of Christ compels us.

So the call of Christ to be “*as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves*” eliminates this martyr complex notion for it commands us to be thoughtful, to function with wisdom, as we go into the circumstances of this world.

Jesus, in His prayer of John chapter 17, recognizes the reality of our entering a hostile world.

*“I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.” ~ John 17:14-15*

Don't expect a kind reception from the enemies of Christ. And, in light of the fact that you will face opposition and hostility, you should never conform to what the world tells you a Christian ought to be. There are those who will embrace the panorama of what the world defines as “spiritual” or being a “good Christian.” They do so in order to not bring distress and persecution into their lives, conforming to the social and societal trends of the day. However, only Christ through His word commands the believer.

You are being sent into a den of wolves. Don't start behaving like a wolf.

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## Chapter Nine: The Conflict in our Going

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Conflict arises when, against the direction of the world, we bring the gospel into view. Such conflict is more than circumstantial as we see in verses seventeen and eighteen.

*“Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles.”*

The ones who go forth in faithful service to Christ will invariably find themselves targeted by those who are opposed to Him. However, there is a purpose to the conflict. God is using you in the world as a light and witness to those in darkness.

To be a witness is to testify to something that you've seen and heard, to bring out the truth in public. You, as a believer, possess information that must be brought to light in the view of any and all—including the governors and rulers of the world wherein we dwell.

You are meant to bear witness before them, but bear witness of what? You are to testify to all that Jesus has done in you. You bear witness of His transforming grace and everlasting love, of His wrath against sin and His mercy for the repentant.

Imagine if you could, during the time of the Apostles in the book of Acts, that when persecution and trouble began to mount, instead of rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ (Acts 5:41), they “lawyered up” and brought lawsuits against the unbelievers and tried to defend themselves in the eyes of the world, refusing to say anything more lest they receive further condemnation from the world? The

end result would be the termination of their powerful witness and passionate testimony.

The very words of Jesus were being fulfilled in their lives as they testified to the rulers of the land. And, consider the view that the Sanhedrin had of Peter and John in Acts 4:13:

*Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.*

Why did the Sanhedrin take note that these men had been with Jesus? Because in the midst of all they did to harass and persecute them, the apostles never broke. They were bold and fearless, and stood their ground faithfully and graciously in their declaration of Jesus Christ as Messiah.

As believers, we anchor ourselves to Christ, trusting in the one who saved our souls. With our eyes set upon eternity and our feet set on earth, we must walk through this world with the same boldness, knowing that there will be conflicts arising because of our faithful witness of Christ.

Can you say, as James had said:

*Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. ~ James 1:2-4*

So we can count it all joy when we face these times of conflicts knowing that it is there for us to bear witness of Jesus and serve as a light in the darkness.

**Can you describe a time when you faced a direct conflict from an individual or group that opposed your Christian witness?**

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You will be brought before all of these times of conflict for a purpose, that you should bear witness of Christ to the world around you. Even if you are, as millions down through the ages have been, persecuted for your faith let us hear what Paul tells Timothy:

*Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! ~ 2 Timothy 2:8-9*

My friends, your suffering and the persecution that comes into your life will be for the purpose of you bearing witness of Jesus Christ.

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## Chapter Ten: The Comfort through our Going

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The Lord Jesus does not leave us alone in that suffering, however. He provides the comfort of His presence through our endeavors as we see in verses 19 and 20 of our text.

*“When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who*

*“speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”*

You must trust that God’s purposes are being fulfilled through your willingness to stay true to Christ. And be comforted to know that you do not go alone. The Spirit of Christ is with you to give you the words to say when you need them.

The comfort we receive is not to be removed from the situation, but to find God present in it. Ultimately, there is great relief in knowing you do go alone. We have security and peace in knowing that God is present with us in the midst of our trials and persecutions. Knowing we are not alone in the midst of such circumstances should give us a renewed confidence to proclaim with clarity the testimony of Christ.

**In times of suffering, can you think of two people who brought you comfort just from being there with you in your trial?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The comfort we receive from God's presence with us is there to testify through us with a "calm boldness" for Jesus Christ so that we can be a light and witness to the world. But they will be His words, His message, given by His Spirit in accordance with His truth.

**Can you describe a time when you experienced a "calm boldness" as a witness for Jesus?**

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This does not mean, as some have said, "If God is just going to give you the words to say then you don't really need to know the Bible." That might be near the top of the most foolish statements I've ever heard! Knowing God's word is critical to your being used of God to speak into the lives of unbelievers and share the gospel of Christ.

Think about it this way: how much can you pull out of an empty cup? Yes, God can press the words through you but it is your witness and God's presence. You are to

testify concerning Christ and God will give you that calm assurance of His presence as you speak.

The testimony of Stephen in Acts chapter seven is a prime example of this very thing. He boldly proclaimed God's word, bringing forth the truth of Christ from the words of the Old Testament. He stood there in angelic confidence (see Acts 6:15) when he answered the high priest. Let me encourage you, right now, to stop and read Acts, chapters six and seven.

And consider the word of our Lord when He said, "do not be anxious." Don't let anxiety overwhelm you. Even in the midst of strife and suffering, know that the Lord your God is with you wherever you go (see Joshua 1:9).

Consider it this way: you are not sent out as a sheep among wolves without the Shepherd also going with you.

## Chapter Eleven: The Continuance of our Going

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A resolute determination to continue on is built upon the promise of Christ in verses 22-23.

*“And you will be hated be all for my name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.”*

There is a quality of fortitude that accompanies salvation. It is not a placid affair, one that is filled with comfort, but an endurance race that takes you from here to there with the word of Christ spreading from you like seed across the landscape.

**What three promises are found in this final text?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
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If you know the legend of “Johnny Appleseed” it is said that he traveled across the United States, scattering apple seeds in order to provide food for people. And though that is merely legend, it is a great illustration for us as believers to go forward in life, scattering the seed of the word of God so that people can find the hope of forgiveness in Christ and eternal life through faith in Him.

Jesus said that the persecutions which will come shall drive His people from town to town, bringing the word of God with them. And that is exactly what happened in

the book of Acts after Stephen was killed and persecution struck the church.

*And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. ~ Acts*

8:1-4

There is evidence of true salvation when the believer doesn't give up. As the text says: "The one who endures to the end will be saved." Salvation is seen in its endurance.

**Can you describe an occasion when you had to endure persecution for Christ?**

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John spoke of this in 1 John 2:19, *“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.”* A lack of continuation in Christ is evidence of a lack of salvation from Christ, for salvation has, by nature, an enduring and eternal quality.

The most durable relationship you have is with Christ. And, if you can cast Him aside how much of a relationship did you really have? Jesus held nothing back in order to save you. How, then, can a true believer depart from such salvation? They cannot. True believers show their faith through endurance.

If you can give up on Jesus, you never really knew Him.

When God sends us into the world that is filled with wolves, it will demand endurance on our part.

Consider what it says in Hebrews 10:35-36.

*Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.*

The will of God and the promises fulfilled really do come at the end. It is in the end that Jesus Christ reveals the full measure of all of the promises made to us. There is no real or lasting reward here on this earth. We must endure to the end, living by faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave us His life. The true reward is from the hand of our Savior who will bring His recompense to all who are waiting for Him (see Revelation 22:12).

The reward comes when we get to the end. When we have navigated the course of life and lived by faith in following Christ, then we will discover all God has waiting for those who love Him. So... endure.

As you're facing persecution, listen to the words of Jesus. If there is one thing you hold onto, hold onto this:

*"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." ~ John 15:18-19*

If you are finding in your Christian walk that persecution is real, that living for Christ is coming up against the wall of animosity from the world, then take

heart and hold onto this: you are walking in the footsteps of Christ.

If you find yourself getting along with the world, and you discover that you can easily embrace all of the ideology and dogma that the world has to offer, then be afraid for your soul. If the world loves you, guess what: it loves you as one of its own. You're not, then, in Christ.

Being in Christ means you separate yourself from the world for His sake. He doesn't take you out of the world, but He leaves you here that you can be a light and witness of the gospel.

And when you face persecution, realize that He is right there with you to guide you all the way to the finish line! His promises are secure and His purpose is clear. No matter what takes place, Jesus will not leave you, forsake you, or cause you to face His enemies alone.

## Section Four: Finding Courage

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**Text: Matthew 10:24-33**

As we open this chapter we begin with a question:

**Where do you find courage and how do you express that courage in the world today?**

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In the previous section our Lord Jesus dealt with the reality that in the life we are called to live we will face persecution. This “sent” life that He gives, this calling upon us to live this experience requires courage.

But where do you find it? Do you have to generate it yourself? Is it something where you must “pull yourself up by the bootstraps” and find your own means of courageously living the gospel of Jesus Christ? The answer to that question is: no. If we had to do this on our own, if we had to live the valiant Christian life within our own capacity and our own capability, we will find ourselves failing miserably.

Christ Jesus is the One who sends us out, and along the journey of this Christian expedition He provides for us. And, one of the provisions of our Lord is: courage.

Three times in our primary text Jesus commands us to be courageous with these statements: “Have no fear,” “do not fear,” and “fear not.” In each of these statements Jesus tells us that we can live a courageous life, not free of distraction, difficulty or danger, but free of that disabling fear which locks us away from accomplishing the mission of God.

Before we enter into the full measure of the text, let's take a quick look at the "bookends" provided to us found in verses 24-25 and 32-33.

In verses 24 and 25, Jesus ultimately says: "You must identify with Me."

*"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household."*

Our Lord explains that if the master of the house is maligned and mistreated, the members of that same household will be treated likewise. To be identified with Jesus is to be brought into His household and made a partaker of even His sufferings (see 1 Peter 4:13).

So, what our Lord is telling His disciples is, after recognizing the reality of persecution and the fact that they are going to be persecuted, He is reminding all who will come after Him that we must identify completely with Him in all of this.

And do not think that just because you're being persecuted, that you are missing the mark. Persecution

from the world because of our faithfulness to Jesus often corroborates the fact that we are right in line with God's purpose. If Jesus did good and was hated for it, what do you suspect will happen to those who follow Him? We don't stand in a better place than the King of kings.

At the beginning of the text we are commanded to identify with Jesus, so also at the end of the text He tells us that we must be willing to publicly acknowledge Him in the midst of such persecution.

*"So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven." ~ Matthew 10:32-33*

Ultimately, through the course of our lives following Christ, even in the face of unyielding persecution, we stand faithful, courageously identifying ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Can you describe a time when you acknowledged Jesus publicly (excluding baptism)?**

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So, how do we do this? How do we walk in this world with courage as we identify with Jesus? He gives us three truths that will anchor us: **Courage in the Revelation of God, Courage in the Security of God,** and **Courage in the Providence of God.** Hold onto these as you move forward with the Lord.

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## Chapter Twelve: Courage in the Revelation of God

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This first truth is found in verses 26 and 27:

*“So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops.”*

Do you understand that all of the tricks, all of the effort of the enemy and the machinations of this present

world to bring an end to the work of Christ will be revealed for what they are. Ultimately all the activities of the enemy will be exposed in the glorious light of Jesus Christ.

There is going to come a day when “he who laughs last, laughs best.” The devil is laughing now, he seems to be gaining victories and making headway to deceive and destroy. But in the end it is the believer who will stand victorious before the throne of grace and we will be ushered into the presence of Almighty God in spectacular triumph. And what will be proved when everything is revealed is that all the effort of the enemy ultimately still falls into the providential will of God.

Nothing the devil tries to do in the darkness will ever thwart the purposes of God.

It will be revealed for what it is—the lies of the enemy. Those people who malign and mistreat you, who seek your downfall because you are a Christian, Jesus tells us to have no fear of them!

The devil does not have a final game plan that will be so overwhelming and creative that God totally misses it.

The devil does not win in the end. But sometimes I fear that we as Christians live in such a way that we think there is a chance the enemy could win and that God is unaware of what is really happening. Sometimes we ask: "Doesn't God know?" And sometimes we ask in moments of doubt and fear: "Doesn't God care?"

In the darkness it does sometimes feel as if God is unmindful of the turmoil that we face in the hatred and challenges suffered in this world. But, my friends, God knows. He sees. And He does care.

Let me give you just a quick side note. Do you know what else is not hidden from God? That's right: you.

You're not hidden from Him either. Perhaps you're caught up in darkness right now and there is something happening in your life that you think even God has forsaken His care for you.

But you're not in darkness that God cannot see you. He knows right where you are and exactly what you're enduring. He sees every pain and knows every weakness of yours. He is not ignorant to your needs nor is He blind to your trials. He is with you.

Hebrews 4:13 says, *“And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”*

The second part of our text gives the marching order for all believers. What Jesus speaks to us in the darkness, we make known in the light! We tell the gospel, the promised salvation to all who believe and the promised judgment to all who don't. We will end up exposing the people around us to the light of Christ and that will either cause them to repent or reject.

**Describe a time when you were in a “dark” situation and God’s truth was pertinent to the circumstance. Did you speak God’s word to the people involved?**

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When we are willing to speak what God has spoken to us according to His word, then get out there! Take courage in the revelation of God for it is He who will ultimately be speaking through you. You are the

messenger, but Christ is the message. You are the witness, Christ is the word.

God knows everything. He knows all that happens in the shadows and He reveals all that needs to be proclaimed in the light. Have courage my friends, He will reveal all things in due course.

Let me give a brief warning, however. This is NOT God's call to gossip! What is whispered in the shadows is not the juicy gossip that is spread abroad in the corners of the café. It is about the quiet moments and the solitary times you have with God through His word and He speaks to you. Jesus said it clearly: "What *I* tell you in the dark." It is the message from Christ that you must bring into the light. And when it is His revelation of Himself, have the courage to proclaim it so publicly that it's as if you're shouting it from the rooftops.

**List three things that you know about Jesus that you want others to know as well.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Also, this is not about being courageously opinionated.

