

# Proclamation and Persecution

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning everyone, it's great to worship with you. This is my great joy and privilege to preach that worship this morning.! Please turn with me your Bibles to Matthew chapter 10. If you don't have a Bible, please raise your hand.

I'd love to give you a copy of the Bible you can use while you're here and take some of you. Thank you.

Heavenly Father, this passage that you have for us this morning, which calls for radical discipleship, a radical followership of Christ, this message that really doesn't make sense unless we see you for who you really are.

Unless we see your glory, your authority, your love, your mercy.

Father, I plead with you that you would help us by your spirit. That you would magnify your name, magnify Christ, your son, for us.

[ 1 : 52 ] that we might be able to follow us to the end of the earth and be faithful even unto that.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Please stand if you are able for the reading of God's word. We stand to honor God as we read from his word as he addresses us.

From Matthew chapter 10, verses 16 to 32. Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.

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

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.

[ 3 : 08 ] For it is not you who speak, but the spirit of your father speaking through you. Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death.

And you will be hated by 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. 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 a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzele, how much more will they malign those of his household?

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 whisper, proclaim on the housetops.

[ 4 : 20 ] And do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body. 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. 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. And God, the only human being before may be seated. The desire for affirmation and approval and the praise of men from others has always been a part of human nature.

Because we're a social creature. However, in a digital age where much of human interactions are driven by social media, the approval of others is now quantified and constantly visible through metrics like likes and follower counts and shares.

[ 5 : 40 ] The immediacy and constancy of such social feedback amplify the human craving for acceptance and approval. Especially in a culture like ours that highlights self-expression and identity.

The pursuit of personal validation can easily become someone's highest pursuit. But Jesus calls us in this passage to forfeit that pursuit once and for all.

As Christians in this sinful world, Jesus warns us that we will be slandered, betrayed, persecuted, and sometimes even killed for our allegiance to Christ.

Why? Because we follow the crucified Lord and His servants will fare no better than their master. So the main point of my message this morning is simple.

Acknowledge Christ before men. First, in order to do that, we must beware of men who persecute us, the reality of persecution.

[ 6 : 48 ] And secondly, we must fear not. Fear not men, but fear rather than God instead. Since we took a break last week from our series in Matthew, let me remind you that Jesus, in the preceding passage, commanded His twelve apostles to go and proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God.

And He told them as He sent them that the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. And as Jesus sends them out on this mission, He gives them this solemn warning.

Behold, I am sending you, I'm sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. How's that for a pet thought?

Sheep? As I mentioned two Sundays ago, sheep are proverbially weak and vulnerable. They're not big or strong. They don't have sharp claws or teeth.

They can't run away very fast. That's why no professional sports team ever names themselves the sheep. I know some of you are from Minnesota.

[ 7 : 57 ] Imagine if the Minnesota timber rules were called instead the Minnesota tender sheep. That's what they look like when they play against the Celtics. That's not exactly a morality, right?

We call sheep like that. What happens to sheep among wolves? That's a no-brainer. Everybody knows. Sheep get mauled by the wolves. And that's exactly Jesus' point.

The allure of power has been too difficult to resist for many Christians throughout history. So it's imperative that we remember this truth.

Jesus does not send out his followers into the world to be commanders, the conquerors, the predators. He sends us out as the prey, as sheep among wolves.

Yes, there is a sense in which Christians ought to be conquerors. We just read that in Revelation. We're commanded over and over again to conquer in the book of Revelation.

[ 9 : 01 ] But Revelation also tells us exactly how Christians ought to conquer. It says in Revelation 12, 11, which we read for assurance of pardon, they have conquered them by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

In other words, we conquer in this world by being killed with our testimony to Jesus, by following in the footsteps of the Lamb of God.

Christian witness should not be characterized by force, aggression, but by patient endurance through persecution. But the fact that we are sheep doesn't mean that God wants us to be dumb. Sheep are often perceived as unintelligent because of their herd mentality. They will follow their herd and get lost sometimes and they will easily get spooked and then run headlong into danger sometimes off cliffs.

