

All That Jesus Taught Bible Study - Part 40

by Zac Poonen

Jesus teaches that true disciples must endure persecution, fear God, and confess Christ, even in the face of opposition, and that this will lead to a division between those who follow Him and those who don't.

Duration: 25:01

Topics: "Persecution And Faith", "Following Jesus"

Description

This sermon delves into the teachings of Jesus from the Gospel of Matthew, emphasizing the reality of persecution for true disciples. It highlights the need for boldness in confessing Christ, the inevitability of division even within families due to faith, and the importance of taking up the cross daily to follow Jesus. The message stresses the significance of losing one's life for Christ's sake and the promise of reward for honoring and supporting God's servants.

Transcript

We continue our study today in all that Jesus taught from the Gospel of Matthew. We've come up to chapter 10. We were looking at verses related to persecution in our last study.

We read in verse 21, brother will deliver up brother to death. When you're a true disciple, even some of your own family members may turn against you. A father against his child, children against parents, and even to cause them to be put to death.

You know, the world hated Jesus Christ so much that they killed him. And if you're a true disciple of Jesus Christ, the world will hate you too. The world is not different today than it was 2,000 years ago.

It's exactly the same. The spirit of the world is still controlled by the devil who ruled it 2,000 years ago and rules it today. And so, not only brother and brother, it says in verse 22, you'll be hated by everyone.

The true Christian is one who endures till the end. We move on to verse 24. In this connection, Jesus says, a disciple is not above his master, his teacher, and a slave is not above his master.

And that's a simple principle. How can we be above the one who is our teacher and our master? Isn't it enough, verse 25, that the disciple becomes like his teacher and the slave like his master? Think of that. It's a principle that applies throughout the Christian age.

The disciple is not above his teacher and the slave is not above his master. And if, what is he leading on to? See the middle of verse 25. If they've called the head of the house Beelzebul, prince of devils, how much more they will call the members of his household by worse names? How much more means worse names than prince of devils? Think of that.

Are you looking for honor and fame as a Christian? Well, you'll get it in false Christianity. You'll get it in Babylon. But if you're a true Christian, a disciple of Jesus, a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ, and one who proclaims the whole counsel of God according to the teaching of Christ, you'll be unpopular, you'll be called a heretic, a false teacher, just like Jesus was called a false teacher by the Pharisees.

They said he's not preaching from the Bible, he's preaching heresy. Like Paul was called a false teacher by many people in his time. And it's exactly the same today.

The people who don't know the Lord, don't fear him, will call the true prophets of God false teachers and heretics. It's been the standard method by which the devil has turned people away from the truth. It's an amazing thing that Christians are more afraid of what they think is false teaching than of sin.

And the end result of that is that when somebody preaches that you can overcome sin, that's called a false teaching. And when somebody else teaches that, well, of course, you'll always keep on sinning till the end of your life, that's called true teaching. Can you believe how the devil has turned truth upside down? Let me repeat that.

Those who preach that you can overcome sin, sin will not have dominion over you, and you don't have to sin, Jesus can deliver you, are considered heretics. And those who say, well, we'll keep on sinning, we'll always be defeated, our nature is bad, they're called the truth speakers. This is the way the devil's turned truth upside down.

Because the master himself was called Beelzebub, Prince of Devils, when he did something good, like delivering people from demons. So when he says how much more, that means how much more the members of his household means that I know that I'm a member of Christ's family by being called worse names than Beelzebub, Prince of Devils. Now some of you may think you're very faithful disciples of Jesus Christ and that you're members of his household or his family.

Can you tell me some of the bad names that people have called you, not for the stupid things you did, but because you stood up for Christ and for the truth of God's word. Only for that purpose, because you stood up for Christ and for the truth of his word. For that purpose, what bad names did people call you? That is the way to find out whether you're a member of his family or whether you're a compromiser who wants the benefits of the kingdom but does not want to stand up for Christ in places where it's unpopular to stand up for Christ.

So many Christians seek popularity. They don't know what it is to stand up for the truth. And I believe we need to hear this word today.

Then he goes on to speak about fear. Do not fear. It's one of the favorite words of Jesus.

Fear not, fear not. Do not fear what people can do to you. You know, there may be a lot of things they accuse you of, but it says here in verse 26, there's nothing covered that will not be revealed, verse 26.

There's nothing hidden that will not be known. You don't have to be afraid of anything. Everything, God is going to bring everything into the light.

