

Witnessing Because of Fear

by Paris Reidhead

The sermon calls Christians to embrace their responsibility in witnessing, driven by compassion and empowered by the Holy Spirit, despite the fear of opposition.

Duration: 40:21

Scripture: Matthew 9:38, Matthew 10:16, Matthew 10:23, Matthew 13:38, Matthew 22:14, Matthew 28:19-20, Luke 10:2

Topics: "Witnessing"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of Christians being concerned and compassionate towards others. He urges listeners to see people the way Jesus does, with love and empathy. The speaker also highlights the need for more laborers in God's harvest and encourages believers to pray for more workers. He reminds them not to be discouraged by slander or opposition, but to continue their witness and trust in God's timing. The sermon references various Bible verses, including Matthew 10:16 and Luke 13, to support these teachings.

Transcript

Matthew chapter 10, verse 16. Two weeks ago this morning we considered together the need for compassion on the part of Christ's people. We saw our Lord Jesus coming upon a vast company of people.

He was moved with compassion, his disciples with disdain and disgust, and we asked our own hearts whether we see, for instance, the throngs of people that press in upon us in New York City the way the Lord Jesus does. And we asked him together as a congregation at the close of the service that he would give to us Calvary hearts. He would give us to share with him the fellowship of his service, fellowship of his suffering, fellowship of his purpose in carrying the of his death to all those for whom he died.

Last week we considered his word wherein he said, the harvest truly is plenteous, the laborers are few, and then gave to his church a commandment that he has never rescinded or amended or removed. Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he will thrust forth laborers into his harvest. I heard years ago of a young preacher that went to a church.

First Sunday he brought a message which everyone appreciated. The second Sunday, reading from his notes, taking identically the same text, he brought word for word the same message. And the third Sunday he did the same thing.

And when a company of the deacons waited on him, he said, well, you see, I came believing that God's word was to be obeyed. And just as soon as you do what I've said in the first sermon, I will bring you the second. But should it be that I give you the second before you obey the first, then my preaching has been the means of death to you rather than the means of life.

I'm afraid the young man was somewhat too altruistic and that possibly this could not be expected of this congregation, which changes so from week to week. But for that company of you that are here, that give allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ and testify to faith in him, might I say that just because this morning we begin with verse 16, you are not relieved from the responsibility of verse 38 of the ninth chapter. And as long as you live in the flesh and as long as you are a pilgrim in this world, this is binding upon you.

Pray ye the Lord of the harvest. A very practical way in which you can enforce this now is to pray that God will raise up qualified, devoted, sincere, and earnest workers to reach out into the community. For instance, we are today greatly concerned in prayer for someone that will be the answer to the cry of the executive committee and the elders, deacons, and Sunday school.

The Women's Bible Society of New York City has afforded us a grant of \$120 a month in order that someone can labor in this community, establishing release time classes and laboring in behalf of our afternoon department Sunday school. As of this time, we have not found a qualified worker. Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he will thrust forth labor into this open door and into this part of his harvest field.

And it is not thus alone, but it is as wherever you learn of need and opportunity, it is incumbent upon you to relate yourself to it in terms of 938. Pray ye the Lord of the harvest. I would indicate to you also that our society, which is calling out to the Lord for missionaries to go to the end of the earth with open doors, tribes that haven't been reached, still have the right to expect that we as a church will obey verse 38 and pray that God will stir the hearts of young men and young women and give them a burden and a vision to go into some of these unreached tribes and into these unevangelized areas.

This is in your hands. You have the responsibility to obey that verse. Mrs. Cowman, the author of that lovely little daily devotional, *Streams in the Desert*, records in one portion of the biography of her husband his experience when incapacitated from further missionary endeavor, he was forced to stay at home.

She said that he put before him a map of the world and would labor country by country from Japan where their work had begun right through. And for a week or two weeks or three weeks, the focus of his heart burden would be for that country until he felt that somehow the Spirit of God through him had prevailed and that workers would be sent forth. I believe that this is true.

