

# Practical Steps to Peacemaking

*Christian Peacemaking*

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You're joining us as we are taking a little bit of a break from our verse by verse exposition of the book of Ephesians which we've taken a little pause to focus on the biblical topic of peace and we've spent a few weeks on this and this will be our last matter of that. I invite you if you are visiting to pick up some of the last few messages that are dated on the label of the CD because that will set the context for what you're about to hear today. Today is a very practical message. I'm very delighted to be able to share these practical things with you as we come to God's word this morning.

You know, we talk about the Lord Jesus Christ as being the Prince of Peace and in Ephesians 2 it says that he himself is our peace and that he reconciled us to God and he reconciled Jews and Gentiles to one another. So central to the very heart of Christianity is this concept of peace, of reconciliation, of harmony, of completeness, and this is part of what Christ was doing. Not simply releasing sinners from the guilt and condemnation of their sin, although that is central to his work on the cross, we must see and understand that there is this great cosmic work of peace that Christ was working to accomplish. It was central to his mission when he came to earth that he would be bringing peace; he would be making friends out of the enemies of God. And that is the core to his nature, that is core to his mission. He commands us to be those who seek after peace. So this topic of peace is not incidental to our Christian lives. It goes to the very core and fundamental aspect of what we are to be and to do. I want you to see that because it's so very, very crucial. The things that we're talking about here today really become the cornerstone of Christian character in some ways. This goes to the very core of life; to the very core of the kind of person that you and I are meant to be. If we are going to emulate and imitate the Lord Jesus Christ, if we are to walk in the new birth that he has given us, then somewhere somehow this priority of peace is going to manifest itself in our lives and that's going to be independent of whether people support us in the process or not. We are called to be peacemakers.

Look at Matthew 5:9 and today what we're going to do is we're just going to look at some practical steps toward peacemaking. So Matthew 5:9, I'd invite you to turn there as kind of our cornerstone text for this morning and then we'll expand out into other Scriptures. I know for a fact that this topic has been at work in your hearts because there have been so many of you who have approached me with questions, "What do I do about this situation

or that? Or this is how these messages have affected me." And all of us are prone whether we manifest it or not or just feel it inside, are prone to frustration and anger and those kinds of emotions that come with living in a fallen world and not getting our way. So I know that as we speak these things, as we look at these aspects of truth, we're looking at things that are immensely practical for each one of us and that's why I wanted to spend some time today just looking at the practical outworkings of it before we return to Ephesians 2 next Sunday morning. Today we get some practical biblical help to appropriate peacemaking in our lives. It's all very, very practical. There is nothing here that none of us need. We all need everything that's in the Scriptures for us here this morning so I'm delighted to be able to share these things with you today.

Now, Jesus said that the mouth speaks from that which fills the heart and so if we're going to deal with Christian character, if we're going to be a Christian peacemaker, as it were, we have to start right there. We have to start with where we think. I'm going to give you four principles for practical peacemaking here today and the first one is this, the first one is this: that you need to develop a peaceful mind. You'd need to develop a peaceful mind. When we talk about Christians being peacemakers, when we orient our lives toward being those who bring harmony and not conflict into the sphere of our personal relationships, we are swimming upstream in our culture both secularly and even in our Christian culture. The media and our politicians profit from conflict. They gain power when there is conflict between warring groups and so they pit people against one another for the sake that their base would support them and it raises them up and it gives them greater prominence and prosperity in their own lives. It's a despicable aspect of our fallen world that it's like that but it's obviously true. They agitate and stir things up so that people are dissatisfied and will pay attention to what they have to say. Sadly, in the Christian community it's not much better. The same aspect you find in many Christian leaders stirring up conflict, getting you worried and concerned, making you anxious about this or that problem and calling you to action and you always have, if you get swept up into that stream, you're in this current of conflict and agitation and, "We've got to do something to fight against it," and your mindset is oriented toward fight and conflict. "You know, we've got to stop this group or stop that group." And this core idea of peacemaking is lost in the process.

Look at Matthew 5:9. Over against that kind of mindset stands the biblical testimony of the peacemaking nature of God and that's what I want us to focus on today. I'm not going to agitate you on political issues or spiritual issues. I want you to see the priority that peacemaking has in your private personal character. In the inner sanctum of your heart, here is what you and I are supposed to be like as Christians. And beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, we must take our cues from God's word, not from what we hear around us. This is where we take our cues about the kind of person that you and I are meant to be.

