

“Blessed are the Peacemakers”
Romans 12:18
(Preached at Trinity, March 6, 2011)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we've seen **Verses 14-21** describe the virtue of loving our enemies. How do we love those who hate us? How do we love those who have treated us unjustly?
In a world that demonstrates such opposition to God's righteous people it is important for us to understand how we are to behave.
2. Last week as we examined **Verse 17** we found a twoedged admonition.
 - A. We are to never pay back evil for evil—we are not permitted to seek vengeance. As we will see in **Verse 19**: "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.
 - B. We are to be careful of the life we live before them. The NIV states:
"Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody."
Human beings have an inner sense of right and wrong. This is why it is so important for us to live rightly before them. When believers violate the principles of right and wrong we bring a reproach upon the name of Christ.
3. This morning I want to direct your attention to **Verse 18**
"If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."
Still on the subject of how we live before lost humanity Paul admonishes us that as much as it is in our ability we are to seek peace with all men.
 - I. First, we need to understand the infinite difference between this world and the Kingdom of Christ.
 - II. Second, we'll look at how this works out practically as we live in this world.
- I. First, we need to understand the infinite difference between this world and the Kingdom of Christ. We need to be certain which kingdom we belong to.
 - A. Sin has brought a terrible hatred and enmity into this world
 1. Look at the wars. Jesus described the condition of this world
Matthew 24:6 – "And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for *those things* must take place, but *that* is not yet the end."
"but that is not yet the end" –
The end of time is not yet. Wars and strife are to be expected until the end of time – as long as lost men rule upon the earth there will be wars and strife
 2. Look at the crimes, man on man - murder, theft, drug trafficking (taking advantage of another's weakness)
This world is filled with all manner of hatred.
 3. Look at the attitudes of people driving their cars, shopping, working.
Look at the way our politicians behave. Look at the strife everywhere.

4. Paul states that this was exactly the condition of our hearts before God saved us.
Titus 3:3 – “For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.”
- B. In contrast, the Kingdom of Christ is a Kingdom of peace
1. Jesus is the Prince of peace
KJV **Isaiah 9:6** – “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”
 2. Peace flows forth from Christ
John 14:27 – “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”
 3. Those who are of Christ’s Kingdom are to be peace makers
 - a. It is one of the fruits of the Spirit – “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace . . .”
 - b. Jesus described this characteristic:
Matthew 5:9 – “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”
 4. In contrast, one of the distinguishing marks of a lost person is he is quick to enter into dispute. It is characteristic of the works of the flesh - Gal. 5:19-21
Galatians 5:19-20 – “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”
- C. Unfortunately, God’s people often have to be reminded of this great duty to be peacemakers.
1. Sometimes Christians haven’t behaved in a manner consistent with our new heart.
 - a. Churches are often guilty of great conflict – of course, this is often due to unregenerate members. But sometimes even God’s people enter into conflict.
 - b. Many new churches have formed as the result of church splits. Often the self-righteous convince themselves they are justified in the division when the truth is they were just as guilty of having a wicked contentious heart.
 - c. Sometimes Christian couples begin to fight with one another
 2. We are members of the Kingdom of Christ – a kingdom of peace. We need to be continually reminded of what we are.
 3. Paul reminded the church of Ephesus
Ephesians 5:8 – “for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light”

Ephesians 4:31-32 – “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

4. We must never forget what God thinks of those who sow discord – those who disrupt peace

Proverbs 6:16-19 – “There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: ¹⁷ Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸ A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that run rapidly to evil, ¹⁹ A false witness *who* utters lies, And one who spreads strife among brothers.”

II. Second, how does this charge work out practically as we live in this evil world?

A. We need to see that there is both an obligation and a restriction placed upon this verse.

1. First, the universal obligation – “all men”
 - a. This means all sorts of men - this means those who are friendly towards us but also those who hate us and seek to do us harm.
 - b. The context of this passage is speaking of our enemies—those who persecute us
 - c. It also means all classes, and all races of men.
John Murray – “There is no circumstance in which our efforts to preserve and promote peace may be suspended.”
 - d. This is absolutely essential
^{KJV} **Hebrews 12:14** – “Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:”
2. There is a restriction placed upon this verse – “If possible, so far as it depends on you”
 - a. It does not deny that there are times when peace is impossible. The behavior of other people may make peace impossible.
Jesus made this clear
Matthew 10:34-36 – “Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ "For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; ³⁶ and a man's enemies will be the members of his household.”
Luke 12:51 "Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division; ⁵² for from now on five *members* in one household will be divided, three against two, and two against three. ⁵³ "They will be divided, father against son, and son against father; mother against daughter, and daughter against mother; mother-in-law against daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”
 - b. We must never compromise our obedience to Christ for the sake of peace. We must never forsake His Law for the sake of peace.