But Jesus doesn't want us to be gullible or ignorant. So he qualifies that image of sheep with another animal image. He says, to be as wise as serpents.

[ 10 : 13 ] The word wise here is a translation of the same Greek word that's used in the Greek translation of Genesis 3, verse 1, which says that the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field.

It's the same word that is translated as shrewd in Luke 16, verse 8. He described a shrewd financial manager who uses his position of influence and power to do favors for people and make friends for himself so that knowing that he will soon lose his job and position and after he loses his job he might have some friends who will take care of him and do some favors for him.

That's shrewdness, cunning, craftiness. If sheep are proverbially vulnerable, then serpents are proverbially cunning. They are famously stealthy, they move without making much noise, and they hide by blending into their surroundings.

They're also known for their exceptional patience. Some snakes that hunt by ambush have been observed to lie and wait patiently for days, even weeks, without moving. just waiting for that smell of movement to stir it by. And then, patience. They also have many means of survival when they're in danger.

[ 11 : 34 ] Some snakes play dead, you know, to trick predators into losing interest. And because they're very sensitive to vibrations in the ground and to heat, they can flee dangerous predators or disasters like wildfires long before they come to where they are to threaten them.

Serpents are one of the most adaptable creatures. They've been found to live in jungles, mountains, even deserts, and in water. In short, serpents are shrewd animals who know how to adapt and survive in the face of danger.

So then, while we are sheep among wolves, we are not to run headlong into danger like sheep sometimes do and invite persecution and marginally. For example, in John 8, 59, when an angry Jewish mob picks up stones to throw at Jesus to stoning to death for claiming to be the pre-existing God, Jesus doesn't just stand there and become a target.

He says that he hid himself and went out of the temple. Similarly, when the Jews fought to kill the Apostle Paul repeatedly throughout the book of Acts, we see the early church often hiding him or sneaking him out of the city to protect him in Acts 9, 14, 17.

When their time for death and martyrdom came, the early Christians followed Jesus' example and faced death with faith and courage, but they never walked blindly into persecution.

[ 13 : 02 ] We are not to be naive, gullible, or ignorant of the schemes of those who speak to do us harm. We should be shrewd and vigilant in recognizing traps and avoiding unnecessary danger. We should be prudent and give thought to our steps.

In conversations, we should answer those who question us, those who are hostile toward us, with grace, wisdom, and discernment, know when to speak and when not to speak.

And we should be aware of and make judicious views of the legal protections and recourses that are available to us as Paul himself does, for example, in Acts chapter 22, verse 25.

And that brings us to the third animal image that Jesus uses. We are as innocent as doves. This command is paired with being wise as serpents to qualify that.

Serpents are shrewd and cunning, yes, but for that reason they're also associated with deceitfulness, with venom, and manipulation. By adding, be innocent as doves, Jesus is telling us, be shrewd and smart, but be completely innocent in all your dealings.

[ 14 : 11 ] never resort to wrongdoing or dishonesty or manipulative tactics. For example, in Acts chapter 24, 26, while Paul is in prison for his witness to Christ, there's a Roman governor named Felix who decides to keep Paul in prison for a while even though he doesn't deserve it.

And it says that Roman governor that Felix hoped that money would be given to him by Paul. So he's keeping him in prison waiting for a bribe.

And I know this is not as common in the U.S., but in many parts of the world, bribes are a very normal part of societal dealings. And it's an expected means of you getting out of a life punishment by paying a bribe.

But Paul refuses to pay a bribe, which makes sense staying in prison for another two years before he's transferred to somewhere else.

Why does he do that? He could have easily collected some offerings from the local churches that were eager to support him because he wants to be sure that's a serpent, but also innocent as dust.

[ 15 : 31 ] Because bribes are everywhere forbidden in Scripture and condemned. Doves are proverbially harmless and gentle and tame.

They were ritually clean animals that were fit for Old Testament sacrifices, so they become a pity symbol of purity, which is why even the Holy Spirit is represented as being like a dove as he descended on Jesus at baptism in Matthew 3.16.

And pigeons and doves are known for their guilelessness. They're really harmless creatures. My girls are afraid of all kinds of animals.

