



Faithfulness In Ministry During Persecution

“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28).

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“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. 30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. 32 Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. 33 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. 34 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. 35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. 36 And a man's foes shall be they of his own household” (Matthew 10:28-36).

It has rightly been said that to be forewarned is to be forearmed. As a good shepherd who wants His followers safeguard their investment in eternity, Jesus left no stone unturned in preparing the disciples for overcoming the perils they would encounter in ministry and persisting in the right investments that will accrue to their eternal rewards. His instructions were also aimed at enabling the disciples to maintain the right perspectives in adversity, which in turn would facilitate continued correct actions in the right direction. Specifically, in this section of the study, He focused the preparations on the following scenarios:

1) Fear on the prospects of being killed should not deter them from obedience to God's commission bearing in mind that killing is only a temporarily physical price for transitioning into eternity in God's presence for the righteous. To put it in perspectives He compared this to the danger of spiritual death that is punishable in hell fire, and therefore warned them to fear God, who alone is capable of sentencing the soul to hell (vs 28). Armed with this would enable Christians to make the right choice of either going to heaven after physical death or offending God and going to spend eternity in hell.

“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 10:32).

- 2) He then encouraged them about the sovereignty of God. If God so much care for sparrows that could be sold two for a farthing, and would not allow any of them to fall to the ground (e.g. during hunting, etc.) would He not take care of us human beings, created in His image, and who are worth far more than sparrows. This should calm down any fear of Christians that it is not the enemies that determine our fate (vs 29-31). No matter what they try, they cannot kill us, unless God permits it. Our attitude therefore should be like the 3 Hebrew children when threatened with death in fire (Daniel 3).
- 3) Faithfulness to God demands the courage and boldness not only to declare our allegiance to him, but also to promote His values and Kingdom. Shying away from discharging these responsibilities attract divine consequences. Equally, faithfully discharging them bring divine rewards both in contemporary times and for eternity (vs 32-33).
- 4) Although Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and our Gospel is the gospel of peace and love, however, faithfulness to divine requirements has the potential of infuriating the devil and creating variance and temporary loss of peace. Jesus wanted the disciples to be very clear on this so that they do not get discouraged when it happens. He particularly wanted them to know that the most painful of these evils may come from close relations, from whom we would normally expect comfort and support from, in difficult times.

So, when next a troubling situation arises, ask yourself – “could this be the devil trying to spoil my joy in God?” Whatever the answer, determine to maintain your peace, joy and focus on God, but without compromise, through every storm of life! Remember that as long as God is on the throne, all is well!