

Happy Are the Peacemakers

Scripture: Matthew 5:9

Code: 2204

INTRODUCTION

The theme of peace dominates the Bible. It begins with peace in the Garden of Eden and it ends with peace in eternity. The course of history could be charted based on the theme of peace. There was peace on earth before the Fall. When man sinned, peace was interrupted. At the cross peace became a reality again-- Christ became our peace (Eph. 2:14). Today there can be peace in the hearts of those who know Him. In the future Jesus will come again and His title will be "the Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6). He will establish a kingdom of peace that will lead into an eternal age of peace. The Bible refers to peace many times. God is tremendously concerned about it--in fact He is called "the God of peace" (Rom. 15:33; Phil. 4:9). There is no real peace now--the fall of the angels and man brought disobedience and opposition to God. Peace is possible only when all parties want it according to a mutual standard.

A. The Regenerate Are to Bring Peace

In Matthew 5:9 our Lord says, "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the sons of God." God has called Christians to bring back the peace that was forfeited as a result of sin. God's peacemakers will achieve more than Nobel Peace Prize winners because the peace they offer is eternal--a real and lasting peace.

Matthew 5:9 refers to a unique group of peacemakers. Our Lord was not referring to politicians, statesmen, diplomats, arbitrators, kings, presidents, or Nobel Prize winners. Nor was He referring to organizations like the League of Nations or the United Nations, or a council of churches. Worldly peacemakers have a dismal failure record--God's peacemaker's are different.

B. The Unregenerate Are Unable to Bring Peace

The nations, political groups, organizations, and homes of this world do not have true peace. There is no real peace anywhere because there is no peace in the hearts of men.

I remember someone saying that Washington D. C. has so many peace monuments because they build one after every war! Peace treaties have a history of being broken. It's been said that peace is that glorious brief moment in history when everyone stops to reload. After World War II the United Nations was brought into existence to promote world peace. But since its inception in 1945 there has not been a single day of global peace on the earth. The world has been continually filled with one upheaval after another. The goal of the United Nations is to have succeeding generations free from the scourge of war. But that has been proved to be a pipe dream.

Some historians say the United States of America has had two generations of peace--from 1815 to 1846 and from 1865 to 1898. But those two periods were bathed in the blood of Indians. We have never truly known a generation of peace in the history of America.

Mankind is incapable of peace. Every relationship is fragile. In our day more people have been identified with mental and emotional illnesses than ever before. The family is disintegrating and our educational systems are breaking down. People participate in marches, sit-ins, rallies, protests, and demonstrations without end. All because man has no peace within himself. And the world man lives in is a projection of himself--it is riddled with chaos. We've never needed peacemakers more.

Matthew 5:9 affirms that through Christ God will bless those who are true peacemakers.

LESSON

I. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF PEACE?

A. The Definition of True Peace

1. What it is Some people think peace is the absence of conflict. But peace is more than that--there is no strife in a cemetery but that's not a model of peace. God sees peace not as the absence of conflict but the presence of righteousness. Righteousness will bring about right relationships. Peace is not just stopping a war. It's the impartation of righteousness that brings two parties together in love. The Hebrew word Shalom (peace), when said to a friend, didn't mean, "May you have no conflicts." It meant, "I desire for you all the righteousness and good God can give." God's peacemakers don't just stop wars--they replace what causes of war with the righteousness of God.

2. What it isn't

There is a difference between a truce and peace. A truce is when people put down their guns and don't shoot for awhile. True peace is when conflict is resolved and the parties to it become friends. Some think peace happens the instant the war stops. But that doesn't resolve the conflict unless the underlying issues are dealt with. Otherwise cessation of open hostility only brings about a cold war, which is still a war. That may result in a state worse than if the fighting had continued. A conflict driven underground can smolder and slowly destroy both sides. Two people who are at war with each other shouldn't be separated so they can't see each other. Rather, the cause of their conflict needs to be resolved so that they can come together in love. Biblical peace never evades issues--it isn't peace at any price. The peace of the Bible conquers the problem and builds bridges between people. That may involve struggle, pain, and anguish, but real peace is the result.

