

Why not peace instead?

As the cover of this edition states, Matthew 5:9 indicates that Jesus once said, "Blessed are the peacemakers! For they shall be called the sons of God."

Strong's Concordance indicates that the Greek word used by the writer of Matthew for "peacemakers" is the Greek word *eirenonpoios* which means pacificatory, that is, (subjectively) peaceable.

Pacificatory is an unusual word. Webster's 1828 Dictionary, online edition, which is the closest one easily available to the time of the writing of the King James Version, shows that word's meaning to be as follows:

"**PACIFICATORY**, *adjective* Tending to make peace; conciliatory. "

When we resort to the meaning of "peace," in the same dictionary we find that word defined to mean: "**PEACE**, *noun* [Latin *pax*, *paco*, to appease.]

"1. In a general sense, a state of quiet or tranquillity; freedom from disturbance or agitation; applicable to society, to individuals, or to the temper of the mind.

...

"5. Freedom from agitation or disturbance by the passions, as from fear, terror, anger, anxiety or the like; quietness of mind; tranquillity; calmness; quiet of conscience.

"Great *peace* have they that love the law. Psalms 119:165.

...

"This word is used in commanding silence or quiet; as, *peace* to this troubled soul."

While Jesus indicates that those of us who are peacemakers will be called sons of God, He did not

indicate that such was His purpose for coming in the flesh. In Matthew 10:34-38 we read that Jesus said of Himself, " Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth. I did not come to send peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes *shall be* those of his *own* household. 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. And he who does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me."

When my wife and I first came into the truth, we were understandably concerned with the concept that one's family would become one's enemy. We did not understand that this verse should be tempered with Matthew 5:9. Early on, we were reproached by my late mother-in-law, a staunch Catholic, as to our not celebrating the birth of Jesus like the rest of Christianity does.

Sadly, my response to her was that we don't keep pagan holidays. Even though the response was correct and respectfully done, it was an offense to her because she became indignant and insisted that Christmas was NOT pagan.

I lost the perfect opportunity to explain exactly why we don't celebrate the holidays of the main stream Christian churches by taking the stance that one's family was the enemy. What should have happened was that I tempered Matthew 10 with Matthew 5:9. In other words, peace should have been the goal, not confrontation.

Over the years, we came to understand that; but, initially we did not do so. This was something of

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which repentance was needed.

In our zeal for the Lord, how often do we alienate those around us by treating them like the enemy? Remember, Jesus said that those of our households would be our enemies—not that we should act in a way that made them such. He said that the peace-makers would be blessed, not those who find a way to create separation or division, not those who relegate family to the status of the enemy.

All too often today we of the Family of God seem to treat one another as enemies because of the differences in our beliefs. For instance, I have heard those who are of the Sacred Name persuasion proclaim that those who worship God without knowing the correct name of God are not worshipping the same God that they are. This is not to single that group out as greater violators of the peace than anyone else—merely to use them as an example. I use them as an example only because I attended a Feast of Tabernacles site in Nashville one year sponsored by a group out of Morrow Bay, California. That group of Sacred Name believers caused the Feast site to be in chaos because of the divisive attitude caused by their speakers and some, not all, of their brethren. There was no peace at that Feast site until the Feast sponsor removed the Sacred Name speakers from speaking the remainder of the Feast. In my opinion, everyone lost. We did not get the opportunity to hear any sincere doctrinal discussion on the matter, and the Feast became less a joy than a period of sadness. I can honestly say that the Feast that year was one of the least enjoyable ones that I have ever experienced.

Taking an attitude toward our brethren that they can't possibly be worshipping the same God because they don't have exactly the same beliefs is creating a situation where these brethren become the enemy. That should not be.

The same could be said of those of the One God persuasion versus those who believe that God is a family, one family—not one individual. There are other differences between the Churches of God that can be described which have led to division and creation of

enemies rather than brethren.

The Bible Sabbath Association has as one of its central tenets the idea that all of us who keep God's Sabbath are brethren—brethren with slightly different beliefs, yes, but brethren nonetheless.

