



2023 3Q Ephesians—Lesson 13 Waging Peace

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

Do you like the title? I like it, it stirs the imagination—what comes to mind for you with this title?

How can we wage peace?

Is this referring to

- societal peace, that we are to wage peace in our communities?
- Or internal personal peace, that we are to wage war with our own selves to experience peace?
- Or spiritual peace, that we are to wage war against everything that sets itself up against the knowledge of God so we have peace with God?
- Or are all three connected in some way?

How are they all connected?

If you think about the three aspects of peace, personal, spiritual (peace with God), and societal, is there a first place we must start to experience peace?

Can we have peace with ourselves, genuine peace, if we do not have peace with God? Why or why not?

Can we have peace with others if we do not have peace with ourselves?

When does the battle with self really begin? Isn't it when we receive a new heart and right spirit, when we are reborn, when we are converted—which is when we are set right, justified in our heart attitude and allegiance to God.

- Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1 NIV84).

So, step one is to be reconciled to God, to experience His grace, goodness, mercy, forgiveness, healing and transforming power and presence through faith, trusting in all Jesus has done in our behalf.

Then, we begin the real battle with ourselves, with our old habits, distorted thinking, false beliefs, fears, insecurities, guilt, and shame. We must choose to act upon our trust in Jesus by choosing new ways, methods, practices in how we think, live, and treat others. We must reject the lies that we are beyond saving, we must reject the lies that our sins are too horrible to be forgiven, or that we have gone too far to be healed.



Simultaneously, as we are battling with old habits, fears, negative thought patterns we will find we need to change some of our relationships. There will be people in our network who are being used by God to build us up, encourage us, help us, and others who are being used by the enemy to tempt us, discourage us, lead us back into the old patterns of destructive living. As we are battling to overcome the old destructive habits, we will necessarily need to make some changes in who we trust, listen to, what we watch, read, and who we hang out with. Some relationships will need to be permanently ended and new friendships established.

Then with new hearts and minds, with maturing and ever-increasing Christlike character, wisdom, insight, and developing fruits of the Spirit—we go forth in our communities to bring peace, to be peacemakers. We forgive those who have wronged us, we seek to use our energies to bless, uplift, protect, heal and restore others, to lead others to the truth as it is in Jesus—but only through the methods of God, truth, love, and liberty. As Jesus said:

- Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. (Matthew 5:9 NIV84).

And as we do this we look forward to the healing of the various human tribes, kindreds, cultures, and nations under one head Jesus Christ. As the Bible says:

- Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. **He will proclaim peace to the nations.** His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth. (Zechariah 9:9–10 NIV84, emphasis mine).
- For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace.** Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. (Isaiah 9:6–7 NIV84, emphasis mine).

We first have peace with God, and then we battle ourselves to experience healing in heart and mind, and have God's design law methods restored within us, then we live out God's law of love in how we treat others, and trusting in Jesus we advance the gospel of peace to the world.

But, what do we do with Jesus' words here:

- **“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.** For I have come to turn ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.’ (Matthew 10:34–36 NIV84, emphasis mine).

If Jesus is the prince of peace, what is going on here?



Can we have peace with those who are actively working to harm, destroy, deceive, and lead away from God and His methods and principles?

Can we love those who are bent on doing evil? Yes! But can we have peace with them?

Here it is from The Remedy:

- "Don't think that I have come to make peace with a selfish world. I have not come to bring peace with selfishness, but a sword to cut selfishness out of the hearts of people. I have come to cut dysfunctional family ties: to free a son from selfish loyalty to his father's ambitions and feuds, to sever a daughter from the control of an oppressive and manipulative mother, to cut through the fear and hostility a daughter-in-law has toward her mother-in-law. A person's worst enemies are often members of their own family (Matthew 10:34–36 REM).

Health relationships *require* health people. We cannot have peaceful, healthy relationships with people who remain in rebellion against God, who are unconverted, who are not fighting their own battle with selfishness in themselves, who refuse to take responsibility for their own shortcomings, who refuse to mature and grow in godliness. Even if we were sinless and perfect, like Jesus. Look what happened to His relationship with Judas—it ended in betrayal, why? Because Judas was unconverted, remained controlled by fear and selfishness and betrayed his relationship with Jesus. Was Jesus responsible for that?

This is a powerful lesson for us today. I know many people who have had relationships breakdown and they falsely take responsibility for what the other person chose to do. Or they stay in dysfunctional relationships allowing others to manipulate them and control them in order to avoid rejection and abandonment, rather than focusing on choosing in governance of themselves to do what is right, reasonable, and health—fulfilling God's calling and purpose in their own life.

Peace on all levels is only possible as we are reconciled to God and have His living law restored in our inmost being.

SUNDAY

What do you think of the metaphor of the church as an army?

