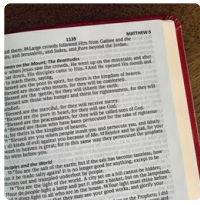


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Blessed Are The Peacemakers



The Beatitudes - Steve Gregg

In this discussion, Steve Gregg delves into the seventh Beatitudes which speaks on peacemaking. He connects the concept of peace to various verses in the Old and New Testaments, emphasizing that God is a peacemaker and that Christ reconciled Jews and Gentiles. Gregg emphasizes that peacemaking involves active pursuit and humility, with a focus on pouring oil on troubled waters and doing good to overcome evil. The overarching message is that peacemaking is an important aspect of living as a child of God.

Transcript

Tonight we're going to be looking at the seventh of the Beatitudes. There are eight at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, as it is found in Matthew chapter 5. The sermon itself, of course, runs all the way through chapter 7. The Beatitudes are found at the beginning of chapter 5, where Jesus introduced his topic of the Kingdom of God. Some have called the Sermon on the Mount a manifesto of the Kingdom of God.

I think there's, in one sense, we could consider the Sermon on the Mount as a commentary on the Beatitudes, because virtually everything that comes in the sermon later is summarized in one or another of these terse statements. And the purpose of the Beatitudes is to recondition us, for one thing, to change our value system, to help us to be disabused of our false values that the world has fitted us with in our upbringing, and to recognize the things that are really enviable. Envable is a category of things that we assess to be that which is worthy of pursuit.

Things that we set as goals in our lives. The world teaches us to set as a goal in our life to be financially secure, to be well-liked, to maintain good health, to stay out of trouble. And yet Jesus talks to people who get into trouble.

They're persecuted. They are poor. They're not well-loved.

They're not happy all the time. They mourn. And these people, he says, are the truly enviable.

These are the ones who are blessed. These are the ones that we should desire to be. And so we look at another of these tonight.

Very important, as I believe all of them are. But each one is so packed with thoughts and so few words. This Beatitude, the ninth, is found in, excuse me, the seventh is found in Matthew 5 and verse 9. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are the peacemakers. They shall be called the sons of God. Well, in order to understand what Jesus is getting at, we need to go back, as usual, to the character of God himself.

Jesus had said earlier, blessed are the merciful. They shall obtain mercy. Well, God is merciful.

That's why he expects us to be merciful. Pure in heart. The pure in heart shall see God.

Well, God is pure. Can't see him without being pure in heart yourself. To be like him, to bear the family resemblance of God, we must be like him.

And he is a God of peace, and therefore he calls his people to be peacemakers. And so we will try to explore what Jesus had in mind when he said these things. Now, in speaking of God as a God of peace, we should remember, of course, in the Old Testament, in Exodus chapter 15, when the children of Israel had come through the Red Sea, they sang a song sometimes called the Song of Moses, a song of celebration of their deliverance.

And they in that song, among other things, they said, the Lord is a man of war. And that he is, God is a God of war as well. And they saw that because God made war against their enemies.

In fact, God called them to make many wars after they came out of the land of Egypt. They didn't they didn't face wars immediately, but but after a Malachi hit them from behind, later they hit Og and the king of Bashan and also the Ammonite king and or the Amorite king, excuse me. And then when they came into Canaan, they had seven kings to conquer there.

There were a lot of wars that God called the children of Israel to do. They were a people of war and God was known to them as a God of war. I don't know whether we will ever find in the Old Testament.

I haven't checked this thoroughly, but I don't know if the Old Testament would ever refer to God as a God of peace. But in the New Testament, that designation for God appears at least five or six times. I didn't count them, but as I was looking through a concordance, I ran across that made sort of mental notes, but didn't didn't count them up.

I'd say there's five or six times in the New Testament that God is referred to as the God of peace. That's interesting. In the Old Testament, he's called the God of war or a man of war.

In the New Testament, he's called frequently the God of peace. There is no change in God, however. Many times people have thought just that way about God, that in the Old Testament, he's sort of a cranky, cantankerous, peevish kind of a God, gets angry and sends fire out of his presence and destroys people for trifles, like offering strange fire in the temple or some other minor infraction like that.

And yet in the New Testament, he's seen in the person of Jesus as the infinitely merciful, always forgiving. I mean, he can in the Old Testament, God has a man stoned to death for gathering sticks for a fire on the Sabbath. In the New Testament, Jesus confronts an adulteress upon whom the death penalty rests.

And he says, I don't condemn you. Go and sin no more. We certainly see a different side of God more clearly in Jesus than we see of him in the Old Testament.

But that does not mean and should not be falsely construed to mean that God is changed. Jesus said, if you've seen me, you've seen the Father. What Jesus is, God is.

And Jesus is called, and no one thinks it a strange thing to call him this, the Prince of Peace in Isaiah 9.6. His name should be called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Everybody, when they hear the term Prince of Peace applied to Jesus, it doesn't sound like an oxymoron. It doesn't sound out of place because Jesus is quite obviously a man of peace.

And yet, Jesus, if you've seen me, you've seen the Father. You've seen God. And God is a God of peace.

