



# TRUTH IN LOVE

*Shedding Light on the Word of God*

## Peacemakers at War

Matthew 5:9

***Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.***

When Jesus says **Blessed are the peacemakers**, many today think He is saying, “Blessed are the pacifists. Blessed are those who never lift a finger to harm another person.” But the word Jesus uses here for *peacemakers* is a very rare word. In Roman culture during the time of Christ, it was used primarily for emperors, especially Caesar Augustus.

Robert Morey points out in his book, *When Is It Right to Fight?* that Caesar

...was called “the Peacemaker” because he won and maintained peace by the use of force. The word does not mean “peaceable” or “pacifist” or “peace at any price.” The word meant “peace through strength.” As such, it named the head of the Roman army without contradiction.<sup>1</sup>

*Pax Romana*, the peace of Rome, only came about because the Roman emperors sent their legions into battle.

So rather than “Blessed are the pacifists” Jesus is saying, “Blessed are those who fight for peace.” But peace where? And regarding what? We cannot read into Christ’s words a command to wage war upon other nations in the hopes of bringing peace to them. We must go elsewhere in Scripture for instructions about that issue. In this context, Christ has been describing the characteristics and qualities that define one of His disciples.

So far, He’s provided six steps the disciple must take to make progress on the path of discipleship. As a result of desperation for God (5:3), we mourn over our sin (5:4) to the point of meekly replacing it with God’s ways (5:5) and the righteousness of God (5:6). This enables us to show mercy to others (5:7), and become faultless in all we think, say and do (5:8). The related benefits of such behavior are astounding: We receive inheritance in heaven (5:3) and on earth (5:5), are comforted (5:4), filled (5:6), obtain mercy (5:7) and become a close, personal friend to God (5:8).

Does all of this sound like something worth fighting for? By all means, yes! And by fighting for these things, we are actually fighting for peace—peace with God and with one another. While we gain positional peace with God when we believe in Jesus for eternal life, we don’t actually experience peace with God (or with one another) in this life unless we live in obedience to God and His commands. And this sort of peace is worth fighting for.

Paul picks up this idea in Ephesians 6, where he writes about taking up the armor of God to stand against the devil. One of the pieces of armor is having feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. The gospel is good news, not just for unbelievers about how to gain eternal life, but also for believers on how to live the resurrected life. Living the resurrected life brings peace. But you have to fight for it as both Jesus and Paul indicate.

The reward for being a peacemaker is the greatest one yet. It is the pinnacle of the Beatitude blessings, even greater than being a friend of God (v 8).<sup>2</sup> This seventh and greatest blessing is that peacemakers **shall be called sons of God**. Most Christians think that we become sons of God by faith in Christ. They see no difference between being a son of God and being a child of God. But the Bible makes a clear distinction between the two (cf. Rom 8:12-17; Gal 3:19-4:31).

<sup>1</sup> Robert A. Morey, *When Is It Right to Fight?* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1985), 46.

<sup>2</sup> The blessing of v 10 is a repeat of v 3, showing that ultimately, all these blessings will be granted in heaven.

To understand this distinction, it helps to understand Roman culture. In the days of Jesus and Paul, those in positions of authority would often have many children from different women. In these families, the first-born son did not automatically get the right to receive his father's inheritance. Rulers and merchants would occasionally disinherit their eldest child and "adopt" one of his other children to be the heir. Reasons for this were generally that the adopted son had greatly pleased the father in some way. Sometimes, this adopted son could even be the child of a slave-woman. So being adopted as a son in a Roman family meant changing status from being a mere child to that of heir.

Being born into God's family as one of His children is a free gift to all who believe in Jesus Christ. But being adopted as a son of God is a blessing given only to the most faithful and dedicated. In Matthew 5:9, it is conditional upon being a peacemaker. In Romans 8:12-17 and Galatians 3-4 it is reserved for those who walk according to the Spirit. Not surprisingly then, life in the Spirit is related to a life at peace with God and with one another (Rom 8:6; 14:17; Gal 5:22; Eph 4:3).

Those who achieve this seventh step of discipleship will not be left unrewarded. They are adopted as sons of God, thereby becoming heirs of God and co-heirs with Jesus Christ (Rom 8:17). So don't passively sit back and wait for such blessings to come. You've got to be a peacemaker, and go out and fight for them.

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## Family and Ministry Update

Balancing family, school and work continues to be a challenge, especially since the arrival of our new baby girl, Kahlea. Like both Taylor and Selah, she suffers from colic, and so cries for six or more hours most days, and there's not much we can do about it. Wendy isn't getting much sleep, and I'm not getting much homework done. We keep reminding ourselves what a friend of ours from Whitefish, MT told us when Taylor had colic: "This too shall pass." Aside from this, Kahlea is healthy and strong, and has smiles that will melt your heart. We thank God for her every day.

Taylor and Selah continue to amaze us. Taylor has been teaching her AWANA memory verses to Selah and today, Taylor said, "Mommy, if we believe in Jesus, we get to go to heaven, right?" When Wendy said "Yes" Taylor asked, "What does it mean to believe in Jesus?" That's a tough concept to explain to a four-year old! I told her that believing in Jesus is knowing that what He says is true. And if He says that He can take us to heaven, then if we know we are going to heaven because of Him, then we have believed Him. It's kind of like how she knows we love her, or she knows that she is four. I don't know if she understands or not, but we'll keep working on it.

School continues to go well, and I was able to get two internship credits from my work as a pastor, so that was a blessing. I have decided to take my final semester of Greek over the summer, which is Exegesis of Romans. Studying Romans in Greek should be enjoyable.

Speaking of Romans, at work I have just recently finished the first edit of Romans for the NT Commentary we are publishing later this year. One of the things I love about editing commentary is that it forces me to think through the thought flow and issues of the book I am working on. I feel I already know Romans much better than I did last month.

I have also accepted five or six preaching engagements over the next six weeks. These sermons will be posted online for listening and downloading after I preach them. I am also trying to convert some of my taped sermons from Whitefish, MT into digital audio, and will be posting these as I get them finished. Go to [www.tillhecomes.org](http://www.tillhecomes.org) and click on MP3 Sermons to listen.

Thank you for your continued prayerful support. We need all the prayer we can receive. Also, let me say "Thank you" to those of you sent in financial gifts last month. They were definite answers to prayer as they helped pay doctor bills and cover some ministry expenses.

TILL HE COMES,  
Jeremy Myers