

Beatitudes: Peacemakers

Matthew 5:9

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TRANSCRIPT:

Matthew 5:1-12 reads, "And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.'"

Let us pray. Father in heaven, we come before You again this morning with expectant hearts, Lord, to hear Your voice through the Word of God proclaimed to us. And so we pray, O Good Shepherd, that You would speak, and that Your sheep would hear the words of life, and that they would follow them, and believe them, and enjoy the sweetness of communion with You through submission to Your holy truth. So send the Spirit, we ask, to make alive the word to our hearts, to prepare our hearts for its reception, and to empower us to do the things that are written therein. And we ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

Last week we considered Matthew 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." And we considered how this is a high and holy calling—the vision of God communicated to the soul of the pure is something that really is beyond our human comprehension in full. At the very least, which we taste here as in one sense heaven on earth, but in the time to come, we shall know even as we are known, and we shall see Him face to face. And we saw the importance of purity and how that affects our communion with God.

And today, this morning, we'd like to consider Matthew 5:9, which says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." That's important when we come to the issue of peace or peacemaking, that we keep peace in perspective. You see, the ultimate goal of Christianity, or of the Christian mission, is not to make peace in the world. The ultimate goal of Christianity is the glory of God. "For whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God." And making peace, being a peacemaker, definitely gives glory to God. But if we exalt peacemaking as the ultimate end for which man was made, then we'll find ourselves getting into all kinds of trouble with regards to glorifying God. Because in Scripture, there are certain truths regarding peace that will not be realized this side of eternity. In fact, the Bible teaches us in several places that a utopia here on earth is not promised until Jesus Christ comes again and brings in everlasting righteousness. In fact, the idea of pursuing peace at any cost is actually contrary to biblical truth. In fact, Jesus Himself spoke about the inevitability of war in the lives of His people. He said, "I have not come to bring peace but a sword." And obviously, He's not talking about actively engaging in physical warfare against others, but He's simply saying that even the closest relationships shall be strained in light of the gospel that I have come to bring and the light of the salvation that I have come to give. And the fact that I have called you as My people to give your allegiance to Me above all other relationships will cause tension in relationships. He goes, "I have come not to bring peace but a sword." He talks about those relationships that will be fractured by the power of the gospel. And it's a sad reality, but it is nonetheless a reality. Opposition is inevitable. He tells His disciples, "Don't be surprised if you are persecuted. They persecuted Me; they'll persecute you." Therefore, their life was not going to be one of perfect peace with regards to conflict. They would find themselves in many contexts where there would be conflict.

Also, if we have a goal of peace at any cost, it will produce compromise in our lives. Not only is it an inevitable reality that there will be no peace this side of eternity, but it will produce compromise. If we set the goal of our living as peace, then we will not give regard to the glory of God if it means certain tension, and we'll find ourselves in compromising God and His word and His truth in order to make peace. You see, you can make peace in one sense with anybody if you stand for nothing. For the husband that doesn't want his wife to be a believer in Jesus Christ, there's an easy resolution to that: just forsake Christ. It's simple, right? But it's one that does not glorify God and is one that will damn your soul. And so it is contrary to God's way and God's wisdom. So yes, if all submitted to Christ, there shall be perfect peace, Him as the sovereign King, yet that is not true this side of eternity.

Also, if we have peace at any cost in this life, it will protect the abusive. And

you think about so much that happens today in the world where abusers continue to abuse simply because the victims are concerned only about peace, so much so that the abuse continues. And this is not what the Bible also teaches us. We are not to give way to sin in order to have peace. That's once again compromise in order to have peace. We're not meant to compromise God's truth. In fact, the silencing of truth leads to some kind of totalitarian system where everyone subjects themselves to the state, and the state governs everything, and we'll have peace, right? They don't want religion, then there's no religion, and everyone just needs to accept that. And so an acceptance of everything is not what is in view with regards to peacemaking. So we're going to keep these things in perspective. And if we have peace at any cost as the ultimate goal of our living, we actually undermine one of the key purposes of the second coming of Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches in Isaiah 9:7 that the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, to order and establish it with judgment and justice. And the Bible teaches us that Christ as King shall bring in everlasting peace forevermore, and that peace there shall be no end to that peace. And that is something that He will bring. And to think that we can accomplish that apart from the coming of Jesus Christ is to undermine one of the key purposes of why He has come into the world and is coming again.

