

Enemies Within Our Household

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Our text that we're going to be focusing in on this morning is Matthew 10, verse 36, but we must first consider several verses in the chapter. As I begin the introduction, I'm going to briefly be talking about the peace of God and the sword of God, but tonight we'll be talking about joy and peace in Galatians 5:22. Notice as we read from verse 32 through verse 39 in Matthew chapter 10:

“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. ³³But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. ³⁴Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. ³⁵For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. ³⁶And a man's foes *shall be* they of his own household. ³⁷He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. ³⁹He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”

Heavenly Father, we do come before Thee again this morning, and, Lord, we ask for Thy presence, we ask for Thy Holy Spirit, the anointing upon the reading of Scripture. We ask this morning for help as we come here to this text. We ask, Lord, that You would open our eyes. Lord, help us to come to a better understanding that we might be better servants to Thee, for we ask all of these things in Jesus Christ's name, Amen.

And you may be seated. I pray that the message this morning will be a help in understanding the reasons why we have opposition, even sometimes in our family. I'm titling the message "Enemies Within Our Household," and my text is in verse 36 where Jesus says, “**And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.**” There are three areas I want to look at. First of all, the context of “Enemies Within,” and that's going to be in verses 1 through 33; secondly, we're going to consider “The Conflict of the Sword” that is mentioned here, and that will be verses 34 through 36, and, number three, we're going to consider “The Cost of Discipleship,” and that is verse 37 through verse 39.

Now, we could ask the question this morning, “Why is there such a tug-of-war in our Christian life with other Christians, maybe with friends, maybe with relatives, or even in our own family? I've seen this year after year after year. I could start here in the state of Alabama and head toward the West Coast, and we could go to Southern California and just go up the Pacific

Coast through Oregon and Washington and then come back across the Northwest and Northeast and come back down the eastern seaboard and we will find Christian people all across our nation who are suffering for Jesus Christ from other people and sometimes relatives and sometimes in their own household. And why is this so? I mean, why is this the case? It's because when we get serious about Jesus Christ and there are others who are not serious, then they start taking it out on those who love the Lord and want to serve Him. I'm going to give you some examples if we have the time this morning. This is really about a three-hour sermon, and I'm going to do it in one. But I could stand here for an hour alone and go from state to state and give you examples. I could go to nearly all of the states in the union and give you examples of people who are going through persecution from friends and relatives and even their own blood relations just because they've gotten serious about Jesus Christ.

By way of introduction, I want you to notice in verse 34 that Jesus says to His apostles, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." Now, when you first look at this verse, you say, "Well, this is a shocking statement, because as I look at the Scripture, the Prince of Peace came to bring peace," so you ask, "Is this a contradiction?" In other words, did Jesus contradict Himself here in this passage? — because we do find passages that say that Jesus came to bring peace. Now, we're going to be speaking of peace and joy tonight, so I'm not going to turn to any of those verses. I'm going to give you a few verses right now, and tonight we'll be talking about peace. But is this a contradiction? Since Jesus did bring peace to the hearts and lives of those who will accept Him, how do we reconcile the peace verses with the sword verses?

Enemies Within

Now, everything must be understood within its context, and our first point is the context of "Enemies Within." In verse 34 we find that Jesus did not come to bring peace but He came to bring a sword, but we find in Isaiah 9, verses 6 and 7, that Jesus is called the Prince of Peace. We find in Zechariah 9:10 a reference to His first coming where it says He shall speak peace. We also know that in Luke chapter 2, verse 14, at His birth, the angels announced to the shepherds peace on earth and goodwill toward men. We also know that in verse 25 of Luke chapter 2 Simeon called Jesus Christ "the consolation of Israel," that is, the peace that would come unto them. In Luke chapter 1, verse 79, Zacharias, John the Baptist's father, said that Jesus came to guide our feet into the way of peace. In Matthew chapter 5 and verse 9, Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers," that is, the believers. In John 14:27 Jesus said to His disciples in the upper room, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." He also said in John 16:33 in the same context, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye

shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." So we have all these verses on peace. And, again, we're going to look at a lot of them tonight.

