

The Instruction: We Are Called to Make Peace With Others

1. Peace is a part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit, evidence that one belongs to Christ is the evidence of peace-making (Gal 5:22)
 - a. 1 Peter 3:9-11
 - b. Hebrews 12:14
 - c. Romans 12:17-21
2. We are to be imitators of God
 - a. Eph 5:1
 - b. 1 Co 11:1

The Inquiry: How Do We Make Peace?

1. Keep Your Eyes on Jesus: His Peace-Making Work for You!
 - a. FIRST: SEE THE GOSPEL!

The gospel is not the first “step” in a “stairway” of truths, rather it is more like the “hub” in a “wheel” of truth. The gospel is not just the A-B-C’s but the A-to-Z of Christianity. The gospel is not just the minimum required doctrine necessary to enter the Kingdom, but the way we make all progress in the Kingdom.

~Timothy J. Keller
 - i. Just as Jesus tore down the barriers that you set up in your wronging of God.
 - b. His peace toward us leads to our peace towards others
 - i. See your sin as egregious (as BIG and HEINOUS) as it really is between you and God
 1. sin causes death, God HATES sin, it is completely unlike Him and rebellious against Him as King, it saddens His heart, grieves His Spirit, angers His justice, and invokes Him to wrath: it is a dangerous and terrible thing to fall into the holy hands of the living God
 - ii. Recognize that God has forgiven you this large debt by paying it for you in Jesus!! You are loved and forgiven and free b/c Jesus made peace by His blood! When we are walking in the light of the gospel, i.e. by the Spirit, it is possible, even natural, for the Spirit-transformed and fully-forgiven heart to completely make peace with those who have sinned against you
 - iii. See the vertical peace we have with God so that we can give horizontal peace w/each other
2. Remove the Obstacles of Contention in Your Relationships (as much as you are able, see Rom 12:18)
 - a. When you have wronged another, go and repent!
 - i. Because of the Gospel of grace we can repent freely
 - ii. I can admit my wrong because the gospel shows me that it is not my righteousness that makes peace with God, but rather the blood of Jesus. I don’t have to defend my so-called rightness. I am not afraid to lose my reputation or my glory b/c Jesus had made me a son-citizen of heaven.
 1. I can hate sin within me AND rest in His payment for that sin
 2. REMEMBER:
 - a. My sin is so egregious that Jesus had to die!
 - b. Jesus loves me so much that He DID die to save us from the wrath to come
 - iii. As far as you are able to remove the obstacle. Remember, it is the offended party’s right to forgive or demand justice. Our desire when we wrong someone is to repent and to either:
 1. Accept their forgiveness GRATEFULLY if offered
 2. Bear up their justice GRACIOUSLY if they do not forgive
 - a. You are forgiven in Christ
 - b. Cling to Him when someone does not forgive
 - c. If the offended is a brother or sister in Christ, humbly remind them of the gospel, too.
 - b. When someone wrongs you, go and forgive!

- i. Because of the gospel of grace, we can forgive freely
- ii. I can admit that my righteousness, even in this situation, does not gain me any advantage with God. I, too, am a *great* sinner, and God has forgiven me freely in Christ by paying down my debt
 - 1. I can hate sin within another AND forgive the debt they owe to me
 - 2. REMEMBER:
 - a. Jesus paid down my debt freely and my debt against God was infinitely larger than any debt owed to me!
 - b. I have been given the righteousness of Jesus, I don't need to prove *my* rightness or defend *my* rightness to anyone.
 - c. I can pay down the debt against me by not demanding retribution or "justice" to my offender. I will swallow the retribution b/c Jesus swallowed the justice owed to me.

