

## **The Teachings of Jesus**

### **Blessed are the Peacemakers**

#### **Matthew 5:9**

### **Introduction**

Can you imagine telling someone like Peter, James, or John, "Blessed are the peacemakers"? They would probably just stare at you in unbelief. Their motto was "Fight to win!" Many terrorist groups today think the only way to have peace is to destroy your enemies. Jesus said He came to destroy the works of the Devil!

History is full of angry disputes. Cruel inquisitions, "crusades" to overthrow rival kingdoms, and demonstrations of military might. Each group invokes the name of God. On the other hand, some consider the absence of conflict the ultimate achievement of peace and are prepared and determined to have peace at any price.

If a leader who could guarantee peace appeared on the world scene today, he would have the whole world at his feet. But God is not as concerned with the act of peace as with the attitude of peace. To be a peacemaker is more than being someone who goes around patching up differences. Peace is more than the absence of conflict. The kind of peacemaking Jesus describes in the Blessings of Matthew Chapter 5 is the kind of peace that is the outcome of love expressed to others in goodwill and genuine kindness.

Let's read through these Beatitudes from Matthew Chapter 5 once again. "Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

"Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed *are* those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. Blessed *are* the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

Blessed *are* the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed *are* the pure in heart, For they shall see God.

Blessed *are* the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God." (Matthew 5:2-9 NKJV)

It's easier to define peace than practice peace? People say, "I love my church; it's just some of the members I have trouble with." "I love my family it's just my brother I can't stand!" "I love my job; it's just some of my co-workers that irritate me."

The truth is, all relationships are an exercise in problem-solving! Even the best of us have either abused a friendship or been abused by a friend. Jesus, the perfect example of character and conduct, was often criticized, rebuked, and reviled by his contemporaries. Their hatred of Him grew so strong they finally had Him crucified.

If Jesus is the Prince of Peace, what are the essential qualities of a peacemaker?

## I. The Peacemakers

Evil is doing its best to take over the world. We don't live in a world of peace and tranquility. Because of evil, the world is becoming increasingly hostile. The greater the influence of evil, the more people cry out for peace and safety. In John 15:18, Jesus said, "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you." (John 15:18 NKJV)

The peacemaker's challenge is to reflect God's nature in an evil-dominated environment. That is the mission of the peace of God. Jesus' definition of a peacemaker has nothing to do with being a diplomat at a conference negotiating deals with other nations. That may be an honorable and needed profession, but Jesus applies his blessing to ordinary people – the kind who listened to him as he taught on the hillside. Jesus' message of peace was for all people but primarily for each person.

A peacemaker sees the barriers between them and God disappear. The peacemaker is an ambassador of Christ's kingdom. God's peacemakers are not peace negotiators. If that is what Jesus meant, Jesus himself failed to fulfill it. Neither is a peacemaker one who refrains from taking sides.

Jesus has not called us to remain neutral or passive. Peacemakers are people of action. Edmund Burke wrote, "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." One of the great dangers in our society comes from those who imagine they can best serve by never taking a clear stand on anything. If a peacemaker never takes sides, then again, Jesus failed miserably at it. He was the most controversial figure of His time, and ours for that matter.

- He took sides with a man against a whole town of people who elevated the value of their pigs above the value of a man's life.
- He took sides against Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees, the High Priest, Chief priests, elders, scribes, and even family.
- He was always for the right against wrong, righteousness against sinfulness, and truth against expediency.

A chameleon can't be a peacemaker. James 1:18 says a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. You can't be for all sides of an issue or pick your position based on the group you're with. That doesn't fit Christ's pattern of peacemaking. The peacemaker Christ is talking about is not a compromiser. A compromiser says, "If you give up something, I'll give up something." While compromising can be an excellent solution for many situations, there are times when it is terribly wrong.

You can't make peace with others until you are at peace with yourself. And you can't be at peace with yourself until you resolve all conflict within you. Colossians 3:18, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart." The peacemaker accepts the terms of peace by surrendering unconditionally to Jesus – the Prince of Peace.

Like Jesus, the peacemaker is willing to confront evil and conquer it. 1 John 3:8 says, "For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." Jesus didn't come to teach people how to get along with the Devil; he came to show us how to claim victory over the Devil.

Paul told the Colossians, "And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister." ([Colossians 1:21-23 NKJV](#))

A peacemaker follows the example of Christ. Jesus did not make peace with the world – he made peace with His Father. In Matthew 10:34, Jesus said, "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'; and 'A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THOSE OF HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD.'" He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.

([Matthew 10:34-39 NKJV](#))

The goal of the peacemaker is to bring people into a peaceful relationship with God. The Book of Proverbs says things like:

- A wrathful man stirs up strife (Proverbs 15:18)
- Where there is no talebearer, strife ceases (Proverbs 16:21)
- He that is of a proud heart stirs up strife. (Proverbs 28:25)
- Hatred stirs up strife. (Proverbs 10:12)
- He that loves transgression loves strife. (Proverbs 17:19)

Strife and conflict is the nature of evil. But for the peacemaker, selfish anger and hatred cease. Peacemakers:

- Know when and how to keep his mouth shut.
- Know when and how to speak boldly.
- Do not hold grudges.
- And do not engage in quarreling.