Too often we are dreadfully timid when it comes to God's word and bold as lions when it comes to our opinions. We don't have too much difficulty telling people when we think they're wrong but Jesus wants us to bring them the word of God, not our opinion.

Consider what the Apostle Paul said to the church in Corinth:

*"Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God." ~ 1 Corinthians 4:5*

God will expose all of it! Everything will be uncovered, everything laid bare. God will hold accountable every accusation, every persecution, and every false word spoken against His people. He will bring this entire world to account for the persecution of His Son in His people.

He loves the church as He loves His Son and will set to right every pernicious action of this world against the people of Christ.

God will not leave them guiltless.

And God will not leave you helpless.

He will give you the words to say. What He whispers in the dark proclaim in the light. Have the courage to know that what God is saying is true even if the whole world disagrees with it.

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## Chapter Thirteen: Courage in the Security of God

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This next truth is found in verse 28:

*“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”*

Let’s begin by looking at the phrase: “but cannot kill the soul.”

My friends, your body is temporary and your soul is eternal. Most people don't think like this, but did you know that death is not the final state of your existence? Death does not finish things, death is temporary.

Every single person who ever lived in this world or will live in this world will ultimately be called up out of the grave – some to eternal life with Christ Jesus and the rest to eternal separation from Christ Jesus in hell. But all will be living!

We are not going to remain dead. And if you don't believe this, you can go throughout the entirety of God's word and discover over and over again that death is conquered by God.

Here are just a few examples:

*And the Lord listened to the voice of Elijah. And the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. ~ 1 Kings 17:22*

*And as a man was being buried, behold, a marauding band was seen and the man was thrown into the grave of Elisha, and as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood on his feet. ~ 2 Kings 13:21*

*But taking her by the hand he called, saying, "Child, arise." And her spirit returned, and she got up at once. And he directed that something should be given her to eat. ~ Luke 8:54-55*

*But Peter put them all outside, and knelt down and prayed; and turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. ~ Acts 9:40*

Jesus steps up to the grave of Lazarus and by the Lord's command the dead man came walking out of the tomb (John 11). On the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17) we see Moses and Elijah – fully alive!

Death is being conquered all the time! And someday, Jesus is going to return and call us all by name and we will rise up and discover that death is completely vanquished. "*Where O death is your victory*" (1 Corinthians 15:55)? So do not fear those who can kill the body, but afterward can do nothing more.

➤ **Who is it that can kill the body only?**

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➤ **Who is it that can destroy both soul and body in hell?**

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But fear Him who can cast both body and soul into hell. That is the Almighty God. Fear Him, honor and revere Him who has the power of life and death, inhabits the judgment seat, and will execute His righteous judgment upon all who have ever lived on the earth.

This, my beloved, is where our security is found. For whoever is in Christ is passed from the wrath of God for that wrath has been poured out on the Beloved Son of God.

Your soul is eternal... your body is temporary. So who do you fear: God or men? What can man do to you? There is great courage in knowing that there is no need to fear those who can only cause temporary harm but do nothing of eternal consequence.

**Describe a time when you feared for your life:**

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The problem is many live in a constant state of fear in this world because they might lose what they have in the here-and-now. Consider what it says in the book of Proverbs:

*The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe. ~ Proverbs 29:25*

When you are afraid of what men may do against you and your faith, you trap yourself in a snare. You've basically entangled yourself in the fear of man. You will not serve the Lord; you will not risk doing what God wants because you're desperately afraid of what man might do to you. But what is the worst they could possibly do to you? If the worst they can do is kill you, you have this amazing statement of Jesus to fall back on: "*don't fear those who can only kill the body!*"

It is great comfort to know that you have no need to fear because if you belong to Jesus Christ you live in the secure hand of Almighty God. And knowing this, let it give you great courage. If you have come to Jesus Christ by faith you will never again be parted from Him. No matter what mankind may do, they can never separate you from Him. The world can never rip you away from

Jesus, so why be afraid when you dwell in perfect security?

**List three things so dear to you that you would rather keep them than serve Jesus.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*(I hope that you left the above section blank. If not, then use this as a time to surrender even these things to the Lord Jesus Christ.)*

Remember, however, that this promised security is ONLY for those who belong to Christ Jesus. Across the world there are many religious people who believe that their expressions of religion will secure them before God. They are dreadfully mistaken. There is no security in a religious life. There is only the promise of security in being found in Christ – not having a hope built on any man-devised plans, but a secure hope anchored to the promises of God.

But there is such security there that should bolster your courage and give you fortitude to run the risk of expressing your faith and love for Jesus Christ openly and publicly. The fear of man is a snare. It will entrap you and keep you from doing what God wants you to do because you fear the response of men.

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## Chapter Fourteen: Courage in the Providence of God

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We come to the third truth of our text found in verses 29-31:

*“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”*

Understand this illustration for a moment. The sparrow is the lowest classification of bird. The value of sparrows is found in this statement – two for a penny (or as seen in Luke 12:6 there is a bargain sale going on: “five for two pennies!”). No one is called to soar on sparrows wings and no musical group had ever been called “Flock of Sparrows.”

**Where do you find your worth? Or whose opinion of your worth matters most?**

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And yet, even this lowest classification of birds does not fall to the ground apart from Almighty God. And you, who are worth far more than a sparrow – how could you imagine God forgetting you? Now, understand, it doesn't mean apart from the knowledge of God; it means apart from the WILL of God! Not even a sparrow falling from the nest happens apart from the will of God. God is in control of everything. His providential hand guides even this seemingly insignificant event.

There is nothing outside His authority. There is nothing outside His control. He knows about everything and keeps it all in His hands. And, as Jesus said, you are of more value than many sparrows! God's providence is in control. You are precious to God. And if He will providentially oversee even the fall of a sparrow, He will certainly be involved with you.

Let this truth bring you courage. God's keeps you in His providential care.

God never runs out of time for you. He never loses interest in you. He has never stopped being concerned about you. There is not one moment that God does not have you in His care.

My friends take courage in that. For our God keeps everything in His hands.

Do you trust that God actually cares about you? When you know that God is watching over you with boundless concern for your life, you can step out with great courage – for God will keep you.

Take a moment and join the apostles in the boat with Jesus. A great storm had come down off the mountains and hit the Sea of Galilee with a vengeance. As the

twelve fought against the waves and battled against the storm-tossed sea, they were afraid.

*And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" ~ Mark 4:37-38*

With water sloshing into the boat, and the seas ravaging against the ship the entire scene is absolute pandemonium for the disciples. Their courage had failed them. Their own skills were not enough to counter the rising threat of the sea. And where do they find Jesus? He is asleep in the stern.

**Can you describe a time when you thought God was unaware of your circumstances?**

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Though the storm could not keep Jesus awake, the disciples had no trouble rousing their Lord. And what do they say to him? I think that it is something we all have said to Jesus at one time or another when we face

the tumultuous challenges of faithful obedience. Like an accusation cloaked in the disguise of a question they said: “Don’t you care.”

