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**Blessed are the
Peacemakers:
God's Peace
Plan**

549-A

Series: The Beatitudes



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Blessed Are the Peacemakers: God's Peace Plan

Imagine, if you will, that you are awakened in the middle of the night by a blinding light. Sitting upright in bed, you see before you the most amazing document in history. It is entitled simply "A Plan For Peace." As you begin to read it, you realize that you have in your hands a plan that would bring peace, real peace, to the whole world. When followed properly, this plan would actually bring peace to every struggling marriage in the world. This plan would bring peace to every troubled family. This plan has the potential to bring peace to every warring nation. This plan could bring peace to every feuding fellowship.

What would you do with it? Would you go back to sleep and assume that it would never work? Would you wish that you would have time to devote to sharing it with others, but were assured that you don't? Would you try to sell it to the highest bidder? Would you bury it in the back yard to save it for a greater emergency? Would you just keep it and use it for your own selfish peace?

I don't think you would do any of these things. I think that you would dash out of the house in the middle of the night, tear through the house, and tear through the city to give others the message. You would call the White House and the Pentagon. You would contact the newspapers and the news networks and tell them to print a new issue with the headline, "Peace Possible At Last!"

I hope that you won't fall asleep during this lesson so that you won't have to be awakened with a blinding light, because I am here to tell you that you have in your grasp the one true, perfect and final formula for peace. The Master, who is Himself our peace and whose very name is the Prince of Peace, looks squarely at each one of us and makes this one penetrating statement in Matthew 5:9.

Oh what bliss, what self-contained joy awaits the man or the woman who assumes his God-given role as a peacemaker because he, the maker of peace, will be exalted as God's called out children. For as Jesus said, "I became the way of peace," they become the instruments of peace. Blessed are the peacemakers, filled with bliss. (Matthew 5:9 paraphrased)

Are you a peacemaker? Does the mention of your name bring memories of one who soothes hurts, calms hostilities, unites warring factions, reconciles man to God and man to man? Or, are

Blessed Are the Peacemakers: God's Peace Plan

you a troublemaker? When your name is mentioned, do people think of a negative word or a gripping tone, a bent for conflict, a lust for hostilities, a reputation of one who is always angry over something or someone churning inside, boiling outside and drawing others into your hostile spirit? You see, God has given the Christian a word of peace. It is a four-fold word. It is to that word of peace that we will address ourselves in this lesson and the next.

First of all, what is peace? You can look in almost any dictionary and find basically the same definition. There is a negative and positive pole to peace. When you put the two together, the meaning of the word becomes very clear. In the negative pole, anywhere you look you will see that peace is the cessation of hostility. So when you say that peace has come, it means that the war is over. It is as simple as that. Two warring factions have stopped fighting. It is the act of ceasing hostility.

But, you can stop fighting and not have peace. To stop fighting is the beginning of peace, but the positive pole is that peace is not only the cessation of hostility, but the presence of serenity based upon reconciliation and submission. In other words, it is also the activity of maintaining tranquility. Peace. To achieve peace, the war has to stop. But, to achieve lasting peace, the one who yields to the other must become reconciled to a new position and to a new order. He must submit himself to the control of a new authority. Then, you have lasting peace.

This world was once a garden of peace. Man was at peace with God and at peace with his mate. But sin entered the world and man declared war against God. He forfeited the peace he had been guaranteed and aligned himself with the prince of darkness in battle. That conflict with God created conflict in the human heart. This conflict quickly erupted into conflict with our fellow man. Cain and Abel went to war. Murder ensued and man has been at war with God and at war with man ever since. But, there is Good News. This Good News is the gospel of peace. It has been given to peacemakers. Practically speaking, what is peace?

- Peace is dignity without agitation.
- Peace is silence when words might stir up wrath. (I think Arthur Pink states in his commentary that the greatest mark of a peacemaker is knowing when to keep quiet.)
- Peace is willingness for another to have the last word.
- Peace is the second mile when the first mile was uncalled for.

Blessed Are the Peacemakers: God's Peace Plan

- Peace is knowing that God understands pain and trouble, therefore, He does not always remove pain and trouble. Instead, He simply gives you peace.
- Peace wears soft-soled shoes so that it won't be noticed.
- Peace speaks softly so as not to offend.
- Peace sees like an X-ray the other person's side of the story.
- Peace carries a handkerchief to dry the tears of its enemy.
- Peace carries an extra coat to give away when the first one was taken from him unjustly.
- Peace is quiet, but it is strong.
- Peace is costly and yet it is free.
- Peace is a divine instrument of God wielded by a peacemaker.

Who are the peacemakers? We are. What is a peacemaker? A peacemaker is a person who knows that the cause of the conflict is Satan and that the source of the solution is Jesus. Any other remedy fails to touch the root of the conflict, which is sin. The peacemaker knows for certain that all men are born at war with God and that the Prince of Peace alone can sign the treaty to calm the conflict. The peacemaker knows that He who said to the storm, "Peace, be still," can say to a hostile heart, "Peace," and like a calm winter's night, stillness will settle on that soul. But alas, the peacemaker also knows that peace cannot come to a heart that clings to bitterness. Peace cannot come to an unforgiving heart. Peace cannot come to one who holds to himself the right to revenge. Who is the peacemaker? It is God's man or woman with God's message and God's purpose, which is peace.

God's four-fold plan for peace is first of all leading men to peace with God. This means learning to surrender to the King on His terms. It is called salvation. Next, we learn to live in the peace of God. While living in occupied territory, man's turbulence within can't be solved by trying to live like a revolutionary. The surrendered Christian life turns loose of the reigns of his heart and lets the King rule, then he finds peace.

The next step in God's plan for peace is for the Christian to learn to have peace with those around him. This is done by remaining in submission to those over him, having harmony with his peers, and having meekness to those under his authority. He will find serenity to circumstances in the midst of conflict.

The last step in the peace process is what we will call the "coat

Blessed Are the Peacemakers: God's Peace Plan

and cloak syndrome." What did Jesus mean when He said, "When a man asks you for his coat, you are to give him your cloak as well?" This is what we refer to as a troublesome passage. There are no contradictory passages in Scripture, as the Word tells us that

All Scripture is given by inspiration by God (God-breathed) and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness

that the man of God may be perfect (mature), thoroughly furnished (completely equipped) for every good work.

(II Timothy 3:16,17)

So because God cannot lie and because all Scripture is truth, there are no questionable passages, there are only troublesome passages. It is exciting to see how the two fit together when we look at them in the light of the Word. We are going to look at the passage in which Jesus said, "I have come not to give peace but a sword." This is the same Jesus who said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

GOD'S PEACE PROPOSAL, AN OVERVIEW.

Here is an overview of the subject of peace. You and I were born in the enemy camp. We were born in a generation of men who were at war with God. Like all men, we were born with a will to live in sin territory and to conquer it with no help from God. So here we are in sin territory. God cannot inhabit it and we think it is home.

All of us live in sin territory and therefore we fall short of having the peace of God. (Romans 3:23 paraphrased)

In reality, it is no man's land. Satan is the prince there. He rules through subtlety. He tells us that nobody rules and that everyone is free to find God on his own terms. But no one is free and God is not there. We are bound in a web of our own hostility. Because we are at war with God, we are at war with ourselves for our hearts were designed by God to be at peace with Him. We are living then in a foreign land acting like we belong there. We are living like we know the language, like we love the customs and yet there is frustration.

We try to doctor our frustrated hearts without making peace with God. We try religion. Do this and you will find peace. Give that and you will find peace. Worship this and you will find peace. But as Jeremiah 8 records,

Blessed Are the Peacemakers: God's Peace Plan

We looked for peace but no good (peace) came;
(Jeremiah 8:15 ESV)

We try through good works. We clean up our act. We try to live according to the Golden Rule and love one another. We, however, find no peace. This is true because the Scripture says,

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.
(Proverbs 16:25 NKJV)

We try to just live it up and try to forget that a battle even exists. We follow the crowd to indulge in the anesthetic of bigger doses of sin only to find that as Isaiah 59 says,

The way of peace they do not know. (Isaiah 59:8) a NIV

How can they? They do not know the Prince of Peace. We try psychology. We blame the conflict on our parents, our environment, or our inherent weaknesses. We shuffle the hostility all around. But, it is still there. God's condemnation falls from Jeremiah 6 which says,

They have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly saying, 'Peace, peace!'; when there is no peace.
(Jeremiah 6:14)

Because we have no peace with God, we have no peace within. Because there is no peace within, man lives in conflict with those about him. The absence of peace manifests itself in four ways:

1- Rejection of authority. Man, without making peace with God, has no peace with those who are over him. His job is always a source of frustration. His hours are too long. His pay is too low. His boss is too mean. He is always yearning for a better deal. He moves from job to job and from place to place looking for peace. Needing others to side with him, he finds other men hostile to God who cannot rest under the authority under which God has placed over them. They cannot trust God to work through presidents or kings, preachers or professors, parents or spouses. They are in conflict with the God of authority and that puts them in conflict with the authority itself.

2- The man who is in conflict with God is also in conflict with and hostile to his equals. He has his own rights and deserves his own way. Every organization needs its own recognition. The two would become naturally at odds with life. He goes to the grocery store, and the bill is too high. He thinks then that the government should stop inflation. The farmer is making too much money, the manufacturer is part of the greedy establishment, the grocery chain is cheating him, and the check out girl cannot add. The whole

Blessed Are the Peacemakers: God's Peace Plan

world seems out to get him, so he fights back so that he can get his before they get him.

