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Hard Sayings of Jesus; Matt 10:34-39
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Introduction – Hard Sayings. You probably won't find these verses in the Precious Moments Bible. You probably won't find these verses on Twitter or Instagram with the caption "favorite Bible verse." These and other verses like these are the hard pills to swallow, the bitter medicine that is not palatable to the taste but good for the soul. These verses, while not as popular, are just as true as John 3:16. Just as true as Psalm 23. But just because they are not easy doesn't mean they are not good and right and true and for the building of our faith.

It is in these types of passages where we see the proverbial rubber meets the road, what actual faith will look like in the actual world in which we live. Jesus is preparing His disciples for what they will surely encounter and what they must know in order to keep the faith when keeping the faith is challenged to the core. It was medicine for them then and it is medicine for us now.

- I. The Prince of Peace Brings a Sword?!? (vv34-36)
 - a. Luke 2:14 – Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased.
 - i. That means Jesus brings an other-worldly, eternal, divine peace to those who belong to Him. To embrace Christ as Savior and Lord is to discover a peace that passes all understanding, a peace that this world cannot give. When we know Christ, we are reconciled to God and have a peace that is everlasting, a rest of soul that is found in nothing and none other than Jesus. He brings an indescribable peace.
 - b. 10:34 – Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. Jesus' coming will bring sharp division that will sever the strongest of earthly ties and bonds.
 - i. Even down to the members of one's own household.
 - c. The angels sang on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased. Jesus says, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth." Which is it? Peace or not peace? In a very real sense, the believer experiences the greatest peace possible in this life while simultaneously experiencing the greatest strife in this life.

- d. Here's how that happens:
 - i. There are two paths of life – the way of the world and the way of the Lord.
 - ii. While we walk the way of the world, we experience a degree of peace with our fellow sinners. We are all in darkness. We are all living according to our own flesh and desires. We are all headed in the same direction, away from God. We strive to find happiness in our indulgences and temporary pleasures. We're in pursuit of the same things that serve self. We exist as friends with the world but enemies of God.
 - iii. God's grace awakens us to the deadness of sin and the eternity of separation from God and the glories of Christ and the meaning of life and transfers us from darkness to light. We are born again to a brand new life, free from the penalty and power of our own guilt and sin. New in Christ with the hope of eternal life. We now have a peace we have never known, a joy abundant, a hope eternal. But when we become friends with God, we become enemies of the world. And sometimes some of our closest, very dearest loved ones are still in the world. When we find ourselves one with God, we find ourselves at odds with the world.
- e. That's how Jesus brings peace to those who belong to Him and does not bring peace to those who belong to Him.
- f. When the lines are drawn between sin and salvation, family and faith, which peace do we prefer? The temporary peace of the world or the eternal peace of God. Both will cost us something. One will cost us now. One will cost us forever. Any peace comes with a price.
- g. One more thing to note before we move on. There is coming a time when Jesus will bring ultimate, final, eternal peace. That occurs at His second coming.
 - i. When Jesus returns, He will take these two paths and make them one under Him. The kingdoms of this earth and the kingdoms of men will be subjected to the kingdom of Christ. He will put away sin. He will put away the Enemy. He will usher in a new heaven and a new earth. Wrongs will be made right. Death will be discarded. Jesus will reign victorious and we will reign with Him. No war. NO unrest. No strife. No sickness.

Peace, everlasting peace and joy. The lion will lay down with the lamb, and we will study war no more. No more division. No more separation. NO more racism. No more hatred. NO more violence. Peace that will endure forever.

- II. Family Can Be a Great Obstacle to Faith (v37)
 - a. This is not only the most surprising obstacle to faith because everyone believes surely my family will support me in following the Lord. It's also the most hurtful. When family force you to choose between them and following the Lord, it's heart-wrenching. It hurts because the hurt comes from someone you love. It hurts because it reveals the spiritual state of your loved one.
 - b. What does it mean to love father or mother more than Jesus? What does it mean to love son or daughter more than Jesus? The best way to answer that question is to stay right in the context of those verses.
 - c. So what does Jesus say right before He says that? Vv35-36.
 - d. So my understanding of this verses goes like this:
 - i. If we embrace Christ as our greatest treasure and love Him and live for Him, there is a great possibility that our love for Jesus and our following Jesus and our adherence to the teachings of Jesus will at some point make waves in family relationships because not everyone in our immediate families and not everyone in our extended families are believers.
 - ii. So we will disagree on doctrine. We will disagree on morality. We will disagree on decisions. We will disagree, and they can be little disagreements and they can be massive disagreements. They can be friendly disagreements and they can be heated disagreements. They can be disagreements that entail foreseeable consequences for not following the Lord or they can be eternal consequences for rejecting the Lord.
 - iii. If we prefer our relation to our relative over our relation to the Lord, we will compromise our faith, we will deny Jesus (v33), we will change our position, we will walk back our adherence and allegiance to Christ in order to keep the peace.
 - iv. Jesus says, "sometimes it will be a sword and not peace."
 - v. When we give up our faith in order to keep our family, we love family more than we love Christ.

- vi. Sometimes this preference for family happens in very subtle and slight ways. How often do we set aside the things of the Lord in order to please or prosper or advance our kids? How often do our faith priorities take a second seat to our secular priorities? I'm not just talking about church attendance and participation, but I'm not talking about less than that. How about family devotions? How about family prayer? How about discipling our children?
- e. When family or family disagreements take precedence over our faith, we show that we love family more than we love Jesus.
- f. Listen: saying "no" isn't fun. Seeing division isn't easy. Being on the brunt end, being accused of not loving or of judging or of being legalistic or not supporting is not easy and it hurts when you see members of your own family choose to reject God's will and Jesus as Lord.
- g. But some things are more important. Some things are worth standing for. Some things are worth dying for. Some things are worth division.

III. Self-preservation Can Be a Great Obstacle to Faith (vv38-39)

- a. V38. To put it in our words – whoever doesn't take his electric chair and follow me is not worthy of Me.
- b. What does that mean? Again – let's stay right in the context to find the answer. Look at v39.
- c. If all we are trying to do, if all we live for, if our main agenda in life is to do whatever it takes to make this life as comfortable and easy and risk-free as possible, we will never live for Jesus, and eventually we will lose what we work so hard and compromised so much and missed so much to keep.
- d. The only way to find real life is to give it freely to the Lord! It won't always be comfortable. It won't always be easy. We'll have to take some risks. But the greater joy is not keeping this life – this greater joy is giving this life and finding life abundant and eternal in Christ!
- e. God's way is always counter to our way. We actually find life when we give life!
- f. What if Esther didn't lose her life? What if Daniel didn't lose his life? What if Shadrech and Meshech and Abednego didn't lose their lives?

Conclusion