In fact, Matthew 5:8 and 9 teach us of an important relationship between peace and purity. In verse 8 it says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." And then it says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." And what is quite interesting is this: that perfect peace will not come to the world until there comes perfect righteousness. Because the main disruptor of peace is sin. You see, the main problem with the world today is not the socioeconomic problems that exist. It is not poverty that is the main problem in the world today. These are serious problems that need to be considered even by the people of God. But these are not the key issues. The key issue that undergirds the problems of the human race and the things that exist in humanity is sinfulness. It is the sinful hearts of men that cause them to disregard other image bearers of God to get their own way. It is the sinful hearts of men that breeds greed and all the other things that corrupt it. So purity of heart is important for there to be peace. And until Jesus Christ comes again and makes all the hearts of those who believe in His name entirely pure and destroys unrighteousness from the presence of this world, then and then only shall perfect peace be once and forever finally realized. It's important as God's people to understand that.

When we look at conflict and issues around us, we must think of it in light of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, unless we fall into the modern views today that think that peace is possible this side of the coming of the Lord. Perfect peace and purity of heart go hand in hand, not only on a gen-

eral scale with relationship to the world around us, but even on a personal scale. The purer our hearts, the less we are infatuated with the problems of others. The more we see God, the less we are overly concerned about the things that people do to us. The more that we see God and the more that we strive towards purity, the less defensive and divisive we will find ourselves to be. And so the purer in heart that the people of God pursue, that purity of righteousness that they pursue, will produce in them a kind of peace and will make them, if I could say, more peacemakers in the world and in the church to which they belong. In fact, unhealthy criticism and division is more akin to Phariseeism than it is to true biblical Christianity. And it's important to come to grips with that as God's people, that the fire of slander is lit by the impure tongue that will not be tamed. And it also is something that only by pride, the Bible teaches, comes contention. And so when you think about all these things, we see the relationship between pureness of heart and also the peacemaking that we are called to. But we must keep peace in perspective, lest we make that the ultimate goal of our existence.

Now therefore, when we look at peace, we must never disconnect it from our theology of man and our theology of sin, but understand what the Bible teaches here about making peace in light of the whole counsel of God. But we must continue to look at what Jesus is referring to here when He says these words, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." What is peacemaking? Well, peacemaking or being a peacemaker is one who cultivates concord, agreement, and harmony between unrecconciled relationships. One who cultivates peace, concord, and harmony in relationships that are unreconciled. And they might be relationships between the person who is making peace and somebody else, or maybe relationships between two or other parties, and they are a third person in regards to that, trying to make peace and to coordinate peace amongst two people.

And the two key relationships where these are applied in scripture is firstly with relationship between God and man, and secondly with relationship to man and man. And so when we think about making peace, we must first begin at God. And what I simply mean by that is that man's ultimate issue with regards to war and with regards to problem and with regards to tension exists finally and ultimately in his relationship to God. And the Bible teaches that man is separated from God and he must make peace with God, and that peace is established through our Lord Jesus Christ.

And so in one sense, the Bible teaches us very evidently and clearly that the gospel is called the gospel of peace. That's not necessarily talking about the fact that it makes us feel peaceful, but it's actually referring more so to the fact that it brings together the warring parties, God and man, reconciled

together through the blood of Jesus Christ and through the cross. And so part of the armor in our spiritual warfare, when we're wrestling not against flesh and blood but against spiritual wickedness in high places, part of our armor is having our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Because the Christian is one who has beautiful feet who carries the gospel of peace, these glad tidings to those that are alienated and separated from God, and he restores the broken through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he speaks peace to dying souls that are at war against God.

In fact, the Apostle Paul goes on to say in 2 Corinthians 5 that we are ambassadors of Christ, and as ambassadors of Christ, we've been given a ministry, and he calls that ministry the ministry of reconciliation. What he's simply saying is our job as preachers of the gospel and as people who herald the gospel is that our duty is to have a ministry of service of reconciliation, that we come to those that are lost and separated from God, and we restore them through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. And how do we do that? He says, well, you also have a word of reconciliation. And so as ambassadors for Jesus Christ, we are ambassadors of peace, and that simply means that we tell people that there is a war going on, and that their souls are in danger because they have broken God's law, and God is against them, and the only way that they may be reconciled to God and have peace with God is through the Lord Jesus Christ, and as that they humble themselves under the weight of their sin and under the acknowledgement of the glory of the cross of God, the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and they yield to that gospel message, then they taste of true peace, reconciliation. The war ceases between God and that individual, but until then, do not be misunderstood and do not misunderstand this: until then, if you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, you are at war with God, you are at enmity against God, because His laws you have violated, and the only hope is peace, and that peace comes through the blessed gospel of Jesus Christ, who died to make peace.

So the peace that we have with God is primary in this, but also between man and man, and I believe Jesus is primarily having this in view when He speaks about peacemaking, although it is not highly unrelated to what we looked at before. And there ought to be peacemaking between man and man, between person and person, and this is done through humility, confession, forgiveness, the same principles which the gospel calls for. So in all our engagements in making peace, so we ought to display the same: a self-denial, a humbling of ourselves, a submission to the truth, and then a confession of our sin, and a restoration and forgiveness that should follow. And it just shows us that what's patterned after true reconciliation in the gospel is also to be carried out in relationships towards one another. And so there is a relationship between the peacemakers and the God of peace.

Look what it says in verse number nine of this passage, it says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." One of the greatest privileges in all of the New Testament revealed to us due to the gospel of Jesus Christ is experiencing the privilege of being recognized and called sons of God. John says, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." What he's simply saying is such love is incomparable; the manner of this love far exceeds the manner of any other love that shall be known, that you, the sons of the devil, the children of Adam, those that were separated from God, shall be brought into union with God through Jesus Christ and shall be counted as His sons, as His children, those that belong to Him. And when Jesus refers to those being called the sons of God, it's a reference to the fact that not only are we brought into relationship with Him and we are His children, but there's something more that He's trying to bring out with that, and that is this: that what is in the son or the children of God should resemble that which is in God.

And so, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" also can be looked at in this way: that they are sons of peace, or they are, you know, we use that term sometimes as well, sons of war. What does it mean? That their life is characterized by war, sons of peace, their life is characterized by peace. Sons of God means that there's a resemblance of the Father's character and His attributes in the very children that belong to Him. And what is the attribute that's revealed here? It's peace. And so the same God that makes peace with men, in that making of peace with men, those children of God that have made peace with God should also have that image of God pressed on their lives, evident in their lives, as sons of God, peacemakers. So it could almost be synonymous: those that are peacemakers, they are sons of God, one of the evidences that you belong to God.

And here we see that it's the God of peace that creates a people of peace who are to be recognized by a life of peace. God initiated peace at the first sound of war. Back in the Garden of Eden, when sin disrupted the entirety of the human race, there was the sound of war. For once in the history of mankind, man had broken God's law. "Of all the trees of the garden you may freely eat, but of the one tree you shall not eat thereof, and the day you eat thereof you shall surely die." And that day, Adam and Eve declared war on God; they violated His commandment, they went in their own way, they listened to the voice of the disruptor of peace, the serpent. And there in the garden, in the place of perfect peace, where sin was not present, where holiness was forever and purity was there, in that place, it was violated that day, and there was the sound of war.

And God, in mercy, He said something to Adam, and He initiated peace

with Adam. God did not say, "Okay, Adam, you don't want My law, go work it out for yourself, get out of here." No, God, the Bible teaches us, said one of these first words after the fall of Adam and Eve, "Adam, where art thou?" "Adam, where are you?" Think about it for a moment: Adam declares war on God, Eve declares war on God, they sin against their Maker and break the one commandment that God had made for them, and God initiates mercy with man and cries out, "Where are you? Where are you? Come to Me, come to the light, come commune with Me, come let's see if we can make reconciliation together that you have now violated My law."

The Bible teaches that Adam hid himself in shame; he covered himself with fig leaves because he didn't want to face the light of God's reconciling peace. This has been the problem of man, has it not, since the very beginning? The Gospel of John picks this up and says that men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil; they don't want to come to the light that their deeds may be exposed. But only if they came to the light of God's peace and confessed their sin and repented of their sin, they might have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. But it's been the pattern of man, just like their father Adam, as it were, that they have pursued war with God and have not sought peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so God, looking upon the corruption of sin and the war that had begun in the world and continued to be waged against Him, God sent His Son, the Prince of Peace, into the world to bring peace. Sin, the great disruptor of peace, could only be dealt with by the Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus Christ, who could deal with the law that was broken, who could procure a forgiveness for His people that could satisfy the righteous demands of God. This is what propitiation means: that there is a war, there's a satisfaction that is required, and only the blood of Jesus Christ can satisfy God, so that God can look at man once again in peacefulness and relationship and not at war with Him.

And so God looked at the problem, and He sends His Son into the world to bring peace. At the birth of Jesus Christ, it says that this is the one who will bring peace. Remember what was cried out there by the angels, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." And Paul looks at this in Colossians 1:20 and says Jesus Christ not only came into the world and walked among men to make peace, but He went to the cross to make peace. And He says that by the blood of the cross, He is seeking to reconcile all things to Himself through the blood of the cross.

And so Jesus Christ Himself, He comes into the world as a spotless Lamb of God, and He takes upon Himself the sins of men, and He pays for sin in His own body, the disruptor of peace, that man can be reconciled to

God. And He does this in a condescension of His own self. He takes upon Himself man's nature. He humbles Himself, the Bible says. He becomes obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And He suffers, and He dies, and He's rejected, and He's despised, and He is slandered, and He is shamed, and He is beaten, and He is bruised, all that we might have peace.

By His death and by His life, not only does He make peace between God and men, but through the work of Jesus Christ, He makes peace between man and man, a peace between the warring parties of men that has never been known before in the history of man. The most hostile relationships, Jews and Gentiles, each looking at each other with hostility, hatred, bitterness, envy, despising one another, speaking harmful and evil of one another, Jesus Christ condescends not to make only peace between God and man but between man and man through the blood of the cross.

And the Bible teaches us of this in Ephesians 2:14-18, "For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." You know what the Bible is teaching us here? That Jesus Christ not only condescended to make peace between God and man but between man and man through the blood of the cross. And He died and He abolished the law of the commandments and ordinances, this wall, this middle wall of partition that separated between Jew and Gentile, and brought them together in one.

The two warring parties that could not be reconciled together by political engagement, even by the Roman rule or even by Jewish rule, no matter what it was, there could be no peace between these two parties. But in the death of Jesus Christ, all those distinctions vanished away, and they were brought near together in one body by the blood of Jesus Christ. And so we see that Jesus created, therefore, in His new work of creation, He creates a people of peace. And who are these people? They are called the sons of God. They are people that have tasted peace, that go about making peace. They are people that know the conflict that once existed in their souls between God and between man and man, and they have been reconciled to God, and they have experienced reconciliation amongst men, and they have set aside things that are petty and indifferent and sin, and they have pursued a life of peace among men. They are the sons of God. They are those whose greeting is grace and peace.

As I said before, whose ministry is reconciliation, whose word is the word of reconciliation, whose commandment is, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts," and be thankful. These are those that resemble God among men. These are those that pattern their lives after the God who reconciles. How did God reconcile man? By condescension. And so the people of peace, this new creation, are marked by a condescension, by not fighting, as it were, for always for the obtaining of their own rights, but seeking the benefit of others, how their relationships may be healed. What if God said, "I have the right," and He does have the right, to destroy men from the face of the earth forevermore and to cast every soul into hell without the opportunity for peace? He would be just in doing so. But in mercy, God condescended; in mercy, He came down to make peace with Him and among men, without the compromise of His own holiness, without saying, "Oh, I'm just going to overlook sin without judgment." No, but He reconciled through condescension, through condescending mercy, people and with Himself and with one another.

And therefore, it is incumbent upon the people of God to be peacemakers, to be those that reflect such condescending mercy, and those that pursue peace with others because they have tasted of this peace, and the God that they serve is the God of peace. And the question then comes to us: are you a son or daughter of this God? How can I know if I'm a son and daughter of this God? Well, He asks you this: is your life filled with contention and with war? Not for the glory of God, but for your own ends, for satisfying of your own lusts? You see, the Bible says that there is no peace, says my God, to the wicked. They're like the troubled sea; their life is full of problems and troubles and conflict because they do not seek reconciliation. They are proud in their own ways, and only by pride comes contention, and they will not condescend, and they will not display mercy because they are fighting for their own rights and for their own ends, no matter the cost.

If you're a son or a daughter of God, the peace of God should be manifest in your life, in relationships with others. The Bible teaches us in Galatians 5:20 that amongst the works of the flesh, there are many that relate to those things that create conflict. Look what it says here in Galatians 5:20, "Hatred, contentions, jealousies, wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies," of which the warning then follows that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. And what the Bible is teaching us here is don't be deceived that if your life is marked by conflict, dissension, division, hatred, wrath, and envy, then you check yourself and ask yourself, am I truly a son of God, a son of peace, a peacemaker? Or is my flesh getting the better of me?

You say, well, how may I be a peacemaker? Without going too much into this, some of these principles are quite simple, but in Matthew chapter

5, this very same chapter, we are instructed in two passages about doing things or living a life that makes for peace. Look what it says in Matthew 5:21, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder,' and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca,' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be in danger of hell fire." Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar and remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

And here what Jesus is telling His disciples in this very same sermon is showing that if we let anger take control of us, we will end up saying words that will produce strife, insulting words to others. You know, like in this passage, "Raca," which is an insulting term, or "You fool," not in the sense where the Bible uses "fool" sometimes in a sense, but a sense of degrading people, mocking. And here it says if you do this, you're in danger. This is not what Christians do. This is not what believers do. They do not let anger get the better of them to cause strife. And they do not let anger get the better of them to start insulting people. Rather, they are not those kinds of people. And then He goes on to say in verse 23, "Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar," so if you come to worship the Lord, and this is what He says here, "and you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift at the altar." So stop your worship, as it were, and go back and reconcile with your brother, and then come and offer your gift. He's saying this is what it means to be peacemakers, the children of God. It's not about who did wrong to who first, is it, in this passage? It's not about who started or didn't start in this passage. It's not about who's necessarily right or wrong in this passage. What He said in this passage is this: if there is a conflict in your relationship, you seek to make peace. That the absence of your willingness to make peace is a problem, is what Jesus is saying here. It doesn't mean that peace may be had. But He's saying you cannot go on realizing that someone has something against you that you haven't sought reconciliation, that you haven't come and said, "We shouldn't leave things undone. We need to try and sort this out at some point. How about we get together? How about we talk about it? How about we talk about this?" And often when things like this come in, we straight away think, "Who started this? Who made the problem?" The peacemaker is not concerned about who started it or didn't start it. He's concerned about the war and the pursuit of peace. And he is willing, or she is willing, to condescend in such a way as to, even though she may be or he may be the one that did not start it, as God didn't start it, if we could say, yet nonetheless would pursue and initiate reconciliation, just like God did with the one that declared war on Him. Do you understand the concept there?

