"ABRAHAM, THE PEACE MAKER"
Genesis 21:22-34

8/30/98

Introduction:

***If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men"** (Romans 12:18).

What does it take to be at peace with others?

I. Believers should <u>agree to the request</u> for peaceful relationships (v. 22-24)
(If the terms for peace are righteous, make peace, not war)

II. Believers should try to <u>restore peace</u> when it is disrupted (v. 25-27)

A. Learn to openly, lovingly, and humbly <u>confront</u> those you have a problem with (v. 25)

B. Don't be quick to immediately spill out every complaint you have with others (timing is important) (v. 26)

C. Take the initiative and pay the expense to re-establish peace (v. 27)

III. Believers should strive to ensure that peaceful relationships <u>continue into the future</u> (v. 28-30)

IV. Believers must use their peaceful, prosperous life to <u>worship and serve God</u> (v. 31-34)

Conclusion:

[Some of the points in this outline have been adapted from the excellent commentary by Allen P. Ross.]

“ABRAHAM, THE PEACE MAKER”
Genesis 21:22-34

8/30/98

Introduction:

The Lord Jesus Said: ***"Blessed are the peacemakers. . .***" Matthew 5:9

> "Scripture contains over 400 references to peace. . . The Bible opens with peace in the Garden of Eden and closes with peace in eternity" (MacArthur, Matthew Commentary p. 209)
>
> I saw a bumper sticker which said: "Imagine world peace"
>
> There will be no true world peace until the prince of peace comes to establish it.
>
> Man's nature since the fall has been opposed to peace (EX: Cain killed Abel).
>
> Because man is basically selfish, conflict generally occurs whenever someone else gets in the way of what we want.
>
> ". . . the popular philosophy of the world, bolstered by the teachings of many psychologists and counselors, is to be put self first. But when self is first, peace is last." (MacArthur, p. 210)
>
> Our natural, unregenerate proneness is toward war not peace; conflict not cooperation; violence not serenity; antagonism not unity; racial discrimination not social harmony; bloodshed not protection of life; hate not love.
>
> The opposite of peace is turmoil, discord, confusion, fighting, and war.
>
> Despite the clamor for peace (as evidenced by marches, rallies, protests, demonstrations, and riots), our society really is opposed to true peace.
>
> Our society exalts violence and war. "The model man is not meek but macho. The model hero is not self-giving but self-seeking, not generous but selfish, not gentle but cruel, not submissive but aggressive, not meek but proud."
>
> If you don't believe that man's natural tendency is bent toward violence, then ask why TV and the movies have so much blood and gore. People pay big money to go to a professional boxing match or the so called “Professional Wrestling” for the sheer enjoyment of seeing two men attempt to knock the brain out of each other. The main attraction of hockey games has become the brawls and fights.
>
> Because so often our world is characterized by fighting and unloading ammunition at others in a vain quest for sovereignty (power), the scarcity of peace has prompted someone to suggest that "peace is that glorious moment in history when everyone stops to reload" (cited by MacArthur, Matthew p. 209).

In a fallen world where tempers flare easily, where selfish ambition quickly becomes the driving force, where many live looking for a fight, anyone can make war (fight). It takes a real man to make peace.

The Apostle Paul in Romans 12:18 said: ***"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."***

"If it be possible" - if you are able, do what is in your power to maintain peaceful relations with others.

"As much as lieth in you" = from your standpoint, seek to be peaceful.

We cannot control whether or not someone else will be peaceful but we can control the peace from our end, from our side of the problem.

Too often you worry about the other side of the problem; you are concerned about their attitude and action toward you, and fail to remember you will not answer to God for them, but for you. Pay attention to how well you are doing to promote a peaceful relationship.

"Live peaceably with all men" -

Do your best to be what you should be to promote harmony and tranquility with:

1)your spouse
2)your employer
3)your neighbors
4)your in-laws and relatives
5)those who "hate your guts"

Some might say: "I can be nice to some enemies, some of the time; but certainly God does not expect me to be nice to all enemies, all of the time, does he?"

