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Sermon Notes

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## **Standing Firm to the End**

### **Matthew 10:22**

#### **I. Introduction: We Need to Persevere**

- A. Long and Glorious History of Martyrs for Christ
- B. Long and Inglorious History of Apostates Too
- C. Cushy Life in America Makes Persecution Voluntary and Rare
- D. Today's Message: A Wake-up Call to Stand Firm

#### **II. The Catastrophe: Falling Away from Christ**

##### **A. The "Temporary Christian"**

- 1. Puritans called this person the "Gospel Hypocrite"

Thomas Shepherd: Sermon on Ten Wise and Ten Foolish Virgins

J.I. Packer: Gospel Hypocrites are persons who have been told that they are Christians, eternally secure, because they believe that Christ died for them, when their hearts are unchanged and they have no personal commitment to Christ at all.

- 2. Typical: Earthly benefits from being Christians

- a. silver piece and clean white robe from Constantine
- b. early Congregational New England: you couldn't vote in public elections if not a member of the church
- c. 1950's: Baptist churches the center of social life in the town... to be anybody, you had to be a member of the FIRST Baptist church downtown
- d. many other benefits
  - i) peace of mind

ii) joy of fellowship

iii) freedom from some besetting sins like alcohol abuse

iv) purpose for life

v) sense of hope for the future

3. When benefits stripped away, joy in Christian life wanes

4. When open persecution comes, they quickly fall away

## B. Examples from Scripture

1. Best example: Judas Iscariot

had everyone fooled... they all thought he was great believer

BUT he was a devil from the beginning

Jesus put him in charge of the money bag

WHY? Something had to hold his interest

As soon as Jesus supported Mary's anointing Him with nard (worth a year's wages),  
Judas was gone to the Jewish leaders selling Christ out

2. Other examples:

***2 Timothy 4:10 for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica.***

Disciples in John 6 "Eat my flesh and drink my blood"

***John 6:66 From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.***

## C. The Warning Passages

1. Matthew 13: The Parable of the Sower

a. four kinds of soil

b. beaten down path: Satan immediately snatches the word away

c. rocky soil:

**Matthew 13:20-21** *The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21 But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.*

d. thorns: worries of this life, deceitfulness of wealth choke it

e. good soil: 100, 60, 30 times what was sown

2. Hebrews 6 & Hebrews 10

**Hebrews 6:4-9** *It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5 who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, 6 if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace. 7 Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. 8 But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned. 9 Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case-- things that accompany salvation.*

**Hebrews 10:26-39** *If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. 28 Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." 31 It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. 32 Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. 33 Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. 34 You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. 35 So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. 36 You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. 37 For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay. 38 But my righteous one will live by faith. And*

***if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him." 39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.***

### 3. 1 Corinthians 10

***1 Corinthians 10:1-12 For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. 2 They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 3 They all ate the same spiritual food 4 and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. 6 Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. 7 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry." 8 We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did-- and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. 9 We should not test the Lord, as some of them did-- and were killed by snakes. 10 And do not grumble, as some of them did-- and were killed by the destroying angel. 11 These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. 12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!***

### 4. 2 Peter 2

***2 Peter 2:20-22 If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. 21 It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. 22 Of them the proverbs are true: "A dog returns to its vomit," and, "A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud."***

D. Common Problem: Period of Christian Behavior, Emotion Followed by Apostasy

#### 1. Rocky soil receives word WITH JOY!!!

- a. Hebrews 6: tasted goodness of Word, experienced Holy Spirit's power
- b. 1 Cor. 10: examples in Israel's history couched in terms of Christian experiences: baptism, Lord's Supper, involvement in the life of the church
- c. 2 Peter 2: moral reformation, cleaned up lifestyle

## 2. William Perkins: Cases of Conscience

- General illumination after hearing clear gospel presentation
- Penitence (sorrow and regret for sin)
- “Temporary faith”
- A Taste of the goodness of God
- Zeal in Christian duties
- Deceit of sin
- Gradual hardening of the heart
- Evil unbelieving heart
- Apostasy

Consistent testimony: I tried Christianity... it didn't work for me!!

Real issue: they never had true saving faith. They didn't trust God's word... promises for faithful consistent belief, warnings against apostasy

### E. The Problem: Once Saved, Always Saved

#### 1. What about Bible passages on assurance of salvation?

***John 6:39-40 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. 40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."***

***John 10:27-30 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one."***

***Philippians 1:6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.***

***Romans 8:38-39 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor***

***depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

2. Key question: How do you know that your faith is genuine?? How do you know you're not self-deceived?
3. Biblical answer: true believer survives every test, perseveres to the end

Faith that only starts and then falls away was not a true faith to begin with... perhaps it was the devil's faith, which merely assents that there is one God... perhaps it was the dead faith of James 2 that produces no works

***1 Corinthians 15:2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.***

Thus perseverance through many dangers toils and snares is the surest mark of saving faith

4. Bottom line: assurance of salvation is strong or weak based on your faith and obedience

Assurance is not meant for the willful sinner, who presumes on the grace of God

The more ingrained a habit of sin becomes, the weaker is your assurance

After a while, you may begin to question whether you ever really were a Christian... this is the great danger of sin!!

