

The Sermon on the Mount: A Reformed Exposition

Chapter 8: The Blessed Peacemakers

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Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God (Mt. 5:9).

In the seventh beatitude our Lord blesses the peacemakers. In this amazing statement Jesus once more sets the character of His true disciples in direct opposition to the common Jewish viewpoint at that time. The Jews in Christ's day were taught to despise the Gentiles. According to their carnal concept of the kingdom, the Messiah would come and would initiate a series of brilliant military victories against the surrounding Gentile nations. The Messiah, in their estimate, was a holy avenger who would subjugate the Romans, Greeks, Babylonians and Egyptians under the Jewish nation. The Jews would be established as the elite, the master race destined by God to dominate the world. Those who stood in their path would be swept aside by force, by warfare and violence. This concept of the kingdom certainly appealed to the carnal mind. It catered to the Jewish concept of works righteousness and to their nationalistic pride. This kind of thinking was behind the Jewish multitude's attempt to force Jesus to be a political-military king after He multiplied the bread and fish (Jn. 6:15). The Savior, however, gives an emphatic "no" to all these Jewish expectations. He teaches that His disciples will have nothing to do with such a thing. They will be peacemakers, not war-mongers. The citizens of God's kingdom will be blessed for spreading peace, not violence, hatred and conflict. As with most other beatitudes this statement would have been a great shock to the Jewish worldview.

This beatitude tells us something very important about Christian character. The man who had his heart changed by the Holy Spirit, who believes in Christ and has peace with God will now strive to spread this peace among men. Biblical Christianity is a dynamic force for healing the enmity between God and men and the conflicts that occur between men. In our world of hatred, conflict, racism and constant warfare, the reconciliation that Jesus brings is our only hope for true, lasting peace.

What is Peace?

In order to understand what a peacemaker is, we first need to spend some time defining the term peace (Greek, *eirene*; Hebrew, *shalom*). In Hebrew the word "peace" has a rather wide range of meaning. It can refer to the end of hostilities, the cessation of war and the absence of ecclesiastical or civil disorder. It was also used positively to describe health, tranquility, soundness, safety and prosperity. "In the east when one man says to another, *Salaam*—which is the same—he does not mean that he wishes for the other man only the absence of evil things; he wishes for him the presence of all good things. In the Bible peace means not only freedom from all trouble; it means enjoyment of all good."¹

¹ William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1:108.

According to Scripture, true peace is something achieved by Christ which results in the salvation of the whole man. When Jesus was born the hosts of heaven praised God saying, “On earth peace, goodwill toward men” (Lk. 2:14b). Before our Lord was born Zacharias prophesied that the newborn would bring salvation and remission of sins to the people; He would “guide our feet into the way of peace” (Lk. 1:79b). “Jesus summarized salvation as ‘the things that make for peace’ (19:42). He bequeathed salvation to His disciples when He left them, using the language of peace, saying ‘my peace I give to you’ and ‘...that in me you may have peace’ (John 14:27; 16:33). He also used the same language of peace as a way of referring to salvation, when He appeared to His disciples after His resurrection (John 20:19, 21, 26).”²

Thus, we can understand why the gospel is equated with “preaching peace through Jesus Christ” (Ac. 10:36) and is called “the gospel of peace” (Eph. 6:15; Rom. 10:15). Paul says that Jesus came “and preached peace to you who were far off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father” (Eph. 2:17-18). The Savior has brought peace by His sacrificial death on the cross. The Redeemer’s suffering propitiated God. Our Lord eliminated the guilt of sin and paid its penalty in full. The enmity that existed between God and sinful man is eliminated by the cross; the believing sinner has been reconciled to God. “Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). Christ’s work of redemption lies at the foundation of all true, genuine, lasting peace because He makes peace with God and by changing our hearts enables us to have peace with other men. Being at peace with God spiritually is only something that comes through God’s grace. It is not a subjective feeling that both believers and unbelievers can enjoy, but is an objective fact established by Christ that can and should affect our emotional state and various relationships. Although this beatitude has more to do with Christian action or conduct than previous ones which focus on character, nevertheless only true Christians can spread biblical peace. True peace can never be divorced from the “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6).