ANSWER: There are no exceptions.

You cannot influence anyone for righteousness unless they can feel at rest (at ease) in your presence.

James 3:18 - "And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

Mark 9:50 - "Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? have salt in yourselves and have peace one with another."

"The occasion for this peace treaty was the dispute over a well" (Ross, p. 285).

God can often take a bad situation (like a conflict or problem) and turn it into something good and beneficial.

***If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men"** (Romans 12:18).

What does it take to be at peace with others?

I. Believers should <u>agree to the request</u> for peaceful relationships (v. 22-24)
(If the terms for peace are righteous, make peace, not war)

When people want to be at peace with us, we should agree to their request for peace and be peaceable.

v. 22
Abimelech, King of Gerar, and the top-ranking official in his army were perhaps military stronger than Abraham, but they saw God's supernatural protection and blessing on him; therefore, they desired a peaceful relationship with him. Like many nations of today, they wanted a peace treaty—a mutual agreement to certain terms for peace.

Abimelech unquestionably saw God's hand on Abraham's life when He protected his wife, Sarah, from Abimelech and sent a supernatural plague on the king and his household for taking her (Gen. 20).

"God is with thee in all that thou doest" – Here is a pagan (a noble one at that) who recognizes God's presence ("with thee") and power ("in all that thou doest") upon Abraham.

Is it evident before the eyes of the world that God's gracious hand is upon our lives, jobs, families and ministries? If not, why not?

If you know Christ and walk with Him, He (Immanuel – "God is with us" – Is. 7:14) is with you as He was with Abraham. "Lo, I am with you always." (Mt. 28:20).

The Bible says, "When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

What does the watching world see when they examine our lives?

v. 23
The king had such confidence in Abraham's respect for God that he knew that any oath or vow taken in God's name would be upheld by Abraham.

"Thou wilt not deal falsely with me" – Perhaps one reason Abimelech makes an appeal for Abraham to be truthful was because Abraham had at one point failed to be truthful to him (when he lied abut Sarah being his sister – chap. 20).

Ouch! It's rough to be reminded of our bad testimony in the past, especially when the rebuke comes from the world!

Abimelech makes a long-term appeal to Abraham to maintain his integrity in his dealings with Abimelech and his posterity.

If the world cannot trust God's people to tell the truth, who can they trust?

Abimelech basically says: "Abraham, I have been truthful to you, you be truthful to me."

v. 24
"I will swear" – I promise; I make an oath with God as my witness that I will fulfill this agreement.

--Do you keep your word?
--Do you fulfill your promises?
--Do you carry out your vows?

(The foundation for marriage is faithfulness to your marriage covenant; "till death do we part")

Oath taking is a serious matter! It is better not to vow than to vow and not fulfill it!

II. Believers should try to restore peace when it is disrupted (v. 25-27)

A. Learn to openly, lovingly, and humbly confront those you have a problem with (v. 25)

"Reproved" – **rebuked**

Proverbs says, "Open rebuke is better than secret love."
Again, Jesus said: "Blessed are the Peacemakers"

"Peacemaker" - Note: Jesus is not saying: "Blessed are the peaceful"

To be peaceful is not always virtuous, if it is a non-confrontational, passive attitude that never seeks to correct, confront error, expose evil, or lovingly rebuke a straying brother.

Some people are so "peaceful" that they never say anything or do anything that might cause waves or stir up things.

> Such passivity was not characteristic of our Lord Jesus, nor is it expected of us. We will cause waves when we beam as light, sting as salt (v. 13-16).

Abraham takes advantage of the good opportunity (the cordial relationship) to bring up a problem.

"Since we're on the subject," Abraham says, "Let me inform you of a situation which was not right."

Timing is crucial. "A word fitly spoken. . ."