Also, in Colossians chapter 1, verses 20 through 23, we find that through Jesus' blood, we have peace with God and we've been reconciled unto God. We also find in Ephesians 2, verse 14, that Jesus is our peace, that is, Jew and Gentile that have been placed in the same body; so there's peace now between believers, between Jew and Gentile. Romans 5:1 says that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. That's salvation. And the Bible says in Philippians 4:7 that we can have the peace of God that passes all understanding; in other words, there's no peace for the world, but you and I as Christians have peace. In Romans 10:15 the way of salvation is called "the gospel of peace." In Romans 14, verse 17, the Kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

So when we come to this passage in verse 34, our first reaction is that this is kind of a shocking statement. Is Jesus contradicting Himself when He says to His disciples in verse 34, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword"? Well, we know that there are no contradictions in the Bible, so let's look at that verse this morning. First of all, go back with me to verse 1 and let's consider the context. In verse 1 the Lord sends His twelve disciples out to preach. This is their first commission. They're sent to go out and preach the Gospel of the Kingdom to the cities of Israel, and Jesus told them to be prepared because they would receive opposition and persecution and encounter hostility toward their ministry, and He's preparing them even for the possibility that there could be contentions and hostility within their own immediate family.

Now, watch this carefully as we read it. I'm in verse 1, and Jesus said, "And when he had called unto *him* his twelve disciples, he gave them power *against* unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease." In verses 6 and 7 He said, "But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." So they have their commission. He also tells them in verses 11 through 14, "And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. ¹²And when ye come into an house, salute it. ¹³And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet." Now, this is important when we bring this down to the immediate family. Jesus is saying to His disciples that some will listen to them and receive them into their house and some will reject them and will not receive them. So this is the context we're looking at.

But notice Jesus goes further. We're looking at the context now. I want to lay a foundation for our message this morning. So beginning in verse 16, Jesus said, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as

doves. ¹⁷But beware of men” — Now, here's the opposition, the hostility, the hatred, and the persecution — “for they will deliver you up to the councils” — this is the religious crowd — “and they will scourge you in their synagogues.” But notice now the civic crowd. He says, ¹⁸“And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. ¹⁹But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. ²⁰For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” So all we've got to do is read the book of Acts and see that this literally happened in their ministry as they were going through the cities of Jerusalem and Judah.

Now, notice verse 22. Jesus said, “And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.” So they would be hated. And not only would they be hated by all men, but verse 21 says, “And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against *their* parents, and cause them to be put to death.” So the hatred extends far out to all men and also among relatives, friends, and even down to the immediate family. As we read in verse 35 a moment ago, Jesus said, “For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.” So there's going to be hostility and opposition sometimes in the immediate family. But if a family is walking as Aquila and Priscilla who were both saved and loved God and were on the same page, then there will not be hostility in that family.

But in many families there's hostility, and it's not God's fault. When the Lord Jesus speaks of sending a sword, I want you to look at the context and see what He is talking about. He's talking about opposition from the outside. He says in verse 23, “But when they persecute you in this city...,” and as we come to verse 24, Jesus says, “The disciple is not above *his* master, nor the servant above his lord. ²⁵It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *shall they call* them of his household? ²⁶Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. ²⁷What I tell you in darkness, *that* speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, *that* preach ye upon the housetops. ²⁸And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” In other words, He says in verse 31, “Fear ye not therefore,” and He goes on to speak of the importance of trusting God and fearing God but not fearing man.

So in verses 1 through 15, Jesus sends the disciples out and He says to expect rejection. He says some will receive you but many will not. In verses 16 through 23, He says clearly here to expect persecution, even down to family members. And then in verses 24 and 25, as we just read, He's saying that, for Christ's sake, men will hate them, but in verses 26 through 31, Jesus tells them over and over not to fear men but to fear God and trust God.

Now, notice verses 32 and 33. Jesus said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. ³³But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." Now, this statement is given to us many times in the Scripture. It's given to us in Luke 12 and Luke 14; it's given to us in Matthew 16 and also in Revelation chapter 3 and verse 5. And basically what this means is that we are to confess Christ before men and He will confess us before the Father. In other words, we are not to be ashamed publicly of the Lord Jesus and we are not to allow fear of other people to creep into our hearts. We are not to worry about being disliked or hated. We are to keep our minds upon the Lord and follow Him and trust Him.