You may be interested to know that the application of this verse is seen in the life of Dr. Simpson, who learned that Tibet was without a missionary. And in 1878 until 1882 and thereafter for two or three years, he asked God to send out missionaries to Tibet. There was a special call, a special burden.

There came a time toward the close of the 19th century when a group of young missionaries went out to Tibet. The amazing thing was this, that they discovered that all of them had been born either the year that Dr. Simpson began to pray or within two years afterwards. The only way that God could raise up workers for that field was to have them born to that end.

And thus part of the implication of this verse is that you as we as parents should ask the Lord in his sovereign grace and wisdom to answer that prayer even through our own family. And thus it is important, it

is absolutely incumbent upon you that you, as long as you live, learn this truth. Andrew Murray well said in his little volume, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, the key that will unlock the door through which the missionaries will go rests in the hands of the church.

If the church will take that verse and apply it as God has intended it to be applied, there will be a sufficient number for every opportunity. But just as that is true, the guilt for having failed to reach tribes and people will rest upon the church because the church failed to pray. We see this, and in the light of what I've just said, I bring you to verse 16.

He not only said, Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, but he said also, Behold, I send you forth. I send you. I send you.

A missionary is a sent one. Isn't it interesting that the very word missionary comes from the anglicized form of the Latin verb *mito*, to send. And a missionary is a sent one.

And literally our Lord Jesus said, Behold, I missionary you. Again, our Lord Jesus said to his disciples in the upper room on the evening when he appeared to them, As my father sent me, even so send I you. In the same manner, for the same purpose, and we find in that beautiful 17th chapter of John with identically the same equipment and provision.

Thus, this is spoken to that company that were with him, but by virtue of its further repetition and amplification and enlargement, it includes you. Therefore, I want you to hear this as being extremely personal. The Lord Jesus Christ speaking to you.

Isn't it interesting that most everyone is quite prepared to say, Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, is personal. Isn't it interesting that we're prepared to accept that and say, Yes, that means me. For certainly I am weary and am heavy laden.

And therefore I know the Lord is including me. Whosoever will may come. And we certainly say that means me.

Whosoever believeth on him shall not perish. And gladly our hearts respond and say that means me. But when it comes to a matter such as verse 16, Behold, I send you, we say, Isn't it fine that the apostles had such a clear commandment? And we're quite willing to turn that over to them.

We'll take the come unto me as being personal and for us and the go as being to someone else. I believe that the statement is being repeated frequently enough today to give it some measure of authority. At least I heartily concur with it.

If you are not a missionary, then you are a mission field. I believe this is scriptural. Everyone that has come to Jesus Christ has come by his invitation.

They've heard him say, Come unto me all ye that labor and I will give you rest. They've come and they've found rest. But the same one that said, Come unto me and rest said, Go ye and preach.

And I believe that it is a absolute mutilation of the word of God to say the come means me and the go means somebody else. I have wondered why it is that so many Christians are so indifferent to the glorious provisions of God for the fullness of the Holy Spirit and why Christians can have heard for days, weeks, months, and years that it is God's sovereign purpose to fill each believer with the Holy Ghost, that the

normal Christian life is to be filled with the fullness of God. I say I have wondered why it is that people can learn this truth and be so completely and totally indifferent to it.

I think I know the answer. They have never seen themselves as an integral part of God's purpose of evangelism. They've never seen themselves as one of the laborers in the harvest field and one of the witnesses to the multitude that are as sheep without a shepherd.

If you were to carefully read Luke 13th chapter where we find the account of the man who had friends come to his house at midnight and beat on the door asking for entrance, then you would discover that our Lord tied right into that portion the promise concerning the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Put yourself in that place. You live in an apartment building.

You live in a home or your own residence in the suburbs. You work somewhere, or at least if you do not have regular employment, you have a circle of people that you meet that are not Christians. If somehow you can escape from the clear commandment, go and preach and press it onto young people in their teens or press it onto missionaries on the field, then you can meet these people day after day and week after week and feel impervious to their need and immune to their condition, and say, well, what are these to me? But if you actually have sat before the Lord Jesus Christ and heard him say, as the Father sent me, so send I you.

