

Song: The Nights (Avicii)

INTRODUCTION

That was fun. I played that song, because I like to have some fun, but most of all, the words are a message to not let your life slip away.

“One day you’ll leave this world behind, so live a life you’ll remember.” That is my favorite line of that song. Though that is a secular song telling people to live life to the fullest, in this life, we know there is more. We know that we do have a heavenly father that is telling us to “live a life that He will remember;” to “light a fire they can’t put out;” and “carve your name into the shining stars;” all images of making a mark on this life that cannot be erased.

Sometimes we need a kick in the butt and that is what this second part of the tenth chapter in the book of Matthew is; it is a kick in the butt. It is Jesus in “basic training” with his disciples. Up to now, it’s been a sort of circus of miracles, and they’ve had front row seats.

Jesus has shown them that he is the prophesized King of Israel and the compassionate shepherd of Israel that heals the sick and broken people. He has shown his power over the sea, by calming the storm that night in Galilee. He casts out demons, who scream and kick as they are thrown into the abyss. He has raised the dead and told people that their sins are forgiven. He has called a group of followers, and maybe so far, their only discomfort has been sleeping out under the stars and taking long walks for miles at a time. He has taught them the most sublime teachings that only God could come up with, and has brought conviction to the core of their soul.

But now they are getting ready to be sent into the field on their own mission. As they go over the next hill into each village, they do not know what is coming at them. Jesus is getting them ready; just as an Army Drill Officer's job is to toughen up the new recruits; they will either survive basic training or they will wash out. If they survive basic training, they have a much better chance at surviving the real battles that they are about to face.

In these passages, there are three or four really difficult sayings. We like the Bible to always be like Romans Chapter 8 – talking about God's overcoming love for us. But now Jesus is going to shine the spot-light on our love for him and God; to see if we have any.

#### OUR CONDITION

You see as people, fear clings to us. It limits what we will do and accomplish in our service to God. We find ourselves also because of our sinfulness to substitute other lesser things into the life of adventure that God has for us.

When we follow Jesus and choose to live for him, we will find ourselves facing hardships more difficult than we can imagine, but there will be more grace than we can imagine, and greater rewards than we can imagine too.

#### MAIN POINT

To live a life that was remembered: (1) Jesus wanted his followers to know the opposition that they would face. (2) Jesus wanted his followers to not fear men, but God. (3) and Jesus wanted his followers to see who they loved the most.

#### VERSES 16-22

Let's begin by reading verses 16-22 of chapter 10,

Matthew 10:16–42 (ESV)

*<sup>16</sup>“Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. <sup>17</sup>Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, <sup>18</sup>and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. <sup>19</sup>When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. <sup>20</sup>For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. <sup>21</sup>Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, <sup>22</sup>and you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”*

Wow, what a slap in the face for the disciples. They are going to be sent out, but Jesus goes deeper; he explains not so much what this mission trip is going to be about; but what their lives are going to be like from then on.

**To live a life that would be remembered, Jesus: wanted his followers to be aware of the opposition that they would face.**

Just like that Army drill master; his job is to show the dangers they will face. Jesus wants us to see that the opposition will go all the way to the top of society; Kings and rulers will oppose them. Also, the opposition will go all the way to the bottom, even to the members of their own households; even members of your family are infected with this hate of God that will spill over to you. Jesus was saying, “don’t be deceived. I am casting you out as sheep into the midst of wolves.” If you don’t not know of this opposition, it is because you have not yet tried to take the gospel of the kingdom to them yet; you have not yet let it be known whose side of the battle you are on.

Difficult saying #1: *“But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”*

Jesus says, one of the most difficult things in this passage. He is saying, when all of this persecution is happening, you need to hang on until the end or you will not be saved. That is a tough saying. We don't like to think that way. We like instead to think as we always do, that I prayed the magic prayer, and I will go to the magic kingdom. But Jesus is telling them that if they have genuine faith then they will endure. This is a teaching or doctrine called the Perseverance of the Saints. You and I are “saints” and that means believers. The teaching is that true followers of Jesus will endure or persevere until the end of their lives, even through persecution.

R.C. Sproul, a theologian, changes the word from “perseverance” to “preservation.” He explains that it is true that Christians will endure or persevere, but also that they are preserved. God is the one that causes them to persevere; He “preserves” them.

This doctrine is a difficult doctrine. We can't just gloss over things that we don't like or understand in the Bible. We need to dig and understand even if it causes us to feel uneasy. We need to feel uneasy, because we need to challenge ourselves; to see if we really do have faith. That is much of what this passage is about.