Now, just by way of a little bit of context, repeating a couple of things from last time for the benefit of those who weren't here last time. We understand that there is going to be a measure of conflict with false teachers; that we are never going to stay silent in the presence of sin or in error inside the church. But that's not what we're talking about today.

We're not talking about how the church deals with error today, we're talking about your private personal character in your heart. You must make that distinction in your mind. We're not calling for a policy of appeasement to sin and error. That's not it. The question is: what are you like in your private character? What are you like in your most intimate relationships with your family, with your spouse, with your children, with your parents, with your siblings, you young people?

This is the core of where we are going to. It spills over into those other areas but we're going to, what we're like in private here this morning and where do we define that? Well, it starts with we need to develop a peaceful mind. As a Christian, you must think deeply about the priority that God's word places upon your disposition toward others. It is not a virtue for you to be a quarrelsome, fightsome person. I made that word up on the spot: fightsome. Don't look for it in a dictionary because it's probably not there. But turn over to the book of Proverbs. I want you to see the priority of this one more time. I want you to see the emphasis that God's word places on this and it's going to be convicting for many of you.

Proverbs 17 is where we are going to start here this morning. Proverbs 17. In some ways, I rather suspect that for some of us, this series, this message this morning, redefines the very nature of virtue for us; the very nature of what nobility looks like in a person's character. Proverbs 17:14 says, "The beginning of strife is like letting out water, So abandon the quarrel before it breaks out." Rather than entrenching yourself and being sure that you assert yourself and get what is your due and that your opinion is heard, Scripture says think about the beginning of strife, once you let water out it goes everywhere. You can't get it back. Once the strife has begun, it is in motion until it goes everywhere that it can reach. Scripture tells us that God's word proclaims to us, calls us to be mindful of that, to have such a peaceful mind that we are willing and we actually abandon the quarrel before it even begins.

Look at Proverbs 20:3. This is so countercultural and I love God's word for it and I want to be this kind of man. I think that you want to be these kinds of people. Proverbs 20:3, "Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man, But any fool will quarrel." Any fool will quarrel and so what this means is and all I'm going to do today is just kind of give you little things to think about. This is one of those messages where you have to kind of drink it in and digest it. You have to take this and chew on it and think about your life, think about your character, think about how you interact with people when they oppose you, when people irritate you. You need to think through all of these things because this goes to every aspect, every corner of your character. What does this mean? This means that in the midst of this stream of conflict in which we are swimming upstream against, it means that you and I have to pursue peace when others revel in the fight. Where others love the conflict, others love the agitation that news channels and news talk bring to your heart, you say, "That's not for me because this just agitates me and makes me a fighter when I want to be a peaceful man." Scripture says that this priority of peace may require you to separate from relationships with angry people because they have a way of infecting your whole disposition.

Look at Proverbs 22:24, "Do not associate with a man given to anger; Or go with a hot-tempered man, Or you will learn his ways And find a snare for yourself." Wow. Scripture says that this priority of peace is so important that it defines who you do and do not have relationships with; that we actually separate from relationships from people who are settled in their anger and simply won't have any other way of life. Now, there are some family relationships where this just cannot be avoided. I understand that, but in those voluntary associations that you make, when you see angry people and you find angry people in your life, Scripture says, "Don't associate with them because you will learn their ways. You will become like them." And Scripture says peace is too important for you to allow that to happen so that this becomes a defining aspect of who we associate with and who we do not associate with. You choose friends, you choose lifelong relationships based on this principle of peace.

So you see from the very start this has a defining dimension to the way that you approach life and who you develop relationships with. This means that you develop a peaceful mind. The pursuit of peace starts in your heart, starts with a recognition of the priority that God places on peace, and then you just start to live out from there. This is a principle, this is a priority that we do not compromise on in our Christian lives because to compromise on it, to associate with angry people, to cherish anger in our hearts, is to compromise the very nature of what it means to be a Christian and what Christian life is supposed to look like.

So we see it in our relationships. Let's look at it from a different direction here. That means that, this means that we don't agitate the conflict in our minds. When you've been wronged, you don't keep rehearsing it. "Why did he do that? That was wrong for him to do that to me. Doesn't he know what that did to me?" And you just rehearse it and you just drive that anger and resentment and bitterness deeper and deeper into your heart. You see, this cuts the legs out from that kind of thinking; that kind of inward motions of your thinking and of your heart. You say, "I can't go there anymore. I have to stop letting myself dwell on these things because this is contrary to the priority of peace."

