

The Sword of Christ

“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.”
Matthew 10:34

“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”
II Timothy 3:12

Preparatory Reading: Matthew 10; II Timothy 3; Psalm 3, 7, 31, 35, 38, 55, 69, 71, 109.

Introduction:

1. Our youth have just returned from a retreat with the theme of letting their light shine before others.
2. It would help them and us to consider the cost of discipleship that following Jesus Christ involves, for it is not a life of fun in the fast lane or a walk in the park, though with Him it has the greatest joy.
3. I recently told you about a person suffering for converting from the family and national religion.
4. It is our experience, with all true saints, to watch some leave and despise us for various sinful causes, and these can be family members, friends, or close friends in the body of Christ that ate with us.
5. The tale of the martyrs, which begins in the Bible, is one of horrible suffering and family betrayal, just exactly as Jesus had prophesied and promised to His disciples during His earthly ministry.
6. The astounding thing is that worshippers of the true God (Christians) often persecute the most, as in cases from Cain and Abel to John wondering with great admiration at the great whore (a church), which take us from Genesis 4 to Revelation 17, and the events are consistent with all that is between.
7. Truly following Jesus Christ is not for the casual believer, fainthearted, naïve, thin-skinned, etc.
8. If our Captain suffered on earth, and He has called us to it, we can also endure the pain and shame.
9. This may not be an exciting aspect of the gospel, but it is part of the gospel you must remember, for if you are going to man up and be the Christian you should be, there will be trials and persecutions.
10. Carnal, casual, and contemporary Christians cannot grasp this conflict, for they have not heard it taught nor experienced it, because the world and devil are at peace with them for their compromise.
11. In this study we are not dealing with persecution that arises from your foolishness or sins that make you obnoxious in the sight of others, but rather from following Jesus Christ (I Peter 4:12-16).

JESUS CHRIST BRINGS A SWORD

- A. Jesus prophesied and promised a dividing sword (Matthew 10:34-38; Luke 12:51-53).
 1. Much of this chapter deals with the topic, persecution of Christ’s disciples, which can be seen in the lessons of verses 11-15, 16-18, 21-24, 25, 28, 32-33, and 38-39.
 2. Though Jesus is the Prince of Peace, He did not come to bring peace on earth, as most believe and teach about Him, yapping especially about keeping family peace.
 3. Contrary to bringing peace with family and friends, Jesus divides by His sword.
 4. In case you did not understand, Jesus specified dividing close family relationships.
 5. In following Jesus, those most supportive of you will oppose your religious choice.
 6. There will be war in families over the person and doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 7. You cannot avoid this sword, but by compromise, then you are not Jesus’ disciple.
 8. If you choose family over Christ (and He knows the tight bond of family), you are not worthy of being a Christian or follower of Jesus Christ, for family is nothing.
 9. If religious animosity will divide the blood bond of families, what of mere friends?
 10. Rather than rebel at this doctrine, embrace it and watch prophecy fulfilled in you!

- B. The recorded historical example is division (John 7:43; 9:16; 10:19; Acts 14:4; 19:9).
- C. Jesus promised hatred (John 7:7; 15:18-19; 17:14; I John 3:12-13; Matt 10:22; 24:9).
- D. Paul warned and encouraged converts that much tribulation was a fact (Acts 14:22).
- E. Paul prophesied that godliness would surely bring Christian persecution (II Tim 3:12).
- F. We have had occasion (preaching against preterism) to consider the war against the saints prophesied in Daniel 7, II Thess 2, I Timothy 4, and Revelation 12, 13, and 17; this warfare is not by pagan enemies but rather by a false church using a secular arm.
- G. Therefore, as with Noah's eight and Elijah's 7000, the truth will be held by only a very small remnant, and it will be the experience of the faithful to see many disappear.
 - 1. The O.T. church excluded all but two before they reached Canaan, had only 7000 saints in Elijah's day, had only 45,000 willing to return from Babylon to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel, and lost nearly the entirety of the ten tribes to Assyria.
 - 2. The N.T. church saw a vast crowd of seekers disappear in John 6, had only 120 waiting for the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, had only a few that Jesus accepted at Sardis, and no one would stand with Paul when he had to appear before Caesar.
- H. It is Christ Himself, the true Christ of the Bible, that causes the division, for your flesh, the world, and the devil hate Him with all their beings and power; consider the gospel's reception by the best of the Jews and the Greeks (I Cor 1:22-24).
 - 1. To some, they can dwell at great length on the thought, "He Is Altogether Lovely."
 - 2. To others, He is the illegitimate offspring of a German soldier and Jewish whore.
- I. Isaiah prophesied of times when godliness would make men a prey (Isaiah 59:14-15).
- J. It is for Christ's sake apostles and converts are taken to a sheep slaughter (Rom 8:36).