Now, as we look at this, we see that the Gospel will not conquer every soul upon this earth. Not everyone will be saved, so there's going to be those who are going to be hostile toward what you believe. The Gospel divides the sheep from the goats. Now, I'm going to read a quote here from another minister. He wrote this a number of years ago, but I want you to think about this: *"The Gospel divides sheep from goats. It divides the wheat and the tares."* Now, I want you to listen to this. I could just read this quote and we could fold up and go home. This is from the Barnes Commentary on the Bible. I knew what I believed about the passage, but as I studied this, I just thought maybe I need a little help here. I want you to listen to this and understand very clearly that Christ is the object of this hostility, but He is not the reason for it; He does not produce it Himself. Now, listen. I'm quoting from Barnes: *"Think not that I am come... This is taken from Micah 7:6. Christ did not here mean to say that the object of His coming was to produce discord and contention, for He was the Prince of Peace" — and he gives some Scripture — "but He means to say that such would be one of the effects of His coming."* Do you get that? This hostility and this division and this sword just basically becomes the effect of Christ's coming. He goes on to say: *"One part of a family that was opposed to Him would set themselves against those who believed in Him."* Now, listen to this. I'll give you this quote again later: *"The wickedness of men, and not the religion of the gospel, is the cause of this hostility."* Let me say that again: *"The wickedness of men, and not the religion of the gospel, is the cause of this hostility."* He goes on to say: *"It is unnecessary to say that no prophecy has ever been more strikingly fulfilled; and it will continue to be fulfilled until all unite in obeying His commandments. Then His religion will produce universal peace,"* and, of course, the commentary says to compare the notes on Matthew 10, verse 21.

So twice in our text in Matthew, in verse 21 and in verse 35, we find clearly that this hostility, this animosity, this hatred, this contention and opposition will not only be without or with relatives or friends, but it can also come down into our household. Now, again, I can stand up here for an hour or more and give you testimony after testimony after testimony of those who are suffering because they are devoted and dedicated to the Lord, and they have family members — it might be a spouse, it might be a mother, it might be a child, it might be a son, it

might be a father — but they have family members who are not converted and who are not sold out to Jesus Christ, so they bring about emotional persecution within the family. And, again, Jesus is saying to His disciples that we are not to fear being disliked by the world. Who cares what the world says, because the world is going to Hell and the world has always got the wrong doctrine and the wrong theology and the wrong concepts of the way things should be, and the Lord Jesus says in Matthew 15 and in a hundred other places that we will be hated by the world. Now, we might as well settle that — and that includes friends that we used to have and relatives, and when we read verse 36, “*And a man's foes*” — that is, his enemies — “*shall be they of his own household,*” it’s sad that this sword that Jesus talked about, this opposition and this hostility, extends to our nearest and dearest relationships.

The Conflict of the Sword

Now, let's come to our second point, and that is “The Conflict of the Sword.” I didn't know any other way to put this. Now, this sword is not literal. Jesus isn't talking about a literal sword that would be carried into warfare. Let me give you two words that will define this sword: spiritual warfare. The conflict of this sword is spiritual warfare. And what is the context? The Lord is saying if you preach the Gospel and stand for Christ, you will be disliked, you will be persecuted, you will have opposition from the world and from relatives and also sometimes within your own household. So that's the context.

Now, what is the conflict of this sword? I'm reading verses 34, 35, and 36 in Matthew 10. Jesus says, “*Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.*”³⁵ “*For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law,*” and verse 36 is the verse I'm using as our text, “*And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.*” In verse 34 Jesus said, “*Think not.*” In other words, He's saying don't misunderstand; do not have any thoughts of false expectations. He's saying all will not be saved; there will not be peace in the world. There's peace in the hearts and lives of the individual Christians who love Him, but there will not be peace in the world. There may not be peace among relatives and there may not even be peace in your own home. You will see conflict; you will see hostility, because the Gospel divides humanity; it divides them up into two groups, and there are sides that are taken. When we get saved, we swear allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ, and our loyalty is to Him and to Him only. Those who reject Christ, their loyalty is not to the Savior, so there's the hostility. It's the opposition from the outside; it is opposition from those who reject Jesus Christ. I'm going to give you some examples of that in a moment.

Now, we see here, then, that the sword represents spiritual warfare because the Gospel divides between the sheep and the goats. The Gospel will separate those who are true believers from those who are not. So we find that the sword in the Bible is an instrument of war and

violence — is it not? — and it speaks of conflict; it speaks of hostility, opposition, hatred and contention. So, again, as I said a moment ago, the word “sword” in Matthew 10 is used symbolically of spiritual warfare. The world thought things were just fine until Jesus showed up. Jesus tells us in the upper room in John 13 through 17 that man pretty much thought he was okay until Jesus came, and then the problems began. You know why? Because Jesus exposed the sin nature and showed how man could be saved. That's where the problem starts. One person gets saved in a home, and the family might have been doing fine before then, but then the hostility and conflict starts.

