

# All That Jesus Taught Bible Study - Part 13

by Zac Poonen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of being a peacemaker, which involves pursuing peace and dying to oneself, and highlights the benefits and costs of being a peacemaker.*

**Duration:** 25:07

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:9, Philippians 2:14

**Topics:** "Discipleship", "Persecution"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the often neglected part of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:20, emphasizing the importance of making disciples who follow Jesus completely and teaching them to obey His commands. It focuses on the significance of being peacemakers, seeking peace in a world filled with conflict and darkness, and the blessings of being called sons of God. The sermon also highlights the inevitability of persecution for those who stand for righteousness and unashamedly proclaim their faith in Jesus Christ, encouraging believers to rejoice and be glad in the midst of persecution.

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## Transcript

We turn once again to the Gospel of Matthew in chapter 28 and verse 20 to see the part of the Great Commission that's been neglected, generally speaking, by most Christians, and that is when you go into every nation, make disciples in every nation, those who follow Jesus totally, and then teach them to do all that I commanded you. So we've been studying all that Jesus commanded or all that Jesus taught, which we are to, first of all, practice ourselves and then teach others. We were looking in Matthew chapter 5 about the nine right attitudes that Jesus spoke of, first of all, and we've looked at six of them in verses 3 to 8, and now we want to look from verses 9 to 12.

First of all, verse 9, Do we have a right to call ourselves the sons of God? It says here, it's not our calling ourselves here, it says they shall be called sons of God. That means God's going to call us his sons when we are peacemakers. We must have a reputation as peacemakers.

The opposite of a peacemaker is a troublemaker. What is your reputation in your church? Maybe you say, I'm not a troublemaker, I'm not a peacemaker, you're neutral. Well, then you can't be called a son of God.

It says here, blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God, those who are always seeking for peace. You remember when Jesus was born, the angels from heaven came saying, peace on earth, glory to God in the highest, Luke 2 14, and on earth peace among the men with whom he is

pleased. God is pleased with those who pursue after peace.

The world is a world full of all types of quarrels and fighting and grumbling and murmuring and complaining. If we were to look at this earth from heaven's standpoint, we'd see it filled with darkness because of murmuring, grumbling, complaining, etc. And in the midst of this darkness, there are a few spots of light.

Those are the children of God, the sons of God. And one mark of these sons of God is they are peacemakers. If you turn to Philippians chapter two, you'll find the same thing repeated there.

Why does it say in Philippians chapter two, that we must put away all, we must do all things without grumbling and disputing and complaining. Philippians 2:14, every single thing in our life, we must do without any grumbling, without any complaining, without any disputing. That's a pretty high standard, but it says here, verse 15, that's the only way we can prove ourselves to be blameless, innocent children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

And that's the only way we can appear, it says here, as lights in this dark world. How is that? What is the darkness? Murmuring, grumbling, complaining. What is the light? People who make peace and do not grumble or complain.

Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God. When Jesus sent out his disciples to the people of Israel, we read in Luke chapter 10, he appointed 70, Luke 10 verse 1, to go two by two ahead of him to every place where he himself was going to come. And he said, when you go to a town, look for a man of peace.

He said, whenever you enter a house, Luke 10 verse 5, say, peace be to this house. And if a man of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you.

And if you find a man of peace, stay in that house and don't move from house to house because you'll hardly find another house like that in a town. In other words, what he was saying is, you probably find one house in a town where a man is a man of peace. Otherwise, why did he say don't move from house to house? What if there are 10 or 20 or 30 or 100 houses like that? Jesus knew it was very unlikely to find that.

He said, don't move from house to house. If you find one man of peace in a house, you're lucky because that's rare. And that is the type of house where God dwells.

It's your house, a house of peace. Can it be said about you as a husband that you're a man of peace? You know, it always requires two people to quarrel. You can't have a quarrel if one person refuses to quarrel and fight.

It's just like two hands. They both have to hit to make a noise. You can't have a noise with just one hand.

If one hand refuses to clap, the other hand cannot make a noise. Quarreling is like that. If anyone, say a husband and wife, if one refuses to fight and dies to himself or herself, there will be no fight.

