



Matthew 5:9

Peacemakers

One researcher has noted recently that in the past 4,000 years there has been less than 300 years of world peace.

Why are there wars in the world? Why does world peace seem to elude our government leaders? Why are there at least fifty civil wars going on all the time in various parts of the world?

Jesus is not referring to peace keepers but to peace makers in Matthew 5:9. He said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." The difference is a peacemaker actively overcomes evil with good. Some people are never happy unless they are fighting with someone. A peacemaker on the other hand finds great satisfaction in removing hostilities and effecting reconciliation between enemies.

Most world leaders won't acknowledge it but the Bible tells us the answer is sin –old fashioned selfishness. Our problem is human greed, lust and selfishness, not political, economic or social. Those are symptoms of a deeper problem. It is sin and depravity in the heart of man. Until there is a change in the heart there will never be any solutions to the problems on the surface. The source of the problem is within man. Nothing but a new heart, and new man, will bring peace. What is in the heart of man inevitably comes out of him.

As we have seen these are not natural dispositions, but dynamic spiritual changes in men's hearts. The spiritually prosperous person has had a life-changing encounter with God. That life-changing experience affects the way we approach every relationship in our lives.

SPIRITUALLY PROSPEROUS PEOPLE ARE PEACEMAKERS

Spiritually prosperous

The spiritually prosperous are in no way kin to the prosperity gospel cult in our day, but are those individuals who have a right relationship with God based upon an intimate, personal relationship with Jesus Christ. By faith they live above the chances, changes, and circumstances in life.

"Peace" is God's highest good for man. In the New Testament sense "peace" is not just the absence of trouble; it is everything that makes for the best that God in His grace gives to man. The words "grace and peace" are associated

together many times in the New Testament. We have the best in life because God has graced us. It is the highest good God can give to man. The peacemaker is God's messenger to bring this peace with God upon the world.

The "God of peace" is the source of this new life. In deed, His very name is Yahweh shalom —"the LORD our peace" (Judges 6:24), and our Lord Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace. He is God's Peacemaker. "He is our peace" (Eph. 2:14). He has brought us near by His own blood (v. 15) and taken us by the hand and brought us into the presence of the Father and introduced us to Him (v. 18). Jesus gives us His peace (John 14:27; 16:33). Moreover, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of peace. He applies and supplies the peace of God to our hearts (Gal. 5:22). The peacemaker draws upon this constant supply of God's peace.

Only a man *iff* Christ *can* live this kind of life. They are one of a kind; no one else is like them. They are different because they are the children of God. The one clear objective of the peacemaker is that the LORD God be glorified in all that he does. Every believer is expected to be a peacemaker. He has laid aside his own selfish ambitions and seeks to glorify God in all he does.

Jesus is our best model for a peacemaker. His concern was to glorify the Father at all times (John 17).

Why are the *peacemakers* *spiritually* prosperous? How are they blessed?
The world system does not know this kind of peace. It is the deep, deep peace of God in the soul of man.

God is perpetually at war with sin —namely the world, the flesh and the devil (James 4:1, 4, 7). Sin is the enemy of peace; therefore, believers living in sin are great sources of troublemaking. We have to keep short accounts with sin. As soon as the Holy Spirit or the Word of God convicts us we must confess it and turn from it. The peacemaker reveals the spiritual war going on in the world. He is salt and light that points to the righteousness of Christ. Only the pure in heart can be true peacemakers in a world of unrighteousness.

Peacemakers

"Peacemakers" are those disciples who strive to prevent contention and strife. However, they are not peacekeepers, but are active makers of peace. They use their influence to reconcile opposing party strife among individuals, families, churches, and the community. They change hostile attitudes to attitudes that seek the best interests of everyone.

Peacemaking is the work of God. History is lined with the failures of man-made peace accords. True peace is accomplished only by the blood of Jesus Christ who gave Himself that sinners can have peace with God. Peacemakers bring sinners to Christ so they can have peace with God. When hearts are changed and enmity is removed man can have a common objective that brings peace.

It must be kept in mind that "the peace of God is not peace at any price." God brought sin out in the open and dealt with it. God made peace with sinful depraved man at "immense cost." Only the blood of Jesus Christ can make propitiation for us (Romans 3:24-25). "Jesus Christ the righteous . . . is the propitiation for our sins" (1 Jn. 2:2). "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the

our sins" (1 Jn. 2:2). "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins" (4:10). The word propitiate means "the turning away of wrath by an offering." God's wrath is His settled controlled, holy antagonism against all sin. Propitiate is the appeasement of the wrath of God by the love of God through the death of Christ. Christ is the priest offering Himself as the perfect sacrifice for sin (Rom. 3:25). God Himself takes the initiative in sheer unmerited love. He turns His own wrath away by His own blood. God's justice has now been satisfied. Our sin debt has been paid in full. His holiness is satisfied. God's wrath is turned away from us on to His Son who died in our place. Any other concept of peace is a "cheap peace." True peace with God is an expensive treasure. We must never compromise with truth just to bring about a false peace. The moment we do we cheapen it. A false peace is more dangerous than open war. All it does is cover up the symptoms. James wrote, "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable" (3:17). We enjoy peace with God at a very high price.

