

## Jesus Has Cut Us Off

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**Matthew 10:34-42** <sup>34</sup> "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. <sup>35</sup> "For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; <sup>36</sup> "and a man's enemies *will be* those of his *own* household'.<sup>37</sup> "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. <sup>38</sup> "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. <sup>39</sup> "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it. <sup>40</sup> "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. <sup>41</sup> "He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. <sup>42</sup> "And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold *water* in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."

Would you be able to cut off a limb if it was necessary to save your life?

You hear stories occasionally, about hikers with an arm or leg stuck in a crevice or caught under a boulder. To save their own life, they cut the limb off. Similarly, a hundred years ago before modern medicine doctors sometimes had to make the decision to cut off a patient's limb to save his life.

In this section of Matthew Jesus is sending the disciples out to preach the Gospel. Before they go he wants them and us to understand that doing so will not always be a joyful task. There are times when limbs need to be cut off and those who are sent by Christ need to be ready to use the sword.

It would be a hard thing to cut off your own limb, but if you are stuck under a rock in the wilderness your choice is to lose the limb or lose your life. Similarly, Jesus says that the gospel which is meant to be such a joyful message will cause division and in some cases it is necessary that you be willing to cut off the rotten limb to save the life.

**Matthew 10:34** Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword

This is not the first time that God has spoken of Jesus' mission in terms of animosity, hatred and war. Indeed, from the very beginning it was foretold that this would be the result. When Jesus says, "I did not come to bring peace . . . but a sword," he is referring to what God told Adam and Eve in the very beginning.

**Genesis 3:15** <sup>15</sup> And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."

One of the things that might be most difficult about cutting off your own leg is simply the decision to do it. It would be tempting to think if I just wait another few minutes maybe someone will find me. Of course, the longer you wait the weaker you will become and the less chance of success you will have.

God didn't wait to make the decision. He knew immediately that drastic action was called for and he didn't hesitate. "Enmity . . . between your seed and her seed." From the beginning it was prophesied that the Messiah would come with a sword to cut away that which needed to be cut away.

In this ancient prophecy the Messiah's use of the sword is not limited to Satan. It's not just the serpent but also His seed which must be cut away.

John reminds us that the seed of Satan is sin:

**1Jo 3:8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.**

The seed of Satan is sin and Jesus has come to cut away even that sin which is within us.

Jesus died so that we might be forgiven. Jesus gave us baptism to wash away our sin. Jesus can deal with our sin. Jesus can and does forgive us daily. However, if we will not let go of our sin but insist on clinging to it than we will perish with our sin.

Just like that hiker with a limb stuck under a boulder must let go of his limb for the sake of his life, so too we must learn to let go of our sin. Rather than let go of our sinful attitudes we all too often make excuses for them. This is one of the reasons why private confession is such a valuable tool. It forces us to confront our sin for what it is and ask Jesus to cut it away.

Sin must be cut away, not only the sin in ourselves but in others as well.

**Matthew 10:35-36** <sup>35</sup> "For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law"; <sup>36</sup> "and a man's enemies *will be* those of his *own* household<sup>1</sup>."

This cutting away not only pierces our own heart to separate us from our sins but also comes between us and those we love. Jesus warns that following him sometimes means turning your back on father, mother, brother, sister, daughter, or son.

Just as the hiker who loves his leg too much to cut it off, when necessary, may lose his life, so to the one who loves father or son more than Jesus may lose his life to remain with them.

We see this happening right from the beginning when Adam chooses Eve over God.

Jesus is not suggesting that just because a loved one is no longer coming to church that we ought to shun them and never speak to them again. The Holy Spirit makes that clear in other scriptural passages.

**Romans 12:18** <sup>18</sup> **If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.**

**1 Corinthians 7:12-13** If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. <sup>13</sup> And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him.

What Jesus is warning against is more subtle than that namely that we do not allow our love for them to blind us to the truth of God's word. God's word will often force us to admit sobering and unpleasant truths about others, even sometimes those who we love. The temptation is to soften or hold back the sharpness of Christ's sword because we don't want to hurt those we love.

We saw that in our OT lesson. The Prophet Hananiah was attempting to reassure the Israelites that God loved them and that nothing bad would happen to them. Yet despite his good intentions what he said was contrary to God's word. The prophet Jeremiah at God's instruction vehemently opposed Hananiah.

Sticking to God's word will cause fights even sometimes between close family members. There is a time and a place to be tactful. There is a time to keep silent because you have already said what needs to be said.

Jesus said, "don't cast your pearls before swine."

But there is never a place or a time to compromise God's word for the sake appeasing those who are opposed to it.

**John 12:31** <sup>31</sup> "Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.

Jesus has come with a sword, to cut away that which must be cut away, to save that which can be saved.

When Jesus sent out His disciples, he requires of them the same attitude. They will need patience, forbearance, and love for all people, but also they need to be ready to use the sword when it is necessary.

A doctor who refuses to cut away a gangrenous infected limb when it is clearly necessary is not a very good doctor. Just so a church that will not properly use the keys to cut away those who are clearly impenitent is not properly doing the task that Jesus has given to those who follow him.

He came with a sword to cut away the seed of Satan and there are times when those who follow him must also use that sword, in their personal life and in the public life of the church.

**Matthew 10:39-40** <sup>39</sup> "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it. <sup>40</sup> "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.

What has Jesus done for you? He has come to cut us off from sin so that we might be united to him in life.

The modern view of the way of salvation is that sin doesn't matter. God loves us all anyway. This is clearly not Jesus' view. His way of salvation is that our sin must be cut away, so that we can be saved through him.

Jesus does emphasize the positive aspects of this division. He reassures us what a wonderful blessing it is to have our sin cut away. Just as holding on to sin means death, even more so holding on to Christ means certain life. Amen