Now, let's look at a one-word definition of the word “sword”: Divide. I'm reading from Luke chapter 12, verse 49, and Jesus said, “I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?” Verse 51, “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division.” We find the word “division” in verse 51 rather than the word “sword” as in Matthew 10:34, but Jesus gives us the same illustration. He said in verses 52 and 53, “For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. ⁵³The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.” This shouldn't be, but it is, and the Lord says that when people reject the truth and reject the saint of God, this hostility would begin. He's telling His disciples that this is a reality.

You see, a relationship with Jesus Christ does not always represent peace. William MacDonald said, *“So a choice must often be made between Christ and family. No ties of nature can be allowed to deflect a disciple from utter allegiance to the Lord. The Savior must take precedence over father, mother, son or daughter. One of the costs of discipleship is to experience tension, strife, and alienation from one's own family. This hostility is often more bitter than is encountered in other areas of life”* — and it is. Those who are the nearest and dearest to us, we want to see them saved; we want to see them walk with God and love God and not this stinkin' world that we live in, so we pray for them, we're concerned for them, and they get hostile toward the truths of the Word of God and toward those who love God. This happened in the New Testament times; it's happened for the last 2,000 years. It's a fact. People will become critical; they'll slander; they'll ridicule and make fun of those who love God. But they're the fools, not the person who loves God.

I guess I get a little angry at this because I get tired of it. I hear it all the time all over this country. I'm going to give you some stories in a moment — just a few, not many. But I just get so tired of this. You see somebody trying to grow in the faith and love God, and others are going the other way. That's where the hostility comes. It doesn't come from the true believer. It comes from those who don't want the truth, don't want to walk in the truth, those who are ashamed of

Jesus Christ. That's where the problem is. I've seen this with relatives. I've got some good relatives, but I've also got some relatives who hate God and dislike me because I love God.

Now, notice as we come back to Matthew chapter 10. Jesus says in verse 35, ["For I am come to set a man at variance..."](#) The word "variance" means division; it means contention or discord. Jesus said, ["For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law."](#) Now, again, remember the quote from Barnes and the other Scripture we have read and the quote from William MacDonald. What we find here is that Christ is not really doing the dividing in the sense of causing contention. The Gospel does separate the sheep and the goats, the wheat and the tares, but the hostility comes from those who hate Jesus Christ. And that's what happened with the disciples. When they accepted Christ, became followers of Christ — listen — relatives and friends and the nation of Israel as a whole turned against those followers of Jesus Christ. We see that all through the book of Acts.

Again, verse 36 says, ["And a man's foes shall be they of his own household."](#) That's a staggering statement that we find in the Word of God. It shouldn't be that way, but it is many times. I've been on the phone in the last four weeks with at least ten people from ten different states asking my counsel over this very thing. Why is there family division? Because one believes and one rejects, and often this is in the same household, and those who reject will oppose those who believe.

Now, listen. Christ is the occasion of division, but the blame is in the hearts of wicked men and women. Before Christ came, the hostility wasn't there. Let me just give you one example. In Matthew chapter 2, Jesus Christ is born into this world. He is an infant, He is a baby, and everybody in Israel is upset. There are those like Anna and Simeon and the shepherds who are waiting for the coming of the Messiah. The wise men traveled from the Far East to see the Messiah, the baby Jesus, and yet the leaders, Herod and others, are worried. They're concerned that there's a king that's been born into this world. And you know what? Listen. Christ was hated as a baby, and Herod had all the children from two years old and under killed. Hundreds were martyred. The first martyrs for Jesus Christ were babies, and they were martyred because of the baby Jesus who was born into this world. Hatred by religious leaders, civic leaders, and by man in general began when Jesus was born. The hatred began at that very moment.