Are these peacemakers those who make peace between man and God or between man and man? Probably either interpretation is possible; however, you can never bring peace between men until they have peace with God. His peace is the solid foundation for all other relationships.

Peace with God

Peacemakers are at peace with God (Rom. 5:1, 11). It is a valid observation that all of the other beatitudes are being acted upon. Quarrelsome people are not peacemakers. They have neither found peace with God nor peace within their own hearts. You cannot be an active maker of peace until you have first found peace. Peace with God involves a new nature, and a pure heart. Only the person who is pure in heart can become a peacemaker. There must be no hidden agendas, not selfish ambitions, and no double-mindedness with the peacemaker. The person who is filled with envy, jealousy, covetousness, hostility, etc. can never be a peacemaker.

Out of the heart proceeds a whole list of things that prevent individuals from being peacemakers (Mark 7:20-23). "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man." The heart must be cleansed of this evil before man can possibly make peace. The change must take place from the inside out.

Peace is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22; Phil. 4:7). We most resemble our heavenly Father when we are filled with peace. The perfect peacemaker is the Son of God. "For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall" (Ephesians 2:14).

These "peacemakers" demonstrate in their own lives how to have inward peace with God and how to be instruments of peace in the world. We can never be peacemakers until Jesus Christ is Lord of our lives and sin is put to death by the work of the Holy Spirit. We have been called to be ministers of reconciliation because we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1). Therefore, because we are no longer at war with God we are no longer at war with ourselves. The peace of God passes all understanding " rules over our lives like a king (Phil. 4:7).

Peace with other people

John Broadus said, "There is no more Godlike work to be done in this world than peacemaking."

Peacemakers show they are "children of God" by using every opportunity to bring about reconciliation with others. God is a peacemaker and they are like their father. "Now all *these* things are from God, who

others. God is a peacemaker and they are like their father. "Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

Peacemakers seek to live at peace with others because they are at peace with God and themselves (Rom. 12:17-21; 14:1, 13, 15-20; 15:1-2, 5-7; I Thess. 5:13; II Tim. 3:16; Heb. 12:14; 1 Cor. 7:15; 1 Pet. 3:11).

Ministry of reconciliation

Peacemakers use their influence to effect reconciliation between God and others (2 Cor. 5:18-20; Gal. 6:1). Ultimately peacemakers are concerned that all men be at peace with God. That essentially is the role of the peacemaker. He goes out of his way to reconcile lost man with God. It can only take place through the peace that Jesus Christ gives.

A great example of a peacemaker is the apostle Paul. If anyone was transformed from troublemaker to peacemaker it was Saul of Tarsus. How would you have liked him as a friend before his conversion to Christ? Luke tells us the very air he breathed was "threats and murder" against believers in Christ (Acts 9:1). Then he met Christ on the road to Damascus and he became a "man in Christ." Stephen's death was a testimony to Saul of God's peace in his heart. As Saul's henchmen were stoning him to death Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit! . . . Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (7:59-60). You can't kill a peacemaker because the source of his peace is an eternal God who shall never die. Even today in many parts of the world peacemakers give up their lives making peace. Men still treat them like they did our Lord.

If you are willing to be a peacemaker you must be willing to pay the price.

THE OPPOSITE OF PEACEMAKERS

The world has its share of troublemakers. They are also called agitators, rabble-rousers, spark plugs, instigators, dissidents, heretics, insurgents, malcontents, mavericks, misfits, rebels, renegades, turncoats, etc., etc.

I am not talking about those agents of change we need in every organization including the local church. We need those individuals who make us think, evaluate, and don't always think the way we do, or see things the way we see them.

However, the opposite of a peacemaker is one who has attitudes which are hostile, indifferent, angry, bitter, judgmental, obsessively critical nit-picking. Even the apostle John had his Diotrephes, "who loves to be first among them." Thank the Lord for Demetrius who "received a good testimony from everyone" and Gaius (Cf. 3 John 9-11).

Like the apostles John and Paul warned, there are shortcuts to peace that we dare not take. They not only cheapen peace, they also cheapen grace. We must never sacrifice Bible truth and solid doctrine for a passing moment of tranquility. There are some things that must never be compromised.

HOW DO WE BECOME PEACEMAKERS?

Let's take time to examine our attitudes and behaviors. Observe your own behavior and attitudes toward other believers, the church, and its leadership. If we are prone to be a bearer of gossip, bad news, negative

other believers, the church, and its leadership. If we are prone to be a bearer of gossip, bad news, negative attitudes, bitterness, resentments, hostility toward others, then let's start working at changing attitudes toward ourselves and others. Let's decide now to make love a priority in our lives. Let's make the building of relationships based on love and grace an emphasis in our lives.

