

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. **Matthew 18:21-35**
 1. The debt must be acknowledged
 2. The debtor recognizes the debt and asks for patience
 3. The wronged party extends mercy and forgiveness
 - ii. 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
 - iii. 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
 - iv. 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. We must acknowledge that it takes two parties to truly make peace: the repentor and the forgiver
 - i. “If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live at peace with all men” (rom 12:18)
 - ii. If one party will not either repent or extend forgiveness truly, then there will not be reconciliation, or peace between them
 - iii. Biblical peace is not merely “getting along”, it is the obliteration of obstacles for your love
 1. Love desires the welfare of the other
 2. Love works for the welfare of the other
 3. Even when the welfare of the other requires discipline (Heb 12:5ff)
 - b. 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.
 - c. When someone wrongs you, go and forgive!
 - i. Because we have been given all that we need in Christ, we can forgive freely
 - 1. Selfish irritants – unintentional irritation
 - a. Make the wrong known
 - b. Seek reconciliation
 - 2. Evil injury – intentional hurt and harm
 - a. Trust in the Lord’s justice and vengeance (Rom 12:19)
 - b. Pray for your enemy (Matt 5:44)
 - c. Love your enemy (seek his welfare and provision)
 - 3. *Recognize* that you don’t need the debt paid back to you!
 - a. When you deeply understand that you are loved by the King of the Universe, that you are His child, you know that you lack nothing!!
 - b. When we are unforgiving it is because we believe that we need to be paid back what was taken from us, but that is simply not true for the child of God.
 - i. Forgiveness is not a feeling, it is a gift of grace, and it is commanded
 - 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 personally
 - 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.
 - iii. I CAN do this because God has loved me so greatly that I have nothing to fear or need from man’s approval of me.
 - 1. Romans 8:31-32 – “If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also graciously give us all?”
 - 2. Psalm 118:6 – “The LORD is for me; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”
 - 3. The Spirit of God dwells within me to produce this forgiving peace (Rom 14:17)

3. Making Peace is Not Apathetic Indifference to Sin

- a. Sin angers God and brings His displeasure, and it does the same for His child
 - i. “Be angry, yet do no sin” – Eph 4:26
 - ii. Making peace does not make light of the debt incurred or the sin committed, but rather rejects vengeance and prays for, blesses, and loves the debtor
- b. Forgiveness does not always alleviate consequences
 - i. The Lord disciplines those whom He loves (Heb 12:5ff)
 - ii. Thomas Watson:
 - 1. Question: Is God angry with His pardoned ones?
 - 2. Answer: Though a child of God, after pardon, may incur His fatherly displeasure, yet His judicial wrath is removed. Though He may lay on the rod, yet He has taken away the curse. Correction may befall the saints, but not destruction (*Body of Divinity*, p556)
- c. Beware confusing forgiveness with excusing sin (Eph 4:15-16)
 - i. This false peace says that you forgive a person, but really do not desire nor move toward reconciliation or friendship. It’s intent is really to puff itself up as “being the godly one in this situation” but has no real heart forgiveness or peace.
 - 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.
 - a. 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.
 - i. 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.
 - ii. This communication of truth is the key to dealing with contentions in all relationships.
 - b. ILLUSTRATION: Baccalaureate and being tardy;
 - c. By speaking the truth we give opportunity for repentance and forgiveness, to see Jesus again together, as fellow sinners.
2. *Peace-keeping* by "repenting" of things which are not sin is also not true peace-making
 - a. When unjustly accused, we do not repent of sins that we have not committed
 - i. This is simply rejoicing in untruth and unrighteousness, which love does not do (1 Cor 13:6)
 - ii. Love rejoices in the truth and speaks the truth
 - b. Though He bore them, Jesus never repented of our sins
 - c. We must guard our hearts in this, too, lest we move into a peace-breaking attitude and harbor bitterness and unforgiveness in our hearts
- d. How can I tell the difference between true forgiveness and false forgiveness?
 - i. Am I harboring thoughts of vengeance upon them by myself or by others?
 - ii. Am I praying for them?
 - iii. Am I desiring their good and grieved when things go badly for them?
 - iv. Am I anxiously awaiting their return to me so that I may give their souls relief?
 - v. Am I coming to their aid in their distress and turmoil?
 - vi. Am I seeking reconciliation as far as it depends on me?

Where Do I Find the Power to Make Peace?

1. Remember the Gospel! (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; Col 1:9-10)
 - 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 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