

## **The Virtues of Christian Character – The Importance of Being a Peacemaker**

Since 3600 BC, the world has known only 292 years of peace! During this period there have been 14,351 wars, large and small, in which 3.64 billion people have been killed. The value of property destroyed is equal to a gold belt around the world 97.2 miles wide and 33 feet thick. Since 650 BC, there have also been 1,656 arms races, only 16 of which have not ended in war. The remainder ended in the economic collapse of the countries involved. Peace is a very precious and very rare commodity.

We have been called to be peacemakers not warmongers or troublemakers! Your strength of Christian character will determine whether you will promote peace, or cause strife and division in order to satisfy your selfish desires. God's word says, "**Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God**" [Matthew 5:9].

When the heavenly host announced the birth of Jesus they joyously proclaimed, "**Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men**" [Luke 2:14]. Therefore, from the very start, it was evident that the securing and establishing of peace, and the promotion of peace, were the primary reasons for Jesus coming. And He paid the necessary price for our peace to be acquired legitimately. **Isaiah 53:5** "**The chastisement of our peace was upon Him.**"

The Greek *noun* translated **peace** ['*eirini*'] describes,

- (a) *Harmonious relationships*
- (b) *Friendliness*
- (c) *Freedom from molestation*
- (d) *Order in a nation or state*
- (e) *The harmonised relationship between God and man*
- (f) *A sense of rest and contentment.*

The Greek *verb* translated **peace** ['*eirinevo*'] means;

- (a) *To bring to peace*
- (b) *To reconcile*
- (c) *To keep the peace*
- (d) *To be at peace*
- (e) *To live at peace.*

The most noted global award presently given to any person for peacemaking is the '**Nobel Peace Prize**'. The originator of this prize was a man named Alfred Bernhard Nobel, who was the Swedish scientist who invented dynamite. Guilt ridden over the fact that his invention had caused so much death and destruction, he sought to make amends by setting up a trust fund of about nine million dollars - purposing that the interest be used exclusively to award annual peace prizes. These prizes, divided into six different categories, were to be given to individuals who made notable and valuable contributions to the "*good of humanity*." One of these categories is described as "*the most effective work in the interest of international peace.*"

How fitting it was that the first peace prize to be presented in 1901 was given to Jean Henri Dunant, the founder of the Red Cross. Dunant was a young businessman who visited the battlefields during the War of 1859 and was shocked to see men dying because there was no way to take care of their wounds. While others never got beyond feeling sorry, he purposed to do something about it and formed the international relief organisation that still identifies itself with the sign which is so similar to the emblem of Calvary. Though Dunant was financially destitute at the time he received his Nobel Peace Prize, he still immediately gave the total sum away to charity. A truly brave and selfless action!

Of course, all of this will send a beautiful message to our hearts. However, we should never forget the greatest act of love the world has ever known. God sent His only begotten Son and Jesus came into this world to defeat the works of the devil and conquer every foe. And in so doing He ascended into heaven and, in a sense, deposited all of the power [the spoils of war] which He procured, in a '*celestial [heavenly] trust fund*'. Thereafter, out of that trust fund He has promised to reward anyone who is bold enough to go forth and take the message of the "**blood stained banner**" to a hurting and perishing world. This is the eternal "**peace reward [crown]**" which we can all receive for being true peacemakers.

When we gladly receive this challenge we go beyond the state of just feeling sorry for humanity, and dare to do something about it! Jesus said it in such a simple and choice way, "**Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children [sons] of God.**"

When people see your genuine efforts, and get to understand the sincere motivation behind what you do, they will truly recognise that you are a "**child of God**" [a joint-heir with Christ], walking in His footsteps and perpetuating His work. Remember, only the **peacemakers** can be called **children of God**! You might be a fully pledged member of the heavenly household, but no one will recognise that you are His child unless you are **peacemaker**! If you are His child then it would be correct to say that you are called to be a peacemaker, and this is definitely something which God has challenged you to fulfil. Having defined **peace** earlier [from the ancient Greek word], we can safely state that:

*Peacemakers are those who impart peace to others. Peacemakers are those capable of reconciling parties who are in opposition to each other. Peacemakers will always create a state of harmony in personal, business or national relations. Peacemakers will ensure freedom from all kinds of oppression.*

If you have yielded to the authority of the Prince of Peace, and He rules in your life and in your heart, you automatically display that heaven-born peace that came to you in three different ways:

- (a) You received peace with God - **Romans 5:1** [being reconciled to Him].
- (b) You received peace from God - **1 Corinthians 1:3**.
- (c) You received the peace of God - **John 14:27**.

Yet without controversy – "*What you received you can also give away!*" What are you doing with the peace you received?