



When Jesus sent out his twelve disciples to preach the message, “The kingdom of heaven is near”, he gave specific instruction and encouragements for how to handle acceptance and rejection by the world. We can look to this model as an example of how we should interact with the world around us. The entire message can be found in Matthew 10. Please read Matthew 10:7-8.

What were the disciples commanded to do along their journey?

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The disciples were to leave the areas they traveled better off for them having traveled through them. How can you leave your own piece of this world better off? What talents or gifts do you have which you can share with others?

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Please read Matthew 10:14-16.

When people rejected the disciples’ message, what did Jesus command them to do?

The punishment or retaliation for the rejection of Jesus’ messengers was left firmly in the hands of God. Jesus clearly says that each will be held accountable for their actions on the Day of Judgment. As Christ’s followers, it is not our place to punish those who reject our message. It is not our place to try to brow beat or force acceptance of our message. Jesus instructed his disciples to preach, heal, and drive out demons... freely without exorting praise, honor, or money for themselves for their actions. If they were rejected, they were to simply leave.

“If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town.”

“It becomes us to pray heartily for all, and to conduct ourselves courteously to all.”

Matthew Henry

Sometimes we face more than mere rejection, however. There are times when our faith puts us at odds with others and leads to more of a painful persecution then merely a loss of friendship. Jesus gives us instructions for these times as well. Please read Matthew 10:16-23

Have you ever experienced this type of rejection or betrayal? If so, how did it strengthen or shake your faith? If not, how do you think you would react?

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In verses 24-25, Jesus reminds us that we are not above our master. This echoes his words in our last Beatitude when he said, "for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." No matter what kind of persecution we face, we are not the first ones to face it. Jesus is not asking us to face anything he himself has not dealt with.

*"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering.*

*Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

*Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.*

*But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; The punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.*

*We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

*He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.*

*By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants: For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of my people he was stricken.*

*He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth."*

*Isaiah 53:3-9*

This Beatitude, like all the others, speaks of a blessing and a promise. God promises to reward us when we stand up under trials and when we hold fast to our faith in times of oppression. Please read Matthew 10:32-42.

“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”

Matthew 10:28

What promise does Jesus give to those who acknowledge him?

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What punishment awaits those who disown Christ?

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The momentary uncomfot and pain of rejection and trial pales in light of the eternal joy awaiting us in heaven. Even when our own family turns their back on us, we never lose the family of God. This type of persecution may be the hardest to endure, but we are called to endure it with love and grace. In all situations, we must conduct ourselves in a way that brings glory to God. We may never know how our response to the trials of this life may affect the ones who silently watch from the sidelines.

Acts 16 tells us the story of Paul and Silas in prison. We read that Paul and Silas were attacked because they freed a little girl from the grips of an evil spirit. Once the evil spirit was gone, “The owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities.” (vs 19) “After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully.” (vs 23)

What man had intended for evil; however, God used for good. Please finish their story in Acts 16:25-32.

What were Paul and Silas doing in prison?

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How do you think that affected the other men in prison with them?

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Did you notice that once their chains fell off none of the other prisoners ran away? This was their prime opportunity to escape and yet, because they had been influenced by the heart of Paul and Silas in the midst of their persecution, they remained.

How did the jailer react to Paul and Silas’ attitude and behavior while imprisoned?

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Persecution may not be high on our priority lists of things we desire, but there is a promise to be held onto when we face it. Jesus tells us that we will be blessed when we are persecuted for righteousness. As unbelievable as that sounds, he is promising that we will be happy and fortunate when we suffer for our relationship with God. This is yet another instance when keeping our eyes on eternity helps us get through ... and succeed ... in this life.

Take a few moments to examine your life. Are there any struggles that you are facing or have gone through? Pour out your sorrow and your fears to God. Take a few moments to thank him for his protection and provision in the midst of our trials. Ask him for guidance and refocus your attention from the problem to the Savior.

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*Thank you so much for joining me on this journey through the Beatitudes. I hope that you have been encouraged and strengthened in your faith. I know I have been. I hope that, if nothing else, you have seen the extent of the love of God towards you. What an amazing thought to know that God desires us to be happy and fortunate in all situations!*

*It is my prayer for you that you will feel the peace of God each and every day. I pray that you will grow closer to him as you study his word and pour out your heart to him through prayer. May you always know how important you are to your Heavenly Father.*

*Love in Christ,*

*Keegan*