They're afraid of pretty much every animal. But even my five-year-old will go around to see one of the new games she plays when we're walking around. She'll scare the pigeons and she'll act like it's her superpower.

She'll run away. I have a friend who has like an eight-year-old daughter who actually catches them. She'll just hold them and catch them and they don't do anything.

[ 16 : 35 ] They just sit there. They're that mild and tame even though these are wild pigeons. That's how blameless and innocent we ought to be as Christians. Shrewd yet never dishonest or manipulative.

Innocent yet wise and prudent. We are sent out as sheep in the midst of wolves therefore we ought to be wise as servants and innocent as dogs. In verses 17 to 18 Jesus moves away from the theoretical language and gives us more direct literal instruction.

He says Beware of men for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues and you will be drafted for governors and kings for my sake to bear witness before them and the gentrists.

We must beware Jesus says because not all are well-meaning and some are out to give us. Jesus' prediction here has been borne out throughout church history.

Already in the first century we can see in the book of Acts that Christians were delivered to courts sloughed and dragged before governors and kings. But even such difficult and unfavorable circumstances are meant to be an opportunity for us to tell people about Jesus.

[ 17 : 54 ] Because it says that we will get to bear witness before our prosecutors and jenties. But when we are taken to court and have to testify before governors and kings how will we know what to say in such an intimidating environment?

Jesus said in verses 19 to 20 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 their honor.

For it is not you who speak but the spirit of your father speaking through you. There are several helpful suggested parallels between this passage and Matthew chapter 6 verse 25 to 33.

There in Matthew 6 Jesus said do not be anxious same command do not be anxious about your life what you will eat or drink or about your body what you will put on which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life therefore do not be anxious say what shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear for your heavenly father knows what you need he knows that you need them all Jesus tell us not to worry about life about our basic necessity because no amount of worrying will enable us to extend our life by a single hour instead we should trust in our heavenly father who provides for us Jesus point in our passage is very similar again he gives the same command do not be anxious because when the hour of need comes then you must testify before these governing authorities he says he will heavenly father will again supply our need for it is not you who speak but the spirit of your father speaking through you now please don't misunderstand me

Jesus is not saying that we should never rehearse the gospel or to never prepare or write sermons imagine if I never wrote my sermons because I want to rely on the Holy Spirit to spontaneously inspire me in this whole Sunday that would be a misapplication of this passage he's saying that when we are under such dire circumstances when we are being persecuted and have to testify before governing authorities under duress our heavenly father will himself intervene by his spirit give us what to say so that what we say goes well beyond our limited powers of intellect and speech God himself will speak through us so Jesus wants us to trust in and depend on our heavenly father to provide for us in our time of need but our father speaking through us does not guarantee that we will receive favor from the authorities or get out of jail some of us will still pay the ultimate price because the father's goal in helping us is so that we bear effective witness to

[ 20 : 54 ] Jesus so we might be faithful to him and preserve our souls not necessarily so we might preserve our bodies he says in verse 21 to 23 brother will deliver brother over to death and the father his child and children will rise against parents and have them put to death and you will be hated by all for my name sake!

Jesus is going for the shock factor here by using familial relations where you would most expect loyalty and speaking of betrayal many Christians throughout history can bear witness to this fact of being betrayed by their own family members being kicked out of their home by their own parents Jesus foretells that we will be hated for our allegiance to Jesus and he says that some of us will be put to death for our faith it's important to note that this persecution is inescapable of course the intensity varies from place to place but persecution in general is inescapable we must not think that oh if we just learn to be more diplomatic as Christians if we learn to be a little kinder and more gracious oh then we can avoid all this persecution that's not what it says we mustn't! we mustn't say oh it's just a big misunderstanding oh if people just realize how nice Christians really are then they will never persecute us no that's not what it says look at the reasons that Jesus gives

for why we will be persecuted he says in verse 18 you will be dragged before governors and kings why for my name sake he says in verse 22 you will be hated by all why you will be hated by all for my name sake the real reason for persecution is our allegiance to Jesus Jesus said in verses 24 to 25 a disciple is not above his teacher nor servant above his master it is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher and a servant like his master if they have called the master of the house beelzobol how much more will they malign those of his household the envious Jews who slandered Jesus in his day by saying that he cast out demons by the power of the prince of demons which is what they said in

