

## Peace Through Fighting

Ponder: Fighting for peace?

Scripture: “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword” (Matt. 10:34, NKJV).

Now wait just a minute! The night Jesus was born, didn't the angels say “peace on earth, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14)? Didn't Isaiah prophesy that the Messiah would be the “prince of peace” (9:6)? Didn't our Lord Himself say “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matt. 5:9)? How, then, can Jesus say He came not to bring peace, but a sword? Last time I checked, people use swords to fight!

The seeming contradiction melts away when we read Jesus' words in context and view them in light of all that He taught. Jesus told His disciples, “Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you” (John 14:27). So Jesus spoke of peace and swords differently from how the world thinks of them.

Jesus explained His own point about peace and swords: “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; and a man's enemies will be those of his own household” (Matt. 10:35-36). Of course it wasn't that Jesus derives some fiendish pleasure from pitting family members against each other. He knew, however, that most people would reject Him and His word. Even families would be divided, and the minority who embraced Him and His teachings would suffer various degrees of persecution up to and including death! In that sense, then, Jesus came not to bring peace, but a sword.

That scenario still exists. Paul exhorted the Christians in Rome: “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men” (Rom. 12:18). Paul knew from personal experience that it is impossible to be at peace with some people. Even Jesus had conflict with enemies including family members. Nevertheless, we can have peace with God (Rom. 5:1) and peace within ourselves (Phil. 4:7) when we “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12). That's because “though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God” (2 Cor. 10:3-4).

It may sound strange, but if you want to have peace, you must fight!

Song: “Onward Christian Soldiers”

Prayer: Gracious God, we thank You for the Prince of Peace who gives us peace with You and with each other. Help us, we pray, to fight the good fight of faith, that we may lay hold on eternal life and enjoy eternal peace. In Jesus' name, Amen.