

GUARDING THE TREASURE

⁹ *"You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them.*
¹⁰ *And the gospel must first be preached to all nations.* ¹¹ *Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.* ¹² *"Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death.* ¹³ *All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.*

Whether it be a sentry on the perimeter of a military installation or the anti-virus software on my computer, the image of being on guard is one of being fully armed and ready repulse any attack. If the church is the outpost of the kingdom in the midst of the principalities and powers of this world, then we as its members have the responsibility to defend the treasure of God's truth from those who would seek to compromise or destroy it. We are called to stand between the kingdom and a hostile world. To do so, we must be armed with the Gospel and ready to proclaim that Gospel in a hostile environment.

It is at the level of "arming" that we are to function more like the anti-virus software than the sentry. The sentry depends upon his weapon and his training in the use of the weapon. In contrast, the efficiency of the software is due to the ability of the one who created it. We can only be successful if we are willing to be totally dependent upon God. If we try to depend on our own strength, knowledge or ability, then we will surely fail. Our training should be centered on coming to know God and learning to rely on him. We must remember that it is his truth, his Gospel and his kingdom that we are guarding. It follows that the best way to mount a proper defense is his way.

Father, it is your fight that I am fighting and not my own. Help me to know that the victory has already been won by Jesus through the cross and the empty grave. Give me the courage and the words to be a faithful witness to your truth, no matter the circumstances. Keep my focus on my dependence upon you. Amen.