
Ministry Memo

Sheep in the Middle of Wolves!

by Richard A. Bennett

*Behold, I send you forth as sheep
in the midst of wolves.*

MATT. 10:16

When introducing a lesson on personal evangelism back in 1956, I believe mention of ‘sheep in the middle of wolves’ would have better prepared the class for their door to door evangelism than the introduction I then selected. I am sorry to say that, at that time, I referred to Monroe’s Motivated Sequence’—a salesmanship technique! Born out of a sincere attempt to communicate the gospel it is easy to substitute psychological manipulation for the Holy Spirit’s conviction.

Fifty-four years later, open hostility to Christ in the Muslim world, and growing hostility to biblical principals in the Western world forbode growing difficulties for the Church. Now the likelihood is that each and every believer who is truly committed to the Great Commission, may soon find that growing opposition to purity and truth will merge into growing persecution for the one who heralds God’s Word. If we are to triumph through testings in this dark hour, the Church is in desperate need of a new anointing.

Yes, in an increasingly pagan culture (if our Lord delays His return) there may be a great price to pay by true believers; i.e., the type of believer who is willing to buck the trends and fearlessly stand for spiritual values and biblical convictions in a hostile environment.

Surely this is no hour to sprinkle homiletic lavender water upon a complacent congregation. No matter how clever and popular our presentation of God’s Word may be, this is no time for mild mannered men to stand before mild mannered people to tell them how to become acceptably more mild mannered!

With penetrating insight, R. Arthur Mathews says in his book: *Born for Battle*, “The thing we need to be afraid of today is that the spirit that produces world trends should invade Christ’s mighty army and argue us off the offensive into a compromised co-existence with the world’s attitudes—so that we end up just like the world, taking lessons in French and practicing detente.”

After having served the Lord Jesus throughout his life-time of severe testings and suffering as a missionary to China; in January of 1978 Mathews was told he had the rare and fatal disease known by laymen as Lou Gehrig’s disease. Though he went to be with his Lord in July of the same year, when he heard of the serious diagnosis he wrote: “I am sure the devil counted on this diagnosis as something he could use to persuade me that my active service in God’s army was over and that I should hunt

up a clover paddock and enjoy what was left of life . . . But in 1978, instead of scouting around for a luscious clover patch in which to get fat and lazy, I have concentrated my thinking [and intercession] on the mighty victory at Calvary and the implications of this for the Christian—for me.”

Today, it appears that many Christians scurry for their own luscious clover patch long before the news of their impending Home-call!

How slow we are to learn, and how readily we forget that we are commissioned by the Lord Jesus to be sheep among wolves. Can you imagine anything more foreboding than for a defenseless sheep to be found in the middle of a pack of wolves? But that is the very warning the Lord Jesus gave to His disciples when He sent them forth to preach.

Furthermore, in Matthew chapter ten, the symbolism of a sheep among wolves was not left to the hazy imagination of metaphor. The Lord Jesus quickly explained the consequences of His serious mandate. Today, in this stark world of fallen men (but with the consciousness that Christ Himself is our strength), the test of true discipleship involves our willingness . . .



TO BE APPREHENDED: *Men . . . will deliver you up to councils.* v.17A



TO BE MUTILATED: *They will scourge [flog] you . . .* v.17B



TO BE BETRAYED: *Brother shall deliver up brother . . .* v.21



TO BE MALIGNED: *If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of His household?* v.25



TO BE WARRIORS: *I am not come to send peace, but a sword.* v.34

[**Note:** *The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God.* EPH 6:14. Conformity to a Christ-rejecting culture is foreign to God’s Word. In our earnest desire to communicate let us pray for discernment between ‘contemporizing’ and compromising. The Word of God *will* always disturb the peace of an anti-biblical society.]



TO BE THE CATALYST OF POLARIZATION: *I am come to set a man at variance against his father [and etc.] . . .* v. 35.

[**Note:** During His lifetime, the Lord Jesus either attracted or antagonized His contemporaries. He never neutralized society. So today, if we are unwilling to lose a friend; or be ignored by our family; or be ridiculed by our work colleagues, we may never see the Lord Jesus save a sinner through our witness!]



Loyalty in the Lions Den

Though we may be interested in the prophetic scriptures, let us ever beware of focussing upon the power sequence of successive Gentile empires—as prophesied in the book of Daniel—to the neglect of the ‘lions den’ and the ‘fiery furnace’!

In these days, news comes to my desk with heart-rending regularity. It tells of increasing numbers of faithful brothers and sisters in Christ from around the world who have been ‘Apprehended’, ‘Mutilated’, ‘Betrayed’, ‘Maligned’, ‘Battle-scarred’, and those whose Christ-exalting testimonies and lives are the catalyst of polarization among family and friends. And do not think (if we too are faithful) that we can be totally immune from such polarization and even persecution by retreating to our own personal clover patch.

Notice it was ‘**in the Name of Jesus**’ that the early disciples were forbidden to speak. Have you noticed that the News Media are willing to mention: ‘God’; ‘Prayer’; ‘Faith’; ‘Church’; ‘Pastors’; ‘Peace’; ‘Charity’ and ‘Love’? But seldom, if ever, do they refer to ‘JESUS’ as the only Savior of the world. As believers, let us not try to avoid trouble by following the example of the modern Media!

It is only in the Name of Jesus that we can apply Bible truth to our peers. When confronting the Gay community, or the pornographic plague, or the theory of atheistic evolution, or the New Age agenda or the many other anti-truth practices and philosophies in our world today, we are expected to do so, not from a coward’s castle in a church of like-minded believers, but in the arena of the public marketplace. There the devil’s wrath will soon be aroused and we will feel his breath from every quarter. So the question is posed—“Are we really prepared to buck the trends with the ‘*sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God*’, and take the consequences? I fear the majority of us hope the clover patch will save us from such discomfort!

Not so with our Lord Jesus Christ. Without hesitation, He endured all the pain of which he warned His disciples. And it was His very suffering that was His pathway to His eternal throne!

Behold a Throne was Set Up in Heaven

And I beheld and, lo in the midst of the throne—stood a Lamb as it had been slain . . . REV. 5:6. Here we see the Lamb of God is dignified by His own indignity—“a lamb as it had been slain” is now in the middle of the throne! Poor wolves! Unknowingly, the very ‘wolves’ who had callously despised and cruelly crucified the God/Man, Christ Jesus, had, in so doing, cleared the way for Him to sit upon the throne of the universe! And the consequence for the wolves was solemn indeed.

Yes, the day is coming soon when *The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, [shall hide] themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains: And say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:*

*The ultimate conquest
makes the immediate
conflict so gloriously
worth while!*

For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? REV. 6:15-17.

Through the Apostle Paul, the Spirit of God exhorts us all with these words:

*Thou therefore endure hardness,
as a good soldier of Jesus Christ . . .
If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him:
if we deny Him, he also will deny us.* 2 TIM. 2:3.12.

The ultimate conquest makes the immediate conflict so gloriously worth while!

Be encouraged! Yes, it is tragically possible to deny the Lord Jesus by silence as well as by speech. But if, in a humanistic age, our identity with the despised and rejected Jesus of Nazareth leads to our own rejection—or even worse, then, wonder of wonders, by God’s grace—one day we shall reign with Him!

In the meantime let us remember the words of an American politician who, after losing an election declared: “I would rather lose a battle in a cause that will inevitably succeed than I would win a battle in a cause that will inevitably fail.”