B. The Purity Accompanying True Peace

James 3:17 says, "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable." God's wisdom attains peace through purity. Peace is never established at the expense of righteousness. Two people will never accept peace until they accept that their bitterness and hatred is wrong, and they humble themselves before God and make things right. Hebrews 12:14 says, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness." Peace and holiness are inextricably interlinked--they can't be divorced from each other. Psalm 85:10 says, "Righteousness and peace have kissed each other." True peace is always accompanied by righteousness and purity.

C. The Conflicts from Bringing True Peace

We all want to avoid needless strife, whether in our family, place of business, or any other situation. But if we avoid conflict to the point of sacrificing truth, we are compromising our principles. We won't have true peace but a truce, in which everyone will merely reload.

1. Matthew 10:34--Our Lord said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword." That sounds like the opposite of Matthew 5:9. But what Jesus meant is He did not come to bring peace at any price. He knew there would be strife before there could be peace--conflict needed to be resolved. Being a peacemaker in this world is difficult because it requires bringing the truth to a world that loves falsehood. That causes strife. That's why people often get upset at the gospel message before they accept its truth and embrace it. When Christians bring the message of peace, the sword of purity must fall first. 2. Jude 3--"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Christians are to be contentious about some things. A true peacemaker does not say, "I don't ever want to offend someone who isn't a believer." Peace can't be made that way because a lack of righteousness is the issue non-believers must face. Conflict will come when people are convicted by the truth of the gospel, but it will be resolved when they put their faith in Jesus Christ. A peacemaker must not abandon biblical principles. He knows it's better to offend people with the truth so they can eventually experience real peace. Christians aren't peacemakers in the sense that they never cause strife. They are peacemakers in that they offer true peace to those whom they confront. 3. Luke 12:51-53--Our Lord again said, "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather

division; for from henceforth there shall be five in one house, divided; three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." He knew that when people come to Him there would be conflict. True peace comes only when the truth reigns. There will be people who come up to you and say, "You are so narrow in your beliefs. You need to be more ecumenical and set aside the things we disagree on. We should discuss only what we agree on." But Christ never pronounced a blessing on apostates. Whenever He met someone who was in error He pointed out the person's error. He knew true peace would come only as people responded correctly to the truth. You can't avoid disagreeing with someone about a central truth in God's Word and be called a peacemaker. You might establish a truce by doing that but you won't be helping that person to make peace with God. Biblical peacemakers are not quiet, easygoing people who want to make no waves and have no sense of righteousness. Some who appear to be peacemakers are that way because they have no convictions. A Biblical peacemaker will not preserve the status quo at the expense of truth. He will not accept something that is wrong so that things can be "peaceful." Biblical peacemakers seek to resolve a problem with the truth by bringing to bear the righteousness of God.

