

Blessed!

A Study on the *Beatitudes* of Jesus

As of 6/28/20

Part 8 The Exposition of Matthew 5:4- continued

Matthew 5:1-12

1 When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him.

2 He opened His mouth and *began* to teach them, saying,

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

5 "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

10 "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.

12 "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

The Blessedness of True Peace

Matthew 5:9

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

The Bible reveals that one of the Attributes of the one, true, and living God- is Peace. God is a God of Peace.

Romans 15:33

Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

2Corinthians 13:11

Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

Philippians 4:9

The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

And our God has emphasized the cherished, but elusive Reality of Peace- by making it one of the dominant ideas in His Word. Scripture contains four hundred direct references to Peace- along with many more *indirect* ones. The Bible begins with Peace in the Garden of Eden and it ends with Peace in Eternity. And the entire spiritual History of all Mankind can be charted based on the theme of Peace.

Even though the Peace on earth in the Garden was interrupted when Man sinned- at the Cross- Jesus Christ made Peace a Reality once again. And Jesus Himself becomes the Peace of all who place their Faith in Him. And that Peace is both “now” in one sense and “future” in another. Peace can reign right now- in the hearts of those who are His. And, someday, He will come as the “Prince of Peace” and establish a worldwide “Kingdom of Peace”, which will result in *ultimate* Peace- an eternal “Age of Peace.”

Yet one of the most obvious facts of all History and of all human Experience is that Peace does NOT characterize Man's earthly existence. There is no ultimate Peace now for two reasons:

- The *opposition* of Satan
- The *disobedience* of Man

The fall of the angels and the fall of Man established a world without any permanent Peace. And that is because both Satan and Man now war against the God of Peace in a battle for Sovereignty.

The scarcity of Peace on this earth has prompted someone to suggest that

"Peace is that glorious moment in history when everyone stops to reload."

In 1968, a major newspaper reported that there had been to that date 14,553 known wars since thirty-six years before Christ. Since 1945 there have been some seventy or so wars and nearly two hundred internationally significant outbreaks of violence. Since 1958 nearly one hundred nations have been involved in some form of armed conflict.

Some historians have claimed that the United States has had two generations of Peace:

- From 1815 to 1846
- From 1865 to 1898

.... yet that claim can only be made if you exclude the Indian Wars, during which our land was bathed in Indian blood.

With all the avowed and well-intentioned efforts for Peace in modern times, few people would claim that the world or any significant part of it is more peaceful now than a hundred years ago. We do not have *economic* Peace, *religious* Peace, *racial* Peace, *social* Peace, *family* Peace, or *personal* Peace. There seems to be no end of marches, sit-ins, rallies, protests, demonstrations, riots, and wars. Disagreement and conflict are the order of the day. No day has had more need of Peace than our own.

Nor does the world honor Peace as much by its Standards and Actions as it does by its words. In almost every age of History, the greatest heroes have been the greatest warriors. The world lauds the powerful and often exalts the destructive. The model Man is not Meek but Macho. The model Hero is not Self-giving but Self-seeking; not Generous but Selfish; not Gentle but Cruel; not Submissive but Aggressive; not Meek but Proud.

The popular Philosophy of the world, bolstered by the Teaching of many Psychologists and Counselors, is to put "Self" first. But when "Self" is first, Peace is last. "Self" precipitates Strife, Division, Hatred, Resentment, and War. It is the great ally of Sin and the great enemy of Righteousness and, consequently, of Peace.

This seventh Beatitude calls God's people to be Peacemakers. He has called us to a special Mission to help restore the Peace lost at the Fall.

Yet the Peace of which Christ speaks in this Beatitude, and about which the rest of Scripture speaks, is unlike that which the world knows and strives for. God's Peace has nothing to do with Politics, Armies and Navies, Forums of Nations, or even Councils of Churches. It has nothing to do with Statesmanship, no matter how great, or with Arbitration, Compromise, Negotiated Truces, or Treaties. God's Peace, the Peace of which the Bible speaks, never evades Issues; it knows nothing of "Peace at any Price." It does not gloss or hide, rationalize or excuse. It confronts Problems and seeks to solve them. And after the Problems are solved it builds a Bridge between those who were separated by the Problems. It often brings its own Struggle, Pain, Hardship, and Anguish, because such are often the Price of Healing. It is not a Peace that will be brought by Kings, Presidents, Prime Ministers, Diplomats, or international Humanitarians. It is the inner, *personal* Peace that only Jesus can give to the Soul of Man and that only His children can exemplify.