Another place that Jesus says, “the one who endures until the end will be saved is in Matthew 24:11–13, later on in this same book,

<sup>11</sup> And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. <sup>12</sup> And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. <sup>13</sup> But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Most of us will not be dragged before courts or face persecution at this level. But notice that what Jesus is talking about here is false teachers that will draw people away and their love will grow cold. What God calls most

to, is continuing to persevere in believing the truth of the gospel. It's not a prosperity gospel, not a watered-down gospel like Joel Osteen's. But a Gospel where Jesus died for sin, and we are obligated to live holy lives and live for Christ. If that is not where you are at, you need to ask yourself, "what am I believing in?"

John 10:27-29 (ESV), Jesus said,

<sup>27</sup> My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

The perseverance of the saints really is the preservation of the Saints. It is God and Jesus who hold believers in their hands.

Jesus tells his apostles that God's plan is that they would be dragged before kings and rulers. When facing kings and rulers, their need was to focus on God and should not worry about what they would say. **Their union and connection to God was to have more to do with what would come out of their mouth than anything else.**

We see this when Peter and John, early in their ministry after Jesus ascended to the Father. They were preaching in Jerusalem to great effect and the Sanhedrin, the ruling council of the Jews, told them to stop preaching about Jesus. They were imprisoned, an Angel let them out, and the next day they were preaching again. The rulers were enraged and dragged them in.

Their response was in Acts 5:27-33 (ESV)

<sup>27</sup> And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, <sup>28</sup> saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” <sup>29</sup> But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. <sup>30</sup> The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. <sup>31</sup> God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. <sup>32</sup> And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.” <sup>33</sup> When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them.

So, we see that Peter and John were brought before the spiritual leaders of Israel, by God’s plan to witness to them. They kept Christ as the issue and shared the gospel to them. That is what it means to give witness; to make Christ the issue. And the result, because they made Jesus Christ the issue, was persecution, but God saved them from their opponents’ intent.

**Peter and John, with God’s help, were living a life that would be remembered. They experienced the opposition that Jesus spoke about, because they made him the issue.**

#### VERSES 23-31

Let’s continue with our passage,

*<sup>23</sup>When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. <sup>24</sup>“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. <sup>25</sup>It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household. <sup>26</sup>“So*

*have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.<sup>27</sup> What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops.<sup>28</sup> And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.<sup>29</sup> Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.<sup>30</sup> But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.<sup>31</sup> Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.*

**To live a life that is remembered, Jesus wants his followers to not fear men, but God.**

Jesus continues with the theme of persecution but tells them to “have no fear of them.” When you are persecuted in one place, flee to the next town. It sounds like the life story of the Apostle Paul; he would get beat up in one place, and by God’s strength go to the next town to preach the gospel again. “Just keep moving” was Jesus’ message.

Jesus makes a logical argument; if the master is insulted, you the disciple will be too. If the rulers of the Jews called him “Beelzebul,” the name they used for Satan, which means, “Lord of the flies,” then you will be insulted too.

Now, what can you think something that draws flies, even faster than your McDonalds hamburger? How about a cow pie or dung heap? There are flies all over it! So here the Lord of all creation shows up and they call him, the Lord of the dung heap; how much more will you be insulted!

Jesus knew this would be his true and we see it in the Old Testament in

Isaiah 53:3 (ESV)

<sup>3</sup> He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

John 1:10–11 (ESV)

<sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup> He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

Jesus knew he would be rejected, and he knows we will be too.

Matthew 5:11–12 (ESV)

<sup>11</sup> “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

**What is it that causes people to hate Christians and the message of Christ?** Quickly, two things. First, they know that if there is a God that they are accountable. It means there is “right and wrong;” it means that they will be judged, by God and they can’t do whatever they want. That is a basic human desire to be “god” of our own lives; to do whatever we want. As humans, we resist the idea of law. In the end, God will call unbelievers, “workers of lawlessness.”

Secondly, a person that is not a believer is a member of Satan’s Kingdom. I remember when before I was a Christian, if someone were publicly talking about Christ, I would have this sense of embarrassment that would come over me; I just wanted to get out of there. This was an example of spiritual oppression of Satan. I was in his kingdom, and he didn’t want me to hear of the Kingdom of God.

The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4:3–4 that the God of this world, Satan, the true Lord of the cowpie has blinded the eyes of the unbelievers,

<sup>3</sup>And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. <sup>4</sup>*In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

Consequently, men, who are part of Satan's kingdom are always making laws to try to keep the message of Christ out; whether it is the classroom or the whole country – do you not think that Satan is pulling the strings on this? Jesus promises that the evil plans of those who hate Christ will be made to be seen. <sup>26</sup>*“So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.*

Those that refuse to believe will hate us when we make Christ the issue.

Difficult saying #2: <sup>28</sup>*“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”*

The Apostle Paul teaches us in Romans 5:1 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We do have peace with God, knowing that Jesus has born our sins. But Jesus teaches us to fear Him, “who can destroy both the soul and body in hell.” How do we reconcile that?