II. WHAT IS THE MENACE TO PEACE?

A. How Peace Is Menaced

Since the essence of peace is righteousness and truth, the menace to peace is sin and falsehood. There is no peace in this world because those things currently dominate. 1. Jeremiah 17:9--"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." 2. Isaiah 48:22--"There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked" (cf. Isa. 57:21). 3. Jeremiah 8:11--"They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace." Many people talk about peace but never experience it because they ignore their sin. 4. Mark 7:20-23--"That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man." Man is internally defiled. He will never produce peace on his own because it is a result of holiness, righteousness, and purity. That's why James 3:18 says, "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by them that make peace." A person can't have real peace until he bears righteous fruit. If two people are fighting it's because of sin; eliminate the sin and the fight will end. Mere separation accomplishes nothing. A person at war with God needs to have the sin that stands between him and God removed. Then the two will be reconciled. Peacemakers make peace by sowing righteousness. That's why the wisdom of God "is first pure, then peaceable" (James 3:17). The only peacemakers in the world who accomplish anything are those who bring men to submit to God's truth. Diplomats, statesmen, ambassadors, presidents, and kings who have tried to bring peace in other ways have always failed. **Prerequisites for Peacemakers** You can't be a peacemaker until the first six Beatitudes characterize your life. That means you must start with the attitude of a beggar in your approach to God because of your sin (Matt. 5:3). Next you must mourn over your sinfulness (Matt. 5:4). That will produce meekness toward God in the light of His sovereignty and holiness (Matt. 5:5). As a result you will hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matt. 5:6), and God will extend to you His mercy (Matt. 5:7). When you've received His mercy you become pure in heart (Matt. 5:8). Only the pure in heart can be peacemakers (Matt. 5:9). But when you become a peacemaker the world won't accept you. That's why Matthew 5:10 says, "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake." Peacemakers are always trying to bring about righteous solutions to problems. But the world reacts negatively to a peace based on righteousness because it doesn't want to deal with the reality of sin. Only when we deal with sin can true peace ever exist. You won't have peace in your life if you have a problem with purity. If you have righteousness you will have peace. If your marriage and your home are characterized by righteousness you will enjoy peace in both. Righteousness produces

peace with God, others, and yourself. That's why the Beatitudes characterize the lives of all biblical believers. Man can search the world over for peace--going from counselor to counselor, gathering at summits, writing treaties, flitting from one religion to another--but he will never find it apart from God and His righteousness. That's because peace isn't based on circumstances. Man can't find peace because of his innate sinfulness--no matter how good his circumstances, they are irrelevant to his obtaining peace. His uncontrolled lusts rob him of peace. If mankind is feverish it's not because of the temperature on the outside but because of his own boiling blood on the inside.

B. Why Peace Is Menaced

1. The world exalts those who fight

Once in a while the world honors a peacemaker who helps prevent a war. But generally it exalts those who fight. Consider those who pay a fortune to watch two men in a ring beat each other to a pulp! Worldly kingdoms give their highest honors to warriors and soldiers. Too often we bow to the god of macho. Society's heroes tend to be hard-nosed, tough, and wild. Our heroines are the women who lead parades promoting their rights and stirring up contention. Psychologists and psychiatrists tell us we are to get all we can for ourselves and not let anyone take anything from us. That kind of thinking precipitates strife. It's no wonder the world fights against the peace of the gospel.

2. The world hates peacemakers

a) Christ Many Jewish people didn't like Jesus Christ because they wanted a fighter. They wanted a messiah who would knock the Roman government out of power. When Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers," many probably thought, Who needs that? When we offer the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ, many look down on us and think we are weak. When we preach the gospel they often actively fight against us. Scripture tells us to expect that. Our Master was the "Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6), yet everywhere He went He created conflict. Jesus' accusers said of Him, "He stirreth up the people" (Luke 23:5). Jesus promised that His followers would receive the same treatment (Matt. 10:24-25). b) Paul The apostle Paul preached the gospel of peace everywhere he went. Riots frequently started as a result of his preaching. His enemies accused him of being "a pestilent fellow" (Acts 24:5). c) Christians Second Timothy 3:12 says, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." We are to be willing to take the blows that Christ did, take up the cross, deny ourselves, and continue doing what we know to be right. If you fail to tell the gospel to avoid strife, you probably aren't a peacemaker. A peacemaker is willing to say what has to be said. It can be hard to be a peacemaker. If you see a person living in sin, Jesus wants you to tell him, "You are offending God. Your sin has brought war between you and Him. I want to make peace between you and Him, so I'm offering you the gospel of Christ." If you see two Christians fighting you shouldn't ignore what is happening. A real peacemaker will tell them, "You must resolve your problem in a righteous manner." Peacemakers don't avoid spiritual conflicts--they dive into the middle of them. God uses the simplest and humblest people to be the peacemakers of the world. They're not striving to win peace prizes or get their names in headlines. They preach the gospel so that men and women can know peace with God. And they are willing to pay the price when the world reacts negatively. They endure the worst conflicts to bring true peace. Jesus was the greatest peacemaker of all and He didn't avoid conflict--He was nailed to a cross for His efforts! He was willing to be killed because He knew true peace would come to those who put their faith in Him.