There is no real peace for the wicked; but only a temporary, external ceasefire. Because the unregenerate man’s heart is a cauldron of wickedness, he cannot make any progress towards peace with God and genuine harmony between mankind. Therefore, Jesus calls upon His disciples to spread the peace that He has achieved and its effects to those around them. The peace and harmony that the gospel spreads among men and nations has been one of its greatest evidences. The gospel turns warmongers into peace lovers; cannibals into gentle saints; wife beaters into wife lovers; thieves and violent drunks into happy, law-abiding citizens.

How to be a Peacemaker

Now that we have an understanding of how the Bible defines peace, let us turn our attention to what believers should do to make peace in this world. This involves a number of things.

First, it involves two preconditions in the peacemaker himself. (1) The person called to make peace must first be a Christian. A man who refuses to make peace with God through Jesus Christ cannot be a true peacemaker at all. That is because peacemaking can only originate in a peaceable spirit that flows from a regenerate heart. In other words, a person cannot promote peace until he first obtains it and loves it himself. The man who is called to make peace is first pure in heart. “The Scripture links these two together, pureness of heart and peaceableness of

² T. M. Gregory, “Peace” in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 4:667.

spirit. ‘The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable’ (James 3:17). ‘Follow peace and holiness...’ (Hebrews 12:14). And here Christ joins them together—‘pure in heart’ and peacemakers’...”³ The Bible teaches that all sin, trouble and warfare begin in the heart (Mt. 12:35); that out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, hatred, murder, unlawful violence and contention (Mt. 15:19). Therefore, as long as the spring is foul and poisoned there can be no real peace. Consequently peacemaking must begin with self-examination. We need to ask ourselves: Are we peaceable? Do we act like Christ’s sheep or Satan’s goats? Are our hearts pure before God or are they full of hatred and bitterness? If our hearts are full of malice, hatred, pride and envy, then obviously we are in no condition to be peacemakers. (2) A peacemaker must have a commitment to the Bible as God’s infallible, sufficient Word and must only seek peace in accordance with truth. This point is important because many people seek peace by sacrificing the truth of Scripture. In the political realm this occurred in the 1930s with the policy of appeasement. Thus, some of the great powers in Europe gave Hitler part of Czechoslovakia in order to prevent war. In this process the Western leaders helped a wicked man to commit theft in order to stop what they considered a greater evil—war. But appeasement and compromise with evil does not really stop war, it only delays it. Nazi Germany was greatly strengthened by this policy and consequently when war came, England and France suffered greater calamities than would have occurred otherwise.

We see this same type of injustice and foolishness today in the policies of the United Nations. When there is conflict, the U. N., regardless of guilt or justice, asks for a ceasefire so peacekeeping troops can come in and patrol the area of conflict. Once again, not only is truth and justice denied, but war is merely postponed. All such appeasers and humanistic relativists do not take a stand when they should; but, in the name of peace follow unrighteous, unwise, immoral pragmatic policies. Such people may pat themselves on the back and may even win the Nobel peace prize, but in reality they leave the world a much more dangerous place to live. Therefore, the mere avoidance of war at any cost should not be confused with peace.

There are also many professing Christians who do not define peace in terms of biblical principles. For example, the whole ecumenical movement seeks peace by either compromising on doctrine or by ignoring doctrinal differences. They seek peace by sidestepping the truth. The result of such activities is that biblical terms and important theological concepts are redefined to mollify opposing parties. The goal is no longer to teach the “all things” that Jesus has commanded, but rather to accommodate contradictory and opposing opinions. The truth is rejected in the quest for consensus. Such peace is the peace of the spiritual graveyard, not the peace of which our Lord speaks. Jeremiah’s rebuke applies to all such men: “...and from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely. They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, saying, ‘Peace, peace!’ when there is no peace” (6:13-14). “Peace must not be bought with the sale of truth. Truth is the ground of faith, the rule of manners.... Truth is a ‘deposit’ or charge that God has entrusted us with. We trust God with our souls. He trusts us with his truths. We must not let any of God’s truth fall to the ground. Luther says, ‘It is better that heavens fall than that one crumb of truth perish.’”⁴

