

Jesus teaching on preparation for mission

Calling and Power gift & response

The apostles were each conscious of the Lord's call. They could take you to the place they first met the Lord-whether for the fishermen when washing their nets or for Nathaniel Bar-Tholomew when he was under the fig tree and then approached by Philip. Or in Matthew's case at the receipt of custom. Again they each were given power-to preach the kingdom to minister therapy to the weak to cleanse lepers to raise the dead and to exorcise demons. All these were gifts which were not to be withheld from the people by the apostles. These not money were to be their pursuit. By those who turned to the Lord under these His provisions they would be sustained as they were invited to stay some time at homes in various cities to pursue His will-of Peter at the Tanner's house and Paul at Lydia's. The success of this ministry depended on all of these being assiduous workmen (Greek *εργατας*) who would prove worthy of the Lord's hire. The apostles were asked to examine as carefully as one testing gold "who is worthy to stay with" in a city or village.v11The reputation of the gospel in that place began with that home. The privilege of such homes was that they had the greeting of Christians but that afterward it remained-the "peace that passes understanding"-when they heard the gospel. In cases of rejection the peace of God like ships tacking around rocks passed from them *εξεταζω* v 11.Theirs would then be a judgement worse than that of Sodom and Gomorrah who rejected angels-these rejected apostles and the salvation of God which they heralded.

Sheep in the midst of wolves

Jesus warned of danger. In concurrent teaching the "**vision of the Christian**" is dealt with by Matthew. This has to be a separate study because there are almost 60 salient truths about vision which entail a prophetic attitude or vista. Here Jesus says, "Behold I send you out as sheep in the circle of wolves". To be aware of this is to realise how vulnerable missionaries and Christians in new and challenging areas of the world are. The best counsel is "Be as wise as serpents and harmless as doves". The good sense in this is obvious. The serpent can coexist with the wolf by timing its expeditions and moving with care and camouflage-the dove has only its wings of flight. So missionaries to this day must merge with their surroundings quietly or fly or suffer in kindred circumstances. This forward vision has to be noted by all who would serve Jesus-it is not cowardice -it is provision and warning from the lips of the master. Long ages of church development would depend on soldiers of the cross living by these principles. Hudson Taylor himself adopted Chinese dress-cultivated a pigtail and naturalised amongst the people he served. By this quiet witness over time the church has grown because of the exercise of love and spiritual power by prayer and preaching. To those who are judged the promise of the Holy Spirit's especial help can be invoked. He will give words of everlasting challenge and testimony to those who must suffer.. Great words of witness may be the "lullaby"*λαλια* v 19-20-the term used for "words given") of saints who become martyrs and also words which ultimately bring peace to their persecutors-of "Stephen's words, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit".

The ultimate situation of witnesses in the world

Christians sent to the cities -like Jews sent to Israel in the Lord's Day will be hated, they have already experienced situations in the east movement where family members betray Christians to the authorities for punishment. Many are brought to tribunals and summarily punished with unjust sentences and condemned.

The Lord promised, "He who endures to the *purpose* (Greek *τελος* meaning "faithfulness to the kingdom and faithfulness to the end of his days" or "the fulfilment of the kingdom in the coming of Christ"-whichever is God's will for that time) will be saved. The instruction is then given to flee persecution and move to another city. This is apt also for Christian witness in the wider world. When doors close God will open others for missionaries of the cross. The mention of "cities of Israel" is significant for wherever there are **Jews** doing business today it will be possible for **Christians** to live work and minister the gospel. By analogy it maybe we shall not have completely testified in all such contexts before Christ comes. The immense spread of Jews since the era of Roman persecution has under God opened up gospel options alongside trade and vocation in the whole world. The Jew has been God's key to the nations through dispersion persecution and even holocaust-indeed the spread of Jewish people to Russia and the West and the mid-east has made the modern world what it is and been a factor to hasten the coming of the kingdom of God



From Paper to practice What are the provisions of Christ for mission?

How does Christianity best secure a worthy foothold in a city?

What advice did Jesus give to missionaries in dangerous communities?