

In the Master's Service

By Scott Moller

"A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master."

(Matthew 10:24)

Growing up in America, I used to think how fortunate it was that I was protected from outright persecution as a Christian, especially given the protections granted in the constitution of freedom of speech and freedom of religion. As the years have gone by, however, we have seen those protections and freedoms encroached upon more and more - so much so that now there is an open war being waged against biblical teachings and Christian beliefs.

In Matthew chapter 10, Jesus sent His disciples out to witness to the nation of Israel. Before He sent them, He gave them instructions and warnings about persecution that still apply for Believers today. In verse 22, He warns that *"all men will hate you because of Me."* This warning is hard to take for those of us who are trying to love our neighbors and be at peace with those around us. But Jesus warned that we would be hated because of Him. It is not a hatred for our actions but because of Who we follow.

In verse 24 (cited above), Jesus explains that a servant is not above his master. Jesus warned His disciples that they would be treated in the same way He was. Jesus only did good and loved people, but the world chose to hate Him for it. The world still hates Jesus today. Since our Master is hated by the world, we should not be surprised when we are hated also. We need to be prepared for it.

In verse 28, Jesus states: *"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."* The natural result of persecution is fear. It is a normal instinct to avoid harm if possible. But Jesus wants us to know that there is a greater danger, even worse than being killed. He warns us that our souls are at risk.

In verses 32 and 33, Jesus says, *"Whoever acknowledges Me before men, I will also acknowledge him before My Father in heaven. But whoever disowns Me before men, I will disown him before My Father in heaven."* Jesus could not have put it any clearer: to acknowledge Him before men means salvation, to deny Him before men means eternal death.

Persecution will bring these warnings of Jesus into sharp focus. American Christians have been able to comfortably sit on the fence, not rocking the proverbial boat. But the world will not let us be lukewarm any longer. Beliefs will be challenged and faith will be tested. Are you preparing yourself? Be in prayer, be in the Word, and be part of the Body.

"But he who stands firm to the end will be saved."

(Matthew 10:24b)

"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first."

(John 15:18)