There is a time to rebuke and a time to refrain. If you want peace, you must seize those times to humbly, honestly, and lovingly correct those you feel have wronged you.

B. Don't be quick to immediately spill out every complaint you have with others (timing is important) (v. 26)

Why had Abimelech not heard about the injustice prior? Well, for one thing, Abraham was not a blabber-mouth! He didn't "spill his guts" on impulse.

He knew how to keep a matter a private issue until the time was right to go to the appropriate authority with the problem.

Do you have such control over your tongue? You will not have peace with others if you can't control that little member in your mouth.

C. Take the initiative and pay the expense to re-establish peace (v. 27)

Rather than requiring Abimelech to offer some of his animals to ratify the covenant, Abraham unselfishly utilizes his own flock.

III. Believers should strive to ensure that peaceful relationships <u>continue into the future</u> (v. 28-30)

v. 28

"These animals were a special gift of friendship, not usually given in ratifying a covenant" (as is evident by Abimelech's question – v. 29) (Ryrie note).

v. 28-30

For the sake of peace, Abraham goes the extra mile. So that Abimelech would not forget the agreement regarding the well, he gives him a tangible reminder.

Everytime Abimelech would see one or eat one of the lambs, he would be reminded of his promise.

Rather than writing the agreement down on paper to be a reminder of the promises, the seven ewe lams were the visible and lasting memorial that the well was Abraham's recognized property (F.B. Meyer).

[SEE verse 34]

"Many days" – Because of his peaceful demeanor, Abraham lived in the land occupied by pagans for a long time.

Long-term peace is produced by long-term faithfulness to your agreements.

So many do not have "long term" anything because they lack the qualities of Abraham. They hope from job to job, church to church, spouse to spouse, etc. Because the lack the features which provide for peace!

IV. Believers must use their peaceful, prosperous life to worship and serve God (v. 31-34)

v. 31

"Beer-Sheba" – *Beer* = well; *sheba* = seven (referring to the gift of seven lambs. Hence, the name means "Well of the Seven" or "Well of the Oath."

Beer-Sheba would be the southern most city of Israel in ancient times. EX: "Dan to Beersheba" (2 Sam. 17:11).

The name of the town would be another reminder of the peace treaty made there.

v. 33

"A grove" – a tamarisk tree; utilizing the well water there, Abraham cultivated a tree or patch of trees.

Such irrigation in the dry desert of the Negev continues to this very day.

“Abraham. . . called there on the name of the Lord” –

The secret to Abraham’s success with people was his relationship with God!

And, Abraham used his restful time of peace to worship and serve God!

This is the reason we are commanded to pray for our political leaders.

1 Tim. 2:1-3
I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

Conclusion:

To be a "peacemaker" is simply to be a maker of peace; someone who does more than talk about peace, someone who does more than promote peace; rather, he produces peace.

A peacemaker is a "bridge-builder" - he himself acts as a mediator as he stands in between the two people at odds with each other, stretching out his hands as it were and grasping both parties and pulling them together.

A story is told of a couple at a divorce hearing who were arguing back and forth before the judge, accusing each other and refusing to take any blame themselves. Their little four-year-old boy was terribly distressed and confused. Not knowing what else to do, he took his father's hand and his mother's hand and kept tugging until he finally pulled the hands of his parents together (cited by MacArthur, Matthew p. 213).

A "peacemaker" is one who realizes that some fellow Christian is struggling and is at war with God's will, but because he is controlled by the spirit of God he says just the right words, at the right time, in the right way, and restores the erring brother.

A "peacemaker" knows about a marriage that is going to fall apart, and rather than passively doing nothing, he prays fervently for the husband and wife, then does all that he can to mend the problem.

A "peacemaker" sees a brother get bitter against another and seeks to replace the bitter attitude with a sweet one.

A "peacemaker" senses disunity among the brethren and seeks to unite them around Christ and His cause.

