LIFE BIBLE MINISTRY

Matthew 10 (Part 3) :16-31

Sheep Among Wolves

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SERMON TRANSCRIPT

We're picking it up in verse 16 of Matthew chapter 10, let's let's read Oh, I'll just read a part here and then we'll we'll stop and pray Jesus speaking here. He says I am sending you out like sheep among wolves Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves Be on your guard against men They will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues On my account you'll be you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles But when they arrest you do not worry about what to say or how to say it at that time You will be given what to say for it will not be you speaking But the spirit of your father speaking through you brother will betray brother to death and a father his child Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death all men will hate you Because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved When you are persecuted in one place flee to another I tell you the truth you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes a Student is not above his teacher nor a servant above his master It is enough for the student to be like his teacher and the servant like his master If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household, so do not be afraid of them There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed or hidden that will not be made known what I tell you in the dark Speak in the daylight what is whispered in your ear Proclaim from the roofs do not be afraid of those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul Rather be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell Are not two sparrows sold for a penny yet? Not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your father and even the very hairs of your head are all Numbered so don't be afraid you are worth more than many sparrows. Let's stop there please if you would and pray father open our hearts to the ministry of your word through the Holy Spirit we just invite you Lord to Communicate with our hearts to commune with our understanding give us spiritual Wisdom and insight and lead us Lord God in the way that is right and true We ask it in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior Amen this 10th chapter. It's been a number of weeks actually because of the holidays since we've gotten into Matthew chapter 10 But this is we've been taking an opportunity here to kind of look over the shoulder or listen in if you will To our Lord as he's giving instructions to his disciples before he sends them out two-by-two to go out into the The countryside and to

minister and so forth and he begins to speak to them about the sorts of things that they can expect as they Go out you know what he's doing is he's kind of giving them sort of a characteristic of This sending forth this what what they can expect as they go out They know they're going out, but they really don't know all that much what to expect and so Jesus Defines it for them here And what he does is he uses kind of an interesting sort of an example where he says essentially guys I'm sending you out.

Here's what it's gonna be like It's kind of like sheep going out and hanging out with the wolves, which by the way Probably wouldn't inspire too many people to want to recruit Because although you and I might not be as aware as those disciples were about the relationship between sheep and wolves these guys were Very intimately acquainted with that sort of a thing it was you know that the whole shepherding scene and sheep and and what a Wolf or a pack of wolves could do to a herd of sheep was very very well known In those times we know about it I dare say very few of us have ever seen it but Here's the interesting thing about sheep, and it is interesting isn't it that? We as the body of Christ are kind of likened to sheep you know We think of that in a positive sense you know oh, we're sheep We're fluffy sheep you know and we hear our they hear the shepherds voice. Oh, it's him calling We're going to prance over the Green Hill and go hang out with our shepherd sheep are dumb Sheep are incredibly stupid, and they are they are just about their worst enemy Seriously, they will do the kinds of things that will make their own lives miserable. I say they're just about their own worst enemy They're not entirely their own worst and their their worst enemy Predators are their worst enemy, and here's why Because sheep have absolutely no ability to protect themselves I Mean they can't fight back. You know when a wolf attacks a herd of sheep The only thing they can do is run and They've got these really spindly short weak legs that Don't help at all.

I mean they're absolutely no match for the wolf They can't get very far they if they get caught they can't fight back. There's no horns There's no nothing in which to with which to protect themselves, and so they're basically just Totally you know at the mercy of the attacking wolves Interesting isn't it I mean that Jesus would use that example and say to him all right guys now. Here's the deal I'm sending you out All right, you're gonna. Go out into the world, and this is what it's gonna. Be like it's kind of like sheep among wolves Go have a good time You know Basically what he is essentially saying to them is you can expect to be victimized I Mean that's kind of a sobering reality And It's not as if they are fighting a losing battle, I don't want to give you that impression It's like oh great.

You know we're supposed to go out there and just get the snot beat out of us. Oh isn't that fun? No, it's not that it's that in this situation Well in every situation sheep are utterly dependent upon Their shepherd to protect them. That's the point That's the reason that we've been given this word picture of who we are as

sheep and the kind of Vulnerability that we would otherwise have in the face of attacking wolves we are 100% dependent upon our Shepherd and The point of the whole thing is that he is The one who protects us he is the one who goes before us and so forth, but the fact of the matter is He says I'm gonna send you out as sheep among wolves Now what's interesting about that is that we find out as we get into more of the New Testament That you don't even have to go out To meet up with wolves you can stay right here within the comfort of of the church the flock if you will Paul when speaking to the elders of Ephesus Let me put this up on the screen for you said this he says I know that after I leave Savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock and look at this even from your own Number that means right here men will arise and Distort the truth in order to draw away disciples After them or after themselves, so Paul not only tells them that wolves are going to rise up from within Their own numbers, but he tells us what is going to characterize them as wolves They will distort the truth of God and their desire will be To draw people after themselves to draw disciples after themselves You need to come to my Bible Bible study at my house because we're really getting into it, man I mean we're getting into the truth. You're not gonna hear it around here You come to my Bible study and you'll hear you'll hear the truth I'll guarantee you that plays right into our vanity But the point is we don't have to go anywhere in order to find out that there are wolves who are wanting to attack We gotta be careful.

