

Peace-makers or Trouble-makers?

1 Kings 18:17-20; 2 Timothy 4:2-4

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What does it mean to live at peace with others? Does it mean you must join hands with and support every religious cause in the world regardless of its contradictions to the infallible testimony of God found in Scripture? Does living at peace with others mean you must throw away any difference between good and evil, right or wrong in order to avoid any conflict or controversy with others? Does it mean you must simply accept the infidelity of a spouse, or the lying of a child, or the physical abuse in a marriage, or the sexual predator that preys upon children in the name of his/her own sexual orientation? Does it mean you must compromise sound doctrine and pure worship in order to unite with other professing Christian Churches? Does it mean you loosen your commitment to God's commandments because they separate you from your neighbor who despises God's commandments? Absolutely not!

Dear ones, there is much confusion over what it means to live at peace with one another, or what it means to be a peacemaker as we are commanded to do as Christians (Romans 12:18). Our text today will help clarify who is a peacemaker and who is a troublemaker. The main points are the following: (1) Ahab Falsely Calls Elijah the Trouble-Maker (1 Kings 18:17); (2) Elijah Truly Calls Ahab the Trouble-Maker (1 Kings 18:18-20).

I. Ahab Falsely Calls Elijah the Trouble-Maker (1 Kings 18:17).

A. We left off in the previous sermon with the Prophet Elijah having sent Obadiah to wicked King Ahab in order to meet with Elijah.

1. Obadiah was King Ahab's chief officer over his house and a godly man who feared the Lord and had rescued 100 prophets of the Lord against whom murderous Queen Jezebel was raging. Elijah had been sent by the Lord to Ahab with the message that there would be no rain upon the land until God brought it again by His word and power (1 Kings 17:1). This was God's judgment upon the land for the wicked idolatry of Israel in worshipping Baal along with all of the prostitution and murder that accompanied it (temple prostitutes, offering children in sacrifice to Baal).

2. That drought had now lasted 3 ½ years, and it was devastating to Israel—both man and beast. And yet the hardness of man's heart is revealed in Ahab's search for water, but no repentance for his rebellion against God that had brought this judgment upon Israel. It was not a lack of knowledge on the part of Ahab—it was rebellion against the Lord God and His holy truth. Ahab was determined to follow his own sinful path and his own pleasures and idols even if it meant the destruction of his own kingdom (the same was true of Pharaoh as well).

3. This is the same sad condition in which we all find ourselves apart from God giving us understanding to see our rebellious heart, faith to receive Christ the only Savior from sin and hell, and repentance to turn and grieve over how we have offended the Most High God. We like to believe we are nice and good and not rebels against the Lord, but the God Himself reveals such a deception to be a lie (Colossians 1:21-22). How do you know whether you are rebellious or not? Ask yourself, "Do I want to rule my life or do I want the Lord Jesus Christ, King of kings, to rule my life?" The rebellious heart against the Lord (like that of Ahab) is revealed in not submitting in faith and love to His lordship by way of faith in the gospel and obedience to God's commandments. You may say, "I'm not against Jesus Christ", but are you for Him (Matthew 12:30). There is no neutrality with Christ. He forces us off the fence.

B. Obadiah directs Ahab to Elijah and these are the words that Ahab denounces against Elijah (1 Kings 18:17).

1. Ahab was shifting the blame for the drought from his own head to that of Elijah—he said Elijah was the trouble-maker that was at fault for the drought for the past 3 ½ years because he was the minister of God who had spoken the truth to Ahab.

2. A rebellious heart does not want to accept responsibility for sin. A rebellious heart wants his/her own way and pleasures. A rebellious heart does not want to be challenged with God's commandments or the gospel or to be convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit. It is always someone else's fault (or it was only a small sin or not as bad as the sins of others). Divisions and conflicts within a marriage will not be healed while pride and rebellion can only see the sins of your spouse while excusing your own at the same time (likewise within the church).