Being a "peacemaker" requires involvement, work, concern, spiritual diplomacy (divine wisdom).

A Godly peacemaker does not pursue peace at the expense of purity! He will not compromise convictions to maintain or restore peace. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable..." (James 3:17)

Peace cannot be divorced from holiness. "Righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Ps. 85:10)

Peace cannot co-exist with wickedness. "There is no peace for the wicked, says the Lord" (Is. 48:22)

A "peacemaker" does not believe in "peace at any price" nor protecting the "status quo" if it is sinful.

A true peacemaker: confronts problems and seeks to solve them.

*Follow God's principles for peacemakers:

How can you become a "peacemaker"?

1) You must belong to the Maker of peace

True peace with others begins with peace toward God

(II Cor. 5:18-20)

You can't give what you don't have.

"God is not the author of confusion but of peace."

Being a "peacemaker" is a very noble occupation.

Peacemakers are truly Godly people - Reason: They take after their Heavenly Father, who is called, "The God of peace" (Rom. 15:33; II Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:9).

Because God gave His Son, you can now have peace with God (ILLUS: Peace Child by Don Richardson, cited by MacArthur, Matthew p. 213-214)

2) You need to love God and others

"Speak the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15)

Rom. 14:19 - "Follow after the things which make for peace

Eph. 4:3 - "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace"

Heb. 12:14 - "Follow peace with all men"

3) You need courage to get involved

(Willing to confront, not avoid all conflicts)

Beatitude # 7 (persecution) is sometimes the result as you are misunderstood and your work is misinterpreted.

We must follow matthew 18:15-17.

"If it be possible. . . live peaceably with all men" (Ro. 12:18).

It is not always possible (Mt. 10:34; cp. Lk. 12:51). "I came not to send peace, but a sword."

4) Depend upon God for wisdom

Only those who "make peace" will produce righteous fruit

SEE: James 3:13 - 18

Ja. 3:18 - "And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

This verse means that the fruit that righteousness produces can only be sown by peacemakers.

"Sown in peace" - the manner in which we speak is just as important as the message we speak.

"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Prov. 15:1)

Col. 4:5-6 - "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."

Eph. 4:2-3 - "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

"Right relationships are the soil in which the reward of righteousness alone can grow. . . nothing good can ever grow in an atmosphere where men are at variance with each other" (Barclay, James, p. 62)

The best peacemaker is the Godly mother, who resolves her children's daily quarrels.

--She hears both sides of the story

--She encourages them to admit wrong

--She encourages them to ask God's forgiveness

--She encourages them to ask the person they wronged for forgiveness and make restitution if needed.

You cannot be carnal and be a peacemaker. Carnal people tend to be factious, divisive, clichish (EX: the church of Corinth - I Cor. 1).

Matthew 5:9b - *"They shall be called the children of God"* - The blessing of being a peacemaker is the impression you will make on the watching world. They will know you are different, that you belong to God, by the peace that you make between the brethren.

A peacemaker realizes that when God's people are unjustifiably at odds with each other, they are destroying the work of Christ and the testimony of Christ.

My whole life as a Christian and pastor is to be a "peacemaker."

--To see the lost gain peace with God (Rom. 5:1)

--To see the saved know the peace of God (Phil. 4:7)

--To see those who are at odds with each other gain peace with each other.

The future ministry of Elijah (like that of John the Baptist 0 Lk. 1:17) will be to "turn the heart of the father to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers" (Mal. 4:6)

We need people who are. . .

--Christian "firemen" - they don't start fires, they put them out

--Christian "architects" - they don't plan evil schemes, but plan for God-honoring interpersonal relationships

--Christian "carpenters" - they don't tear apart relationships but build them.

The hymnwriter said it best:

"Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace!
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy. . ."

[Some of the points in this outline have been adapted from the excellent commentary by Allen P. Ross.]