Four important Realities about God's Peace are revealed:

- Its Meaning
- Its Maker
- Its Messengers
- Its Merit

The Meaning of Peace: Righteousness and Truth

The essential fact to comprehend is that the Peace about which Jesus speaks is more than the absence of Conflict and Strife; it is the presence of Righteousness. Only Righteousness can produce the Relationship that brings two parties together. Men can stop fighting without Righteousness, but they cannot live peaceably without

Righteousness. Righteousness not only puts an end to Harm, but it administers the Healing of Love.

God's Peace not only stops War but replaces it with the Righteousness that brings Harmony and true Well-being. Peace is a creative, aggressive Force for Goodness. The Jewish greeting, 'Shâlôm' wishes "Peace" and expresses the desire that the one who is greeted will have all the Righteousness and Goodness God can give. The deepest meaning of the term is "God's highest Good to you."

The most that Man's Peace can offer is a Truce, the temporary Cessation of Hostilities. But whether on an international scale or an individual scale, a Truce is seldom more than a Cold War. Until disagreements and hatreds are actually resolved- the Conflicts merely go underground- where they tend to fester, grow, and break out again. God's Peace, however, not only stops the Hostilities but settles the Issues and brings the parties together in mutual Love and Harmony.

James confirms the Nature of God's Peace when he writes,

James 3:17

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable.

God's way to Peace is through Purity. Peace cannot be attained at the expense of Righteousness. Two people cannot be at peace until they recognize and resolve the wrong Attitudes and Actions that *caused* the Conflict between them, and then bring themselves to God for cleansing. Peace that ignores the Cleansing that brings Purity- is NOT God's Peace.

The writer of Hebrews linked Peace with Purity when he instructed believers to:

Hebrews 12:14

Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

... so, Peace cannot be divorced from Holiness.

Psalms 85:10

Lovingkindness and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Biblically speaking, then, where there is true Peace there is always Righteousness, Holiness, and Purity. Trying to bring Harmony by *compromising* Righteousness- forfeits both.

When Jesus' said,

Matthew 10:34

Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

... it seemed to be the antithesis of the seventh Beatitude. His meaning, however, was

that the Peace He came to bring- is NOT "Peace at any Price." There will be Opposition before there is Harmony; there will be Strife before there is Peace. To be Peacemakers on God's Terms requires being Peacemakers on the Terms of Truth and Righteousness- to which the fallen world is in fierce opposition. When believers bring Truth to bear on a world that loves Falsehood- there will be Strife- NOT Peace. When believers set God's Standards of Righteousness before a world that loves Wickedness- there is an inevitable potential for Conflict. Yet that is the only way Peace can hope to come.

Until Unrighteousness is changed to Righteousness- there CANNOT be godly Peace. And the Process of Resolution is difficult and costly. Truth will produce Anger way before it produces Happiness; Righteousness will produce Antagonism before it produces Harmony. The Gospel brings bad feelings before it can bring good feelings. A person who does not first mourn over his own Sin- will never be satisfied with God's Righteousness. The Sword that Christ brings is the Sword of His Word, which is the Sword of Truth and Righteousness. Like the surgeon's scalpel, it must cut before it heals, because Peace cannot come where Sin reigns.

The great enemy of Peace is Sin. Sin separates men from God and causes Disharmony and Enmity with Him. And Man's lack of Harmony with God causes their lack of Harmony with each other. The world is filled with Strife and War only because it is filled with Sin. Peace does not rule the world because the enemy of Peace rules the world. Jeremiah tells us that

Jeremiah 17:9a

the heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick [or wicked]

... so, Peace CANNOT reign where Wickedness reigns. Wicked hearts CANNOT produce a peaceful Society.

Isaiah 48:22

"There is no peace for the wicked," says the Lord

To talk about Peace without talking about Repentance of Sin is to talk foolishly and vainly. The corrupt religious leaders of ancient Israel proclaimed,

Jeremiah 8:11b&12

11 ...'Peace, peace,' But there is no peace.

12 "Were they ashamed because of the abomination they had done? They certainly were not ashamed, And they did not know how to blush; Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; At the time of their punishment they shall be brought down," Says the Lord.

Jesus said,

Mark 7:18b-23

18 ... "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever

goes into the man from outside cannot defile him,

19 because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" (*Thus He declared all foods clean.*)

20 And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man.

21 "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries,

22 deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, *as well as* deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride *and* foolishness.