I want you to think about this. Truth divides between the genuine and the phony. Truth divides. Now, Matthew 10:36 is a quotation from Micah 7:6, and in the context of Micah 7:6, it appears to me that the prophet can find comfort only in God Himself because he lived in a society that was ripe for judgment and hated God. He came to a place where he couldn't trust friends or family or neighbors or anyone — opposition in every way — so he said, "I'll trust God." So Matthew 10:36, ["And a man's foes shall be they of his own household,"](#) is a quotation from Micah

chapter 7, verse 6. Micah lived among a people that were ripe for judgment. America is ripe for judgment. There is a hostility that is growing in the families across our land against the truths of the Word of God. In orthodox Judaism to this day a Jew can accept Christ — and many do — they can accept Christ to this day, and they will be rejected by their family, considered as dead, and I've even heard of some cases where they would have like a mock funeral for that individual; in other words, they're cut out of fellowship, inheritance, or anything else. You say, that is extreme. Well, it's happened emotionally in families all over our country — emotional persecution and criticism and hostility. A Muslim can get saved in other countries, and, in many cases, that Muslim will be put out of society, and many times their lives will be taken from them.

Darlene and I know about that kind of hostility. I've been saved for 47 and a half years, and I've been preaching as of yesterday 37 years. I'll give you one classic example of this. I have some lovely relatives, but I have some that are not so lovely and I have some that hate the Gospel of Jesus Christ and, in turn, they hate me. Three and a half years ago when I did the funeral of Darlene's mother, at the wake the night before — or back home they call it “the viewing”; different places call it different things — but at the wake or the viewing, three people walked up to me in front of a crowd and tried to start an argument over body tattooing and body piercing. As far as I'm concerned, you can do whatever you want, but I'm telling you, biblically it's out of Hell — both tattooing and body piercing. Now, I don't care whether you're male or female; it's wrong and it's ungodly. But, anyway, they wanted to start an argument. I had never met these people before, but they're relatives. I just avoided it, but I'm thinking, "I'll preach to you tomorrow." And then I was told that night by another relative, "You better be very careful what you preach." And then the next morning the sanctuary was full of people and relatives, and as I'm walking down to preach, one stopped me and said, "You better be careful what you say." I said, "I will."

I stepped into the pulpit as I've done before. I've preached many funerals and I've seen many of our relatives saved. Now, again, we've got some wonderful Christian relatives, but we also, like you, have many who are lost, and when I stepped into the pulpit, I'm looking out at some people who are drunks and drug addicts, some living together and not married, and guess what I preached on? You can listen to the sermon on line. I preached on drunkenness and drugs and fornication and adultery and I preached the Gospel, and three made a profession of faith. We know for sure one of those was real, maybe two. And the relatives who loved me and loved God came and hugged my neck and thanked me, and others just walked out the door. And then when we got home, we got an e-mail, and the first two words were curse words. I'll not tell you what they were because I don't use that language, but they were curse words. And they go on to tell me what they think about me — anonymous, of course, but we know who it is. And we know for a fact that it's a relative because they use my middle name, and we can also know exactly who it is because of the words that were used. And Darlene said, "What should I do with

it?" And I said, "Delete it." And another e-mail came, and I said, "Delete that," and we never responded. This is what the Lord is talking about here. Blood relations will hate you because they hate Jesus Christ and hate His Word.

I know of three families in Virginia who have troubles with their teenage and grown children rebelling against them, rebelling against their authority, and the same thing in another family in Virginia with one of the grown children rebelling against the truths of the Word of God. I can carry you to Southern California and another story there. I can carry you to Oklahoma and tell you a story there — all around this country. And there's a lady my wife and I met who visited the church here a time or two, and she was loving God and serving God. We hadn't seen her in a number of years, but she ended up losing her family and her husband turned against her. The grown children, teenage and in their 20s, turned against her, and even the church turned against her. She was the dedicated, faithful one in the family, and she got put out. We know that story very, very well. And I can go on and on with many other stories.

When we look in the Scripture, we find Jesus' unbelieving brothers in John 7, verses 1 through 5. They did not believe on Jesus for the first 30 years. They did not really know who He was as they should, but we find that after the resurrection, they came to know Him. In John 6, verse 60, there are disciples following Jesus, and when Jesus said you must eat of my flesh and drink of my blood, they said, "Oh, this is a hard saying," and then verse 66 tells us that they walked no more with Him. People want a little American watered-down Christianity. They don't want to be disciples of Jesus Christ. John 3, verses 19 and 20, says that men love darkness rather than light; they embrace it. In John 10, verse 19, there were divisions because Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. In John chapter 15, verses 18 through 23, the Lord Jesus said if they've hated Me, they'll hate you. He said if they've received My words, they'll receive yours; if they've rejected My word, they'll reject your word. He said they hated Me first and they're going to hate you. And then we get shocked to death when we're hated by the world and by relatives and by friends and sometimes even in our immediate family with close blood kin.