It’s as if they are asking, “How could you be sleeping at a time like this!? How could you be ignorant of the fact that we are all about to die!?” Though they did not know or believe it, they were as perfectly safe in the storm as in the calmest sea. Jesus was in the boat with them. He wasn’t outside the storm that the disciples faced; He was right there with them and was completely at rest in His Father’s will.

There is a providential care over your life and mine that we don’t see, and it is real every moment of every day. God is constantly watching over you. Even in the storms that He allows to enter your life (which are there for a purpose) He does not stop watching over your life. He cares about everything concerning you. He allows certain things to happen. Even the fall of a sparrow never happens apart from the will of the Father.

So Peter tells us this:

*Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting*

*all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. ~ 1  
Peter 5:6-7*

It all happens in God's proper time and according to His perfect plan. So cast your anxieties, cast your fears and trembling, cast your trepidations upon Him because He cares for you. He will never forsake you. You can take courage in the simple truth: God's providence is your protection, not protection from the storm, but His presence in the midst of any storm.

If God did not spare His own Son in order to rescue you from sin, death and hell (see Romans 8:31-39), He will not allow any circumstance into your life that is not in accordance with His purpose.

**Take a moment and write out a statement of thanks for a specific difficulty that brought you into deeper communion with Christ.**

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Remember, beloved, He allows us to go through the difficulties for His purposes. So we can rest in the

knowledge of Romans 8:28, *“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”*

So, take courage in the providence of God. Every time you walk through the door, every time you sit or go, every circumstance you will ever encounter along the journey of your life is, ultimately, firmly fixed in the providential care of God.

So we close this chapter with the final word of our text:

*“So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.” ~ Matthew 10:32-33*

Now that He has given us these reasons to have courage in this sent life of obedience to Christ, and as He tells us to go into the world around us with the message of the Gospel, let us take courage to acknowledge Jesus before men. However, if we abandon Jesus and deny Him before the world, how then can we possibly say that we truly know Him?

Why do we do this? Because if the world around us never hears about Christ from us, who will tell them? If we don't take the courage to speak... who will?

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## Section Five: The Great Divide

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**Text: Matthew 10:34-39**

Even though we have been facing negative realities in these principles of a sent life, I want to remind you before you read any further that we will wrap up this book with some hope. We face the reality that all believers are divided against the world, and often

within their own sphere of connections, and yet God has a purpose for it all.

As we begin to explore this truth, let's look at the first verse of our text:

*"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." ~*

*Matthew 10:34*

This is hard for us to comprehend, for Jesus is also described as the "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). How then can He, the Prince of Peace, wield the sword of division? It doesn't make any sense to our way of thinking, for we want Jesus to be the great Prince of Peace, the Sovereign who sheds His grace and brings joy in the morning.

So why is this a part of His teaching? Why, before He sends His apostles out to do the work, does Jesus include this statement of division? What possible benefit is there from knowing that Jesus didn't come to bring peace but a sword?

The simple answer, first of all, is that Jesus had not come to bring to the world a political or humanitarian peace. He's not looking to bring all the factions of people

together in some sort of “harmony of nations.” He’s not here to make Russia and the United States like each other.

As the Prince of Peace, Jesus has come to bring peace between God and man. There is a great divide between us and God, a chasm fixed that can only be crossed by Him. It is insurmountable by us. There is no possibility for us to cross over and be with God, for sin has prevented our coming to Him. And if we are going to cross over to Him, we must be willing to leave something behind—and that is: the world.

**In what way do you see Jesus dividing the world?**

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If we want to cross over to be with God the Father and join with Jesus Christ we must abandon our allegiance to the systems, strategies and sentiments of this world. The great divide that Jesus causes is a separation from the world for all who will belong to Him.

Jesus didn’t come to make sure the Sadducees and the Pharisees got along or to make sure that everyone was

happy with each other. He came to make peace between God and man. But there can be no peace with God for any who still love this world. And for those who don't want to have peace with God, they are still at war with God.

He didn't come to bring equanimity within the confines of a sinful world. He came to bring a sword that will separate all who believe from all who do not. He didn't come to see that everybody gets along; He came to bring salvation to all who will believe.

And that's the challenge here. We see Jesus as the Prince of Peace and still the factions of humanity are at each other's throat. But the global peace that we long for will only come on that day when Jesus returns and establishes His rule and reign forever. There is coming the day of peace, when we will all stand before God in heaven and He will bring the final separation of the righteous and the wicked, between those who love God and those who do not. At that time, then, there will be peace.

And think about that peace when Jesus reigns! There will be no animosity between neighbors. There will be

no hostility between peoples or nations. All will be at peace for the Prince of Peace will rule the hearts of men.

But that is not this day. In this day we still lock our doors and take pains to protect our surroundings. We do not live in a world at peace. Violence erupts in the streets. Wars ravage nations. Multitudes have this continual sense of fear in life because they are still at war in life – at war with the Living God. Consider the words of Isaiah 57:21,

*“There is no peace,” says my God, “for the wicked.”*

But Jesus is coming to be our peace, just not the peace of this world. He’s coming to divide and separate us from the world.

This divide must occur for us to live out the sent life.

There are three powerful truths to understand from the text that we now grapple with: That we are **Positioned Against the World**, we are **Purposed to Love God**, and we are **Pursuing the Real Life**. And that is what we will explore.

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## Chapter Fifteen: Positioned Against the World

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This might sound odd and you may wonder why this is the case, but we are meant to be positioned against the world. Consider the words of verses 35 and 36.

*“For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person’s enemies will be those of his own household.” ~ Matthew 10:35-36*

Walking with Christ establishes a new set of loyalties that may not include those who are closest to you such as family relationships. And though Jesus is the Prince of Peace, that peace is between God and believers. Never expect to find that peace between Christ and the world.

The above statement of our Lord is from the book of Micah. In the full rendering of the text (see below) the true conditions are presented.

*Put no trust in a neighbor; have no confidence in a friend; guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your arms; for the son treats the father with contempt, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house. But as for me, I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me. ~ Micah 7:5-7*

The truth of the matter is this: when Jesus comes and we surrender ourselves to Him, our loyalties are divided from the world and we are joined with Christ. If, as Micah 7:7 states, that we will look to the Lord, it must demand that we also look away from the world.

Multitudes have experienced this. A husband or a wife comes to faith in Jesus and then their partner is at odds with them. Friendships have dissolved because one has been born-again and the other has denied the Lord Jesus. Fathers and mothers who have tried to raise their children in the fear of God, only to have those children turn away from their parent's faith and embrace the world, experience this truth.

**How have you experienced these fractured relationships?**

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I knew of a woman who was a good Christian woman before she married. After she got married, she discovered that her husband was a brute, to put it bluntly. He tried to beat the Christianity out of her, demanded that she never go to church again and that she must walk away from the Lord. He hated Christ, hated the church, and tried with his anger and rage to drive it out of her heart as well. Now there, my friends, is a woman who suffered the reality of this text.

God separates us out from our worldly loyalties because He wants us to be loyal unto Him. And the truth of this text is experienced when fathers and mothers and children who do not love and follow Jesus Christ divide from us and are hostile to us for we no longer stand with the world, but with Jesus.

