

## CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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<b>Series:</b>	<b>The Beatitudes</b>		Pastor/Teacher
<b>Number:</b>	<b>8</b>		Gary L.W. Johnson
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### BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

I am always amazed when people who have no interest in accepting the Bible as the inerrant Word of God quote Scripture to give credibility to some ideology they are advocating. My response is: “So you want to appeal to the Bible, do you? Good! Here is the central message of the Bible – the drama of Redemption, the promised Lamb of God, virgin born, sinless, suffering servant of the Lord. Offering Himself up as an atoning sacrifice for sinners, He rose victorious from the grave and has ascended to the right hand of the throne of God. Now, since you quoted Scripture, what do you think of that?” Selective use of the Bible is very common. Equally common is the erroneous way Scripture is cited in this fashion. Donald Gray Barnhouse tells of the time a woman came up to him after he had preached a sermon on The Second Coming of Christ and told him the Bible does not teach any such thing, and she quoted part of 2 Peter 3:4, “Where is the promise of his coming?” She ignored the context completely because these are the words of scoffers.<sup>1</sup> The Sermon on the Mount, as I have said earlier, has *always* suffered from this kind of abuse. The words of Jesus in verse 9, in particular, have been a favorite of those who read the Bible in such an isolated manner. This mindset is not interested in doctrine – the world needs peace, they cry, and therefore people who are working in the proper social and political fields are the real heroes. Peacemaking is not a theological concern to them at all – and this verse appears so untheological in their eyes. Is this the case? Ask yourself this question: Why are there wars, conflicts, international tension, etc.? According to the Bible, it is because of **sin**. All of mankind’s troubles stem from man’s fallenness, his rebellion against his Creator. If you fail to read v. 9 in a *theological* context, you will also fail to understand it. As Kenneth Bailey points out, “Peace is often limited to absence of war or the cessation of violence. Ceasefires and surrenders are important as preambles to peace. But peace in the Bible includes the finest of loving relationships between individuals, within families, communities and nations. Peace also includes good health. The peace here discussed is primarily the peace of God, which includes all of the above and *passes all understanding* (Phil. 4:7). The word *peacemaker* appears only here in the entire Bible. Semitic languages are obliged to break this unique word into two. It is neither the *peaceful* nor the *pacifists* but the peacemakers. Given this broad scope of peacemaking, it is easy to see why Jesus called such people *sons/children of God*.”<sup>2</sup>

#### I. **WHAT IS A PEACEMAKER?**

**A. The Definition.** We must first determine the meaning of the word *peace*. We find the word used today in much the same way as was used by the Greeks and Romans. The Greek *eirene* (from which we derive the fem. name “Irene”) and the Latin *pax* both have as their central meaning “the *absence* of strife; the *avoidance* of conflict.” You can see that this is primarily a negative concept. This *secular* sense of the word is used in the NT (cf. Lk. 14:32; Acts 12:20; 24:2; and Rev. 6:4). The OT concept of peace is expressed in the Heb. *shalom*, which, unlike the Greek and Roman, is primarily *positive*, not merely the absence

of conflict, but the *presence* of well-being, wholeness, contentedness (Num. 6:24). The absence of *shalom* is mourning (Jer. 16:5).

**B. *The Context.*** A peacemaker is therefore first and foremost peaceable. What is a peaceable person? I remind you again the beatitudes form a unit and cannot be isolated from each other. Jesus is *defining the character* of the subjects and citizens of His Kingdom. First, He described them according to the initial experiences of those in whom a Divine work is wrought. The first four may be grouped together as setting forth the *negative* graces of their hearts. They are *not* self-sufficient, but consciously *poor in spirit*; they are *not* self-satisfied, but *mourning* because of their spiritual poverty; they are *not* self-willed, but *meek*; they are *not* self-righteous, but *hungering and thirsting after righteousness* of Another. In the next three beatitudes, the *positive* graces are stated: having tasted of the mercy of God, they *are* merciful toward others; having their hearts purified by grace, they now hate impurity and seek after holiness; having peace with God through the cross of Christ, they now seek peace. “Let it be pointed out,” says A. W. Pink, “that this lovely Christlike disposition is a vastly different thing from that easygoing indolence which is so often naught but cowardice or selfishness. It is not peace at any price which the Christian loves and aims to promote. No, indeed, that is a false peace, unworthy to be called peace at all.”<sup>3</sup>