If you have had come home to your heart the indictment of the Word, after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you, ye shall be witnesses unto me. If you have ever heard, I have set you as a watchman, and will require their blood at your hand. Then you no longer can be indifferent to the people that live in that apartment building.

You no longer can be unconcerned about the people that sell you your groceries. You no longer can be immune to the claims that lost boys and girls that trample up your flowers have upon your heart's love, and the paper boy that throws your paper into the bushes and receives for a reward for it your scolding, but never received the testimony and love that Jesus Christ died for him. The moment that you hear the Son of God speak to you in a personal way and say, as now I send you, that moment that you consent to this and submit to this, then you have entered into a whole new realm of responsibility.

I am sure that when you find that you are responsible for that apartment building, and you are responsible for the people for whom you work, and the people that you could meet and know, and that their blood is on your hands, that you're going to become concerned. You are going to become concerned. And when they knock at your heart and say, what about this? What is a Christian? And how do I become a Christian? And what should a Christian do? Or they become indifferent, or they resist you, or they sneer at you.

Perhaps you're going to take stock and say, well, there must be something radically wrong with me, that I have no means of contact. I have no liberty of heart. I have no fluency of word.

I have no freedom of thought. I'm bound up. I have even no burden.

I believe that you will then put yourself in the place of the man that had people come to his door at midnight and knock and say, give us bread. For these that you know around you are in the midnight of earth's darkness, blinded by the God of this world, dead in trespasses and sins. And they've come to you.

They live by you. Perhaps they heard that you were a former missionary, or they heard that you were a Christian, or they heard that you loved Christ, or something about, and they meet you and they wonder

what you'll do and what a Christian does and what kind of a person they are. But they find that your cupboard is empty, nothing on it.

I submit to you, dear heart, that when you become face-to-face with your responsibility and the people around you, you are then going to have the same degree of importunity that you find with a man that had people come to his door at midnight. And you're going to go to the door and knock. Listen.

He didn't go to that door of his friend who had bread because they were friends. He didn't go because he was hungry. He went because he was responsible to give bread to those who didn't have it, and he was unprepared to share.

I believe that you are going to become concerned about your union with Christ in death and victory over the tyranny of your traits and your personality and these angular things which are so obtrusive to Christians and so abhorrent to the unsaved, when you realize you're responsible to the unsaved and these are the great blotches and spots that stand in the way of their accepting your testimony. Then you're going to become concerned about the cross and the outworking of the cross and the victory of the cross, when you realize that their blood is on your hand. And you're going to become concerned about the fullness of the Spirit.

You're going to be willing to sit up nights reading and talking and conversing. This is going to become a matter of great importance to you when you realize that the only way that you ever can fulfill your responsibility to the lost people around you is through the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Then it's no longer a matter of option.

It's no longer a matter of just temporary concern or selfish interest or to satisfy the pastor. You have been sent. I send you.

And therefore you must have the equipment with which he was to send you, namely the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Here is his word. Behold, I send you.

He speaks with authority. He speaks as the Son of God. He speaks as the one that to whom God has committed all authority in heaven and earth.

And because you came in repentance and faith and you confessed Jesus Christ to be Lord, he speaks now to you with personal authority that you have given him. For when you named him as Lord, you said, look, Jesus Christ, you have a right to command me. And he says, now I send you.

I send you for. Obviously he sends you in his authority to speak for him. Since you are going for him, you are going with his message, not something that you concoct for yourself.

But as an ambassador is sent with the message of his country, regardless of what his personal political opinion might be, so you are sent with that message which he has committed to you. You are sent with his equipment for just as he said, go, he also said, Lo, I am with you always. As he said, go, he said, after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you, you shall receive power.

But notice something else. I send you forth as a sheep in the midst of wolves. The world which you're going hates Christ.

The world which you come crucified him, and if he were to return, would crucify him again within three years after he began his ministry. This world is no friend of grace and no friend of Christ. Say what you will, the attitude and temper of the world is not changed in any particular.

And consequently, when he sends you forth, he says, be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. Therefore, that wisdom which is not natural to you must come from him. And that wisdom will be also the gift and the enabling of the Holy Ghost.