The sons of God are not waiting to see who or not's right and wrong and you need to come first and do this. They understand this, that God saw me at war with Him, and I started the war against God. I hated God. I violated His law, and God initiated peace with me. So it's not really about who's right or wrong, is it? It's rather about being a peacemaker and pursuing peace.

That's pretty revolutionary, isn't it? In the world's eyes, That's not how things happen and go down in court, for anyone who knows a little bit about that. But nonetheless, this is something that we see in Scripture. And also in verse 38 of this passage, it says, "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your 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. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away."

Now let's just wait for a minute before we say, "Hang on a minute. Then therefore, there's no sense of justice in the world." This is not what Jesus is referring to here. What Jesus is simply saying is this: regarding personal conflicts that happen to you, when evil comes your way, this is the attitude of how you should respond to evil. You should not be one who retaliates with an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. But the disposition of the people of God, they should be willing to accept things that happen to them, even when they happen unjustly. They are not to condone them. Jesus is not saying that. He's not saying to praise them for their evil. He's not even saying necessarily not to defend yourself here in any capacity. He's not simply saying to that slapping in the face was more than just trying to hurt somebody because it actually wouldn't really hurt that much. It's an insult. It's a shame somebody when you slap them in the face.

And what we have here is what Jesus Himself practices, is it not? They stripped His garments, and He let them have it. They put a crown of thorns on His head. They slapped Him up on the face, and you do not see Him reviling, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. But He understands the concept that vengeance belongs to God. And He allows things to happen to Him that seem unjust and unfair, understanding that justice will come from the hand of the Father.

And so, in the same way, if we want to be people that make peace and have peaceful relationships, we've got to have this kind of attitude. How often do we just so quickly react and retaliate immediately to the things that happen, rather than thinking, "OK, what's my retaliation going to do to this?" The problem with us is that our lusts and our pleasures take pri-

mary place in our lives. James 4:1-2 says this, "Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war."

And what he's simply trying to say here is, watch out for your lusts because your lusts always think first about themselves and not about the glory and kingdom of God. When we are hurt, the first thing we think about is, "Why me? Why should this happen to me?" And we start thinking of ways in which it's affecting you. What's affecting this area of my life and that area of life? And guess what ends up happening? You get taken over by passion and hatred and evil, and your tongue starts to speak bitter things because it's affecting you. Wrong question. That's a bad question to ask. People ask that question all the time. Something wrong happens to you, and you say, "How is this affecting me?" And you start thinking of ways in which it's affecting you. What's affecting this area of my life and that area of life? And guess what ends up happening? You get taken over by passion and hatred and evil, and your tongue starts to speak bitter things because it's affecting you. Wrong question. That's a man-centered question. That's a question that asks, "How is it affecting me?" as if you are at the center of all goodness and of all things that pertain to the glory of God. Wrong question.

How does this affect my family? How does this affect my church? How does this affect my community? How does this affect my relationships with others? How does this affect my relationship to God? How does this affect the glory of God? You see the difference? They're God-centered questions. They're not centered around an individual person. They're not setting ourselves up as the ultimate thing that is to be defended. But rather, it exalts God as the one whose name is to be defended, whose name is to be praised, whose name is to be obeyed, whose name is to be, if we could say, fought for, not by carnal weapons of course, but in truth.