III. WHO IS THE MAKER OF PEACE?

A. The Author of Peace

1. 1 Corinthians 14:33--"God is not the author of confusion but of peace." Apart from Him there is no peace.

2. Romans 15:33--Paul said, "Now the God of peace be with you all" (cf. 2 Thess. 3:16).

3. Hebrews 13:20--The author of Hebrews described God as "the God of peace." Both the New and Old Testaments confirm that God is the author of peace.

Peace belongs to God--not man. Since the Fall of man recorded in Genesis 3, man has never known

peace except when received as a gift from God. God is perfect peace. He is at perfect peace with Himself because the Trinity is characterized by perfect oneness--perfect righteousness, absolute harmony, and a total absence of conflict.

The only way a man can ever know peace is if God comes to him. Ephesians 2:14 tells us that Christ is our peace. He came into the world as the peace of God that came to man.

I once read a story about a couple at a divorce hearing whose conflict couldn't be resolved. They had a four-year-old boy who became distressed and teary-eyed because of what was happening. While the couple was arguing, the boy reached for his father's hand and his mother's hand and pulled until he joined them. In a sense that's what Christ did: He provided the righteousness that allows man and God to join hands.

Colossians 1:20 says that Christ "made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself." It was Christ's sacrifice on the cross that made peace between God and man.

There may not seem to have been peace at the cross--there was a chaotic mob screaming and spitting on Christ, the chief priests and rulers mocked and cursed Him, the disciples fled, the day became dark, and there were criminals on either side of Christ cursing and swearing. But Christ's death on the cross provided the righteousness that alone makes real peace.

B. The Child of Peace

In his book *Peace Child* (Glendale, CA.: G/L Publications, 1974), Don Richardson told of his search for a way to explain the significance of Christ's death to the Sawi people in Irian Jaya in the South Pacific. The tribe he was working with was in a terrible feud with another tribe. There seemed to be no way that peace could be established. But there was a custom among the tribes that if someone in one tribe gave up his baby to another tribe, there would be peace between the tribes. The baby had to be given as a permanent gift and as long as he lived the peace would be honored. However the two feuding tribes hated each other so much that for a long time no one was willing to give up a baby to establish peace. Finally a man took the only child he had--a baby boy--and ran to the enemy village to present him to them. His wife chased him to recover the baby but couldn't catch him. That child became known as the peace child. As long as he lived there would be peace.

Richardson used that occurrence as an analogy to explain Christ to the Sawi. He presented Christ as the peace child who established peace between God and man as long as He lives--which is forever. There was anguish in the heart of God the Father when His Son died. You can imagine the anguish of the Sawi father who handed his only child to the enemy tribe. But the peace established was worth the price.

God is the source of peace, Christ is the manifestation of peace, and the Holy Spirit is the agency of peace. Galatians 5:22 says, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, [and] peace." When you become a Christian the God of peace, the Prince of Peace (Christ), and Spirit of peace come to reside in your life. In Judges 6:24 our Triune God is called Jehovah-shalom--"the Lord our peace."

C. God's Desire for Peace

God wants peace. He created the world with peace and will bring it to a destiny of peace. However, turmoil exists during the interim. Christ came to offer peace and will return to establish a kingdom and eternity of peace. God's will has continually been for peace--He doesn't want conflict. People often ask why God allows wars to happen--but He doesn't start them. Mankind's wars aren't His wars. Jeremiah 29:11 says, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace." Jesus said, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

D. The Source of Peace

Peacemakers draw their peace from God. A person who doesn't know God or Christ or have the indwelling Spirit can never be a peacemaker. The best he can do is provide a truce--but not peace. A psychiatrist or counselor who does not know God has no source of peace from which to extend peace. To try to mend a heart or put a family together without God is ultimately futile--apart from Him

there is no peace. No nation can be unified apart from God as its source of peace. The peace of the Christian is the tranquil serenity of righteousness wrought by God. That peace stays even in a world of troubles. Those who abide in the Lord have His peace.

