

IS JESUS DIVISIVE?

SCRIPTURE FOR TODAY:

"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. 36 And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. 37 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. 38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. 39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

Matthew 10:34-39 King James Version

In the first place, Jesus tells us to remember that His gospel will not cause peace and agreement wherever it comes. **"I didn't come to send peace, but a sword"** ([Matthew 10:34](#)).

The object of His first coming on earth was not to set up a millennial kingdom in which all would be of one mind, but to bring in the gospel, which would lead to strife and divisions. We have no right to be surprised if we see this continually fulfilled. We are not to think it strange if the gospel divides families and causes estrangement between the nearest relations. It is sure to do so in many cases because of the deep corruption of the heart.



There is a deep truth in all this, which is constantly forgotten and overlooked. Many talk vaguely about unity, harmony, and peace in the Church, as if they were things that we ought always to expect, and for the sake of which everything ought to be sacrificed.

Such people would do well to remember the words of our Lord. No doubt unity and peace are mighty blessings. We ought to seek them, pray for them, and give up everything in order to obtain them, excepting truth and a good conscience. But it is an idle dream to suppose that the churches of Christ will enjoy much of unity and peace

before the millennium comes.

In the second place, our Lord tells us that true Christians must expect trouble in this world. Whether we are ministers or hearers, whether we teach or are taught, it makes little difference. We must carry "a cross." We must be content to lose even life itself for Christ's sake. We must submit to the loss of man's favor, we must endure hardships, we must deny ourselves in many things, or we shall never reach heaven at last. So long as the world, the devil, and our own hearts, are what they are, these things must be so.

We shall find it most useful to remember this lesson ourselves, and to impress it upon others. Few things do so much harm in our Christian faith 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.

Happy is he who thoroughly understands, that though Christianity holds out a crown in the end, it brings also a cross in the way.

Adapted from The Gospel of Matthew by J.C. Ryle (Chapter 10).