Remember here just a few chapters ago in Matthew chapter 7 up on the screen Jesus said watch out for false prophets They come to you literally clothed like sheep, but they're not sheep at all He says inwardly they're ferocious wolves. So you see we're even going to experience the reality of That kind of ferocity and that kind of attack Within the body of Christ from people who claim to be leaders who claim to have a word from the Lord and so forth And they are in fact wolves. So you see this whole wolf thing. This is a problem This is something you and I need to be very well aware of otherwise, we're gonna find ourselves, you know Possibly Potentially taken out and that is the desire of the wolves by the way fact of the matter is to invite Persecution in our lives. All we really have to do is live for Jesus You guys have heard me quote this verse how many times 2nd Timothy chapter 3 verse 12 Everyone he says to Timothy who wants to live a godly life and he says to the people of Israel Christ Jesus will in fact be persecuted and what he's saying by that by a godly life is he's talking about Essentially living according to the model that has been shown us by Jesus walking in obedience to his word He says you do that and you're going to invite persecution.

You're going to invite a reaction from the world You know what the converse is also true if you're concerned about persecution and you're concerned about getting in trouble, all you got to do is back down and And not live that life just kind of live a life of compromise back down and and don't assert the fact

that you are a Believer and that you are called by God to share the truth of his word. Do you know Christians do that all the time? All the time. I was reading recently about a pastor who had a someone in his fellowship come up to him and She was some kind of a counselor Advisor of some sort. I don't remember the exact application of what it was, but she She began to share the Lord, you know with the people that she was advising and Started doing it quite successfully and people were responding and this and that and eventually and she wasn't involved in any sort of a Christian organization, but eventually, you know her her Superiors I guess Supervisors, whatever said to her listen, you can't do that.

You can't share Jesus and if you do We're gonna have to let you go. And so she came to her pastor and just said, you know, what do I do? And he said well, first of all, that's what it's what Jesus was talking about when he said, you know you go into the world and just live for Jesus, you know and You're going to get opposition And you're going to get opposition and So you got it, you know, you got to come to terms with the Word of God and you have to say well What am I gonna do? How am I gonna handle this situation? You know, do I feel a greater responsibility?

I mean What did the what did the disciples say when the Sanhedrin threatened them within an inch of their lives and said do not? Speak in the name of this Jesus of Nazareth ever again What was their response? They said well judge for yourselves whether it's proper to obey you or obey God Because we have a greater mandate We have a greater calling upon our lives to share the Word of God and and and the life that is in Jesus Christ So, you know do your worst I suppose but see that's this is the reality But you know the natural response of a Christian is just gonna say, okay. Well, I can't do that anymore Can't I gotta just kind of put the stopper on that thing, you know, and why do we do that we do it out of fear We're afraid Well, what if I did lose my job? What am I gonna do then?

Jesus, you know goes through in this passage to say, you know what? God not a sparrow falls from a tree without God knowing about it He says you're worth more than many sparrows to God, you know, he's able to take care of you so forth Anyway, the point is that's the world that you and I live in and So There's a there's a promise that goes along with living our lives for Jesus And that is that we're gonna we're going to get a reaction from this God-hating world that we live in You know, we live in a war zone you guys we live on a we live in a battlefield We forget that we try to we try to make it a fun place You know, we're trying to turn it into a Disney Cruise when the fact of the matter is it's a battlefield, you know We're we're involved in warfare. We're involved. We're dealing with a world here that rejects Christ doesn't want anything to do with the message of Jesus which is the message that you and I are called to take to the world and we're trying to soft-pedal that and Make all kinds of excuses about why we can't do what we're supposed to be doing, you know And our culture man, I tell you our culture is primed and cocked You

know to just get in our face about it and say you can't do that around here, you know Well, hey, that's the kind of stuff they told the disciples to you can't do that around here You can't speak about that person around here. We just don't we don't do that sort of thing I don't know if you were watching the The the New Year's Day parade there was a Rose Bowl I guess parade and You know, they're talking about all the floats as they're kind of going by and then there's this float And I don't even remember the organization but it was obviously a Christian organization and and to be honest with you It wasn't the nicest float in the whole parade and it was and they had a guy dressed up like Jesus you know with his thing and it looked pretty campy, but but you know, the the message was was good and and and You know the people who are doing the the thing on television they have these things to read when Parade or the floats go by and they and they read the information and then they usually comment.