So the New Testament tells. I haven't listed all the places. First place I ran across that expression is in Romans 15.33. It comes up again, actually, in Romans 16.20. And there's a few other places in the book of Hebrews and Philipians.

You'll find this term, the God of peace, even First Thessalonians, I believe, uses the term. Now, it is true in the Old Testament, God manifested another side of himself. That side of God is still there.

And by the way, it's in Christ, too. In the book of Revelation, we read frequently of the wrath of the Lamb and of the kings of the earth gathering to wage war against the Lamb. That's Jesus.

Jesus is apparently a man of war, too. It's simply a matter of which aspect is in view in the Old Testament before the atonement was made, before God had an excuse to forgive people. He wanted to forgive, but he had very little reason to.

There were very few people whose hearts were right toward him. And so judgment was pretty much the order of the day. You see it much more in the Old Testament.

But in the New Testament, the aspect of judgment is not absent. But we see in Christ, God coming to make peace. God, who has been a God at war with mankind, the sinner, coming down and making an occasion for peace, seeking peace.

God is the one who invented the idea of peace. Turbulence was not part of his original creation. Disorder in nature, disorder in man did not come from God.

It came from the fall. Now, by the way, disorder in nature and disorder in man came at the same time. And in one sense, the one is a type and a shadow of the other.

The storms on the sea. Remember, Jesus was on the sea with his disciples and a storm arose. There was great turbulence.

Their lives were threatened. They were terrified. And Jesus once awakened, spoke to the sea and said, peace, be still.

And the sea suddenly was at peace. He spoke peace into a turbulent circumstance. And that command of peace brought with it peace.

Jesus said to his disciples in the upper room, my peace I give unto you, not as the world gives, give I unto you. In John 16, 33, Jesus said to his disciples, these things I've spoken unto you that in me you might have peace. In the world, you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer.

I have overcome the world. There are two realms in which we live. We live in the world and we live in Christ, in him, in me.

He says you have peace in the world. You have tribulation. You have both at the same time.

But without him, there's only the turbulence. There's only the tribulation. There is no peace for the wicked.

But Jesus comes and in the midst of tribulation, in the midst of turbulence, in the midst of human hostility, he is the one who comes with a message of peace. He is the one who reconciles. He's the one who reintroduces peace with God and peace between men since the time of the fall.

In Isaiah 26, 3, Isaiah said, thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee. God is the one who brings peace. I know someone's gonna say, I thought Jesus said I didn't come to bring peace, but a sword.

We'll get to that. But the scriptures are replete with references to God being the one who

speaks peace, peace to the weary and many other scriptures. And Jesus, of course, the Prince of Peace, speaks peace to his disciples.

Into a turbulent, fallen, disordered world, Jesus is sent as the Prince of Peace to bring with him the peace of God. Now, God is a peacemaker. He makes peace.

He's a God of peace. He brings peace, but he he is a reconciler, and he does this on two levels. And if we are to be like him, we must be peacemakers on these levels, too.

The first aspect of God's peacemaking is that he reconciles his enemies to himself. That is where there has been a breach of relationship between himself and man. He has come to bring reconciliation and to restore that relationship to himself.

Probably the most familiar passage on that subject is in 2 Corinthians chapter 5. In 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 19, Paul says, that is that God was in Christ reconciling. Now, reconciling is another word for peacemaking. Two persons are at odds.

They are brought back to a state of peace and their relationship. That's called reconciliation. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

God reconciled the world to himself in the cross of Jesus. This reconciliation is spoken of by Paul elsewhere. In fact, it's a common theme.

In fact, the word atonement, which is much more of an obscure word to us in modern English than reconciled, it has that meaning. The word atonement means reconciliation. In Ephesians or in Colossians chapter 1, in verses 19 and 20, Paul wrote, For it pleased the Father that in Christ all the fullness should dwell, and that by him to reconcile all things to himself.

By him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of his cross. Having made peace. That's peacemaking, isn't it? Now, that is a peacemaking between his own enemies and himself.

That is one direction that God is a peacemaker. He reconciles enemies to himself. He has done this through Christ, through the cross, he says.

In Ephesians 2, 16, something of a parallel to that same passage in Colossians. In Ephesians 2, 16, it says that that he might reconcile them both, meaning Jews and Gentiles, to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. So through the cross, Jesus reconciled Jews and Gentiles, essentially that's everybody, anyone who's not a Jew is a Gentile, to God.

Reconciled them to himself. So God is concerned about peace between himself and his enemies. Now, I'm not a universalist.

There are some, and they feel that when the scripture says that God, through Christ, is to reconcile all things to himself, whether things in heaven or things on earth, they actually believe that this is a reference to the ultimate salvation of all, and some would even include the devil. Someday the devil gets saved, they think. That is not taught in scripture.

All things has to, of course, somehow be modified or qualified. He did say all things, whether in heaven or on earth. When the day comes of judgment and God has swept the world clean, all that will be left are those that are reconciled to him.

There will not be others left. He will put all his enemies under his feet, we're told in 1 Corinthians 15. All the rest will be swept away and will no longer be.

Now, in addition to creating peace between himself and his enemies, God is in the business of creating peace between hostile third parties. He gets mixed up in people's problems, and two people don't like each other. God does not just stand aloof for this.

He's concerned about that. He doesn't just say, well, I mind my own business. His business is relationships.

His business is human relationships. Relationships are so important to him that he said that everything, all the law and all the prophets hang on to relationships. You should love the Lord, your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and you shall love your neighbors yourself.

And those two relationships are all there is. God's a God who is into relationships and he's into our relationships with each other. This is what somehow seems to be missed in much evangelical teaching, because very few evangelical churches will neglect to point out that God desires man to be reconciled to himself.

But I have been in churches many times that taught that faithfully, and yet persons in the congregation had not been on speaking terms with each other for years. And there seemed to be a missing piece to what was being taught here. God is concerned not only about man being at peace with God, but man being at peace with other men.

He commands us to be at peace with all men. He commands us to pursue peace with all men. And he commands us to be like him, a peacemaker.

Now, God gets involved in tensions between parties. We were in Ephesians 2 a moment ago. We're looking there again.

This is made clear when we begin to read it. Verse 11, Ephesians 2, 11 says, Therefore, remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh who are called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision made in the flesh by hands. Now, that little comment, you Gentiles were called the uncircumcision by those who call themselves the circumcision,

is a way of saying that you were looked at with contempt by the Jews previously.

Those who call themselves the circumcision called you the uncircumcision. Uncircumcised to the Jew became practically a synonym for filthy, dirty. In fact, Moses said, How can I speak to Pharaoh of uncircumcised lips? He wasn't talking about literal circumcision in that case.

Uncircumcised is just another term for unclean, unacceptable. And so we Gentiles were called the uncircumcised by those who call themselves the circumcised, Paul says. There was a problem here in the relationship between Jews and Gentiles.

He says that at that time you were without Christ being aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel. So there's alienation here. There's a breach in relationship here between the Jews and the Gentiles.

We're alienated from them. We were alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise without having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off and he's talking here about the alienation of the Gentiles from the Jews.

We were far apart from each other. We were far off from the Commonwealth of Israel. We weren't part of it.

Now we are. He says, You who were once far off have been made near by the blood of Christ for he himself is our peace who has made both. That's Jew and Gentile one.

He's made the church out of Jew and Gentile. He has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of division between us, having abolished in his flesh the enmity that is the law of commandments contained in ordinances so as to create in him one new man. That's the church.

And from the two, thus making peace, God is a peacemaker. In addition to reconciling the world to himself, he reconciles us Gentiles who were alienated from Jews. But of course, there are still Gentiles alienated from some Jews and some some Gentiles alienated from other Gentiles.

The point is there was a basic wall of division between Jew and Gentile. And Jesus came and broke that wall down so that there could be cross pollination there so that there be no Jew or Gentile distinction anymore in the eyes of God or in ours. He came to remove that kind of racist alienation that existed between the Jew and the Gentile.

And by the way, he's not any more pleased with alienation over gender or alienation over age group or alienation over political party or whatever. I mean, alienation is not what God wants among his people. Now, Paul is not saying that God eliminated all alienation when Jesus died, because there are still people who reject Christ.

But in him, he took of the two and made one new man in him. Those who come into Christ have no more basis for alienation. The middle wall of partition that once provided a schism there has been broken down.

And so God has, it says in him, made peace. God is a peacemaker. He makes peace between himself and his enemies.

He makes peace between two parties that are enemies to each other and seeks to reconcile them. That is at least what he is going about doing. Now, Jesus said, blessed are the peacemakers.

They shall be called the sons of God. We will not speculate too much as to who is doing the calling here, who's calling them the sons of God. It could be that he's just mean God will call them his sons.

It may be more than that. It may be that others will recognize. Truly, these are the sons of God.

Someone said that about Jesus once. Truly, this is the son of God. There are times when even the children of God on earth can be recognized by the non-children of God.

It's not so clear now, but in Romans chapter 8, Paul speaks of the time of fulfillment of all prophecy. At the end of the world, he speaks of it as the time of the manifestation of the sons of God, implying that we are children of God now, but it's the time of manifestation, when people will recognize, the revival of the sons of God. Revealing that we are the children of God will be, well, that's something yet to be seen.

However, there are people who can recognize a child of God when they see one, even if they're not yet saved, like that centurion who said of Jesus, truly, this is the son of God. I believe, of course, the most important thing is that God recognizes who his children are. It's most important that on the day of judgment, we're not among those that he says, I never knew you.

But at the same time, I believe it very desirable that the world recognize that we are the children of God. Jesus said, by this shall all men know that you are my disciples. If you have love one for another.

And he prayed that the disciples might have unity among themselves in John chapter the verse by this, shall men know that you're my disciples, but that you have love for another is John 13, 34 and 35. But in John 17 and verse 21, he said he prayed that we would be at unity at one with each other. He said so that the world may know that you have sent me.

So our relationships with each other, the unity, the love, the peace, the tranquility, the agreement. This is something that Jesus said would become a basis for the world,

knowing some very important things, knowing that he was sent by the father. That's what you read in John 17, 21.

And secondly, knowing that we are his disciples, knowing that we are the children of God. Well, peacemakers will be known as that. Why is that? Because children bear a family resemblance to their parents.

It's often the case that when my son and I actually, I don't think my son and I look all that much alike, but there are other people who apparently do because a better example would be me and my father. My father, when people meet our father, say no question whose dad that is, if they know me already, because he looks like me. Now I'm getting as gray as he is.

I can hardly tell the difference when we're in the same room. He even grew his mustache recently. He didn't do that all through my youth, but he grew his mustache.

Now it's getting really hard to tell the difference. But the fact is, it's very common to recognize somebody's parentage by their resemblance to their parent. Now, God is not seen with the human eye.

God is not physical. And therefore, the resemblance to God that we bear is not one of physical resemblance. It is one of character.

And God is a peacemaker. And his children, who are peacemakers, bear a family resemblance and therefore can be recognized as belonging to that family, being the children of God. And so, I'd like to tell you some of the things that the Bible talks about, bearing God's resemblance in this respect, being recognized as God's children by having this likeness to the Father.

In Luke chapter 10 and verse 6, when Jesus sent out the twelve, no, excuse me, that was the seventy. When he sent out the seventy to these various villages for a short-term outreach, he told them, when you go into a village, ask where a worthy house is and stay in that house. And he says, if you go in this house, if there's a man of peace in the house, then let your peace come on the house.

A man of peace. Interesting statement. You know, these people were going to a place where the gospel had not yet preached.

There were no Christians there yet. But there might, because it was Israel, there were some of the remnants of Israel. There were some who already knew God because, I mean, God was not entirely unknown by the Jews before Jesus came.

There were some who knew him. I mean, think of Simeon or Anna in the temple or Mary and Joseph. There was a remnant who knew him.

And that remnant, Jesus referred to a representative of that remnant as a man of peace. You go into a village, if you find a man of peace, stay in his house. A man of peace obviously must be a person who is by disposition peaceful.

A man who loves peace as God does. To be like God, we need to love peace. We need to seek peace.

We need to gravitate toward peace. We need to be people who want to make peace. This disposition is found many times in the scriptures.

In Titus chapter three and verse two, Paul says, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. To be peaceable. Isn't that an interesting word, peaceable? I mean, peaceful is a much more common English word.

Peaceable has a, it's like the word Pacific. Of course, we think of Pacific as the name of an ocean, but Pacific comes from the Latin word pacis, which is peace. The Pacific Ocean means the peaceful, peaceable ocean.

A man who's a man, he's not turbulent. A man who's not contentious. A man who doesn't take delight in stirring up strife.

A man who enjoys peace, is a peaceable person. In James chapter three, we read of the wisdom that is from above and of it, it says in verse 17, the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle. That was gentleness and peaceableness were mentioned together in Titus three, two, also in rapid succession.

Gentleness is part of being peaceable. The wisdom that is from above is first pure and peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits. Does anyone see an echo of the Beatitudes in this verse here? Without partiality and without hypocrisy.

Pure, blessed are the pure in heart. Gentle, blessed are the gentle or meek. Peaceable, blessed are the peacemakers.

Full of mercy, blessed are the merciful. I've told you many times that James alludes to and quotes the Sermon on the Mount quite frequently in his epistle. This one verse has quite a few of the Beatitudes suggested, and he says that these traits are the traits of a godly wisdom.

It's not just a mechanical pattern that you learn the ropes of how to make peace. It's rather something that's generated from your character, something that's your inner state, your disposition, you're informed by a wisdom from above that teaches you to be peaceable and gentle. That's a man of peace.

In Galatians 5.22 we read that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy and peace and other things too. But peace is a fruit of the work of the Holy Spirit. Are you a spiritual person? If

so, then peace will be part of your disposition.

You will be a person who naturally prefers peace. In Genesis chapter 13 we have a story of the conflict that arose between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle. It was a serious contention, so much so that Abraham saw it as threatening the unity of the family, and he took Lot aside.

He said to Lot in Genesis 13a, please let there be no strife between you and me and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brethren. And then he proposed a solution to the problem, which we'll mention a little later. But the point is that he could not tolerate strife in the family.

We're brethren. We're of the same family. We have the same ancestors.

We have the same father. Abram and Lot didn't have the same father because Abram's father was Lot's grandfather. But the point is we are related.

And therefore, please let there be no strife. It's irritating. I don't like strife among brethren.

Neither does God, by the way. It says in Proverbs chapter 6, verses 16 through 19, there's six things the Lord hates. One is J7, or an abomination to him.

And then it gives a list. And the last one in Proverbs 6, 19 is he that sows discord among brethren. He that sows discord among brethren.

That's one of the seven things God hates, an abomination to him. He finds it very irritating, discord among brethren. So did Abram.

He was a man of peace, like God is. By the way, it says in Psalm 133, verse 1, how good and how pleasant it is when the brethren dwell together in unity. When there's peaceful relationships with brethren.

That's a good and pleasant thing. And that psalm doesn't specify whether it's God or us who find it so. But I suppose there's no need to distinguish.

Because God and all godly people do find it good and pleasant to be in unity. And how irritating, how aggravating to be among those that do not love peace and do not seek peace. Probably the most protracted teaching Jesus gave about being a peacemaker is in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew chapter 5. In that place, Jesus taught how to relate to people, by definition, people who are not naturally at peace with you.

They are people who are, if not at outright war, they are nonetheless the kind of people that would be at war with you. They are not the people that you would naturally be at peace with. And yet Jesus teaches us how to make peace.

Or at least how to relate to enemies in such a way that is likely to, rather than escalate hostilities, more likely to bring about peace. In Matthew 5, beginning at verse 39 really, he says, But I tell you not to resist an evil person, but whoever slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also.

Whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him too. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you, do not turn away. You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

But I say to you, love your enemies. Bless those who curse you. Do good to those who hate you.

Pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. For he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust. Do you see the amplification here of that parable? Blessed are the peacemakers, they shall be called the sons of God.

Treat your enemies this way, so you will be sons of your Father in heaven. Your father does this. This is how your father behaves toward those that are not friendly toward him.

Be like him. Bear the family resemblance. If you hate those who hate you, you bear a family resemblance of another.

Jesus said to certain Jews who said, God is our Father. He said, no, you are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning.

He never stood in the truth, He said. Now, if you hate peace, hatred is like murder, said John in 1 John 3. He said, he that hates his brother is a murderer. Jesus said, if you are angry at your brother without a cause, it is all the same in some ways as murder.

It is not peaceable. And the murderer is Satan. Those who are angry and live angry, those who hate, those who stir up strife, they are of their father the devil.

They bear another family resemblance, but those who love their enemies, do good to those who persecute them, those who make peace, or act peaceably, those who have a peaceable disposition, they bear the family resemblance of the father, as Jesus said. Now, in this respect, we have the same obligations to make peace at the same levels that God Himself does. God finds those that are hostile toward Him, and He makes peace.

He has reconciled the world to Himself by not imputing their sins against Him. We must discover those who hate us and make peace with them as best we can. Just as God wished to close the breach between Himself and those who are His enemies, so the Son

of God, the Child of God, bearing the Father's nature, desires to close that breach between Himself, Herself, and any who is an enemy.

In Romans chapter 12 and verse 18, Paul said, If it is possible, as much as lies in you, be at peace with all men. That means between you and them. As much as lies in you.

Some of it doesn't lie in you. There's another party. To have a good relationship, both parties have to be participating.

There will be some who will not participate. There will be some who will not care to be at peace with you. But, we are to seek to be at peace with all men.

In Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 14, Hebrews 12, 14, we're told, Pursue peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Kind of a combination of this beatitude and the previous one. Blessed are the pure in heart, they shall see God.

Holiness, without which no one shall see God. Pursue peace with all men. So, to be at peace with others is necessary.

We've talked before, we don't have to go into it in detail again, how we do that. If somebody has injured us, Jesus said, in Luke 18, you go to that person. Actually, Luke 17.

Luke 17, the opening verse, He says, If someone sins against you, you go and confront him. If he repents, you forgive him. It's all over.

And Matthew 18 says, if he doesn't repent when you do that, then you bring some other friends. Two or three witnesses. If he doesn't listen to them, then it's going to have to be escalated somewhat.

The privacy factor is going to have to be compromised by taking it before the whole church. It's a loving thing if you have a conflict with someone, to try to settle it quietly. Because they might repent.

And if they do, it's nicer for no one else to know that they had done something wrong in the first place. But that's peaceableness. That's being peaceful.

You want to make peace. You don't just say, well, that person hates me, and I don't like them much either, and we'll just leave it that way. No, if you leave it that way, it's a dishonor to God.

If that person is a Christian. Now, if they're not a Christian, you're going to have a lot less ability to do anything about that. Because that person is not accountable to God in his conscience, as he should be.

And you can't really make peace with him, necessarily. Although, you can do much to

promote it, as Jesus said. If he's a person who spitefully uses you, persecutes you, and curses you, it goes a long way toward making peace.

To bless them, serve them, do good to them. That's what Jesus did. I mean, we weren't exactly his friends when he came down and served us, and washed our feet.

It says in Romans chapter 5, is it verse 8 or 9? It says, here is the love of God manifested, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. For scarcely for a good man would anyone die, but occasionally for a good man, some would dare to die. But he says that God commended his love toward us, and that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

And if when we were enemies, he died to reconcile us, how much more will he not freely give us all things, now that we're his children. But the point is that God didn't wait for us to become his friends, and then send Jesus. He initiated the reconciliation, and that's what his children must be doing.

We're pursuing peace with all men, it says in Hebrews 12, 14. By the way, I think it's in Psalm 34, it also says, pursue peace. And it's quoted in 1 Peter.

If you look up pursue peace in the concordance, you'll find a few places where that's found. Peace has got to be pursued actively. It will not always come to you.

If there is a conflict, that person may not initiate a resolution, or a reconciliation. And therefore, it falls to you to do so. After you've done all you can, if there's no peace available, your hands are clean.