3. Make Peace from the Heart

- a. Colossians 3:15, "Let the peace of Christ rule your hearts"
- b. The peace with God that Jesus Christ has made for us should "umpire" our relationships with each other.
 - i. The peace of Christ brings unity. When we are securely loved and completely forgiven, we can securely love and completely forgive others as well, thus letting the peace of Christ establish peace with each other. How?
- c. In the midst of contention, remember the Peace-Maker:
 - i. My sin against God
 - ii. God saved me by His grace alone through Jesus
 - 1. Undeserved and unsought for
 - 2. He chose me, adopted me, redeemed me, sealed me in Christ
 - iii. Because Jesus has done all that I NEED, I can forgive (not exact repayment) my brother for his sin against me by removing the obstacle between us (take up your own cross)
 - iv. **The greater degree that the gospel is known and believed in our hearts is the greater degree that forgiveness and peace will flow through our lives.**
- d. Beware the twin evils of accusing and excusing (Eph 4:15-16)
 - i. Accusing: When we operate outside of the truth of the gospel we will only speak the truth (w/o love) in our relationships. This is where we find ourselves pointing out other people's failures in an accusatory way.
 - 1. Gal 5:26
 - a. Challenging: calling one out in order to defeat them
 - b. Envying: looking up to someone else's righteousness
 - 2. Underlying this action is the belief that it is *my righteousness* that has made right with God and the person whom I am accusing is not righteous. Therefore, I must show them their error.
 - a. Wesley Quote:

"Is your heart right with God? If it is, give me your hand. I don not mean, 'Be of my opinion;' you need not. Neither do I mean, 'I will be of your opinion;' I cannot. Let all opinions alone; only give me your hand."
 - b. Winslow Quote:

"Oh! It is a tragic thing to stand aloof from a holy man of God because he is not in all things of our own opinion! Such a violation of the first law of Christianity does despite to the Spirit of grace, the Spirit of love, the Spirit of God, and either proves our own utter destitution of the Spirit, or must result in the withdrawal of His sensible presence, and a consequent spiritual leanness, darkness, and desertion of the soul."
 - ii. Excusing: When we operate outside of the gospel (bold humility of the cross) we will excuse sin in our relationships as well (we will only "love" without truth).

1. *Peace-keeping* by saying nothing, not speaking the truth of what needs to be said out of the fear of hurting someone's ego or making them angry.
2. We must inform a party who has hurt us (injustice) that they have hurt us. Not in an accusatory way, as if we want them to pay, but in an informative way so that they know that they have sinned against us.
 - a. This must be done "in love" or else is simply "accusing" again. Humility with one's own sin in a situation, in light of the gospel (I am so sinful that Jesus had to die), is imperative.
 - b. This communication of truth is the key to dealing with contentions in all relationships.
 - c. ILLUSTRATION: Katie and trust issues in college.
 - d. By speaking the truth we give opportunity for repentance and forgiveness, to see Jesus again together, as fellow sinners.
4. Ultimately, the peace of Christ is incomprehensible. It is spiritual, not natural, so doesn't make natural sense. The world will not understand it, for it is not of the world
 - a. Phil 4:7
 - b. Retribution and proving one's rightness in self-acknowledgement, self-approval, and self-preservation is what drives our flesh to raise up obstacles and keep them there. The peace of God is based upon grace. Giving up one's own power for the sake of another. It is paying down debt that doesn't belong to you for the sake of reconciliation. It is incomprehensible to the world.
 - c. The peace of God guards our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus. The peace, security in God's grace toward us, is actually what protects us from sin and an unloving heart. Do you want to love better? Forgive from the heart and let go of anger/wrath? Take joy in people, real joy? Then we must see again the complete grace of God in Christ and His cross! We must see, acknowledge, and accept that our peace with God comes only because of His great grace to us through the blood of Jesus. We were the enemies of God, and while we were still enemies, Jesus broke down the barrier of the dividing wall of sin and established peace with God for us! This truth, deep within our souls, by the power and transformation of our hearts by the Holy Spirit, thus will establish peace with others as we obliterate their debts against us, just as Jesus has done for us.

The Influence: Where Do I Find the Power to Make Peace?

