

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Only Way to Happiness: Be a Peacemaker

Scripture: Matthew 5:9

Code: 90-195

Well, let's open the Word of God tonight, and we're going to have just a kind of a Bible study together in Matthew chapter 5 as we look at verse 9. We are going through the Beatitudes. This is beatitude number seven, a wonderful teaching of our Lord that summarizes the matter of salvation. He did this teaching as He began the great Sermon on the Mount, which extends all the way to the end of chapter 7. This beatitude in verse 9 is "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God."

This is a great subject to talk about and we're just going to kind of talk around that subject. I'm not going to give you some kind of an exotic outline to follow, although we will try to hang our thoughts on some questions as we've done all the way through the study of the Beatitudes. This is foundational teaching. This is bottom line. This is a kind of a primer on New Testament gospel. Very, very important teaching from the mouth of our Lord. It sums up everything. You could say that from verse 3 down through verse 12 you have a summation of what it means to be in the kingdom, what it means to be saved, what it means to be a believer, what it means to know God. It's all wrapped up in these incredible statements that begin "Blessed are."

And we come in verse 9 to this subject of peace. And, of course, that's a main subject throughout the Bible. The idea of peace, in fact, permeates the Bible. It opens and closes with peace. When God originally created man and woman and put them in the garden, it was a garden of peace. Then came the Fall and peace was interrupted, Peace with God was interrupted. Peace between men was interrupted. Then at the cross Jesus came and brought peace to the heart. Some day Jesus will return and establish a kingdom of peace. And in the ultimate new heaven and new earth we will enjoy eternal peace.

So really the story of redemption is the story of peace, peace forfeited, peace regained in the heart, peace regained on the earth, and finally peace regained in the eternal state. There are, in fact, nearly four hundred references to peace in the Scripture. The only reason there is presently no peace is because there is a major conflict going on in the world that can be summarized simply in this sense, man is at war with God. That's the problem. And that has been the problem since Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden. Since the Fall when peace was totally disrupted and taken from the earth, there is an ongoing war with God. Not only is man at war with God, but so is Satan and his host of fallen angels. Consequently there is conflict both at the angelic level and at the human level in this universe.

So learning about peace, what that peace means and how to be peacemakers, is critical as we can understand. As we come to the seventh beatitude we come to the seventh step, as it were, which ascends the ladder of blessedness. We come to this very important issue of being peacemakers. That would be to say that we are agents to restore peace. We have the responsibility to bring peace to otherwise troubled hearts, to bring peace where otherwise there would be only conflict.

God has put a high priority on peace making. And I want to hasten to add that He didn't give this responsibility to politicians. He didn't give it even to statesmen. He didn't give it to diplomats. He didn't give it to arbitrators. He didn't give it to lawyers. He didn't give it to judges. He didn't give it to kings. He didn't give it to presidents. He didn't give it to Nobel Peace Prize winners. He didn't give it to the League of Nations. He didn't give it to the United Nations. He didn't give it to the World Council of Churches. There isn't any ecclesiastical order or any council of men in any way, shape or form that can effect real peace.

These peacemakers are very different, vastly different from everything the world would identify as a peacemaker. And we're glad for that because we had enough of the world's peacemakers and their continual failure. In fact, if you study Scripture there is coming in the future perhaps the most apparently superficially and temporarily successful peacemaker the world has ever seen and he is known to us by the name Antichrist. And he like all other peacemakers is really nothing but a harbinger of further conflict. God's peacemakers are very, very different.

We don't have peace politically. We don't have peace socially. We don't have peace economically. We don't have peace maritally. We don't have peace in nations. We don't have peace in countries. We don't have peace in cities or states. We don't have peace in communities. We don't have peace in homes. We don't have peace in hearts.

Somebody said, "Washington has a lot of peace monuments. They build one after each war." Nobody has succeeded in bringing peace, nobody.

You will remember, I think, if you're old enough, that the United Nations came into existence in 1945. And it came into existence after the aftermath of World War II which is, of course, a frightening holocaust and caused the death of hundreds of thousands. At the end of World War II the United Nations was formed as an agency for world peace. Since that time there has not been one single day of peace in the world, not one day. The world is filled with never-ending upheavals though the motto of the United Nations is this, "To have succeeding generations be free from the scourge of war," end quote. That is a pipedream.

The New York Times reported in 1968 that there had been fourteen thousand five hundred and fifty-three wars that they could count since 36 B.C. Since 1945 the count has continued. From 1945 to

the mid sixties there were between fifty and seventy wars, 164 internationally significant outbreaks of violence involving some 82 nations. That's thirty years ago and they continue.