DISCIPLES COUNT THE COST

- A. Family division is prophesied and promised: you must count the cost (Luke 14:25-33).
 - 1. This lesson is more than discipleship, construction budgets, or military strategy.
 - 2. It is making a calculated decision to follow Jesus Christ regardless of the costs.
 - 3. Though you might try for both – Christ and your family – His sword will divide.
- B. James and John's mother asked for positions of honor for her sons, but the response of Jesus indicated that such honor carries with it a very high price tag (Matt 20:20-23).
- C. A prophet and friends counted the cost too high, but not our Paul (Acts 21:10-14).
- D. John Mark should have counted better, for he would not pay it (Acts 13:13; 15:38).
- E. Paul wrote to Timothy that ministers endure hardness as good soldiers (II Tim 2:3).
- F. For this reason we are cautious, careful, and slow to baptize – cost must be weighed; most children or teenagers have no clue whatsoever about the cost of discipleship.

SURPRISE! CHRISTIANS ARE THE ENEMIES

- A. Hard to imagine or believe, but the greatest enemies and persecutors are Christians, so rather than worrying about Islam, think instead about family and friends here today!
- B. Look in the beginning: it was two brothers worshipping the same LORD (Gen 4:1-8).

- C. Look in the end of scripture: John saw a church drunk with saints' blood (Rev 17:1-6).
- D. Did David fear and stress over the Philistines? Or over friends that had turned on him?
- E. Who took better care of Jeremiah? The Chaldean Nebuchadnezzar or his own nation?
- F. Who persecuted Jesus and Paul the most? the pagan Egyptians? No, Jehovah's Jews!
- G. The apostolic prophecy and warning is of persecution from Christians (II Tim 3:3,12).
- H. These enemies will hate and reject you ... for God's glory (Isaiah 66:5; John 16:2)!
- I. Beware of enemies in the church (Acts 20:29-30; Gal 2:4; I John 2:19; Rev 2:20-24).

FAMILIAR FRIENDS MAKE GREAT ENEMIES

- A. The greatest test of love for Christ is how you will rank Him against other loved ones.
- B. It is these defections and enemies that hurt the most, but it will occur, for the value of anything is what you will exchange for it – loved ones and your own life for Christ!
- C. Who were the enemies of Moses in Number 12? His sister and his brother! Grasp it!
- D. David encountered the type in Saul, Absalom, Ahithophel, or Adonijah – Jesus felt the antitype, Judas Iscariot – of a familiar, communing friend (Psalm 41:9; John 13:18).
- E. Who hated Micaiah and put him in prison? The pagan Syrians, or Ahab the Israelite!
- F. Jesus' brothers did not believe on Him (John 7:1-5). Why? Ask Eliab (I Sam 17:28).
- G. The Lord's friends spoke to one another and said he was beside himself (Mark 3:21).
- H. Why did Paul and Barnabas separate company (Acts 15:36-41)? Nepotism (Col 4:10)!
- I. Division in families, which we have seen often, is by prophecy (Matt 10:21,34-37), and if it is true of families, then arguing from the greater to the lesser, what of friends!
- J. Hear Paul to the Galatians, Am I your enemy because I tell you the truth (Gal 4:16)?
- K. Get used to kisses by enemies, and love those who lovingly rebuke you (Pr 27:5-6).