We find in 1 Samuel 17:28 that David's brothers despised him because of David's zeal for the Lord — David, a 17-year-old young man. His brothers despised him because he stood up for God. He said, "[Is there not a cause?](#)" He's willing to stand up against the giants, the enemies of God, and his brothers despised him because he was sold out to the Lord. In Genesis 37, Joseph's brothers hated him and they sold him into slavery. Some of them wanted to kill him. They wanted to get him out of the way. Why? One of the reasons — and there's more than one — but one of the reasons was that he received dreams from God. He received revelation and visions from God. They didn't like that. But you know what? They had to come and bow down to Joseph one day. They had to bow down. Cain hated his brother Abel. Why? Because Cain was disobedient and Abel was obedient. Abel brought a divine sacrifice, and God approved of Abel's sacrifice and disapproved of Cain's sacrifice. That's why Cain killed his brother — animosity,

hostility. A man's foes, a man's enemies shall be those of his own household. We're talking about households here.

Even in verse 40 of this chapter, Jesus said, ["He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me."](#) To reject the messenger is to reject the message. To receive the message is to receive the messenger. In other words, no one could ignore the disciples and then still be a follower of Jesus Christ. We're talking about serious stuff here. I hope this helps someone because, again, this is a reality all across our land. It's been a reality from the first century. I hear it on a weekly basis. I can carry you to Canada, to Vancouver Island. I can carry you to Toronto and other places. I can carry you outside this country where people have contacted me, called me or by e-mail saying they're having trouble with relatives or family, with a spouse, with a husband, or with children and so forth.

Quoting again from Barnes Commentary: *"The wickedness of men, and not the religion of the gospel, is the cause of this hostility."* Listen to me carefully. Don't think that the true believer who loves God is the troublemaker. The troublemakers are those who resist the truths of the Word of God, those who are worldly, those who don't want to follow the dictates and the commands of God and the traditions of the Bible. They are the troublemakers. Ahab told Elijah, "You trouble Israel," and Elijah said, "You're the one who troubles Israel because of your sin and your wickedness."

Now, here's the problem. Amos chapter 3, verse 3, says, ["Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"](#) We must be in agreement, and if we're not in agreement, we must get into the Scriptures and find out what God has said. Let me give you one other verse. Hebrews chapter 11 talks about those in the Old Testament who were sawn asunder, slain, and wandered in deserts and caves and so forth, and verse 38 says, ["Of whom the world was not worthy."](#) Those who were persecuted and hated and put out of society and slandered and hostility toward them, the world was not worthy of them. God's saints are the ones who have the truth and carry the truth, and it's hated by the world — and that's not going to change till Jesus comes. It's not going to change.

The Cost of Discipleship

Notice with me now as we come back here to our text. We're coming to our third point, and the third point is "The Cost of Discipleship." Now, I preached a sermon titled "Discipleship" and wrote an article on discipleship in 2007, and I preached a sermon titled "Disciples" in May 2019, and I also preached a sermon in 2014 titled, "Take Up Thy Cross." So if you want to study this further, get the article and listen to these three sermons. But now I'm going to read verses 37, 38, and 39, and I want you to see the cost of discipleship. It is the straight and narrow way. Most people want to go on the super highway, the broad way that leads to destruction. Not so.

Notice Jesus says here in verses 37, 38, and 39, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. ³⁹He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." And I suggest to you that you get the article and listen to the other sermons and write the verses down.

What we're reading right now is that the Lord is very serious about discipleship. He's not playing games. We're not talking about some halfway Christianity where you're halfway in and halfway in the world. That's what we see in most churches today. Churches now are promoting body tattoos and body piercing, and they're getting Jesus tattoos all over them. Preachers are doing this. They're promoting it, and many supposed Christians are falling for this.

What is a disciple? I just preached a whole message on this in May of this year. A disciple is a follower of Christ. The word "disciple" is used over 250 times in the New Testament, and the word "Christian" is used three times. Even in The Great Commission, Matthew 28, verse 19, Jesus basically says, "Make disciples." He said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," and in the next verse He says, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

Now, in our text, there are basically three requirements for true discipleship that speak of our loyalty and our allegiance to Jesus Christ, and I've laid those requirements out in the article. The first requirement is to deny all, those two words. What does that mean? It's the demand of supreme love. Now, this doesn't mean we don't love our families and our relatives. That's not what Jesus is saying. He's just telling us who we've got to love the most. We are to love our family, love our relatives, love our friends, we're even told to love our enemies and especially love our neighbors. But we must love God above all others, even above our spouse, our children, our mother and our father and everyone — and that's not the case in many families. So Jesus says in verse 37 of Matthew 10, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."