Richard Nixon came into the presidency in 1970. He said this in his election speech, he said, "Peace, a generation of peace. We shall have a generation of peace, something we have never had in this nation." Well it was a nice thought, didn't happen. Webster said a generation is 33 years. What are the chances of 33 years of peace when we can't manage to have one day?

Somebody said, "Well no, we had peace. We had some peace a few years of peace between say 1815 and 1846, between 1865 and 1898." But that's because they didn't count the Indian wars, periods bathed in blood in this country. And interestingly enough as many as we have killed in the wars since America's inception and certainly since 1945, we have killed more people with private guns than in all the wars combined. At every level we don't have any peace. And more people are being killed with guns in our day than ever before. There's no personal peace, mental, emotional problems and anguish strikes at the hearts of most people. There's no family peace, no school peace as we well know.

And the reason for all of this is because there's no peace...where? In the heart. Consequently the world reflects the heart of man. There is no peace to the wicked and the world is wicked and all men are wicked, deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, Jeremiah said. And because the heart is wicked and knows no peace it simply projects itself into all of its relationships. The world that man creates is a world without peace. It's a world of chaos. It's a world of conflict. It's a world of trouble. It's a world of shattered dreams and hopes and broken relationships. Peacemakers are desperately needed...desperately needed. And they can't come from the world because the world is full of hearts that have no peace, cannot therefore produce it.

Now God offers the world peacemakers right here in verse 9, "Blessed are the peacemakers." That indicates that there are such things as peacemakers and they are the ones that shall be called sons of God. The sons of God then are the true peacemakers. If you are a believer you are a peacemaker. If you're a child of God you're a peacemaker.

Now as we think about what this beatitude means, as I've done all the way along, I want to just point out a few areas that we can sort of lock on to maybe in the form of questions. Question number one, what is the meaning of peace? When we talk about peace what are we talking about?

I suppose for many people peace could be defined as the absence of a war. Peace could be defined as the absence of conflict. But that really isn't God's definition of peace. God's definition of peace is not the absence of something. Most people would say, "Well, peace means there's no strife, there's no conflict, there's no animosity." But frankly there's no strife and there's no conflict and there's no animosity in a cemetery but we wouldn't want to use a cemetery as a model of peace. We wouldn't

want to hold up a cemetery as the place where everyone gets along so well.

In Scripture peace is not the absence of anything. Peace is the presence of something. It is the presence of all that is blessed, all that is good, all that is fulfilling. When two Jews meet they say "Shalom." They don't mean to say, "May you have no more wars." But rather, "May you enjoy the full satisfaction, the calm, the tranquility that God brings." Peace is a creative force producing goodness and well being. It is not just the absence of something, it is the presence of something. It is -- it is not the absence of conflict, it is the presence of aggressive goodness. Peacemaking doesn't create a vacuum. It isn't just the absence of conflict and the presence of nothing. It isn't just a cold war. It isn't just truce.

Now there is a kind of worldly peace that is only the evasion of the issue. You know, you know what it's like, it exists in your home from time to time. It's an uneasy peace. It's a truce and it's produced by the fact that you just won't talk because if you open your mouth you know war will break out. So you just keep your mouth shut and you silently go around while smoldering inside. That's only an evasion of the issue. That's a kind of compromise. Or, you know there is sin in the family. You know there's iniquity that should be confronted but you don't want to confront it because it will blow sky high, so you compromise. You don't stand for the truth. You don't confront the issue. That's a very uneasy truth, that's an evasion of the issue. That's a very dangerous situation, very dangerous because you're only letting the real issue hide itself, a smoldering truce that is very likely to break out in greater conflict.

God never tells us to do that. He never tells us to just keep our mouth shut so we can somehow live in a superficial tranquility. He never allows us to be comfortable evading issues just to keep the peace, just to keep everybody tranquil. He never allows us to avoid confronting sin, to avoid confronting error for the sake of some superficial truce.

No, on the other hand, the Bible kind of peace conquers error, confronts sin and produces a true peace. The Bible kind of peace is the peace that exists after the struggle has been resolved. The greatest peace is not the cold war, the greatest peace comes after the hot war. That's the true peace.

James wrote about what is a true kind of peace in James 3:17. He said, "The wisdom from above is first pure then peaceable." In other words, peace comes from pure truth, pure wisdom. Peace is never sought at the price of truth. Peace is never sought at the price of error. Peace is never sought at the price of sin or unrighteousness. Hebrews 12:14 puts it this way, "Follow peace with all men and holiness." In other words, it's not a true peace because you don't confront sin. It's not a true peace because you don't confront error, you just let it exist in a superficial kind of truce. Follow the peace that is associated with holiness. Follow the peace that is first pure and reflects the wisdom that is from above, the truth.

Well, we want to avoid all needless strife. We don't want to just go around wreaking havoc everywhere. There are times when it is a wise judgment to overlook a transgression. There are times when it is the noblest of things to do to cover a multitude of sins. We don't want to just create strife. Some people are good at that, they can just create strife everywhere and they can do it rather piously in the name of virtue. But we certainly don't want to sacrifice truth. We don't want some kind of peace that is the product of truth sacrificed or the product of compromised righteousness or indifference to spiritual duty. That kind of peace is dishonoring to the Lord, unproductive, superficial and deceptive.

In fact, Jesus said in Matthew 10:34, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword." Before the peace can come the sword has to fall. What was Jesus saying? Well Jesus was saying this...Look, if you're in the house of unbelievers and you're a believer, you realize that as soon as you say I have committed my life to the Messiah, Jesus Christ, you're going to have some instantaneous conflict in your Jewish home." Right? That's going to be a sword that falls in that family and it is liable to divide you in every way. That's why Jesus said, you know, you may have to hate your mother or your father, your sister, your brother to be My disciple. This is the sword. Before there can come the true peace there has to be the sword that falls. The confrontation is necessary. The unmasking of sin is necessary. The confrontation of retribution and judgment and the message of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ must be given no matter whether it brings division or not because the only peace that will satisfy God is that peace that comes after confrontation.

We do not abandon truth. We do not abandon doctrine. We do not abandon conviction. We do not abandon principle. We do not cry peace where there is no real peace. In fact, Paul said in 2 Timothy 3 that all who will live godly will suffer persecution. I mean, just living your godly life is disruptive. Living your godly life in your home or your school or your work environment or your neighborhood in the relationships that are around you is a disruptive reality because you're confronting their sin. But when real peace comes, it comes not because we avoid issues because issues are resolved, conflict is resolved. That's real peace. The real peace that comes when the battle is fought and the battle is over and the truth has prevailed, that's it. The true peace is the peace that occurs when truth prevails.

Remember I said this morning as we were finishing up our study of 2 Corinthians that the only way the church will experience true unity is when it thinks the same thing. Right? And if you're going to be at peace with all men it's because you all think the same way. The peace that God is after is the peace that comes to those who agree about the truth of God. The Christian who enters conflict for the truth, the Christian who willingly combats error, who confronts lies and falsehood, the Christian who will point out heresy, the Christian who will point out sin in the end is not a divider, he's not a disturber, he's not a disrupter, he's a peacemaker cause he's working toward the true peace, the only true peace that God recognizes.

In Luke 12:51 Jesus said, "Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you know, but rather division." Before you can have a true peace you're going to have a disruption. True peace can only come, I say it again, when truth reigns and everybody agrees to that truth.

You know, that isn't how it is today. Most people would say, "Well if you want to have peace, we just...we just have to not disagree. Let's all get together and only discuss what we agree on." That's kind of the thrust of ecumenism, let's strip away all the stuff that divides us. Let's get everybody together and let's not talk about what divides us. And all I want to do is talk about what divides us if it's doctrinal or if it has to do with biblical truth and righteousness.

Jesus never pronounced blessings on apostates who opposed Him. He didn't say, "You know, these Pharisees, they're really very religious guys and we just need to get together with them so that we can have a more united front here in Palestine." True peace is the child of truth. That's the only real peace that God recognizes. The other kind is a false peace, a phony peace because nothing is resolved. What is true and what is righteous is simply ignored...ignored. And so we may have to endure temporary trouble in order to bring real peace. That's what Jesus did.

Now would you agree that Jesus was the greatest peacemaker that ever walked? Sure because He came into the world and what kind of peace did He offer us? Peace with God. And was He a disturbing person in society? So disturbing that the whole of the population of Israel basically turned against Him and executed Him. The world would look at Him and say He was anything but a peacemaker, He was the one who troubled like the prophets of old. He was the one who troubled Israel.

So, biblical peacemakers...and I want you to get this...are not just quiet, easy-going people who don't want to make issues, who lack any understanding of doctrine, who lack justice or righteousness, who are nice but compromising, who are appeasers. No. In a sense, a true peacemaker will not tolerate the status quo if the status quo dishonors God. He seeks a peace that demands truth. He seeks to bring to light the conflict, to resolve it and gain the victory through the truth. That's...that's the meaning of peace here.

Now let's talk secondly, what is the menace to peace? And this is pretty simple stuff, this is just foundational. What is the menace to peace? What threatens this?

Well, in a word...sin--sin...whether it is sin in terms of rejection of truth, or sin in terms of conduct. Peace is that peace that is goodness and righteousness. The enemy of that peace is unrighteousness and sin. So in order for there to be a real peace, sin has to be dealt with. Sin in terms of how we think or what we believe, that is error, and sin in terms of how we behave.

Listen to James 3:18, "And the seed...he says...whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace." Boy, that is so good. The seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. Peacemakers sow seeds of righteousness. They confront sin because the only true peace is the peace that is gained when sin has been confronted. There must be a dealing with sin.

And that would be true in your life. Go back to the first beatitude. And here you have the flow of someone coming to God, as it were. First of all, they are coming poor in spirit, that means they're bankrupt spiritually. They're overwhelmed with their sin. They realize their iniquity. They realize they are impoverished when it comes to offering God anything commendable, that they have nothing by which to be credited as righteous. They have nothing by which to gain heaven to earn forgiveness. They come spiritually stripped and barren and bankrupt and destitute.

And secondly, they are mourning over that condition. This is the recognition of sin in an attitude of penitence.

Verse 5. the third beatitude, they are meek. Gentle being a word for meek. They are meek and broken and selfless and humbled.

Verse 6 says they hunger and thirst for righteousness, that is to say they know they don't have it. They are without it and it is what they crave.

They are then beneficiaries of God's mercy in verse 7, and they are purged and cleansed and become the pure in heart. And having become the pure in heart they then become the peacemakers. And now that they are the peacemakers, guess what? Verse 10, "Blessed are those who have been...what?...persecuted." It will always be the case that the true peacemakers will be persecuted because there is something that stands in the way of real peace and they know what that something is and in a word, it is sin. It's the sin of wrong believing and wrong behaving. Only when that sin is confronted and only when that sin is dealt with can someone genuinely bring about true peace. We are to bring then to the trouble hearts of men and women a true peace. Not an uneasy truce, not a false peace, the real thing.

To be a peacemaker you must then have gone through this beatitude flow. You must have had a view of yourself that is very different than most people. If you ask the average person what they think about themselves today, what do you think they'll say? "I feel pretty good about myself. I'm pretty proud of myself and what I've achieved." Because they've been taught that in order to be a whole and healthy person they have to have high self-esteem, right? They've always been proud. People have always been proud. Sinners have always been proud. Today it's just justified. It's just hailed as a great virtue. Where once it was sort of scorned, today it's the virtue above all virtues.

But quite the contrary to the way most people view themselves, if you're going to be a peacemaker you have to realize you have nothing to be proud about. You are the lowliest of the low. You are bankrupt, destitute, mourning, meek, hungry and thirsting for a righteousness you don't have and desperately in need of God's mercy. You're really hating your own life. You realize you are a wretched soul, you are miserable. You deserve nothing. You have no rights, no privileges. You've achieved nothing. You hate your natural self. And you are not at all concerned with your rights, you're concerned with your needs. And you have a view of God. You come to God and you say, "I need mercy, I need mercy, I need mercy. If I get justice I'll be damned forever. Please give me mercy." And then having received that mercy you are cleansed, you become the pure in heart and now you can be a peacemaker.

A peacemaker then is one whose sins have been dealt with in Christ. He has been given a new nature, a pure heart. He has a whole new perspective. He views himself as humbled, as lowly and he comes begging for righteousness which he doesn't have and mercifully is granted that by God's grace. He is therefore because self is not the priority, because self is not important, because self is unimportant to him, he is willing to suffer wrong, he is willing to suffer injustice as Jesus did. And that's what verses 10, 11 and 12 tell us. Persecution, insults, all kinds of evil against you falsely on account of Me...that's okay, I'm nothing. Paul the apostle demonstrated that in Acts 20 when he said it really doesn't matter what happens to me, I know that when I get to Jerusalem I've been told that bonds and afflictions await me, none of those things move me. He said to the Philippians, "I know how to be abased, I know how to abound. I don't really care whether I have everything or nothing. I'm not an issue to me."

So it's a whole different approach to life. The peacemaker is one who has become a peacemaker because he has made peace with God. You know, these would be the least likely people that the world would select to be its peacemakers.

