

Blessed are the Peacemakers

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

President George Bush had the opportunity to take on the role of peacemaker when he hosted the Presidents of Pakistan and Afghanistan at the White House. The two leaders stood stiffly on either side of the President during a brief appearance in the Rose garden before dinner. For months they have been trading criticisms regarding the others efforts to fight terrorists along their long remote mountainous border.

President Bush said the dinner was a chance for them to strategize and find common solutions. The President said, "These men are personal friends of mine. They are strong leaders who have an understanding of the world in which we live. They understand that the forces of moderation are being challenged by extremists and radicals." The President added, "The countries need to cooperate "to make sure that people have got a hopeful future."

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/15025606/>. Submitted by Jim Sandell.

It should be understood that God is the Author of Peace (Ps. 147:14, Isaiah 45:7, 1Cor 14:33) and once we have a grasp of this then we can see the relationship of our Lord and Savior as a Peacemaker.

But this is not the basis of our study, in looking for examples of peacemakers in the Old Testament, we only find what we call '*allusions*' to being a 'peacemaker' (εἰρηνοποιός *eirēnopoios*). When considering commentary's and what they say in regards to this particular verse, we will read from many that focus mainly on being "*called the sons[children] of God*" and little is said concerning being peacemakers. Now most of us here are new believers or have been for a year or so, but for the most part many are young Christians, with a limited knowledge of what it means in being one; how to live daily, how to speak, how to walk the walk not just talk the talk.

So, what we are going to do is open this verse and break the Bread that Christ was serving to his disciples, and, possibly get a glimpse of God our Eternal Father in the process:

What does being, or becoming, a 'peacemaker' entail?

To define this concept of peacemaking, we will look at the meaning of the word, the manner of the work, the musts for the work, and the misrepresenting of the work of peacemaking.

The simple meaning of the word: "peacemakers" in this beatitude simply means "to make peace" (Zodhiates). The peculiarity of this Greek word is that it is found only once in the New Testament, although other related words are used in the New Testament, this word is a combination of two Greek words *eirene* (peace) and *poieo* (to make). This particular beatitude, which focuses on peacemaking, tells us that there was possibly a great lacking of peace during the time it was written, even today we have *peacebreaking*, and without this we would not need *peacemaking*. But peacebreaking is what characterizes the world, then and even now. This peacebreaking should bring us to full realization of the horrible contention and enmity which our lives of sin have brought into the world, for if there was/is no strife then there would be no need for peacemakers. However, the world is "living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another" (Titus 3:3); and sin does not promote any kind of peace but strife and contention with one another. Hence the great need for

peacemakers. And as Arthur W. Pink adds, "If it be true that 'Blessed are the peacemakers,' it necessarily follows that cursed are the peacebreakers."

The manner of the work: To be a peacemaker involves more than talking about peace, loving peace, and honoring peace. It means to be active in making peace and doing something positive about bringing peace where there is strife, employing peace where there is still peace. We can see then that the work of a peacemaker can, and does, cover many areas. Our concern should not only be peace between man and man; but more importantly, it is concerned about peace between man and God. We, as Christians, should not only strive to prevent contention, strife, and hopefully war, but seek to bring about peace that destroys the hostilities within families, friends and neighbors, also striving to get men right with God as a primary goal. Thus it will be of an evangelical witness to our own being called "the children of God".

