

“Obstacles Bring Opportunity”

Matthew 10v16-26

Scripture Ref: Micah 7:6; Matt 24:13; Matt 13:21; Jer 12:5; Rom 2:16

1. If you have ever been a part of an organization, or a large company, you know that a good leader will lay out a vision of the future.
 - a. *“This is where we are going, this is how we are going to get there, this is your part in the journey...”*
 - b. By doing so, the leader helps the team members get a vision for the goal, to see themselves as part of something meaningful, something larger than themselves.
 - c. It motivates people to get engaged and work, to move towards a common goal.
2. Now that Jesus has selected His team, it’s time to give them a little ‘pep talk’.
 - a. The next three sessions, we’ll look at Jesus’ motivational talk.
 - b. It’s really a classic – all motivational speakers, whether they realize it or not, base their talk on this word from Jesus!
 - i. There is the “here is where you are going”
 - ii. “Here are some of the obstacles you will face, but you need to stick it out to the end”
 - iii. “You need to trust your leaders through the process”
 - iv. “in the end, there is a reward for those who are faithful”
3. We talked last week about the “here is where you are going, this week it will be “Obstacles - Opposition brings opportunity!

Persecution

16 "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

4. It’s a ‘dog eat dog world’ out there, and Jesus knows that when we go out into the world to do the work of spreading the gospel, not only will there be opposition, there will be people out there looking to tear us to pieces!
 - a. One of the things I like to do is stay abreast of current events in our culture, and one thing that amazes me is the absolute hatred that is directed at the Christian community.
 - b. If you read some of the things that are written, videos that are published, there is a guttural hatred towards anything that has the appearance of righteousness.
 - c. RE: Christians are more dangerous than Al Qaeda; if you stand for Christian family values you are a ‘hatemonger’.

5. That being said, Jesus isn't saying 'run away and hide', but simply that we need to be aware of the battleground that we are operating in.
 - a. And we must be wise as serpents... that means being very cautious and discrete about where you go –
 - i. Remember last week Jesus noted that if a house or city does not accept the truth, then move on!
 - ii. Don't beat your head against the wall trying to open a door that God has not opened!
 - b. But at the same time we are to be gentle as a dove – we are not “attack dogs for Jesus!”
 - i. Jesus never shoved the truth down anyone's throat – He presented the truth, then allowed people to choose.

(Jesus describes the persecution)

17 But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. 18 You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. 19 But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; 20 for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

6. What I find interesting is that the three institutions that God ordained: Family, government, church, are the exact three institutions that in the last days will oppose the truth, and come against the believer.

Government

7. This prophecy came to pass as the church went through ten waves of persecution under ten Roman emperors – as many as 175 million Christians were killed.
 - a. Let that number sink in – 175 million – that is almost 30 holocausts, that is one-half of the population of our country.
 - b. But that is not the end of the story – persecution of the Christian is not limited to some time long ago in history – it continues today on a systematic government level.
 - c. According to the World Evangelical Alliance, over 200 million Christians in at least 60 countries are denied fundamental human rights solely because of their faith. David B. Barrett, Todd M. Johnson, and Peter F.
 - d. The International Bulletin of Missionary Research estimates that approximately 176,000 Christians have been martyred in the past year.
 - e. The estimate is that 45,000,000 Christians have been martyred in the twentieth century.
8. Government is no friend of the cross.

they will ÷ scourge you in their synagogues

Religion

- 9. Religion has always persecuted true believers, beginning with the synagogues, but by no means ending there.**
 - a. History has a long list of wrongs perpetrated by one group against another – most notable by large, state-sponsored religion against Christians who swore allegiance to Christ alone, rather than to a Pope or a King.**
 - b. You were considered a heretic if you didn't join the church of Spain, or Church of England,**
 - c. That is why we are here today, the early pilgrims came to America to seek freedom to worship God without interference from the Church of England.**

Family

21 "Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. (*Micah 7:6*)

- 10. Jesus is speaking of a time when simply being identified as a Christian will cost you your life, and when family members will turn one another in.**
 - a. The apostle Paul was involved in this activity, under direction of the High Priest in Jerusalem.**
- 11. But you can't help but get the feeling that Jesus is not just warning the Apostles about their upcoming journey.**
 - a. As we read though this we get the very distinct impression that Jesus is spanning history with His words.**

22 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. 23 When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

- 12. If you are a bible student, you might notice that what Jesus is saying here parallels what Jesus taught in the Olivet Discourse (Matt 24-25)**
 - a. In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus disciples come to Him and ask "When will the end come, and how will we know?"**
 - b. Jesus answered with some very specific prophetic statements that we will look further into when we get to Matt 24.**

