

NOT WORTHY OF CHRIST

Jesus DEMANDS to be number ONE! He will not share His LORDSHIP with anyone else. He said there would be division over Him even among the closest of family relationships. And just to be absolutely clear, He said...

Matthew 10:37 (NKJV)

37 He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

Christ is not saying we should not love our parents or our children. Of course, we should. The balance of Scripture is very clear on this. 1 Timothy 5:8 says that if anyone does not care for his own family, he is at that point acting worse than an unbeliever.

The issue here is in that little word “*more*”. Family is not to be above Jesus. Jesus demands to be recognized as LORD! This is the stuff of true discipleship. Jesus says if anyone loves family more than Him, they are not worthy of Him. And as seen in verse 39, this is a test of who is genuine. One must choose loyalty to Jesus above loyalty to family. The issue is this: What is going to be the number one loyalty? Who will have our supreme allegiance? Well, for true disciples, the answer is Jesus!

John Bunyan was told he must quit preaching or go to prison, which would result in his family being destitute. His oldest daughter Mary was especially close to him, and she was born blind. From his cell he wrote...

“The parting with my Wife and poor Children hath oft been to me in this place as the pulling the flesh from my bones; ...I should have often brought to my mind the many hardships, miseries, and wants that my poor family was like to meet with, should I be taken from them, especially my poor blind Child, who lay nearer my heart than all I had besides. Oh, the thought of the hardship I thought my blind one might go under would break my heart to pieces... But yet, recalling myself, thought I, I must venture all with God, though it [means I have] to leave you. Oh, I saw in this condition, I was a man who was pulling down his house upon the head of his wife and children, yet thought I, I must do it. I must do it.” – **John Bunyan** (*Grace Abounding*, Section 327.)

Who could possibly make such a claim on people as to insist on being the number one allegiance of their life? Such a person must either be the divine/human Messiah, or he would be a maniac. This is a God-like claim because only God has the right to demand absolute supreme allegiance above all others. Yet, this is exactly what Jesus demands!

One commentator translates “**not worthy of Me**” as “**does not deserve to be Mine**” (Phillips). To choose family over Christ as an unbroken pattern shows one is not converted - that one is not a true disciple (cf. Lk. 14:25-27).

Christ was not presenting to His disciples some kind of a higher level of commitment. He was educating them on what it means to be “disciples indeed” (Jn. 8:31). Lots of people claim to believe – claim to be disciples, but when the testing time comes, they are shown to be bogus. That is a key point in Christ’s parable of the Sower and the soils.

Mark 4:17 (NKJV)

17 and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when **tribulation or persecution** arises for the word’s sake, immediately they stumble.

Luke 8:15 (NKJV)

15 But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and **good heart**, **keep it** and bear fruit with **patience** [endurance].

John 8:31– 36-37 (NKJV)

31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who **believed** [not with saving faith] Him, “If you **abide in My word**, you are My **disciples indeed**.

...

36 Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

37 “I know that you are Abraham’s descendants, **but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you.**

Note: these people claimed to “believe,” but Jesus made the determining factor abiding in His Word. And when it came to that reality, His Word had no place in them.

There is such a thing as a bogus kind of faith that is not saving faith. A true faith sees Christ as Lord over all, and it continues/endures!

This idea of Christ demanding to be number one (or to use the Bible word “Lord”) over all is not unique to this passage. There are two KEY gospel passages that make the salient point that in salvation Christ is recognized above anyone else and above everything else. In other words, true BELIEF recognizes Christ as Lord over all.

Matt. 10:34-39 – Lord over the closest of human **RELATIONSHIPS**.

Mark 10:17-22- Lord over all the **STUFF** of life.

Mark 10:17–22 (NKJV)

17 Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what shall **I do** that I may inherit **eternal life**?”

18 So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call **Me good**? No one is good but One, that is, God.

19 You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Do not defraud,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother.’ ”

20 And he answered and said to Him, “Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.”

21 Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “**One thing you lack**: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, **take up the cross, and follow Me.**”

22 But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Jesus makes the issue that of FOLLOWING HIM, and the issue is LORDSHIP. True discipleship is a Lordship issue. Will Jesus be recognized as Lord over all or not? Will we, above all, FOLLOW JESUS? That is the issue regarding the closest of human relationships in Matthew 10, and that is the issue regarding the possessions of life in Mark 10. These two chapters serve to show that having eternal life involves recognizing Jesus as Lord above all else. Only this type of Lordship commitment is a saving faith.

But let me add this qualifier. Jesus here uses the word “**phileo**” for love instead of the word “**agapao**,” which is characteristically the more intensive word for love. Admittedly, at points there is overlap, but we might have expected Christ to use the more intensive *agapao* here since that word emphasizes a love driven by the will, emphasizing sacrificial commitment. Phileo literally means “friendship love” and emphasizes the affections of the heart. All believers will supremely phileo Jesus, but they may fail Him in the realm of agape love. This was the deal with Peter. His affections were all in for Jesus, but he failed at agape. Jesus said to Peter, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Mt. 26:41)

When Jesus addressed fallen Peter after the Resurrection. Twice He asked Peter if he loved (*agapao*) Him. Peter, humbled and remembering his miserable failure, answered with the weaker word. Saying, “You know that I

love (*phileo*) You.” The third time Jesus used the less intense word saying, “Do you even *phileo* Me?” The humbled Peter said, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love [*phileo*] You.” And indeed Jesus did know that Peter loved Him – not perfectly, not as consistently and intensely as he should have. But Jesus knew he loved Him, as seen in His response of “Feed My sheep.” (cf. Jn. 21:15-17).

Jesus is saying that all believers, down deep, will have the strongest of affection for Him. It might not be as agape-consistent as it should be, but down deep, all true believers in their innermost soul do (*phileo*) love Jesus above all.

It is easy to say “I believe in Jesus,” but do we truly love Him? There are many evidences of true salvation, but right at the top is a SINCERE LOVE for Jesus.

1 Corinthians 16:22 (NKJV)

22 If anyone does not love [*phileo*] the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come!

Ephesians 6:24 (NKJV)

24 Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

1 Peter 1:8 (NKJV)

8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

1 John 4:19 (NKJV)

19 We love Him because He first loved us.

The affections of the heart tell on a person. It's not that true believers never fail. They do, but when they do, they characteristically hate it (cf. Rom. 7:18-22). You can truly love Jesus and yet fail Him miserably. Peter did that. After (in human weakness) he denied the Lord three times, he was immediately convicted to the core and went out and wept bitterly (cf. Mt. 26:75). Why? Because in truth he did really love Jesus!

True believers characteristically love Jesus and hate sin. That is why Paul in 1 Corinthians 8:3 says, “***If anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.***” The fruit of true faith is LOVE, first to God and then towards fellow believers (cf. 1 Jn. 3:14).

There is a flow of thought here related to loving Jesus and following Him in the way of the cross. To make the matter clear, Jesus uses the same type of “cross” language here in Matthew 10 that He used in reference to the rich young ruler in Mark 10, showing there is a parallel thought in view. The same type of “love commitment” demanded by Christ here in Matthew 10 is seen in the commitment He demanded of the rich young ruler in Mark 10.

Only those who love Christ above all others and above all else are worthy of Him! Says who? So says Jesus!