The peacemaker Jesus refers to maintains an attitude of quietness and confidence in the face of angry attacks. A peacemaker can endure humiliation and even angry assaults. Peacemakers do not retaliate against evil with evil. Jesus is our model. He did nothing to invoke the abuse and hostility aimed at him. He was so good it made evil people angry with Him. His accusers couldn't stand Him, and they finally crucified Him just to appease their own hatred. Though He was reviled, Jesus did not revile in return. And though he was falsely accused, He did not react with

anger. Even at His crucifixion, Jesus knew their sinfulness and the immenseness of their evil. Yet he pleads with the Father, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." That is the true pathway to peace. A peacemaker will bow humbly and pray to the Father to keep them from sinning through pride and self-righteous justification.

Are you a peacemaker, or do you cause problems and pain for other people? Jesus said peacemakers could be called the Children of God.

## **II. The Children of God**

When Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God," he does not tell us how to become a child of God. He simply says that the children of God are, in fact, peacemakers.

People who become peacemakers will be recognized as the children of God at the judgment and welcomed into the Father's house. John 1:12 says, "To all who received him (Jesus), and believed in his name, he gave power to become the children of God." Galatians 3:26 says, "For in Christ we are all children of God through faith." The word "sons" in some versions of scripture also means "daughters" too! We become the children of God by trusting in Christ for our forgiveness and hope.

We know that heaven is a place of peace. And most important of all, we know that God is a peacemaker! 2 Corinthians 5:19 says, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them." Colossians 1:20 says, "He made peace by the blood of the cross."

Even though by nature we are rebels against God and are worthy to be eternally banned from God's presence, God has sacrificed his own Son for us and declares that anyone who wants to can come home through faith in Christ.

Redemption is God's strategy to bring about a lasting peace between us and God. As God's children, we are to be that way too. We are developing the character of our Father. What he loves, we love. What he pursues, we pursue. His children are willing to make sacrifices for peace the way God did. Romans 8:14 says, "All who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God." Being led by the Spirit includes bearing the fruit of the Spirit. And the fruit of the Spirit is peace! It's by the Spirit of God that we are made children of God, and the Spirit of God is the Spirit of peace.

Our salvation, from beginning to end, is a work of Grace. The blessing of peacemaking lies in our hope, joy, and freedom through Christ.

## **III. The Blessing of Peacemaking**

Many of the letters of the New Testament begin with the blessing of peace.

The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:3, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

(1 Corinthians 1:3 NKJV)

Addressing the Christians in Rome, he reminds them, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the Gospel of peace." (Rom 10:15) Writing to the Ephesians, he tells them peace is Christ himself: "For He is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation." (Ephesians 2:14 NKJV)

Paul tells the Colossians that Christ "has reconciled all things to himself, having made peace through the blood of the Cross." (Colossians 1:20) Peace is not a principle, theory, concept, political program, or social ideal. Peace is an attribute of God. It is Jesus who heals and forgives and reaches out to people the world tells us we should avoid, condemn, hate, and possibly even kill.

Among the things that Jesus did not say in the Sermon on the Mount is, "Blessed are those who prefer peace, wish for peace, await peace, love peace, or praise peace." Peace can appear to be anything but peaceful from the point of view of those who wish peace was the absence of conflict.

Probably no believer has been more identified with the beatitude of peacemaking than Francis of Assisi. After his conversion, while he was still a prisoner, He had only one ambition: to live according to the Gospel. He wanted to be one of the least rather than a great man. His famous prayer is about the blessing of peace:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
Where there is sadness, joy;  
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;  
To be understood as to understand;  
To be loved as to love;  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

That prayer truly expresses the blessing of the peacemakers.

## **Conclusion**

The followers of Jesus are called to demonstrate peace. When God calls us, we find peace because Jesus is our peace. But we have peace and make peace, which requires us to renounce any desire for violent retaliation.

In The Message of the Sermon on the Mount, John Stott writes, "Peacemaking is a divine work. For peace means reconciliation, and God is the author of peace and reconciliation. ... It is hardly surprising that the particular blessing which attaches to peacemakers is that "they shall be called sons of God." They seek to do what their Father has done, loving people with his love.

Being a peacemaker is part of surrendering to God. We abandon all efforts to satisfy our vengeance through the destruction of enemies. God comes to us in Christ to make peace with us, and when we accept God's Grace, it is our responsibility in Christ to go to our enemies to try and make peace.

In his book, The Ladder of the Beatitudes, Jim Forest writes, "No one has ever been converted by violence."

In an article called "Cold Turkey," Kurt Vonnegut writes, "Many Christians demand that the Ten Commandments be posted in public buildings. ... I haven't heard one of them demand that the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes, be posted anywhere. What about "Blessed are the merciful" in a courtroom? "Blessed are the peacemakers" in the Pentagon?" *Kurt Vonnegut "Cold Turkey."*

Making peace makes us God's child— which means we are related to each other as family. Peacemakers actively work to bring healing between sinners and God by introducing them to Jesus. Peacemaking requires time and effort. We must pursue and produce it.

Is there someone you need to make peace with? Is there someone you're holding a grudge against and won't forgive? If so, you are denying yourself the blessings of God because Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers!" God approves and blesses the peacemakers.

Paul concludes his letter to the Thessalonians by saying, "Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways." That is the best blessing for those who want to be called the children of God.