The musts for the work: In being a peacemaker there are at least two important '*musts*' or '*qualifications*' that we need to consider. They are sanctity and sacrifice. The peacemaker must be pure and he must be willing to pay a price, interesting enough that these qualifications are taught to us in the work of Jesus Christ, the order for which Christ brings peace between God and mankind, He had to be absolutely sinless, and He had to pay an enormous price—that price was His blood. Paul spoke of this price when he said of Christ, "Having made peace through the blood of his cross" (Colossians 1:20). Already we can begin to understand that these qualifications are why few people are peacemakers, or even attempt to '*make peace*'. In other words, we have to be righteous, having the Righteousness of Christ within (Romans 5:17) to be a peacemaker, for sin causes strife and how can one who is causing strife be a peacemaker. Righteousness must always come before peace. This is demonstrated in Melchisedec, the priest to whom Abraham paid tithes after Abraham's slaughter of the kings who had sacked Sodom. Scripture says of Melchisedec that he was "first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace" (Hebrews 7:2). Next, we have to be willing to pay a price or we will not do much peacemaking either. F. B. Meyer elaborated on the cost it will be to us to be a peacemaker when he said, "If we are to make peace with men it will have to be at heavy cost to ourselves... at a great cost of tears and anguish... It will cost us something to make and maintain peace. We shall have to sacrifice our pride, reputation, and the maintenance of our fancied rights, to say nothing of ease and self-indulgence, if we shall repair the wrong of the evildoer, and readjust broken relationships."

The misrepresenting of the work: Many folk are called peacemakers, or who consider themselves the same, when in reality they are nothing of the sort. Being a peacemaker is not being a peace activist who parades and protests on the streets and causes more trouble than tranquility. Being a peacemaker is not appeasement. "You can postpone war by appeasement; but it generally means that you are doing something that is unjust and unrighteous in order to avoid war" (Lloyd-Jones). It is a person sin that breaks the peace and we must deal with that if we are going to have peace. Thus "we are not called upon to sacrifice truth for peace, and thus make the latter '*peace at any price*'" (Lawlor). You cannot separate peacemaking from truth and righteousness as we have just noted in our previous point. "Righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psalm 85:10) clearly we can see the connection between the Righteousness of God and the Peace that comes from God as well. Therefore all the political peace efforts which would endeavor to bring peace apart from righteousness are not peace efforts at all, only an allusion to peace. The Nobel peace prize winners are not true peacemakers, for these men have ignored the need of righteousness for the work of peace—such as in the so-called peace negotiations of Vietnam when the two head negotiators on either side were given the Nobel peace prize. What they did was not peace action but simply political action.

What does displaying, or illustrating, a 'peacemaker' appear to be?

In looking at the displaying of peacemaking or that of being a peacemaker, we will look at the illustrations of Abraham and of Abigail. In using these two illustrations, we do not negate the fact that the perfect peacemaker is the Son of God, "He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us" (Ephesians 2:14). As we have noted earlier, Christ fulfilled the qualification of purity and price in order to be a peacemaker. In fact, He shows us what is the qualification to be a peacemaker, He was the sinless Son of God and the sacrifice of the cross was necessary to bring peace between God and man. There is no greater peacemaker than Jesus Christ, no *allusion*, our perfect example. Furthermore, in giving illustrations here of displaying a peacemaker, we are examining two human illustrations inasmuch as we have already focused some on the great Divine illustration in Christ.

-Abraham: Abraham's dealing with Lot regarding a problem they had in living together displays in an excellent way the peacemaking work Christ spoke of in this beatitude. In this case of Abraham and Lot, there was "strife" between the two men's herdsmen (Genesis 13:7). Abraham went to Lot and said, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren" (Genesis 13:8). In this endeavor, and to bring the peace between two families, Abraham fulfilled the two qualifications for purity and price. He dealt righteously in that he dealt factually with the problem of strife and contention, he did not down-play the problem but dealt with it in truth. In the qualification of price, Abraham paid a big price; for in advocating that he and Lot separate to stop the strife and contention that brought hostility between the two families, he gave Lot first choice of the land. In this there was the sacrifice of privilege (Abraham had seniority and deserved to have first choice) and the sacrifice of property (Abraham let Lot have the best land). Thus, not surprisingly, the work of Abraham did indeed bring peace, thus demonstrating being a *'peacemaker'*.

