

Pentecost VI: Matthew 10:34-42: Not Peace, but a Sword

1. Compare the 25th and 26th editions of Nestle/Aland on vss. 5-42. The 25th edition makes it one paragraph with a number of subparagraphs. But the 26th not only increases the number of subparagraphs but also makes twelve paragraphs. In the Introduction to the 26th edition we are told, on page 44, that the editors are trying to distinguish "the primitive units". If by that they mean that twelve sayings of Jesus are here grouped together for the sake of convenience, it is higher-critical. 10:5 and 11:1 clearly state that Jesus said all of this on one occasion. It is one speech. These notes, therefore, prefer the paragraphing in the 25th edition at this point. Vss. 34, 37 and 40 are subparagraphs, not major paragraphs.
2. Before studying this vs. look again at vss. 32-33. Confession of Jesus before men will result in Jesus confessing the confessor before the Father. But that will bring suffering at the hands of men. Denial of Jesus before men will result in Jesus denying the denier before the Father. That will bring peace from the world, the wrong kind of peace.
3. Vs. 34: NEB: "You must not think", like our: "Don't ever get the idea." ὅτι introduces an object clause. ἦλθον, the mission of Jesus beginning with His incarnation. βάλειν, an inf. denoting purpose. βάλλω has more meanings than "to throw". Here "to put" "to bring". εἰρήνην ἐπὶ τῆν γῆν here means a Utopian peace, the cessation of all strife, "the good life" without troubles. There is no such thing. ἀλλὰ, following a negative, means "quite to the contrary." μάχαραν, "a sword", is metaphorical and is explained in the next verse. It denotes war and strife, division. Bengel interprets εἰρήνην "the peace of the righteous with the wicked". Ylvisaker: "The Gospel is a separating and sundering force. Christ is called the Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6). He came to establish peace on earth, between man and God, and among men (Lk. 2:14). He fills the hearts of His believers also with peace (Jn. 14:27; 16:33). This purpose is not attained, however, with a stroke of the pen; it may be effected only through the suppression of sin and its consequences." Fahling: "Not as though Christ or His Gospel were to blame; but it was due to carnal enmity, which found its expression in the hatred against Christ and the persecutions which followed the introduction of the Gospel." Stoeckhardt: "Those who refuse the Gospel of peace have a thorn in their conscience and become bitter and hostile towards those who wish to rescue their souls." Lenski: "If Christ had not come, the earth would have gone on undistributed in its sin and its guilt until the day of its doom, Jn. 15:22-25. Christ came to take away that sin and that guilt. At once war resulted, for in their perversion men clung to their sin, fought Christ and the gospel, and thus produced two hostile camps. . . . Better the war and the division, saving as many as possible, than to let all perish in their sin." Verily, the church on earth is the Church Militant, if it is truly serving its purpose.
4. Vs. 35: γὰρ is explanatory. Vss. 35-36 explain vs. 34. Note that Jesus repeats ἦλθον "I came". διχῶσαι, another inf. of purpose, rendered by the majority of our translations: "to set against". The family is the most intimate group of people known to man. God wants families to be at peace. But theological differences, owing to the sinfulness of human nature, cause the sharpest and deepest conflicts so that those who ought be closest are set against each other the most. Bengel: "In this passage those are put in opposition, who are otherwise naturally most attached to each other." Ylvisaker: "It becomes at once a question of 'either-or' either for Christ or against Him, either to continue in the service of sin or to be released from such servitude." Fahling quotes Kretzmann: "There is no more bitter hatred and strife than that due to religious differences. It estranges relatives, disrupts families, and causes lasting enmities between the closest of friends."
5. Vs. 36: καὶ introduces a summary statement. ἐχθροὶ means "personal enemies". τοῦ ἀνθρώπου,

objective genitive. The article τοῦ is generic, covering all such situations of being hated. Note that it's ἄνθρωπος which means "person" whether man, woman, or child. οἱ οἰκιακοὶ αὐτοῦ "the members of his (her) family". Jesus is saying that a true believer can expect the hatred of his (her) entire family. That is, indeed, a heavy cross to bear. But, it cannot be avoided. Forewarned is forearmed. Jesus understands. Read Jn. 1:11 and 7:5. By the way, in vss. 35-36 we have a quotation from Micah 7:6. Ylvisaker remarks: "In Micah 7:6, it is predicted, as a part of the woes of the daughter of Zion, that the Kingdom of peace shall be ushered in through conflict and dissension among those who in a physical sense are closely united." Of course, Jesus is not saying "Hate them back." By no means. He is speaking about what the true confessor may have to endure.