HATRED PROPORTIONATE TO THE STANDARD

- A. You might think the better you live the fewer enemies – but it is actually the opposite!
 1. Consider Paul's warning, it is godly living in Christ that will bring it (II Tim 3:12)!
 2. Consider David's experience – adversaries because of His goodness (Psalm 38:20).
 3. What is the standard? Jesus Christ the Lord! He was rejected, tortured, and killed.
 4. The closer you live like the Lord Jesus Christ, the more you will suffer like Him.
 5. Men hate *truth*, so more of it brings more enemies (Ga 4:16; Jn 8:45; II Tim 4:3-4).
 6. Men hate *righteousness*, so more of it brings hate (Jn 3:19; I Jn 3:12; II Tim 3:3).
 7. Men hate *success*, so more of it brings envy (Mat 27:18; I Sam 18:7-11; Ac 13:45).
 8. Men hate *wisdom*, so more of it brings fear (I Sam 18:12-16,28-30; Mat 22:15-46).
 9. Men hate *favor*, so more of it brings hate (Gen 27:41; 37:4,11; Ac 7:9; Job 1:9-11).
 10. Men hate *virtue*, so more of it brings animosity (Eccl 4:4; Gen 4:5; Luke 16:14).
 11. Men hate *leadership*, so more of it brings conspiracies (Ps 106:16; II Cor 10:7-18).
 12. Before falsely accusing, torturing, and crucifying Jesus, they accused Him of any charge that came to mind (Luke 7:34; 11:15; John 8:48; 10:20).

- B. After Jesus, who stands next? *John the Baptist*. Was he loved (Lu 7:33; Mat 14:1-12)?
- C. After John, who is next? *Paul*. Was he loved (Ac 22:22; I Cor 4:13-16; II Co 12:15)?
- D. After Paul, who stands next? *David*. Was he loved (I Sam 16:11; 17:28; 18:11,17; 22:9-10; 25:10; 30:6; II Sam 15:1-6,10-13; 16:20-23; I Kings 1:5-7)? See Psalm 35!
- E. After David, who stands next? *Moses*. Was he loved (Num 12:1-3; 16:1-3,41-42)?
- F. Time would fail to consider Joseph, Elijah, Jeremiah, the prophets, the apostles, etc.
- G. The world was not worthy of these heroes, yet men killed them (Heb 11:36-38; etc.)

HATRED PROPORTIONATE TO THE LOVE SHOWN

- A. You might think the more you love others, the less likely they will turn to be your enemies – but that is not the truth. Do you think you can love more than Jesus or Paul?
- B. Paul learned at Corinth that the more he loved them the less they loved (II Cor 12:15).
 1. How could anyone dislike or reject the apostle Paul? Pride. Envy. Self-righteous.
 2. Paul had to spend many chapters in both epistles defending himself to a church he had fathered by the gospel (I Cor 3:6,10; 4:15). They should have defended him!
- C. See a Psalm by David about Jesus and himself – what does love get you (Ps 109:1-5)?
- D. See other indications by David of this profane treatment by enemies (Ps 35:12; 38:20).
- E. Consider the horrible story of Joash murdering Jehoiada's son (II Chron 24:20-22).
- F. What else could Jesus have done for Israel in any way? Yet they bloodily killed Him.
- G. God asked the church, What more could have been done for my vineyard (Is 5:1-4)?
- H. The hatred of the wicked (of any kind) against the righteous will easily overlook and ignore anything or everything done for them – think of ungrateful children rebelling!

ENEMIES LOVE COMPANY – OTHER ENEMIES

- A. Pilate and Herod, former enemies, became friends by hatred of Jesus (Luke 23:12).
- B. But add to that how the Jews solicited their hated Roman governor (Ps 2:2; Ac 4:27).
- C. The O.T. is full of confederacies against Israel, though these independent nations at others times hated each other and warred against each other (Ps 83:1-8; Isaiah 8:9-10).
- D. The Pharisees hated the Sadducees, unless Jesus was the common foe (Matthew 16:1).
- E. What in the world would cause nations to give their rule to the popes (Rev 17:13,17)?
- F. Those who reject us for the truth's sake will slobber around with others of like kind.

IT CAN GET WORSE THAN YOU THINK

- A. Because the human heart is more deceitful and perverse than you know (Jer 17:9), family or friends can and will do things against you that you thought impossible.
- B. Atrocities against the martyrs, recorded by Foxe and others, reach beyond the mental ability to grasp, considering that their only offence was loving Christ and His gospel.
- C. The betrayals Jesus promised are found in history over and over again (Mat 10:21,35).
- D. Why did the Jews try to kill Jesus for healing a man's withered hand (Matt 12:9-14)?

