

Peace or Division?

Sermonette by Robert Schmid

March 1990

Good morning brethren!

Please picture the following:

It's Sabbath morning and it's time to get up and prepare to go to Sabbath services. Father and mother are in the kitchen preparing breakfast. It should be a happy morning, but there is a certain apprehension on the part of the parents, for they know that one of them would have to go upstairs and wake up their 15 year old son who has no intentions of going to Sabbath services.

It was about 6 month ago when their son began to put up a fight, declaring that he no longer wanted to attend Sabbath services. The father in turn made it clear that as long as he lived in this house, there would be no choice but to go, like it or not. Since then Sabbaths have been anything but peaceful.

Or consider this scenario: A couple, married for several years, with a young son, and members of God's Church since they left college. They decide to visit the husbands parents who live across town. It's been several months since they saw each other, since the grandparents saw their little grandson. During dinner the conversation, as it always does, turns to religion, and eventually turns to arguments and accusations. How could you have possibly left the Catholic Church that you grew up in? How could you possibly join this cult that takes all of your money, keeps you away on Christmas, and probably makes you drink coolaide some day?

So - after angrily leaving the house, they vow not to come back again. What was to have been a peaceful family get-together turned into an ugly war, and feelings of anger, helplessness and guilt, will take months to heal.

You ask yourself what's wrong? Didn't Christ come to proclaim *peace and goodwill to all men*? Didn't He say: "*Peace I leave with you*" before He left to return to His Father? What do such scriptures, and there are many others, mean in the light of everyday reality? Let's face it, we can all relate to such problems in one form, or to one degree or another.

Let's turn to Luke 12:51 Christ is speaking to His disciples, He is speaking to you and me and He is asking a question:

"Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth?"

Now the very fact that He is asking that question, implies that at least some, and probably most, believe that He came to bring peace. Is that what you believe? Do you blame yourself and feel guilty when there is no peace in your family?

And so, Christ who knows us, is asking the question:

“Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth?”

Now I realize that it may be difficult for some of us to accept the answer, but here it is, Jesus Christ is speaking and He says:

“NO, I have not come to bring peace, but rather division!”

And in verse 52 he begins to explain what He means when He said:

“From now on (and I am reading from the Living Bible) From now on families will be split apart, three in favor of me and two against, or perhaps the other way around. A father will decide one way about me, his son, the other; mother and daughter will disagree; and the decision of an honored mother-in-law will be spurned by her daughter-in-law.”

This is a horrible and depressing picture Jesus is giving us, as to what to expect when we follow Him. On the other hand, this is really good news, for there is now no need for me to feel guilt anymore when there is no peace. It was Christ that brought the division - NOT YOU and NOT I.

But why would Christ, who is the Prince of Peace, bring war and division into our lives, our homes and into our families?

Well, He did so because He was beginning to call people and separate them for a different, for a specific purpose. He did so out of love and compassion, to accomplish a mighty work in our lives. He did so because there was no truth in the land, and truth must first be established before there can be peace.

The division that Christ brought is between BELIEVERS and UNBELIEVERS, between the CONVERTED and the UNCONVERTED.

So, therefore, whenever a BELIEVER comes in contact with an UNBELIEVER there is division, there is a kind of war, and ***Jesus Christ is the cause of it.***

But, here is the Good News. You see, even though Jesus brought division in our relationship with unbelievers, He also provided a way for the believer to have peace with God, with his fellow believers and with himself.

This way of peace that God provided, is explained by Paul when he wrote to the Philippians. In Phil. 4 beginning with verse 4 he says (and again I am reading from the Living Bible):

“Always be full of joy in the LORD; I say it again, rejoice!”
“Let everyone see that you are unselfish and considerate in all you do!”
“Remember that the LORD is coming soon!”
“Don’t worry about anything, instead, pray about everything!”
“Tell God your needs and don’t forget to thank Him for His answers!”
“If you do this, you will experience God’s peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will keep your thoughts and your hearts quiet and at rest as you trust in Christ Jesus!”

Yes, God will give you rest in the midst of trials and tribulations and division. Paul expressed it this way in 2nd Cor. 4:8 :

“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.”

Yes, Jesus Christ came to bring division between believers and unbelievers, but, IF you are a believer, IF you love Jesus Christ, IF you love your neighbor as yourself, IF you diligently search for truth, then, God promises you HIS peace, a peace that passes all understanding, a peace that you can have, even though there is division in the world, and in your home. Even though you may be sick or persecuted.

This is the Good News of the Gospel, that with Christ ALL things are possible, and that with Christ ALL things will work together for good, even the things that are not so good.

I pray that you all have a happy and peaceful Sabbath.