3- The man who is at war with God is insensitive to those underneath him: his wife, his children and his employees. They look to him, but if he is at war with God's authority, he has no basis for love in exercising authority to them.

4- Men and women at war with God cannot stand the pressures of life. They can try as they will, but they become bitter toward circumstances. They rebel at death, pain, sickness, setbacks, poverty and persecution.

GOD'S PEACE TREATY

But praise God, there is another way. The other way is the way of peace. This lesson may seem very simple to many of you, but it is so important. God came down and conquered sin at a very great personal expense. All war is costly. Calvary is the highest price that was ever paid for peace. Christ subdued the enemy, and He offers peace to any who will come to Him on His very simple terms. His terms are these: He says, "You are at war with Me because of sin. I have conquered sin and have set up a kingdom. It is a kingdom of peace. I will come to you and find you and bring you an offer of peace. All of the hostility, all of the warfare and all of the struggles can cease."

Here are the terms of the treaty. Again, they are so very simple.

a- Acknowledge separation. Before man can find peace with God, he has to acknowledge the fact that he is separated from God.

For all have sinned and the price paid for living in sin territory is the absence of the presence of God.

(Romans 6:23 paraphrased)

No man can find peace until he knows he is at war. So the first element of understanding God's plan of salvation is admission with the mind that man is separated from God by sin.

b- Acknowledge that salvation is found in Jesus Christ. This is an act of the mind as well. The price had to be paid. Isaiah 53 says,

Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:4,5 NKJV)

Blessed Are the Peacemakers: God's Peace Plan

The Berkeley Translation says,

The punishment that procured our peace fell on Him.

(Isaiah 53:5)

The Living Bible says,

He was chastised that we might have peace.

(Isaiah 53:5 TLB)

The New International Bible says,

The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him.

(Isaiah 53:5 NIV)

The enemy had to be defeated. Romans 16:20 says that the God of peace will crush Satan under our feet. There had to be a new commander in chief. We see this in Isaiah 9,

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end,

(Isaiah 9:6,7 NKJV)

There shall be a new King, a new kingdom and a new people. These new people would know that the battle was over. Ephesians 2 says,

Do not lose sight of the fact that you were born "Gentiles," known by those whose bodies were circumcised as "the uncircumcised"

You were without Christ; you were utter strangers to God's chosen community, Israel; and you had no knowledge of, or right to, the promised agreements. You had nothing to look forward to and no God to whom you could turn.

But now, through the blood of Christ, you who were once outside the pale are with us inside the circle of God's love and purpose.

For Christ is our living peace. He has made a unity of the conflicting elements of Jew and Gentile by breaking down the barrier which lay between us.

By His sacrifice He removed the hostility of the Law, with all of its commandments and rules, and made in Himself out of the two, Jew and Gentile, one new man, thus producing peace;

For He reconciled both to God by the sacrifice of one body on the cross, and by this act made utterly irrelevant the antagonism between them.

Then He came and told both you who were far from God and

Blessed Are the Peacemakers: God's Peace Plan

us who were near that the war was over.

(Ephesians 2:11-17 JB Phillips)

I just love that last verse, "Praise God the war was over."

c- Seeking God. Having acknowledged separation, having acknowledged that salvation is in Christ, the man or woman who wants peace with God has to come and put salvation in the first person to make it work. Job 22:21 is a verse to memorize.

"Now acquaint yourself with Him, and be at peace;"

(Job 22:21 NKJV)

John 1:12 says,

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

(John 1:12 NKJV)

In other words, with the mind you believe that you are separated. With the mind you believe that salvation is in Christ. But now, with the will you put yourself in the first person and say, "I am separated from God. I need to acquaint myself with Jesus Christ."

d- Act of surrender. This is what Revelation 3:20 as it says,

Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him.

(Revelation 3:20a NKJV)

I think this is the missing ingredient for many of us as we share Christ with those about us. We talk about Christ forgiving our sins. We talk about Jesus coming into our lives, but do we understand and do we share with those about us that the Christian experience of salvation is an act of surrender? God is not looking for copilots. God is looking for the transfer of title to the plane, the pilot, the route, the fuel and the whole nine yards. All of it is to be surrendered to God. All of it belongs to God, and He can do with us as He chooses. That is the transaction of faith. It is coming to God, laying aside pride, self-achievement, self-assertion and all that has gone on before us and all that may go on ahead of us. It is coming to a treaty ceremony having lost the battle and won the war. It is walking into the presence of the Living God and saying, "I can't. You can. Do it." That is salvation. It is a surrender of our lives. It is the giving of everything we have to become everything He wants us to become. Whatever He wants us to become is enough, because He is in us. That is salvation. We can know that we are separated and know that He offers salvation. We can put it in the first person but until we hand Him the keys to our hearts with no

Blessed Are the Peacemakers: God's Peace Plan

strings attached and no works to cling to as we read in Ephesians,

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

not of works, lest anyone should boast.