Turn over to Philippians 4 just to reinforce this to help you see that this starts in your mind. Philippians 4, a familiar passage. Philippians 4:8 says, "Brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things." Now, he has said that just after verse 7 where he said, "the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." So with this priority of peace, your responsibility is to cultivate true, right, honorable thinking in the inner recesses of your heart and you reject that which introduces agitation and conflict. You reject that in which you try to justify bitterness in your emotions.

Cotton Mather, the great Puritan, one time received a number of letters from opponents to him which greatly insulted him and made false accusations against him. He read them. He read those letters and he kept them but what he did with them was quite remarkable, he put a piece of paper around them and put them on his library shelf and on the outside

of that paper he said, "Lies. Father, forgive them." These people who had written and made false accusations and slandered him in writing in what they said to him, his peaceful response was, "Father, this is untrue. Father, forgive them." That's what a peacemaker does. A peacemaker looks at these things and says, "Father, forgive them," rather than turning it into a further source for conflict. Rather than defending himself against the lies, he just said, "Father, forgive them. I'm going to be a peacemaker here. I'm going to let this go. I'm not going to respond in kind." That's what a peacemaker does, beloved. A peacemaker doesn't rush to defend himself. A peacemaker knows that God will take care of him.

Let me say this to you as your pastor and as your friend and I want you to embrace this based on the Scriptures that we've just seen: beloved, it is a far greater reproach for you to be angry with someone than it is for you to bear a personal insult without defending yourself. It is better for you to let an accusation go unanswered than it is for you to be angry and respond in kind. You see, these things, our character pivots on things like this. Our character turns on how we approach these things and so in this concept of biblical peace, in this concept of what a fool will quarrel but we turn away and we abandon the quarrel before it begins, these things become the defining first principles of Christian character for us. We have to think through these things carefully and examine ourselves and say, "What am I like? What's my first impulse?" Brother and sister in Christ, are you noble enough to hold your tongue and forgive a wrong done against you simply for the sake of Christ? Just because Christ is worthy of it. Do you love him enough to let an earthly wrong go and just say, "Christ, Father, forgive them. Take care of me. Protect me in the process because I'm not going to lift my hand up against the principle of peace in my heart." This is where the so-called rubber meets the road. Recognize the priority of a peaceful mind and develop it. Think through these things. Recognize that Scripture calls us to that and embrace it and say, "Yes, Lord, I want to be like that in my inner man."

Secondly, we said to develop a peaceful mind, secondly: develop a peaceful mouth. Develop a peaceful mouth. I wanted to simply make this second point shh, but then it's kind of hard to spell shh, and it doesn't alliterate with the letter "P" either. So develop a peaceful mouth. Most of you would be better peacemakers if you would just be quiet. Proverbs points us in this direction repeatedly. Turn back to Proverbs and go to Proverbs 12. I'm just picking out a few things from Proverbs here to make the point. If you would read Proverbs 1 through 31 with this perspective, you would see how often it emphasizes this, how often Solomon emphasized this to his son. But since Solomon was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, this is God speaking to us saying, "This is the kind of person that I want you to be. I have given you your tongue. Here's what I want you to do with it," Scripture says. Proverbs 12:18, "There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, But the tongue of the wise brings healing." Chapter 13, verse 3, "The one who guards his mouth preserves his life; The one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin." Elsewhere Scripture says that, "He who restrains his lips is wise." Look at Proverbs 15:1 where it says that, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, But the mouth of fools spouts folly."

Beloved, let's just speak in short direct sentences us to one another here today. Hold your tongue. Don't hurry to explain why the problem is not your fault. Don't jump on the first mistake or the first sin that you see in someone's life and point it out and castigate them for it. Hold your tongue. Restrain your mouth. Don't escalate a situation by raising your voice. This is how practical it is. This is how practical peacemaking is. The gentle tongue promotes peace. The harsh impulsive mouth promotes conflict. So as we're cultivating these priorities in our heart, we're seeing that it immediately affects what we say and what comes out of our mouth.

You say, "That's all Old Testament, I'm a New Testament kind of person." Fair enough, turn to James 3 with me. James 3, beginning in verse 4, actually just go to verse 2. "We all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well." The whole course of what a horse does driven by that bit in his mouth, is what he's saying, and he's not talking about horses, he's talking about our tongues as is shown in what comes. "Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. So also," here we go, "So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!" In a big dried out forest, a little fire becomes something big. He's saying, "With your little tongue you can set a lot of conflict into motion if you're not careful." So the point is to make it a priority to watch your tongue.

