

## Yeshua Instructs His Emissaries on Their Mission ~ Part 4 To Be Like Yeshua Means – To Affirm Others

Fair warning: This post is a little longer than normal ~

In my last post, Yeshua warned His emissaries that they would be persecuted. If we want to be like Him, we have to share the joy and risks of working together. In this post, we will conclude our mini-series on affirming others.

***"A talmid is not greater than His rabbi, a slave is not greater than His master. It is enough for a talmid that he become like His rabbi, and a slave like His master. Now if people have called the head of the house Ba'al-Zibbul, how much more will they malign the members of His household! So do not fear them; for there is nothing covered that will not be uncovered, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim on the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but are powerless to kill the soul. Rather, fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in Gei-Hinnom. Aren't sparrows sold for next to nothing, two for an assarion [penny]? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's consent. As for you, every hair on your head has been counted. So do not be afraid, you are worth more than many sparrows. Whoever acknowledges me in the presence of others I will also acknowledge in the presence of my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others I will disown before my Father in heaven. Don't suppose that I have come to bring peace to the Land. It is not peace I have come to bring, but a sword! For I have come to set a man against His father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, so that a man's enemies will be the members of His own household. Whoever loves His father or mother more than he loves me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves His son or daughter more than he loves me is not worthy of me. And anyone who does not take up His execution-stake and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds His own life will lose it, but the person who loses His life for my sake will find it. Whoever receives you is receiving me, and whoever receives me is receiving the One who sent me. Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive the reward a prophet gets, and anyone who receives a tzaddik because he is a tzaddik will receive the reward a tzaddik gets. Indeed, if someone gives just a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my talmid — yes! — I tell you, he will certainly not lose His reward!"*** ~ Matthew 10:24-42

Yeshua used a common proverb stated two ways (***talmid*** and ***rabbi***; ***slave*** and ***master***) to show that both must share the same experiences. A talmid or slave is not ***greater*** than the rabbi or master. In Judaism, a talmid shared the daily experiences of His rabbi; in pagan cultures, a slave fought beside His master. Both receive the same treatment. Yeshua used a play on words by saying ***if people have called the head of the house Ba'al-Zibbul*** because "Ba'al-Zibbul" meant "lord of the dwelling." Ba'al-Zibbul was the god of Ekron (2 Kings 1:2-3, 6, 16). The word has two parts: "Ba'al" which was the name for local Kena'ani fertility gods in the Tanakh, and "Zibbul" which means "exalted dwelling." This became a name for Satan himself, prince of the demons. The P'rushim did this very act, accusing Yeshua of using Ba'al-Zibbul's power to drive out demons (see Matthew 12:24). If Yeshua, who is perfect, was called evil, ***how much more will they malign the members of His household!*** Yeshua's followers should expect that they would face similar accusations. God promises to vindicate those who stand firm (10:22).

Yeshua's followers can expect persecution, but they must never be afraid. ***"Do not fear,"*** Yeshua said. The Gospel's mission must be accomplished. The parallel in the phrases (***nothing covered*** or ***hidden*** that will not be ***uncovered*** or ***known***) stresses that the truths entrusted to the talmidim will be known no matter what the opposition. There is also a hint that the knowledge of the kingdom was presently vague or known in only a limited way, but would later be openly revealed by God. Although the truth may be "hidden" or kept secret for a while, it will not remain so. One day the truth will be "revealed" and "known."

Yeshua was speaking of the days of His ministry as the time of using parables, concealing the truth, and being rejected by many. The time of revelation would be either Yeshua's resurrection and ascension (when His followers would fully understand Yeshua's words) or the Second Coming. Yeshua's followers did not understand everything about Yeshua at that time, but one day all their questions would be answered.

The **dark** is not a picture of sin, but of privacy. What Yeshua had told them privately what they were to proclaim publicly. These parallel phrases (**dark** and **light; what is whispered** and **proclaim on the housetops**) describe bold, public proclamation of the truths that Yeshua had taught the talmidim privately. To "**proclaim on the housetops**" pictured the common practice of using roofs as platforms for making public announcements (since in the Middle East roofs were and are flat). The talmidim had a mission and a responsibility to teach what they learned from Yeshua. We have that same responsibility.