In Luke 10:27 we're told that the first and great commandment is to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. That's the first commandment, and the second commandment is to love our neighbor as our self. In Luke chapter 14, verse 26, Jesus said, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Somebody will say, "See, the Bible is going astray again. We are told to hate." Well, this word "hate" here means to love less. That's exactly what it means here. It's not used in the way we use the word hate many times today. Genesis 29:30 and 31 illustrates that. We find in verse 30 that Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah, and in the next verse God says it seemed that Leah was hated. So it just means that Jacob loved one more than he did the other.

So what we find here in Luke 14:26 is that we are to love God above every other thing and every other person. I don't care if it's your spouse. God has to be number one. I don't care if it's your children, your babies, your relatives, your mom and dad. It doesn't matter. God has to be number one. But most put their relatives first, especially their kids. They put their kids even above God. John Bunyan's family was absolutely destitute. He spent about fourteen years in a Bedford jail in England, and all John Bunyan had to do to get out of that jail is compromise, take a license to preach and say, "There will be some things I won't preach and some things I will." But do you know what he did? He spent fourteen years in jail. I mean, his family was destitute. He said it was the hardest decision he ever made. What would you do? What would you do if your family was destitute? What would you do if your family was poor and you had to compromise?

And notice, Jesus also said that we are to hate our own life. We have to deny our own self; we have to deny our self-interests and self-desires. We have to put God not only above wife or husband and children and mama and daddy, but we have to put God above our own self. We have to die to our self. That's what Jesus is saying here in this passage. Mark 3:32 says, "And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee," and Jesus answered them in verse 33 and said, "Who is my mother, or my brethren?" ³⁴And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!" He's talking about the believers.

There was a man many years ago in this church who compromised and left the church because his grandchildren were going somewhere else. Do you know what he lost? He later lost fellowship with his grandchildren, and he lost fellowship and favor with God. They're miserable people right to this day. Why? Because they compromised. You can go ahead and compromise with this world, but I promise you, one day it will catch up with you. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). I'm simply saying to you that one of the requirements for discipleship is that we deny all. The demand of supreme love is to be given to God only. We're to love all others, but we must love God supremely. He must have priority in our lives. We must be loyal to Him and to no one else. Can I get an Amen? That's the way it's got to be. And that's why people hate us, by the way. That's why relatives sometimes will not like you because you're loyal to your Savior, your Creator and Redeemer. How could you not be loyal to your Creator and your Redeemer?

The second requirement for true discipleship is in verse 38. We are to suffer all. Jesus says in verse 38, "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." This is the demand of taking up our cross, that is, to openly confess the Lord Jesus and suffer for Him. That doesn't mean your head is going to be cut off and you're going to be persecuted. That means you've got to be willing to do that. The cross in the Bible speaks of suffering and persecution and cruel treatment, and the Romans used the cross as punishment

for criminals. When you saw people carrying a cross, they were going to their death, and crosses were all around Rome for people to see. Jesus says to take up your cross in Matthew 16, Mark 8, Luke chapter 9, Luke 14, and many other places. This is the badge of discipleship. This is death to self. The cross was an instrument of death, and we find here that we're to follow Christ in His sufferings.

Now, the cross is not difficulties in life. Lost people have difficulties. The cross is not being unable to pay your light bill. It's not having to get up at 4 o'clock in the morning and go to your job. Lost people have to do that. Lost people's lights will get turned off if they don't pay their electric bill. Taking up your cross is not difficulties and sickness because lost people experience that too — and they finally die too. It's not even your mother-in-law, because lost people have mothers-in-law too. The cross is openly confessing Jesus Christ and being willing to suffer for Him and not being ashamed of Him. That's taking up the cross and following the Lord Jesus Christ.

