

Matthew 10:36

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

Analysis

The climactic statement 'a man's foes shall be they of his own household' completes Jesus's warning about familial division. The word 'foes' (ἐχθροὶ/echthroi) denotes active enemies, not mere opponents. Those who share one's home may become one's adversaries when the gospel divides. The phrase 'of his own household' (οἰκιακοὶ/oikiakoi) refers to immediate household members—those with whom one shares daily life. Reformed theology sees this demonstrating total depravity's reach: even natural affection cannot overcome spiritual blindness and opposition to God. Yet those who continue following Christ despite household opposition demonstrate authentic conversion. The verse doesn't encourage creating division but remaining faithful when division comes.

Historical Context

This completes Jesus's quotation of Micah 7:6. In the ancient Near Eastern context, the household included not just parents and children but servants, extended family, and sometimes multiple generations under one roof. The paterfamilias held near-absolute authority over religious observance. If he rejected Christianity, household members who converted faced not just emotional but legal, economic, and social consequences. Roman law granted fathers power of life and death over children (patria potestas). Early church history records numerous instances of family members betraying Christian relatives to authorities during persecutions. The apostolic letters (Ephesians 5-6, Colossians 3, 1 Peter 2-3) address mixed households, providing guidance on maintaining witness while fulfilling household duties.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How do you balance honoring family with following Christ when these conflict?
2. What comfort does this offer believers who experience family rejection—how does knowing Jesus predicted it change your perspective?
3. How should churches support members who face family opposition for their faith?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ἐχθροὶ	τοῦ	ἀνθρώπου	οἱ	οἰκιακοὶ	αὐτοῦ
And	foes	G3588	a man's	G3588	household	shall be they of his own
G2532	G2190		G444		G3615	G846

Additional Cross-References

Micah 7:6 (Parallel theme): For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.

Jeremiah 12:6 (Parallel theme): For even thy brethren, and the house of thy father, even they have dealt treacherously with thee; yea, they have called a multitude after thee: believe them not, though they speak fair words unto thee.

Psalms 41:9 (Parallel theme): Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

2 Samuel 16:11 (Parallel theme): And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him.

Psalms 55:13 (Parallel theme): But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance.

Jeremiah 20:10 (Parallel theme): For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him.

1 Samuel 17:28 (Parallel theme): And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle.