

what is being said is our peacemaking activity reflects God's peacemaking character. Richard Baxter, the Puritan, wrote, "He that is not a son of peace is not a son of God".

What is meant that they will be called sons of God? This means they will be owned by God as His sons. Often in the world, the peacemaker is seen as the troublemaker. Ahab called Elijah the troublemaker. The prophets were often seen as troublemakers. But one day God will own them as truly His sons. Let me make it clear they are not *made* sons of God, they have always been sons, but in the last day they will be publicly acknowledged as such before a watching world.

This blessing of being owned by God is also experienced in the here and now. We presently enjoy access to God as His sons; we now are chastised for our sins because we are His sons; we enjoy by anticipation the hope of heaven, where our Savior dwells. Even though there are moral and spiritual inconsistencies which hides our true identity, God still owns us as sons. This state of affairs will not last forever, for a day is coming shortly when we will be like our Savior, whom we now serve as peacemakers. "*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*" [1 John 3:2]

Let me leave you with some questions to ponder. Do you realize that you are born an enemy of God? Have you fled to the only means by which peace can be established, namely through the life and death of Jesus Christ? If this is your state, you are not described by this beatitude. Come to Christ today, without delay and sue for mercy. Only those who enjoy this peace qualify to be peacemakers.

To those who profess faith, let me ask, "Do you seek to promote peace and harmony in the church of God?" "Remember to disrupt peace in the church fellowship is to despise both the prayers of Christ and the blessings of Christ," writes Sinclair Ferguson. May all who profess faith in Christ manifest it by their peacemaking activity. Beloved, if you are one that has been responsible for breaking the peace of the church, then I call you to repent of your sin, that you may not be disowned by God in the last day. Amen.

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November 19, 2006

Publication No.285

BANNER OF TRUTH RADIO BROADCAST

Radio Ministry of the FREE REFORMED CHURCHES of North America

Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth. (Psalm 60:4)



BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." [Matthew 5:9]

These beatitudes are all in opposition to the world's thinking. You are not blessed in the eyes of the world if you mourn. But surely here the world would agree with our Lord. Not so, for in the Jewish world of that day, they believed when Messiah came, there would be uninterrupted series of wars against the Gentile nations till they were completely subjugated to the chosen people of God. Jesus instead declared His people are those who are *peacemakers!* Christians are not those who seek vengeance on their enemies, but seek to bring them into a state of peace by bringing the gospel message.

"This beatitude" writes Don Carson, "does not hold out a blessing to the **peaceful**, nor to those who **yearn for peace**, but to the **peacemaker.**" John Blanchard writes, "It has been estimated that in the past 4000 years there have been less than 300 without a major war". The world, beloved, is full of enmity, which sin has brought into the world, so there is great need for peacemakers. But what kind of peace is here being talked about by our Lord?

Let us consider the word peace as it is used in Scripture. The word does not mean merely the absence of war; rather it means *everything which makes for a man's highest good*. The Lord Jesus Christ is called the "*Prince of Peace*" in Isaiah 9:6 because He provided a foundation for peace by His blood. Let us go back to the Garden of Eden to see what peace meant. There man dwelt with his maker in a relation of love and fellowship. Sin marred that relationship, and man is now at enmity with God. God is righteously the enemy of man. This enmity is not only between God and man, but between man and man. Listen to the Scriptures as they describe this state of affairs: "*Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*" [Romans 8:7] "*But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.*" [Isaiah 57:20] "*From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.*" [James 4:1]

Now God could have in justice sentenced man to everlasting punishment, as his sin deserved. But thanks be to God, He instead put into operation a plan made from all eternity to rescue man by the sending of His beloved Son. His Son would come into the world as the substitute of His people and suffer the punishment they deserved and grant to them His own righteousness, by which they would have right standing with God. He would bear God's wrath away on the Cross, so making peace between God and man. This is the amazing gospel which the angels sang about at His birth. God took the initiative, as man never could, for he was full of enmity to God. Listen as Paul expounds this thought: *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we ere yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."* [Romans 5:8] *"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 pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."* [2 Corinthians 5:19] *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:"* [Romans 5:1]

Not only has Christ established peace between God and man, but also between man and man. Those who are changed by the grace of God receive the Holy Spirit which binds them in love to one another. All believers, whatever their standing in the world, are made one in Christ Jesus. The Gospel breaks down all barriers between men and women. Listen to these two scriptures. *"For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:"* [Ephesians 2:14] *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."* [Galatians 3:28]

Since Christians are those who have experienced this peace, they as a result become peacemakers. What then is a peacemaker? It is not someone who seeks peace at any price. He is not someone who winks at sin, because he does not want trouble. He is the one, remember, who is described as pure in heart, and so cannot compromise with sin. He is rather one who is single minded in seeking holiness of life. He does not have an agenda of his own. He is not a double minded man.

A peacemaker is a person who is peaceable, for a quarrelsome person cannot be a peacemaker. Now there are persons who profess to be Christians, but wherever they go, they are the cause of divisions and quarrels. Such are not the people described in this beatitude. If this should describe any of my hearers, I urge you to repent of this sin of causing division in the body of Christ, and seek His mercy today. The Bible makes it clear not only are the peacemakers blessed but that peace-breakers are cursed.

Now a child of God, who himself has experienced the peace of God, wishes that others would enjoy it too. All peacemakers are to do the work of evangelism. It is sharing the word of the gospel, and living it so that others would be saved. How are you a peacemaker? Do you show any concern for the lost? It is true that this is not an easy task; many will reject your efforts of peacemaking. But remember the Lord Jesus Christ who came to make peace between God and man was rejected by many too. Paul writes of his obligation to others in these words, having received salvation himself: *"I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise."* [Romans 1:14]

Beloved, does this characterize how you feel towards others? When was the last time you made an effort to share the gospel? When was the last time you invited another to church? Sinclair Ferguson writes, "The Christian church would be healthier if it shared Paul's conviction".

Not only are believers to be involved in evangelism but also they ought to be those who promote peace in the church of Jesus Christ. There are so many churches which have been destroyed because church leaders avoided their responsibility precisely here. "They forget", writes Sinclair Ferguson, "that those who destroy God's temple will be destroyed by God. *"If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."* [1 Corinthians 3:17] Their own wisdom and their own ways are more important than God's will, which is for peace and harmony among his people. He goes on to say "too often the causes are pride and the desire for power and position".

One of the ways in which peace is promoted between believers is that we pray for it. People are so busy during a controversy in playing judges rather than praying. Yet this ought to be the attitude of the child of God. How have you responded when there is division within the body? Do you take sides, or do you pray? If the latter you are a peacemaker. *"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee."* [Psalm 122:6]

Let us now look at the blessing pronounced on those who are peacemakers. Jesus says they *"shall be called the children of God"*. The word "children" should be literally translated "sons", for son describes our characters, whereas "children" merely speaks of our place in the family. So