He says, I send you, but I send you in my power. I send you in my purpose. I send you with my message.

I send you with my provision and my enablement. I send you. This is the commission that he has given to you.

But notice, just as he commissions you, so he warns you today as he warns you, the disciples to whom he spoke. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils and will scourge you in their synagogues. And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

Now, I believe that this is true today as it has been in the past. They that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. It's such a simple matter to avoid it if you have no regard for your own conscience or your own convictions.

If you can just take the little pinch of incense and lay it at the feet of whatever Caesar happens to be in prominence at the moment, the world will leave you alone. But if you should have certain convictions regarding procedures and about the day and the truth, you will discover that there is nothing quite as cruel as organized religion. It was organized religion that instituted the Inquisition in Spain.

It was organized religion that instituted the pogroms in Russia. And it is organized religion that, through America, for centuries has had the ability to duck women as witches in the pond and put them in the stocks for religious reasons, to persecute them even when they fled to this country for the sake of religious freedom. You discover this, dear heart, that whenever you do something that others don't do or have something that others don't have or say something that others don't consent to, one of two things.

They either have to seek it or kill you. This is the reason why they crucified Christ. Did Christ agreed with the Pharisees as to theology and doctrine? And he didn't attack any of the institutions.

But Christ said that before you're a Christian, you have to have a miracle performed upon you. It isn't enough to be baptized. It isn't enough to agree to this and to be circumcised.

Something must happen to you inwardly. Something supernatural must take place. Immediately, it struck at the very foundation of structure that had been erected so elaborately and carefully by the Pharisees for 400 years.

And they said, this young fellow from up there in Galilee is going to take the whole world after him. And the consequence of his doing that, he's going to cut right into our position, our status, our income, all of this. And so it was religion that crucified Christ.

And that's exactly what he is saying. And it's exactly what will happen. If you are prepared today to stand for the Lord Jesus Christ, then it will mean that you must recognize that you are going to be called heretic.

You're going to be indicted and slandered and vilified by religious people. It's happening today. It's happening all around us in every communion, in every group.

But generally speaking, there's a tremendous debt that's being paid to the people that have dared to stand. For instance, Martin Luther stood against the Church and was indicted by all on every hand. And there has been also the experience of John Calvin who stood.

And we would see Wesley who stood. And we would think of the fact that Charles Finney, in great revival movements throughout this New England area, was being tried in absentia by the Presbytery here in New York City because he dared to use new measures such as the anxious seat. Now I submit to you, my dear friend, that this day is not over.

You will discover that the Lord Jesus Christ is absolutely frank and honest with you when he calls you to himself. He says that you've got to put him above all relationships, above all family relationships, above all career ambitions and all personal possessions. You've got to put him there.

He doesn't say that this is going to be a carry-yourself ride. He doesn't say this is going to be a prolonged Sunday school picnic. He said, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves, beware of men, for they will do this.

But he didn't say stay and stay your hand because you're going to have opposition or misunderstanding. He said, you go. This is what's going to happen to you.

They're going to bring you before their courts. They're going to lay their rods upon you. Your brother is going to deny you and your father is going to turn you over to the authorities.

Your family is going to ridicule you. You're going to be hated of all men, for my name's sake. Now, dear heart, please do not think that this has changed.

We live in the land of greatest liberty and greatest freedom. But do you realize that there are a thousand subtle little temptations to the earnest Christian today that perhaps are even more dangerous than in some of the lands where there's out and open persecution for being a Christian? Oh, yes. It's a terrifying experience, as I learned from a lady up in Toronto, Canada, one of the first families, most prominent family socially.

She'd come to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ. Her husband had turned against her. Her children had turned against her.

Her society friends had cut her. And when she did go among them, they simply tolerated her. Why? Because she had put Christ first in her life.

This still happens. This still happens. You perhaps have not experienced it.

But I will assure you of this, that if you will put Christ first in your life and you will put his word in that place where you render to it that kind of obedience that he expects, that you will find that this is true. What I am trying to say is this, that the Lord Jesus Christ did not put his premium upon conformity but upon obedience. There will be certainly the desire to walk in the sweetest, warmest fellowship with everyone you can.

