

...anything, or this Word of the Lord brought to his disciples, I would call it a message on the fear of death; I think that's what's here. I can't be certain of that, but after having spent the time that I have pondering it, my impression is that this is on the subject of death resulting from being a worker following the Lord Jesus Christ. I like to hold this not to my life nor yours. Maybe we make some applications, but I'd like to hold this to the scene that's here. This isn't for me, and it isn't for you, but it's for 12 men about to go out in pairs. He's giving them final instructions that will last not only for this tour that they're going out on, but for the rest of their lives.

Now, I have to find the Father in this. Where is the Father in this word that the Lord Jesus passes on? Where is the Lord Jesus' reference to the Father in this matter? What has the Father said to Him? What has the Lord sensed of His indwelling Father in this? What has the Father experienced? What is the Lord's experience with the Father in persecution, and ultimately, persecution that could even result in death? Two overriding words keep coming up: "fear not." Fear not.

Now, the Lord opens His words for the disciples, saying, "I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves." As I read the rest of this passage, I see that everything about it is in ... I'm seeing the Lord speaking of being bold, and I'm seeing him say, "Go as sheep, be very bold, be not afraid of anything. Don't be afraid, but be like a sheep." I want to ask Him, "Which do you want me to do?" Which do you want them to do? Then I see that my Lord went like a sheep, and He was bold.

My strong impression is that Jesus Christ was not a controversialist, at least in this respect. I know there are exceptions, but He did not deliberately go out declaring trouble and war on the system. When they came before Him, He confronted them, but most of His ministry was not aimed particularly at that. His ministry was positive and upbeat. It was not mostly tearing down. He was not... He was a sheep... With all those thoughts running through my mind, I have to go back further and say, this isn't far enough. What's really going on here? He mentions sheep. Innocent sheep. Wise serpents. Sending you to wolves.

Now, He got that from the Father. Where does the Father get the impression that this is what's going to happen? I think that the next paragraph gives the secret. He says, "You are not greater than I am." A slave is not greater than his master. It is enough that you be like your teacher. It is enough that the slave be like his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub...

Now, I stopped there, and I say to myself, the Lord Jesus was called prince of demons, Beelzebub. His disciples will be called prince of demons, Beelzebub, but surely the Father has not. Then I stop and realize that my God and my Lord has been looking down on this planet for hundreds and hundreds of years, long before the Lord Jesus got here. I realized two things; one of them is that He is constantly seeing His work being called the work of Satan, that it is the nature of men to attribute the work of men to the devil, godly men. That work is actually God's; God did it.

God is quite used to having that which he does attributed to the devil's doing, or put it another way, God's work is called the work of Satan. Long before the Son was incarnated, the Father was told, "That's of the devil," yet the Father knew the heart of men, and we see this right here. So suddenly I can come back and say, I can see the Father say to the Son, "I am sending you a sheep to wolves." They've been

doing this to me for hundreds of years; they are about to do it to you. The work that I have done and the prophets...the work I've done by my own hand, it is the nature of man to attribute it to Satan because it doesn't fit their doctrine, it doesn't fit their religion, it doesn't fit their belief, it doesn't fit their disposition.

Son, I'm casting you to wolves. I send you out as a sheep among wolves. I am sending you to be devoured. There can be no other conclusion: if a sheep goes out, he will be devoured. The Father knew He was sending His Son out to be called a worker of Satan, because the Father had been called...His works had been called the work of Satan; He knew men were like that, and He knew this was going to happen to His Son. Therefore, He said to the Son, "Be as guileless as the dove but as wise as the serpent." I'm sorry that when a sheep goes out as guileless as the dove and as wise as the serpent, it does not prevent Him from being called a son of the Devil, nor does it keep Him from being eaten alive.

You, be as wise as a serpent, as guileless as a dove, and you'll last a little longer. That's all. If you go out without realizing you're going out in the midst of wolves, you won't last six months. If you start waging war with wolves, you're gonna be ended before you start; by the way, that was true of the Son, and it's true of any man who, working for the Lord, doesn't exercise great wisdom in how he ministers.

What's under discussion here is just as simple as it can be: he who proclaims the Father gets in trouble; he who proclaims the Son gets in trouble. He who opens his mouth gets in trouble. It's that simple. When you open your mouth, be wise, because you'll get in trouble. Be guileless; you'll be in trouble. Then the Son says, "The Master has been called Satan. Do you think the disciple won't?" You're gonna be called Satan more often than I've been. Don't think you're going to be wiser or more sagacious than I am, and don't think you're going to be more guileless or more innocent than a dove. You're not going to get out of this.