Isn't that gorgeous? Oh, look at the all the flowers on when they came to this one. That was about Jesus. I mean the guy just read the card And it was kind of like get this out of here, you know, you could you could just I could feel the tension You know from from the television, you know It was just like we got you just gonna read the theory and then moving on and then let's get on to the other floats Here that are about other things that we don't care so much about Cramp our style You know It's just really crazy. You know, that's the world that you and I live in You know What Jesus is saying is don't be surprised You know Don't be surprised don't get whacked out.

Well, we'll talk about that here in just a little bit now We know when it comes to this whole sheep and wolves scenario. We know who the sheep are. We're the sheep Like we already said it's not really a compliment, but that's okay But we're the sheep. So who are the wolves? Well, that's the sad part The sad part is they're they're people They're people just like you and me the only difference is they've essentially rejected Christ you and I have accepted what Christ did on the cross and therein lies the difference and because of that choice we are the sheep and They are potentially the wolves and even though the Bible says that our battle is not against flesh and blood have you ever read that verse and kind of cocked your head a little bit like It sure seems flesh and blood to me, you know that the verse was never meant to say that that Flesh and blood cannot be your enemy you know because The point of that verse is to kind of Give you a greater understanding of what's behind The opposition that we experience in this world What is behind that opposition are the rulers principalities and powers of this dark world, that's where the battle ultimately is Staged however, here's the point Satan Uses people he really does the same thing that God does God uses people us were the sheep Satan also uses people to oppose the message that we have been called to bring and so we need to Remember that it is all about the opposition that we're going to get from people.

We need to be prepared for that John wrote in his first letter first John chapter 5. He said we know that we are children of God We're we know that we know that we're the sheep We also know something else. We know that the whole world is under the control of the evil one See, here's the reality of the situation there are two influences in this world in this in our in our known universe for you and I And you're either going to be under the influence and the control of the Holy Spirit or your if you reject him You're going to be under the control and the influence of the evil one or if you will the spirit of this world There really aren't two options That's not to say that people everybody who isn't a Christian is demonically possessed not saying that at all I mean demonic possession is frankly a very radical and you know much more rare sort of a Situation it can certainly happen. It does it you know all the time But but far and away The greater expression of what the enemy is doing in the world is done by or through Average ordinary people who just don't really want to have anything to do with you or your God And would you please just kind of be quiet about it because I don't want to hear about it I don't really don't want anything to do with this Jesus guy that you guys are all so You know excited about and so ultimately From this scripture, we know that the whole world, those who are outside of Christ, are ultimately under the control of the evil one, and that is where the opposition of the wolves is essentially going to take place. Throughout the centuries, it has been men who have slaughtered the people of God, who have thrown them into prison, burned them at the stake, thrown them into the Roman arenas and killed them there, and so forth.

And so, as the enemy attacks, he does it through human agents, and so forth. And that's essentially what Jesus says. Look with me at verse 22 in your Bible here in our text. Verse 22, he says, All men will hate you because of me. And by the way, that verse not only tells us it's going to be men who are going to do the hating, even though they don't know that they're under the influence of the enemy, he also tells us why they're going to hate us.

Do you see there in that verse? All men will hate you, why? Because of me. All men will hate you because of me, Jesus says. Now, it's possible, I suppose.

Well, I more than suppose, I know. It's possible to be hated just because you've done something dumb, or offensive, or inappropriate in someone's life, and they could very much dislike you just because of you. And I've certainly done that in my own life. I've caused people to dislike me because of dumb things I've done. That's not what we're talking about.

That's not persecution. That's just you reaping the benefits of being kind of dumb. Persecution, in the context of what Jesus is using here, is when you and I are living a life of obedience and loyalty to Jesus Christ, and there is fallout because of that. It's when we're just kind of going about our business, doing

what we think the Lord has called us to do, sharing the life of Jesus, encouraging people, praying for people, loving people in the name of the Lord. And there's some kind of, you know, hatred, or some kind of dislike, or whatever, that confronts us.

That is persecution. But Jesus wants you to know, it's because of me that this is happening. It's me in you. It's me manifesting myself through you. That's what people are hating.

And he's telling us that for a very important reason. It's, it's, I don't know if you've ever received any kind of opposition, you know, because of just living for Jesus. But it's, it's really disconcerting. I mean, when somebody just absolutely hates you, and they let you know, in no uncertain terms, that they don't like you, but they don't even know you, just because you're a believer. It's really, really, really easy to get your feelings hurt, and to back away from that thing for a while.

And believe me, it's happened to me. You know, where someone responds to me, and it just comes out of the blue, and there's just this viciousness to it, you know? And, and, and my first impression is just, wow, whoa, what was that? And it hurts. I mean, who, who of us doesn't want to be liked, or appreciated by people?

