

THE SAVIOUR - - and His strangest utterance
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(Matthew 10:34-36)

The coming of Christ stirred the hearts of Israel as they had never previously been stirred, and from all parts of the country crowds rushed to hear the new Teacher. Every miracle gave promise of greater things to come, and the fact that He gave peace to innumerable sufferers seemed to guarantee that soon He would be able to bring peace to the troubled nation. Then to the consternation of His followers, He said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother . . . And a man's foes shall be they of his own household."

The Sword that Wounds

The Bible has three things to say of the usefulness of a sword. In the first place, it is able to wound. The Saviour came to act as a great surgeon, and knowing the need of His patients, He liberated a Gospel destined to be a two-edged sword. Recognizing the deep-seated need of sinners, the Lord Jesus did not hesitate to hurt them, for only by so doing could He hope to bring healing to their sick hearts. He also warned His disciples that the forceful presentation of the Gospel message would arouse resentment, for the sword of truth would penetrate into the secret places of the conscience to reveal those things that most people would prefer to remain hidden. He said, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!" (Luke 6 :26). Holy warfare must always precede the healing of souls, for until sin is ruthlessly exposed and overcome, spiritual healing will be an impossibility.

The Sword that Separates

"For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother," and we might add "a friend against his friend." The incoming of the Gospel message leads to a complete transformation in the outlook of men. The convert's former associates will probably misunderstand his motives, and might even persecute him in the new faith. In order to follow the Lord Jesus, the Christian may have to renounce his old delights and forsake many of his former friends. The business man may find it necessary to revise all his ideas of trading, and if this should lead to serious financial loss his partners will probably have a great deal to say in the matter. A wife who has accepted Christ as her Saviour may find it impossible to accompany her husband in the ways of sin, and her refusal to co-operate may lead to domestic unpleasantness. The sword of the Gospel will sever ties that might have been in existence for years, and instead of creating peace, will prove to be the harbinger of discord. The early history of the Church provided ample evidence of the truth of Christ's prediction.

The Sword that Ministers

The inspired Old Testament prophet recognized another use for the sword, and embodied his vision in his thrilling utterance concerning the coming of the King. "And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift

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up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any
more ' (Isa. 2 :4). The prophet saw that the coronation
of the Messiah would transform the steel weapons of war
and make them to serve a new purpose in the production
of food. People who had been hurt by the sword would
suddenly be fed by the new instrument. And in like
manner, this is true concerning the Gospel of Christ. The
message of redemption will hurt, and then separate the
sinner from the ways of sin. Yet when this operation has
been completed, and Christ occupies the throne of a man's
affection, the Bible suddenly becomes the greatest book in
the world, for within its pages the Christian discovers the
true source of the bread of life. It will minister to his
deepest needs, and satisfy his hungry soul. The universal
coronation of the Lord Jesus will lead to a new world, and
the greatest proof of this sublime fact is found when a
similar transformation takes place within the kingdom of
a man's heart.

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