

Making Peace

Matthew 5:9

Pace is a word that describes the character of God (Rom. 15:33). It is the reason Jesus died on the cross (Rom. 5:1). Jesus was referred to as “*the Prince of Peace*” by the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 9:6). It is no wonder that God exhorts all of His people to “*pursue the things which make for peace*” in Rom. 14:19. As children of God we are to be imitators of Him. As disciples of Christ we are to follow in His footsteps (1 John 2:6). If we are to accomplish these things we must pursue the peace of God in our lives. Therefore, Jesus included in the beatitudes the happiness of one who strives to make peace, “*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God*” (Matt. 5:9).

Peace can be defined in three ways: 1. There is peace which means to “hold one’s peace,” to muzzle or to be silent. 2. There is peace which is a calmness, quietness or rest. This is the peace we have within ourselves when we pray to God and make our requests known to Him. 3. The peace we will be discussing in this lesson, however, is one that exists between two or more people. It describes the harmonious relationship between men or between man and God. It is friendliness and kindness. This is the peace that we are exhorted to make in Matt. 5:9.

God’s Peace is Not of This World

Truly, the idea of peace is one that sounds noble to most people. Often we hear of those who desire “world peace.” However, we must understand that the peace of God is not the same as the peace which the world knows. Men desire world peace, but as long as sin is in the world there will never be true peace. Therefore in order to pursue the peace of God let us notice these differences:

The Peace of the World

The peace of the world is motivated by selfish desires: “Do what I want and I will be peaceable toward you.” It disregards essential spiritual truths: “Let’s agree to disagree.” It is often established upon separation: “Leave me alone, and I will leave you alone.” It is based on fleshly relationship (what pleases worldly desires): See Acts 12:20. It is often forced, though there is not truly peace, often accompanied by hypocrisy.

The Peace of God

The peace of God is always accomplished through love for others (Gal. 5:22). It is established in submission to spiritual truth (1 Cor. 1:10; 2 Cor. 13:11). It is accomplished by being unified in one truth (Eph. 4:3). It is wholly unselfish and not arrogant, is of a spiritual character (Titus 3:2). It is the natural result of humility and godliness (James 3:17-18).

In short, the peace of the world is based on selfishness where as the peace of God is founded in holiness, righteousness and love. Therefore, as different as God’s nature is from that of the world, so ours must be from the world if we are to make peace in the godly sense of the word. Let us therefore learn

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to pursue those things which make for peace.

Basic Elements for Making Peace

Every goal we pursue must be founded upon and established in the revelation of the Spirit of God. If we are going to learn how to be peacemakers we must first learn the necessary elements that make for peace. Jesus is the perfect example to show us what those elements are and how we can apply them in our lives. When He offered Himself for our sins He made peace between man and God. Through that act we can see the following characters:

Love: God loved man. That is why He was able to make peace between Himself and us through the sacrifice of His only begotten Son. Therefore, in order to be “peacemakers” we too must learn how to love to the point of making such sacrifices. Only when we have love can we learn to put the needs of others before ourselves (1 Cor. 13:4-7). *“Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good...giving preference to one another...”* (Romans 12:9-16).

Humility: Jesus showed humility by the fact that He was willing to submit to the will of the Father. Therefore, we can be peacemakers only when we learn to be humble and submissive (John 14:27). The humility of Christ can be seen in His interaction with other people. Jesus was able to go to the sinners and tax collectors in order to teach them about the kingdom of heaven (Luke 15:2). Jesus showed great humility by submitting to death on the cross. Though He was the Son of God, He humbled Himself so that we might have life. In like manner, if we are to be peacemakers we must humble ourselves before God and men. We must have the humility to put other people’s needs before ourselves (1 John 3:16). Rather than becoming angry or hurt when people do not treat us well, we can take it in stride and consider how God will help this person become better. We will no longer cause strife or become bitter when people do not treat us the way we want to be treated. Rather, we will be able to turn the other cheek and give away our shirt along with our coat, just as the Lord instructed in Matt. 5:38-42.

Forbearance: Because every person is different it is inevitable that there are going to be disagreements between brethren. People are going to do things and treat us in ways that we do not appreciate. Forbearance enables us to endure such things without causing strife and without becoming bitter. *“...with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”* (Eph. 4:2-3). We must understand that our brethren are growing and learning just as we are. If we want them to be patient with us, and if we want God to be patient with us, then we must learn to be patient with them. We must learn to be kind and gentle. Jesus showed this characteristic during His trial when He could have called twelve legions of angels, but chose to suffer instead (Matt. 26:52-54). Forbearance is also called self-restraint.

Love for Truth: Without a love for the truth there can be no peace between brethren. Sure, men may be able to overlook the error of other men, but this is not the peace of God. When the scribes and Pharisees confronted Jesus with erroneous arguments He rebuked them for their error (Matt. 22:29). He knew that there was only one truth and anything different than that was error. Some may ask, “How then can we have peace if we must all understand the truth?” Despite the popular doctrine which says, “We cannot all understand the Bible alike,” men do have the ability to agree on spiritual truth. If we can agree that $2+2=4$ and that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead, then we can understand that there is one truth. The difference is not in the word of God or man’s ability to understand, but in what men love. Those who love the truth will find peace with others of that same character. But, those who do not love the truth will never find

peace because they only want to do things their own way (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Because they are motivated by selfish ambition, they are continually at odds with those who do not share their ambitions (James 3:16). However, when our desire is for the truth of God's word, then there is nothing stopping us from speaking the same things and having the same mind (1 Cor. 1:10).

Love for Righteousness: If we have a love for righteousness then we will be at peace with God. We will also be at peace with everyone else who loves righteousness. Therefore the Psalmist wrote, *"I am a companion of all who fear You, and of those who keep your law"* (Ps. 119:63).

Fear of God alone: At times, our own fears prevent us from making peace. We may fear what men will do. We may fear how men will treat us. However, Jesus teaches us to fear no man, but to fear only God (Matt. 10:28-31). When we fear God then we will be able to behave in a godly manner no matter who we are interacting with. When we love God then we will be able to overcome our doubts in order to be kind and generous even to those who persecute us. We will be able to fulfill the command of Jesus which says, *"Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven"* (Matt. 5:44-45).

Mind set on Spiritual things: Finally, if we are going to be peace makers we must set our minds on spiritual things: Men's souls, eternal reward, the righteousness of God. When we set our minds on spiritual things we will not judge others based on physical standards: how they treat me, how they make me feel, how they look, etc. (2 Cor. 5:16). We will look at others as in the same spiritual condition as ourselves and in need of God's grace. When we have our minds set on spiritual things then we will have a reason to be forbearing and humble. Instead of becoming bitter at the differences of others we will be able to instruct them more accurately in the way of Christ.

When we combine all of these things then we will be able to make peace with others. We will be able to better live peaceably with all men. *"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men"* (Rom. 12:18).

Conclusion

Peace is something that all of God's children pursue (Matt. 5:9). As we have seen, being a peacemaker is not an easy task. It requires great patience, determination, and effort on our parts. But, if we pray to God for wisdom and seek His counsel then we will be able to learn how to be peacemakers.

*By David Phillips
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