Do you remember the song *Onward Christian Soldiers*?

Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war
With the cross of Jesus going on before
Christ, the royal Master, leads against the foe
Forward into battle see His banners go



When you think of this war what comes to mind?

Jesus said,

- “From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it” (Matthew 11:12, NIV84).

If Jesus’ kingdom is the kingdom of peace, how do forceful people lay hold of it?

Can God’s kingdom be advanced, procured, achieved by force, might, or power? Didn’t God previously say that it is,

- “not by might, nor by power but by my Spirit” that His kingdom advances (Zechariah 4:6)?

So how can forceful people lay hold of God’s kingdom if it doesn’t advance with might and power?

The Good News translation helps clear up this confusion:

- “From the time John preached his message until this very day the Kingdom of heaven has suffered violent attacks, and violent men try to seize it” (Matthew 11:12).

God’s kingdom is the kingdom of love, truth, and liberty. It is built upon design law, the protocols upon which the Creator built reality to operate. It cannot be advanced through might, power, force, coercion, external control, imposed laws, or inflicted punishments.

God cannot win people to love and trust by threatening to torture and kill those who don’t love and trust Him. Such actions result in just the opposite outcome, more rebellion, less trust, and the destruction of love.

It is Satan’s kingdom that operates upon imposed law with inflicted punishments and advances through external control, legal enforcement, and violence. Jesus is telling us that since John the Baptist came preaching about the true kingdom of God—the kingdom that operates within the hearts and minds of men (Luke 17:21)—that violent men, humans who embrace Satan’s kingdom of imposed laws and coercive force, have been trying to take control of it. Meaning, that violent men, those who use imposed law, inflicted punishments, and external control, have been trying to take control of the Christian message and ultimately control of human hearts and minds. And sadly, they have succeeded far too often.

We are fighting upon the same battlefield, with the same enemy and utilizing the same weapons that Jesus did. Jesus won every encounter, but after His ascension the violent people slowly took over the “church” and created a “church” built, not upon God’s design laws of truth, love, and freedom but, upon Roman law, Roman power, and violent methods of coercive control.



The idea that God's law functions like human law, imposed rules requiring God to use power to punish rule-breakers, has become assumed truth to almost all Christians. And, thus, violent people have taken control of the theology of Christianity and teach a violent punishing god that is the opposite of Jesus and what Jesus lived, taught, and revealed.

But Jesus said that the gates of hell will not prevail against His true church that is built upon Himself (Matthew 16:18). What a strange and interesting expression—gates will not prevail? Think about that imagery. In warfare, what role do gates play? Do people carry gates into battle? Gates are used to close out opposing forces and to seal in a captive people.

Jesus is saying that Satan, with his lies about God, has taken the hearts and minds of people captive in fear and selfishness. He has closed the minds and hearts of many in fear and falsehood, but his gates of lies, of fear, of selfishness cannot prevail against the divine weapons given to us by God.

- For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have **divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God**, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Our divine weapons have the power to demolish the gates of hell, to open hearts and minds to healing and salvation, to set the captives free!

- The divine weapon of truth demolishes lies—"you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32 NIV84).
- The divine weapon of love demolishes fear—"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear" (1John 4:18 NRSV).

We war against lies with truth and against fear and selfishness with love—the infinite love of God found only in Jesus. We do as Jesus instructed:

- "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven... Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:44–45 & 48 NIV84).

We can never win the war for God's kingdom by embracing and practicing the methods of this world. We cannot win people to love and friendship by seeking to control, dominate, punish, and destroy those who disagree with us. So we move forward with the truth, presented in love, while leaving others free.

But we also cannot win the war by compromising with the enemy, by agreeing with their falsehoods in order to get their approval. **The truth cannot be exchanged for a lie for the sake of peace.** No, we are at war. We must war against lies, falsehoods, and all violations of the kingdom of God.



In war the force that takes the initiative dictates the flow of the battle, the battlefield, and often wins the conflict, while the force defending scrambles to react to the force directing the terms of the engagement.

As Christians, we are to be advancing the kingdom of God, taking the initiative, moving the truth about Jesus forward, standing firm for reality as God created things to be. But all too often, reacting to the false allegations of God's enemy, too many good-hearted people find themselves placating the enemy rather than advancing the truth God has given them.

Have we fallen into a trap of reacting to the methods, standards, practices, rules, and logic of the world, trying to meet the worldly on the platform of godless standards, or are we advancing the kingdom of God on God's terms, with God's methods, holding to God's principles and refusing to step down into the perversion of the world?

When COVID swept the world and the fear-messaging, mind manipulation, coercive tactics were employed did Christian organizations stand for the principles of truth, love, and liberty of conscience, or did far too many embrace the methods of the world and justify coercion of conscience and collusion with the false governmental narratives?

