

**Theme: How is it that Jesus the Prince of Peace did not come to Bring Peace, but a Sword?**

**Text: Matthew 10:34-42 (NKJV)**

<sup>34</sup> " Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. <sup>35</sup> "For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; <sup>36</sup> "and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' <sup>37</sup> "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. <sup>38</sup> "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. <sup>39</sup> "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it. <sup>40</sup> " He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. <sup>41</sup> "He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. <sup>42</sup> "And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."

*In the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, who together with the Father and the Holy Spirit we ever strive to put first place in our hearts and lives, dear fellow redeemed;*

Does the Bible contradict itself? Did Jesus, who is the Incarnate Word, ever contradict Himself? While there are Bible critics and detractors who make the fallacious claim that there are contradictions in the Bible, yet we have been blessed with the conviction and have learned to appreciate the fact that there are absolutely no contradictions to be found anywhere in the Bible.

Whenever questioners or nay sayers make the faulty claim of there being contradictions in the Word of God, it can be due to a variety of reasons. Some revelations on the surface sound like they conflict with other parts of the Bible. But upon further examination and study it can be clearly seen that there is no conflict whatsoever in Holy Scripture. Still other cases involve individuals who don't like a certain teaching in the Bible and so they will try to discount it or explain it away by saying that this teaching is a contradictory error that crept into the Bible during the recording of it. And therefore on account of this misguided reason, they don't feel compelled to go along with that particular teaching in the Bible.

What Jesus tells us in the opening verses of our text is one of those places whereupon first reading of it we may find ourselves scratching our heads and thinking to ourselves, this doesn't seem to match up with what we know about Jesus. Our text starts out with Jesus saying to us, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword." How could Jesus, who is the Prince of Peace, tell us that He didn't come to bring peace but rather a sword?

We know and rejoice in the wonderful fact that Jesus' primary reason for coming into this world was to bless us with peace. On the night of Jesus' birth, the angels could be heard above the Bethlehem hills glorifying and praising God concerning the newborn Savior saying, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." (Lk. 2:14) Jesus came as the Savior of the world to work out our salvation and thereby impart peace on earth to sinful mankind. As our Savior from sin Jesus blesses us with spiritual peace, for through the knowledge and faith in His gift of forgiveness of sins we have peace of conscience. Also through that same priceless gift we enjoy a peaceful coexistence with the holy God, knowing that He is not angry with us nor will He punish us on account of our sinfulness. The ultimate peace that our Savior Jesus Christ came to bless us with is everlasting perfect peace in heaven.

Since it was Jesus' primary mission to bless us with this extraordinary gift of peace which the world cannot give us, why does He tell us in our text that He did not come to bring peace on earth but a sword? The answer lies in what happens in our human relationships when we believe in the Lord Jesus and are committed to following His every Word and teaching, but those we are acquainted with or related to are not willing to go along with everything Jesus stands for or teaches. It is disagreement over the words and teachings of the Lord that causes a breakdown in our human relationships and disrupts our peaceful coexistence with them.

A good example of this is what happened in the early church. At the beginning of the New Testament church believers were primarily made up of Jews who accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. When and where this took place, there were cases where their relatives did not convert to Christianity. In many of those instances, unbelieving Jews were so upset with their relatives who became Christians that they disowned them whether they were their father, mother, son, daughter or any other kind of close relative. Not only did unbelieving Jews ostracize Christian relatives from their family, but they also went so far as to persecute them even to the point of having them imprisoned and put to the death.

When we hear of these cases in church history, it makes complete sense to us why Jesus said that He did not come to bring peace on earth but a sword. We can also see how there can be situations where close relatives are set against each other over teachings in the Bible. While the teachings of Christ can serve to unit people in mind and spirit so that they live in peace and harmony with one another, nevertheless when individuals reject His teachings, their sinful heart can cause them to set themselves up against confessors of the truths of God, yes, even against family members. Sadly, opposition from relatives over religious teachings is one of those crosses that Christians are called upon to bear for Jesus' sake.

The loss of peace between family members, even to the point of violence, over differences of beliefs continue to this day. Extreme cases of this nowadays is not so much found with Jews as it is with Muslims. You are no doubt aware of Muslim countries where it is illegal to convert to Christianity. And the punishment for doing so can be the death penalty. Devoted Muslims have been known to turn in their family members to the authorities for becoming Christians.