There'll be peace. And so I can never blame the lack of peace on another person in my church or in my house or anywhere. You can't say, well, my wife is the one who disturbs the peace or my husband disturbs the peace.

It's because you cooperate in that quarrel and fight that there's no peace. There can be no sound if both hands, if one hand refuses to come together with the other. So in a situation where there's conflict, if you are pursuing peace, you will die to yourself and let the other person agitate as much as he or she likes.

There'll be peace. Now, if both are willing to die to themselves, then there'll be what we call fellowship. Fellowship is even higher than peace.

Peace is second best. Fellowship is the best. Peace is where one person refuses to fight and dies to himself or herself.

Fellowship is when both die to themselves and their rights refuse to grumble or complain or find fault. They have fellowship. So where we can't build fellowship, let's pursue after peace.

Let me show you two verses in the New Testament that speak about the importance of this. I already showed you Philippians. It says also in Romans and chapter 12, Romans chapter 12, it says, if possible, Romans 12 verse 18, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

That's exactly what I was saying. If anybody wants to come for a fight, an argument with you, you refuse to fight and quarrel, you die to yourself, there's peace. There may not be fellowship with that person.

There may not even be fellowship between you and your husband or wife, but there'll be peace in the home, as much as it depends on you. And it's always possible from our side to die. I refuse to argue with people, even on doctrinal matters, if I find that all they are interested in is controversy.

When people come to my home and inquire questions or after a meeting, if I find that they're really eager to know the truth, I'm willing to spend hours with them. But if I find their only interest in controversy, I want to pursue peace. I say, listen, let's change the subject.

Let's talk about cricket or something like that where we are united. Let's talk about pursuing humility instead of arguing about this doctrine, because I know this person's interest in controversy is hot under the collar, and he's getting upset and angry, and it's pointless pursuing that discussion, because I don't want to win an argument and lose a friend. I'd rather say, let's keep the friendship and you can assume that you won the argument, but I'm not going to argue with you.

If we are willing to die to ourselves and our reputation and all that, it's easy to pursue peace in every situation. If you believe that God is sovereign and will never allow me to be tested beyond my ability, I'm willing to die to myself. Many people say, if you pursue this path, people will just take advantage of you.

They'll treat you like a doormat and walk over you. No! If you believe 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 13 that God will never allow you to be tested beyond your ability, he will not allow people to take advantage of you. You will pursue the way of peace, and you'll find, like it says in the book of Proverbs, the name of the Lord is a strong tower.

The righteous runs into it and is safe. Proverbs 18 verse 10. So when you find controversy, take refuge in the name of Jesus, and then you'll find the fulfillment of Proverbs 16 and verse 7, that when a man's ways are pleasing to the Lord, you come and hide in the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

It's amazing what God can do, and I've experienced that. You try to please the Lord, and you'll find even your enemies get subdued. The peacemakers are called the sons of God.

And another verse which I wanted to show you in Hebrews is in Hebrews chapter 12. Hebrews chapter 12, it says in verse 14, pursue peace with all men, not only with believers, with every human being, with your difficult neighbor, with your difficult mother-in-law, relatives, your brother-in-law who cheated you of the property, or your family members who cheated you and took advantage of you. Pursue peace with them.

God will make sure that you get what you should get. You don't have to fight for it. Pursue peace with all men, without which no one will see the Lord.

Now this is an amazing verse. It's not enough to pursue sanctification. I must also pursue peace with all men.

Many people are pursuing sanctification in their personal life with the Lord, but they're not pursuing peace with all men. But here it says, I need to pursue peace with all men and sanctification, without which I will not see the Lord. So blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.

That's different from children of God. Children of God are babies. A son is a mature person who knows how to die to self and walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

So ask yourself whether you deserve the title son of God, daughter of God. It's very easy to find out. Are you a peacemaker? Are you a peacemaker at home? Are you a peacemaker in the church or a troublemaker? Are you a peacemaker with your neighbors? Are you the type of person who kicks up a quibble wherever you go? Well, you don't deserve the title son of God.