1. Remember the Cross! (Heb 5:2; Gal 6:1)
 - a. Remember Your Own Sin
 - b. Remember Your Savior
2. Remember the Holy Spirit!
 - a. It may be very difficult to forgive someone (esp. if they've hurt you severely)
 - b. Jesus did not leave us as orphans (John 14:18-19) to scrape along trying your best to do what he said. He is with you to lead you (John 16:13), to strengthen you to hope (Rom 15:13; 2 Ti 1:7), to produce His fruit in you (Gal 5:22-23). You are not alone in your struggle to forgive.
3. Pursue it Through Prayer (1 Tim 6:11)
 - a. Repentance for failure
 - i. Deal w/your own sin before God in honesty
 - ii. Lose your power and *your* righteousness and see the power of Christ for what it is: given to you by faith
 - b. Faith in Jesus to change you (Rom 15:13)
 - i. So, faith in Jesus to change others
 - c. The more we realize that God is control and that He must change hearts, the more that we ask Him to do so, rather than trying to change people ourselves
Let me urge upon you the importance of cultivating faith if you are to be able to walk in love and spiritual power. Without faith it is impossible to please God, but those who believe are given more grace than they can handle. Believing is to expect

God to be with you and change you and change others. Therefore, expect great things from God; attempt great things for God.

~C.J. Miller (Jack)

4. Above all: SEEK HIM (1 Peter 3:15) – sanctify Christ as your Master in your hearts
 - a. Seek Him first, not what He wants from you first. That comes secondary:
 - b. Let us look at His work with Octavius Winslow:

Are we not all of us, as saints of God, dependent upon Jesus? – are not all of us hanging upon Jesus? – Do we not all receive from Jesus? The blood that cleanses us, the righteousness that justifies us, the grace that sanctifies us, the sympathy that comforts us, the hope that cheers us – is it not all derived from the fullness that is in Christ? Are not all clinging to that one dear Savior, depending on His finished work, and all drawing from His infinite resources? Oh, yes! Where do the saints of God the most frequently meet? Is it not at the feet of Jesus?...of His fullness have we all received; and all alike living upon Christ's fullness, nourished by His grace, kept by His power, soothed by His love, fed by His hand, guided by His counsel, and bound together in the same heart of God, supplies us with one of the strongest and most persuasive motives why we should love one another..."

Conclusion:

Let us be peace-makers, like the One who made our peace with God, like God Himself. We, when we are offended, let us live up our name, Christian. It means "little Christ." Let us step in the gap to forgive, removing the obstacle of contention by paying down justice ourselves. We must give up the right to retaliate when we have been treated unjustly, for that is what Christ has done for us. Let us fix our eyes on the Him, on His cross, and let us trust His Holy Spirit to guide us into the truth, to see the gospel clearly, and to empower us by His fruitful and effective power to transform our hearts into the hearts of the peace-making people of God.

Let us speak the truth to one another in love, not letting sin remain or injustice to prevail in our relationships, but neither letting sin and injustice become obstacles to peace among us. Fix your eyes on the great Peace-Maker.

Remember the gospel. At all times of contention, see Jesus. Train yourself to see Jesus quickly: to repent of your wrong and to forgive when you are wronged. For the more greatly that we seize the gospel within our hearts, the greater that we will find peace in our relationships to the glory of the great Peace-Maker. Soli Dei Gloria.

Benediction: "The holiest moment in the church service is the moment when God's people – strengthened by preaching and worship – go out of the church door into the world to be the Church. We don't go to church; we are the Church." ~Ernest Southcott

QUESTIONS:

1. Are there any relationships in your life where you don't have peace? What is the obstacle of contention in that relationship? Are you the offender or the offended?
 - a. If you are the offender, how the gospel of Jesus make it possible, even natural, to repent of your injustice toward the other? What is it that has stood in your way of repenting to them? How does the gospel humble us? Embolden us?
 - b. If you are the offended, how does the gospel of Jesus make it possible, even natural, to forgive the injustice (to not make the person pay down the emotional debt)? How does Jesus' work of peace-making give you reason to make peace with your offender (see Matt 18:21-35 for help)? How does the gospel humble you? Embolden you?
2. Respond to Octavius Winslow's quote above. How does the brotherhood of the saints lead us to make peace with each other? Do we have to "be of the same opinion" or agree on all things to have peace? How can we disagree and wrestle together with love?
3. Do you have trouble being able to forgive? Look at the four steps of "Influence" in point three. What would this look like in your situation: See the Gospel, Remember the Holy Spirit, Pursue it Through Prayer, and Seek Jesus. How do you see this changing *your* heart?