

Luke 14:32

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.

Analysis

Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. The alternative scenario: *ei de mē ge* (εἰ δὲ μή γε, "but if not") introduces the king's prudent response to recognized inadequacy. While the enemy is *eti autou porrō ontos* (ἔτι αὐτοῦ πόρρω ὅντος, "yet being far off"), the outmatched king *aposteias presbeian* (ἀποστείλας πρεσβείαν, "having sent an embassy") seeks terms. The phrase *erōta ta pros eirēnēn* (ἐρωτᾷ πρὸς εἰρήνην, "asks for conditions of peace") indicates negotiation from weakness, seeking surrender terms.

Applied to discipleship, this is the gospel's call: recognize you're at war with God, outmatched infinitely, and seek peace while He's yet distant (Romans 5:10). The alternative to submission is destruction—continued rebellion against an all-powerful King ends only one way. The 'ambassage' is Christ Himself (2 Corinthians 5:20), and the 'conditions of peace' are repentance and faith (Mark 1:15). God offers terms not because He's weak but because He's merciful (2 Peter 3:9).

Yet the parable cuts both ways: those who begin discipleship must recognize they've entered total war against sin, Satan, and self. There's no neutrality, no partial commitment. The king who seeks peace surrenders unconditionally; the disciple who follows Christ must likewise relinquish all competing loyalties (v. 33). Peace with God requires war against all that opposes Him. The cost is total, but so is the victory for those who persevere through Christ.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern warfare included provisions for seeking terms of surrender when defeat was certain. Envoys (ambassadors with diplomatic immunity) negotiated conditions—often tribute, hostages, territorial concessions, or total subjugation. The king who sought peace 'while the enemy is far off' acted wisely; waiting until siege or battle began removed negotiating leverage and increased likelihood of total destruction.

Biblical examples include Ahab's treaty with Ben-hadad (1 Kings 20:31-34) and Hezekiah's attempted tribute to Sennacherib (2 Kings 18:14-16, though God later delivered Jerusalem). Jesus' hearers understood that seeking peace from weakness was shameful but necessary when the alternative was annihilation. Applied to the gospel, humanity is at war with God (Romans 5:10); Christ offers terms of peace through His cross; rejection means facing God as Judge rather than Savior (Hebrews 10:26-31).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does this image of seeking peace while the enemy is far off illustrate the urgency of responding to the gospel now rather than delaying?
2. What does unconditional surrender to Christ as King look like in practical terms—what areas of life are you still negotiating rather than surrendering?
3. How does understanding God's patience as opportunity for peace (2 Peter 3:9) rather than indifference to sin affect your evangelism and urgency in calling others to Christ?

Interlinear Text

εἰ δὲ μήγε, ἔτι αὐτοῦ πόρρω ὅντος πρεσβείαν
G1487 G1161 G3361 yet while the other a great way off is an ambassage
G2089 G846 G4206 G5607 G4242

ἀποστείλας ἐρωτᾷ τὰ πρὸς εἰρήνην
he sendeth and desireth G3588 conditions of peace
G649 G2065 G4314 G1515

Additional Cross-References

Acts 12:20 (Peace): And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country.

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