

Romans 12:9-21
Intro to the Brethren Part 2
WRCoB 8.15.2021

ALL WAR IS SIN

Begins an Annual Conference statement
Written back in 1935.

What followed six years later

When the United States entered WW II
Was the drafting of over 10 million men.

The Church of the Brethren

Along with the other historic peace churches
Found themselves in a quandary.

Seek alternative service

As provided by the US government

Or enter the draft

And fight a war considered as justifiable a war
As any in recent history.

Of all eligible draft age Brethren men during WWII

1

- 80% entered active military duty.
- 10% served in the military as noncombatants
- And only 10% took a Conscientious Objector status.

With WWII, there began a shift among Brethren

Away from pacifism and nonresistance
That continues to this day.

Perhaps, we are no longer a peculiar people.

During the earlier wars

The American Revolution

The Civil War

And World War I

The Brethren forbade their men from entering the military.

Those who did, which were few in number

Were expelled from membership rolls.

But by the time of WWII

So many Brethren had entered the military

The church no longer saw fit

To expel their young men.

Consequently, the Brethren's peace position slowly eroded.

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The introductory sentence

In the AC Statement of 1991 entitled

Peacemaking: The Call of God's People in History

Reads

2

At the heart of the Church of the Brethren life is a commitment both to live within God's peace and to be peacemakers.

And so, the question for us today is this.

If surveyed today

Would Brethren consider themselves pacifists?

According to Wikipedia the Brethren

Are one of the historic peace churches

Along with the Quakers, the Mennonites, and the Amish.

But are we?

My contention is that we are still a peace church.

But being a peace church

Includes way much more than just being against war.

Being a peace church has to include

A more layered approach to peace.

Peace begins within and extends ever outward.

3

The Dalai Lama said: —*We can never obtain peace in the outer world until we make peace with ourselves.*

So let's begin.

God created the heavens and the earth

And in that creation

There was harmony

And there was order

And there was peace.

And God called it good.

But with the advent of humankind
Things deteriorated rapidly.

Through sin
Disorder, disharmony and conflict
Became the reality

Consequently, ever since Eden
Peace has been fleeting
More of a concept than a reality.

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Peace begins and ends with God.

When all things are restored to God,
To one another, and to creation
Then peace becomes a universal reality.

For it is all interconnected.

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Peace on earth begins with peace with God.

To Brethren, it begins with the advent of Jesus.

The angels proclaimed peace on the night of his birth.

4

**Luke 2:14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth
peace and good will to all.**

Brethren find an inner peace
Through the saving graces of God in Jesus Christ.

Jesus promises his followers the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit brings comfort, courage and guidance.

But above all, Jesus promises his followers, peace.

5

John 14:27 NRSV Peace I leave you; my peace I give you. I do not give as the world gives.

Our relationship with God is the foundation for inner peace.

Through Jesus' sacrificial love
We are reconciled to God.

In our confession that Jesus is Lord of our life
Through prayer, meditation, and Bible study
Through worship and fellowship.

We can obtain an inner peace, calm, and tranquility
Away from the anxieties, stresses and troubles
That life inevitably brings.

6

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Without the peace of God
We might never find that inmost calm.

Like the church leader Augustine once said.

7

You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.

Inner peace is quintessential if there is to be
Any kind of external peace.

For internal peace influences external peace.

For that matter external peace influences inner peace.

In the constitution of UNESCO written in 1945
(United Nations Educational Scientific
and Cultural Organization) it says

8

Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.

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From an internal peace we move to an external peace.

Lao Tzu's the Chinese philosopher once said;

9

If there is to be peace in the world, there must be peace in the nations. If there is to be peace in the nations, there must be peace in the cities. If there is to be peace in the cities, there must be peace between neighbors. If there is to be peace between neighbors, there must be peace in the home. If there is to be peace in the home, there must be peace in the heart (Lao Tzu).

When there is peace in the heart
There will be peace in the home.

Brethren begin their pursuit of peace
In their relationship to God.

From there it extends to the home.

10

Isaiah 32:18 My people will live in peaceful dwelling-places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest.

Psalm 4:8 In peace, I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety.

It is so vital for people of God to live in peace
Within the home and among family members.

How can the world experience peace
When there is conflict at home?

I know, right? Easier said than done.

But to advocate for peace in the world
Without doing the hard work of peace in the home
Becomes antithetical.

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When there is peace in the home
There will be peace with neighbor.

Peace among neighbors includes friends and coworkers.

11

Matthew 7:12 In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.

The golden rule is a guide to peace
Within the context of the place you live and work.

Jesus was pretty specific
In how we are to treat neighbors.

He said the entire teachings found in scriptures
Boil down to love of God and love of neighbor.

How can we be peacemakers in the world
When we can't get along with our neighbor?

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When there is peace with neighbor
There will be peace within the cities.

12

Jeremiah 29:7 NIV Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.

As I have suggested in an earlier sermon
Our engagement within the city we live,

Working to create a more just and equitable
Place for all to live is vital work for a peace church.

Standing in solidarity with the oppressed
Serving the needs of the poor
Advocating for justice
Is what makes for peace in the city.

There can be no peace without justice.

But when that happens **13 Psalm 46:4 God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved.**

When there is peace in the cities
There will be peace in the nations

14

Psalm 33:12 Happy is the nation whose God is the Lord.

If peace seems hard to attain within the home
Or among the neighbors
Or within the city

Peace in the nation seems downright impossible.

In a nation so divided, so polarized
The word peace sounds almost absurd

The challenge is there for sure

And the scope of the work so great.

But the call to pursue peace is clear.

15

2 Chronicles 7:14 If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

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When there is peace in the nations
There will be peace in the world

16

Proverbs 16:7 When the ways of people please the Lord, he causes even their enemies to be at peace with them.

On earth peace, good will towards all.

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The Church of the Brethren must stand firm
As a peace church..

In fact, my contention is that all Christian churches
Are to be peace churches
If they seriously consider Jesus' teachings.

Mohandas Gandhi said

17

The only people on earth who do not see Christ and His teachings as nonviolent are Christians. - Mohandas Gandhi.

If we are to seriously consider our life as followers of Jesus
Then we must consider peace as our ultimate goal
Peace with God and one another.

18

1 Peter 3:18 Seek peace and pursue it

James 3:18 A harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.

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Yes, Brethren believe all war is sin.

We believe that complete obedience to Christ
Prevents us from killing our enemies

Jesus teaches us to love our enemies
To pray for those who persecute us
To turn the other cheek
To walk the extra mile.

The Apostle Paul teaches us not to resist evil
But to overcome evil with good.

But having said that
Being Brethren includes way much more
Than just being a pacifist.

Peace begins within the heart
And moves out in ever widening circles

Until God's peace permeates once again
The whole of God's originally intended creation.

God, may it be so. Amen.