23 "All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

Sinful Man CANNOT create Peace- either within themselves or among themselves. Sin can produce nothing but Strife and Conflict.

James 3:13-18

13 Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.

14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and *so* lie against the truth.

15 This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.

16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

18 And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Regardless of what the circumstances might be, where there is Conflict it is because of Sin. If you separate the conflicting parties from each other but do not separate them from Sin- at best, you will succeed only in making a Truce. Peacemaking cannot come by circumventing Sin, because Sin is the Source of every Conflict.

The "Bad News" of the Gospel (that we are sinners) comes before the "Good News" (that Jesus came to save us from our Sins). Until a person confronts his Sin, it makes no sense to offer him a Savior. Until a person faces his false notions- it makes no sense to offer him the Truth. Until a person acknowledges his Enmity with God- it makes no sense to offer him Peace with God.

Believers cannot avoid facing Truth, or avoid facing others with the Truth, for the sake of Harmony. If someone is in serious error about a part of God's Truth, he cannot have a right, peaceful Relationship with others until the Error is confronted and corrected. Jesus never evaded the Issue of wrong Doctrine or wrong Behavior. He treated the Samaritan woman from Sychar with great Love and Compassion, but He did not hesitate to confront her godless life. *First*, He confronted her with her immoral living:

John 4:18

... you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband

... then He corrected her false ideas about Worship:

John 4:21-24

21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

22 "You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.

23 "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.

24 "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

The person who is not willing to disrupt and disturb in God's Name- CANNOT be a Peacemaker. To come to terms on anything less than God's Truth and Righteousness- is to settle for a mere "Truce"- which only *confirms* sinners in their Sin- and may leave them even *further* from the Kingdom. Those who, in the "name" of Love or Kindness or Compassion, try to witness by Appeasement and Compromise of God's Word- will find that their witness leads people AWAY from Jesus- NOT to Him. God's Peacemakers will not "let a sleeping dog lie" if it is opposed to God's Truth; they will not "protect the status quo" if it is ungodly and unrighteous. They are not willing to make "Peace at any Price." God's Peace comes only in God's Way. So, being a Peacemaker is *essentially* the result of a holy Life and the Call to others to embrace the Gospel of Holiness.

The Maker of Peace: God

People are without Peace because they are without God- the Source of Peace. Both the Old and New Testaments are replete with statements of God's being the God of Peace

Leviticus 26:6

I shall also grant peace in the land, so that you may lie down with no one making *you* tremble. I shall also eliminate harmful beasts from the land, and no sword will pass through your land.

1Kings 2:33

So shall their blood return on the head of Joab and on the head of his descendants forever; but to David and his descendants and his house and his throne, may there be peace from the Lord forever."

Psalms 29:11

The Lord will give strength to His people; The Lord will bless His people with peace.

Isaiah 9:6

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

Ezekiel 34:25

I will make a covenant of peace with them and eliminate harmful beasts from the land so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.

Romans 15:33

Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

1Corinthians 14:33

for God is not a *God* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

2Thessalonians 3:16

Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. \e Lord be with you all!

Since the Fall, the only Peace that men have known is the Peace they have received as the Gift of God. Christ's Coming to earth was the Peace of God coming to earth, because only Jesus Christ could remove Sin- the great *barrier* to Peace.

Ephesians 2:13-16

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,

15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace,

16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

Salvation in Jesus brings God and Man back together- reconciling and bringing Peace.

Colossians 1:19&20

19 For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,

20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the

blood of His cross; through Him, *I say*, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

But how did the Cross bring Peace? At the Cross, all of Man's hatred and anger was vented against God. On the Cross, the Son of God was mocked, cursed, spit upon, pierced, reviled, and killed. Jesus' disciples fled in fear, the sky flashed lightning, the earth shook violently, and the veil of the Temple was torn in two.

Yet through that violence- God brought Peace. God's greatest Righteousness confronted Man's greatest Wickedness- and Righteousness won. And because Righteousness won- Peace was won.

If God the Father is the Source of Peace, and God the Son is the Manifestation of that Peace, then God the Holy Spirit is the Agent of that Peace. One of the most beautiful fruits the Holy Spirit gives to those in whom He resides is the Fruit of Peace (**Galatians 5:22**). The God of Peace sent the Prince of Peace Who sends the Spirit of Peace to give the Fruit of Peace. No wonder the Trinity is called *Yahweh shalom* "The Lord is Peace" (**Judges 6:24**).

The God of Peace intends Peace for His world, and the world that He created in Peace He will, one day, restore to Peace by the Prince of Peace establishing His Kingdom of Peace.

But the person, who does not belong to God through Jesus Christ, can neither have Peace nor be a "Peacemaker". God can work Peace *through* us only if He has worked Peace *in* us.

Some of the earth's most violent weather occurs on the seas. But the deeper one goes the more serene and tranquil the water becomes. Oceanographers report that the deepest parts of the sea are absolutely still. When those areas are dredged they produce remnants of plant and animal life that have remained undisturbed for thousands of years.

That is a picture of the Christian's Peace. The world around him, including his own circumstances, may be in great turmoil and strife, but in his deepest being he has Peace that passes understanding. Yet those, who are in the *best* of circumstances but are without God can *never* find Peace, while those, in the *worst* of circumstances but *with* God need never *lack* Peace.

The Messengers of Peace: The True Believers

The Messengers of Peace are the genuine Believers in Jesus Christ. Only they can be Peacemakers. Only those who belong to the Maker of Peace can be Messengers of Peace. Paul tells us that

"God has called us to peace" (1Corinthians 7:15)

... and that

"Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2Corinthians 5:18).

The Ministry of Reconciliation *is* the Ministry of Peacemaking. Those whom God has called to Peace He also calls to “*make Peace.*”

2Corinthians 5:19&20

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

At least four things characterize a Peacemaker. First, he is one who, himself, has made Peace with God. The Gospel is all about Peace. Before we came to Christ we were at war with God. No matter what we may consciously have thought about God, our hearts were against Him. It was "**while we were enemies**" of God that

"we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son" (Romans 5:10).

When we received Christ as Savior and He imputed His Righteousness to us, our Battle with God ended, and our Peace with God began. So, because a person, who is saved, has made Peace with God he can now enjoy the Peace of God.

Philippians 4:6&7

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 3:15

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

... and because he has been given God's Peace- the saved person is called to *share* God's Peace with others. He is to have his very feet shod with "the Gospel of Peace"

Ephesians 6:12-17

12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

14 Stand firm therefore, *HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH*, and *HAVING*

PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS,

15 and having shod ***YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE;***

16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*.

17 And take ***THE HELMET OF SALVATION,*** and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Because Peace is always corrupted by Sin, the peacemaking believer must be a holy believer- a believer whose life is continually cleansed by the Holy Spirit. Sin breaks our Fellowship with God, and when Fellowship with Him is broken, Peace is broken. The disobedient, self-indulgent Christian is not suited to be an Ambassador of Peace.

Secondly, a Peacemaker leads others to make Peace with God. Christians are not an elite corps of those who have spiritually arrived and who look down on the rest of the world. They are a Body of sinners cleansed by Jesus Christ and commissioned to carry His Gospel of cleansing to the rest of the world.

The Pharisees were the embodiment of what Peacemakers are not. They were smug, proud, complacent, and determined to have their own ways and defend their own rights. They had scant interest in making Peace with Rome, with the Samaritans, or even with fellow Jews who did not follow their own party line. Consequently, they created strife wherever they went. They cooperated with others only when it was to their own advantage, as they did with the Sadducees in opposing Jesus.

The peacemaking Spirit is the opposite of that. It is built on Humility; Sorrow over its own Sin; Gentleness; A Hunger for Righteousness; Mercy; and purity of Heart. G. Campbell Morgan commented that,

“... peacemaking is the propagated character of the man who, exemplifying all the rest of the beatitudes, thereby brings peace wherever he comes.”

The Peacemaker is a beggar who has been fed and who is called to help feed others. Having been brought to God, he is to bring others to God. The purpose of the Church is to preach "**peace through Jesus Christ**" (**The Acts 10:36**). To preach Christ is to promote Peace (with God). To bring a person to saving Knowledge of Jesus Christ is the most peacemaking Act a human being can perform. It is beyond what any diplomat or statesman can accomplish.

Third, a Peacemaker helps others make Peace with others. The moment a person comes to Christ he becomes at Peace with God and with the Church and becomes himself a Peacemaker in the world. A Peacemaker builds bridges between men and God and also between men and other men. The second kind of Bridge building must begin, of course, between ourselves and others.

Matthew 5:21-26

- 21** "You have heard that the ancients were told, '*YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER*' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.'
- 22** "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell.
- 23** "Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,
- 24** leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.
- 25** "Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.
- 26** "Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent.