Jesus never said "*By this shall all men know that you are my disciples by the fact that you weeded out the infidels who believe a little differently from you.*" Instead, He said, "*By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love toward one another.*"

What we are saying at the BSA is that we all have a common belief in keeping the commandments of God, including His Sabbaths, and that is a place from which we can all agree to be brethren and to rejoice in fellowship.

The common beliefs are a place from which we can build (a positive idea) a relationship based in love for all of God's Children—indeed, all of humanity as potential and future brothers and sisters. It is the place where we should focus, not on our differences, but in how we all love our Father God and Elder Brother Jesus—and want to love our fellow brethren.

How many of us have said in the past, "Why can't we all come together as brethren to fellowship?" I know that I must have heard that a 100 times, if not more, over the years. The Bible Sabbath Association promotes that peace between all of us that so many of us desire. And, the idea is Godly!

As stated already, Jesus said His followers would be known by their love for one another. When He said this, He used the word translated into the Greek "agape" and into English as "love."

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance defines this word as follows:

"agapeo

"From G25; love, that is, affection or benevolence; specifically (plural) a love feast: - (feast of) charity ([-ably]), dear, love."

This is more than just love as we have come to know it in our pasts. This is a love FEAST, an abundant love, with plenty for everyone! It is loving to the

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fullest!

It is my belief that scripture is understood best by combining all of the scriptures on a topic in order to form an understanding of the mind and will of God on a matter. In this instance, we are talking about how to deal with those who believe differently from how we believe.

To those who want to consider themselves more correct than other brethren because of one doctrine or another, I issue this challenge. "Do you believe the same thing today that you believed 5 or 10 years ago? If not, then how do you know you are right now if you were not right then? If it is possible that you are still wrong—and you should admit that it is so—then how do you know the brother or sister you estrange yourself from over your doctrine isn't the one who is correct?"

The fact is that division and isolation are not of God. He says that we should not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. People want Hebrews 10:25 to mean coming together at a church meeting but that is not exactly what the verse is saying. Love for one another coupled with assembling means that you don't find ways to divide yourselves from the brethren but instead are tolerant of the beliefs of others that are reasonably supported by the scriptures, preferring to focus, instead, on how to show greater love for the brethren.

In summary, the BSA goal of seeking harmony between the different sects of Sabbath Keepers is a Godly one. We invite everyone reading to join us as members, and to encourage others to become members, to help us further the Godly goal of unity in the Spirit, and peace among brethren.

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hate to say this, but some of the dullest Christians I've met have been seventh-day Sabbath-keeping Christians.

My wife recently told me that she misses some of the things we had when we were in the Sunday church world decades ago. I told her I miss those things too. I still experience the presence of the Lord alone in my prayer closet, and I still eagerly greet each new day with a sense of anticipation as an individual. But I miss experiencing that excitement and anticipation in the larger context of a body.

I told my wife that some of the things that we miss from the old days do not exist anymore. The experiences of the past are in the past. I do not know of any church, Sunday-keeping or Sabbath-keeping, that experiences the presence of the Lord the way we experienced the presence of the Lord in the 1970s. Maybe there's a group out there somewhere that does, but I doubt it. The 1970s was a unique decade. Every decade is unique, but the 1970s were unique in a unique way, if that makes sense.

I miss the excitement of the 70s, but I don't want to spend my time reminiscing and pining for the past. That's like trying to eat yesterday's manna. Old manna breeds worms and stinks. Rather than pining for the glories of the past, I want to live in the present and ask the Lord what I can do now to help bring back the presence of the Lord among His people.

Several years ago I attended a formal debate between a Christian and a non-Christian in a university auditorium. The non-Christian was trying to persuade the audience that all religions are equally valid. He did not deny the fact that Christians can experience a spiritual presence in their midst. However, he said, this phenomenon is not limited to only Christians. To prove his point, the non-Christian said that he had recently attended a large gathering of Muslims in this very same auditorium. "And there was something there," he said. "There was

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