Verse 6, "And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race." We have zoos. We have tamed lions. We have tamed rhinos and hippos and all of those animals. We've tamed them all.

Verse 8, "But no one can tame the tongue." What an indictment of the human race. We can tame wild animals but we can't tame our own tongues. "It is a restless evil and full of deadly poison." Look at verse 9 and this hits us right where we live, "With it," with that tongue in our mouth, "we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? Can a fig tree produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh." He's saying, "Think about what is coming out of your mouth and realize that the inconsistency on the one hand of singing praise to God on Sunday morning and then cursing your family or arguing with people on Sunday afternoon is a totally unacceptable way to live the Christian life." The priority of peace is not a mere secondhand ornament to be placed on the tree. This is to be the defining nature of how we live life and how we handle our relationships.

So we approach this, we say develop a peaceful mind and that we recognize this priority of peace; we recognize the element of self-restraint that it involves; we embrace that; we love that; we accept that; we define our character in light of that, what we aim after. And

as we go on in Scripture, we realize, "Okay, this affects everything that I say. This affects what comes out of my mouth and I recognize," you say to yourself, "I recognize the unacceptable lack of integrity with, on the one hand, talking about how much I love and bless God while at the same time I strike and tear down with my tongue the people that are closest to me." Beloved, these things can't be. We can't live that way. Scripture exposes this to us and calls us to a different standard.

So what does this look like? Well, I say this gently and in love: be quiet. Just be quiet. When someone slanders your friend, don't run and tell the friend the details of it. Don't carry that and like a fox with its tail on fire go and spread the fire someplace else. Unkind and untrue things are not worth repeating anyway. Rebuke the one who slanders but don't repeat it to your friend. There is no need to pollute them with this stuff as well. The retelling of the sin will only sow more discord. Your words can either stir up further controversy or they can make peace. Which will it be for you?

You see, I'm not a prophet or a son of a prophet and I don't know what the future holds but you just look at the trajectory that our culture is on and all of the anger and the conflict and it seems like it just gets worse and people thrive on it, and the more that God's word has been pushed aside not only in society but in the church as well, the only thing that restrains that kind of sinfulness in the hearts and mouths and actions of men is the word of God and the fear of God. It's only the fear of God that keeps us from evil. Well, beloved, realize, recognize as you sit here today that the only thing that is going to cue you in this direction is the word of God. Don't look for anything outside to promote it, to affirm that in your life. So what I'm pleading with you today as a pastor, as a fellow Christian who stumbles myself, what I'm pleading with you today is to recognize what a priority this is in Scripture and to adopt it as your own and to say, "Yes, this day henceforth, whatever my past failures may be, this day henceforth, I'm going to aim myself to be a peaceful man, a peaceful woman. I'm going to stop being the one who controls my kid with an elevated voice. I'm going to aim my heart at being the one who works through conflict peaceably rather than withdrawing in a sullen spirit or striking out in anger because it's not what I want it to be." It's that practical.

Thirdly, develop a peaceful mind, a peaceful mouth, thirdly, develop peaceful meetings. Develop peaceful meetings by which I mean be proactive in the pursuit of peace. Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God." Peacemakers, you're someone who does peace. You're about the business of peace and so you're proactive. You take the initiative to make peace. It's such a priority to you that you're happy to make time in your schedule to cultivate and to promote peace in your relationships; to make it a priority to settle conflict where that's possible and where the resolution of the conflict is not possible, you're content to step back and drop the issue if that's what it takes. This may take your time. You may have to swallow your pride and admit, "Sweetheart, my friend, I was wrong and I want to make it right." You say, "I don't like that kind of discussion where I'm the one vulnerable and the one taking the heat." You see, what lets you become like that is the fact that there is a greater priority of peacemaking in your heart than there is of preserving your human pride.