Romans 12:16-21

- 16** Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.
- 17** Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.
- 18** If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.
- 19** Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath *of God*, for it is written, "*VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY*," says the Lord.
- 20** "*BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD.*"
- 21** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

We are even to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us,

Matthew 5:43-48

- 43** "You have heard that it was said, '*YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR* and hate your enemy.'
- 44** "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,
- 45** so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the evil and the good*, and sends rain on *the righteous and the unrighteous*.
- 46** "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?
- 47** "If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing *than others*? Do not even the

Gentiles do the same?

48 "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Now, by definition, a bridge cannot be one-sided. It must extend between two sides or it can never function. And once built, it continues to need support on both sides or it will collapse. So, in any relationship our first responsibility is to see that our own side has a solid base. But we also have a responsibility to help the one on the other side build his base well. Both sides must be built on Righteousness and Truth or the bridge will not stand. God's Peacemakers must first be Righteous themselves, and then must be active in helping others become Righteous.

The first step in that bridge-building process is often to rebuke others about their Sin, which is the supreme barrier to lasting Peace.

Matthew 18:15-17

15 "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.

16 "But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that *BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED.*

17 "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

That is a difficult thing to do, but obeying this Command of Jesus is no more optional than obeying any of the Lord's other Commands. The fact that taking such Action often stirs up Controversy and Resentment is no excuse for not doing it. If we do so in the Way and in the Spirit the Lord teaches, the Consequences are His Responsibility. But we must realize that not to do so- does NOT preserve Peace but through disobedience, establishes a truce with Sin.

Obviously, there is the possibility of a Price to pay. But any sacrifice is small in order to obey God. Often Confrontations will bring *more* turmoil instead of *less* — misunderstanding, hurt feelings, and resentment. But the only Way to Peace is the Way of Righteousness. Sin that is not dealt with- is Sin that will disrupt and destroy Peace. Just as any Price is worth paying to obey God, any Price is worth paying to be rid of Sin as well.

Matthew 5:29&30

29 "If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

30 "If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.

... if we are unwilling to help others confront their Sin, we will be unable to help them

find Peace.

Fourth, a Peacemaker endeavors to find a "Point of Agreement." God's Truth and Righteousness must never be compromised or weakened, but there is hardly a person so ungodly, immoral, rebellious, pagan, or indifferent that we have absolutely no "Point of Agreement" with him. Wrong Theology' wrong Standards; wrong Beliefs; and wrong Attitudes must be faced and dealt with- but they are NOT usually the best places to start the process of Witnessing or Peacemaking.

God's people are to contend without being contentious; to disagree without being disagreeable; and to confront without being abusive. The Peacemaker speaks the Truth in Love

Ephesians 4:11-16

11 And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers,

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ,

16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

... so, to start with Love is to start toward Peace.

We begin Peacemaking by starting with whatever peaceful Point of Agreement we can find. Peace helps beget Peace. So, the Peacemaker always gives others the benefit of the doubt. He never assumes they will resist the Gospel or reject his Testimony. When he does meet Opposition, he tries to be patient with other people's blindness and stubbornness just as he knows the Lord was, and *continues* to be, patient with *his own* blindness and stubbornness.

God's most effective Peacemakers are often the simplest and least noticed people. They do not try to attract attention to themselves. They seldom win headlines or prizes for their Peacemaking, because, by its very nature, true Peacemaking is unobtrusive and prefers to go unnoticed. Because they bring Righteousness and Truth wherever they go, Peacemakers are frequently accused of being "troublemakers" and "disturbers of the Peace"- as Ahab accused Elijah of being:

1Kings 18:1-19

1 Now it happened *after* many days that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth."

2 So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab. Now the famine *was* severe in Samaria.

3 Ahab called Obadiah who *was* over the household. (Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly;

4 for when Jezebel destroyed the prophets of the Lord, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave, and provided them with bread and water.)

5 Then Ahab said to Obadiah, "Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the valleys; perhaps we will find grass and keep the horses and mules alive, and not have to kill some of the cattle."

6 So they divided the land between them to survey it; Ahab went one way by himself and Obadiah went another way by himself.

7 Now as Obadiah was on the way, behold, Elijah met him, and he recognized him and fell on his face and said, "Is this you, Elijah my master?"

8 He said to him, "It is I. Go, say to your master, 'Behold, Elijah *is here*.'"

9 He said, "What sin have I committed, that you are giving your servant into the hand of Ahab to put me to death?

10 "As the Lord your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent to search for you; and when they said, 'He is not *here*,' he made the kingdom or nation swear that they could not find you.