Matthew 9 34 and later on chapter 12 does specifically achieve Jesus miraculous power exorcism to beelzobol which probably comes from beelzobol meaning the chief god of the canons who dwells in the high place beelzobol it's another name in this context for Satan if Jesus the son of God is maligned as being doing things by the power of the prince of demons by Satan how much more will they malign his followers if they despise and disdain the teacher who of course deserves no respect in the students then how much more will they despise and disdain his students if they crucify the master what will they do to his servants the language of servants and master have been used once already in

Matthew 6 24 25 he told us that no one can serve two masters either you must love the one and hate the other you cannot serve both God and money in that context the master was God and we were the slaves were the servants and Jesus here applies that to himself I am the master again Jesus is claiming for himself divine prerogatives divine authority if this is how they treat me they treat you that person isn't it enough for the disciple to be like his teacher and the servant like his master isn't it our destiny to be conformed to the image of God's son as it said in Romans 8 2 so that one day when he appeared when Jesus returns and we shall be like him if we want to partake in the resurrection from the dead like Jesus Christ we also must partake in his sufferance becoming like him in his death says in

[ 25 : 24 ] Romans 3 did you know that this is in fact what! you signed Jesus does not promise us that we will be loved and liked by the world he said we will be hated Jesus does not promise us safety and comfort he speaks instead of persecution and martyrdom why then do so many of us Christians make concession after concession compromise after compromise us groffling before the sinful world to win their affirmation and approval when Jesus already told us that they will hate us why then do so many of us live as if safety and comfort are the absolute non-denotiables of life and make all of our life choices to promote that end when

Jesus already said that those who are faithful to him will meet tribulations and persecution the overriding goal of the Christian is not health and longevity and wealth and prosperity it is faithfulness and loyalty to Christ our Lord and it is only the one who endures to the end who will be saved I think it's providential that we're on this passage after what happened this week with the murder of Charlie Kirk if you've been in our church for any length of time you know that I don't talk about politics often I intend to do so now yes he had a confrontational style and no I don't agree with all of his politics and I know many of you don't but it seems abundantly clear to me that he was a brother in Christ he shared the gospel with tens of thousands of people with exceptional clarity and boldness and many of his most unpopular views like his views on abortion and his views on LGBTQ issues they all stand directly from his commitment to the scriptures as the word of God we will behave if you live as a public Christian we will behave but the one who endures to the end will be saved one who as Revelation 2.10 says is faithful unto death will be saved the one who forsakes Christ to save his life might be spared for a little while but his ultimate fate will be eternal perdition and this soaring message to give his disciples some hope Jesus tells them this in verse 23 when they persecute you in one time flee to the next for truly

I say to you you will not have gone through all the times in Israel before the son of man comes many people automatically assume here that Jesus is speaking of his second coming because he speaks of the son of man coming the gospel writers do use similar language to describe his second coming however here Jesus is not referring to his second coming but to something that will happen much sooner before his twelve apostles had even finished proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom through all the towns of Israel this language of the coming of the son of man is an old testament allusion and the only old testament passage that speaks of the coming of the son of man is Daniel chapter 7 verses 13 to 14 which says behold with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man and he came to the ancient of days and was presented before him and to him was given

dominion and glory and a kingdom that all people nations and languages should serve him his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed this passage is not speaking of the son of man coming to earth but to the son of man coming to heaven to the throne room of

God that's where he receives his everlasting kingdom dominion and glory this is what Jesus is speaking of in the parable of the ten minuses in Luke 19 where Jesus compares himself to a noble man who goes into a far country to receive for himself and then return and when does Jesus receive this kingdom after his departure when he goes to the far country namely when he goes back to his father the ancient days to receive the everlasting kingdom at his ascension to heaven this is why in Matthew 26:64 right before his crucifixion resurrection and ascension Jesus declares this to Caiaphas the high priest from now on right right before his death from now on you will see the son of man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven once again [31:22] Jesus is not speaking of his return to earth but his ascend to heaven on the clouds his coming to the ancient days to receive his kingdom in the medium that's why right before his ascension Jesus commissions his disciples in Matthew 28 saying all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me go therefore and make disciples of all nations it is there that the mission of the apostles to all the towns of Israel is expanded to all the nations because now Jesus receives!