You can't do more than that. If it is possible, as much as lies in you, live at peace with every man, Paul said. But in addition to peace between ourselves and hostile parties, God, remember, is one who meddles with other people's relationships too.

And there's a sense in which we need to be prepared to do this. But we also need to use discernment. Because it's one thing to serve as a mediator, as a peacemaker, as a go-between, between parties that are hostile, like a marriage counselor.

It's one thing to be in that role. It's another thing to go to meddling. Remember, there's that proverb that says that he that passing by, intermeddles in business not his own, is like he that takes a dog by the ears.

I've often wondered what in the world that image, taking a dog by the ears, meant to Solomon. I can only conjecture. To me, you take a dog by the ears and you're going to make that dog mighty unhappy.

And then how do you get rid of it? You know, you let it go and it'll bite you. You've bitten off something that you may not be able to get out of very easily. When you meddle in

someone else's business, you may find yourself to have unleashed a flood that you cannot bottle up again.

Hostility toward you. One brother I knew paraphrased this beatitude, bless for the peacemakers, they should get their eyes scratched out. But actually, we need to be prepared to get our eyes scratched out.

Although meddlesomeness is a different thing. If we're not welcome, we need to recognize we're not welcome. But there are many people who are looking for a counselor, looking for somebody who can be a mediator, someone who can translate between themselves and someone else that they're not communicating well with.

And there are those kind of relationships where both parties mean well. But there's some kind of a rift that causes every time this person speaks, that person hears it different than it was intended. And when that person speaks, this person hears it and interprets it differently.

And it's like they're speaking a different language, though they're not. And to get someone in there to translate, to get somebody in there to mediate, to get somebody in there to put oil on the water, to bring calm in the turbulence is a ministry. The Bible doesn't actually speak of a gift of counseling or anything like that.

And I certainly don't believe in what normally goes under the name of counseling, which usually means psychotherapy. I don't believe in that. But I do believe in Christian intervention as a peacemaker, and sometimes even when you're not asked.

There are times, what's it say in Galatians 6, verse 1? If you see a brother overtaken in a fault, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted. You see a brother overtaken in a fault. Most people's faults have to do with something they're doing wrong in a relationship.

Most sins are relationship sins. And therefore, you will often see parties, maybe in the same church, who are not on speaking terms with each other. They won't look at each other.

They go out separate doors. And you see that. You see two brothers overtaken in a fault.

And there is, for the spiritual at least, for the sons of God, for those who are like God in terms of being adept at being peacemakers, there is an assignment there. Somebody needs to promote unity, where the parties that are disunited with each other are not necessarily interested in doing so. In Acts chapter 7, verse 26, Stephen is retelling the story of Moses in Egypt, how Moses killed the Egyptian who was smiting a Hebrew.

And then the next day, two Hebrews were fighting among themselves, and Moses tried to intervene there. And Stephen says in Acts 7, verse 26, And the next day he, Moses,

appeared to two of them as they were fighting, and he tried to reconcile them, saying, Men, you are brethren. Why do you wrong one another? Men, you are brethren.

Why do you wrong one another? He tried to reconcile them. And in that case, Moses was singularly unsuccessful. But at the same time, we see in him a man desirous of repairing the breach in relationships between brethren.

Why are you brethren fighting? I mean, you've got enemies out there. Why are you fighting each other? In Isaiah 58, there is a promise to the remnant of Israel, I believe, that if they would seek God in the proper way, they will have a ministry and a reputation. And he says in Isaiah 58, verse 11, In such a case, the Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your soul in drought and strengthen your bones.

You shall be like a watered garden and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. Those from among you shall build the old waste places. You shall raise up the foundations of many generations.

You shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwelling. There are breaches in the church that need to be repaired. The church is made up of living stones.

The walls need to be reassembled. The walls need to be repaired. There are stones that are not in proper relationship with each other.

There needs to be those who are children of God who can repair the breach and be known as repairers of the breach because of their adeptness at doing so. We live in a really, really alienated world. Really broken.

I mean, divorce is the most obvious symptom of it. Because, I mean, when people have covenanted to live together for life and they think they're in love with each other and they get married and so forth, and then they break up. It's an extremely painful thing.

And yet that's happening in the church. It's happening outside the church. And what the world wouldn't gain by having persons who can take hostile parties, married to each other in many cases, or parents and their children, or neighbors, and there's a breach there.

And when the Christian comes, it should be possible that hope arises that this breach is on the way to getting healed if we are adept at being peacemakers. In James 3, verse 18, it says, The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. Again, peacemakers.

James, again, alluding to the Sermon on the Mount. The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace. Now, righteousness is the fruit.

The seed that is sown is peace. The peacemaker sows the seeds of peace and the fruit that grows is righteousness. The fruit that grows is justice.

Righteousness and justice are interchangeable translations for the same Greek word. Justice arises not from those who impose violent restrictions on the unjust, but those who know how to go and make peace, how to restore human relationships to the glory of God. The Bible indicates that there is such a thing as a responsible peace, and there is such a thing as an irresponsible peace.