E. The Cushion of Peace

I remember reading about what is called "the cushion of the sea." On the oceans' surface there is often great agitation, but in descending the water becomes increasingly calm to the point of being virtually still. Survey teams dredging those calm areas of the ocean bottom have found animal and plant remains that appear to have been undisturbed for hundreds of years. That's like the peace experienced by Christians. Regardless of the anxiety and trouble in a Christian's surroundings there is a cushion of peace in his soul. That's because he knows the Prince of Peace and has within him the Spirit of peace given by the God of peace.

IV. WHO ARE THE MESSENGERS OF PEACE?

Christians are the messengers of peace. First Corinthians 7:15 says, "God hath called us to peace." Second Corinthians 5:18-20 says, "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we beg you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Reconciliation refers to peacemaking. Second Corinthians 5:18-20 affirms that Christians are ambassadors of peace sent by God to the world.

Christians are God's Peace Corps in the truest sense. Colossians 3:5 says, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts." Similarly, Philippians 4:7 speaks of letting the peace of God dominate our lives.

A. They've Made Peace with God

A Christian is someone who has accepted the gospel of peace. Ephesians 6:15 says we should have our "feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." Before we became Christians we were at war against God. But when the righteousness of Jesus Christ was imputed to us by faith we made peace with God. No one will ever be a peacemaker unless he has made peace with God. Only then will we have peace to dispense to others.

To be effective as a peacemaker you must maintain your peace with God. Sin in your life disrupts that peace. You can't commune with God openly and God cannot bless you when you're in sin. Nor can you dispense God's peace to others. If you are living in disobedience to God's will as revealed in Scripture you cannot function as a peacemaker. A true peacemaker first concentrates on his own peace with God. When you wake up in the morning your attitude must be, "Lord, I want to continue enjoying peace with you." Confess the things that are wrong in your life and turn away from sin so you can be a peacemaker.

B. They Help Others Make Peace with God

Jesus probably had evangelism in saying, "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matt. 5:9). The greatest privilege a peacemaker has is helping someone at war with God to make peace with Him. An unsaved person will be antagonistic towards your message initially because he is not part of God's kingdom. But the minute he comes to Christ he makes peace with both God and you. Then he is God's child and your brother. The best way to be a peacemaker is to preach the gospel of peace in a way that makes plain to men and women their alienation from God. Romans 10:15 says, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace!" By telling someone the gospel you will accomplish more than a politician or statesman could ever do--only Christ gives peace that lasts forever.

Matthew 5:9 was an indictment of the smug self-righteousness of the Pharisees. They thought it was their right to preach hostility against Rome and a theology of self-exaltation. In the process they stepped on the necks of others and created strife everywhere they went. They looked down at

people and divided society into cliques. Jesus told them they were completely wrong--God doesn't want spiritually elite people who think they know everything; He wants poor, beggarly sinners who know they have nothing to offer God.

The early church preached "peace by Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:36). When you preach Christ, you preach peace. G. Campbell Morgan said, "This is the propagative character, the man who, being all the rest [of the Beatitudes], therefore brings peace wherever he comes" (The Gospel According to Matthew [N.Y.: Revell, 1929], p. 44).

C. They Help People Make Peace with Each Other

Peacemakers build bridges between people.

1. Matthew 5:21-24--Our Lord said, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old, Thou shalt not kill and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of judgment; but I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca ["you blockhead," or "you dunce"], shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." God doesn't want you to worship Him if there is strife between you and someone else. Deal with the conflict first.

2. Matthew 5:44-45--"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you, that ye may be the sons of your Father."

3. Matthew 18:15-17--"If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault.... But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more [witnesses].... And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church." It's tempting to avoid telling someone to repent. We tend to want to let sleeping dogs lie. But only when a problem is resolved righteously will there be real peace. The Bible commands us to be peacemakers. Mark 9:50 says, "Be at peace with one another."