The third requirement for discipleship is in verse 39. Jesus says here, *"He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."* Well, that sounds like a contradiction, doesn't it? The way to live is to die? Sounds like a contradiction. But we find this concept many times in Scripture, and this is the demand of sacrificial living. This is the forsaking all — deny all, suffer all, and forsake all, and this is the demand of sacrificial living. What does that mean? Well, Luke 14:33 says, *"So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."* We find this concept again in Matthew 16:25 and in Luke 16, verses 16 through 18, and again with the rich man in Luke 18, verses 18 through 30, and we find it again in John 12 in verse 25. What is all this about? Well, the Bible destroys the American dream, does it not? The Bible destroys the concept of the American dream because the Lord says we're to renounce possessions, and we're warned over and over against covetousness. We cannot serve, you cannot serve, I cannot serve God and mammon. *"And having food and raiment let us be therewith content"* (1 Timothy 6:8). Let us serve God and be faithful. Yes, we've got to work and we've got to make money, but let us serve God and follow Him and be pleasing to Him, and He says that He'll supply the things that we need — and I believe that we really need to pray and search the Scripture when we spend money and buy things. In other words, hold loosely to these worldly goods because one day we've got to leave them. I quoted Jim Elliot recently, a missionary martyred for Christ, and he said, *"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."*

Deny all, the demand of supreme love; suffer all, the demand to take up thy cross; and forsake all, the demand of sacrificial living. All people think about today is how much they can get, how much they can buy, how much they can put in the stock market and, you know, how many millions and millions they can have when they retire and all those kinds of things. This is

on people's minds, and it's like blinders on a mule — It destroys our vision; it destroys our spiritual vision.

Now, let's close in 1 Peter chapter 2. I listen to testimonies on a weekly basis where people have a love for God and want to follow Him, but there's this constant pushing and tug-of-war and hostility against the Word of God, either by relatives, friends, or in the household, so I hope this Scripture will be an encouragement and a blessing to those who hear it. First Peter chapter 2, reading verses 5 through 8:

*"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. ⁶Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. ⁷Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, ⁸And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, *even to them* which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed."*

You've heard me quote John 14:15 many times, and this passage in 1 Peter chapter 2 lines up with John 14:15, *"If ye love me, keep my commandments."* And we find two groups of people in this passage, especially in verse 7. We hear a lot today about fake news. What about fake disciples? Notice the two groups of people. In one group, the Lord is precious. He means everything to them. They value Him above everything. But the other group is always stumbling at the Word of the Lord Jesus. To me, this is one of the clearest verses in the Bible about the divide between the lost and the saved. Again, we have the wheat and the tares, the sheep and the goats.

We could go on and on with the list, but this verse really sums it up. Notice verse 7 again: *"Unto you therefore which believe *he is*"*— somebody say it with me — *"precious."* We've got a sermon titled "He is Precious." We've got another one titled "The Chief Cornerstone" and articles on both of those, I think. Notice, *"Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious."* Jesus carries the supreme place in their lives. He's on the throne in their lives. Nothing else means as much as our Creator and Redeemer. But notice the second group: *"but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, ⁸And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, *even to them* which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed."* Think about it, Church. There are those who are in love with Jesus Christ and He is precious and He means everything to them, and they want their whole life centered around the Lord Jesus Christ. But there are those who stumble at the Word. They stumble at the clear Scriptures that we find in the Word of God. I

know of people who were stumbling 25 years ago, and when I see them now, they're still stumbling over the same verses. They probably need to be saved.

Let me say it again. The hostility is not from the believer. The hostility is not from those who have accepted Christ. The hostility is from those who reject the truths of the Word of God and they don't want the Gospel; they don't want the truth or they want a halfway Christianity, as I've been told by some — "I just want to get halfway there." Well, halfway there puts half of you in Hell, does it not? There are those who Jesus is precious to. He means everything to them. But there are also those who are stumbling — "Yeah, I know what the Bible says, but that's a hard saying. I'm going to do what I want to do. I want to have fun. I want to go in my direction. The broad way is a nice highway. That straight and narrow, I don't really like that."

Would you stand with me this morning. I pray that we'll take this to heart. Pray for those who are going through the oppositions and contentions. I could give names this morning and cities and dates and counties and states, but I'm not going to do that. Pray for all who are going through this.

Father, we thank You for Your love and mercy to us. And, Lord, You are precious to us. Lord, You're our Savior, You're our Creator, our Redeemer. We love You. Lord, I pray You'll give comfort to those who are going through oppositions. Bless them and be with them. Help them to be strong. Bring family members to saving faith in Jesus Christ. Lord, we love You and we just thank You for Your Word. We thank You for the indwelling Holy Spirit. We thank You for the salvation You've given to us. In Jesus Christ's name we pray, Amen.