The talmidim might face death, yet Yeshua warned them not **do not fear**. People might be able to **kill the body**, but they would not be able to **kill the soul**. The only One worthy of our fear is God **who can destroy both soul and body in hell** [Gei-Hinnom]. It is far more fearful to disobey God than to face martyrdom. The worst that people can do (e.g. kill the body) does not compare with the worst that God can do. While the Greeks believed that only the soul lived on after death, Yeshua says unmistakably that hell is a place of destruction for soul **and** body - the whole person. We are not to be afraid of people, but we are to be afraid of (that is, to be in awe of) God.

This awesome God whom we are to fear is also the God who cares about the smallest sparrow. When we fear Him, we have nothing to worry about because He loves us. **Sparrows** were the cheapest type of living food sold in the market; a **penny** was the smallest copper coin. God is so concerned for them that **not one** falls to the ground without God's consent. That God knows the number of **every hair** on our heads (or the lack thereof for some of us) shows His concern about the most trifling details about each of us.

Because God is aware of everything that happens to sparrows, and because he knows every tiny detail about us, Yeshua concludes that His followers need never **be afraid**. Sparrows *will* fall to the ground; God's people *will* die, sometimes by martyrdom. Yet we are so valuable that God sent Yeshua, His only Son, to die for us (John 3:16). Because God places such value on us, we need never fear personal threats or difficult trials. God cares not only about the "big" problems and situations of life, but also about the tiniest details.

We have a clear choice. **Whoever acknowledges** Yeshua will be acknowledged by the Messiah before His **Father in heaven**. Yeshua's followers would face earthly courts of law where they would have to publicly claim to belong to Yeshua, usually at their peril (Matthew 10:17-25). But for the talmid to acknowledge Yeshua means that Yeshua will claim that talmid as His own before the Father in heaven. On the other hand, the person who **disowns** their relationship to Yeshua would in turn face denial by Yeshua before the Father. Yeshua was making the astounding statement that each person's standing before God is based on His or her relationship to Yeshua.

The Jews believed that when the Messiah came, he would usher in a time of world peace. Yeshua's first arrival would not bring that universal peace. The very nature of Yeshua's claims forces people to make a choice. They must choose to believe who He said He is, or they must choose to reject Him. As Greg Laurie says, **"There ain't no fence sitters."**

Yeshua did not come to bring **peace** but a **sword** (that is, "division") that separates families, friends, and nations. Conflict and disagreement will arise between those who choose to follow Messiah and those who do not. In saying this, Yeshua was not encouraging disobedience to parents or conflict at home. Rather, He was showing that His presence demands a decision. Because some will follow Messiah and some will not, conflict will inevitably arise. As His followers begin to follow Him, their different values, morals, goals, and purposes will set them apart. Do not neglect your family, but remember that your commitment to God is even more important than they are. God should be your first priority. Ironically, those who accept Him **do** find inner

peace because of their restored relationship with God. One day, however, there *will* be universal peace (see Isaiah 9:5-7), for the Prince of Peace will resolve all conflict.

In verses 35-36, Yeshua was quoting from Micah 7:6. In Micah, these divisive conditions led to a yearning for the Messiah; in this context they were caused by the Messiah's coming. Yeshua explained the response to His call - there will inevitably be conflict between those who respond and those who do not. Sometimes the reaction is violent, and angry family members become like *enemies*. In the early Messianic community, Jews who became Messianics were ex-communicated from the synagogues and often shunned by their families. Even today, the road is difficult for Jews or Muslims who turn to Messiah. Their own family members become their worst enemies. Yeshua did not *come* to make such divisions happen; instead, His coming, His words, and His call inevitably will cause conflict between those who accept Him and those who reject him.