The hidden motives of people in what they are seeking to attack you, God will bring it to light, don't worry. The crooked people who try to accuse you falsely, God will bring them to light. Bring it to light.

Leave it to God. There's nothing covered that will not be revealed and hidden that will not be known. The same thing applies to our own life.

If you're a preacher and there's something crooked in your life, be sure that one day it will be revealed. That's why God will walk in the light all the time. And therefore, he says in this also, if I have told you something in the darkness, speak it in the light.

And what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops. So, God wants to speak to us in the darkness. That's a very interesting word.

What I tell you in the darkness, that means in the middle of the night, that's when it's dark. You wake up. Like Samuel, you say, Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.

And God says something to you. We have to proclaim that. You have the habit of listening? When you're in bed at night and you're awake, you say, Lord, speak.

It's one of the best times to hear because the whole world is still. Everybody's asleep. You can hear God speaking to you.

Proclaim it in the light. And what you hear whispered in the ear, the gentle whisper of the Holy Spirit, proclaim it on the housetops. This verse teaches us that God speaks to us.

Not with big trumpet sounds, etc. But in a gentle voice. Softly like a whisper.

And in the darkness. But we proclaim it publicly. And don't fear.

Again, repeat it. Do not fear. Do not fear.

Verse 26 and verse 28. It's like in the end of Matthew 6, we saw Jesus saying three times, So here he says, Do not fear. Do not fear.

And again in verse 31. Do not fear. So there it was, Don't be anxious, three times.

Here it is, Don't be afraid, three times. Three times. Don't be afraid, verse 26.

Don't be afraid, verse 28. And don't be afraid, verse 31. Don't be afraid of those who can kill your body.

Every Christian, if he wants to be a true disciple of Jesus, must listen to this. Don't be afraid of people who call you Beelzebul, verse 25 and 26. Don't be afraid of those who can kill your body, because they can't kill your soul.

It's better to fear him, who can destroy both body and soul in hell. If I fear God, I need not fear anything else on this earth. That's a beautiful verse in Isaiah chapter 8, verse 12 and 13.

When you combine it together, the Living Bible combines it and says, If you fear God, you need fear nothing else. It's a great verse. I've had it in my sitting room for 40 years, and it's encouraged me constantly.

If you fear God, you need fear nothing else. I want to encourage you to believe that verse. You need fear nothing.

Terrible things are going to happen on this earth in the days to come, but you need to fear nothing if you fear God. Then he goes on to speak about our personal needs. Aren't two sparrows sold for a cent? Not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your father, for the very hairs of your head are numbered.

The Lord says you're of more value than many sparrows, verse 31. Therefore, do not fear, because even the sparrow that falls to the ground, the father is watching. Now, think of the millions of sparrows that are on the earth.

They're so cheap, and it's unbelievable. Almighty God could watch. It's so difficult for our mind to comprehend that with all the millions of insects and birds that are on earth, God sees even a sparrow fall to the ground.

Here the Lord is showing us, teaching us of the tremendous ability that the father has. I mean, God is almighty. It's so difficult for our mind to understand.

He says as far as human beings are concerned, the hairs of your head are numbered, verse 30. Now, whether that means that God knows the total number, or whether he knows this is hair number 31, and this is hair number 897. I can believe both.

That God knows the number of your hair. If one hair falls out of your hair, out of your head, when you wake up at night, for example, wake up in the morning, you see a hair of yours on the pillow. It doesn't disturb you.

And if the Lord knew the exact moment at night when that hair fell off from your head, can you imagine the intense care he has over you throughout the night? A lot of people who get fear, dreadful dreams at night, who are afraid at night, think of this verse. Even the hair that falls from your head to the pillow, which you never know when it happened. You only see it in the morning.

It doesn't disturb you. God knew about it. This is the intensity of his care for us.

Everyone, therefore, he says, who shall confess me before men, verse 32, I will also confess him before my Father in heaven. But whoever denies me before men, I will deny before my Father who is in heaven. So we need to see that there's a principle here.

The Lord will deal with us in exactly the same way. He'll confess us before the Father in the measure in which we have unashamedly confessed him before men. This whole section is talking about being a witness for Christ.

And the fear people can have about being a witness because they think, if I'm a witness, I will suffer some loss. Some people are even afraid to witness for Christ in their offices lest they don't get a promotion. I've seen a lot of non-Christians in banks and other places sometimes hang a calendar near their table with a picture of some Hindu idol.