4. 1 Peter 3:7--Peter wrote, "Ye husbands, dwell with [your wives] according to knowledge ... being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered." That's the kind of peace that's to exist between husband and wife. If you're having trouble worshiping God, you'd better make sure you don't have any problems between you and your spouse. Your prayers will be hindered if there is merely a truce and not true peace. Don't enter a worship service before resolving your problems with your spouse. Otherwise the war goes on--a cold war. The process of making peace can be like building a bridge. First you need to build a solid base on each side of the area to be spanned. After that you stretch cables between the two bases. Eventually there are enough cables on which to build the superstructure of the bridge. Too many people are unwilling to send out a cable from their end to span the chasm of discord and sin. That may involve suffering. But that's what Jesus did, and He's our example. Some fellow ministers I know don't agree with me on certain theological matters. But our disagreements don't cause bitterness between us. When I get together with one of them I don't immediately say, "Let's talk about the things we disagree on--I have more I want to tell you." I don't carry a pocketful of tapes that affirm my viewpoint and say, "Brother, the Lord told me to tell you to listen to these!" Instead I try to find something we agree on and build from there.

V. WHAT IS THE MERIT OF PEACE?

Our Lord's promise to peacemakers is that "they shall be called the sons of God" (Matt. 5:9). I'm glad to be a MacArthur--it's a name with a rich heritage. I'm happy to be the son and grandson of two godly men. But nothing compares to being called the son of God. That's the badge of the peacemaker.

In Matthew 5:9 the Greek word translated "sons" is *huios*, not *tekna*, which means "children." *Tekna* was used to express tender affection; *huios* describes a position of dignity and honor. When Christ spoke of being called "sons of God" He went beyond affection to promising a privileged position--the honor of being a peacemaker. That's one mark of a true Christian. If you look at your life and see you are not a peacemaker, then either you are not a Christian or you are a peacemaker who is living in sin. You need to examine yourself to see if you are in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5). He whose life is

characterized by discord and has no desire to make peace is no Christian.

Only God can say who His sons are. In the Greek text of Matthew 5:9 the word translated "called" is stated in the future passive tense. That expresses continuous action. Jesus meant that in the future believers will be continuously called the sons of God. Believers are sons of God now and will continue to be called that throughout eternity. What a great promise!

Conclusion

A Christian is more than someone who says he made a decision at one time, walked an aisle, raised his hand, signed a card, or talked to a counselor. He is someone who is poor in spirit, mourns over sin, and is meek before God. He hungers and thirsts for God's righteousness, has been shown mercy by God, and has a corresponding desire to show that mercy to others. Purity of heart and peacemaking also mark the Christian. Those are all qualities that Jesus said marked the citizens of His kingdom.

To be called a son of God is truly a tremendous privilege. I am a father and I love my children more than I love my house. God's house is the universe--yet He loves you and me more than that. Jacob prized his son Benjamin more than any of his possessions. Genesis 44:30 says "his life [was] bound up in the lad's life." God's great love is bound up with those of us who are His children.

Zechariah 2:8 calls us "the apple of [God's] eye." Zechariah wasn't talking about a shiny apple--he referred to the pupil of the eye, perhaps the most vulnerable part of the body. When anything comes toward your eye you protect it. When someone harms one of God's children he's poking his finger in God's eye!

Malachi 3:17 says we are God's jewels and will be a part of His crown. The psalmist wrote, "Thou hast ... put my tears in thy bottle" (Ps. 56:8, NASB). God stores our tears in a bottle of remembrance. That reflects the old Hebrew custom that when a person cried about something he would store his tears in a bottle so others would know how much he sorrowed. Psalm 116:15 says, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." God cares about us--He makes us sons, princes, kings, priests, and fellow heirs. In Psalm 16:3 we are called "the excellent." Second Timothy 2:21 says that a Christian is "a vessel unto honor." In Revelation 3:21 our Lord says, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne." We will be like children on our Father's lap.