But the Lord Jesus Christ has made you responsible to serve him, to stand before him, and to witness to him. And he has warned you that this will not always be easy. But notice something else that he has said.

Not only has he warned us, but as the title of the message states, he has instructed us. He tells us first that we are not to perpetually endure hatred and antagonism and opposition. There comes a time when he says that when they persecute you in this city, flee into another.

When it is clear that the testimony that you have been sent to deliver is heard and rejected, then do not think that it is honoring to the Lord to simply stay there and cast pearls before the hard feet of swine who have no intention of taking it. This is not what he has planned at all. He has sent you there not to stay to prove your enduring quality.

It is not a matter of an endurance contents this. He instructs us that we are his witnesses and we are to stay regardless of what happens until his witness is complete. And then when that happens, there's no use to go on any longer.

I think with some of your loved ones to whom you have witnessed and prayed and spoken for years, that there is absolutely no further use in your tormenting them. You'll know when that time comes. He is saying that your purpose is witness, not endurance, but witness, and that he doesn't intend you to indefinitely stay until the message will be ground beneath their feet.

When it's finished, you'll know. Then he also has instructed us not to let the slanderous attacks that are leveled against us deter us in our witness. He said, they called me Beelzebub.

They'll call you the same. Do not let that deter you, because after all, you're just the servant and I'm the master, and they've called me that, and do you not think that you should be as the master? So, whereas at the one hand, he said very clearly, there comes a time when my purpose for your being witnessing to this person or situation is finished, then you'll leave. But he said also, do not let the reactions of the individuals move you before the time.

Let it be a relationship that you have to me. Then notice that he also instructs us that we are to fear not those who would speak, who'd use their tongues, who would slander, would oppose. He said, fear not them, therefore, that have the ability to call you names.

Do not fear these, for there's nothing covered that shall not be revealed and hid that shall not be known. Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Last summer, or a year previously, two years ago, I was up at a camp in New York State and made the statement to a group of irreverent, careless, professing Christian young people who gave no evidence of grace, that God was a consuming fire and was to be served with reverence and godly fear.

When I finished, a missionary home on furlough got up and without making reference to the message proceeded to completely contradict it. And he said, because Jesus Christ has died, no Christian ever needs fear of God again. No fear.

The only thing we fear is the devil. Well, I didn't wish to enter into an argument, but I saw from the conduct of that group of young people after that that they had listened to him and they hadn't listened to me. But I still maintain that this verse, and the many others that relate to it, tells us that we are to fear God who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

This Satan cannot do. The only one that has the authority to say to the goats, go off into the left hand, is Jesus Christ, for such judgment has been committed to him. And so this is what our Lord is saying.

He's commissioned us. I send you. He's warned us they're going to persecute you.

He's instructed us not to leave until his task is finished and not to fear those that would oppose us. But he said, you fear the one that is able to cast, destroy both soul and body in hell. This is the one that you are to fear.

I want to ask you tonight, today, do you have the fear of God before your eyes? If this is truly a part of your experience, that you've seen God in his majesty, in his sovereignty, in his holiness, in his love, in his wisdom, in his power, then you're afraid of God. And you ought to be afraid of God. And as long as you live, it becomes you to be afraid of God.

Afraid to lie, for God hates lying. Afraid to steal, for God hates thievery. Afraid to lust, for God hates lust.

Afraid of sin. Afraid of whispering. Afraid of backbiting.

Afraid of all the things. You see, dear heart, strange isn't it that people have no fear of Jesus Christ, and so they have no burden for the unsaved, no witness to the lost, no concern for the fullness of the Holy Spirit. And then they turn around and have no fear of sin, no fear of slander, no fear of lying, no fear of this, no fear of that.

They've lost the fear of God before their eyes. That person that truly fears God is the converted person. For the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the fear of the Lord is to hate evil because of what one has seen God to be.

Now, if you have truly come to love and trust Christ, then you fear him. John saw him in his resurrection glory, and John fell at his feet as dead. And if you rightly understand Jesus Christ, when you hear him say, Now, I behold, I send you forth, you don't likely pass it by.