And so we must be very careful in our relationships, lest we set ourselves up in a man-centered way. But we ought to humble ourselves and see how does this affect the glory of God. And therefore, we need to watch our tongue and all the other things that make for division in the world. The tongue is a little member, but it's like a fire that sets a fire that sets a blaze of like a bushfire, and it's unstoppable. Once it gets out, it goes. And so we need to learn sometimes not to speak. Sometimes when you have a conflict with somebody, you just need to be slow to speak, swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. Sometimes you don't need to speak all the time. At that time, you just need to listen. Sometimes that helps create peace. Other times, you just need to learn how to speak. How often we speak with just a tone of anger or with bitterness or with frustration. I mean, if you know that your heart's frustrated, do not engage in conversation in such a

way that would create war and tension. You need to know how to speak.

Then we need to learn when to speak. It's not always time to speak when you see sin before your eyes and say, "Ah, you did wrong here." You sometimes just need to let it go and come around to that. How often it is in marriages where that's the case. The wife sees the husband do something wrong and bang, or the husband sees the wife do something wrong and bang, straight away get into each other. That's okay. There is a God in heaven that does teach people things. If your spouse is reading God's word and has a conscience and is sensitive to the things of God, God may very much well show that to them without you even speaking. But there may come a time later on where you will say, "Hey, hon, look, I want to talk about this." Know how to speak, when to speak, sometimes not to speak. But so often we think, "No, I have the right to speak," and bang, bang, bang, we fire away. No wonder there's war.

And sometimes we just need to learn how to cultivate peace by the use and the wise use of our tongue. We need to be sensitive to people's temperaments. Not everyone is made like us. The Bible teaches us that we are to warn the unruly, we are to comfort the fainthearted, and we are to support the weak. And sometimes we think, "I'm just going to be real." And know what it means to be real. I just have one tone, I have one approach, and I'm just going to be real. I'm not a hypocrite, you know. I don't adjust my tone to certain circumstances. Well, no, be a peacemaker, and a peacemaker will be willing to forgo their most comfortable and natural way to speak to condescend in such a way to speak peace to somebody, to not declare war. Maybe you come from a very loud and boisterous home where there was that. Now you need to just learn how to engage people in a different way or to be more sensitive towards that.

And then be careful of excessivism. It's so easy to be excessive and divisive. One person does one thing wrong, and then all of a sudden, we hear these words, "You always do this." Always? Can you demonstrate always? You mean always, like actually always? And what does that do? That's just put a lot of fuel on this little fire that could have been knocked out if you just simply didn't even use the word always. But said, "Oh, you know, you did do this, and it affected me. Can we talk about that?" But we get excessive, extreme, and our extremity leads to more violence and more trouble because then the next person is like, "What do you mean always? It's not always." And then you start fighting about always. And then you spend two hours fighting about what always means, and then you don't even deal with the issue. Isn't that what happens a lot of the time? And something that starts so small that could be put out simply by condescension on the part of both, and both initiating reconciliation, a part of one just saying, "I'm going to wait for this person," and that person, "They can bring peace."

And therefore, don't cut communication. There's no peace without communication. There's got to be some kind of communication. Silent mode does not resolve issues. It makes things worse, prolongs things, and deepens bitterness and causes the thoughts to go a thousand miles an hour and to develop a case that cannot be checked. And all of a sudden, when you get back to talking after three, four, five minutes, you—when you get back to talking after three, four hours, or whatever it is, all of a sudden, it's like, "Where did you get that from?" From the wandering mind taken up in its own passion.

And so what we have to realize, dear people of God, is that division and sectarianism and schisms is not the mark of the children of God. And we ought to be a people that pursue peace with every fiber of our being. I love what Thomas Watson says. He says this, "There could be no purity where there is no study of peace. That religion is suspicious which is full of faction and discord. If blessed are the peacemakers, then cursed are the peacebreakers. If peacemakers are the children of God, then peacebreakers are the children of the devil. Heretics destroy the truth of the church by error, and schismatics destroy the peace of it by division. And therefore, we must take seriously the charge of Romans 12:18, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men." Let us be as David, who said, "I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war." And may God help us to be a people of peace. Let us pray.