You know, I watch all these people sent all over the world to make peace. You watch this. They go to Northern Ireland and they get a bunch of people to sign a document and for a few weeks nobody kills somebody else. And then a bomb blows off and somebody dies and right back to where we started. Or you watch them go to the Middle East and sign these hopeless peace documents or wherever it might be, Bosnia or anyone else. And basically they're sending all the wrong people. They're not sending the peacemakers. What they need to do is just gather a group of Christians who can go over there and proclaim the gospel of peace. But that would never enter their minds because we're sort of the scum, the off scouring. Worldly kingdoms have always given their highest honors to the warriors, to the soldiers, to the proud and the forthright and the mighty and the dominant, the virile, the take-nothing-from-no-one people, the hard nose, the tough, self-sufficient. And they don't consider those who are Christians as having capacities to make peace. But only true peace comes through the gospel. We are really the peacemakers of the world.

Now we don't have to wait for the government to assign us. We can go anywhere anyway. The responsibility is to take every opportunity we have in life to be a peacemaker and use it for the glory of God, right?

So the issue, you see, is that men are at war with God. Women are at war with God in their hearts. And they'll never be able to have peace with each other unless they have peace with God. And so we are the peacemakers who tell them how to have peace with God because we have had peace with God in our own lives. Any time a person is at war with God, believe me, they'll be at war with everybody else. It can only be resolved when it starts in the heart. That's why Psalm 85:10, I love that statement, says, "Righteousness and peace have kissed each other." You're not going to have peace without righteousness. As long as a person is unrighteous, as long as a person is unforgiven, as long as a person is untransformed, as long as a person is in sin there will never be any peace because righteousness and peace kiss each other. Ultimately Jesus came to bring peace, but first of all there would always be a sword.

Well let me ask a third question, and this is a very obvious one as we think about this. Who is the source of peace? Who is the source of peace? We talk about what is the meaning of peace, what is the menace to peace, which is sin. Who is the source of peace?

Well we learned it this morning, didn't we? Second Corinthians 13:11, "The God of peace..." Listen to what it says in 1 Corinthians 14:33, "God is not the author of confusion but of peace." God is the author of peace. God is the source of peace. I mean, He is the only source of peace. Romans chapter 15 verse 33, "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen." And as we learned this morning, Paul called God the...the God of peace in 2 Corinthians at the end there. He called Him the God of peace in Romans. He called Him the God of peace in 2 Thessalonians, the Lord of peace. Hebrews ends with the God of peace being referred to. Peace belongs to God, it doesn't belong to man. Only God is the source of peace and peace resides in God as an essential part of His nature.

When God came into the world, do you remember what the message was? What did the angels say? "Peace," didn't they, peace, goodwill to men. Christ came to bring peace. Ephesians 2:14 says He is our peace. Boy, what a great statement that is. God is the source of peace. He sent the true peacemaker into the world who is Jesus Christ. And it is by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that sinners can be made right with God. In fact in Colossians 1:20, a remarkable verse, it says that God made peace through the blood of His cross. You can't have peace in your heart, therefore you can't have peace in your home, you can't have peace in your country until you know the God of peace through the peacemaker Jesus Christ. It's really an incredible thing. On the cross Jesus made peace between God and man. Why? Because He satisfied the justice of God by bearing our sins in His own body. Just a glorious truth that we're very familiar with.

Ephesians 6:15 calls the gospel the gospel of peace. That's a great statement there. The good news is that you can have peace with God. That's the good news. The good news is that you may have peace with God. Christ is called in Scripture the prince of peace. He says in John 14:27, "My peace I leave with you." The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of peace. Peace is a fruit of the Spirit. The whole of salvation is wrapped around peace. Judges 6:24 calls God Jehovah Shalom, the Lord our peace. In Jeremiah 29:11 it says, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace." Thoughts of peace. If there's ever peace it has to come from God. And it comes from God only through Christ. Jesus said it in John 16:33, "These things have I spoken unto you that in Me you might have...what?...peace."

So if we are to be peacemakers we have to draw that peace from God. And it comes to us in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Beloved, what this incredible statement is saying here in verse 9, this beatitude, is that there's only one group of peacemakers on the face of the earth and that is those who know the true and living God and have made peace in their hearts with Him through the blood of the cross of Jesus Christ. We are the only peacemakers the world knows. Everything else, all their efforts to produce tranquility of life, whether you're talking about on a political level or on a psychological level, I guess we would like to think, and I probably...probably they would like to think also this is true...psychologists, psychiatrists would like to see themselves as peacemakers, wouldn't they? But all of the peace that they produce is artificial, superficial, manipulative because they cannot bring the message that changes the heart. We are the true peacemakers cause we preach the gospel of peace about the God of peace who sent the Prince of peace and who through His Spirit granted peace to repentant sinners. Just a tremendous truth.