This is the Son of God, who said, Go ye, therefore, who speaks with authority and speaks to you. You're afraid not to go. You're afraid not to go.

And when, though there would be those that would attack you and slander you, as he said here would happen, you're afraid to bow to them because you fear God more than you fear them. How often it is that the little boy who's afraid of the night is told by his father, Go out to the woodshed and bring in an armload of wood. And the boy says, Daddy, I'm afraid of the dark.

He said, Listen, the dark isn't nearly as dangerous as I am. You go get the wood. And the boy loses all fear of dark out of his proper and right fear of daddy.

And so it ought to be that you should come to that place in your experience, that rightly understanding who God is when he says, Behold, I send you forth, you bow before him. Say, Yea, Lord Jesus, here am I, send me. I haven't anything to bring you.

I haven't wisdom. I haven't grace. I haven't strength.

I haven't power. I haven't the fruit of the Spirit. I haven't it.

But you said, Go here, my Lord, you'll have to give me everything. And you'll knock at the door until he does. And when he has done that and given you himself and filled you with himself, you'll lose your fear of those that he said would be there.

And when these things come, you'll say he said they'd come because the instructions he has given you have been to teach you not to fear men who can kill the body, but to have a right, proper respect for God. Do you have that today? Oh, dear sinner friend, do you have it? If you're here without Jesus Christ, you're standing over the mouth of hell. Do you fear God? Are you afraid of what God is going to do? You ought to be.

And dear Christian friend, do you fear God? If you do, then you're going to be afraid to be careless and indifferent to the lost about you. For he said their blood will I require thy hand. You're going to be afraid to go on less than the Lord Jesus died to make you.

And so our Lord Jesus instructs us that if we can't be drawn by love and motivated by interest and carried on by sharing with him, then he's going to stand behind us with fear and said, do it or else do it or else. Our God is a consuming fire. It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

He is to be served with reverence and godly fear. Let me ask you, have you been the witness for Jesus Christ this past week that he intended you to be? Have you had that victory of the cross in identification with him you ought to have had? Have you? Have you had the power of the Holy Ghost in your life, producing the fruit of the spirit that he died to make possible? Have you? How are you going to leave the hall to go back into, to go into this week the way you went through last week? Or will there be a sense of fear and responsibility upon you saying, I can't, I can't go and live the way I've lived. I've got to either meet God and let him do with me what he wants to do or toss the whole thing over.

I can't be a fruitless vine that cumpers the ground. And it's the fear of God our Lord instructs us that will motivate us to meet him and obey him and seek him. If it can't be any other motive, he'll resort to this.

Let us pray. Our Father, we come before thee this morning realizing that here in the heart of this city are a company of people that have drawn aside to listen to thy word and sing hymns of praise and worship and adoration to consider the Lord Jesus and his claims upon their life. We leave in just a moment.

We'll be on the street, in the subways, in the bus, in the highways, back in the apartment building. Oh God, hast thou a people here that will render to thee what thou dost deserve from them? Dost thou dost have a people here that take seriously the living word? Is there a people here that can tremble out of fear? Fear of failing to be what the Lord Jesus made possible by his death and burial and resurrection? A people that can tremble in thy presence, fearing that they shall have the blood of sinners upon their hands that thou wilt require at that day? Fearing because they have grieved the Holy Ghost and injured the church by the sins of the spirit, by malice and pride and envy and strife and whispering and backbiting and cherished these things and defended them? Oh God, is there no fear of God before the eyes of thy people? Grant, Heavenly Father, that somehow we shall see thee as the spirit of burning and we shall be afraid, afraid to go on less than what the Lord Jesus died to make us. Let that come into our hearts today.

And when we see the hungry come to our door at midnight and nothing to give them, drive us, draw us, bring us, Lord, to the place where we'll knock until thou dost rise and give us all we need. Great is our responsibility. Teach us, Lord, that one day soon we're going to give an account to thee and let us serve thee with reverence and godly fear for Jesus' sake.

Amen. Shall we stand? Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the communion and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be in abide with each of us now and until Jesus comes again. Amen.

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