I certainly do, don't you? And to have someone just out of the blue, just absolutely, you know, rake you over the proverbial coals, and you, and you're like, what is this? Where did this come from? You know, the Bible says, don't be surprised when this happens to you. Don't be surprised if you're going on living your life for Jesus, and just loving people, and, and, and shining the light of His presence.

Don't be surprised when people hate you, when people persecute you, you know? And yet, it's so easy to get ourself in there, you know, and get our feelings hurt. So, you can kind of see here, can't you, that, that what we've been seeing in these verses is essentially Jesus outlining for us how the world is, is going to respond to us, not might, but how they will respond to us, when we're really, truly living for Christ. Here's, here's one of those interesting things, you know, we talk about how we, here in America, we kind of, we say this often, here in America, we don't experience persecution, really. And that's kind of our way of saying, I'm sure we're doing everything right, but for some reason, we just don't experience persecution here in the United States of America.

I don't know, I, I got a problem with that. You know, my Bible says, and I showed you that verse from Timothy that says, if you live a godly life, you will experience persecution. You will experience a reaction from a God-hating world that doesn't want you living that kind of a life in front of them. You will. And so, I think that we need to put aside our little Americanism of, you know, we don't suffer persecution here in

the United States of America, and say, well, maybe the reason we're not suffering any kind of persecution here in the United States of America, largely, is because we're really not living for Christ, largely, because we've learned to compromise.

We've learned to back off. We've learned to tone it down. Don't want to sound like a radical, you know. And yet, Jesus goes on and says, listen, if they hated me, they'll hate you, too. You know?

They will. He didn't say, they might, they will. It's going to happen. That's how they're going to respond to you. So how are you supposed to respond to them?

Well, I'd like you to look with me again here to a couple of things that Jesus says, beginning here at the end of verse 22. Look with me there. End of verse 22. It says, he who stands firm to the end will be saved. Well, that's an interesting statement, but we're not to be shocked, we're not to be surprised, we're not to be disappointed.

We're to stand firm. And that means we stay on course. Like I said before, when somebody comes out in some sort of a vicious attitude against you because you're living for Christ, the natural tendency of our flesh is to just back away. Let me kind of find a shadow here that I can kind of just get into so nobody's going to see me for a while. I'm just going to kind of let things settle out.

You know what? Jesus says we are to carry on. We're to stand firm. Stay on course. Don't let that thing derail you.

Next, look at verse 23. He says, when you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. You notice he doesn't say, when you are persecuted, fight back. You have rights. That is an Americanism, isn't it?

But Jesus doesn't say that. In fact, there's nothing here about matching violence for violence, anger for anger, hatred for hatred. He says, when you're persecuted in an area, that basically means that those people have just kind of shut off. They're not willing to listen. Move on.

Just move on and see where the Lord takes you after that in this situation. If this situation is shut down, then move on. No retaliation here. And then in verse 26, verse 28, and then also in the very last verse that we read, verse 31, Jesus says three times, don't be afraid. And I think that that's an important statement.

And I think it's particularly important that you and I understand he repeated it. He said it, then he repeated it two times. You know, when God goes to the trouble of saying something to you and I three times, it's probably well worth listening to. Well, it's well worth listening to the first time. But if it's being repeated, it's obviously a repetition for a reason.

We need to hear it. Don't be afraid. And he knows that the natural tendency of us is to be afraid and allow that fear to cause us to back away from being the witness that we are called to be in this world. And what does he say that this lack of fear should be predicated on? One thing is you read through these verses.

He says in verse 28, don't be afraid of those who kill the body but can't kill the soul. It's kind of an interesting sort of a statement, isn't it? He's basically saying to you and I, hey, you know what, don't be afraid. All they can do is kill you. So don't worry about that.

I mean, what the heck? All they can do is kill you. It almost kind of sounds like you're being weird. You know, you're trying to be funny. Hey, man, all they can do is kill you.

No, he means it. All they can do is kill you. And what he's saying to you and I is, oh, I've already handled that issue. I've conquered that bugaboo. Just in case that was an area of fear.

I have conquered death. I have conquered the grave. I've handled the issue of death. So don't worry about it. All they can do is kill you.

Then I got that one dialed in. For you, you just enter into the life that is truly life. That's what happens to you. So if you're going to be afraid, be afraid of the one who can kill both the body and the soul. That's me, God says.

But don't worry, that's not going to happen to you because your life is bound up in Christ. So don't be afraid. Don't be afraid. That's how you and I are to respond to the world. We're to stay the course.

Hold on. Be strong. No retaliation. If we run into an issue, just move on with life and don't be afraid. But just know this, it's going to come.

Persecution is going to come. It is the most natural thing in the world that the world itself is going to hate you. Because Jesus says this, remember, and don't forget, they hated me first.