You can be at peace with the world when you shouldn't be. James said, if anyone is a friend to the world, he's the enemy of God. That's not a good position to be in.

You can be at peace with the wrong side. There is a peace that is not to be desired as well as a peace that is. In Psalm 85 and verse 10, it says, Mercy and truth have met together.

Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Now, this is of course a personification of two concepts. Righteousness, which is justice, and peace.

These concepts need to be in union. They need to meet on friendly terms. Peace without justice is not what God is looking for.

That's why God doesn't just come and just impart salvation to everybody unilaterally. There is no justice in that. There are people who don't want to be at peace with God.

There are people who make a career of avoiding being at peace with God. That would be an imposition upon them that He is not prepared to do. Besides, just forgiving them unilaterally is not really something that justice would permit.

Because justice always requires that people get what they deserve. That's what justice means. You get what you deserve.

Not something more, not something less. When sinners are unrepentant, when there is no atonement made, there can be no reconciliation without an injustice being performed. But when there is an atonement made, when there is repentance, when there is a responsible meeting of minds because a price has been paid to cover the offense and so forth, and there has been a change of heart, then peace and justice can dwell together.

There can be a responsible peace. Now, there will always be those who do not meet the conditions for a responsible peace. Jesus said in Matthew 10, verses 34 and 35, He says, Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth.

I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. And He went on to tell how that a man's enemies would be even within his own household. There would be such a division.

By the way, in Matthew 10, He says, I came not to bring peace, but a sword. In Luke's

parallel, it says, I did not come to bring peace, but division. Obviously, a sword means division.

He didn't mean he's calling his disciples to go get swords and start a crusade. He's saying that don't think that my coming is going to instantaneously bring a seamless and complete peace throughout the world and throughout Israel. It's not going to happen.

The result of my coming is not going to be merely peace. Now, He did come to bring peace to His disciples. They had peace.

He says, in the world you have tribulation, but in me you have peace. He does bring peace. But not only peace, but also they should expect conflict.

They should expect there will be strife, there will be contention. Now, why is that? It is because, of course, not everyone wants peace so much. Which is why Paul had to put it this way in Romans 12, 18, which was quoted earlier.

If possible, as much as lies with you, be at peace with everyone. If they don't want to, then you can't do it. In Psalm 120, verses 6 and 7, the psalmist says, My soul hath too long dwelt with him who hates peace.

He then says, I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war. There's a guy, he wants to be a peacemaker. He bemoans the fact that his company, the environment he's in, no one seems to want peace like he does.

I've dwelt too long with him that hates peace. I'm for peace, but when I speak, he just wants to pick a fight over it. He just, he's for war.

I'm a peacemaker, but I can't always have peace because not everyone will accept the terms of peace. There certainly is a good example of that in Israel's rejection of the peace that could have been theirs in their conflict with God. They were at odds with God.

They were rebellious against God. God was punishing them. There was definitely a problem in this relationship.

And he says to them, in Isaiah chapter 48 and verse 18, Oh, that you had heeded my commandments, then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea. You would have had peace like a river, just like the old Pentecostal song. But they couldn't sing that song because they didn't have peace like a river.

He said, you would have had peace like a river, but you didn't because you didn't heed my commandments. You neglected the peace that could have been yours. And even more mournful is the plaint of Jesus in Luke chapter 19, in verses 41 through 44, where he wept over Jerusalem.

He said, Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem. He said, let me read that because it's lengthy. I was going to just give you one line, but I think the whole thing I'll have to read.

Luke 19, verse 41 through 44. Now, as he drew near, he saw the city of Jerusalem and wept over it, saying, If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace. In other words, you could have had peace if you'd known how to do it.

It's an irony because the word Jerusalem means city of peace. Shalom, Yerushalom, city of peace. And he's making a play on words here to Jerusalem.

You could have had peace. You could have been a city of peace. If you'd only known the things that make for your shalom, your peace.

But now they're hidden from your eyes for the days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side and level you and your children within you to the ground. They'll not leave in you one stone upon another because you did not know the time of your visitation. If you'd only known the things that would have pertained to your peace, but you did not.

They're hidden from your eyes and therefore you'll have no peace. You'll have war. They could have had peace, but they neglected the terms of peace.

Well, what are the terms of peace? Well, in order to understand the terms of peace and appreciate them, we need to understand what causes strife. According to Scripture, strife, let me put it this way, peace with God, I believe, is one of the components necessary for peace with man. I don't believe that somebody who's continually at war with God is going to really have very many good relationships with men either because his conscience is not clear, he's going to be fighting with God all the time, he's not going to be a man of peace.

The Bible indicates that one of the causes of strife is simply that wicked men war against God. It says in Isaiah 57 and 21 that the wicked are like the raging sea casting up their foam and their waves. He says, there is no rest, no peace, sayeth my God, to the wicked.

James says in James 4.4, He that is a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Those who are not on God's side are against Him. They're at war with Him.

Now, the core of strife, the core of contention, is pride, according to Proverbs 13.10. It says, only by pride cometh contention. This is the King James rendering. Only by pride cometh contention.