6. Vs. 37: Note the parallelism in this verse, two sides of the same coin. To be worthy of Christ means to be in the right relationship to Him, repentance, confession of sin and faith in the Gospel. To love father and mother more than Christ means to prefer their false teachings, sinful ways, their personalities, to the relationship of repentance and faith in Christ. The second part of the verse should thus be understood too. Read Luther's explanation of the first and fourth commandments. Never should we despise our parents and masters. But NEVER should we fear, love and trust in them above all things. To love parents more than Christ means to make gods of them, their ideas and teachings. Note that twice Jesus uses forms of φιλέω, affectionate love. And note that in both cases φιλοῦν present participle, denoting a constant habit. Jesus is not speaking about the sins which a Christian commits against the first commandment against his own will. We're all guilty of that. He is speaking about a way of life, a habit.
7. Vs. 38: καὶ means "furthermore". Likely οὐ λαμβάνει meaning "refuses", as LB translates. λαμβάνω denotes willing acceptance of the cross, as Christ willingly took His cross. The Christian's cross is anything and everything which he suffers for Jesus' sake. His own flesh is a heavy cross. It tempts him to unbelief, compromise, giving up, despair, etc. First the Christian must willingly accept his very own cross. The second καὶ "and then". He must willingly follow after Jesus. Jesus is pictured as the Christian's example. Read I Pet. 2:21, and Hebr. 12:1-3. He does not expect us to go before Him. He says "after Me". Note that λαμβάνει and ἀκολουθεῖ are in the present tense, a constant taking and following. To refuse the cross means to deny Christ, to be unworthy of Him, to lose one's own soul. Which thought leads us into the next verse. Some modern critics claim that this vs. (38) was interpolated later because crucifixion would have been unknown to Jesus' disciples before He was crucified. But Ylvisaker rightly says: "It has been contended that the words are a later interpolation with a view to the crucifixion of Christ. But this is not the case. Nor is the verse an ordinary truism, but it contains the prophecy of Jesus Himself regarding the manner of His death, and concerning the cross which Roman custom required that He must carry (Jn. 19:17; Mt. 27:32; Mk. 15:21; Lk. 23:36)." The very fact that, at the trial of Jesus, the people cried: "Crucify Him" shows that crucifixion was known among the people before His crucifixion.
8. Vs. 39: Phillips and NASB wrongly translate the aorist participles "he who has found" "he who has lost". All other translations correctly have "he who finds" "he who loses". On the verse itself Ylvisaker says: "This verse contains an oxymoron, paradoxically expressed. These statements would ordinarily seem inconsistent." In this vs. all men are divided into two classes. There is no third possibility. We agree with Ylvisaker and Stoeckhardt who say that the word ψυχῆ is used in two senses in this verse: the first one is temporal and earthly life; the second is spiritual and eternal life. The first clause denotes the person who cannot stand up under the divisions and strife noted in vss. 34-35, prefers close relatives to Jesus noted in vs. 37, and refuses to take up his cross and follow Jesus, vs. 38. The second clause denotes the faithful and enduring believer. The words ἔνεκεν ἐμοῦ, 39, are very important. Because they belong to Jesus in faith, confession, practice, and suffering they will

find life. The future verbs ἀπολέσει and εὐρήσει should not be limited to Judgment Day. They apply already to this life. They are future because they are the inevitable consequence of personal disposition. Sanctification does not save man. But if sanctification is refused, loss of everlasting life sets in.

9. Vss. 40-42 form the conclusion of Jesus' directives to the Apostles and all Christians, vss. 5-42, though vss. 5-15 were meant particularly, not exclusively, for the Apostles. Ylvisaker says of 40-42: "It is to give strength and encouragement to the disciples in their difficult task that Jesus speaks these words." And Lenski: "While the prospect the twelve must face in their mission through life is dark, it is by no means entirely so. The inaugural address ends with the note of success." Five times forms of δέχομαι. Twice form of λαμβάνω occur. The first means "receive" in the sense of "welcome", wherever and however that may be. It denotes a cordial reception. And, in vs. 38 λαμβάνει means "take", while in 41 it means "will receive". Bengel notes that in vss. 40-42 we have a descending scale: Apostles, a teacher, a righteous man (believer), one of these little (disciples), meaning the unnoticed believer. But at the very end we have a sudden ascending scale introduced by "verily, I say to you". Treatment toward the least of Christians certainly does not involve "the least reward". Note what a high honor Jesus gives to Apostles, teachers, righteous Christians, and the least of these, just one. They are exceedingly precious to Him.