-Abigail: The story of Abigail's peace making is in 1 Samuel 25. She was the wife of Nabal, the man who treated David rudely. When Nabal refused to recompense David for the protection he and his men had provided for Nabal, David replied with a threat of bloody revenge. When Abigail heard of David's threat, she quickly took action to bring about peace between the two. She brought a liberal gift of food to David and his men then humbly pleaded with him for mercy. Her intervention worked and brought about peace instead of bloodshed. Thus, being a *peacemaker*, Abigail fulfilled the two basic requirements for purity and price. Her purity was seen in the humble position she took and the confession of Nabal's evil, the price qualification is seen in the large gift of food which she brought David and his men.

The opposite of this is that there are some people, nations or groups, who are continually contentious about the making of peace or of being *'peacemakers'*. Those belligerent nations such as Germany and Japan of World War II and the communist nations of more recent years have done much in peacebreaking but little in peacemaking. In the more recent years there are the Arab nations whose actions are peacebreaking, not peacemaking. The hostilities of the Middle East are directly attributed to the peacebreaking attitude and actions of the Arabs. Also, groups such as the ACLU show their disdain for peacemaking by being engaged in constant peacebreaking. And there are a number of groups of hoodlums who wander on the streets and alleys of our cities just looking for something to do to upset the peace of our neighborhoods and towns. Furthermore, the disdain of peacemaking is even seen in many of our churches today, these are the dissidents who are forever on the war path and who continually upset things at church. This beatitude strikes sharply at those contentious, stubborn, obstreperous church members who do not have the work of

the Gospel or the glory of the Lord at heart. It can also be said if these church dissidents that they do not have an interest in peacemaking but they are constantly in pursuit of peacebreaking.

What is the development, or developing, of a 'peacemaker'?

There are at least three things that we can do, or attempt to do by the Grace of God and the Power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; cf Mark 9:50, Luke 1:79; John 14:27, 16:33, 20:21, Romans 5:1, 14:19) to become a peacemaker and, therefore, fulfill this seventh beatitude. These three things would involve supplication, the Scriptures, and sanctity, but this list is not limited, but these three will be the focus of our study:

Supplication: As with all the beatitudes, one must start with prayer in seeking Divine help to this fulfillment (Matthew 6:32-33, 7:7), how little we pray for such needs. We are often busy praying for the material and physical, but seldom are we busy praying for spiritual needs such as help for fulfilling the beatitudes. Just listen to the prayer requests at any church and you quickly realize that we do little praying for spiritual needs. If we were as earnest to live these beatitudes as we are to make money or gain some other prize of this world, we would indeed become better Christians and honor God more in our conduct and our walk before the world.

Scriptures: The Word of God gives us the strength to live as we ought. Let us saturate our lives with the Scriptures; and when we do, we will find help to live godly lives and to live these beatitudes about holy conduct (Psalm 119:11). No one who ignores the Word of God and gives it scant attention will do much in the way of conforming to these beatitudes. No one who leaves out the Word in their life will do much true peacemaking (Romans 12:1-2).

Sanctity: We noted earlier that one of the main qualifications for peacemaking was purity. Therefore, if you hope to do any work in this area, you must live a holy life (1 Peter 1:16). Practice purity. Separate from the evil practices of the world. Live a clean life; turn from evil; and you will be much better able to be a peacemaker (Gal 5:13-16, 22-26). Unholy lives do not do well at all in being a peacemaker. Sin destroys peace, and one who has sin in their life does not have peace. And they cannot give peace because they cannot give of what they do not have.

What are the rewards of being a 'peacemaker'?

The reward for this seventh beatitude is *"they shall be called the children of God"*. To examine this reward, we will note the crowd for the reward, the clarification of the reward, and the character of the reward:

The crowd for the reward: They are the ones who are themselves at peace with God and live in peace with all men (cf. Rom 5:1). They are called "the" peacemakers for these are not social reformers, but rather have been reformed by the regenerating power of the Gospel. They are peacemakers because they themselves are at peace with God and have entered into the peace of Christ and are able to be ambassadors of God's message of peace to a troubled unpeaceable world. Hence, they shall be also called the children of God. These only shall be called the sons of God! Throughout the Beatitudes Jesus clearly underscores that only those who are a part, or have taken part in the life-changing qualities described are citizens of His kingdom.