**C. *The Demonstration.*** What does a peacemaker do?<sup>4</sup> Perhaps a better way of stating this is asking, what is the *concern* of a peacemaker? Reconciliation. This may be, and often is, costly (cf. Eph. 2:15-17; Col. 1:20 and the model of God the peacemaker). Within the larger context of the Sermon on the Mount, this beatitude corresponds to the section on “love your enemies” (Mt. 5:38-48). Therefore, as Guelich declares, “The *peacemakers* are those who demonstrate love and concern for their enemies.”<sup>5</sup> Morris observes, “He refers not to *peace-keepers* but to *peace-makers*, people who end hostilities and bring the quarrelsome together. Argyle points out that these are *not appeasers*, but *those who actively overcome evil with good*. A person may be known as one who ends hostilities throughout his whole sphere of life, whether that sphere be great or small.”<sup>6</sup>

**II. *THE BLESSING GIVEN TO PEACEMAKERS.*** “They shall be called sons of God.” Note the future tense. It looks *forward* to the final consummation. Likewise the verb *klathasontai* is in the passive voice stressing God’s action and not their own. This term stresses the reality of *actually* becoming a son of God and not merely being given a title. “The name,” writes McNeile, “reveals and identifies a person’s nature.”<sup>7</sup> To be declared a son expresses complete acceptance by God. Once again Morris notes, “It is people like this who will be called *God’s sons*. There is something godlike in bringing peace to people and people to peace. There is, of course, a sense in which all believers are members of the family of God, whether they are distinguished as makers of peace or not. But those who make peace are fulfilling what membership in the family really means, and this is something to which all the members of the family must aspire. The verb *to call* may be used in a variety of ways, but here the point is that the call signifies that the person called really is what the name indicates.”<sup>8</sup>

**CONCLUSION:** What about the actual outworking of this beatitude? This is not merely a theoretical principle – it must be done. How can we be peacemakers in our day to day lives? Let me echo the thoughts of Martin Lloyd-Jones here. First and foremost it concerns our speech – or more precisely our *lack* of speech. This is the admonition of James 1:19-20. “One of the first things in making peace is to know when not to speak.”<sup>9</sup> Second, our principle concern should *always* be the welfare of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Will my actions help or harm God’s people? If we are only looking

out after our own concerns, our own rights, mark it down: there will be conflict (cf. James 4:1-3). Thirdly, we must actively pursue peace (1 Pet. 3:11) and not passively hope an uncomfortable situation goes away. Stott sums it up perfectly: “Every Christian, according to this beatitude, is meant to be a peacemaker both in the community and in the church. True, Jesus was to say later that he had *not come to bring peace, but a sword*, for he had come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, so that a man’s enemies would be those of his own household. And what he meant by this was that conflict would be the inevitable result of his coming, even in one’s own family, and that, if we are to be worthy of him, we must love him best and put him first, above even our nearest and dearest relatives. It is clear beyond question throughout the teaching of Jesus and his apostles, however, that we should never ourselves seek conflict or be responsible for it. On the contrary, we are called to peace, we are actively to *pursue* 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.*”<sup>10</sup>

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret Barnhouse, *That Man Barnhouse* (Tyndale, 1983), p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> K. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes* (IVP, 2008), p. 84.

<sup>3</sup> Arthur W. Pink, *An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount* (rpt. Baker, 1953), p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> We should note that the adjective *eirenopoioi* only occurs here in the New Testament. Cf. R. A. Guelich, *The Sermon On the Mount: A Foundation for Understanding* (Word, 1982), p. 91.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>6</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Eerdmans, 1992), p. 101.

<sup>7</sup> A. McNeile, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Macmillan, 1949), p. 53.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* (Eerdmans, 1949), p. 123.

<sup>10</sup> J. R. W. Stott, *The Message of The Sermon on The Mount* (IVP, 1978), p. 50.