

There Is No Peace for the Wicked

By Nathan Warner

As Christians, we are supposed to promote peace, aren't we? Aren't we supposed to champion tranquility in the world and avoid all turmoil at any cost? We hear much about it from every side. "Peace, peace!" say the churches; "Peace, peace!" says the world. Peace.

Peacemakers but a Sword?

Jesus told people in the Sermon on the Mount that "*blessed are the **peacemakers**, for they shall be called sons of God*" (Matthew 5:9). But just a few chapters away, Jesus says, "*Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me*" (Matthew 10:34-37).

How do we reconcile Matthew 10 with Matthew 5? The challenge is that the word "peace" is used to describe two completely different things. Sometimes it means tolerance among men, and other times it means reconciliation with God. In Matthew 10, Jesus is saying that if we love social, tolerating, "getting along" peace more than we love Him, we are not worthy of Him. If we aren't willing to stand up for Him at the price of social disturbances or family upheaval, then we are not worthy of Him.

Usually, God is speaking about spiritual peace – the only true, lasting, and eternal form of peace, which only comes by submitting ourselves under God's authority in our lives. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is speaking of reconciliation with God, bringing peace between us and God and between God and others so that we will have peace between ourselves and others. He did not come to promote tolerating peace—quite the opposite, for tolerance of wickedness is an abomination to God: "***There is no peace,** says the LORD, for the wicked*" (Isaiah 48:22), "*precisely because they have misled My people, saying, **Peace,** when **there is no peace,** and because, when the people build a wall, these prophets smear it with whitewash*" (Ezekiel 13:10). Here I think Ezekiel describes a situation where people promote societal "peace" through tolerance at the expense of justice instead of reconciling themselves with God and obtaining peace.

We can never have peace unless we are at peace with God, and we can only do that by coming to Him in Truth to call Him Lord. "*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that He might create in Himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace*" (Ephesians 2:13-15).

Once we come under His authority, and only then, will we have peace—peace with God and peace with each other. No person, church, town, state, or country can be experiencing peace when they are not submitting themselves to God's authority because "*the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth*" (Romans 1:18). Tolerance of ungodliness and unrighteousness for the sake of social or societal "peace" (getting along) brings the wrath of God because it suppresses the Truth of His Word and is an abomination to a Holy and Righteous God.

Where Tolerance of Wickedness Leads

“Oh that you had paid attention to My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river and your righteousness like the waves of the sea” (Isaiah 48:18). Tolerance of wickedness nurtures and feeds what is abhorrent to God and destructive to peace. Generations rise that do not know peace:

“Their feet run to evil, and they are swift to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; desolation and destruction are in their highways. The way of peace they do not know, and there is no justice in their paths, they have made their roads crooked; no one who treads on them knows peace. Therefore justice is far from us, and righteousness does not overtake us; we hope for light, and behold, darkness, and for brightness, but we walk in gloom. We grope for the wall like the blind; we grope like those who have no eyes; we stumble at noon as in the twilight, among those in full vigor we are like dead men. We all growl like bears; we moan and moan like doves; we hope for justice, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far from us. For our transgressions are multiplied before You, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and we know our iniquities: transgressing, and denying the LORD, and turning back from following our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart lying words. Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands far away; for truth has stumbled in the public squares, and uprightness cannot enter. Truth is lacking, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. The LORD saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no justice” (Isaiah 59:7-15).

And yet, still we go on talking about tolerance for sin, *“for from the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain; and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely. They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush.”* (Jeremiah 6:13-15a).

Peace in Tribulation

*“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have **peace**. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33). Here we see that as Christians we will not have peace in the world. We will have tribulation in the world, but we will be at peace with God through the blood of Jesus Christ that has cleansed and saved those of us who have believed in Him, confessed our sins, and confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord in our lives. He has already overcome those that persecute us.

When difficulties arise and rulers rise over us that are not Godly and there is no peace in the land, we must remember to turn to the Lord who is our peace and cry out, *“O LORD, You will ordain peace for us, for You have indeed done for us all our works. O LORD our God, other lords besides you have ruled over us, but Your name alone we bring to remembrance”* (Isaiah 26:12-13). We must turn to the Lord and never expect someone from the world to bring us peace. We must live our lives to God as living sacrifices - to be spiritually crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20) for the peace of God to rest upon us. We must be pleasing to a Holy and Righteous God through our obedience to Him in our thoughts and in our conduct, whether towards our friends, family, coworkers, strangers, or enemies.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and all the prophets were raised up to confront the tolerance of

wickedness in the people of Israel and preach the peace of God. They were not well-received. Jesus told Believers, *“Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets... Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets”* (Luke 6:22-23; 26).

As Believers, we should never expect to be loved by the world, nor should we seek to be tolerated by it through tolerating sin. As the Prophets are examples for us, we should confront wickedness and sin in our own lives and in the lives of those around us, testifying to the Word of God. Take Paul’s instruction to heart to spend time in God’s Word, to *“continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work...preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry”* (2 Timothy 3:14-17 & 4:2-5).

The Good News of Peace through Christ’s Rule

Peace throughout the world will only occur with Jesus ruling in the heart of everyone. This was the message the angels delivered at Jesus’ birth – the good news of a day when men would be ruled by Jesus in their hearts, not a message of political and social peace to the world at large. *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!”* (Luke 2:14) There is no peace for those who do not please Him, for *“the nations raged, but Your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding Your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear Your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth”* (Revelation 11:18).

Peace between nations and peoples will come to pass only when Jesus Christ returns to rule the earth as we read in Revelation:

“And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords” (Revelation 19:14-16). The King of Kings says, *“Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.’ Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood...He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!”* (Revelation 22:12-15, 20)