

## Prepare to Be Persecuted

This article is edited from the Ligonier Ministries

When Jesus was on earth, he spent a lot of his time preparing his disciples to share the Gospel. Now that He is about to send His disciples into a world hostile to God's kingdom, our Savior takes time in today's passage to warn His followers that they will often bring His words to sinners who are all too eager to "shoot the messengers" even when these people are families.

From Matthew chapter 10, knowing what is ahead, Jesus describes how we are to conduct our outreach. Verse 16 exhorts us to act with a wise innocence — "innocent as doves that we may not harm anyone; cautious as snakes that we may be careful of letting anyone harm us" (Augustine, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the Twenty-first Century*, vol. 3, 3:189). We are not to be naïve, but we must realize that not all whom we encounter are who they say they are. Still, our mission is not one of subversion or automatic mistrust of everyone we meet.

Matthew Henry in his commentary on Luke 12 wrote, "That the effect of the preaching of the gospel will be division. Not but that the design of the gospel and its proper tendency are to unite the children of men to one another, to knit them together in holy love, and, if all would receive it, this would be the effect of it; but there being multitudes that not only will not receive it, but oppose it, and have their corruptions exasperated by it, and are enraged at those that do receive it, it proves, though not the cause yet the occasion of division... Some distinguished themselves by embracing the gospel, and others were angry that they did so."

To be a Christian is to imitate Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). If many have persecuted Him, so also will many hate us for preaching the Gospel. We who follow Him cannot expect to escape the tribulation our Lord also endured. Let us embrace this truth and, as John Calvin says, "be bold and courageous, that [we] may be always ready for martyrdom."

"A spirit of bigotry and persecution will break through the strongest bonds of relation and natural affection; see Matt. 10:35; 24:7. Even mothers and daughters fall out about religion; and those that believe not are so violent and outrageous that they are ready to deliver up into the hands of the bloody persecutors those that believe, though otherwise very near and dear to them. We find in the Acts that, wherever the gospel came, persecution was stirred up; it was everywhere spoken against, and there was no small stir about that way. Therefore let not the disciples of Christ promise themselves peace upon earth, for they are sent forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." Matthew Henry.

Are you ready for the conflict that comes with following Jesus? If you will not stand up for Jesus today when you talk to unbelieving friends and family members, will you be prepared to stand up against more hostile adversaries?