Proverbs 13.10. That means that contention only comes when there's pride. You take away the pride, there won't be any contention. People have contention with God because they're proud.

Too proud to bow their neck, too proud to admit they're wrong, too proud to humble themselves and follow God. And that's the same problem in human relationships. Peace is forfeited when you hold on to your ego, when you hold on to your pride.

Pride isn't the root of contention, according to Scripture. Also, wars are caused by jealous lust. In James 4.1-2 it says, From whence come wars and fighting among you? Come they not hence even of your lusts, which war in your members? You lust and desire to have and cannot obtain.

You fight and war, yet you have not because you ask not. You ask and receive not because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts. You fight and war because you desire to have what someone else has.

You're not satisfied with God. You're not content. You crave, and therefore you fight.

All wars generally have this element in them. Somebody wants the land, somebody wants the money, somebody wants the subjects or whatever of another country, and so they go and try to take them forcefully. Well, the only way that you can have terms of peace with God and in many cases with other people is through surrender.

Giving up your stake, giving up your rights. This requires humility and trust. Since pride is at the root of contention, it should not be surprising that humility, giving up your pride is what it takes to be at peace, to get rid of the contention.

It says in James 4.6, God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. There's fighting, there's war between God and the proud man, but He gives grace, favor to the humble, and after grace comes peace, or as a result of grace comes peace. Essentially the same thing is said in 1 Peter 5.5. God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Humility, humbling oneself before God. There's a proverb that says something like, it is a glory to a man to break off contention. But to break off contention when you're in the middle of a heated fight with someone, requires that you humble yourself.

Because the only way they're going to stop fighting is for you to say, okay, and act like you don't have any more arguments left. Even though you can think of a whole bunch more. And how humbling it is.

In a controversy, to give the other person the impression that you've run out of arguments and they're right, when in fact all you really want is peace. You're just going to humble yourself. You're not going to argue any further.

You'll just let your ego go. Trusting God is what makes it possible to have peace both with God and man. The reason is, well first of all, we have peace with God because we're justified by faith.

Trusting God brings justification. It brings the basis of peace with God. According to Romans 5.1, therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God.

The reason that it's necessary for our peace with men as well is that in order to surrender to the other side, that is to give them their way, to give up my rights and stop contending, I have to really believe that God will take my side. It would be too insecure otherwise. If I won't defend myself, I'd be totally insecure unless I believe that God will vindicate me in His way or in His time or at least protect me and He'll take care of things.

To put myself in the hands of God. That's why it says in 1 Peter 4.19, Let him that suffers according to the will of God commit the keeping of his soul to God in well doing as unto a faithful creator. You just stop fighting for yourself, stop defending yourself and leave it in God's hands.

You can only do that if you trust Him. You can then resign yourself to whatever God brings. Paul talks about that, how the peace comes as a result of trusting and turning things over to God.

In Philippians 4, verses 6 and 7, Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. So, as you trust God with the problems, you turn them over to Him.

You pray about it. Let Him know the request. Resign yourself to the fact that He's got it now, it's His problem.

Then the peace of God floods you. And you can be at peace with God, and then you can live as a peacemaker toward men because you have nothing more to defend. You don't have a side to defend.

In the bottom of your notes, I don't have time to go over these and look at all these verses. There's quite a few verses. I've given you a description of the way of peace.

In Isaiah 59, 8, the wicked are described as not knowing the way of peace, the way of peace they have not known. In Luke 1, 79, I believe it's Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, prophesies that Jesus and John the Baptist are now being born to guide our feet into the way of peace. There is a way of peace.

There's a way of living that promotes peace. And there's a way that does not. Now, I've given you several points here I don't have time to go into detail on right now, I'm afraid.

But certainly, the Scripture, if you look those up, you'll find them to be so. One of them is gracious tolerance of diversity of opinion. If you're all wrapped up, if your identity and your security are all wrapped up in being right on some controversial point, you're going to want to be contentious toward people who disagree with you.

If your security is in Jesus, you're not threatened when people disagree with you. What's it matter? Peaceful words, certainly the way you speak can promote peace or not. There's He that speaks as the piercings of the sword, but the tongue of the wise is health.

Healing, it says in Proverbs 12, 18, and there's many others like it. Proverbs 15, 1, a soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger. You can speak peacefully.

Many times you can speak either peaceful words or irritating words in the same situation. A man of peace will wish to pour oil on the water with peaceful words. You can overcome evil with good.

This is what Paul says in Romans 12 when he says, Do not retaliate. Do not avenge yourselves. Give place to the wrath of God.

If your enemy hungers, give him food. If he thirsts, give him drink. In so doing, you'll heap coals of fire on his head.

He says, do not be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good. If someone comes at you in a hostile manner, if you take up the battle and fight with him, you're not a peacemaker. And you have been overcome by the evil that he has brought into that situation.

But you can overcome that evil by doing good. Good to those who persecute you, Jesus said. You can pray for peace, and we're told to do so in 1 Timothy 2, verses 1-4.

We're told to pray for all men and for kings on all who are in authority that we might live a peaceable life. Psalm 122, verse 6 says, Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.