

Keeping the Peace Requires Vigilance Matthew 5:9

I. God is the ultimate peacemaker!

- A. The “God of peace” loves peace in relationships.
 - 1. We see this in covenant.
 - (a) The Trinity is the original covenant relationship.
 - (b) Unbroken love, loyalty, faithfulness, peace.
 - (c) So, peace in relationship is part of his nature.
 - 2. Through the Gospel, God calls us into covenant.
 - (a) He reached down to make peace with rebels like us.
 - (b) In the Gospel, God reconciles us to Himself (makes peace) (II Corinthians 5:18-19).
 - (c) One way we are to be peacemakers is evangelism.
 - 3. In calling us to covenant he says, “Be like Me.”
 - (a) The central ethic of the new covenant (John 13:34).
 - (b) Vertically, we are to love God above all else.
 - (c) Horizontally, we are to love one another as God has loved us.
 - 4. Relationships in Christ are to be characterized by peace (Ephesians 4:1-3).
 - (a) What kind of life is “worthy of the calling you have received?”
 - (b) “...completely humble and gentle, patient, bearing with one another in love.”
 - (c) Make “every effort” to preserve unity and peace.
 - (d) This is a second way we are to be peacemakers.
 - 5. To be a peacemaker is to be like God. Hence, “called sons of God.”
 - (a) In Scripture, the son is the image of the Father (image renewal).
 - (b) Pursue and protect peace, and you will be like our Father.

II. As much as our Father loves peace, our adversary hates peace.

- A. Satan attacks peace and unity with lies, manipulations.
 - 1. He tempts us to serve self over and before peace.
- B. One of the enemy’s main weapons: offense (and offendedness).
 - 1. A great resource: The Bait of Satan by John Bevere.
 - 2. Offense: Greek word is skandalon.
 - (a) Word origin: the skandalon held the bait in a trap or snare.
 - 3. Satan uses offenses as bait.
- C. What is an offense?
 - 1. In our relationships, we say and do things that are hurtful.
 - (a) Sometimes it is done unintentionally.
 - (b) Sometimes we are like “bulls in the china shop.” (sharp words).
 - (c) Sometimes it is intentional, to hurt someone (little digs).
 - (d) It can also be major wounds.
 - 2. When we are hurt, or feel angry, we can be offended.
- D. The Bible speaks about offendedness a lot.
 - 1. Jesus said that offenses are inevitable (Matthew 18:7 – KJV)

- (a) The “one through whom they come” is not necessarily the offensive one.
 - (b) What causes offenses to be a problem is how we respond.
 - (c) Both the offense and the response can be sin.
- 2. The new covenant requires us to be like Jesus.
 - (a) “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”
 - (b) The central command of the new covenant is to love as we’ve been loved.
 - (c) God loved us while we were yet sinners (Eph. 4:32-5:2).
 - 3. The danger of disobedience in this area.
 - (a) Unforgiveness can become bitterness (Heb. 12:14-15).
 - (b) A root of bitterness “causes trouble” and “defiles many.”
 - (c) Trouble in your life. Trouble in the church.
 - (d) To defile something is to make it unholy (a defiled temple).

III. What are we to do?

- A. The key question: what do I do with my offendedness?
 - 1. The temptation is to strike back (vengeance).
 - (a) When we do that, we have swallowed the bait.
 - 2. If I hold on to offendedness I am holding a grudge.
 - (a) That is unforgiveness. It is disobedience. It is toxic.
 - 3. Sometimes the hardest offenses are against our loved ones.
 - (a) Don’t take up someone else’s offense. Forgive! Extend grace!
 - 4. Guard your heart against hatred (I John 2:9-11).
 - (a) Verse 10 in Greek: “There is skandalon in him.”
 - (b) Offenses cause people to stumble, to walk in the flesh.
 - (c) Guard your heart (Proverbs 4:23)!
 - 5. If it is a small or unintentional offense (Proverbs 19:11).
 - (a) Do not repeat things that are offensive (Proverbs 17:9).
- B. Step by step process of dealing with offenses.
 - 1. Identify what you feel (hurt, anger, shame).
 - (a) Is it small enough to quickly extend grace (to overlook it)?
 - 2. Take your heart to God.
 - (a) Be honest with God about what you feel.
 - (b) Acknowledge that you don’t want to hold on to offense.
 - (c) Remember God’s grace toward you (you’ve probably done worse things than what you’re offended by).
 - (d) “Father, I release _____ from this debt. I choose to forgive.”
 - (e) “I extend grace to _____ now. Bless (him/her) Jesus.”
 - 3. In some cases, you will need to talk it out with the person.
 - (a) Check your heart. Don’t go to blast them. Go for healing/restoration.
- C. Be a peacemaker and you will be recognized as a child who is like his or her Father!
 - 1. Jesus was treated in some very offensive ways to gain our forgiveness for us. Remember him and do like he did.