all authority and a kingdom everlasting kingdom over all nations and peoples and times because and his return to earth are events that are sequentially and causally related the gospel writers do use the same language to refer to the coming to earth as well because really those two events are at one piece with each other it's helpful for us to note that the Greek word for come is the exact same word that means to go and is translated that way in other parts of Matthew chapter 2! 27:64 but we have to rely on the context to figure out whether Jesus is speaking of going to heaven or coming to earth in our text this morning there are clues that tell us that Jesus is talking about receiving his kingdom at the father's throne the kingdom of God that his disciples Jesus disciples have been longing for and waiting for and hoping for will be here before too long before they have finished proclaiming the gospel to all the talented Israel this is meant to give them hope as they take their message despite persecution and resistance from the world having taught us to beware of men because of the persecution Jesus nonetheless adds that we should never fear them be aware of them but be not afraid of them Jesus said in verses 26 to 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 proclaimed on the house house I have noted before in chapter 9 verse 30 to 31 that there is a pattern in Jesus earthly ministry where he consistently tells people to keep his true identity under wraps later in Matthew 16 for example when Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ the Protestant messianic king Jesus strictly charges the disciples to tell no one that he is the Christ and again chapter 17 verse 9 after temporarily revealing his divine glory at the transfiguration Jesus tells his disciples to tell no one division until the Son of Man is raised from the dead Jesus does this because he is not interested in stirring up people's misguided messianic fervor he's not interested in instigating a revolution and overthrowing Caesar he knows that his God given destiny rather is to suffer and die on the cross for the sins of many to be the sacrificial lamb of

God so knowing this Jesus is thinking now is not the time for him to receive dominion and glory and kingdom from the father that will happen after his death and resurrection and ascension so now is the time for things to be hidden covered but Jesus assures his disciples but the time is coming when they will no longer be covered 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 whisper proclaim on the house now is the time when we declare Jesus identity and authority from the house for all to hear to all nations to the ends of the earth because Jesus is the glorious son of God who rose from the dead then Jesus continues to tell us why we should not to fear him but whom we should fear instead 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 the contrast between body and soul teaches us clearly that even when we die physically there is an immaterial spiritual life called the soul that continues to exist this is an unnatural separation that will be remedied at the resurrection of the body when our souls are united with our bodies but by speaking of this

[36:11] Jesus puts man's natural fear of death into perspective no matter how intensely this world persecutes us the worst they can do is to kill our bodies and they can do no more they do not have

the power to kill our soul and the continued existence of the soul all but guarantees that one day God will raise up our bodies that means we have nothing actually to lose that means we have nothing actually to fear our lives here on earth are a fleeting breath but then there's eternity to be mindful of so who should we fear the one who has the power to take a few years of our life away or the one who has the power to take our eternity away technically men do not even have the power to take one hour from our lives remember what

Jesus said in Matthew 6 27 which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life in God's book are written every one of them the days that are formed for us before we lived a single day of our lives our entire lives were written in God's book only it says in the Bible so we need not fear of what man can do to us rather Jesus says fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell the fear of God is the only true antidote to the fear of man he says in Proverbs 29 25 the fear of man lays a snare but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe many seek the face of a human ruler but it is from the Lord that a man gets justice notice how the fear of man is contrasted with trust in the Lord which is another way to speak of fear of the