God has a personal and eternal love for those who are His own. He bears with our weaknesses and sin, accepts our imperfect service, provides for our needs, and shields us from danger. He has revealed His truth to us and made us heirs of all He possesses. He works everything for our good and will accept us into heaven. Those are all things God does for His sons. Peacemakers are indeed blessed!

Focusing on the Facts

1. Why is there no real peace in the world now?
2. What is one of the things God has called Christians to do?
3. What shows it is impossible for unregenerate men and women to bring peace to the world.
4. What is the biblical definition of peace?
5. Explain the difference between a truce and peace. What does a truce do to a conflict? Is biblical peace attained at any price?
6. What does the process of attaining peace sometimes involve?
7. What happens when we avoid conflict to the point of sacrificing truth?
8. Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34). What did He mean by that?
9. When is the only time true peace comes? Explain.
10. The menace to peace is _____ and _____ ?
11. Who are the only peacemakers in the world that truly accomplishing anything?

12. How does the world react when peacemakers try to bring about righteous solutions to problems? Why?
13. Whom do the people of our world exalt? Why does the world fight against the peace of the gospel?
14. What kind of response did Christ and Paul receive as they ministered to bring peace between man and God? Should believers expect the same response (Matt. 10:24-25; Luke 23:5; Acts 24:5)?
15. Did Jesus avoid conflict in His peacemaking ministry? Explain.
16. Why might it seem that there was no peace at the cross? What did Christ's death on the cross provide (Col. 1:20)?
17. What evidence is there in Scripture that God's will is for us to have peace?
18. What does 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 affirm?
19. What do Colossians 3:5 and Philippians 4:7 tell us to do?
20. What happens when there is sin in the life of a peacemaker?
21. The best way to be a _____ is to _____ the gospel of _____ in a way that makes plain to men and women their _____ from God.
22. What will happen if there is a lack of peace between you and your spouse (1 Pet. 3:7)?
23. What happens to those who are peacemakers?
24. What is significant about the Greek word translated "sons" in Matthew 5:9?
25. If you look at your life and see you are not a peacemaker, what two possibilities apply to you?
26. How precious are God's children to Him? Use Scripture to support your answer (see p. 16).

Pondering the Principles

1. God is a God of truth, and His peace must be grounded in truth. The British pastor Octavius Winslow wrote, "The nature and tendency of error must be the opposite to that of truth; for it is impossible that two things so different in their natures should be capable of producing the same effects. If the nature and the tendency of truth are to promote holiness, it must be the nature and tendency of error to promote unholiness: if the one tends to humble the pride of man, to diminish him in his own eyes, to correct the evils of his fallen nature, to break the power of corruption, and to introduce him into the holy liberty of the child of God ... surely the other tends to foster his proud conceit of himself, to beget a lofty view of his own gifts and attainments, to lessen his views of sin's exceeding sinfulness, and, lowering the motive and weakening the power of holiness, gives the unchecked rein to all the corrupt propensities of a fallen nature" (Personal Declension and Revival of Religion in the Soul [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1960], p. 118). Winslow could have added that if truth promotes peace, toleration of error will promote discord. Are you promoting peace by revealing the light of truth, or are you in fact shading its light?
2. It is easy to forget that peace with God inevitably results in war with the world. Vance Havner said, "Let it not be forgotten that a twice-born and Spirit-filled Christian is always a contradiction to this old world. He crosses it at every point. From the day that he is born again, until he passes on to be with the Lord, he pulls against the current of a world forever going the other way. If he allows it, men will tone him down, steal the joy of his salvation, reduce him to the dreary level of the average.... Most church folk dislike having their Laodicean complacency upset by those who insist on walking by faith and not by sight" (The Secret of Christian Joy [N.Y.: Revell, 1938], pp. 54- 55). Are you at peace with God or the world? A faith that draws peace from heaven finds life on earth a continual struggle.

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