3. It was not the obedience of Elijah in bringing God's word of truth to Ahab that was responsible for God's judgment upon Israel. It was Ahab's rebellion against the Lord (and that of Jezebel and of most of Israel). Elijah was not the trouble-maker in Israel—Ahab was. The prophets of God were not men-pleasers, tickling the ears of their hearers, telling their audience what they wanted to hear, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:2-4). Faithful preachers preach what the people need to hear from the Lord and His Word, not what they necessarily want to hear. The prophets, the apostles, and the Lord Jesus were generally despised because people hated the light of the truth and preferred to remain in the darkness of sin and error (John 3:19). And so it continues with those who still prefer darkness over light.

4. Despising the minister of Jesus Christ who brings to you the truth in exposing sin and error and in sending you to the Savior who alone can save you would be like despising the neighbor who shouts and bangs on your door to awaken you to a fire that is quickly moving your direction, telling him to leave you alone so that you can go back to sleep.

5. What is usually your first reaction to someone pointing out to you that you have sinned or erred from the truth or commandments of the Lord? Is it to retaliate by pointing out the sins of the one who has confronted you? We can tell that we are being foolish rather than wise by our reaction to others who challenge us (James 3:17-18). Ahab revealed his rebellion and his foolishness in blaming Elijah rather than himself for God's judgment.

6. When you listen to this minister of Jesus Christ are you offended or convicted at the Word of God given to you? Does a faithful minister become a trouble-maker because he teaches you how God says you are to raise your children, to be a godly, loving leader, to love your wife or husband, to submit to your husband and parents in the Lord? Does a faithful minister become a trouble-maker because he preaches that you must repent of your sins and that there is no salvation outside of faith alone in Christ alone? Does a faithful minister become a trouble-maker because he exhorts and encourages you to have daily communion with Christ through reading His Word and prayer? Does a faithful minister become a trouble-maker because he speaks on behalf of the Lord that it is your duty to God keep the Sabbath day holy and that it is not a day for work or recreation—it is the Lord's Day? Does a faithful minister become a trouble-maker because he preaches the sanctity of marriage as God's institution—that it is for long as you live and not a convenient arrangement that you can violate or end because your spouse does not make you happy—that sex outside of marriage corrupts God's institution, and that pornography, movies, and music that promote impurity are grievous sins before the Lord? "The guilty conscience that I have is the preacher's fault! If he didn't preach such things, I would be at peace, but as it is, my conscience tells me I'm a sinner that stands in need of God's forgiveness." Have I become the troubler of your happiness and pleasure or has God? This was the charge of Ahab against Elijah.

II. Elijah Truly Calls Ahab the Trouble-Maker (1 Kings 18:18-20).

A. Elijah responds by turning the spotlight where it belonged—upon Ahab. It was the idolatry and false religion, the violence and murder, the lust and immorality, and the covenant-breaking of Ahab and his

father's house that had brought God's judgment upon Ahab and Israel. Rather than endeavoring by God's grace to break the ungodly cycle of his father's house, he gladly walked in that rebellion to even a greater degree. That is what usually happens apart from God breaking that wicked cycle in a family by rescuing an individual by His mercy and grace. We would all be walking in the sins of our fathers, but for the mercy of God in restraining us and in saving us—which shows we are no better than others—we are what we are by the grace of God alone.

B. What makes one a trouble-maker?

1. Trouble-makers actively stir up and raise up trouble with others and destroy peace due to their own sin or corrupt doctrine. They destroy the peace, purity, and unity of the church by pursuing an unbiblical peace at any price (even at the price of sacrificing the truth of Christ revealed in Scripture and confessed in faithful Covenants, Confessions of Faith, Catechisms, and Directories of Worship and Church Government). One is not a peacemaker who joins hands with those who sacrifice sound doctrine, pure worship, faithful church government and discipline, and godly practice on the altar of compromise. Such trouble-makers pretend to promote a biblical peace, but in reality it is a counterfeit peace and a unity of confusion not based upon truth. This is the basis of the Ecumenical Movement in seeking to draw all religions under the umbrella of the Papacy (Protestants, Eastern Orthodox, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc.).