So these things work out. The whole message today is all about just saying that when we talk about peace, it is meant to work out in your life. That's what we're saying. To not be content with the general concept of peace out there someplace without realizing and making the connection, without plugging the plug into the outlet and saying, "This matters to my life." Without feeling, here's the thing, beloved, without feeling a sense of shame that you as a professing Christian have cherished conflict and harbored bitter resentful feelings against people close to you for years and you have been content to live like a Christian like that, as if that were somehow acceptable behavior, if that was acceptable conduct on your part as one who has been born again from the Spirit of God. The Lord takes us as his people and he lays us before us and he starts to deal with us and those of you that have felt the convicting force of the past couple weeks of messages, take heart in realizing this is a mark, the fact that this convicts you and you want to respond to it even though it's hard, this is a mark that your salvation is real; that your heart is tender toward these things of peace. But what I want you to see is that settled bitterness in your heart is not consistent with being a Christian and you need to deal with it to the point that you resolve it and you stop holding those past wrongs against the person who did them against you. You must let it go and you can let it go because we believe in a sovereign God who works all things together for good to those who love him and are called according to his purpose; that even in the way that people have wronged us, God was working out good things to accomplish good things for us in the end even if we don't see them right now. That's what Joseph said, "You meant it for evil against me but God meant it for good to bring about this present result," Genesis 50:20. So our whole theology comes to bear in the way that we respond to things like this.

Look at 2 Corinthians 13:11 where it says, Paul is bringing this great letter to a conclusion and he says, "Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you." Live in peace. Aim after conciliatory interactions with those that are closest to you. Go settle a conflict. Make the phone call. Beloved, take the blame, "It's my fault. That one's on me," if that's what will bring peace. Do good to those who have wronged you, we saw that in Matthew 5. Pray for them. It's hard to be angry with someone that you're sincerely praying for. Brothers, our Lord Jesus Christ gave himself so that we could be at peace with God. He sacrificed when he was innocent for the sake of peace. Those of us who have received the salvific benefits of his peaceful work of atonement now have a defining principle to shape the way that we live. That's the impact of being a Christian. We give ourselves so that others might see peace manifested in us. This is a way of life. This is how we live as Christians.

Fourthly and finally: develop a peaceful motivation. A peaceful motivation. Why should you live this way? Now we get to the good stuff. This has been convicting, this has been instructive, now we get to the good stuff. Develop a peaceful motivation. Why should you live this way? Because God will reward peacemaking. Go back to Matthew 5:8. This principle of peace goes from the cross all the way into eternity. It works its way from conversion until you are in heaven. This is all defining. This is woven through. There is this golden thread of peace woven throughout your entire redemption and this part is awesome. This is why we can live this way. This is where we subordinate earthly



affections for the sake of the greater reality yet to come to us when we are with Christ. Matthew 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." Right here, beloved, is all the motivation you need to embrace everything that Scripture says about this. Right here is where you can put away your petty jealousies and bitternesses that seem so important right now. You view them in light of a greater eternal perspective that makes them seem so insignificant because of what is yet to come for you as a Christian. Why should you live this way? God will reward you for it.

Look at verse 9 with me again, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." We mentioned this last time. The term "son" emphasizes that the true Christian reflects God's own peacemaking character. The son is like the father. You say, "So what?" So what? Are you kidding me? It is your, if you're a Christian today, if you're a Christian it is your glorious destiny, it is appointed for you before the foundation of time to be in the presence of God where he openly claims you as his own. You will be called a son of God by God himself. You will be in the presence of God and he will say, "Yes, you belong to me. You were born of my Spirit and it displayed itself during your earthly life."

Beloved, it's your glorious destiny, not only to see God, I mean, that's glorious, not just to be in heaven with saints from all the ages, that will be awesome to be reunited with our loved ones that knew Christ on and on, all of that is going to be wonderful beyond description. There aren't words to describe how great and glorious being in the presence of God with the saints through all the ages is going to be but, beloved, that's not the best part. That's not the best part. It's infinitely great, it's infinitely good, but the best part is that you are going to be in the presence of a holy, magnificent, uncreated God and you are going to be in his presence, belonging there. You are going to be in the presence of God the Father with all of the privileges of being a part of his family. You're going to be there with the privileges of a son. You will be welcome in his presence. This holy God, this Lord Jesus Christ, will receive you in love and name you as his own. It will be as if he says, "Christian, come into my presence. You belong to me."

That moment, that eternal, unchanging, unbending, undiminished reality makes the greatness of pursuing a peacemaking life on earth worth whatever cost we pay to enter into it. Christ died to save our souls. Christ gave new life to us and as part of this new life, we live out this peacemaking spirit. And from moment to moment there may be times where it seems like we're getting the raw end of the deal in it as part of the life of discipleship to Christ. It may seem that way, don't be deceived by the appearances. When we enter into the presence of God and that instant when we enter into his presence and we realize that now we are really, really home, really, really, really in the presence of our Father, and really, really, really in the supremacy of the glory of God, he would own us. He would have us and say, "Yeah, you're my son. Come right in." That great moment, that great eternal reality is what awaits those who are true Christians. That great reality is what awaits true peacemakers. That's why we can let the conflict go. That's why we do the hard work of forsaking bitterness for real wrongs done to you, I get that. The wrongs were real, so were your sins that were forgiven at the cross.