Yeshua did not force His followers to break family ties to follow Him (as opposed to some present-day cults). Yeshua was pointing out that His talmidim must have singular loyalty to him. When being a talmid conflicts with family loyalty, following Yeshua must take the priority over natural love of family. If one must choose, one must take Yeshua. Messiah calls us to a higher mission than to find comfort and tranquility in this life. Love of family is a law of God (see Ephesians 6:1-4; 1 Timothy 5:8), but even this love can be self-serving and used as an excuse not to serve God or do His work. We must not be so devoted or enmeshed in family love that we push Messiah into the background.

*Not taking up His execution-stake* applied to the talmidim and to all who want to be *worthy of* Yeshua. To *take up the execution-stake* was a vivid illustration of the humility and submission that Yeshua asked of His followers. When Yeshua used this picture of His followers taking up their execution-stakes to follow Him, the people knew what taking up the execution-stake meant. Death on an execution-stake was a form of execution used by the Roman Empire for dangerous criminals and political prisoners. Yeshua's followers faced social and political oppression and ostracism; yet He warned them against turning back. For some, taking up the execution-stake might indeed mean death; for all, it means denying self. Yeshua's words meant that His followers had to obey God's Word, spread the Gospel, and follow His will, no matter what the results were for them personally.

Soon after this, Yeshua would take up His own execution-stake. Yeshua was speaking prophetically here as well. Yeshua's words became graphically clear after His crucifixion. To *follow* Messiah is a moment-by-moment decision, requiring denial of self and taking up one's execution-stake. Following Yeshua does not mean walking behind Him, but taking the same road of sacrifice and service that He took. The blessing for us is that He walks right beside us along the way.

***"Whoever finds His own life will lose it, but the person who loses His life for my sake will find it."***

This verse is a positive and negative statement of the same truth: Clinging to this life may cause us to forfeit the best from Messiah in this world and in the next. The Messianic life is a paradox: To attempt to *find* (or save) your life means only to *lose* it. A person who "finds" his or her life to satisfy desires and goals apart from God ultimately "loses" life. Not only does that person lose the eternal life offered only to those who believe and accept Messiah as Savior, but he or she loses the fullness of life promised to those who believe. By contrast, those who willingly "lose" their lives for the sake of Messiah actually "find" them. They will receive great reward in God's kingdom. To lose one's life for Messiah's sake refers to a person refusing to renounce Messiah, even if the punishment were death. Yeshua preached on this theme more often than we may wish to acknowledge (see Matthew 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; Luke 17:33 and John 12:25).

It would be easier to give one's life in battle or in martyrdom than to do what Messiah actually asks of us. Not only does Messiah demand loyalty over family, he also demands loyalty over every part of our lives. The more we love this life's rewards (leisure, power, popularity, financial security), the more we will discover how empty they really are. The best way to *find* life, therefore, is to loosen our greedy grasp on earthly rewards so that we can be free to follow Messiah. We must risk pain, discomfort, conflict, and stress. We must acknowledge

Messiah's claim over our destiny and our career. In doing so, we will inherit eternal life and begin at once to experience the benefits of following Messiah.

To give *a cup of cold water* was an important act of courtesy and hospitality. It would not be out of the ordinary and, therefore, would deserve no *reward*. The talmidim definitely were "*little ones*" who were insignificant and despised in the eyes of the world. Those who would *receive* (welcome) the talmidim merely because they were talmidim would not lose their reward. Because the talmidim would come with God's authority, their acceptance by people would test the people's attitudes toward God. It is *that* attitude that leads either to reward or loss of reward.

As a reminder for those you have been following the "Christian Torah" series, it is based upon the following passages from the Gospel of Matthew:

Matthew 5:1 – 7:27	The Sermon on the Mount
Matthew 9:35 – 10:42	Instructions to the Twelve Emissaries
Matthew 13:1 – 52	Parables of the Kingdom
Matthew 18:1 – 35	Instructions on Community
Matthew 24:1 – 25:46	The Olivet Discourse

In my next post, we will move on to Mattityahu 13 as we explore the "Parables of the Kingdom."