That's more like son of the devil. So let's be careful. Matthew 5 verse 10, an eighth right attitude.

Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Now earlier on we saw blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Now when we take a position of humility and pursuing peace and hungering and thirsting for righteousness and we pursue gentleness and we don't fight for our rights, we will find that people in the world who are evil persecute us.

All those who seek to live godly will be persecuted. So if we seek to live in righteousness, it says here we'll be persecuted. Let me show you this verse in 2nd Timothy, which is an absolute statement inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Paul says, 2nd Timothy 3.12, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. It doesn't say some, it doesn't say many, it doesn't say most, it could be some, many, or most, or all. It says all.

All includes every single believer, who, not every single believer who calls himself a believer, but everyone who desires to live a godly life in Christ Jesus. You will be persecuted. In your place of work you may be persecuted for righteousness.

What does it mean to be persecuted for righteousness? That means in your place of work or in some situation you say, I will not do that wrong. I remember numerous situations when I was working in the Navy, where I had to stand up to my senior officers and say, I'm sorry sir, I cannot do that because my conscience does not permit me. I'm a Christian.

And that is a very risky, dangerous thing to say in the military. If you say that in a secular job, you just get sacked and turned out of your job. You lose your job.

But when you say that in the military, you're in danger of being court-martialed, taken before a court, and probably put into jail. Because it's a very serious thing not to obey orders in the military. But I remember numerous situations where that happened.

I had to trust God to take care of me, but if they asked me to do something violating my conscience, I would say, sorry sir, I'm a Christian. I can't do that. It's against, it doesn't matter how senior the officer is.

And I may, I would have suffered in some way because of that. And that means the commanding officer wouldn't give me a good recommendation for a promotion. And once I was transferred within half an hour to another post, I could suffer inconvenience.

That's okay. These are not, I mean, you can't call this persecution at all. These are little mosquito bites compared to the lions that ate up the early Christians.

But the early Christians faced this too. But we'll come to that in a moment. Here we are talking about standing up for righteousness.

There are many jobs in which people compromise. They tell lies. They cheat.

They give bribes in order to get something unrighteous done. And when Christians go that way, of course they will not face persecution. But if they refuse to go that way, if they refuse to take a bribe to do something unrighteous, they may face threats.

They may face threats from the people above them who want a share of that bribe, et cetera. There are many cases like this. When we stand for uprightness, you may lose your job.

You may find disfavor with your bosses. But the kingdom of heaven belongs to you. You may lose something of earth in that process, maybe a position, maybe some promotion, but you'll get something of heaven in exchange.

Is that worth it? Is it right for a person to tell a lie to get admission or a job into some situation? It's not worth it. Not for a Christian. It's far better he doesn't go there because he'll be out of the will of God.

If you get admission into some situation by telling a lie, you can be pretty sure that God didn't lead you there. Now, when you face a tight spot, the devil may tell you, tell a lie here because a lie is almighty. It can get you anything.

And the Holy Spirit says, no, that's a lie. God is almighty. Telling a lie is not the most powerful way to get what you want.

Stand up for God. God is able to give you what he wants you to get. And then you will find that God gives you what you should get.

Sometimes God will test you in this. I know God has tested me in different times. And I believe if I failed that test in those places, I would not be where I am today.

I would not have the ministry God has given me. And I believe that many of you could have had a ministry if you had been upright and been willing to suffer earthly loss in some places for the sake of righteousness. The kingdom of heaven would have been yours to some more extent.

You've lost some of that. Now, you can't do anything about the past. What you have lost is gone.

You can't get it back. But you can do something about the future and say, Lord, at least in the days to come, I want to stand up for what is righteous and upright. A Christian is not supposed to be crooked in any area.

He's not supposed to tell a lie or cheat for any type of profit. God is looking for those who will stand upright so that he can commit a greater ministry to them. And then the ninth one is similar but slightly different.

And he says here, blessed are you when men cast insults on you and persecute you, not for righteousness sake now, but say all kinds of evil against you on account of me. The difference between verse 10 and 11 is, in verse 10, it's because you're standing for what is right. There are non-Christians also sometimes who stand for what is right.

