

The Lord Gives More Teaching and Encouragement to His Disciples

Matthew 10:34-42

Matthew 10:34-42 - *“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. ³⁵ 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’; ³⁶ and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household. ³⁷ 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. ³⁸ And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹ He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.*

⁴⁰ “He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. ⁴¹ 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. ⁴² 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.”

Background Notes

“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword” (v34).

“But wait!” you may say. “I thought that the Bible taught that Jesus came to bring peace. Isn’t that what the angels said at the time of His birth? *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”* (Luke 2:14).

So why did the Lord say that He didn’t come to bring peace, but a sword in Matthew 10? Answer: The Lord certainly did come to bring peace. Ephesians 2:13-17 teaches about the peace that Christ brings: peace in the Church between Jews and Gentiles, who formerly were divided and hostile to one another. *“Now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off, and to those who were near.”*

Our Lord certainly came to earth to bring peace. In fact, He is the **only** way to peace from the guilt and penalty of sin. I trust that you are experiencing that peace. Because Jesus died on the cross for your sins, you can have peace **with** God. And you can have the peace **of** God in your heart and your life because you know that your sins are eternally forgiven.

Besides our personal peace, it is only through the Lord Jesus that we can have true peace in our relationships, our fellowships, our ministries and our churches. And furthermore, true and lasting peace will only come to earth through the Lord Jesus Christ. Peace will come when He returns – and maybe He will return today!

Well then, how do we explain what the Lord said: *“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword” (v34)?* He meant that when Christians tell others about Jesus, people who don’t know Him will become uncomfortable - and even hostile - to the believer. When some members of a family receive Jesus Christ as Savior and start to talk about it to other family members who don’t know Him, there will be division in the family, not peace. The Lord quoted Micah 7:6 (v35-36). Back in Micah’s day there was disunity in families because they were not following the ways and words of the Lord. Sadly, what was true in Micah’s day is still true today.

If you are in a Christian family, you can be thankful for the unity and peace that you’ve experienced in your Christ-centered home. However, many families are composed of Christians and non-Christians, and this brings division - and sometimes it brings outright hostility. Some Jewish Christians have been literally disowned by their families because of their faith in Christ. And sometimes a Muslim family feels an obligation to kill a family member who converts to Christianity.

Often when someone accepts Jesus Christ as Savior, division in their family will follow. However, verse 37 teaches that allegiance to the Lord should take precedence over family ties: *“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.”*

Doctrinal Points

1. The demands of discipleship are hard.

“And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me” (v38).

What did the Lord mean when He said to take your cross and follow Him? Did He mean we should patiently bear our problems as we follow Him? No! Some Christians think this verse means that if they still follow the Lord in spite of difficulties and burdens, poor health, or a major trial in life, that they are “taking up the cross.” In fact, sometimes you may hear a Christian describing a particularly difficult life problem as “That is my cross to bear.” That is **not** what the Lord meant when He said “take your cross and follow Me.” In Roman days, “the cross” was a means of execution. Taking up the cross meant death! **So “taking your cross” means to lose your life for the sake of Christ.**

This doesn’t mean that every Christian must literally die for his or her faith, but “taking your cross” certainly includes the possibility of martyrdom. At this very moment there are Christians who are being martyred for the sake of Christ. “Taking your cross” and “losing your life” for the sake of Christ means to be such a devoted disciple of Jesus that you would be

willing to die for Jesus. It means there's no place or desire in your life for self-gratification, and it means that you would be willing to die for the sake of your faith in Jesus.

That doesn't leave room for many true disciples, does it? The demands of discipleship are **hard**. Alienation from one's family for the sake of Christ is hard, but taking up the cross is even harder! Many Christians have "presented themselves as living sacrifices," in line with Romans 12:1, but many living sacrifices have not stayed on the altar of sacrifice! How many times have we "crawled off the altar" because of fear or selfish interests? The demands of discipleship are hard.

Following Christ means much more than "becoming a Christian." It means being a disciple, and the demands of discipleship are hard.

2. The rewards of discipleship are sure.

"He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it" (v38).

How do you "find your life" by losing it? The more you give of your life for the Lord and His interests rather than for to yourself and your own interests, the more you will find real joy and satisfaction in life. Have you found real joy in life? If not, then your life is too **self**-centered! Start spending more of your time serving the Lord by serving others, and you really will find more joy and satisfaction in life. You will find that your life is fulfilled. Try it! You'll like it! And this principle of "losing your life to find it" can operate life-long.

Many of you know that I love to ski. In fact, this coming week I'll be running a Bible study ski retreat in Colorado! Let me tell you about one of the greatest ski days of my life. A number of years ago, I took a group of Young Life high school teens skiing. It was a beautiful day and the snow was perfect, but I couldn't get to the slopes right away because I had to take care of getting rentals for the group. When I finally got everyone fitted with boots and skis (etc., etc.), the morning was just about gone. Then I ended up instructing the beginners and picking up those who had fallen! I never did get to ski very much that day, but building relationships with those teenagers and sharing Christ with them later that evening made it one of the most joyful and most satisfying and fulfilling ski days of my life! One of the teens who became a Christian on that trip is now married and has a Christ-centered family! What could bring more joy than that?

That kind of reward is what "finding your life" is all about! **That** is what the Lord meant when He said, *"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).*

And reward for discipleship is not just for this life. There is eternal reward for discipleship! God keeps a record of every act of service that's done for Him. It's a great reward, and any disciple can receive it. The Lord said that if you encourage a teacher or preacher, or encourage someone to live righteously, you will share in that person's eternal reward! *"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" (v41). Even as small an act as giving a cup of cold water in the service of the Lord is recorded and rewarded! The rewards for discipleship are sure.

Practical Application

Even you can give a cup of cold water!

"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" (v42).

The phrase "*in the name of a disciple*" is important here. The Lord was not talking here of humanitarian aid, although humanitarian aid is good, and it certainly has its place. But the Lord's point here was that even the **smallest act of service that is done to help further the cause of Christ** will be remembered and rewarded.

Even you can give a cup of cold water! I could give many examples. Let's take the children's ministry at your church. Sunday school, or nursery, or Awana, or VBS, or summer camp. Many "cups of cold water" can be given to encourage busy teachers or to help young children. But you might say, "There's no way I can help with kids' ministry!" Well, there are lots of other areas where you can give a cup of cold water! You can help with church mailings. You can provide snacks for various events. You can drive someone to church or Bible study, or to a doctor's appointment. You can help by opening your home for hospitality, or by taking meals to families who are in need, or by writing follow-up notes. You can help by calling parents, or by being a "listening ear" for people who are grieving - or even just by saying "Thanks!"

There are many ways **you** can "give a cup of cold water" to help and encourage those who are carrying a heavy ministry load. **Even you** can give a cup of cold water!