We have to do the things that Jesus wants us to do and be the people He wants us to be. You are positioned against the world. So if you are living in this world and living for this world you are not living, then, for Christ. Jesus didn't come that you should have peace in worldliness, He came that you walk in peace with God.

Many Christians I've encountered seem to have this imaginary Christianity in place, as if we should be able to walk in this world with everyone delighted in us, that we all just stand around holding hands and singing "Kumbaya" with each other. However, because you have surrendered to follow Christ and others around you still reject Jesus, you find yourself on the receiving end of that rejection as they unload their hatred of Christ upon you.

So why does Jesus include fathers and mothers, sons and daughters? These are the closest relationships you

have. Your household, that place where you might expect to be received with joy and love, even there you must hold your love and loyalty for Christ as a higher pursuit than any other.

If we are living to please, or even appease, the world, we are separating ourselves from God. Consider what James tells us:

*You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ~ James 4:4*

Do you put yourself in the camp with the enemies of God because you're loyal to worldly things? My friends, position yourselves to be totally devoted to Christ. When other loyalties try to capture your mind and worldly things attract you, be reminded that you belong to Christ first.

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## Chapter Sixteen: Purposed to Love God

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And this brings us to the next point: that we must be purposed to love God. Consider the words of our next text:

*“Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.” ~ Matthew 10:37-38*

Bracketed on either side of our lives stand our parents and our children. Allow those loves (or love for your own life) to be greater than your love for God and you will soon discover that you are far from the One who redeems you.

It is very interesting that Jesus uses these illustrations: father, mother, son, and daughter. These are the “entry” points and the “exit” points of all our relationships in this world. We enter into the world because of our father and mother. We leave behind in this world our sons and daughters. If there is ever going to be a place where the fullness of human love is experienced, it will be in these primary relationships.

And in these primary relationships we discover the real value of love. In the first, the father and mother, these are the ones who care for you, protect and provide for you when you are but a child. And it is hoped, then, in the second, the sons and daughters, that in the days of old age, when life is feeble and need is great, that they will also take care of you.

**What experience have you had where you were pressed to love Christ over others?**

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And in the midst of all our other potential loves, Jesus wants us to look to Him as our ultimate love. He declares with absolute truth that if we love anyone – even those primary relationships – more than we love Him, we cannot be his disciple.

Then Jesus takes it to the one relationship everyone has: the relationship with themselves. He puts it in unconditional terms, that if we love our own lives more than Him, if we refuse the sacrificial road of bearing our cross—that is, dying to ourselves—then we are not worthy of Him.

It's not easy.

How deeply we love our children! We sacrifice and surrender even our own comforts and conveniences so that they are provided and cared for to the best of our ability. We yield our own time to their needs and guide them in life.

And then, how greatly do we love our parents. Not all children grew up with wonderful parents, but somehow in our hearts they are etched. I've known many (including myself) who have moved their parents into their home so that they can better care for them. These vital and primary relationships are precious to us.

When we love Jesus, however, He is the greater love, the supreme devotion, the outright owner of our hearts.

Do you love Jesus more? Such was the question posed to Peter at the end of the gospel of John.

*When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" ~ John 21:15a*

Many years ago a woman came to my office with her heart grief-stricken for the situation in her home. She told me that her husband didn't want her to pray in the home, didn't want her to read her bible, didn't want her to go to church, and, ultimately, didn't want her to follow Christ. She said to me, "I don't know what to do, because I love my husband and I love my Lord."

This is where it really hits. This is where the "rubber meets the road" because we all know someone living in

this situation, and perhaps you've been one to live in this situation. And it comes down to the question of who do you love more: Jesus or anyone else? I've known people to walk away from Jesus Christ because they are trying to keep peace in their home.

And so many make compromises, and tell themselves that they can worship God in private, and keep their love for the Lord in secret. But, the simple truth is, they can't. Love, by nature, will reveal itself in all that you do. You cannot have a private love for Christ for either you will abandon it in the end or it will drive you to expose it to the world.

It is very simply put in the book of Deuteronomy:

*"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and  
with all your soul and with all your might." ~  
Deuteronomy 6:5*

If you are willing to let the world determine your love for Christ, then you must hear the warning from the Lord Jesus once again: you're not worthy of Him.

**Are you positioned to love the Lord your God more than every other relationship you possess? Explain.**

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But let me tell you a secret that is not so terribly hidden. When you love God, when He is the supreme focus of your entire life, you will be enabled to love the people in your life so much better. For from you will pour out the love of God to them. Your love will be transcendent, divine. You will not just love them from a worldly position or a humanitarian mindset. You will know real love – the love of God – and that will be made manifest through you to them.

Never forget this truth: *“We love because he first loved us”* (1 John 4:19).

The text above brings home the fact that without His love, we cannot love. When we first love the Lord Jesus it comes only because He first loved us. Then our love for our neighbor flows from that primary love for Christ.

You will never be able to love fully the way you ought to until you love Him supremely. And then watch how God

will pour His love through you to the people around you.

That is God's intent.

He never intends to pull you away from loving people, but you need to be transformed in order to make you capable of loving them in truth. Then, through you, they will experience Him and discover the salvation you have which is found in Jesus Christ.

To love God supremely is repeated throughout the Gospels. It is the first and greatest command, reiterated by Jesus for all who will listen. And the second is like it He said, "*Love your neighbors as yourself*" (Matthew 22:39).

Do you really want to know how to fulfill everything God wants to do through your life? The answer is here: Love God supremely and then out of that fountain, pour out love to your neighbors.

As we saw earlier, at the end of the Gospel of John (John 21:15-17), Jesus asked Peter the ultimate question: do you love Me? With the answer being "yes" then Jesus said to "feed my sheep." Our genuine love for Christ will manifest in our determined love for others. In essence,

Jesus is saying that if we really do love Him, then we will do the things He commands—and through our loving obedience the world will see the love of Christ displayed.

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## Chapter Seventeen: Pursuing the Real Life

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And so, a life that sacrificially loves the Lord Jesus Christ will put you on the right track in pursuing the real life.

*“Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” ~ Matthew 10:39*

The world is crowded with people clamoring to discover the road to a purposed and valued life. And in temporary moments, they find some facsimile of one.

But the real life, the life of great worth in God's sight, is the life lived by faith in the Son of God.

There is a great push today in the pursuit of "self-worth." The mantra of the human heart is primarily all about "self." There is even a magazine with that same moniker. Photos are taken and we call them "selfies." And, in truth, if you were to navigate the plastered photo section of a person's social media account, the primary image that is portrayed is often of themselves.

You may be able to find a life that far exceeds any humanitarian pursuit and you might be the most altruistic individual that ever lived, but if you have not abandoned your life for the life of Christ you will still lose your life before God.

### **What have you lost in your pursuit of Christ?**

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Are you perpetually looking for the "perfect" life? The American dream is to have a life that is rich with comfort, plastered with delights and filled up with treasures. And that same mentality has crept into the

church so as to make many Christians fall into the trap of believing that worldly security is synonymous with Divine favor.

