



Preparing Souls To Serve The Lord

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“Blessed are the Peacemakers”

By

Jackie M. Stearsman

In the last issue of the Harvester, we pointed out mistakes made by some in the issue of fellowship. Some have chosen the route of remaking the church into a denomination.

If what they are writing and doing in their gatherings be practiced by us, we must see ourselves as one denomination among others. We must give up our goal of being Christians and only Christians.

However, in our quest for being a follower of the Lord, we must never forget that we must balance our efforts with the total demands of the Lord. One of these demands is being a peacemaker.

John the baptizer, the great fire and brimstone preacher of repentance and judgment, in prison and facing death, wanted assurance from Jesus that his impending death would not be in vain. Jesus directed his attention to His work, and that the work of the Messiah was not one of judgment alone. “The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is

he, whosoever shall not be offended in me” (Matt. 11:5-6).

I have no illusion that I have all that is required to bring about peace among brethren. Neither do I have any one person that I think may have the wisdom and authority to accomplish the task. However, as a child of God, and one who believes the Bible (Psa. 119:160 ASV), I know that the Bible has specific directives for us all.

I offer the following suggestions for sober reflections by all of us who claim to be brethren.

Spiritual Characteristics Of Peacemakers

In the midst of the Beatitudes of our Lord, He states that a necessary component of being sons of God is cultivating the ability to be peacemakers (Matt. 5:9). The task is most difficult! “A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle” (Prov. 18:19).

If we are to succeed as the Lord’s child, as a peacemaker, then we surely understand that we must

cultivate the associate attributes of being poor in spirit, having the ability to mourn for sin, cultivating meekness, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, extending mercy, being pure in heart, and being willing to suffer persecution for righteousness sake (Matt. 5:3-10).

Is not peace a component of the fruit of the Spirit? We do not have the liberty to select from the components of spirituality those that we choose, we must cultivate all, and this is no easy task. Consider “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another” (Gal. 5:22-26).

Peace Talkers Or Peace Makers

It is possible to talk about peace yet be unwilling to abide by the terms of peace established by the Lord. We must avoid, as

did Nehemiah, being drawn into the plains of Ono under the guise of talking peace (Neh. 6:1-9). Let us pray, as did Nehemiah, that God might remember us for good (Neh. 13:31, 14, 22).

It is not easy to practice to perfection the art of peacemaking. Paul was swayed by Jewish Christians and found himself in a very difficult entanglement with his Jewish brethren (Acts 21). However, Paul's actions are better understood when considered with what he had written just prior to this. Do not the words of this text (written by Paul before his arrest in Jerusalem in Acts 21) show the heart of the great apostle as he tried to be a peacemaker (1 Cor. 9:19-27)? This is not to justify any mistake made by Paul. It is cited only to show that peacemaking goes far deeper than peace talking.

Peace Demanding Or Peacemaking

When the prodigal son returned from a life of sin, it offended his elder brother. The elder brother appears to lay down stipulations on his Father that would not permit his brother to be welcomed home (Luke 15:11-32). Bold and courageous Peter along with Barnabas the encourager found themselves restricting fellowship to certain brethren because of brotherhood coercion (Gal. 2:11-14).

There is the need for restoring the wayward, and this is included in peacemaking. However, the following verses make clear demands of those who would restore others and make peace among brethren. "Brethren,

if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden" (Gal. 6:1-5).

Passages For Reflections

In our zeal to contend earnestly for the faith (Jude 3-4), "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (Rom. 14:19).

To those of us who desire to be teachers and not receive condemnation (Jas. 3:1), may we imbibe these truths "Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you" (2 Cor. 13:11).

We must never forget that we are to always be "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).

We must never lose sight of the fact that the people of God will be in a minority, and that some of the enemies of the faithful are false brethren (2 Cor. 11:26). Therefore, we must "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Tim. 2:22).

Let us constantly remind ourselves that "... the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (Jas. 3:18).

Finally, if we are to be peacemakers for the Lord, we must, "turn away from evil and do good; we must seek peace and pursue it" (1 Pet. 3:11 NKJV).

Peace has never traveled easy street. In order to make peace possible, it cost the Prince of Peace His life.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psa. 133:1). How sad, how utterly heart breaking it is when brethren have differences, and parade them before the unbelieving world (1 Cor. 6:1ff.). "He who covers a transgression seeks love, But he who repeats a matter separates friends" (Prov. 17:9).

Conclusion

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. 5:9).