Lord man in his people are big and God is small written by counselor and seminary professor Edward Welch he gives two diagnostic questions to figure out whether or not we struggle with the fear of man one is if you ever experience peer pressure just another term for fear of man two is if self esteem is a critical concern for you if you're very concerned for how others support your sense of well-being and self expression and identity then you deal with the fear of man and this can be very subtle for example you can be consumed with making sure that people think that you're someone that does not care what they think you're still caught in the snare of the man! And the heart of the problem of the fear of man is that we need people for our own glory rather than loving people for God's glory the antidote therefore to the fear of man is the fear of the Lord to be so consumed for God's glory to be so aware of God's importance that we don't actually spend that much time at all thinking about what mere men say about us in what ways is the fear of man controlling you and making you unfaithful to God do you fear people's judgment do you hesitate to share the good news of Jesus Christ with others when God's truth is maligned in the classroom do you refuse to seek up out of fear when a glaring sin when you see a glaring sin in a brother or sister in

Christ that needs to be addressed do you ignore it for the sake of self preservation do you seek to appease others because you fear them more than you love them because you fear their verdict more than God's verdict what would we say if we saw a neighbor or friend tormented in hell and they look at us with longing question in our eyes why didn't you tell me how I can be saved will we really tell them just a little embarrassed what does the fear of God look like in the practice it doesn't look like terror or being afraid of punishment remember what I said earlier it looks like entrusting ourselves to

[ 41 : 17 ] God how do we know that because Jesus says that in verses 29 to 31 are not too spare or sold for a penny and not one of them will fall to the! apart from your! the hair of your hair are all numbered fear not therefore you are of more value than many sparrows a sparrow is one of the smallest most common and least valuable birds all across the world it's the cheapest thing sold in the market in Jesus time nobody pays any mind when there is a dead sparrow I'm sure you've walked by many without even noticing him we don't care about him but God says he cares about him Jesus says that not one sparrow is forgotten by God not one sparrow falls to the ground apart from the sovereign will and purpose of God the Father how much more than will God take care of us similarly Jesus tells us that even the hairs of our head are all numbered hair follicles on their head and each follicle grows about 20 individual hairs in a lifetime and we lose hair all the time right you find them on the bed on the rug on the carpet in the sink in the bathtub

I know first hand because I live with four ladies not that I don't lose hair I do I just can see it a strand of hair is insignificant and yet God has each strand of hair on your head how detailed intimate personal is his care for us he knows how many tens of thousands of hairs are on your head and when each one falls it is counted if God cares about a sparrow if God has a number of strands on your hair counted how much more does God care for us and for our lives and do you think that God does not care when you are ridiculed or belittled because of your faith do you think that God does not see when you are mistreated for your faith in him do!

! think! God does not care that his representatives his children are beaten and put to death all throughout the world for their faith in him of course he cares! according to Open Doors USA

hundreds of millions of Christians faced extreme persecution in many countries throughout the world last year alone 4,476 Christians were murdered 7,679 churches with church properties were attacked and 4,744 Christians were in prison for their faith and do you think that God does not care?

Of course he cares! He said in Psalm 116 verse 15 that the precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints every death of one of his people one of his children one of his saints is precious in God's life rare costly weighty to God he does not see us as cheap replaceable disposable goods the death of one of his people is not something that God brings about flippantly it's weighty to him each life is significant and costly to him and that means we can trust him with our lives and with our souls fear not therefore you are of more value than many sins things so Jesus doesn't promise that none of us will be killed for our faith but he does assure us that if it were to happen it would not be outside of God's perfect loving and sovereign plan for us in

Daniel chapter 3 when king Nebuchadnezzar erects this idolatrous golden image and commands all of his subjects to bow down before him worship shattered Meshach and Abednego the three friends of Daniel refused to bow down and Nebuchadnezzar threatens them saying if you do not worship you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace and who is the God who will deliver you out of my hands and these three humble men defy the most powerful king in the world at that time saying oh Nebuchadnezzar we have no need to answer you in this matter if this be so our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fire furnace and he will deliver us out of your hand oh king but if not be known to you oh king that we will not serve your God for worship the golden image that you have set God can and we believe that he!