Take some time and do an in-depth study of the principles of interpersonal relationships in the Bible. Study Romans chapters 12-16. You will be amazed at how many passages are addressed to interpersonal relationships. These chapters emphasize good relationships in the body of Christ.

Philippians 4:1-9 gives us an excellent model on becoming "peacemakers." There were two women who were outstanding leaders in the church at Philippi. Their names were Euodia and Syntyche. Paul asked the leaders in the church to help them. They may have had strong personalities and wanted to do things their way. Take a piece of paper and respond to some questions and apply these verses to your own Euodia and Syntyche.

What are my *attitudes* toward Euodia and Syntyche?

What are my *feelings* about Euodia and Syntyche?

What am I *saying* to myself about Euodia and Syntyche? Use the tape recorder analogy. If we were to place a tape recorder against your brain and record everything you are saying to yourself about these two ladies and played it back for the whole world to listen to, what would we hear you saying? Yes, that stuff! What am I silently saying to myself about them?

The peacemaker also *learns* to be quiet. "Be swift to hear, slow speak, slow to wrath," is the behavior of a peacemaker. There are times when it is best not to reply, don't make comment, and don't react with your natural instincts. Don't repeat what you hear. Don't take sides. Lay aside your personal biases in decision-making. Strive to be objective. Know when not to speak. Humble yourself before man and God and ask for wisdom from Him.

Pray with thanksgiving for Euodia and Syntyche (v. 6). What is it you can honestly thank God for in the lives of Euodia and Syntyche? Start with one thing, but don't stop there. Write them down and pray over them daily.

"*Stop being anxious* about Euodia and Syntyche. "Stop worrying!" "Do not be full of anxious care" over this situation. You have committed it to God in prayer; now let go of it!

Paul says, "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving" (v. 6b). Have you sincerely prayed for God's will to be done? Have you prayed that God will bless your enemy? "Lord I thank you for Euodia. Lord bless Syntyche." Be specific in your thank you and blessings.

Change what you are saying about these individuals. Apply verses eight and nine to this situation, "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."

Do what you know to be the right thing to do. Instead of expressing your bitterness, pause and don't say a word, just think through the situation. Find something encouraging to say, or don't say anything. Start taking off your own masks. Remind yourself out loud that just like you they are sinners saved by grace! In your idle

off your own masks. Remind yourself out loud that just like you they are sinners saved by grace! In your idle moments write down the things you like about Euodia and Syntyche, what you like about your church, Jesus Christ, etc. Look over your list at least once a day and remind yourself of the good things in life. You can become a peacemaker in this situation.

Do what you know to be the right thing to do at this time for them. Practice the gesture of love. It is a volitional choice; it is something we do. It may be to bake them a pie, or take them out to lunch. I have a friend who says, "Love them until you slobber all over them!"

WHAT IS THE REWARD OF THE PEACEMAKER?

The peacemaker enjoys inner peace and security in relationships with God, others and himself.

God is the actor, He will call them His own children. To "be called" means "to become." "They shall be called sons of God" means "owned." Sons in this verse is figurative for children of God. It includes sons and daughters who have been born of God through the regenerative work of God the Spirit. God has a relationship with believers like a father does with his children. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be *owned* as the children of God." God owns them as His children. Since we are His children we must act like our Father. We have His character. When we become peacemakers we become more like our Father in heaven.

God has made peace with man through His Son Jesus Christ. Christ is our peace. Peacemakers do what their Father has done. How often in our selfishness we want to stand up for our rights and stage a protest. If God did that we would all spend an eternity in hell. But God in His mercy and grace sent His Son to make peace with us through His own blood. The Prince of Peace gave Himself to make peace with us.

Peacemakers shall be known as sons of God because that is what they are.

The Bible treats reference to people as "sons of God" or "children of God" with great reserve. It is always an act of God's mercy and grace.

"For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I say*, whether things on earth or things in heaven" (Colossians 1:19-20). He is our peace because He gave Himself that we might be at peace with God.

The promise is that you will be called sons (and daughters) of God." If you want to resemble God, be a peacemaker. The peacemaker is called "God's sons." There is something God-like in bringing reconciliation between men and God. All believers are children of God, but there is a sense in which peacemakers are fulfilling what God fully intended them to be as His children. Such a person is really what the name indicates, children of God.

Every time we led someone to Christ we change the tide of world history. You can't legislate it, you can't socialize it, and you can't educate it. The problem is so deep in the heart of mankind that there has to be a radical change. Only God can do that. He does it one on one. The heart is deceitful beyond all imagination; only God can cleanse the heart and make man new.

Do I write to someone today who longs for this kind of deep inner peace? You can have it right now by confessing to God your need and asking Him to give you that peace that comes only from Jesus Christ.



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