

Despised for the Gospel

Mark 13: 9-13

As we continue to discuss the Olivet Discourse, we are reminded that Jesus had warned of calamities the world would face as the end drew near. There would be many false prophets seeking to deceive, much fighting and war among nations, earthquakes, famine, and troubles previously unknown to humanity.

As difficult and horrific as these events sounded, likely the disciples realized Jesus was speaking primarily of social upheaval. As of yet, He hadn't spoken in a personal manner with them, revealing events or circumstances that could potentially affect them personally. That was about to change as Jesus gave a specific warning to those who are committed to follow Him.

Living in America, we enjoy religious liberty and the freedom to worship – at least for now. We are unfamiliar with the difficulties many face around the world simply for their faith in Christ. Christians are being attacked, marginalized, and even martyred in many regions around the world. The warnings of Christ regarding the end are beginning to become reality for many.

As we continue in our discussion of the Olivet Discourse, I want to examine the [difficulties](#) Jesus spoke of in these verses as we think on: [Despised for the Gospel](#).

I. The Affliction Predicted (9-10) – As Jesus continued to talk with the disciples, He predicted they would be afflicted for their faith. Those who stand for the Lord at the end of the age can expect to endure the same. Consider:

A. The Presentation (9) – *But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils...and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake...* Jesus warned the disciples that they would be taken before the councils. He was speaking primarily of the Sanhedrin, the ruling religious council in Jerusalem. They can be viewed as the Supreme Court regarding spiritual and biblical matters. Jesus would soon enough be tried and condemned before the Council, and He warned the disciples to make preparation to stand before them.

- Jesus also cautioned they would be taken to stand before rulers and kings for his sake. Those who served Him would find themselves accused and standing before the ruling political powers of their day. We know this prophecy was carried out in many of their lives. Peter and John were taken before the Sanhedrin after the lame man was healed. Peter and James stood before King Herod and imprisoned. James was executed and Peter was miraculously delivered from the

jail. John was banished to the Isle of Patmos, considered an enemy of the state. Paul found himself before the councils, governors, and kings – all for the cause of Christ.

- This continues today, just as it has for centuries, and will only intensify as we get closer to the Lord's return. Christians are being arrested, sued, taken to court, and forced to publicly defend their faith before the authorities of this world.

B. The Punishment (9) – **and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten.** Jesus revealed the disciples would be hunted down and beaten, even within the synagogues as they sought to worship the Lord and teach His Word. Those who opposed the Gospel would come into their places of worship to attack and physically abuse them. Within the place one would expect to enjoy peace and security, pain and suffering would come. Unfortunately, this is an all too common occurrence around the world today. In many countries, when houses of worship are discovered, those who gather there are beaten and the buildings are often vandalized or destroyed.

C. The Purpose (9c-10) – **for a testimony against them.** ^[10] **And the gospel must first be published among all nations.** Although the affliction would be difficult to endure, it would serve a purpose. As these were persecuted for the faith, their words and witness would stand as a testimony against those who opposed the Gospel. The accusers could not deny the truth they encountered. They may have rejected it, but they could not escape responsibility to it. The perseverance of the disciples in preaching and sharing the Gospel would be remembered against those who opposed their efforts.

- Another benefit would come from the affliction endured by the disciples. Jesus revealed that His Gospel must be preached among all nations prior to His return. While none enjoy adversity, congregations at ease have little burden to take the Gospel outside their walls, much less into their communities and the world at large. Through the difficulties of affliction, the Gospel would be shared throughout the world as those who faithfully served the Lord were forced to flee to other parts of the world due to persecution. Every nation will hear the Gospel prior to the Lord's return, one way or another!

II. The Assistance Promised (11) – **But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.** Although they faced certain affliction and opposition because of their faith, Jesus promised they would not be without assistance. Notice:

A. The Admonition (11a) – *But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate.* They would certainly be brought before the councils and kings, forced to defend their faith. Jesus revealed there was no need for fear or alarm. He didn't even want them to worry about what they would say or how they would respond. They were not to prepare a statement ahead of time, prior to standing before their accusers. (I have heard some messages that I believe the preacher pulled this verse out of context and stepped into the pulpit unprepared. Jesus is not referring to teaching or preaching the Word; He refers to times when we are called to give a defense of our faith before authorities.)

B. The Proclamation (11b) – *but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye.* As they stood before the authorities, Jesus admonished them to proclaim what the Spirit revealed unto them at that moment. They were not expected to stand before councils and kings within their own wisdom or ability. The Spirit would reveal unto them what needed to be said at that particular moment, for that setting, and they were expected to share the truth the Spirit revealed. (If we find ourselves in a similar situation, we would do well to remember this verse. We do not stand alone. When it is needed, the Lord will faithfully provide.)

C. The Confirmation (11c) – *for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.* These men have yet to receive the Spirit and experience the miracles the Lord will perform through them. In these moments of difficulty, standing before their accusers, the words they would speak would actually be the Spirit speaking through them. At that moment they would become a vessel, the mouthpiece of the Lord through the Spirit. There was no need to worry. Their answers would always be correct and in the power of the Spirit.

III. The Animosity Portrayed (12-13) – In these verses Jesus spoke of additional animosity the disciples and those who followed him could expect. Consider:

A. The Severity (12) – *Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.* As hatred for the Gospel increased, so would intolerance toward those who believed the Gospel. Jesus declared that brother would betray brother, fathers would betray their sons, and children would accuse their parents, resulting in the death of family members because of their faith in Christ. Hatred for Him and the Gospel would become so intense that family members would turn on each other and support their martyrdom for the Gospel.

- We see the horrors of such betrayal happening around the world today. So called “mercy killings” are acceptable in many parts of the world for those who renounce the faith of their birth for faith in Christ. Families are ripped apart as many are rejected, denied, and even killed for their faith. Serving the Lord and being faithful to the Gospel has cost many their lives.

B. The Enormity (13a) – *And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.* Having warned of the possibility of being betrayed by their own families, Jesus revealed their reception among the world would not be any better. In fact, they would be hated of all for the name of Christ. This does not imply that everyone would hate them for their faith, but that men from every region of the globe would join in their hatred for Christ.

- I don't have specific numbers or statistics, but we cannot deny this truth is becoming reality today. Even in America, many despise the Gospel and all who have faith in Christ. Christians seem to be the most persecuted people throughout the world today. They are hated and persecuted in regions that are largely Muslim, fiercely by the Hindus in India, and by the regimes and regions that claim atheism. We are hated of all men for the sake of Christ.

C. The Responsibility (13b) – *but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.* I want to clarify that Jesus is in no way implying that our salvation is based upon on works, or that we would lose our salvation for any reason. He reveals those who are saved by His grace will be known for their commitment to the Gospel and faithfulness to Him, even in the face of extreme persecution and affliction.

- This is quite difficult to embrace and would be even harder to practice. However, the Lord has always provided the grace and strength necessary to endure. Like our salvation, the ability to endure comes from the Lord. We must ensure that we are walking close enough to receive the strength we need to endure. I can't explain how a man or woman looks death in the face and embraces it rather than deny their faith, but countless eyewitness accounts have proven their commitment. We have no way of knowing what we may have to endure, but we can face whatever comes our way knowing our Lord is faithful and He will never forsake us!

Conclusion: We have considered another portion of the Olivet Discourse. We cannot deny this passage has personal implications for believers today. The Western church is no better than the ancient church in Jerusalem or Ephesus. We are no better than the church in China, the Middle East, or India today. We can expect to face adversity and persecution. When it comes, we must be settled in our faith and abiding in the Lord. We must rely on the Lord to provide for our need. Come to Him for whatever need you have, especially if you stand in need of salvation.