But to find that, if that's all you want, is to invariably lose Christ. For the promise is clear: whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses it for the sake of Christ will find it.

Life in this world is a transient, temporary experience. There is nothing of lasting value that the world has to offer. There is no great pursuit in this life that will be so magnificent that it can replace the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing lasts in this world, and a life in Christ is everlasting.

Let me make two things relatively clear.

1. To find your life in this world is ultimately doomed to loss because nothing is going to last in this world. It will all spoil, fade, rot, rust and decay.
2. Nothing in this world is yours anyway. You cannot truly "own" something. You possess it temporarily, but once you die it no longer belongs to you.

You were created by God. You belong to Him. Imagine for a moment Jesus walking through this world. People

were rejecting Him at every turn. Here is the Creator of the universe being rejected by humanity. I wonder if He ever thought: “But I made you! How can you reject the One who knit you together in your mother’s womb?”

And here it brings us back to the temptation in the Garden of Eden. Despite the truth that God has the right to rule over our lives, the tempter came and planted the seed of an idea that mankind can rule themselves.

**Where do you see believers going out in their own names for their own purposes?**

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So Jesus tells His disciples that if He is going to send them out, they won’t go seeking their own purposes. They are not to create their own plans or devise their own strategies. They don’t go looking for their own life and they don’t offer any other life to those they speak with. It is Jesus only, Jesus ever. No man will have life apart from God.

Think about it like this: If I send a messenger, I want that messenger to carry and proclaim the message I

sent. I would not give them latitude or leeway to change the message or modify it in any measure.

Ultimately, those who are yielded to Christ for all time are the ones who will find their lives for eternity. The principle of a sent life is that we go in the name of Jesus Christ, and no other. We don't go proclaiming our own name. We don't go in the name of a denomination or a church. Go in the name of Jesus—or don't go at all.

Consider what Paul tells the Galatians:

*“For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.” ~ Galatians 6:8*

We don't go out “sowing” to the flesh. That is to say, we don't go into the world with the idea of pleasing ourselves. We sow to the Spirit. We work for the Master. We labor in His harvest field under His direction and for His glory. And His promise then is our reward—eternal life.

As we wrap this up, consider what Jesus is set to do even as it was said of Him:

*“His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” ~ Luke 3:17*

This, my friends, is the ultimate in the great divide that Jesus will accomplish. The Lord will divide the entire world. Everything will be separated. He will gather all who belong to Him and the chaff, those who reject Him, those who have no love for the Lord Jesus Christ, will be burned.

It's not a pleasant way to close, with the flames of hell licking at the boots of the unbeliever. But, perhaps, this will move us in our sent life to try and grasp as many as we can before the Lord comes and clears His threshing floor – the world.

## Section Six: The True Reward

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**Text: Matthew 10:40-42**

We come to the conclusion of these principles. As Jesus had discoursed on the reality of their task to go forth as the representatives of Him, facing the hardships and persecutions of the call He had given, He concludes with some encouraging words. Jesus tells them that their going is not without purpose or reward.

How important is it for us, as believers, to remember that there are promised rewards attached to our faithfulness? With all of the discussions and sermons and studies that remind us that the journey with Jesus through this world is filled with hardship, for even Jesus said, “In the world you will have tribulation” (John 16:33a), yet those tribulations are not absent the blessed promises of God.

My friends, we have something to look forward to. We need to remember this!

Without such promises of divine reward and blessing during the journey, many believers might feel overwrought with the reality that walking with Christ is difficult, pressed with hardship, along a tough road with many days filled with dread. Yet there is hope and anticipation that not only is our destination filled with glory, but the journey is also marked by moments of joy.

There is a reward that comes. However, it is toward those to whom we are sent. The final word in these principles of a sent life concerns the reward of those to whom we go: the reward of having believed the message.

Let me explain.

As we look at the text for our instruction today, we see that those who receive the apostles, welcoming them, offering hospitality and kindness, are the ones who get the promised rewards. And yet, the sent ones are also blessed, for they are seeing first-hand the work of God in the transformation of lives through the message of the gospel.

So, in truth, your reward of obedience is the privilege of being co-laborers with Christ and bearing witness of the gospel toward the lost. And, when the Holy Spirit opens their minds and hearts to the message, you can rejoice in their salvation. Consider 1 Corinthians 3:5-9.

*What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.*

We each will receive our reward for the work we are tasked to do. But, perhaps, the greater joy and glory is that we are co-laborers with Christ. We are God's "fellow workers!"

If there is more joy in heaven over one lost soul who returns to God (see Luke 15:7), then let us join with that chorus of delight and celebrate the salvation of those who respond to the gospel through our faithful work.

## Chapter Eighteen: The Reward of Receiving Christ

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The true reward is for those who believe.

After giving His disciples so many warnings, Jesus reminds them that there is a grand purpose for their going out, and a true reward for those that they encounter: the reward of receiving Christ.

*“Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.” ~ Matthew 10:40*

It is to that word “receive” that I want to draw your attention.

One possible consideration of this idea is that the apostles are “received” into the homes of those they encounter.

Another aspect of this word is along the nature of receiving a gift, the transferring of some article or item from one person to another.

This statement in the verse above, however, is a bit more expansive than that. What is in view here are those who not only receive the apostles into their home, but also receive the reason why they came. Those to whom the disciples were sent not only welcomed them, they welcomed the message brought and the salvation offered.

Face it: you’re going on mission for the Lord. And whoever receives you (that is: receives you for the reason that you’re there) receives also the Lord. And that’s the point! The whole goal of this is that we bring Christ to the world.

Here we find the principle reason every believer is sent into the world. We go with the unwavering task of

bringing Christ to the people. And when they receive us, it is in recognition of the mission we are on—to introduce them to the Savior.

Now imagine, for a moment, that you're an ambassador of the United States and you are sent to a foreign country. They will receive you into that country as an ambassador of the U.S. They recognize the reason you're there—to represent the nation who sent you.

The reason people should receive us into their lives, more than just mere acquaintance or friendship, is through our representation of Jesus Christ.

And that's the challenge.

Too many Christians do not have this mindset. So often we go into the world and do not adhere to the idea that we are meant to represent Jesus everywhere. We want people to receive us for our sake, and so we make ourselves acceptable to them. We want them to think of us as good, kind, generous, fun and enjoyable to be around. And so we become the ambassadors of ourselves rather than maintaining our purpose and mission given to us by Jesus.

Jesus did not send you so that **you** would be received, but that **He** would be received.

**When you encounter people, do they receive you for Christ's sake? Explain.**

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This is the challenge for the followers of Christ.

Jesus told the disciples that “you will be hated by all for my name’s sake” (verse 22). The Lord already warned them that there is great animosity out there. The Pharisees hated Jesus; the priests hated Jesus. Even those in the crowd that Jesus had fed (see John chapter 6) grumbled, argued and complained, eventually departing and no longer following the Lord.

That same reality exists in our world today.

