

THE CONFOUNDING PATH OF CHRIST...(Matthew 10:34-42)

The demands of the kingdom are so offensive to a world already convinced of its rightness that they provoke that world's hostility.

1. FACT: THE GOSPEL WILL NOT CAUSE PEACE AND AGREEMENT.

Matthew 10:34-39 "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to turn "a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law-- ³⁶ a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.' ³⁷ "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸ and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

2. MAKE UP YOUR MIND TO ACCEPT TROUBLE IN THIS WORLD.

Few things do so much harm in religion as exaggerated expectations. People look for a degree of worldly comfort in Christ's service which they have no right to expect, and not finding what they look for, are tempted to give up religion in disgust.

3. SERVICE DONE TO THOSE WHO WORK IN HIS CAUSE IS OBSERVED AND REWARDED BY GOD. V. 40-42

MONDAY, JUNE 30TH READ MATT.10:34-42

This lesson is a little heavy—but I know you're ready for it. This is all about the cost of being a disciple. In this passage Jesus is exact and uncompromising. He lays some heavy demands upon His disciples—and you too. He states clearly what it will cost you to be His disciple, and He describes the cost by using four illustrations.

1. Jesus' purpose (v.34).
2. Illustration 1: a person's family (v.35-37).
3. Illustration 2: the cross (v.38).
4. Illustration 3: a person's life (v.39).
5. Illustration 4: welcoming and ministering to others (v.40-42).

Read verse 34: : Jesus' purpose. Jesus says He did not come to send peace on earth, but a sword. Huh? What did He mean? (*John 16:33.*)

1. He did not come to give His approval or sanction to the physical corruption and decay of the earth. The earth and all that is therein ages, deteriorates, and dies. It all wastes away. Jesus did not come to give God's peace or blessing upon a world that dies. What He came to do was to bring a sword to earth. He came to war against aging and decay and death. He came to slash out, cut away, and put to death the physical dimension of being that condemns everything to decay and death.

2. He did not come to give His approval to the sin and evil of the earth. He could never give God's peace or blessing to a world that is so full of cursing and rebellion against God and so full of selfishness and division between men. He came to bring a sword to earth: to war against sin and evil and to destroy all the evil that is both within and without man.

Jesus' presence automatically causes division. This is because the believer's godly and divine nature is so completely opposite from his fallen and Adamic nature. As certain persons heed the call of Jesus and become one with Him and the way of righteousness, there is suddenly a division both within and without.

- a. *Within* there is division between his old fallen, Adamic nature and his new divine nature (*2 Cor. 5:17; Ephes. 4:22f; Col. 3:8-10; Galatians 5:13-17, Galatians 5:16-17*).
- b. *Without* there is a division between Him and those who choose to reject Jesus and to follow the way of darkness (*Matthew 5:10-12*). The division often occurs among family members and friends when one person accepts Jesus and the other person does not. The saved person becomes a totally new creature, born of God with new ideals and a righteous behavior; but the unsaved family member or friend remains in darkness, continuing to desire the things which please his flesh.

TUESDAY, JULY 1ST READ MATT.10:35-37

The first illustration Jesus used is that of a person's family. The believer is to note three things about his family.

1. First, Jesus sets the believer against his family. It is important to see that it is Jesus who causes the division. Jesus calls a person out of the world and separates him from the world so that he can go about correcting the evil of the world. If a family member continues to live in sin and to walk ever onward toward the grave without turning to God, two things usually happen.

- a. The believer struggles to save his loved one, no matter what opposition he may face.
- b. The family member rebels against the righteousness and efforts of the believer.

Luke 12:51-52 Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. ⁵² From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three.

The believer is called to a life of righteousness and to a fight against sin and evil. If a member of your family is engaged on the side of sin and evil, there is *a natural conflict* between the you and the family member. Of course!

- 1) **The family member is still of the earth**, seeking the pleasures and possessions of the world, and still living primarily to satisfy earthly desires. S/he represses and subdues the thought of God so that s/he can pursue earthly desires.
- 2) **The believer is of the earth**, but s/he is also of heaven. You're physical and spiritual, and living primarily for God and His righteousness, living to reach others with the gospel of Christ. The two natures differ drastically. They are diametrically opposed to one another. The person of the world talks primarily about the world and lives for the world. The person of the spirit makes God the primary force of his life: talking about and living for God and His righteousness.