The Harvester

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Florida School of Preaching
1807 South Florida Avenue
Lakeland, Florida 33803
(863) 683-4043

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MONDAY

9:00 Known by Descriptive Names Robert McAnally
 9:40 The God of the Bible is Holy Bruce Daugherty
 10:20 BREAK
 10:50 Rejection of the God of the Bible Freddie Clayton
 11:30 LUNCH
 Forum: Perversions of the God of the Bible
 1:30 Religious Cults Gene Burgett
 2:00 World Religions Ted Wheeler
 2:30 Evolution George F. Beals
 3:00 BREAK
 3:30 Questions and Answers on Forum Topic
 4:30 DINNER
 6:30 Congregational Singing
 7:00 The God of the Bible is a Jealous God Rick Kenyon
 7:45 The God of the Bible is Generous Jackie M. Stearsman

TUESDAY

9:00 God is Not the Author of Confusion James E. Rogers
 9:40 The God of the Bible Can Be Known Jody Apple
 10:20 BREAK
 10:50 Intelligent Design Daniel Stearsman
 11:30 LUNCH
 Forum: Attacks Against the God of the Bible
 1:30 Atheism and Agnosticism Jody Apple
 2:00 Denying the Godhead (Trinity) Brian R. Kenyon
 2:30 Denying God's Personality Bill Greer
 3:00 BREAK
 3:30 Questions and Answers on Forum Topic
 4:30 DINNER
 6:30 Congregational Singing
 7:00 God Provides All Our Needs David Stearsman
 7:45 God is Not a Respector of Persons Jimmy Clark

WEDNESDAY

9:00 God Makes Himself Known Gaylon West
 9:40 The God of the Bible and Human Free Will Jimmy Clark
 10:20 BREAK
 10:50 The God of the Bible and Christ J. Brooks Boyd, Jr.
 11:30 LUNCH
 Forum: Perfection and the God of the Bible
 1:30 God's Sovereignty Earl D. Edwards
 2:00 God's Infinite Nature Bill Greer
 2:30 God Cannot Lie Freddie Clayton
 3:00 BREAK
 3:30 Questions and Answers on Forum Topic
 4:30 DINNER
 6:30 Congregational Singing
 7:00 God Desires Mercy and Sacrifice Marcus Grayson
 7:45 The God of the Bible and Post-Modernism Earl Edwards

THURSDAY

9:00 The God of the Bible and Justice Jon McCormack
 9:40 God and Augustinian/Calvinistic Influences Steve Attrip
 10:20 BREAK
 10:50 The God of the Bible is All-Knowing Bob Bauer
 11:30 LUNCH
 Forum: Comfort and the God of the Bible
 1:30 Grace and the God of the Bible Chris Coil
 2:00 The God of the Bible Is Faithful Ryan Roark
 2:30 Comfort and the God of the Bible Bruce Daugherty
 3:00 BREAK
 3:30 Questions and Answers on Forum Topic
 4:30 DINNER
 6:30 Congregational Singing
 7:00 God and Human Accountability George Franklin
 7:45 The God of the Bible and Singing Tom Holland



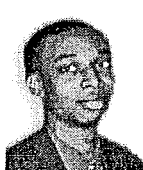
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Is There a Preacher Shortage?

Gene Burgett

From time to time as I speak with churches about the importance of training men to preach I am asked whether there is a shortage of preachers. The question has obvious implications for preacher training schools, for if there are more than enough preachers to go around then preacher training need not be a priority item for churches to support.

From a statistical standpoint this question is difficult to answer. Congregations among the churches of Christ are autonomous. They report to no headquarters when they need a preacher. Furthermore, there is no official list of men who are licensed to preach kept on an official database. Thus, when men enter the field of preaching no one adds to an official count and when men leave there is no subtraction

made from the number of official preachers among the churches of Christ.

However, I believe we can arrive at a logical answer to this question even without statistics and carefully updated databases. I would challenge all to consider the following: Is there a trade or profession that has too many *qualified* men? Has it not always been the case that in virtually every area of employment there is a shortage of *qualified* men? Haven't employers perpetually complained of a shortage of workers who are competent to do the work they have been hired to do? Please note the emphasis on the word *qualified*. The question is not whether any given endeavor has plenty of men receiving a paycheck, but rather are those being paid really qualified to do the work, or have we merely settled for the best we could get?

My father was a building contractor. Often he would put big signs on our job sites: Carpenters Wanted. There was no lack of men applying for the pay claiming to be carpenters. Often I can remember my father saying after interviewing an applicant: "Everybody with a hammer and a saw thinks he's a carpenter." It takes more than a Bible and a gift for gab to be a gospel preacher. Jesus trained the twelve for around three years, and still said they had more to learn (John 16:12). There is a need for more men trained to do the work of an evangelist.

Please contact me and I will be happy to tell you or your congregation more about the Florida School of Preaching.

Gene Burgett

burgett@atlantic.net

352-339-3195

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WEB SITE: www.fsop.net/

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