So the meaning of peace we saw. The menace of peace. And if you want another "M", the maker of peace is God. That brings us to the messengers of peace...the messengers of peace.

First Corinthians 7:15 says God has called us to peace. But it doesn't end there. Look back with me for a moment at 2 Corinthians chapter 5. This is very familiar. Second Corinthians chapter 5, this is a great text of Scripture and it identifies believers as God's peace corps. I kind of chuckle when I see that term, The Peace Corps. It's a nice idea and they do some good things on the level of human kindness. But the church is the true peace corps, isn't it? And it says in verse 18 of 2 Corinthians 5 that God who reconciled us to Himself through Christ gave us the ministry of reconciliation. In other words, we have been given the responsibility to tell the world they can be reconciled to God. That's peace. The war can end. God, verse 19, was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Therefore verse 20 says, "We are ambassadors for Christ, we have been given the responsibility to beg people to be reconciled to God." That's what peacemakers do. They evangelize the lost, the people who have no peace. There's no peace to the wicked, no peace.

So we are the ambassadors. We are the spiritual peace corps. We are the only peacemakers on the face of the earth. We're it. Nobody else, just us. And the world doesn't understand it. And what makes it more difficult is that we have to start a war before we can bring a true peace, don't we? We have to elevate their sin to their consciousness. We have to confront their iniquity and their error, their wrong thinking, their wrong living in order to bring about a true peace. So we aren't seen as the source of peace, we're seen as the source of conflict, just like Jesus was. But for those who hear our message and believe it, they understand that we are the peacemakers and they join us to become part of the peace corps.

Now let me just kind of break it down a little bit. Specifically, just so you understand, in what ways are we peacemakers, we who are the messengers of this peace?

First of all, we become peacemakers when we make peace with God ourselves. That's where it starts. When we believe the gospel of peace and the war with God ends because God is no longer threatening judgment on us, God is no longer promising damnation to us, we are no longer enemies of God as Romans 5 identifies us, we have made peace with God...that's where we become peacemakers.

Then secondly, we are peacemakers because we help others make peace with God. This is evangelism. At peace with God we are therefore filled with what Lenski called "sweet peace." We live in peace. We demonstrate that peace. And we become the proclaimers of that peace. And we call on sinners to meet the Prince of peace, to turn from their sin and embrace the only one who can bring peace to the troubled heart.

It's always amazing to me when I see on the television these criminals, sometimes...and I'm thinking particularly of the young man in Eugene, Oregon who...Springfield, Oregon who killed those students and teachers. And immediately the solution was that he's going to be under immediate psychiatric care because this is a troubled young man. Hey, we live in a world full of troubled people, not all of them get a gun and shoot each other. Some do. But we live in a world filled with troubled people. It's only a question of the degree of their trouble and how it manifests itself socially, right? We're in a world of conflict...marriages disintegrating, families flying apart, people unable to get along with each other at all levels. We've got a lot of troubled people with no peace.

And the solution that best in our culture seems to be..."Well, we'll get them in to some kind of psychotherapy." But they're not the peacemakers, those people. We can commend them for efforts to help folks sort of modify their behavior, but they're not the peacemakers. What the young boy in Springfield, Oregon who killed those people needs is salvation. That's what he needs. He needs to repent of his sin and his hatred and his bitterness and his hostility and his evil intent and his murderous behavior and embrace Jesus Christ and God can bring peace to his heart. Do you believe that? That's the gospel

Paul was a murderer and he became a peacemaker.

What those people in Northern Ireland who keep blowing up each other need is peace in the heart that only Jesus Christ can bring. They don't need to sit down at a table and conciliate again, they need to be saved. The most important thing going on in Northern Ireland right today, the most important thing going on up there is not going on in the city hall of Belfast, and it's not going on in the councils of England, as the Parliament meets, it's going on in the churches that preach the gospel. That's the only hope of peace in the heart.

Did some of you hear the radio broadcast of Grace To You where the testimony of Johnny Dean was given recently? Was executed, did you hear about that? This is a young man who has been fifteen years on death row in Texas. He had quite a long record of crime. And he went in the back store of a liquor store or some kind of a convenience store, whatever it was, and he was going to rob the store and he had a confrontation with a sheriff and he killed the sheriff and he was sentenced to death...capital crime. The jury sends him to execution. He's been on death row for fifteen years. This is a very troubled man. This is a man who had a long history of crime, all kinds of problems.