2. Second, Jesus demands supreme love. Note the words, "more than me." Believers are to love their families, but they are to love God more; God is to be first and foremost. Your loyalty is to be to God. Two terrible things happen when a family is put before God.

- a. **Families cannot be what they should be without God.** No family can reach its full potential without God. Without God a family will lack spiritual growth and strength, conviction and commitment, confidence and

assurance, purpose and meaning for all eternity. There will be no prospect and no hope of eternal life, no assurance of anything beyond this life.

b. Families cannot be looked after and overseen by God unless God is given His rightful place in the family.

If the family takes control over its own life, ignoring God and His control, then what happens to the family is in its own hands. God is put off to the side, excluded, and shut out. He is given no voice in the life of the family.

The family is left all to itself. All kinds of trouble can and usually does follow. There is a lack of spiritual strength to face the trials and crises that confront the family during its life together.

The point is this: we must love God supremely, putting Him before all others, even before our families. When we do, our families are assured of being everything they should be and of being looked after and cared for by God (*Matthew 6:33*). Therefore a decision to follow Christ, no matter the sacrifice to family, is a wise decision; in fact, it is the only reasonable decision (*Romans 12:1-2*).

WEDNESDAY, JULY 2ND READ MATT. 8:18-22; 10:32-33

Sometimes you can love family so much that you turn from Christ, choosing family over Christ. There is usually one of two reasons for this decision.

- 1) The opposition against his following Christ is too strong.** The division within the family is too deep (*Matthew 10:21*).
- 2) The sacrifice demanded is too great.** It may be that God is calling you to some ministry, to some field of service, to some act of giving; but you decide the financial and emotional strain would be too much. You decide that God is demanding too much of a sacrifice for you.

When we allow our families to keep us from serving God and from doing what we should, we are making our families the supreme love of our lives. We are worshipping them, looking after them and their welfare first instead of worshipping and putting God first. When we put our families first, we are allowing our families to become our idols.

Third, Jesus warns the believer that he shall either be counted worthy or unworthy of Him.

- a. There is a great reward for loving Christ supremely.** If we count Christ worthy of our first love, He will count us worthy of Him. We are assured: we shall receive *the great salvation* in Him (*Matthew 10:32*).
- b. There is a terrible loss for not loving Christ supremely.** If we love our family more than Christ, He will count us unworthy of Him. We are assured that we shall not receive the great salvation in Him (*Matthew 10:33*).

THURSDAY, JULY 3RD READ MATT. 8:18-22

A person's family is to be the strongest and most precious relationship among human beings. A person is to love his family as much as s/he loves any others on earth. However, there is one relationship that is to supersede his relationship with family: the relationship to Jesus Christ. You are to love Christ supremely, counting Him more worthy than all, even more worthy than your own family. There are at least three reasons why Christ is to be counted more worthy.

- 1) Christ is the Supreme Being of the universe.** He is the Creator, Sustainer, and Protector of life throughout the course of our walk upon earth. Our time and our care are in His hands. Our families can sustain and protect us only to a certain point and only for a short time. They do not control life, but Christ can. He is the Supreme Being of the universe; therefore, He is the only One who is worthy of our supreme love.
- 2) Christ is the Supreme Savior.** He is the Giver and Provider of life, both abundant and eternal life. Our families can bring some happiness and pleasure to our lives, and they can protect us to some degree in this life—but not ultimately. Accidents and disease are beyond their power. They can save us in only a few situations and only for a brief time. Christ is the Supreme Savior; therefore, He alone is worthy of our supreme love.
- 3) With Christ we have the Supreme relationship.** Christ is totally unselfish and He loves perfectly. Of course we are not completely unselfish nor do we love perfectly, but to have the privilege of being loved perfectly and treated completely unselfishly (all the time) is the height of relationships (*John 3:16; Matthew 7:25-34*).

In Matt. 10:38 we see the second illustration Christ used is that of the cross.

- 1. Christ again made a strong demand.** Note the words "And anyone who does not take up his cross..." We all have a "cross." The cross is the symbol of death and of execution. We all must die to self day by day. We must count ourselves dead to sin and follow after Christ.
- 2. The reward is again being counted either worthy or unworthy of Christ.** If we do not put ourselves to death, we are not worthy of Christ. He shall deny us.