We must never ever compromise truth for the sake of peace or unity. To do so is to sacrifice biblical doctrine on the altar of sinful human pragmatism. Believers should seek to unite; but they should do so only on the basis of submission to Scripture alone. When Paul exhorted believers to greater unity he called them to the same mind (1 Cor. 1:10). He reminded

³ Thomas Watson, *The Beatitudes*, 204.

⁴ *Ibid*, 207.

them that believers are to have the mind of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 2:16). Everyone that makes peace with the adherents of serious false doctrine, (e.g., Romanists, Shepherdites, Federal Vision advocates, Arminians, Modernists, etc.), has rejected Scripture and has made a devil's peace. Thankfully, the Reformers and martyrs of old were not like today's pragmatists and compromisers.

Second, peacemaking involves telling people about the necessity and importance of receiving reconciliation with God through the cross. A moment ago we noted that all true peace begins with salvation and a regenerate heart. People at war with God will never achieve true peace within or among men. Therefore, peacemakers must be active in telling others about the person and work of Christ. Men are born with corrupt, cruel dispositions. They need the Holy Spirit to change their black, contentious hearts and make them peaceable, loving, kind and gentle. When God spoke concerning the power of the gospel to bring peace to this earth He said, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them" (Isa. 11:6). "He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isa. 2:4; Mic. 4:3). As men believe the gospel and apply God's Word to their lives, families, various institutions and even civil governments, this prophecy of peace will eventually find its fulfillment. No matter whether one holds to an amillennial or postmillennial interpretation of this passage, both views agree that it is Christ's work of redemption that results in such a comprehensive peace. The postmillennialist believes that the great leavening effect of the gospel will lead to the cessation of war before the second advent. The amillennialist believes that this prophecy receives its fulfillment at the second coming when all sin is completely removed. Both, however, attribute this great victory of peace to the blood of Christ and its effect upon history. The fulfillment of this prophecy began with the angel's announcement of "peace on earth"; continued with the first preaching of the gospel; and was guaranteed the moment Jesus died on the cross.

Genuine peace cannot be attained by human efforts, for only Jesus can give peace. Peace begins when Christ reigns in our hearts. The person who is born again seeks it, pursues it and points others to this blessed peace. The power of the gospel to change men's hearts from rage, hatred and contention to peace, gentleness and love is amazing.

The task of spreading peace through the propagation of the gospel is especially assigned to gospel ministers. Such men have been called by God to proclaim the reconciliation achieved between God and man by the sacrifice of Christ. "The heralds of the Cross are the ambassadors of peace, bidding sinners [to] throw down weapons of their warfare and enter into amnesty with God. They know there is no peace for the wicked, and therefore do they exhort them to acquaint themselves with God and be at peace (Job xxvi.21). Of them it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!' (Romans x.15)"⁵

Third, a peacemaker actively pursues peace in all areas of life. He pursues peace in personal relationships by approaching people with a humble and meek spirit. With this attitude he regards others as more important than himself and thus is not contentious over insignificant matters. The Christian who is serious about making peace is also serious about communicating biblically with others. He does not judge a matter before he gathers all the appropriate information (Pr. 18:13). He treats other Christians with respect; carefully listens to what they

⁵ Arthur W. Pink, *An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount*, 38.

have to say and asks thoughtful questions in order to clarify issues and avoid misunderstandings. Many conflicts between professing Christians arise from poor communication skills. The Christian peacemaker also learns to control his temper and remains calm when offended. His speech is gracious; as Paul says, “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one” (Col. 4:6). The believer speaks as one who has experienced and continues to experience the grace of God. He does not want to say anything that is unworthy of Christ who has saved him and instead seeks to edify the hearer. A gracious, humble approach to communication disarms anger, contention and conflict before it has an opportunity to break out.