He started listening to Grace To You and he came to Christ and his troubled heart found peace...total peace. He was totally transformed from this criminal into a Christian. He began to devour everything in the Word of God. He began to read everything he could get his hands on. He became a fanatic for Puritan theology, started devouring the deepest things that he could read. And this is new for a guy like that who was relatively uneducated. He started taking in the Word of God and he became the peacemaker on death row. He was the only one who could bring peace to the troubled hearts of the inmates who were there waiting to die.

He was in contact with Grace To You for the four years before his execution. He was executed in June just a few weeks ago. And he was in contact with us and he would write letters and he got his MacArthur Study Bible but he was a little bit sorry about taking a study Bible because he would only be able to use it for about a month before he was executed.

Jay Flowers who produces our radio program thought it would be wonderful to go down there. So he went down to death row in Texas and he sat with him and they did an interview and he gave his testimony and in his testimony he basically said...Look, don't feel bad for me, I'm going to heaven. I've made peace with God. And he talked about how the Lord had used him to be the peacemaker there and with others who were on death row facing the same thing. He also, I think it was so interesting, he also spoke on this tape to the family. And he wrote a beautiful letter to the family of the victim, the man that he had killed. Of course there's bitterness and hostility and hatred and he has seen that through all these fifteen years as they have waited for him to be executed. And his message to them was, "Don't think that when I'm executed you'll find peace. The only time you'll ever

find peace is when you embrace Jesus Christ." He told them that.

He said, "Don't worry about me." He said, "I just read your book on heaven and I'm ready to go. I'm getting what the law says I deserve. I just want to be with my Lord Jesus."

That family won't find peace in his execution. He was executed five days after he made that radio program with us. And when he was asked, "What do you think about when you think about your execution?" He said, "I think about the sorrow of my family. I don't think about myself, I'm going to be with Christ. And I think about those people who think this will bring them peace, but it won't."

He's a real peacemaker. He was. And he knew how to bring peace. Sadly, so many people aren't willing to take the peace that we offer in the gospel. We are the heralds of the cross. We are the true peacemakers. We are the ambassadors of peace. We're the ones who bid sinners to throw down their weapons against God, come to the cross where peace is made.

The third way that we're peacemakers, not only when we make peace with God, and when we take the message of peace to the unconverted, but a third way we are peacemakers, and this is important, is we help other believers to make peace. We understand that now that we have made peace with God, the peace of God should rule our hearts, shouldn't it? Colossians says that. Once we've made peace with God and once we have become the proclaimers of peace with God, we also need to be useful to God in making peace with others. Agree with your adversary quickly, Matthew 5 says. We're to be quick to declare peace in troubled times.

Romans chapter 12 talks about that. You might want to look at it just briefly. There's a great statement made in Romans 12 about this. Verse 19, "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written...Vengeance is Mine, I will repay...says the Lord. If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he's thirsty give him a drink for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head."

In other words, even with people who are outside the cross we seek not to trouble them needlessly. And certainly with people inside the family of God we seek to be peacemakers.

I would encourage you as a Christian, be a peacemaker...be a peacemaker. You can't make peace always when you're proclaiming the gospel, that's a sword. But in the issues of life that come and go, the little irritations of life, relational conflicts around you, particularly among believers, be a peacemaker. Swallow your pride. Take the high ground and admit the wrong. Forget the injury. Let love cover a multitude of sins. Don't turn everything that's ever done against you into some massive issue. Jesus said have peace with one another, Mark 9:50.

If I'm going to build a bridge between me and you, I have to start building on my side. That's right. Have you ever seen a bridge built? They...they don't start in the middle, they start on both sides and then they begin to span. First a thin little cable, then another, something is fastened to the thin cable and a heavier cable is pulled. And then there's more and more...thin little cables from one side...eventually connected to the other, bigger cables, bigger cables. That's peacemaking.

Sometimes peacemakers don't say anything. They just let love cover. Peacemakers are never defensive, never self-protective, never vengeful. Peacemakers don't give excuses for what they did that might have caused conflict. Peacemakers are always willing to accept responsibility for what they've done. Peacemakers are always looking to how they can strengthen relationships. Be a peacemaker. Be a peacemaker.

Don't gossip, that doesn't make peace. That just spreads conflict. Don't be proud and self-serving, exercising self-love. Self-lovers all seek their own, Philippians 2:21. They don't do well at making peace in relationships. Proverbs 28:25 says, "Whoever has a proud heart stirs up strife." If you're the big issue, if it's got to be your way, you're going to be a strife-producing person. Somebody said, "Pride opens Pandora's box and fills the world with diseases." Be humble, that's what a peacemaker has to be.

Well finally, we've talked about the meaning, the menace, the maker, the messengers of peace. What is the merit of peace? What comes to us as a result of this?