2. Trouble-makers are divisive, contentious, quarrelsome, argumentative, and work to disrupt relationships.

3. Trouble-makers are not simply content to walk in their own sin and error, but want others to accept and to join with them.

4. Trouble-makers are lovers of controversy and debate rather than lovers of a biblical peace in following the steps the Lord has laid out for reconciliation in his Word (Matthew 18; 1 Peter 4:8).

5. Trouble-makers despise lawful, biblical authority or if they are officers they abuse their authority. Divide and conquer.

6. Trouble-makers are relational, marital, and ecclesiastical pyromaniacs—wherever they seem to be they are starting fires of sin and error that cause division in a relationship, a marriage, or the church.

C. What makes one a peace-maker like Elijah and Jesus Christ?

1. Biblical peace is a wholeness or reconciliation that begins with God in God removing the enmity of sin through Christ. Likewise biblical peace reconciles people so that the sin or error that divided them has been removed through repentance, forgiveness, and love. Thus, peace-makers are not those who pretend that there is no division with others due to sin or error, but are rather those (who by God's grace) humble themselves, remove the beam out of their own eye, and seek in love to remove the enmity and restore peace (Galatians 6:1).

2. This will inevitably bring peace-makers into conflict with others, not because they desire conflict, but because they desire reconciliation where there is presently division and separation. The world despises (and sadly even Christians despise at times) biblical peace-makers because they will not compromise what they know and believe to be the truth of Christ, even among family, friends, and fellow Christians.

3. Being biblical peace-makers may be hazardous to your health when you are caught in the middle of two warring parties. Biblical peacemakers will not win popularity contests because they make Christ and His truth (rather than mere "loyalty") the foundation of the relationship. Loyalty and faithfulness to Christ and His Word over every other relationship is at the very core of their being.

4. Biblical peacemakers will boldly stand against idolatry, covenant breaking, Sabbath breaking, abortion and "reproductive rights", adultery, fornication, pornography, sodomy, and same-sex "marriages". From the perspective of the world this is bringing a sword, however, it is those who stand against

Christ and His gospel and His law that have like Ahab brought division by turning against God. It is the Prince of Peace and the gospel of peace alone that can bring peace to a family, church, or nation, when God grants the grace to repent of sin and error, to seek forgiveness, and to live a godly life.

D. Elijah then issues a challenge to Ahab to gather all of Israel (rulers and representative of the people), the 450 prophets of Baal, and the 400 more false prophets that ate at the table of Jezebel to meet him at Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18:19). It does not appear that Ahab yet knows the reason for this challenge, but that will soon be made known. It does not appear that Ahab felt threatened by this challenge (though he would have if he had any reverence for the Lord God at all). Ahab likely felt comfortable knowing that Elijah would be standing all alone among hundreds and thousands of Baal worshippers. The only problem was that Ahab had not factored into the equation that one God-fearing man, woman, or child is in the majority if he/she stands in faithfulness with the Most High God. This truth will soon become evident to Ahab and to all Israel. Ahab then sent out his couriers to gather all the rulers and prophets to Mt. Carmel for one of the greatest demonstrations of God's greatness in history (we will consider next Lord's Day—God willing).

As we close today, let it be known that all of us are Ahabs and trouble-makers by nature. There is no peace with God because we have sinned against Him and His holy commandments. But Jesus bore all of the sins of those who will trust Him and became the only peace-maker between God and man (John 14:6). Only He has satisfied the just wrath of God and can bring everlasting peace with God now and for all eternity. Stop fighting against God. You cannot win. There is peace with God through faith in Jesus Christ—God's peace offering.

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