I've almost never seen a Christian hang a calendar with a Christian verse there. They're ashamed of it. They're ashamed to be known as Christians because in a non-Christian world they say, hey, I might lose opportunities for promotion.

The manager won't be so happy with me if he sees that. We're ashamed to confess Christ. But when we have a need, of course we go to him.

That's how it was in Israel. And the Lord said, why do you come to me only when you have a problem? Why don't you go to the gods of Egypt that you've been worshipping? So the Lord says, if you deny me before men, how do we deny him? It's not like Peter saying, I don't know Christ. I don't think any of us would say that.

But we deny him very often by silence. By keeping quiet when we should be speaking. By hesitating or being unwilling to let people know that I'm a Christian.

That's one way we deny him. We deny him when we are unwilling to let people know that we are Christians. So if we deny him, he will deny us.

But if we confess him before men, he will confess us before his Father in Heaven. Now we need to think about that. There's a day coming when Christ will return in glory and we will stand before him.

Who are the ones he's going to be proud of? Do you want the Lord to be proud of you when he comes back? All that Jesus taught. Here's what Jesus taught. He will not confess before the Father those who are ashamed of him on this earth.

Now whatever people may say, oh everybody's going to be equal, we're going to have a wonderful time in Heaven, etc. Remember this, that if you have not been bold enough to acknowledge that you're a disciple of Jesus and by keeping quiet about your faith and silent about your faith you have denied the Lord, you can be sure, you can be 100% sure that when Christ comes back he will deny you before the Father. Now you probably never heard preaching like this.

But this is the truth. All that Jesus taught. What did Jesus teach? Here's what Jesus taught.

Tell people everything that I've taught. Here it is. Verse 33.

Whoever, you call yourself a Christian, spiritual, tongue speaker, whatever it is, you deny Christ before men, he will deny you before the Father in Heaven. It's like saying, I don't know this guy. Because when you were on earth you acted as though you didn't know Christ.

It's a very serious thing. The Lord wants us to be his bold disciples. He doesn't want us to be secret disciples who hide our light under a bushel or put it under a bed where nobody can see it.

He says, put the light upon the lampstand. If people reject you, let them reject you. If they call you bilgeable, let them call you bilgeable.

If they kill you, be willing to be killed. Don't be afraid of men who can kill your body. Be afraid of him who can destroy your body and soul.

If you fear God, you can be sure that nobody can touch you without his permission. So this is all very important. And if you confess him, if you boldly say, Lord, I'm your witness and I'm not ashamed to

confess to others that I belong to Jesus Christ.

Think of the joy that will be yours one day when Christ returns and your turn comes up and your name is called and the Lord Jesus says, I want to confess this person boldly before you Father. He's been a bold witness for me on the earth. I hope we will hear those words.

Well done, good and faithful servant. I want to hear it. And I don't care what loss we have on the earth because we confess Christ, of course, we will lose many things.

Maybe you lose a promotion. Maybe you lose financially. Maybe you lose socially in the sense that your relatives and all will think you're crazy and off your head or whatever it is.

Be bold to confess Christ. In the long run you'll be thankful. And when we confess Christ like this, verse 34, there's going to come a division even in a family.

He says, don't think I came to bring peace. And one way he came to bring peace. Peace on earth, goodwill towards men is what the angel sang.

But it's peace in the hearts and between the true disciples of Jesus because everybody doesn't want peace. Most people want war. So don't think I came to bring peace.

I did not come to bring peace but a sword. A sword that will bring a division between those who confess Christ and those who don't confess him. And the result will be a man, verse 35, will be against his father, a daughter against her mother, daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

This is not talking about the regular daughter-in-law, mother-in-law fights which are universal among non-Christians and everywhere. This is talking about one of them standing up for Christ and therefore a division coming between that person and the other person who doesn't want to follow Christ all the way. We see that happening all the time.

Here is a son, for example, who's gripped by the truth of the gospel and he wants to take baptism. He wants to really live for God and give up sinful ways and wholeheartedly follow the Lord. And the father doesn't want that.

And so what is the result? A division comes between the father and the son or between a mother and the daughter. And very often the mother will cry or the father will cry and say, don't treat us like this badly and all that. And the son and daughter is in a bit of a problem.

What shall I do? Well, that's where the sword comes in. You have to love Jesus more than you love your father or mother. And a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.