11 "And now you are saying, 'Go, say to your master, "Behold, Elijah *is here*.'"

12 "It will come about when I leave you that the Spirit of the Lord will carry you where I do not know; so when I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill me, although *I* your servant have feared the Lord from my youth.

13 "Has it not been told to my master what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the Lord, that I hid a hundred prophets of the Lord by fifties in a cave, and provided them with bread and water?

14 "And now you are saying, 'Go, say to your master, "Behold, Elijah *is here*!"; he will then kill me."

15 Elijah said, "As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him today."

16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

17 When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is this you, you troubler of Israel?"

18 He said, "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house *have*, because you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and you have followed the Baals.

19 "Now then send *and* gather to me all Israel at Mount Carmel, *together* with 450

prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table."

The Jewish leaders accused Jesus of being a Troublemaker too:

Luke 23:1-5

1 Then the whole body of them got up and brought Him before Pilate.

2 And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King."

3 So Pilate asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And He answered him and said, "*It is as you say.*"

4 Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this man."

5 But they kept on insisting, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee even as far as this place."

... but God honors their Work because they are working for His Peace- in His Power. God's Peacemakers are never unfruitful or unrewarded. This is a Mark of a true kingdom Citizen: he not only hungers for Righteousness and Holiness in his own life- but has a passionate desire to see those Virtues in the lives of others.

The Merit of Peace: Eternal Sonship in the Kingdom

The Merit, or the Result, of Peacemaking is eternal Blessing as God's children in God's Kingdom. Jesus said, Peacemakers **shall be called sons of God**.

Now most of us are thankful for our Heritage, our Ancestors, our Parents, and our family Name. But the greatest human Heritage cannot match the believer's Heritage in Jesus Christ, because we are

Romans 8:17b

... heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*.

Now there are two Greek words and both *huios* and *teknon* are used in the New Testament to speak of a believers' Relationship to God. *Teknon* (child) is a term of tender Affection and Endearment as well as of Relationship

John 1:12

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children [teknon] of God, *even* to those who believe in His name,

Ephesians 5:8

for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children [teknon] of Light

1Peter 1:14

As obedient children [teknon], do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours in your ignorance,*

The word, "Sons", however, is from *huios*, which expresses the Dignity and Honor of the Relationship of a child to his Parents. As God's Peacemakers we are promised the glorious Blessing of eternal Sonship in His eternal Kingdom.

Peacemaking is a Hallmark of God's children. A person who is not a Peacemaker either is not a Christian; or is a disobedient Christian. The person who is continually disruptive, divisive, and quarrelsome has good reason to doubt his Relationship to God altogether. God's **sons**- that is, all of His children, both Male and Female- are Peacemakers. Only God determines who His children are. And He has determined that they are Humble; Penitent over Sin; Gentle; Seekers of Righteousness; Merciful; Pure in Heart; and Peacemakers.

Now the phrase, "**shall be called**" is in a continuous future passive tense. And that means that throughout all Eternity, Peacemakers will go by the name, "children of God." And the passive form indicates that all Heaven will call Peacemakers, "**sons of God**", because God Himself has declared them to be His children.

Jacob loved Benjamin so much that his whole life came to be bound up in the life of that son (**Genesis 44:30**). Any Parent worthy of the name, loves his children more than his own life, and immeasurably more than all of his possessions together. God loves His children today as He loved Israel of old, as "**the apple of His eye**" (**Zechariah 2:8**; cf. **Psalms 17:8**). The Hebrew expression "**apple of the eye**" referred to the cornea, the most exposed and sensitive part of the eye, the part we are the most careful to protect. That is what God's children are to Him: those whom He is most sensitive about and most desires to protect. To attack God's children is to poke a finger in God's Eye. Offense against Christians is offense against God, because they are His very own children.

God puts the tears of His children in a "bottle" (**Psalm 56:8**), a figure reflecting the Hebrew custom of placing into a bottle the tears shed over a loved one. God cares for us so much that He stores up His Remembrances of our Sorrows and Afflictions. God's children matter greatly to Him, and it is no little thing that we can call Him, "Father."

God's Peacemakers will not always have Peace in the world. As Jesus makes clear by the last Beatitude, great Persecution usually follows Peacemaking. In Christ, we have forsaken the false Peace of the world; and consequently we often will not have Peace *with* the world. But as God's children we may always have Peace even while we are *in* the world- the Peace of God, which the world cannot give and the world cannot take away.

Amen.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.