Peacemaking begins with a peaceable conversation. As Christ’s disciples, we must speak and act in a way that preserves peace with our brothers in Christ. We must also work diligently to recover peace when conflict arises. Paul tells us that, as an aspect of sanctification, this process is both negative and positive. He writes, “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (Eph. 4:31-32). Venomous speech that wounds the feelings of others leads to further sin and conflict. Words that cut and slice a person must be replaced with words that heal, edify and build up others. Destructive words that tear down must be replaced with constructive words that build up. Peacemaking is a natural consequence of our regeneration and sanctification.

The peacemaker also must learn to hold his tongue. As James says, “Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God” (Jas. 1:19). The man who causes conflict doesn’t listen to others and likes to run off at the mouth. The peaceable man listens to others carefully, but takes his time in formulating thoughts and giving an answer. When he is offended, he does not merely spout forth the first thing that comes to mind which usually is tinged with anger and inappropriate. Rather, he meditates on a proper biblical response which disarms the antagonist and brings peace to the situation. When someone says something to us that is offensive, we must resist the temptation to respond in kind. We must remember our calling as peacemakers and take the time to come up with a biblical response instead of following our flesh, which desires to retaliate with something mean and harsh. In such situations we must call to mind the Solomon’s wisdom: “There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health” (Pr. 12:18). “*Wisdom* is the guiding principle; not loose talk, but a delicate discriminating tact, directing us to whom to speak, when and what to say, and how to say it.”⁶ “The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, and adds learning to his lips. Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones” (Pr. 16:23-24). In our communications do we take the time necessary to come up with a wise biblical response or do we speak too quickly and regret it later? It is better to say nothing at all than to say something destructive which brings further conflict and anger. “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver” (Pr. 25:11).

There are many professing Christians who do remain silent; but, instead of giving a biblical response, gossip about the person that has offended them and seek retaliation by ruining their reputation. This wicked behavior is very common in churches today and is one of the most destructive things of the peace of Zion that can happen. If someone wants to tear down another Christian, we must have nothing to do with that conversation. We must politely inform the gossipier to follow Matthew 18 and other passages which relate to protecting our brother’s

⁶ Charles Bridges, ed. George F. Santa, *A Modern Study in the Book of Proverbs* (Milford, MI: Mott Media, 1978), 171.

reputation. By refusing to listen to such unbiblical speech we will help others avoid gossip and will not be tempted to spread such peace-breaking, contentious information to others. “A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter” (Pr. 11:13). A talebearer likes to meddle in other people’s affairs. He is a busybody, a cruel trifler who tears others down behind their backs because it makes him feel better about himself. Such people are like rotten apples in the church. They do not exhibit the love of Christ or express genuine concern for others, but rather are malevolent troublemakers. People who habitually sow such discord need to question themselves as to whether they are really saved or are wolves in sheep’s clothing. Once again, let us heed the words of Solomon who says, “He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends” (Pr. 17:9). If it is a reality that peacemakers are blessed, then logically it follows that habitual peace-breakers are cursed. Then let us be diligently on our guard against gossip, slander, unjust anger, “intemperate zeal, and a quarrelsome spirit: the things of God are too sacred for wrangling.”⁷ The unity and witness of the church is too important for self-serving quarrels. “Highly important is it that we give earnest heed to the exhortation of ‘endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace’ (Eph. iv.3).”⁸

A Christian can be a peacemaker by avoiding a judgmental spirit. When people aggravate smaller faults and make an issue out of every perceived wrong, no matter how small or insignificant, they cause unnecessary conflict with others. As the object of God’s mercy, grace and love, Christians must be willing to overlook annoying things in others and forgive the various non-scandalous offenses that occur. Peter sets forth this point beautifully when he writes, “And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins” (1 Pet. 4:8).