Verse 36. Throughout these 2,000 years of Christianity, it has been true that the true disciples of Jesus, they love peace, they want peace, but their relatives, so-called believers, will turn against them. It's religion that will turn against, that will make people turn against the true disciples of Jesus.

And the history is full of examples of religious Christians, unconverted religious Christians, who persecuted the true disciples of Jesus Christ, very often much more than the heathen and the non-Christian. Absolutely fulfilled in these 2,000 years. And in such situations, if a man loves his father or mother more than he loves Christ, the Lord says, you're not worthy of me.

I don't want to ever hear Jesus say to me in the final day, you're not worthy of me. You loved your father or mother more than me, and you wanted to please your father and mother more than you wanted to please me. Would the Lord have to say that to any of you? All that Jesus taught, he who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.

He who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Do you compromise your Christian convictions in order to please your son or your daughter? You're not worthy of Jesus Christ. I don't want the Lord to say to me in the final day, you're not worthy of me.

I want to love Jesus more than I love my parents, and more than I love my son or daughter. If they are wrong, I have to stand against them and say they are wrong. There are so many Christian parents who are partial towards their children, and don't stand up for the Lord against their children.

The end result is those children go away from the Lord, and the parents go away from the Lord. But if the parents had stood up for the Lord and loved the Lord more than they loved their children, their children would have become disciples of Jesus. Consider this.

Have you been soft towards your children and compromised and lowered Christian standards? Do you stand up for the Lord when you see your daughter dressing in an immodest way and following the fashions of the world? Or do you love her more than you love the Lord, more than you love the Lord's testimony? That will determine whether the Lord will deny you in the final day. And he went on to say in verse 38, If you don't take up the cross and follow after me, you're not worthy of me. That's a message which we need to hear today.

It is the missing message, the main missing message in Christendom today is the message of the cross. Take up your cross daily and follow me, Jesus said. Otherwise you cannot be my disciple.

And that means you've got to die to yourself, your self-will, and do the will of God. Otherwise it is impossible to follow him. Let me say this.

Those who imagine that you're following Jesus without denying your own will every day and doing the will of God in the power of the Holy Spirit, I want to say to you that you're fooling yourself if you think you're following the Lord. You're not. And when he speaks here about finding our life in verse 39, speaking about this earthly, soulish life which includes our reputation and our honor and our dignity, etc.

And we try to preserve our reputation and our honor and our dignity. That's like finding our life. You lose it.

Be willing to lose your reputation and your dignity and your honor for the sake of standing up for Christ. That is losing your life. One day you'll find it.

If you lose your life for my sake, that means because you stand up for the Lord, you are treated like rubbish and garbage by the earth and evil spoken of and called bilgeable and persecuted. You're losing your life, your soul life, your dignity, your reputation. You'll find it one day.

Then he gives these concluding words to his disciples as they go out. It's amazing words. He says, remember this.

If anyone receives you, he's receiving me. What an honor. You know that if you're a true devoted servant of Jesus Christ, faithful to him, anyone who receives you is receiving Christ.

And he who rejects you is rejecting Christ. It's an amazing thing. The reverse is also true.

And he who receives a prophet, in the name of a prophet, will receive a prophet's reward. If you honor a prophet of God, because you recognize this is a man who's speaking as the mouthpiece of God and you honor him as that, you can get a reward just for that. Amazing.

And if you receive a righteous man, here you find a man who's standing up for holiness and purity and standing against sin. And you receive him as a righteous man. I respect this man because he's standing up for the Lord.

You receive that reward. These are amazing words. And then the last word in verse 42.

First he speaks about the apostles, received by, as Jesus himself. Then prophets, righteous men, apostles, verse 40. Prophets and righteous men, verse 41.

And finally, an ordinary disciple. And then a little child, even a little child, verse 42. See how it goes down.

Apostle, prophet, righteous man, a little child, and the easiest thing to do, give him a cup of cold water, you'll get a reward. What the Lord is saying is, if you honor my servants, God will honor you. And if you do something for my servants, help them in some way, even such a small thing like giving a cup of water, God will make sure that he repays you because God is not the debtor to any man.

That's a wonderful truth you can always be sure of. If you've done anything for the Lord or for his people, or for his servants, you can be absolutely sure the Lord will repay you. Now I'm talking about the true servants of his, not the multitudes of fake preachers and crooks that go out in the name of Christ today, which constitutes 90% of today's preachers.

Steer clear of them. Don't believe every spirit, but discern and honor the true servants of the Lord. God bless you.

We'll continue in our next episode.

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