FRIDAY, JULY 4TH READ MATT. 10:37-39

The third illustration Jesus used is that of a person's life.

1. Jesus demands a person's life. Note the unique way He words this.

- a. "Whoever finds his life shall lose it." The phrase "finding one's life" means that a person seeks his own pleasure and passions in life. It is a selfish life, finding out what pleases self and going after it. It is heaping and hoarding and doing as self wills. It is finding out what gives self *life* and pleasure on this earth and doing it.

But there is something wrong with this. It is selfish. We live in a sinful and evil world: a world of pain and hurt, of starvation and disease, of crime and injury, of accident and wrong-doing, of greed and selfishness, of war and death. The one thing that is needed by all is to deny self: to commit and to lose our lives in Christ, which is to combat evil and to deliver a dying world to eternal life.

- b. "**Whoever loses his life...shall find it.**" The phrase "loses one's life" means that a person seeks to lose his life on this earth in order to find God. It means that a person gives up the right to order his own life, and lets Christ control their life. It means that a person's pursuit must be all consuming, that a person diligently seeks after God. When a person is consumed with finding God, the things of the world just fade away. But the person who refuses to relinquish this right to the Lord misses out on the life God purposed for them. They fail to experience the fulfillment of completing their mission on earth, whereas the person who gives the Lord the right to order their life experiences real life. They experience that deep sense of fulfillment, satisfaction, and pleasure with life—even in the face of difficulties and hardships. In addition, Christ says that they will find life, both abundant and eternal.

2. The reward is losing life vs. finding life. Life, the very thing which a person seeks, is found only in Christ. If a person never finds Christ or if s/he rejects Christ, s/he loses life. If s/he denies self and follows Christ, they find life. Note: A person must not search for their life on this earth. If they find life on this earth, they will lose life. Why? Because all that is on this earth is corruptible: aging, decaying, deteriorating, dying. Nothing on this earth lasts. This fact clearly says something: life cannot be found on this earth; only death can be found.

What we call "life" is not real life.

- ⇒ The flesh, your body, is not life.
- ⇒ Wealth, with all the things it can purchase, is not life.
- ⇒ Recognition and fame, with all the ego it can boost, is not life.
- ⇒ Power, with all the rights and pomp it can give, is not life.
- ⇒ Pride, with all the self image it can build, is not life.

All this and all else on the earth fades and passes away. It just does not last. How can life, real life, be something that ends so quickly and leaves one so empty?

The world and so many in the world are desperately in need. Every person should therefore lose his life in serving God and his fellow man. One thing is sure: a person should not *hoard life*, seeking only to satisfy his own pleasures and desires in life. The person who tries to save his own life and the life of his family will lose his life. Denying Christ or putting something before Christ is not the way to save anything, much less one's own life.

In Matt. 10:42-44 we see the reward. It is astounding. The person who welcomes and receives God's servant shall receive a reciprocal or an equal reward.

a. The person who welcomes and ministers shall receive the presence of Christ and of God Himself. They reflect honor upon the Lord and even upon God Himself. In fact, Jesus says that welcoming and ministering to others is the same as entertaining Him and His Father (*Matthew 10:40*).

b. The person who welcomes and ministers shall receive a reciprocal or an equal reward with God's servant. Perhaps a person cannot be a prophet or a shining example of a righteous man, but one can receive the reward of both. How? By simply welcoming and supporting and caring for God's servant. This is an astounding truth: the person actually shares in the work of God's messenger when they receive and help him. Christ puts an enormous value on how his messenger is received and treated. If the messenger is welcomed, Christ will give an equal reward for the kindness and care shown to his messenger. (*What a lesson for churches as to how they receive and trust their ministers!*)

c. Christ declares that the smallest ministry will not lose its reward. A person will be rewarded for the smallest ministry done for God's messenger. Just giving a cup of water to a messenger is extremely significant to God. It causes God to say emphatically that a person will be rewarded for such an act. The person needs to know that he is ministering to someone who is very, very dear to God. Christ calls His messengers "little ones," which is a term of endearment.