Now, I'm not sure you know where the Lord is headed in this. I think all of us here right this moment are thinking that we need a little wisdom and a little understanding of what's going to happen to us. I think something is going to be said here that's quite interesting. I think the Lord recognizes how shocked the disciples are going to be when they get called a son of the devil by other men. What's the shock? That they've been called that? No. The psychological reaction to it is devastating.

It's hard for any of us to be socially rejected. It's even more difficult to be socially rejected based on being a son of the devil. It is even more difficult when you realize that's going to happen all the time, and it is going to be so intense, so very intense. By the way, I want to tell you there are certain words used to persecute. There are, I'm going to repeat that, words of persecution. There are fair words. I want to list them for you. Have I already done this before? Heretic. Deceived. Deluded. A servant of the devil, or satanic. Not only heretic, but heresy, false prophet, deception, and then there are the lesser words: arrogant, not humble, and prideful. I think that's about it; those are the words. Oh yes, thank you: cultish and sometimes hypocritical, which will often come in another place, but hypocrite will probably get in there too. Actually, being called a hypocrite is calm compared to being called the son of the devil; a hypocrite's at least a Christian putting on, but there's no hope for the Son of the devil (laughter). All of these point to clear deception.

I want to say this to everyone listening. I will implore you to vow that, as long as you live, you will never call another person a servant of the devil or say that something is of the devil. Now, if it is proclaimed to be satanic, that is a different matter, but aside from that, just don't. If someone says he is of the devil, that's a different matter, but if our own Father has been called, and His works have been called, of the devil, the very creator of heaven and earth, obviously a lot of men have misunderstood a lot of things about God. Brothers and sisters, don't do it. Just don't ever do it.

I think here is one of the calls to be sheep. The Father called the Son to be a sheep, knowing the Son would be devoured. In that context, I want you to hear Him say to His followers, "You're not above me; you've got to be called this, and you're going to be devoured." I love this statement, but let's hear it first from the Father to the Son. You are not greater than I am, Son; You are My servant; You are not My head. It is enough that You be like Me; it is enough that You serve Me, and as a Servant, be like Me and become like Me on this earth. You are My Son; You are not My Father. It is enough that You are My image, that You are likened to Me. The Father has said this to One who has been commissioned to go to the earth as a sheep to wolves; they've called Me this, My Son; they will call You even more so. It is enough that You have the privilege of being likened to Me. That's reward enough, or simply enough to remember. Do not try to rise above Me. Do not try to get out from under these things. Do not try to be better. It is enough, Son, to be as Your Father.

Now, the Son has turned around and proclaimed that statement to those following Him. You cannot be greater than Me. You cannot expect this to happen to you less; don't expect it to happen more. Here is your contentment: being My disciple is enough; it is enough that you be like Me. I have been devoured; I have been persecuted. You will be like Me. I am the Son of God; you will be like Me. I am the Master; you are My servant. You will become like Me by having been associated with Me; that's all you need. Be content with that; be content with nothing else when it happens to you, and it will. Be content to know that the servant has the privilege to be like the master.

His final conclusion is that you're going to get called this, and it's going to be done to you twelve more than it was done to Me, the Lord Jesus. So the twelve are sitting there realizing that 12 times one is 12, and between the 12 of them, they're going to get called this more than He. I really believe that because each of us, as a disciple, is a little weaker than our master. Does that make sense to you? There are exceptions: Ronald Reagan goes to Saudi Arabia, and he gets called the devil himself - well, no, the son of the devil. What if the secretary of state goes? I don't know what they'd call him...the father of the devil. So it seems the disciples will catch it more than the master, and the master might catch it more than the Father, a little bit of the pecking order, perhaps.

Now, the most mind-boggling and difficult words in this whole passage for me to understand are the next words: "for this reason," and I kept asking the Lord, for what reason? *For this reason, fear not.* I haven't found a reason here to "fear not," and I continue looking. What are you talking about, Lord? For what reason do I therefore fear not? I think the reason has already been given to me. For this reason, fear not. Now, the rest of this passage really tells me something. Tells me something about myself. It tells me something about the disciples, and maybe something about my Lord.

What happens to a man who serves another when he is persecuted? What happens to a man when he serves another and is persecuted for having served? I know the answer to that, because I've had the privilege of feeling it. Do you know what it is? It's really simple. You start watering down what you say. I want to repeat that, brothers, because this is where it starts getting serious. I said to you, you may not know where he's headed; this is where he's headed.