- c. But one of His statements mirrors what He says here *“But he who endures to the end shall be saved”* (Matt 24:13)
13. This verse is applicable not only prophetically, but presently, because Jesus told us that in this world, we will have tribulations (Matt 13:21, 24:9)
- a. In other words, there will be problems in life, and we have to remember that life is a race: *not a sprint, but a marathon!*
 - b. And when Jesus says *“But he who endures to the end shall be saved”*, I don’t think He’s talking about salvation – because that would mean you wouldn’t know if you are saved until the last day.
 - c. The greek word here is *sozo*, a word that refers to the full orb of God’s blessing.
 - d. In other words, those who endure to the end of this marathon will experience the full blessing of God on every area of their lives:
 - i. Future: When you get to heaven, your mind will be blown with the extent of the blessing that will be yours.
 - ii. Present: Your life, your family, ministry, finances, career
14. But sometimes there are going to be bumps in the road.
- a. When you run a marathon, sometimes it will rain, or sleet, it’s really hot, or you step somewhere that one of those police horses have been...
 - b. Same in life- there are bumps – and sometimes we wonder *“what’s up God!? Look at these bumps, why don’t you do something about those bumps!”*
15. There was another guy who felt that way – Jeremiah was a prophet in Judah in the 7th century BC, just before the Babylonians came to destroy the city and take the nation into captivity for seventy years.
- a. Jeremiah was given a message for Judah; Repent, and be spared from the judgment to come.
 - b. But remember Jeremiah was the preacher that had ZERO converts, nobody listened, and he was getting weary, his problems were mounting on all sides, and he was about to throw in the towel, and the Lord spoke to him...

Jer 12:5 “If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, Then how can you contend with horses?”

- c. (in other words) *“Jeremiah if you fall back now, what will you do when the big problems come? I know you are pressed in, but I see the future, and much bigger things are coming. I am allowing you to go through hard times now to prepare you for what lies ahead!”*

16. Now some might ask *“why wouldn’t God just destroy the Babylonians, and save Israel and Jeremiah a whole lot of pain and misery?”*
- a. God didn’t destroy the Babylonian’s for the same reason He doesn’t destroy all the problems in our lives:
 - i. The reason we have problems is because ever since the Garden of Eden man has thumbed his nose at God and said *“I want to live my life my way, I want to do what I want to do!”*
 - b. That is the reason we have disease, death, wars, financial hard times...
 - i. You think the economic crisis we are in was a sudden, unforeseen blip or cycle?
 - ii. Well, you would be wrong – we are in this mess because our country has lived above our means for 40 years,
 - iii. and the government has done the same, and they supported the whole mess by taking us off the gold standard so they can print as much money as they want and keep the train rolling.
 - iv. A “correction” was inevitable. Our chickens have come to roost. And guess what, they are compounding the problem with this “stimulus”.
 - v. They are going to borrow more money – YOUR money - and go off and spend it like a bunch of drunken sailors.
 - vi. But I digress...
17. We experience problems because of the fallen nature of man – we refuse to live according to God’s principles, and then we wonder why we have problems.
- a. God isn’t sitting up in heaven thinking *“Oh good, here it comes, they’re really gonna get it this time!”*
 - b. No, He allows these problems to draw us closer to Him, to allow us to see our need for Him.
 - c. Sometimes we experience problems that we haven’t created, yet God will still allow them to come into our lives to strengthen us, and prepare us for the mighty horses that are going to come stampeding into our lives.
18. The most persecuted church in the world today is probably China, and yet the gospel is growing like wildfire! God is strengthening those Chinese believers through their trials!
- a. And we sit here with no persecution; I wonder how many American believers would fold after just the slightest tribulation?
19. Guys we are in a battle for the souls of billions of people – people that God wants to save and seal for heaven and eternity, and Satan wants

to destroy and drag as many as he can into hell, the lake of fire where HE is going to be tossed.

- a. And Jesus is our mighty Prince – our General – our Lord of Lords and King of Kings**
- b. And He tells us:**

24 "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25 It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!

20. So Jesus is telling the team “they came after me, they’re going to come after you. Would that concern you?

- a. If it does, hear these words...**

26 Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.

21. In the late 90’s in California, the dot-com boom was in full swing. People were starting companies that were nothing but web sites that helped you find a date or sell Pez dispensers.

- a. The workers were paid almost nothing, but they were given stock options, a promise for the future.**
- b. Their friends and family would tell them they were crazy, they would work for nothing and be cast aside when they were no longer needed.**
- c. But once the companies were up and running, they went public, and everyone became millionaires.**
- d. There were secretaries sitting on millions, just being at the right place at the right time. People that no one knew, didn’t particularly stand out, but they were rewarded richly for participating.**
- e. The team – those who endured through the tough times and the 20 hour days and no vacations - received their reward.**

22. One day in the future, Jesus will return and claim His Kingdom. He will “go public”, if you will.

- a. And for all of God’s team – there will be a reward. There will be reward like we cannot image, because we think in such limited material patterns.**
- b. We want money, or a nice house, or an important title.**
- c. What will be for those who endure will be sozo, the full orb of God’s blessing.**

- d. And nothing will be lost, no deed forgotten, no work left out, everything will be revealed in that day!**

Rom 2:16 ... in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

Copyright © 2009 Pastor Clay Ritter. This data file is the sole property of Pastor Clay Ritter. It may be copied only in its entirety for circulation freely without charge. All copies of this data file must contain this copyright notice. This data file may not be copied in part, edited, revised, copied for resale or incorporated in any commercial publications, recordings, broadcasts, performances, displays or other products offered for sale, without the written permission of Pastor Clay Ritter. Requests for permission should be made in writing and addressed to Pastor Clay Ritter, c/o Calvary Chapel of Wilmington, 2831 Carolina Beach Rd, Wilmington NC, 28412.