There are people who have lost their jobs, judges who have been killed for giving a right verdict, and businessmen and politicians and others who've been killed by their enemies for standing up for what is right. It's not just Christians. It's a shameful thing that non-Christians are sometimes willing to stand for uprightness more than many who claim to be Christians.

And I believe you're going to get a lot of surprises in the Day of Judgment when such Christians who are compromisers and backsliders who imagine that they're entering God's kingdom. If you're righteous and you're willing to be persecuted for righteousness sake, the kingdom of heaven is yours, not otherwise. And here in verse 11, it's speaking about being persecuted for Jesus' sake.

You know, if you keep quiet about the fact that you're a disciple of Jesus Christ, you can get some benefits in your place of work. Maybe you're righteous and that's appreciated by others, but you keep quiet about the fact that you believe in Jesus Christ as the way of salvation. Because you're afraid you won't get a promotion.

You'd rather let them believe that you're a non-Christian, just like your bosses are. They're ashamed to be a witness for Christ. I've seen government offices and banks where non-Christians will hang up a calendar with a picture of their favorite idol.

But it's very rare that you find a Christian who is willing to hang up near his table a calendar with the word of God on it, which pronounces the fact that he's a Christian. Because he's afraid, what will people say about me? Will my boss see it and prevent me from getting a promotion or harass me in some way? Blessed are those who are persecuted on account of me, who are not ashamed of me. Are you ashamed of Jesus in your place of work? Don't glory in the fact that you're just righteous, because many non-Christians are righteous too.

But beyond that, one step further, I'm also a Christian. I'm a disciple of Jesus Christ. And if you stand up for God and his word, and it's not only for those in my place of work, even as a preacher, if you stand for everything that is taught in God's word, if you're here to expose the deception in Christian circles today, well, people will insult you, persecute you, say all kinds of evil stories about you falsely, because you stand up for the truth.

And what should you do when that happens? Do we have to feel sorry for ourselves? Far from it. It says here, rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great. You won't get a reward on earth, you'll be persecuted and cast out.

But your reward in heaven is great, because that's exactly how they persecuted all the prophets who were before you. If you look at the Old Testament, the prophets, the true prophets of God were persecuted. The persecutions that they faced are not always mentioned.

For example, a man like Isaiah, who spoke some strong words against the people of Israel, we're not told in the book of Isaiah how he died, but tradition tells us that he was inside a hollow log of wood, and they sawed him into two. They sawed him into two pieces, as one of those people mentioned in Hebrews 11, who were sawn asunder. All those who stand up for Christ will be persecuted.

And Stephen, when he was standing before the chief priests in Acts chapter 8, he asked them a question. It's very significant what he says to them in Acts of the Apostles in chapter 7. He asked them all a question at the end of his long message. He says in verse 52, Acts 7 52, which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? Your fathers killed those who had previously announced the coming of Jesus, the righteous one.

Which one of the prophets in Israel did your fathers not persecute? Can you name one? Stephen was describing Israel's history in that chapter. He'd studied Israel's history, and he came to a conclusion that there was not a single prophet in the entire history of Israel who was not persecuted. No true prophet was popular, neither in the Old Testament nor in the New Testament.

Pastors can be popular, evangelists can be popular, even apostles can be popular at times. Teachers can be very popular, but a prophet is almost always never popular because he is coming to diagnose and expose the faults in a church or in people, and he comes into a church to speak what they need to hear and what they like to hear. He will show them the areas of God's word which they are ignoring.

He'll show them the areas in their life where they are failing short of God's standards, and he'll be persecuted. It happens even today. So this is what it means to stand up for Jesus, on account of me and my word.

If you're persecuted, you're blessed, you're to be envied. So here are these three that we consider today, peacemakers, those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, and those who are persecuted because they unashamedly proclaim that they belong to Jesus Christ and stand for his word. Rejoice and be glad.

In another version it says, another passage it says, leap for joy. You should be excited because you're in the footsteps of the prophets and in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, once again we thank you for your word so crystal clear. Help us to walk in that light all our days. We pray in Jesus name.

Amen.

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