This is as inevitable as it can be, and I wish I could gather all the Christian workers outside the religious system when they were young men and say to them, the first time somebody calls you the son of the devil, you're going to find things out about yourself you never believed. One thing you'll discover is that, in your inner relationship with whoever's calling you that, you'll start backtracking and watering down what you say. The next time you get up to speak in another situation, you'll watch your words, because the last time you spoke that way, you got in trouble.

Brothers, if you can identify with that, I am encouraged. If you cannot, then at least remember this all the days of your life. The disciple will tend to water down his boldness. The Lord said, "For this reason you should fear them not." Does this mean that my Lord Jesus Christ, the first few times He caught it, sensed fear and a desire to be a peacemaker over that which His Father sent Him to do? I don't know the answer, and I doubt I will in this lifetime, but somebody in the Godhead had enough wisdom to pass that word on to us. I think the Lord did it the first time He was human, the first time this happened to Him. We all have this drive, this need to be accepted. I know young workers; we dream of getting up there and being bold. We don't dream that somebody's going to come up afterward and confront you.

Now, brothers, may I be personal with you for just a minute? I've never been able to express this well to young men. When a young brother says he's been called to the Lord, he's been asked to do something, and he comes back later and says, "That can't be done because..." He sees me getting very frustrated, maybe even a little hot under the collar, and I tell him to go back and try again. I tell him, "Don't ever give up so easily." He doesn't understand why. I try to tell him, sometimes I'll pursue something for a month, a year, maybe two or three years before I get it resolved, but I never let go. I say to him, "Push...struggle with this thing. Think. Try to resolve it." He doesn't understand why. The reason is, if he gives up so quickly over a little thing, what on earth will he do when the whole roof caves in?

I don't know if I'm communicating. I gave young brothers a really hard time over this, when I heard a brother say, "Well, we called, and they said that wouldn't work." "Who did you call?" "Well, I called that man who really knows an awful lot about the subject." I said, "Did you meet him?" No. "Did you call four other people?" No. I know if I get on the phone, I can find ten other answers. We couldn't get that car fixed without this or that because the man just really knew what he was doing. We're going to have to junk it; you have to junk the car because of one phone call from somebody who's never seen the car, but he's giving you his opinion. I could go on for hours and hours. What will that brother do when he stands up to proclaim the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and gets devoured? The answer is simple. He will start compromising his words and his work, reducing them to the lowest possible minimum. He'll get it down to a non-controversial level, because it's the only place he can live.

Am I off the subject? Maybe I am? Sorry. I don't think we should be bragging about not being afraid, but God is running short of men who aren't afraid. *For this reason, fear not.* When the pressure builds, fear not. Don't back up. Don't compromise. Don't mince your words and don't lower your standards to have the approval of people who call you the son of the devil or the prince of demons. Just stand there...and proclaim... Okay, now then, I'm going to get into this, and this is anybody's interpretation, but here's mine. What you are about to water down will be proclaimed. So don't water it down, because it's going to be said; somebody's going to say it.

What you have heard me whisper here in these rooms, what I said to you late at night as the lamps were going out, you're going out there to proclaim on the rooftop. What is the Lord Jesus saying? He is saying, don't water it down under the pressure of men in society; don't fear. Proclaim it from the rooftop. Now, if you don't know this, dear saints, the first time you get under pressure, you'll feel the urge to compromise. Your sense is going to be a peacemaker. Somebody's going to say that you shouldn't be so negative. Somebody else is going to say that's deception. Somebody else is going to do something else, and you're going to feel like next time you get up...I'll tell you what you're going to do; you're going to be afraid. And the Lord said, don't do that. Don't be afraid. That which is burning inside of you that's never been uttered, that which I whispered in your ear, get up on the rooftops and holler it at the top of your voice. *Do not be afraid.*

Maybe the Father said that to the Son. What I said within You, what I said in the recesses of Your being: when men back you against the wall, don't water it down; proclaim it from the rooftops, because it's going to be proclaimed. You might as well be the one to proclaim it. I like that He tells me I belong to His household, the household of my Master. I like that; I appreciate that; I'm glad to know He's got a house, and I'm glad that I belong to it, and that which I have had whispered to me; I hope, Lord, that I have not been afraid to proclaim it from the housetops.

