

Let's continue in our study of Ephesians. Two weeks ago we started to look at Ephesians 4:3-6

Ephesians 4:3-6 *being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

⁴ *There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;*

⁵ *one Lord, one faith, one baptism,*

⁶ *one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.*

We are talking about unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. This topic of unity in the bond of peace goes very deep, so we broke it into 3 bite-sized chunks:

- 1) God's perspective on unity
- 2) Our responsibility to preserve unity
- 3) The practical walking out of unity and lack thereof

First, we looked at it from God's perspective. Last week we looked at our responsibility to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. This morning I want to look how we practically walk this out, especially when there are challenges that create a lack of unity and peace.

First, it's important to realize that the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace may not always be possible. Like many aspects of life, the ideal is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God and the actual sometimes falls short of that for many reasons. As we learned last week, we are called to diligently and intentionally pursue unity and peace. Sometimes others are not as committed to that pursuit.

Romans 12:18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

We see here that once we do what we can do, we are not responsible for other people's actions and attitudes. The enemy would try to bring guilt, shame, and condemnation on us if we can't create unity or foster peace.

The Father says, "**If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.**" Sometimes it's not possible and it doesn't all depend on us.

The myth is that there will always be unity and that it the only biblical option. Paul deals with that myth when he addresses the church in Corinth:

1 Corinthians 11:18,19 For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part I believe it. ¹⁹ For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you.

Unfortunately, there can't be unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace if one or more parties refuse to align their actions and attitudes to the Truth of God's word and principles.

There is an incredible pressure for people to keep the peace at all cost. Jesus didn't say we were to be peacekeepers – He said we are to be peace makers. Peace keeping is facilitated by compromise. Peace making is facilitated by Truth. When we compromise His Truth and reduce our convictions and His principles to the lowest common denominator, we are settling for a cheap peace – the shallow peace that the world settles for. Jesus said He didn't come to give us that kind of peace.

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

Our pride fosters division, discord, and strife. We are only responsible for humbling ourselves before the Father as we pursue unity and peace – we can't be responsible for how others may not humble themselves before the Lord in various situations. The enemy loves to entrap Jesus Followers in the bondage of prideful divisions and schisms.

2 Timothy 2:22-26 Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love *and* peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. ²³ But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. ²⁴ The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, ²⁵ with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ and they may come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

Proverbs 13:10 Through insolence comes nothing but strife, but wisdom is with those who receive counsel.

We know that Jesus is the Prince of Peace. We know that He brought Peace to earth and goodwill to man. We already read that He said He gives us a peace that is so very different than the world's idea of peace. In the midst of all that, Jesus also makes this very radical statement:

Matthew 10:34-39 "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I came to set a man against his father, and

a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; ³⁶ and a man's enemies will be the members of his household.

³⁷ "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸ And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹ He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

At first glance, this statement seems to contradict all that we think about God's heart for peace. This statement gets to the heart of peacekeeping versus peace making. Jesus told us His peace is different than the world's peace. Sometimes it may look similar to the casual observer and other times it looks very different, as described in the Matthew 10.

The Greek word for bring is *ballo*. It means to throw or let go of a thing without caring where it falls, to give over to one's care uncertain about the result – basically a haphazard scattering and unintentional dispersion.

Jesus didn't come to the earth with a haphazard mission. The peace He came to bring wasn't to be casually thrown around without caring where it falls. He came with a laser focus – on mission from the Father. He expresses it in Matthew 10 as wielding a sword.

This is why I said this statement gets to the heart of peacekeeping versus peace making. As I said earlier, peacekeeping is facilitated by compromise. Peace making is facilitated by Truth. Jesus didn't come to *ballo* a cheap peace for the sake of appearances – He came deliver peace with a sword. Remember a couple of weeks ago when we were talking about the power of God's True Truth – His word:

Hebrews 4:12,13 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

The Truth of God's Kingdom is piercing and divisive by nature. Not divisive in a negative way, but divisive in a surgical way – creating a separation between light and darkness, truth and deception, life and death.

Here's another interesting aspect about this issue of Jesus wielding a sword as an instrument of the kind of peace He gives:

Ephesians 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Who is the Word?

John 1:1;14 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus didn't come to ballo – casually scatter peace – He came with a sword – the Word – He actually embodies the Word – He is the Word!

Jesus came on the scene as the Prince of Peace – bringing a peace unlike the world's peace – He brought Himself and gave Himself for us!

If we are living according to His ways and teachings and others choose not to, we are not to compromise to keep peace – we are to humbly and compassionately live the Truth to, “**If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.**” If some don't want to align to the Word – the sword of Truth – The very person of Jesus, we aren't held responsible at that point – we did our best to do what He has called us to do.

Don't let the enemy guilt you into compromising His Truth just to keep peace. Pray that God will move in the hearts of those who aren't aligning themselves to His Truth that “they may come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.”

Hale Pule Question:

Are there some situations that you find yourself in that there is discord, division, schisms, etc. that are caused by people not submitting to the principles of God's Word? List them out. First, make sure you have forgiven them for any hurt or offense they may have caused you. Then, commit to regularly pray for them to “come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.”

Divisions = Schisma = a division, rent (tear), schism

Factions = Hairesis = a body of people following their own tenets (sect or party) – dissensions arising from diversity of opinions and aims

Insolence = Zadown = pride, presumptuousness, arrogance, insolence

Bring = Ballo = to throw or let go of a thing without caring where it falls, to give over to one's care uncertain about the result