Well, a great blessing. We...it says in verse 9...are given a great privilege. "We are called...what?...sons of God." This is the honor that comes to peacemakers...sons, huiosnot teknon, not little kids, but sons, emphasizing stature, inheritance, dignity, honor, standing. It's to designate us as those who are worthy to bear the title "sons of God." We because we characterize ourselves as peacemakers reflect the character of God. You see a son and you say, "Ah, I know whose son that is, I can tell because he bears resemblance to his father." That's what it's saying here. When you are a peacemaker you bear a resemblance to God your Father. You can say, "Now there's a peacemaker because he's like his Father, the God of peace." He's a peacemaker because he preaches the gospel of peace, because he seeks to bring peace to the relationships around him.

That's just another mark of a true Christian. True Christians are peacemakers and they are therefore called the sons of God because they alone reflect the nature of their Father. What a tremendous honor, isn't it? I mean, to say, "You know, you resemble God...you're a lot like Jesus Christ...you came to bring peace." You used to be a son of Satan, right? John 8:44, "You're of your father the devil, but as many as received Jesus Christ to them He gave the right to call themselves the sons of God." And many sons, of course, He will bring to glory. What a tremendous truth.

As sons we are honored. We are precious to God as His sons. A father prizes his child above his estate, like Jacob prized Benjamin. And God prizes us. The wicked, the Bible says, are like chaff, it's kind of useless, like dross, no account. But God's children are precious. Malachi 3, they're like jewels. They are the apple of His eye, the Old Testament says. Isaiah said the wicked leave their name for a curse. But Isaiah also said the names of God's children are perpetuated. Christ carries them on His heart. They're written in the Lamb's book of life. Even the tears of the sons of God are precious. The psalmist said in Psalm 56:8, "Put Thou my tears into Thy bottle." God keeps track of all our suffering and sorrow. And when we die it says precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. Isaiah 43:4 says, "Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been made honorable."

I mean, to be a peacemaker, to have been saved by the Prince of peace, the God of peace, the Spirit of peace, to have become a peacemaker is to have become a son of God. And God crowns His sons with the highest and noblest honors. It is we who are the princes of the earth. It is we who are the true priests. It is we who are the fellow heirs with Christ. It is we who are kings. Psalm 16:3, we are the excellent of the earth. Second Timothy 2:21, "We are the vessels unto honor." We have been elevated above the angels. Revelation 3:21 says we'll sit on the throne of Christ who sits on the Father's throne.

I mean, do you really grasp the great privilege of being a son of God? It means that God has a personal eternal love for you. It means that God bears with your weakness and sin and incessantly forgives it. I remember in Numbers 23:21 where it says, "He hath not seen iniquity in Jacob," just overlooked it by His grace. God, because you're His son, accepts your imperfect sacrifice, your imperfect service. Because you're His child He provides for you. You don't need to worry about what you shall eat or drink or wear, it's all cared for. He shields you from danger. He never sleeps or slumbers. He is your rock and your sure defense. His angels have charge over you. He bears you up on eagles wings and no evil will ever befall you. Because you are His child He reveals to you eternal truth. Because you are His child He frees you from the curse of sin. Because you are His child you become an heir to all that He possesses. Because you are His child He works everything to your good. Because you are His child He keeps you from ever perishing, and so it goes.

The God of peace then has sent the Prince of peace to give us the Spirit of peace to make us peacemakers. And thus we become sons of God. This is a great privilege. It does catapult us into the next beatitudes. The reality is that though we are peacemakers we produce initial conflict because to bring the true peace we have to confront the menace to peace which is sin. And we'll see about that in our next study in a couple of weeks from now. Let's pray.

This is such rich, rich truth and so foundational, Father. Thank You for laying it out so wonderfully on the pages of Scripture. We're so encouraged by it, so thrilled by it. And yet we bear a great accountability because we are the peacemakers. Help us not to be afraid to confront. Help us not to compromise truth or righteousness for a false truce, but to bring the truth to bear that it may conquer

error. Bring righteousness to bear that it may conquer sin and therefore bring the true peace. How we thank You that in Your mercy and grace You've sought us out and made peace with us and made us peacemakers. We are greatly privileged and deeply thankful. And for any here tonight, O God, who have not made peace with You, who have not seen themselves as sinners come to the cross, embrace the One who died for them, who have not believed in the Christ of the cross and the Christ of the resurrection, may this be the night when they embrace the Savior and find peace at last and become peacemakers. What a high calling. What a privilege. Work that mighty work in hearts tonight. We pray in the name of the Prince of peace, our Lord Jesus. Amen.

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