But we must be ever mindful that those united to the Son of God are already "sons of God" (v. 9), in that their sins have already been forgiven (v. 3; cf. 9:2). The Beatitudes, like the rest of the sermon,

are addressed to the crowd (only vv.11-12 are directed specifically to disciples). Jesus invites the needy within the crowd (those who suffer in the ways described here) to come to him.

Please take notice that the Lord is not speaking about people with a *peaceful disposition* or those *who love peace*, He is referring to those who actively intervene to '*make peace*'. The natural approach is to watch strife from the sidelines, contrary to the divine approach which is to take positive action toward creating peace, even if it means taking abuse and invective slander in the process.

In all that can be said and done, we must also be ever-so-mindful that this can only happen by receiving Jesus Christ as Savior (John 1:12). By making peace, believers *manifest* themselves as sons of God, and God will one day acknowledge them as people who bear the family likeness.

The clarification of the reward: "They shall be called children of God." This reward has been misunderstood by some to mean soul salvation. But this reward says "called" not "made." To be made a child of God is to be renewed in His image and likeness; [but] to be called so is to be esteemed and regarded as such, there is a big difference in being "made" and "called", would you not agree? Many folk are "called" Christians who have not been "made" Christians, or even truly understood what being a *Christian* is all about, and likewise, many who have been "made" Christians are not "called" Christians. So this reward is not talking about salvation at all. It is simply telling of the praise that will come to peacemakers and one of the ways that the praise will be.

The rewards are at the level of spiritual experience and relationship with God rather than of material recompense or earthly gain, again this refers back to our last statement about being '*made*' or '*called*'. The key phrase, which opens and concludes the series, is *they shall be called the children of God*. This refers to the people who acknowledge God as their King and who may, therefore, confidently look forward to the fulfillment of his purpose in their lives, they have also publicly acknowledged the redeeming Power of the Cross thru the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The character of the reward: There are at least two things that can be said about this reward in regards to its character. It is a dignifying reward and it is a despised reward. Now how can that be?, you ask, Good question-

-dignifying reward- this reward brings great honor to the person who gains it (it calls the person a child of God). So many rewards do not dignify, rather they defile. But this reward will not defile. This award associates you with God, it makes the statement to those around you that you have a character that is godly. Therefore, this reward commends holiness it does not condemn holiness and thus corrupt.

-despised reward- there are many persons who despise such a reward, hard to believe isn't it?, really remember back at the beginning of this discussion/study we made mention to *'peacebreakers'*. It is not so much that they do not want to be called a child of God but rather to be labeled as "Christian" would be an outward embarrassment to them. Sadly, most people in our society today cringe at the thought of being called anything that speaks of holiness, especially that of being called a Christian or resembling anything that might make others think that they are by their actions or attitude. The more honorable the reward, the less the ungodly like it. They prefer the unholy rewards such as the Oscars of Hollywood and other like recognitions that are temporal as opposed to the real matter, those that pertain to the Spiritual.

In closing out this brief discussion/study, take time to meditate on whole of these Beatitudes, for they are general in their promise(s) to anyone who qualifies. Then notice the immediate following, that our Beloved Savior, Jesus the Christ, made an application to the disciples themselves in declaring "*Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you*" (vv. 11-12). What is true of the Beatitudes is true of other promises in the Sermon on the Mount. There is present application, and there is future promise of reward.

The person listed is the author of the book which follows his name and is quoted in this study. The quoting of the person does not necessarily mean I endorse all the beliefs, practices, or associations of that person.

Lawlor, George L. *The Beatitudes are for Today.*

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