

**(Matt. 10:34-36)** - The Gospel is a message of peace. The angelic host which appeared to the shepherds proclaimed, *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men”* (Luke 2:14). Contrary to popular opinion, the peace they declared was not between men and men or between nation and nation. It was (and is) peace between God and His chosen people, a peace wrought by the substitutionary sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, the literal translation of Luke 2:14 is - *“Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.”* God is pleased only with those who are IN CHRIST! Christ, the Savior, was appointed by *“the God of peace”* (Heb. 13:20) in *“the covenant of peace”* (Zech. 6:13), to make reconciliation (peace) between God and His chosen people. Reconciliation (peace) between God and sinners comes only by the merits of Christ’s obedience unto death as their Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer. It is all based on His blood, i.e. His righteousness imputed to them (2 Cor. 5:19-21; Col. 1:19-22). Christ is *“the Prince of peace”* (Isa. 9:6), and the message of His finished work of salvation is *“the Gospel of peace”* (Rom. 10:15; cf. Acts 10:36; Rom. 5:1). Christ Himself IS our peace (Micah 5:5; Eph. 2:14). This is the *“SWORD”* of truth that divides those who believe it from those who disbelieve and even hate it. And this division reaches even unto our own earthly families, making a man’s enemies those of his own household.

**(Matt. 10:37)** - A true believer, true child of God, must take a stand in the truth of Christ even when it opposes the beliefs of his *“FATHER OR MOTHER.”* Light can have no fellowship with darkness; good cannot exist peacefully with evil. Again, remember the first murder was Cain killing his brother, Abel, over the Gospel (Gen. 4:1-8; 1 John 3:11-12). The worthiness of which Christ speaks here is not in any way implying that we are made worthy by any supposed merit acquired by our fervent stand in the truth. It is simply showing that our worthiness in and by Christ is evidenced by our fervent stand in the truth even against our nearest and dearest loved ones on earth. Consider Luke’s statement on this subject - *“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”* (Luke 14:26). Christ would never teach His disciples not to love their families. The law of God commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:28-34), and Christ made it clear that our neighbor includes even our worst enemies (Matt. 5:43-48).

How, then, can we reconcile what Luke wrote with the commandment of love to all people? The hatred commanded in Luke 14:26 is not sinful loathing of someone that comes from our own sinful motives. It is a righteous judgment of another person’s state due to their expressed unbelief of the Gospel truth as it is in Christ which causes God’s people to deny any spiritual relationship and refuse any spiritual fellowship with them (2 John 9-11). We can love them as human beings and desire the best for them, especially in telling them the Gospel truth and praying for their salvation, but we cannot speak peace to them or include them in our spiritual fellowship in the family of God as long as they remain in unbelief. As Christ Himself asked, *“Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?”* (Matt. 12:48), and answered, *“For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother”* (Matt. 12:50).

**(Matt. 10:38)** - Since the cross is the emblem of suffering and shame, bearing one’s cross means willingly enduring whatever trials, reproaches, and opposition that God, in His wise providence, sends our way, even if that suffering comes from our families. Every true believer has his/her own particular cross which should be borne patiently for the glory of Christ. We are to take up our cross and follow Christ, bearing His reproach (Heb. 13:13). To

follow Christ is to follow His teachings, obey His ordinances, and confess Him publicly in spite of all opposition. Bearing the cross and following Christ are evidences of salvation, not duties to be performed to earn or merit salvation. Our love and loyalty to Christ is to be above all other loves and loyalties. No one or nothing is to rival or eclipse our faith, love, loyalty and obedience to Christ, His people, and His truth.

**(Matt. 10:39)** - Any person who seeks to preserve life here on earth and its comforts and temporal enjoyments, such as the friendship, fellowship, and praise that comes from men, and does so by compromising the Gospel and denying Christ and His truth to gain or preserve the approval of his family and/or men in general will lose his life, i.e. eternal life which is in Christ alone (John 12:42-43; cf. Matt. 16:24-26). Any person who is made willing to stand for the truth, even against his earthly family, i.e. losing the friendship, fellowship, and praise that comes from men, finds his life as it is by God's grace through the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. John 12:25).

**(Matt. 10:40)** - As the preachers of the Gospel, true witnesses, are ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20), whenever a person is brought by God to receive them and the message of salvation by God's grace, they are, in essence, receiving Christ Himself. To receive Christ is to believe and trust in Him for all salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life (John 1:12-13). Receiving Christ is the same as receiving God the Father. When God the Holy Spirit gives a sinner spiritual life and brings that sinner to believe in Christ, that sinner comes unto the Father through the Son and on the ground of His blood and righteousness imputed alone. All access to and acceptance with the Father is through the Son.

**(Matt. 10:41-42)** - These verses speak of the unity and fellowship that exist among true believers and which demands that we who are true disciples of Christ are to receive and support true prophets (preachers of the Gospel) and all who are righteous by God's grace in Christ (3 John 5-8). *"HE THAT RECEIVETH A PROPHET IN THE NAME OF A PROPHET"* - True preachers of the Gospel do not come before men in their own names but in the name of Christ as they are all ambassadors of Christ and have no authority but in Christ's name and word. The meaning here is that they come preaching the Gospel and the Word of God which they themselves, personally, believe. They do not come before men invoking the names of other prophets as their authority. Again, their authority is the Word of God.

*"HE THAT RECEIVETH A RIGHTEOUS MAN IN THE NAME OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN"* - A "righteous man" is a sinner saved by grace and who is righteous because of Christ's righteousness imputed to him. To receive him "in the name of a righteous man" is to receive him, not because of any outward or inward piety or works and not because of the testimony of other men, but because of his own testimony of the Gospel of God's grace in Christ (2 John 9). What is *"A PROPHET'S REWARD"* and *"A RIGHTEOUS MAN'S REWARD"*? It is that God is glorified and Christ is exalted by their testimonies and their lives. Again, the reward is not blessings that we earn by our obedience but blessings given freely as they promote the glory of God in Christ and joy and love for our brethren in Christ (1 John 3:14-19).