10. Vs. 40: Some modern critics talk about a "corporeal identity" between Christ and the Christian. That is neither logical nor theological. Faith and faithfulness identify Christ and Apostles, as well as all Christians. Christ is speaking of the mystical union, by faith. To receive Christ means to receive the heavenly Father because both are true God and because the Father sent the Son with a specific commission. Likewise, the Son sent the Apostles with a commission.

11. Vs. 41: προφήτης denotes God's spokesman, be that a prophet, a preacher or a teacher. On receiving a prophet read II Kings 4:9ff. εἰς ὄνομα προφήτου is rendered "because he is a prophet" by RSV, NIV, JB, and AAT. It is implied that "the one who welcomes" is a regenerate man or otherwise he would never recognize him as God's spokesman. προφήτου is adjectival genitive, telling us what kind of reward. The very reward which will be given the prophet will be given the one who welcomes him. μισθός, used three times in 40-42, is never used of a meritorious reward, but only a reward of grace. Cf. Mt. 5:12. καὶ means "furthermore". δίκαιον doesn't mean only "a good man" (TEV, NEB), but rather "a righteous man" in the Scriptural sense that the righteousness of God is imputed to the believer and results in the righteousness of godly living. εἰς ὄνομα δίκαιου means "because he is a righteous man". Bengel rightly points out that "the welcomer" (a believer) can determine this fact by the righteous man's attitudes and actions. δίκαιου is adjectival genitive. The very reward which will be given the righteous man will be given the one who welcomes him. For an example see Josh. 2:1 and Hebr. 11:31. Rahab the harlot welcomed righteous men and will receive her reward.

12. Vs. 42: καὶ "and finally". ποτίζω is a causative verb (to give a drink) which takes a double object, both of the person and of the drink. τῶν μικρῶν τούτων is partitive genitive and surely is not limited to (though it includes) little children. ψυχροῦ is genitive of content or adjectival genitive. Bengel says: "Little ones is a sweet epithet for disciples." Does μόνον go with the prepositional phrase "only in the name of a disciple" (AV) or with ποτήριον "only a cup of cold water" (NKJV and others)? We think it is the latter. Furthermore, does εἰς ὄνομα μαθήτου refer to the giver of the water "whoever in the name of a disciple gives etc." (NASB or LB) or to the receiver "to one of the least of these my followers, because he is my follower etc." (TEV)? We think it is the latter on the analogy of similar expressions in vs. 41. Thus Ylvisaker: "For it is in His disciples Jesus would be loved and honored, and even the least service of love rendered unto one of them—a cup of cold water only—shall be

considered by the Saviour as having been done toward Him and shall receive His reward. The nature of this reward, and that it is a reward of grace only, is not stated in this passage. It is a matter of self-denial oftentimes to differ from the unfriendly world in our attitude toward the servants of the Lord. But this relation is of such import that final judgment will be conditioned upon our attitude. How worthy is not then the true servant in the eyes of the Master! Should not this truth encourage and strengthen us and inspire us with confidence and good cheer?" Jesus adds the asseveration "Verily I say to you" which denotes His divine authority. It will truly happen. οὐ μὴ denotes an emphatic denial. The last clause amounts to a litotes: "He will most surely get his reward." The point is the high value which Christ places on His own. By the way, "the welcomer", twice in 41, and "the giver", vs. 42, must of necessity themselves already be believers because they recognize prophet as prophet, righteous man as righteous man and one of these little ones as a disciple of Jesus. Contextually this refers to kindnesses done by Christians to Christians under difficult circumstances. Like Aquilla and Priscilla, like the jailor of Philippi, like Lydia the seller of purple, in the Book of Acts. God always saw to it, and still does, that the suffering and persecuted Christian was taken care of by other Christians.

13. An afterthought: The sword, vs. 34, began to show itself in the first family, Gen. 4:48. It was found in Abraham's house, Gen. 21:9. The principle is enunciated for all generations at Gal. 4:29.