

Blessed Are The Peacemakers

Matthew 5:9

Introduction

This is another one of the ‘famous sayings’ of the Sermon on the Mount. Quoted without any sense of context, this verse is used while handing out Peace Prizes and other backslapping awards. We must come to understand what this verse is not teaching, because there is such a mishmash of teaching on it. But, more importantly, we must come to understand what this verse does teach, for there is an important message for us individually and for Reformed Christians generally.

Earning Your Sonship?

You had nothing to do with coming into the earthly family you are in, and you had nothing to do with coming into the heavenly family either. John 1:12 and Gal 3:26 teach that we become sons of God through our faith in Christ for our forgiveness, not by works of peacemaking. The fruit of His work is imparted to us by the Holy Spirit through whom we are adopted (Rom 8:14-15). Then, we become peacemakers, because we bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22, Eph 2:8-10).

You Can’t Give What You Don’t Have

If a man is at war with God, he cannot bring biblical peace to others. Under Adam, we are murderers like his son Cain (Gen 4, Titus 3:3, 1 John 5:10-15). Jesus tells us who we are – “You are of your father, the devil” (John 8:44). This means that cease-fire agreements, land dispute settlements, baseball-strike negotiations, done by those at war with God are simply chasing after vanity. They cannot last.

Pursuing Peace

God is a God of peace (Heb 13:20), He was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (2 Cor 5:19) and made peace through the blood of the cross (Col 1:20, Rom 5:1), and we are to imitate our Lord in this. How are we to pursue peace?

Hold our tongues – James teaches the destructive power of the unbridled tongue (James 3:13-18).

Mortify our Pride – “He who is of a proud heart stirs up strife” (Prov 28:25)

Forgive Sin – “Love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Pet 4:8).

Stir up Love – “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,” (Heb 10:24)

Love and Prayer for our Enemies – Matt 5:43-45.

Peace at What Price?

As Paul puts it “If it is possible, as much as it depends on you, live peaceably with all men” (Rom 12:18). We are constrained in our pursuit for peace, for it is not the only thing we are to pursue.

Morality – David was a peacemaker (Psalm 120:7), but he would have nothing to do with certain kinds of men (Psalm 26:4-5). And so it is for us (1 Cor 5:13).

Truth – We are to “contend earnestly for the faith” (Jude 3). Elders are required to be the kind of men that can (and will) correct false-teachers (2 Tim 2:24-25). It is not divisive to reject a divisive man (Titus 3:10) because the battleground between right and wrong is not a level one. We must learn the difference between ‘tolerance’ and ‘pluralism’.

Beauty – Paul is not afraid to rebuke worship practices that have become indecent and disorderly (1 Cor 14:40), nor was he hesitant to praise the Colossians for the good order of their services (Col 2:5). It is not true that ‘beauty is in the eye of the beholder’ unless you understand the Beholder to be God.

Privileges of Sonship - 1 John 3:1. Membership has its privileges.

He has great love, compassion, and even pity over us (Psalm 103:13-14).

He bears much with us (Mal 3:17, 1 Pet 3:6) as he perfects us (Phil 1:6).

He reveals His Law to us (Matt 11:25) and gives us His Spirit to obey His Law (Ez 36:27).

He grants us to freedom from sin (Rom 8:2).

He makes us heirs to His kingdom (Gal 3:26-29).

He promises to work all things for good (Rom 8:28).

Biblical Peacemaking

Grumpy Gatekeepers – In our zeal for truth and reformation, the church is well known for intramural squabbles over too many of the details. We are not first known for our love of the brethren, of our compassion and humility. We are known for our devotion to ‘the truth’ that, by definition, no longer is. True wisdom is first pure, but then peaceable as well (James 3:17).

Unity and Light – Biblical peacemaking is evangelical, which is why Christ prayed for our unity (John 17:21). The world is to see this; it is to be our reputation. The testimony of our lives must match the proclamation of the gospel of peace (Rom 10:15), which is our spiritual sword now to take the land – all of it. What is our testimony today? Do we have a zeal for truth, for righteousness, and for unity and peace?

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