I want to get back to the Lord and His relationship to the Father. He didn't fear to proclaim it widely for Him, and He's about to send six more delegations out to proclaim it, and He wants them to do it boldly. Now, this blows my mind: "Fear not, but remain a sheep." Be bold but remain a sheep. I'm getting mixed messages from my Lord here. Proclaim it from the rooftops. Don't be afraid...but be a sheep. Be a dove. Let him see the dove inside and be wise. I don't have the wisdom to explain these things. All I can do is look to my Lord and know that the Father said this within Him, and somehow He did it for Himself. He was innocent, and He was devoured. He was bold, and yet He was a Lamb. He knew what these people would do to Him ahead of time, and that made Him as wise as a serpent, but He had the guilelessness of a dove.

Now, brothers and sisters, if you can put all that together, understand what the servant of God must be. Being bold and wise is as difficult as being a bull and a lamb, and who knows what guileless means; I have no idea. A bold dove...I have never seen a bold dove; have you ever seen a bold sheep? Have you seen a fearless sheep? Have you seen a fearless dove? I might say that of a snake, a serpent. Perhaps the serpent is causing the dove, and perhaps the serpent is causing the sheep. You understand what I'm

saying? Wisdom says you should be both the sheep and the dove, but also be bold and unafraid. Don't fear the pressure men and society will put on you for taking a fearless stand for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Okay, what are we to fear? I'm going to throw this one open. What are we to fear? There is no question about who we're to fear. We are to fear him who can destroy the soul and cast it into Gehenna, and only one can destroy the soul and cast it into Gehenna. That is your Father. That is your Father. I don't know if it's a judge or what it is; I don't think He's trying to put a doctrine here. He's just saying that in that moment when you're going to be afraid of somebody, those men can only kill you; that's all they can do. They can destroy your body; perhaps that's all Satan can do at best. Fear the highest destroyer, fear the One who can do more than that. I'm not even sure this is a threat; I think it's a matter of perspective. If you're going to fear somebody, fear Him who can destroy even more than the body. When you fear Him, you will not fear them.

Now, I really believe the subject from that point on, from right there on, is the subject of death. I personally am persuaded the whole subject has been death. I think everything here has been about death. Those people will put you under pressure, and if you're bold as you ought to be and as innocent as you ought to be, you may very well end up being killed, and most of the twelve were killed. I think you all know that. They didn't have to be killed, you know. There's one of those twelve who had to die; you might say they committed suicide by not being very "serpent-ish." They didn't have enough of the serpent's wisdom to avoid death. Not one of them did, nor did the Lord Jesus Christ. I can only see longevity here, not preventiveness.

If you're as wise as a serpent, you'll live a little longer, but you'll die eventually. Eventually you die. The Son made it four years by being the wisest of all the wise. He made it four years. If you are very, very wise, you may make it a while, but you are probably, or at least very possibly, going to be killed for your boldness. Don't be afraid of men who can kill you; alright, maybe they will not kill you, maybe they will make life miserable for you, but they have the capacity to kill you; do not be afraid of their capacity to kill you. You should fear the one who can destroy a soul as well as a body; fear Him.

Now, the Lord says the most remarkable and the most beautiful thing. He says it to the disciples, but I think the Father said it to the Son first. I think Father said, "You can't fall, My Son, until I allow it. You will not fall until I allow it. Be as wise as you can, be as the dove as long as you can, but you are still sheep, and you're going to be devoured by wolves. You will not be devoured by them until I myself say you fall. You will not fall one minute before that. I alone decide when you will fall." The Lord said that again and again: this is not your decision when I will be crucified; it is not in your hands. You can't do that to me because my time hasn't come. You will fall when the Father says so.

Now, very definitely to me, the Lord Jesus brings the Father center stage.

I see a revelation of the Father here now. That we're on really good, clear ground. We're here to see an indwelling Father. Well, here He is right out in front of us. The Lord Jesus clarifies everything. We're talking about the Son's relationship to the Father, and we're speaking of you, 12 disciples' relationship to the Father. There is definite succession here in all of this. The Son is a sheep, but He will be eaten.

The Son is sagacious. The Son is guileless, but He will fall. So will you. The Son feels the pressure of men in society, but He will proclaim what He has heard in secret. You will also feel the pressure of men in society; proclaim what you've heard in secret.

Yes, they can kill you. Yes, they can kill me, but I do not fear men who can kill me. I fear Him who can also destroy a soul. Yes, they can kill you. Do not fear them; fear my Father, and know this: you will not fall until my Father says you'll fall. I will not fall as the servant of the Most High God; I will not fall until my Father says, "Fall." God's sovereignty is revealed here—the Father's sovereignty. The Father's sovereignty is revealed here. You will fall when I tell you to. The Father speaking.