You will be reviled for His name, however...

The world might hate you, however...

Your sons and daughters might despise and turn against you, however...

... If they receive you, they might also receive Jesus – the person for whom you're being sent!

This is the chief principle of a sent life: that you go with Christ's mission in mind. You have the charge from God to enter into people's lives with the gospel of Christ, and if they receive you let it be from the fact that they encountered Jesus through you.

Consider the prayer of the Lord Jesus in the Gospel of John.

*I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word. ~ John 17:14-20*

Jesus is sending His disciples into the world and praying for them. So here we see His sent ones should not be taken out of the world but that they should be protected

for the sake of those who will believe in Him through their message.

The point of our lives as believers in Christ is to be the representatives of Christ so that others might encounter Christ through us and believe unto salvation as well.

And this is purposed for every aspect of life.

How do you represent Christ in the home? How is Christ seen in your workplace? How about when you're on the golf course or other arenas of recreation that you enjoy?

**How is Christ and His mission your first priority in every segment of your living?**

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I remember once when I was given a simple gift: golf balls with Scriptures printed on them. When I asked why, the person told me that they knew I would probably lose them and someone else would find them. Definitely not the most direct way of making a gospel encounter, but that individual had a heart that desired for someone to discover the message of Christ.

Everyone who comes to the saving grace of Christ is now purposed to be sent by Christ. This does not mean that everyone is to be traveling across country or into foreign lands. But everyone who loves the Lord Jesus Christ has a mission to be aware of life from a gospel point of view.

God doesn't call any of His children to merely sit and watch the world pass by. Of what value is it to maintain a static life of perpetual learning and never applying the things that we have been taught?

What a privileged opportunity we have to see others receive Jesus Christ and they receive the great reward of eternal life. As we have already received the greatest reward—everlasting life, we now have the obligation of taking what we know and sharing it with the masses of humanity that are in our lives. And Jesus anticipates, expects, and even commands that we go—and wherever we go, to bring the message of the gospel with us.

Paul told it to the Corinthian church this way:

*“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” ~ 2 Corinthians 5:20*

We are meant to be ambassadors, bringing Christ to the world. This is the first aspect of the true reward for those who we encounter: to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

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## Chapter Nineteen: The Reward for Recognizing the Messenger

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When people come in contact with the true reward, they are recognizing the messenger for who they are – representatives of Jesus Christ, the King of kings.

*“The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward.” ~ Matthew 10:41*

When they receive you it is in conjunction with the message you bring. Not as one prophesying the future but simply proclaiming the gospel, you speak as a prophetic voice for their soul and a representative of the righteousness of Christ given to a forgiven heart.

Do you ever ask questions when you read the Scriptures? My first question as I read this was: “what is ‘a prophet’s reward?’” Does God open up the treasures of heaven and give a gold coin to the prophet?

What about a “righteous person’s reward?” Do you ever wonder what that might be?

Proverbs tells us what a righteous person’s reward actually is.

*Disaster pursues sinners, but the righteous are rewarded with good. ~ Proverbs 13:21*

And again in proverbs:

*The wicked earns deceptive wages, but one who sows righteousness gets a sure reward. Whoever is steadfast in righteousness will live, but he who pursues evil will die. ~ Proverbs 11:18-19*

The prophet Isaiah states it this way:

*And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever. ~*

*Isaiah 32:17*

So the righteous are rewarded with goodness, life, along with quietness and trust forever.

Jesus tells us in the gospel of Luke that the great reward of the prophets for their endurance of persecution and the reviling of the world was a place in everlasting joy – heaven is our great reward, even as it was for the prophets.

*Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets. ~ Luke 6:22-23*

So, my friends, you are in good company!

So, as a prophet (and we don't want to overlay that term, for it means merely one who presents the message of God), you are being sent as a messenger. As a righteous person, you are being sent as an example.

To sum this up: you preach the word and live the word and those who receive you because of your message and

the testimony of your life will be situated to understand the hope of salvation and find themselves repentant and willing to receive Jesus Christ the Lord and Savior. Thus, they experience the reward of the righteous and the prophet – everlasting life.

Let me take this just a step further.

They will never receive the reward of Christ if they hear your words only and not the words of Christ. Wise, pithy words of human ingenuity and reason will never lead anyone to the salvation of our Lord. Even the apostle Paul said this to the Corinthian church.

*And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ~ 1 Corinthians 2:1-*

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They will also not be able to grasp the reward of the righteous if it is your righteousness on display and not the righteousness of Christ. The full measure of all human righteousness is described for us this way:

*We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. ~ Isaiah 64:6*

The righteousness that is on display is the righteousness of Christ. Even as the apostle Paul stated:

*Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.*

*~ Philippians 3:8-9*

Ultimately, when they hear our proclamation of Christ and see in us the righteousness of Christ, they will be convicted and compelled to repentance and salvation. For it is not our word nor our life that they encounter, but His life of righteousness and His words of salvation. And upon belief, they receive the reward.

So when they receive you as a prophet, they do so because they comprehend that you are bringing them a message from God. And when they receive you as a righteous person, they do so because they recognize the righteousness of Christ in you.

A great illustration of this is the woman at the well (see John chapter 4). When she realized who Christ Jesus

was, she rushed to her village and they all followed her to an encounter with Jesus. She had no righteousness in herself that they marveled at; she had no words of her own wisdom. But she spoke of Jesus Christ and they all came out and discovered for themselves that Jesus is the Savior of the world.

**Consider: what are your words and life conveying to the watchful world around you?**

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So why does Jesus use the dual illustration of the prophet and the righteous person? Because in one person who believes, two things are manifest: their words and their life. Does your life reflect the words that you speak? Do your words convey the life that you live? To proclaim Jesus Christ and live like the world is to put a question mark at the end of everything you say. Also, to live in a way that demonstrates Christ and yet your words are merely humanistic wisdom and rhetoric, brings to question whether you know the truth at all. Both are necessary.

Paul said it this way concerning the Galatian church:

*“You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first, and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus.” ~ Galatians 4:13-14*

Paul was received even as Jesus said – he was received as one who brought the message of Christ, as an angel of God, even as they would have received Christ Jesus.

So, are you living and acting in such a way that they receive you, not for your sake but for the sake of Christ Jesus?

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## Chapter Twenty: The Reward for Responding in Kindness

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When the true reward is received by those who received the message, when the gospel is received by those who hear, they will respond in kindness. And here in the last verse of this chapter brings such a tender and simple expression of kindness that it might be overlooked by some.

*“And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.” ~ Matthew 10:42*

### **It’s just a cup of cold water. Why is this significant?**

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The evidence of a transformed life is the love of Christ expressed. When those who receive Christ do something with even the smallest measure of His love as the motivation, there is hope that they belong to Him.

The “little ones” mentioned are not referencing little children but those who are the children of God, disciples of Jesus Christ who brings the message of the gospel to the world. So, if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you are a “little one.”

This is the response of the newly redeemed.

They have such a transformed heart that they want to express their gratitude toward those who brought the message. And, in the dry, Middle-Eastern land where the

disciples lived, a cup of cold water was a tremendous blessing.

