

February 1, 2026 Session 9
Matthew 10:16-34 Loyalty Tested

Intro:

Snakes and Doves (Matthew 10:16-20) p. 89

Before sending out the Twelve, Jesus warned them they would experience rejection. They would need to be shrewd as “serpents and as innocent as doves.” Persecution would provide opportunities for the disciples to bear witness to the truth of the gospel. The Holy Spirit would give them words to say. Jesus was preparing His disciples for the persecution and death that would follow Christians after Jesus’s return to the Father. Jesus referred to the disciples as sheep, and the point of comparison was the vulnerability of the sheep with respect to wolves. Sheep have no defenses to protect their physical bodies. There can be no question that the persecution envisioned would be severe. What Jesus described is what the disciples experienced in the days after His ascension. It was like that then and is like that today.

To survive in the midst of wolves, Jesus advised that we be as shrewd as serpents and as innocent as doves. “Shrewd” in this application means understanding that is associated with wisdom and insight. “Innocent” refers to purity of intention. The vulnerability of the sheep is offset by Jesus’s call for His sheep to be “smart sheep, sheep who use their heads, sheep who don’t overestimate the benevolence of wolves.

Vs. 17 Earlier in the chapter (vv.12-14), the harshest reaction that the disciples would receive would be a refusal to welcome the disciples into a home. In these verses, Jesus made it clear that the reaction on future missions journeys would be much more severe. Jesus issued a command to stay alert, “Beware of them.” The men in question were probably the people in authority who were responsible for passing judgment on the believers. “Local courts” is “the transliterated word for Sanhedrins or smaller courts found in towns and villages outside of Jerusalem. On the first offense the parties causing the offense were warned and released.

Acts 4:18-19 *“So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than God, you judge. On the second offense, the offending parties were flogged. No more than thirty-nine strokes could be given in the synagogues. 2 Corinthians 11:24 “From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one.”*

Vs. 18 While Jesus had earlier given instructions on what to do when the disciples were not welcomed into a home, here He instructed them on what to do when standing before governors and kings. Jesus’s focus switched from the preaching tour on which His disciples were about to embark to missions trips that the disciples would make after Jesus returned to the Father in heaven. Jesus told

the disciples not to worry concerning how they would answer their accusers. He promised that a proper defense would be given to them. The Spirit of your Father would provide the words. God is not telling us to just sit back and not study His word or read up in support of His truth. There is much information available to support the truth of Creationism (God created the universe). **John 15:26** “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the father, He will testify of Me [Jesus].” God would give Jesus’s disciples the defense they would need when they would need it.

Sparrows and Hairs (Matthew 10:26-31) p. 91

The sobering fact that Christians will face opposition is affirmed repeatedly throughout the New Testament. Christians would be treated no better than their Master, Jesus. The things authorities did to Jesus would be done to His disciples as well. But Jesus offered words of assurance and encouragement. The disciples were not to fear because those things that are covered and hidden will be uncovered and made known. There are two ways of understanding verse 26 and both are applicable. Jesus primarily had been teaching His disciples and not the masses, so His teaching was in that sense covered and hidden. That would soon change as the gospel would be boldly and openly proclaimed. The other understanding suggests that the reference is to the last judgment when God will reveal all the secrets that people thought had gone unknown. Believers in God will be vindicated and those persecuting God’s children will be punished. The disciples nor should we be afraid to preach the gospel Jesus had declared to them and us.

Vs. 27 Jesus instructed His disciples to pass on to others what He had taught them. They had a message to proclaim that came from Jesus. We need to proclaim that same message. The large, flat roofs of most homes were commonly used to proclaim important messages. The approach of the Sabbath was signaled by a trumpet on a rooftop. What was to be spoken in the light was to be shouted from the housetops. Jesus wanted to emphasize that His gospel message was to be proclaimed fearlessly.

Vs. 28 Again, Jesus encourages His followers not to fear, and gives the reason why persecutors are not to be feared. Persecutors were capable only of killing the body. They could not kill the soul. Martyrdom was a real possibility for the disciples. Those who could kill only the physical body had no authority or power over the soul. God is omnipotent. Only God could destroy both soul and body in hell. Only God has control over a person’s ultimate fate, and He is the one that should be revered and feared. Hell is another word for Gehenna, which referred to the valley outside Jerusalem where the garbage was burned. It became symbolic of the literal and eternal punishment that awaited those who rejected God. Destroy refers to eternal punishment.

Vs. 29 Whatever happens, we can trust the goodness and faithfulness of God. Jesus transitioned into the worth of the person by comparing the worth of a

sparrow and the worth of an individual. Sparrows were the least expensive animal sold in the market and were considered cheap food for the poor. Yuck! Five sparrows were sold for two pennies. Like tacos at Jack in the Box when tacos used to be two for a dollar. God governs over insignificant sparrows, and not one of them falls to the ground without His consent. God is aware of their appointed time of death, and He is aware of our appointed time of death as well. It is all part of His providential plan. God has intimate knowledge of and control over all of His creation. Nothing happens without God's knowledge or consent. Our heavenly Father cares about even the smallest detail of our lives. He knows the number of hairs on my head, even though it changes daily. Dan does not have that experience. God who is sovereign over history is sovereign also over the hairs of our heads. Because God is sovereign over everything, we have no reason to fear anything. We know death is a release from the sufferings of this life and will usher us into the very presence of our loving Father for all eternity. **Philippians 1:20-21** *"...according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."*

Peace and Swords (Matthew 10:32-34) p. 93

Jesus's teachings would bring opposition and conflict. Armed with the assurance of the Father's care and a lasting reward, the twelve were to remain loyal to Jesus even in the face of hostility and division. Because we have nothing to fear, we should acknowledge Jesus publicly. The mission on which Jesus was about to send His disciples, as well as their future appearances in courts, provides the context in which the disciples were to acknowledge Jesus publicly. The disciples would appear before governors and kings because of Jesus. They would be hated because of Jesus's name. The disciples' acknowledgment of Jesus on earth affected Jesus's acknowledgment of the disciples in the last day.

Vs. 33 Disowning Jesus leads to being disowned by Him. In the final judgment Jesus will speak for or against a person based on whether they accepted or rejected Him. **Matthew 7:21-23** *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"* Denying Jesus can be done either actively or passively. Denial can be an outward declaration of rejection or take the form of a silent failure to acknowledge and follow Him. Jesus pointed to the consequences. He will also deny those who deny Him.

Vs. 34 Recall that many Jews had the false expectation that when the Messiah appeared, He would break the back of Roman oppression and usher in a period of peace and prosperity such as had characterized the nation under King David.

Jesus wanted His followers to know that was not why He came. Jesus would not bring peace but turmoil. The peace that Jesus referred to here was more than the absence of conflict. God's peace rests in knowing that in Christ we are forgiven all our sins, reconciled to God, and have received eternal life. That means war with evil, and accordingly, hostility against those who support the ways of wrong. Jesus's coming presents a challenge to which people respond differently. Emotionally, some who oppose Jesus do so passionately, as do those who become His followers. Where strong and opposed feelings are held, conflict is inevitable. **Matthew 10:37-39** *"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."* Loyalty to Jesus must take precedence over family. We all have family members who have rejected Jesus outwardly or just don't care. We still need to pray for them and try to maintain a relationship with an open dialogue if possible. I know it is difficult, but we must believe that with God nothing is impossible. Through it all and above it all we must cherish our relationship with Jesus. He is worth everything!