Two sparrows sell in the marketplace for one and a one-half cents. Two little birds sell for one and a half cents. That's American. The Greek word means a penny and a half. Two sparrows, about three-fourths of a penny each, and yet neither can fall to the ground. Listen, the weather can't get them to the ground. Disease can't cause them to fall. The hunter's bow, knife, and bullet cannot cause them to fall. Old age cannot cause them to fall. Poison can't cause them to fall. Lightning can't cause them to fall; Satan cannot cause them to fall. That sparrow will never fall until my Father accompanies it to the ground. Incredible.

Therefore, fear not, because you and I will not fall. Well, your Father will go down to the ground with you. He will pick you up when you lay down. What comfort to the Son, what comfort to the twelve, what comfort to every worker. Therefore, do not be afraid. Don't be afraid of what? Don't be afraid of wolves. Don't be afraid of being a sheep. Don't be afraid that you don't have enough wisdom to stay out of trouble. Ultimately, it will come no matter how wise you are. Don't be afraid that your guilelessness isn't enough. It is not enough. It will help for a while, but ultimately it will fail. Do not fear the pressures of men; do not fear the destruction of your body. Fear only Him who can destroy the soul, and He will never let you come to your end until He Himself takes you in His arms and carries you personally to the ground; until that moment, you are indestructible. Hallelujah.

If He will not allow a sparrow to fall under any conditions worth a little less than a penny, will He not therefore decide your hour, because you are worth more than three or four sparrows? If several sparrows get such an accommodation, if they get such a funeral, if they have such a glorious death, if they have such attention at their demise, then surely you, who are worth more than several sparrows, will have even more of the Father's attention, regardless of your circumstances. I have a Father; therefore, I'm not afraid in proclaiming the Gospel. The Lord Jesus wasn't, and He died; the twelve weren't, and they died...but not until the Father declared their death, no man could touch them.

Well, I don't think that passage ends there; in my judgment, it goes just a little further. When they have you surrounded, and they look like a bunch of wolves, and you, at that moment, don't back up for nothing, and you confess me before those men, I'm gonna confess you before my Father in the heavenlies.

Then I see the succession brought here so beautifully; listen, this whole passage is about the Father and His relationship to the Lord Jesus. I'm going to read this from the Son's viewpoint. I have not loved my mother more than I loved my Father. If I had, I would not have been worthy of my Father. I have not loved my disciples more than I loved my Father because if I were, I would not be worthy of my Father.

I have taken up My cross, and I am following My Father. If I did not, I would not be worthy of Him. I had a glorious life, and I lost it. In losing that life, I have found it. You have a life; if you keep it, you will lose, but if you lose it, you will find it. And now, I see succession here. The Father has received me; I have received you. You have received me. If you have received me, you have received Him who sent me.

In my judgment, dear saints of the Lord, the Lord Jesus is saying that everything I have said to you up until this very moment has been a succession. Everything I've said to you has been true of me and of my relationship to My Father. Whatever I have told you, I have already been told. Whatever my relationship is to the Father, that is your relationship to Me. I have clearly told you what my relationship to the Father is; that is your relationship to Me. My relationship with my Father remains unbroken in all I've said. I am remaining faithful in these things. You remain faithful to me in these same things. Not only will I receive you, but my Father will receive you too.

I am a prophet. Whoever gives me a cup of water, my Father will make known of it. I want you to know that you are a prophet, and whoever gives you a cup of water, I will make known of it. If you deny Me, I will deny you. If I deny My Father, He'd deny Me. But if you proclaim Me as I have proclaimed the Father, I will receive you as My Father has received you. The passage is there: *My Father will receive you too.*

Well, I think twelve men walked away from that day, very sober men. Sober in their realization of the tremendous commission their Lord and Savior carried; the pressure He was under; and the demands of loyalty He faced. If they had eyes to see then...perhaps they didn't; then they saw it later, that He was under the sentence of death for having proclaimed His Father.

Brothers and sisters, I am not far amiss in saying to you: if you faithfully proclaim the Son of that Father, you will be under sentence of death. Maybe you will be one of the fortunate ones, but I'm not sure you can proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ faithfully without endangering your life. If you are not willing to die, you back up from the gospel to the point that whatever you're proclaiming really isn't worth hearing.

Use all the wisdom you can. Last as long as you can...but don't water it down. He was under the sentence of death for proclaiming the same gospel; you are not above your Master. Expect to die, but remember this. You won't until He comes to get you and carries you to the ground, you in one hand and a sparrow in the other. Praise the Lord.