Why won't they lose their reward? Because they are responding in love. There is now the evidence of a transformed life, a new life, a believing life that is made manifest through even a simple act of kindness.

Jesus is not saying that generosity is the way to heaven, but that such generosity of love shows that their hearts are transformed. When a heart is changed by His grace, it displays itself in a new way, in the way of love. Instead of rejecting you and hating you, they are now bringing you in and listening. They are believing and receiving their reward. And, they are responding in a manner that expresses the love of Jesus Christ.

A great illustration of this is played out in Acts chapter 16.

To summarize the experience of Paul and Silas, they were preaching in Philippi and delivered a slave woman who had been possessed by demonic influence. Ultimately, Paul commanded in the name of Christ Jesus that the evil spirit come out from her and she was set free.

However, the owner of that woman was enraged because he used her divination as a source of income. Now that she was freed from the demon, she no longer possessed the ability to make predictive statements. Paul and Silas were severely beaten and thrown in jail where they were put in the stocks.

About midnight they began to pray and sing hymns and God sent an earthquake to set them free.

The jailer, having responsibility for the two men, was going to commit suicide. But Paul prevented him.

That's the scene.

Imagine for a moment that you are there. The echoed voices of Paul and Silas were reverberating through the dungeon of that prison all the way to the ears of the jailer. Perhaps they were singing hymns of redemption. Perhaps they were praying for the salvation of their captors.

Then an earthquake hit. Pandemonium of epic proportions rumbled through the corridors as all the chains fell off and the bars of the prison were flung open. Chaos ensued. And the jailer was ready to end his own life, when this happens:

*But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ~ Acts 16:28-32*

But that's not the end of the story.

What does the jailer do after he believes? He doesn't lock Paul and Silas back up. He doesn't put them back in the stocks. He, in grateful rejoicing, does just the opposite.

*And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God. ~ Acts 16:33-34*

In gratitude and love for what Christ has done, this jailer expresses kindness toward the messengers of Jesus—offering a "cup of cold water" with love. He was truly transformed. And, perhaps at that moment, the church of Philippi was born.

My friends, such is the evidence of a heart transformed. When the love of Christ is made manifest through the life of the individual, there is a reality being seen of a born-again soul.

And that is what Jesus is telling His disciples. If they give a cup of cold water to you, even that small expression of kindness, then recognize that it is His interaction with them. They have been changed for there is a little bit of Christ's love pouring out from them.

When it comes from a society that hates you, those little acts of kindness are an overwhelming testimony of the evidence of Christ's work in their lives.

So Jesus reminds them that they will not lose their reward. If they have had a transformed experience after you brought them the message, and have received Christ Jesus as the Savior and Lord of their lives, they will respond in a way that demonstrates that reality. It is evidence that they have been brought into fellowship with Jesus Christ.

Consider what John says:

*“We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.” ~ 1 John 3:14*

When we go into our world, and are sent by the Lord to bring His message, we will have encounters along the way. People will either push back against us, perhaps even hate us for Christ’s sake, for they do not want the message of salvation. Others will receive us, even as they receive a prophet from God and a righteous representative of Christ, and their response of a transformed heart is real love.

It’s not done in perfection. It’s not an overabundance of generosity. It is truly a small act of kindness, yet it is an act of genuine affection toward the one who brought the word of life.

It’s as if Jesus is saying: “even if all they can do is give you a cup of cold water, they are doing so because you are My disciple – and it is a reflection from their heart that they have received Me.”

And isn’t that what we’re meant to do? Isn’t that what we’re supposed to be about? That we go in order that others might hear and receive the message of Christ so that they too can be saved.

We don't go in the hopes that they give us something. We go so that we can be poured out for Christ's sake and that in the pouring out of our lives others might find that they too can believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

And with that mission in mind, we can suffer the outlandish persecutions of the world for the hope of encountering even one who might be drawn into the kingdom of the Beloved Son of God.

It is a mission where we give ourselves away so that other might gain Christ.

In the end, what's it all about? Read the words of Revelation:

*Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets*

*and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.” ~*

*Revelation 11:15-18*

There is coming that time when Jesus will reward His servants, both small and great. Prophets, saints, and all who fear the name of the Lord Jesus will receive His everlasting reward. The joy of His presence will belong to all who believe.

You were rewarded when you heard the message of the gospel and by faith you believed. Now you are given the charge to bring the message of Christ to the world so that they too can believe and be rewarded, just as you were.

That together, with prophets and all the saints, we will along with all who believe join in the great reward of heaven, being set free from the wrath of God because of Jesus Christ who bore our sins and suffered God’s wrath in our place.

Romans 10:13 declares with certainty, “Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Will you go?

Will you get out there and bring this message of redemption to the people around you?

If there is ever a gift you could possibly give, isn't it the message of salvation offered by Jesus Christ? Is there any other gift of greater value than the life of the Beloved Son of God?

Jesus is still sending us out. He is still bringing His message of salvation through us to the world. And with these principles, you are equipped to be a "sent one" as well.

## Conclusion

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Two critical moments occur in the life of a disciple, moments that hearken us to Christ and faithfulness to His commands.

And even as you read the above statement, I am certain you said as I thought, “surely there are far more than just two!” You are right, for along the course of a life there are multiple times where the Lord challenges us with His word and changes the direction we go.

However, the two I speak of are these: the call to follow Jesus and the call to go into all the world. These two critical moments occur in the Gospel of Matthew at the beginning of the Lord's ministry with His disciples and at the end of His time with them on earth.

*And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." ~ Matthew 4:19*

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." ~ Matthew 28:19-20*

Like bookends on Matthew's Gospel, these two commands of our Lord Jesus are the quintessential expression of the Christian life. A life that is called to follow Christ is ever to be a life that is also sent out by Christ. And a life cannot ever be sent out by Christ who is not also a life that follows Christ.

Between the "bookends" are the experiences and commands, the priorities and principles of our Lord Jesus to prepare God's people to fulfill His call.

Chapter ten is the first sending of the Apostles by the Lord, and it gives us a template to understand the necessary principles we must grasp as we step out with the gospel in faithful obedience to Christ.

My friends, if you have responded to Christ when He commanded, “Follow me,” then you are already purposed to obey the directive to “Go therefore.”

The Apostle Paul knew himself and the church as ambassadors for Christ’s sake (see 2 Corinthians 5:20). We are here on this earth to represent the Kingdom of our Lord and to obey the commands of our King.

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Thank you for taking the time to read this book. Like a signpost pointing you to the proper way, I hope and pray that this book has directed you to the One Book that is of greatest value for your soul – the Holy Word of God.

Even now, let me encourage you to pick up your Bible, start at the Gospel of Matthew, and learn of the Lord Jesus Christ and His way, then set your heart to the obedience of faith and follow Him.

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# Let's Connect!

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[www.authormichaelduncan.com](http://www.authormichaelduncan.com)

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Some other books by Michael Duncan:

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For a full list of his books, you can find them on his author's page on Amazon.com at:

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