Moreover, we should actively seek peace by obeying Jesus’ command to seek out any Christian who we believe has something against us and seek reconciliation with him (see Mt. 5:23-24). The peacemaker is a man who takes immediate action to put out the flames of discord before they spread. He does not wait for the other person to come to him. He does not procrastinate or ignore the situation. And he doesn’t gossip about it with others. He takes the initiative and does everything he can through biblical communication to put to rest any misunderstandings; to bring to light any problem or offenses; and bring to pass a full restoration of the relationship. This task is not always easy. Sometimes people do not listen. Further, there are professing Christians who simply do not want to be reconciled. Also, in the process, we may need to confess our sin, which requires humility. Sometimes this process involves rebuking a person who is holding a grudge based on false information or gossip. In any case, if we are serious about being peacemakers it must be done.

Another biblical method of making peace is to do something good to those who are in opposition, who do not expect or deserve kind treatment at all. Jesus said, “Bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (Mt. 5:44). One of the best ways to disarm an enemy is to make it difficult and irrational for them to hate you. If they abuse you verbally, respond with a soft, wise, kind answer (Pr. 15:1; 25:15). In other words, go out of your way to actively make peace; do not respond in a manner that allows the conflict to continue. This does not mean that you are dishonest or phony, but that you answer with wisdom and kindness. For example, after someone has abused you and accused you falsely you could respond, “John, I am sorry you feel that way. I did not intend to

⁷ Arthur W. Pink, *An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount*, 38.

⁸ Ibid.

hurt your feelings. Why don't you come over for lunch so that we can work this misunderstanding out?" This involves humility, patience and a friendly approach. It may run counter to our emotions and ego, but it is the biblical thing to do. It is the only way to produce peace.

Finally, we must not forget that peacemaking always begins with ourselves—with a diligent application of God's Word to our hearts. To be a peacemaker we first must be serious about our own personal sanctification. The reason for this is simple. James, writing under divine inspiration, attributes the beginning of all wars and tumults to our corrupt hearts. "Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask" (Jas. 4:1-2). Peacemaking begins with personal piety. The more Christians seek godliness, the more peace they will attain. So much conflict in churches today is a direct result of pride, selfishness, ego and worldliness. The godly man is humble and willing to yield to others. He doesn't pick an unnecessary fight, but rather goes to God in prayer and waits upon Him.

Believers must also pursue peace in their family relationships. Peace in the family is especially the responsibility of the father or covenant head. This involves the principles already noted and using one's knowledge of Scripture to deal with conflicts in the home. Most conflict that occurs in families can be dealt with by learning to attack problems instead of each other. When married couples fight, they usually become defensive, begin blame-shifting and attack each other instead of the problem. In such circumstances arguments can spiral out of control with yelling, abusive speech and name-calling. The covenant head must be a peacemaker in such situations by stopping the argumentation and insisting on analyzing the problem biblically. To do this he must assume a position of humility and be willing to stop trying to win an argument in order to identify the sin or offense that led to such confrontation. A peacemaker doesn't ignore a problem or walk away; such behavior only postpones conflict and makes it worse. He doesn't remain silent; hold resentment inside and pretend everything is alright when it isn't. But, rather, he deals with sin in a calm, reasoned, biblical manner and does not stop until a genuine biblical reconciliation is achieved. The person who follows appeasement by giving in to sin in family relationships is not seeking peace, but is merely postponing a greater, more difficult conflict down the road. When husbands and wives approach their relationship in a humble, meek, Christian manner and are open, honest and biblical in their treatment of each other, their relationship is peaceful and prosperous. If there is to be peace in families, then the various sins, problems and irritations that arise daily must be dealt with biblically and eliminated daily.