You will see God. Look at verses 8 and 9 with me again. In this description of the true Christian, the true citizen of the kingdom of God, Jesus himself makes promises. He says, "Those that are like this have this benefit guaranteed to them." Blessed are the pure in heart. Jesus says, "I promise you you will see God." Blessed are the peacemakers. "I promise you you will be called sons of God." God will own you. God will claim you. Jesus said that, "Those who confess me before men, I will confess before my Father in heaven." A holy, gracious, loving God is going to openly name us as his own and what this holy, gracious, loving God wants from us right now is, "I want you to be a peacemaker. You be faithful here on this end," he says, "and the reward, the outcome of that is greater than mind can comprehend." Beloved, what Christ promises, he keeps. What Christ has said he will do, he will fulfill. It is certain that this glorious outcome awaits the true Christian. The true Christian is one who by nature is a peacemaker.

So what motivates us to pursue through this, what motivates us to swim upstream against a contrary culture, Christian and secular, what motivates us to overcome our petty jealousies, is the fact that we have our eyes fixed on that great reward. I want more than anything, I want that moment where my God openly, publicly owns me as his child. When that moment comes, nothing else is going to matter. Everything else is going to seem inconsequential by comparison. That's true for you too. And because we want that reward, we pursue the price of peacemaking for the little short window of time that God calls us to it here in this life.

Beloved, you don't have to fight for what's yours. Just trust your heavenly Father. Be the kind of person that he has called you to be and trust Christ to care for your situation. Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you. Beloved, have this mind in yourselves, have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus who although he existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped and held onto but emptied himself, gave it away in order to come to earth, to go to a cross for the sake of your salvation. We have a peaceful Spirit placed within us. We have a peaceful example to follow. We have a Scripture that calls us to this priority of peace. I'm trusting the Spirit of God to apply this to your individual lives and hearts, those of you with keenly sarcastic mouths, to reevaluate what you're doing and what you're living for. We want this abundant entrance into the kingdom of heaven. We want this declaration of son of God to be made upon our lives.

So, you see, God calls us to this life priority of peace. This changes the way that you think. It changes the way that you speak. It changes the way that you act. It makes a heavenly reward, not your earthly ambitions, you're defining life motivation. Could anything be more noble than being a Christian? Could anything be more noble than being a biblical peacemaker as we've defined it over these past three weeks? Honestly, is there any price too high to pay to live out what Christ has called us to? Is that conflict that you've cherished so long in your heart really worth it?

Bow with me in prayer.

Christian, if you have fallen short in this area as I have, go to Christ right now and confess your sin to him. He saved you to be gracious to you. He will forgive your sin. He will cleanse you from all unrighteousness. Christian, based on the authority of God's word, I promise you that you are not a prisoner to your past. That shriveled, petty spirit that sometimes has animated you does not have to define your life going forward. Call upon Christ to forgive you and to change you.

For some of you, your argumentative spirit, your irreconcilable ways, your consistent selfishness of life, show something deeper. It shows that you do not know the God of peace at all. You're lost. God, at this point, would not call you a son of God. You're a child of your father the devil. You're lost. You need a new Spirit from above. For those of you that are in that condition, I invite you to turn to Christ today. Jesus said, "I came to seek and to save that which has been lost." He came to call sinners just like you to repentance and offers eternal life for those who would believe in him. My friend, leave behind your sin. Come out of that way of life. Come out of all of that selfishness and receive Christ and bow the knee to him. Receive him. Scripture says that those who receive him he gives the right to become a child of God. The atoning work of Christ on the cross was designed for sinners just like you. The blood was shed for a sinner just like you. The call to come to Christ goes out to a sinner just like you. There is nothing in Christ that would hinder you from coming. He's a peacemaker. If you come to him to make your peace with God, he will receive you because that is what he is. He is the Prince of Peace. So, my beloved friend, come to Christ. Come to Christ now. Come to him today. Don't wait any longer. He brought you here today to hear this message to invite you through his Spirit to come to him personally, to enter into the kingdom for yourself. Come to Christ, won't you?

*Our Father, take these words of yours and apply them to our hearts. Shape our character as you would have it to be. And now may the Lord of peace himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all. Amen.*

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