- E. Why did the worshippers of Jehovah demand Jesus' crucifixion death by Rome?
- F. How could Corinth make life so difficult for Paul and his beautiful feet by Christ?

IMPLACABILITY IS THEIR SPECIALITY

- A. What is implacability? The inability to satisfy a person no matter what you attempt.
- B. John and Jesus came as opposites, but religious Jews hated them both (Luke 7:31-35).
- C. When He confronted the Jews about John, they would not answer Him (Luke 20:1-8).
- D. Is this where we list the pagans of Lystra, who turned a 180 on Paul (Acts 14:11-19)?
- E. You are damned if you do and damned if you don't with these insatiable enemies.
- F. They will accuse you of not discussing things with them, but refuse to meet with you!
- G. They will accuse you of not discussing things with them, because you give them truth.
- H. There is nothing you can say or do to appease these abjects, for they bent on murder.

THE ACID TEST

- A. Family (the same DNA) and friendship (different DNA) are nothing next to scripture; neither have any role or value once opposite positions are taken on the word of God. (This does not eliminate the duty of Christians to honor authority, even to pagans).
- B. The only relationships that count are those based on scripture and continuing on scripture, for anything else is absolutely and totally vain (Ps 101:3-8; 119:63; Tit 1:8).
- C. If a person will not obey scripture as previously held, then they are not worth having.
- D. If a person will not honor authority as scripture teaches, they are not worth having.
- E. If a person will not maintain godly kingdom priorities, they are not worth having.
- F. Here is the crux of the matter: if we are standing on God's word, we cannot care less!

THE UNGODLY ACTIONS

- A. Of course, we know what they did to Jesus throughout His life and by killing Him.
- B. And the record in both testaments and history's martyrs show us insane cruelty.
- C. Festus accused Paul of being mad, though all he did was preach the truth (Acts 26:24).
- D. Corinth accused Paul, like Miriam and Korah did to Moses, of too much authority.
- E. They will cut us off, cast us out, and would kill if possible, as a blind man (John 9:34).
- F. Remember, there is nothing they would not do, if they could get away with it, for the same spirit that motivated the Jews against Jesus and the RCC against the martyrs has not limitations of a rational mind or spiritual charity or mercy.
- G. It is hilarious to hear their vicious slanders against us after they are gone, which is to be expected, because exactly foretold in the Bible (Ps 31:13; Jer 6:28; 9:4; Matt 5:11).
- H. It is hilarious to hear their great relationship with Christ after they are gone, which is to be expected, because that is exactly what the Bible told us (Isaiah 66:5; John 16:2).
- I. Of course, the only way they can justify their wicked hearts and actions is to set us in the worst light they can. Their creativity at doing so is like the Jews against Jesus.

THE GODLY EXPLANATION

- A. Because our Father has chosen it to be part of our existence on earth (Phil 1:27-30).
- B. How can we identify with Jesus without persecution like Him (Rom 8:17; I Pet 4:13).
- C. There is an aspect of fellowship with Christ known only by persecution (Phil 3:10).
- D. Jesus would reason, if they hated Him, how will they not also hate us (John 15:18-20).
- E. Why do these abjects not fear God to learn good, for they have no changes (Ps 55:19).
- F. The Preacher gave good wisdom about these contentious abjects – pride (Prov 13:10).
- G. The Preacher gave more good wisdom about what happens to men – envy (Prov 27:4).
- H. Self-righteousness is one of the worst sins – for you could not sin yourself (Pr 26:12).
- I. Bitterness is the hateful result of past offences not dealt with scripturally (Heb 12:25).
- J. There is animosity and hatred between the righteous and the wicked (Prov 29:10,27).
- K. Righteous men hate scorners; scorners hate the righteous (Pr 24:9; 9:8; Is 29:20-21).
- L. Barely a few can accept correction, and Christians must correct (John 7:7; 15:22-25).
- M. Perilous times include fierce Christians despising those that are good (II Timothy 3:3).
- N. We separate to please God, but they reject such divisions (Ps 119:115; Rom 16:17-18; I Cor 5:9-13), because the only divisions acceptable to them are those they make.
- O. The world does not know us, as it missed Jesus (I Cor 2:15-16; I John 3:1-3; Ga 6:14).
- P. The deceitful nature of man’s heart loves lies and hates truth, so get ready (John 8:45).
- Q. They are of their father the devil, so they act as the devil as God leaves them (Jn 8:44).