5. Persecution a time of GREAT TESTING

***Hebrews 3:14 "We have come to share in Christ IF we hold firmly to the end the confidence we had at first."***

Turn it around: He who is saved will stand firm to the end.

F. Past, Present and Future Salvation

1. Have been saved: past... justification

***Ephesians 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--***

2. Are being saved: present... sanctification

***1 Corinthians 1:18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.***

***Philippians 2:12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed-- not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence-- continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,***

3. Will be saved: future... judgment day & glorification

***Romans 5:9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!***

### III. The Crisis: Earthly Abuse

#### A. Persecution in Matthew 10

1. Almost the whole chapter a warning of persecution

***vs. 14 If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town.***

***vs. 16 I am sending you out like sheep among wolves.***

***vs. 17-18 "Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. 18 On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles.***

***vs. 21-22 "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. 22 All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.***

***vs. 34-36 "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to turn "a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law-- 36 a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'***

2. This violent persecution involves some of the worst treatment a person can endure

resistance and opposition to the Gospel

plots and schemes against the Gospel messengers

flight from city to city

betrayal from family members

arrest and public trial

scourgings

death

3. This horrible persecution is a great trial to the faith

B. Stony Soil Crisis

***Matthew 13:21*** “***When trouble or hardship comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.***”

Crisis = Greek for testing... what is it really???

Key: does the plant which sprang up so quickly with such joy have the root system to survive when the scorching heat of persecution comes?

Illus. : My witness at work: “Resurrection, Hoax or History”

C. Real Issues: Expectation of Earthly Comfort, Lack of True Saving Faith

1. Person who falls away has no eternal perspective... they were living for this world
2. Expectation of earthly comfort... no faith to see what God is doing in the world
3. True saving faith is a vital connection to the living God... He will never leave you nor forsake you
4. Though sorely tested and downcast, you can never give up!!!

D. Crisis = Destruction or Purification

1. Persecution will either destroy the false faith or purify the genuine one
2. Illus. Gold refined by fire

***1 Peter 1:3-9 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade-- kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that your faith-- of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire-- may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and***



*honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

#### IV. The Cure: Daily Faith

A. Fear: Fearing God More than Man

***vs. 28 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.***

We constantly care what people think... if someone frowns we get worried and anxious; if someone won't be our friend anymore, it's a devastating loss

The true Christian cares most of all about what God thinks!! The true Christian fears displeasing the Lord more than displeasing men!

B. Understanding: There's Nowhere Else to Go

***John 6:67-68 "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.***

Illus. Noah's Ark... it starts to be tough, to smell, be hard work, tossing & turning makes you seasick... "That's it! I can't stand it any more!!" Where are you going to go? To disobey and fall away from Christ leaves you in great trouble on Judgment Day

C. Warfare: Killing Sin, Advancing the Kingdom

1. Daily warfare against indwelling sin... to fight the good fight of faith, putting sin to death by the Spirit

***Romans 8:13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,***

Illus. Soldier on mountain ridge in Viet Nam... "I'm not going to fight any more... I'VE HAD IT!!" Then, today you'll die!

We must fight sin every day

Surrounding body of Christ of great use here!!

**Hebrews 3:12-14** *See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. 14 We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.*

2. Mentality: I'm live and die to advance the Kingdom

**Acts 20:22-24** *"And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. 23 I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. 24 However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me-- the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.*

D. Expectation: Expecting Earthly Hardship

1. Many warnings of earthly suffering there to prepare us for battle
2. Expectations of earthly comfort devastating to Christian perseverance

Illus. Drill instructor's too easy training

3. Expect a life of hardship in preaching gospel, and it won't surprise you

E. Discipline: Living to Please God

1. Daily habits of personal spiritual disciplines: Bible reading, personal prayer, confession of sin
2. Weekly habits of corporate spiritual disciplines: church attendance, listening to preaching, corporate worship and prayer
3. Constant focus: desire to please God
4. Ultimately: living for reward of God's pleasure

**vs. 41- 42** *Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. 42 And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."*

**1 Corinthians 4:5** *Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.*

F. Faith: Daily Looking Unto Christ Alone

***Hebrews 12:2-3 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.***