- c. We must never forsake doctrine for the sake of peace. There are too many today who are willing to forsake truth for the sake of harmony.
James 3:17 – “But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.”
 - d. We must never be at peace with sin and error. We must never compromise God’s commands or God’s truth. In this case peace must be sacrificed.
 - e. Calvin – “It is not possible that there should be perpetual peace between the soldiers of Christ, and the sinful world whose prince is Satan.”
3. What does a Godly wife married to a lost man do when he tells her to quit honoring the Lord’s Day? She wants to be submissive. What does she do? What did the Apostles do when the authorities told them to cease preaching Christ? They wanted to be submissive to the authorities.
Acts 5:27-29 – “And when they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. And the high priest questioned them, ²⁸ saying, “We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” ²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered and said, “We must obey God rather than men.”
- B. Some further restrictions upon this principle of being a peacemaker
- 1. This does not rule out fighting wars. Remember, these duties are to individuals, not governments. We’ll see their duty in the next chapter. You cannot use this passage to defend conscientious objection
 - 2. This verse does not rule out the seeking of justice
If someone breaks into your home and steals your TV being a peacemaker does not forbid you from seeking his arrest and prosecution.
 - 3. This verse does not teach absolute passivism.
 - a. The principle of Matthew 18 teaches us it is proper to challenge the wrong, and punish the offender.
 - b. If someone strikes you on the face it doesn’t forbid you from speaking out against his wickedness
Acts 23:1-3 – “And Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, “Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day.” ² And the high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth. ³ Then Paul said to him, “God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! And do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law order me to be struck?”
 - c. Even Jesus spoke out against the injustice of His tormentors
John 18:22-23 – “And when He had said this, one of the officers standing by gave Jesus a blow, saying, “Is that the way You answer the high priest?” ²³ Jesus answered him, “If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?”

- C. How do we follow the principle of being a peacemaker?
1. We must understand our ultimate goal as we interact with the people of this world
 - a. Our primary goal is to reach them with the Gospel
 - b. Paul was willing to sacrifice his rights in order to reach the lost
1 Corinthians 9:19 – “For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more.”
1 Corinthians 9:22 – “To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some.”
 - c. We must avoid having a contentious spirit
 2. In order to reach this lost world it may mean responding in meekness even when we are wronged.
 - a. This is the principle behind our Lord’s teaching in the Beatitudes
Matthew 5:39 - "But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.”
 - b. Our natural response is to retaliate. Our natural response is to claim our rights. We must be willing to be wronged for the sake of the Gospel. This is the meaning of **verse 19**.
 - c. Regarding Christians taking Christians to court
1 Corinthians 6:7 – “Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?”
 - d. Sometimes our gentle spirit will soften the strife of the wicked.
Proverbs 15:1 – “A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.”
- D. We must understand how love has changed everything
Proverbs 10:12 – “Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all transgressions.”
1. Love creates within us humility
 - a. It isn’t always necessary that you speak your opinion about everything
 - b. And there is a huge difference between going to a brother or sister in sorrow and humility about sin and being a person that feels he has to censure every behavior that doesn’t suit his standards.
 2. Love doesn’t allow us to be censorious.
 Love is patient, kind, and gentle. Love isn’t easily provoked. Love is full of humility.

Conclusion:

1. To be a peacemaker demands that you desire peace. If you desire peace you have to work towards peace. This demands doing the hard thing. It demands denying yourself. It demands letting others have their way. It demands sacrifice.
2. This is the life of Christ – “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”
 Being a peacemaker demands a heart of forgiveness.
1 Peter 3:8-9 – “To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; ⁹ not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.”