He is saying fear God more than men. Fear men less than God. No matter how much trouble and abuse or loss our faithfulness leads us to, we need to fear not doing what God wants, more than doing what men do not want.

Jesus continues in verse 32,

<sup>32</sup>*So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, <sup>33</sup>but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven. <sup>34</sup>“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. <sup>35</sup>For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. <sup>36</sup>And a person’s enemies will be those of his own household. <sup>37</sup>Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. <sup>38</sup>And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. <sup>39</sup>Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. <sup>40</sup>“Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. <sup>41</sup>The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward. <sup>42</sup>And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”*

**To live a life that would be remembered, Jesus wants his followers to see who they love the most.**

Jesus states that our love for God needs to be greater than our love for our family members and even our own lives.

The sword that Jesus brings is the sword that cuts us at the point of our loves. Any love that we have that competes with our love for God has to be cut away. This is what causes discord among our family. They hate it that someone else has our first love and allegiance.

People want to imagine peace on Earth and think that it will only come when we can do away with religion. John Lennon's song "imagine" was about this. But Jesus is saying that people cannot be at peace with each other until they are at peace with God. And of course, that comes only through the gospel and believing in Christ.

Difficult saying #3: <sup>33</sup>**"but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven."**

Jesus wants us to see our loves, because what we love will be that which we are willing to suffer, and that which causes us to overcome our fears. It will result in who we choose to honor.

#### CONCLUSION

To live a life that was remembered: (1) Jesus wanted his followers to know the opposition that they would face. (2) Jesus wanted his followers to not fear men, but God. (3) and Jesus wanted his followers to see who they loved the most.

We need to think about what this means to us. How do we face our fears? How do we live a courageous life that will be remembered? How do we endure hardship to the end?

There are a few things revealed in this passage that will help.

Jesus is calling his followers to see the bigger picture. They have been just following along to see what will happen, but now he is asking them to get involved and go into every village and preach the Kingdom of Heaven. To be a part of the story.

As a church we are coming together in groups to watch the TV series "The Chosen." I have watched some of the interviews on YouTube of the cast members. Some of them are Christians, some of them are not. All of them

would say that they are grateful for the chance to play a significant part as an actor in a TV series that is a worldwide phenomenon.

### **How would you feel if you were an actor on The Chosen?**

Well, the fact is that “The Chosen” is fiction. But we have been given a real part in the real show; your life on Earth as a follower of Christ; that is the real show and you have a part on the stage.

This show is an epic battle between the forces of evil and of God. All of heaven is watching and well as the demons of the dark side. It is important to keep that in mind. The song said, “My father told me, Son don’t let it slip away,” and “One day you’ll leave this world behind, so live a life you’ll remember.” We need to see our part in the big play as important.

If I think back on my own life, almost all real ministry steps come with fear.

When I was asked to take on the ministry at the Arizona Boys ranch when I was just six months old in the Lord, I was full of fear, but I went and continued for 3 years. When I went out on Campus and shared my faith at Arizona state, I went in fear. When I moved to California and went to the Juvenile Hall each week in San Bernardino, I had to face fears. When Jeanine and I met neighbors and started a Bible study, I had fear. When I joined staff with a missionary organization and had to raise my support, even though I hated the phone and stuttered: I had to face my fears.

I share these few examples to show that ministry comes with fear. But I am like you, I still let fears overtake me. I fail way more often than I have succeeded. There are probably thousands of examples of failure.

### **So, how do we live courageously as God wants us to?**

**The way to get courage is to get love.**

Courageous people still have fear, but people will fight for what they love. If your family is in danger, people will fight. Their fear is overcome by their love. People will have courage when they see the peril of those that they love. We need to see the peril of those around us that are not reconciled to God. They are in grave danger of hell - and we need to respond.

**Another way to get courage is know that God is with us.**

No matter the amount of difficulty, it is God that gives the strength. When we share the gospel, we know that we are doing God's will.

1 Thessalonians 2:2, 4 (ESV)

<sup>2</sup> But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. <sup>4</sup> but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.

Another way to have courage is knowing that God takes weak things and makes them strong. All of the Apostles were ordinary men that had an encounter with Jesus. So are we ordinary and encounter Jesus.

As we conclude, I want us to think about an area of our life that we need to have the courage and strength of God. Maybe we need to share the gospel with a friend or family member or neighbor or roommate.

Let's pray together and confess our dependence on God and ask for courage to make our life something to remember.

Prayer

- We have a part to play – we need courage.

- Confess our fear
- Lord increase our love of you. Help us to spend time with you, so that we can see the reality of the world and its needs. But also of you. Increase our love for you.
- Increase our love so that we will do what you want us to.
- Jesus said, if you love me, you obey me. Lord increase our love.

Amen.