[ 46 : 17 ] will deliver us from your God to your golden idolatrous image and when they are thrown into the fiery furnace as a result he says that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men the hair of their heads was not singed their clothes were not harmed and no smell of fire come upon them not even their hair was lost in the fence because no man not even the most powerful king of the world can make even a strand of hair from one of his children fall from their head apart from the sovereign will of God the Father and that's why Jesus is telling us this it is imperative that we fear God and not man because if we don't if we fear man we will not bear witness to Jesus we won't confess him or acknowledge!

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 will also deny before my Father who is in heaven this is why we as a church emphasize the importance of baptism as a public acknowledgement of our faith in Christ Christians sometimes talk in a very individualistic manner about salvation as if it were a personal and private thing repentance as if personal private repentance and faith were sufficient but the Bible associates our private repentance and faith with a public profession of faith in baptism it associates our personal repentance and faith with a corporate baptism into the body of Christ the church church and outward public professional faith is important our faith is a public faith why because the Christian faith is not a matter of personal opinion it is a matter of universal public truth John 12 42 and 43 says this nevertheless many even of the authorities the Jewish authorities believed in Jesus but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess so that they did not be put out of the synagogue for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God do you see the contrast there in John 12 between believing and confessing there were Jewish authorities who believed in Jesus already secretly but for the fear of the Pharisees they did not confess Jesus publicly and John's assessment of them they are not true believers he loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God they were ashamed of Christ in his words Jesus said everyone who acknowledges me before man I also would acknowledge before my father who is heaven the word acknowledge is a translation of the same Greek word that is translated as confessed! with your mouth that God raised him from the dead you will be saved for with the heart one believes and is justified and with the mouth one confesses and is saved believing in the heart is not enough you must always confess with your mouth genuine inward faith must be accompanied by authentic outward confession this is why throughout the New Testament if you could read through all the New Testament it's always public baptism and not a private recitation of the sinner's prayer that's used to mark the beginning of a believer's life the Lord Jesus will not acknowledge before the divine heavenly court those who refuse! to acknowledge him before the earthly human! If not start this week start by letting you know that you are a Christian start by speaking openly about your faith and about your preaching activities

and things that you're doing with church and whenever you can share the good use of Jesus Christ with them for that is the power of God for salvation for those who do you yes Jesus sends us out as sheep in the midst of wolves but we must remember that he's not sending us to go where he hasn't already gone before us Jesus says in John 10 11 I am the good shepherd the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep usually it's the sheep that's slaughtered for the sake of the shepherd right but Jesus is a good shepherd who lays down his life for us the sheep remember verse 28 fear him can destroy both soul and body and hell hell is what we all deserve because as [ 51 : 40 ] Romans 6 23 says the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord God we all sin against the holy and just God and therefore the righteous price the wage for that sin is death and damnation bearing the eternal wrath of God in both body and soul that's what we deserve but instead of slaughtering us sheep God loved us and sent his only son Jesus Christ to shepherd us and to rescue us and he came as a good shepherd and in dying on the cross for our sins the shepherd became the sheep the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world because Jesus took our place and because Jesus paid our price on the cross and because he rose again from the dead in victory now all those who pledge allegiance to Jesus and entrust themselves to him can be forgiven of all their sin and gain eternal life if only we confess

Jesus if only we acknowledge Jesus before man Jesus says I also will acknowledge you before my Father who is in!

that's an amazing promise that's the most amazing promise I can offer to every single one of you and that promise is singular everyone Jesus said I'm not going to you all all at once I will acknowledge you by name personally before the heavenly throne of God God some 117 billion people are said to have lived throughout history as people estimate of all those countless feelings Jesus will say your name he is mine I died for him I rose for him to be lost with us!

Father isn't that to hear that to receive that isn't that worth forsaking everything in our world isn't that worth being rejected by all if only we could be received by God by our Savior Jesus Christ let's pray that that's the case for all us oh Father it's all the name of your son Jesus Christ magnify again the right man magnify your glory your authority your love your mercy so that we might see you as big as you actually are so that it puts all things into perspective so it puts our earthly lives into perspective so that it puts all our interactions with other men and women in this world into perspective so that we will never fear them fear you love that we might bear witness to Jesus and be faithful to him unto death help us and fill us with your spirit so we can do it in Jesus name we pray amen you