Of those cases reported in the news of Muslims converting to Christianity who are then subjected to severe persecution I have not heard of any buckling under and going back to Islam for the sake of family peace or in order to escape persecution, even persecution resulting in death. Why? Because they were not willing to give up the precious gift of forgiveness, life, and salvation which their Savior had purchased and won for them.

This is where Jesus' paradoxical saying in verse 39 comes into play where He declares, "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it." The finder of his life is the one who is frightened to lose his life as a Christian and so he denies Christ to save his skin. But in the process he ends up losing his life with God as a child of God. The one who loses his life for Jesus' sake ends up finding it, that is, he passes from death to life everlasting as a believer in Christ Jesus.

While we are not faced with such extreme cases in our country of losing our life for Jesus' sake, still we can encounter the loss of peace in the family when a relative does not faithfully hold to the teachings of God's Word or has chosen to live in a way that is contrary to God's commandments. When and where this happens, how do we respond to it? The temptation is to keep the peace in the family by compromising our beliefs founded on the Word of God by overlooking the differences or embracing the faulty teaching. In situations where loved ones have decided to live in a sinful manner, the temptation is to remain silent about it and not rebuke and reprove them or to accept what they are doing and justify it by saying it is not contrary to God's will.

If we are tempted to compromise our beliefs by going along with error or sinful behavior and then try to justify it by saying this is okay with God, then we need to keep in mind what Jesus says to us in our text in verse 40, "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me." Speaking to His disciples who are to serve as His spokesman to the world, Jesus is basically saying, those who receive you by accepting the teaching of Christ you bring to them they are thereby receiving or accepting Jesus and the heavenly Father who sent Jesus to reveal God's truths to us. If on the other hand people are not willing to accept the clear Word of God that is brought to them by servants of the Word, they are not simply rejecting the called servant, but also Jesus Christ Himself. So, if any are inclined to reject the spiritual counsel brought to them by a minister of the Word, they need to be absolutely certain as to whether they are standing on God's Word of truth or falsehood.

What does Jesus say to us if we were to give way to such temptations for the sake of peace in the family? In verses 37 and 38, He says to us, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me." By compromising the Word of God in order to keep peace in the family we would be showing a greater attachment to family members than to the Lord. This would be a violation of God's foremost command of loving Him above all others. If ever we would place family above God, may God have mercy upon us by working repentance in our hearts and forgive us for Jesus' sake.

Whenever a family member were to fall prey to false beliefs or a sinful lifestyle, rather than trying to keep the peace by going along with this, wouldn't we be showing love both for God and our loved ones by trying to help them see the error of their ways. In so doing, we would be helping them in establishing and building a lasting relationship with the Lord wherein is found spiritual and eternal peace. This is the kind of peace that we want for ourselves and the kind of peace that we want for our family.

In those situations where we have to choose sides either with God or our relatives, we need to answer for ourselves why we would side with God even when it means bearing the cross of a Christian. As children of God we side with God, because He is our Lord and Maker. And yet, greater still is our motivation to side with God because of His tremendous, unconditional love that He has shown us in Christ Jesus. God the Father sent His only begotten Son into this world so that we could become His redeemed children and heirs of eternal life, and thus be blessed with spiritual and eternal peace. This was an extraordinary sacrifice on God's part. It meant making His beloved Son the sin-bearer of the whole world and punishing Him for all our many sins. God did this for us so that when we fail each day to love Him as we ought, we can be forgiven of our unloving ways through Jesus Christ.

Yes, Jesus came to this world to bless us with spiritual and eternal peace as our Savior. But when we become His followers by believing in Him, we can anticipate times when our peaceful relationship with others even with family will break down and we will be opposed by them. This is bound to happen when one is willing to accept all the words and teachings of Christ and another is not. The loss of peace over God's Word is one of those crosses we are called upon to bear as a Christian. As Jesus was willing to bear our sins and suffer our punishment on the cross, may His redeeming love move us to be willing to bear the cross of a Christian.

Thanks be to God who blesses us with spiritual and eternal peace through our Savior Jesus Christ. May we never lose this peace, but ever hold on to it by confessing Jesus by faith and faithfully following His words and teachings. Amen

- Mark Gullerud