(Ephesians 2:8,9 NKJV)

Only then can we come to the treaty table and exchange our lives for His and receive that one thing that matters, Jesus Christ.

e- Security. In exchange for the title to your life, He gives you peace. Peace is knowing that you can never again be separated from God. What can separate you from the love of God? Paul asks this question,

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,

nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(Romans 8:35. 37-39 NKJV)

I John 5:11,12 says this, because it is on record in God's file.

...God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son (Christ).

He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

(I John 5:11,12 NIV)

God gives you security when you come in submission and say, "Lord, take me." Jesus says, "These are My terms. You come to Me this way, empty-handed but available, and I will fill you up with peace. Your heart will be at parade rest. You can joyfully submit to those over you, because they were placed there for your peace. You can aggressively seek harmony with your peers for they were placed there so that you can demonstrate peace. You, like Moses under God, can show meekness to those who serve you, ruling with a rod of love in peace." You can be so at peace with God that as the pressures mount and the troubles come, you can literally experience Philippians 4 as God says to you,

Don't worry about anything, instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs and don't forget to thank Him for His answers.

Blessed Are the Peacemakers: God's Peace Plan

If you do this, you will experience God's kind of peace which is a whole lot more wonderful than the world can understand. This peace will keep your heart and mind quiet and at rest as you trust in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6,7 TLB)

The result of this ought to be a life so different, a home so different, a church so different because they are all so much at peace that a war-torn world will look on in amazement and cry out, "Lead us to the Prince of Peace."

This is why Christians must be different under pressure. In fact, this is why Christians must be under pressure. That is why our homes must be different and must demonstrate peace. Of all places, that is why the church of Jesus Christ must be a haven of peace. The church must be a place where brothers and sisters are serving one another in love. It must be a place that is meeting needs and overlooking faults, eagerly pursuing whatever makes for peace. Our churches must be a place where we never bicker over trivialities, but we break our backs to meet needs as God breaks our hearts with a desire to meet them. That is the peace of God. That is the peace God has called us to bring to the world. But, you can't bring peace to the world until you have peace in your heart. You can go out with a message, but there will be no power. You can't have peace in your heart until you have made peace with God.

This is a different kind of lesson than the one I had planned to teach. In fact, at midnight last night, this wasn't the lesson I had to teach. I'm not really sure why, but I can tell you this much, I felt confident that for some reason or another that today God wanted me to share with you as we begin the discussion of peace, the reality of how to find peace with God. It is very simple and somewhat redundant for many of you. But I thought this morning as I was coming to church that Jesus said if there was a whole room full of sheep, and one of them begins to stray, you leave the room, and you go give the message to the one. Somehow I feel that in a crowd this large, there must be one or two or five or ten who can relate to the hostilities and the frustrations we have been talking about. These people know that it goes all the way back to the root problem. You are still in conflict with God over sin. You may be working hard, but there is still no peace.

I would like to invite you right now to meet the Prince of Peace. Come to Him on His terms. Acknowledge that there is separation between you and Him because of the sin territory. Be aware that God paid the price and conquered the land. Be aware that perhaps

Blessed Are the Peacemakers: God's Peace Plan

for a long time, you have been seeking and searching to enter that land. God has a program for peace that has been etched in His own blood, and all He asks you to do is to accept it.

I think if God could speak to you this morning directly, He might hand you a document of peace. It might read something like this:

Whereas, my life has been alienated from God's life by sin and whereas that sin has meant enmity with God; therefore, I (fill in your name) do hereby acknowledge my alienated condition and my desperate need to be reconciled to God. I hereby acknowledge Jesus Christ as God's peace offering for me, and I acknowledge His terms to end forever my hostility with God. His terms are total surrender followed by living in occupied territory under the sovereign rule of God for all eternity. I hereby accept peace as a gift in exchange for control of my life. Lord, Jesus, I give you my heart.

You may be here this morning
And you've longed for the conflict to end.
You've longed to stop the struggle,
To know that God is your friend.

You may have learned a million things
And earned all of life's degrees,
But you've never cried out, "Save me God,
Do with me as You please."

If He has spoken to you through this lesson,
Why not give Him your heart?
He will break it, then take it and remake it,
If you'll give Him a place to start.

His terms are clear, surrender. All of the hostilities will end for God will meet you at Calvary, and He will give you peace. The Scripture says,

Oh, what bliss, what joy for the one who has made his peace
with God. (Matthew 5:9 paraphrased)

He is now commissioned to share that peace with men

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