Christians are called upon to work for peace in the church. If the church is to be the example of love to the world and a salt and light to culture, she must also be a haven and example of peace. "Peaceableness among Christians is a powerful loadstone to draw the world to receive Christ. Not only gifts...and preaching may persuade men to embrace the truth of the gospel, but peace and unity among the professors of it."⁹ Let us pray and work for the peace of Zion. Sadly, churches today are often terrible examples in this regard. Because of pride, ignorance and sin many congregations are full of conflict, contention and bitter feuds. This tragic situation can only be remedied and prevented by obedience to the following biblical principles.

Perhaps the most important principle to follow is Matthew 18. In addition to all the biblical verses regarding gossip, tale-bearing, revealing secrets and slander, our Lord gave additional instructions to the church on how to handle sin and perceived sin. Christ insists that

⁹ Thomas Watson, *The Beatitudes*, 212.

personal offenses (i.e. sins that are not public) are to remain private and are to be handled by the person involved alone. This simple principle is brilliant in that sin is not ignored but is handled in a biblical manner; yet, the accused party's reputation is preserved and there is no opportunity for the problem to become an issue for conflict in the church. Although this is the explicit teaching of the Savior Himself, what usually happens in such situations is that gossip spreads throughout the church; people add their own spin on what occurred; and people take sides on the issue. The person involved, whether guilty or not, has his reputation ruined and is tempted to lash out at those responsible for the whole sordid mess. People who do not follow Matthew 18 are troublemakers who are guilty of serious sin.

Many church splits in evangelical and Reformed churches can be traced back to gossip and slander relating to the pastor or elders. The devil uses such people to destroy profitable ministries or at least damage them. "The tale-bearer carries reports up and down. The devil sends his letters by this post. The tale-bearer is an incendiary. He blows the coals of contention."¹⁰ That is why Matthew 18 exists and why God requires two credible witnesses before any accusation can be made against a pastor or elder (see 1 Tim. 5:19). If these passages were faithfully followed, the church would be a haven of peace in a world of turmoil. For this reason we must studiously avoid listening to any accusations or reports of secondhand stories if these steps have not first been faithfully followed.

A believer can be a peacemaker in the church when called upon to act as a witness in a dispute (e.g., the second step of Matthew 18). When there are people at variance with each other, it is our duty to be objective, sympathetic, rational and especially biblical in our attempt to bring such conflict to a resolution. In such circumstances, we must set aside prejudices and strive for objectivity in seeking biblical justice.

Christians must also work for the unity of the church. Various denominations have arisen because of doctrinal differences and because of sin and pride. We can work for the visible unity of the church by spreading the doctrines of grace and biblical worship and by praying for a revival of the attainments of the second Reformations in Scotland and Holland. This, of course, does not mean that we seek unity at the expense of doctrine or truth; but, rather, that we seek unity by advocating the truth. Our Lord rebuked sectarianism and said, "Have peace with one another" (Mk. 9:50). Denominations that are doctrinally the same, that do not seek unity are following pride, ego and personality instead of Christ on this particular issue.

Christians should be peacemakers by working for political peace; that is, peace in cities and between states and nations. This task is *not* accomplished by imitating the left—carrying signs, engaging in protest or violating the law; but, by being a witness for Christ in all areas of life. This involves everything discussed so far, such as personal sanctification, being peaceable with individuals, promoting peace in family life and working for the peace and unity of the church. It also involves the long term goal of the establishment of biblical Christianity in all the various levels of civil government. The modern practice by our civil government of antinomian pluralism and ethical relativism is a philosophical platform for constant warfare and conflict. This is true because, in such a system, man acts as God, determining for himself what is good and what is evil. Without the ethical absolutes and restraint of God's moral law and the influence of Christ's gospel on men's hearts, warfare among men is inevitable. Currently in America, the divisions between the various political and special interest groups have grown sharper and the speech more vehement because secular humanism with its irrational, nihilistic view of reality

¹⁰ Ibid, 213.

does not provide a fixed reference point for discussion and debate. Without a vision the people perish (Pr. 29:18). Peace needs the anchor of God's Word and the influence of Christ's gospel.