THE GODLY RESPONSE

- A. Celebrate! Leap! Rejoice and be exceeding glad (Matt 5:10-12; Luke 6:22-23), just as Spirit-filled apostles were when they got a criminal beating (Acts 5:41; 16:22-25)!
- B. We cannot be offended or surprised when it comes, for He told us about it (Jn 16:1-3).
- C. We know persecution is a token of two items on two parties (II Thes 1:5-6; Phil 1:28).
- D. Paul put his own troubles, far worse than yours, in perspective for us (II Cor 4:8-11).
- E. Paul put his own troubles, far worse than yours, in light of eternity (II Cor 4:16-18).
- E. Keep your perspective on the future for its joy, for God will come (Heb 10:34-36).
- F. To be like the best, we must pray for God to rid us of strange children (Ps 144:7,11).
- G. Imprecatory Psalms, misunderstood or reviled today in an effeminate generation, are David’s prayers against his enemies (Psalm 3, 7, 31, 35, 38, 55, 69, 71, 109, etc.).
- H. To be like the best, we pray for God’s blessing on personal enemies (Matt 5:43-48).
- I. The Lord will have His revenge, no matter how inconsistent you see it (Hab 1:13-17).
- J. The Lord will have His revenge, for He has promised it to the martyrs (Rev 6:9-11).
- K. Why does the Lord take long in revenge ... account His longsuffering your salvation!
- L. Has God forgotten? Never! Every tear is in His bottle, and every drop of blood shall be revenged (Ps 56:8; Rev 6:9-11; II Thess 1:8; Rev 7:9-17; 16:5-7; 18:20,24; 19:2).
- M. Do not blame you, unless guilty of overt, obvious, obnoxious faults (II Tim 2:24-26).
- N. Note: We are not allowing or excusing our faults that lead to persecution by others, for we are only referring to persecution for Christ’s sake (Matt 5:10-11; I Pet 4:12-16).

Conclusion:

1. Do you understand this rule of engagement in Christ's kingdom, and will you always remember it?
2. Have you with me this day counted up the cost and are willing to pay it as we have in the past?
3. We must ask and answer a real question. Am I persecuted? If not, what does that say (II Tim 3:12)?
4. May God make each hearer to love and serve Christ as they should ... regardless of consequences!

For Further Study:

1. The sermon outline, "Perilous Times," ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/sermons/pdf/perilous-times.pdf>.
2. The sermon, "Beware of Good Christian Heretics," ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/sermons/pdf/christian-differences.pdf>.
3. The sermon outline, "Truth Is Fallen," ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/sermons/pdf/truth-is-fallen-in-the-streets.pdf>.
4. The sermon outline, "Parable of the Sower," ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/sermons/pdf/parable-of-the-sower.pdf>.
5. The sermon outline, "Few There Be that Find It," ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/sermons/pdf/few-there-be-that-find-it.pdf>.
6. The sermon outline, "Wild Grapes," ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/sermons/pdf/wild-grapes.pdf>.
7. The sermon outline, "Belly Worshipers," ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/sermons/pdf/belly-worshippers.pdf>.
8. The sermon, "Truth, Lies, and Compromise," ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/sermons/pdf/truth-lies-and-compromise.pdf>.
9. The sermon outline, "Are You a Bible Christian?" ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/sermons/pdf/bible-christians.pdf>.
10. The sermon, "When Your Husband's a Fool," ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/sermons/pdf/when-your-husbands-a-fool.pdf>.
11. The sermon outline, "Biblical Separation," ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/sermons/pdf/biblical-separation.pdf>.
12. The sermon outline, "Angel with an Inkhorn," ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/sermons/pdf/an-angel-with-an-inkhorn.pdf>.
13. The sermon outline, "Church Discipline," ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/sermons/pdf/church-discipline.pdf>.
14. The sermon outline, "Joash Corrupted," ... not in e-format at this time.