

Genesis 22:1-14

Psalm 13

Romans 6:12-23

Matthew 10:40-42



HE WHO RECEIVES ME RECEIVES HIM WHO SENT ME

We first review Matthew 10:34-39. *“Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵For 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; ³⁶and a man's foes will be those of his household. ³⁷He 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; ³⁸and he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it.”¹*

• *“I have not come to bring peace, but a sword”* (v.34). Jesus said he came to set people against each other – even family members. How can this be? After all, the prophesied Messiah is called *“Prince of Peace”* (Isa 9:6). Why would this *“Prince of Peace”* set a man against members of his own household? Why would he say, *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God”* (Matt 5:9), and then say, *“I have not come to bring peace on earth”*? And don't the writings of Paul insist on striving for peace and unity within the church? Did he not begin each of his epistles with, *“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,”* or something similar?

In other words, Jesus did indeed bring peace, at least to believers, but this was not his purpose, nor has the world ever been at peace since he came. The *“sword”* he brought was the sword of separation, which would separate and consecrate believers into the family of God – in the world but not of the world, destined to live one short life in the world, and live forever in the kingdom of God.

Peace is what you and I receive when we receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. If you have Christ, you have in your heart a peace the world cannot understand. Even when things look dark or there is suffering, you have this special peace in your heart. The bible says, *“Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us”* (Rom 5:1-5).

Are there issues of concern on your mind today? The NLT says, *“Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”* (Phil 4:5-7). The *“peace of God”* comes with Jesus. It *exceeds* the world's understanding. If you have Christ, you have his assurance that whatever is happening now pales into insignificance compared with blessings yet to come.

The Bible says clearly that we are to strive for peace with all men. A review of Romans 12:14-21, for example, shows that Christians are indeed instructed, *“If possible, so far as it depends upon you,”* to *“live peaceably with all”* (v.18). But, even in the church, we cannot let our desire for peace and unity lead us to tolerate doctrine refuted by the words of Jesus himself – doctrine such as, *“Jesus is not the only way to God,”* etc. These issues, Jesus said, will not bring peace. Until they are resolved, they will inevitably set men within the church against each other. Thus we understand why Jesus said, *“I have not come to bring peace, but a sword”* (v.34, above).

¹ Bible quotations are from the RSV.

We must leave pride and selfishness at the cross and pray for peace and unity in our church – unity based on our uncompromising belief in the claims Jesus made concerning himself. It is vital that we do this. Jesus himself said, *“You will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he”* (John 8:24).

The reality of this division in the modern church was emphasized in 2006, in a *Pew Forum*² survey of people who identified themselves as Christians. The survey found that 46% didn’t agree with the statement, *“Belief in Jesus Christ is the only way to be saved from eternal damnation.”* In 2008, a *USA Today* cover story titled *“Believers OK with Many Paths”*³ concluded, *“Religion today in the USA is a salad bar where people heap on upbeat beliefs they like and leave the veggies – like strict doctrines – behind.”*

• *“I have come to set a man against his father...”* (v.35ff). This is certainly a serious and demanding expression of the cost of discipleship, and of the importance of a Bible-based faith in the identity of Jesus. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the One who gave his life for us, and rose from the dead to signify our redemption and eternal life. He is not just one way to God; he is the *only* way to God.

But peace and respect within the family, especially with our parents, has been vital since the beginning: *“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you,”* says the fifth commandment (Ex 20:12). Thus it is no small thing when you become separated from a parent, or any member of your family, on account of your faith in Christ. But Jesus said this would, at times, be the inevitable result of his coming. Of course I am to love and honor everyone in my family, but I must not forget my Savior’s words, *“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”* (v.37).

• *“He who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me”* (v.38). Crucifixion was a common Roman punishment. Crosses along the roads out of Jerusalem were a common sight for all to see. Jesus gave his life on the cross, and only God knows the number of men and women since then who have surrendered themselves to torture and death rather than deny their faith in Christ.

You and I may have to sacrifice our personal ambitions, the ease and comfort that we have enjoyed, and the career goals we might have achieved. You may have to lay aside your dream of reaching the wealth or worldly positions that seem to be in the realm of possibility. You will certainly have to sacrifice your will, because no believer can ever again do what he likes unless it agrees with the will of God. William Barclay wrote, *“In Christianity there is always some cross, for it is the religion of the Cross.”*⁴

• *“He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it”* (v.39). You may “find” your life by doing mostly as you please, nearly always putting your own pleasure and ambition ahead of, and in place of, the will of God. Live your life this way, Jesus said, and you will lose it.

But if you can surrender even some of these selfish desires and ambitions to Christ, and begin to serve him by being kind to others, helping those in need, and telling people about Jesus, you will “find” the life God created you to live, and with it, everything else you ever really wanted in the first place.

Matthew 10:40-42. *“He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me. ⁴¹He who receives a prophet because he is a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward, and he who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. ⁴²And whoever gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.”*

The grace of God is given in all its fullness to those who receive the gospel. Anyone who receives a prophet as such, *“because he is a prophet,”* receives the full measure of God’s grace.

The same is true of anyone who receives a Christian (that is, a *righteous man*) *because he is a Christian*. The one who gives even the smallest thing (a cup of cold water) to the most humble disciple because of who he or she is *“shall not lose his reward.”* Considering all this, we can see what a great privilege it is to serve others, *and to receive others*, in the name of Jesus Christ who said, *“He who receives you receives me!”*

2 <http://www.pewforum.org/iPoll.aspx?ipoll-keywords=paths%20to%20god>

3 *USA Today*, June 24, 2008, p.2D.

4 *Barclay’s Daily Study Bible (NT)*, Matthew 10:34-39.