Therefore, the best way to work for peace is to plant churches and spread the truth of God's Word among the masses. While this is occurring, churches can respectfully petition the civil magistrate and all those in authority to repent of unjust, ungodly laws (e.g., abortion on demand, assisted suicide, sodomite rights, etc.). Also, believers should do everything they can to elect godly Christians to office who place Christ and the glory of God above their own power and popularity. Peace is a great blessing for any nation. However, we must never forget that only God can give a true lasting peace. "He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth them with the finest of wheat" (Ps. 147:14). The sound of the preaching of the gospel, attended by the power of the Holy Spirit, will drive out the roaring of the cannon and the thunder of the bomb.

Someone may object to our contention that only Christ can bring true peace by referring to Matthew 10:34-36: "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'...." Note, however, that the point of this passage is not that Christians are to go about causing trouble, but rather that conflict would be the inevitable result of the gospel. This is the conflict caused by unbelievers, who became angry with those that abandon their idolatry and flee to the Savior. The unbelievers who hate God are the troublemakers, not Christians. Further, the teaching of the New Testament is consistent throughout, that believers are never to seek conflict or be responsible for it. "On the contrary, we are called to peace, we are to 'actively' seek peace, we are to 'strive for peace with all men,' and so far as it depends on us, we are to 'live peaceably with all' [cf. Rom. 12:18]."¹¹

Beloved, are we the peacemakers that Jesus has called us to be? Do we carefully follow Matthew 18 or do we spread gossip and discord in the body of Christ? Do we do everything we can do in the political realm to stem the anti-Christian statism and barbarism that is increasingly gripping our nation? Do we support the doctrinal attainments of the reformation or do we compromise with declension and apostasy in the name of a humanistic peace? Do we tell our neighbors about the peace that Jesus has achieved between God and man by His sacrificial death and glorious resurrection? In this wicked, chaotic world full of wars, conflicts, terrorism and family disintegration, there is much that we can do and must do as Christ's peacemakers.

The Peacemaker's Blessing

Our Lord's great blessing pronounced upon peacemakers is that they will be called "the children of God" (Mt. 5:9, KJV). The Greek word used here is not *ta tekna*, "the children," but *whioi*, "sons." "When the article is omitted in Greek, the emphasis is on kind or quality."¹² Thus the New King James translation, "they shall be called sons of God," is a better rendering. The point of this passage is not our adoption into God's family, as important as that is; but, rather, the blessing of being made like God who is the great peacemaker in sending Jesus into the world. This statement by Christ is a very common way for a Jew to express Himself. "Hebrew is not rich in adjectives, and often when Hebrew wishes to describe something, it uses not an adjective, but the phrase son of...plus an abstract noun. Hence a man may be called *a son of peace* instead of *a peaceful man*. Barnabas is called *a son of consolation* instead of *a consoling and comforting*

¹¹ John R. W. Stott, *Christian Counter-Culture*, 50.

¹² Ralph Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament*, 3.

man.”¹³ This beatitude says that peacemakers are blessed because in working for peace they are imitating their Father in heaven. They are engaging in a God-like work.

When Christians spread the gospel and work to expand the kingdom of God on this earth, they glorify God by fulfilling His will. Everyone who has been regenerated by the Spirit has a holy desire to be at peace with all men and wants all people to embrace the prince of peace. It is such a great title to be called “sons of God” because it indicates that, by God’s grace, we have been given the privilege of entering into the sphere of God’s own work of peace on earth. There is a sense in which all believers are God’s co-workers. By our faith and the good works that proceed from our faith, as well as our gratitude to Jesus, we become the Savior’s ambassadors of peace everywhere we go. Believers are God’s holy “peace corps” who are leavening this world with the peace of Christ. God not only owns us as sons, but also transforms us into peacemakers. Are you zealous to spread the peace of the cross? Are you a walking picture of the peace of the gospel? Are you endeavoring to be a contributor to the peace of Zion? If you are, then you are greatly blessed of God.

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¹³ William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1:109.