When greed-driven corporations and power-hungry politicians divide society based on race, sex, gender, or any other identity issue, does the church fall into their trap and seek to prove how inclusive it is by holding sensitivity training and working to be inclusive of each and every identity group, or does the church stand for the principles of God's kingdom and stand firm on the truth that there are only two groups of people: the righteous and the wicked, the sheep and the goats, the wheat and the tares, the saved and the lost. Do Christians recognize that in God's kingdom race, sex, nationality, tribe, language, marital status, vax status doesn't matter, what matters is character. In God's kingdom

- “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28 NIV84).

In God's kingdom there are only those who are like Jesus in character and we are to advance the kingdom of God by keeping Christ, His character, methods, principles and design laws central.

Yes, we are at war, but it is not a war of might or power, it is a war of methods: truth, love, freedom at war against lies, fear and selfishness, and control. We will only succeed as we embrace the kingdom of God and advance it by using His methods—truth, love, and freedom.

Read first paragraph,

- Victory in Greek and Roman warfare was dependent on the cooperation of the soldiers in a military unit and especially in their support for each other in the heat of battle. Individualism in battle was regarded as a characteristic of barbarian warriors, dooming them to defeat. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 105).



There is a lot of truth in this. We can be so much more effective when we are united in common cause, with hearts aligned in love, minds focused on Jesus, and motivated to advance His kingdom and we pool our talents, resources, abilities, when we support, encourage, and help each other. No question about it. So we never want to undermine the power of a united force working for good and we want to do all we can to develop such godly community, cohesion, and unity.

But does that mean we never fight alone? Does that mean it is wrong to fight alone? Does that mean we should not prepare ourselves to be able to fight alone?

Consider this passage which refers to Jesus and His experience in Gethsemane and crucifixion weekend:

I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me (Isaiah 63:3 NIV84).

What about the following, who stood with them in their warfare?

- Job?
- Moses?
- Joseph?
- Jeremiah?
- Elijah?
- John the Baptist?

And have there been many in history who stood alone before tribunals and counsels for their faith?

What about this quotation from Counsels to Writers and Editors:

- And there are many in the church who take it for granted that they understand what they believe, but, until controversy arises, they do not know their own weakness. When separated from those of like faith, and **compelled to stand singly and alone to explain their belief, they will be surprised to see how confused are their ideas of what they had accepted as truth.** Certain it is that there has been among us a departure from the living God, and a turning to men, **putting human wisdom in place of divine.** Counsels to Writers and Editors 39.

So, of course let's fight as a team, united in love, truth, motive, method, and principle—but let's also be settled into the truth for ourselves that if we ever find ourselves alone we will not be shaken from the truth, that we as individuals have our own personal relationship with God, have developed our own ability to think and reason, know for ourselves the difference between reality and fantasy (truth and lies), and are not dependent upon others to approve of us in order to stand for what we know is true.



MONDAY-WEDNESDAY

Examines the armor of God as described by Paul in Ephesians—what do you think of this armor?

Is the armor that we are to use referring to fighting external warfare, or internal warfare?

Paul wrote:

- When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my **inner being** I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work **in the members of my body, waging war** against the **law of my mind** and making me a prisoner of the law of sin **at work within my members** (Romans 7:21–23 NIV84, emphasis mine).

We are warring against the power of sin, selfishness, fear, lies, deception, propaganda, lusts, and the evil methods of this world. The primary focus of our fight is internal, against our own fears, hurts, disappointments, doubts, the inherited desire of selfishness, and the dysfunctional and destructive habits that we have developed along the road of life.

Sometimes, we might not realize that our battle is internal and not external, because of a superficial reading of Bible statements like this one:

- For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:12 NIV84).

This could be perceived as saying that our fight is outside of ourselves, as in a physical fight. But our battle against demonic and satanic forces occurs *within our hearts and minds!* Notice how, in Ephesians 6:13–17, Paul describes the armor of God that we use to battle these various demonic powers:

- The belt of truth—truth is internalized, understood, believed and, when accepted, transforms our mind, destroys lies, and restores us to trust in God. The impact of truth is upon our own hearts and minds.
- The breastplate of righteousness—this is a heart, a character, that is reborn to be like Christ. We have had the stony, cold, hard heart removed and a tender, compassionate, merciful heart recreated within us by the power of God. Again, the battleground is internal.
- The gospel of peace functions like track shoes gripping the ground—it gives our hearts and minds a solid grip on reality so that we don't lose our confidence, our security, our peace and so that we don't emotionally fall down and give up when assaulted with the accusations, misrepresentations, and injustices of this world. Again, the gospel of peace fights against fear and doubt within our hearts to maintain our connection with Jesus.



- The shield of faith—this is our trust in God, trusting Him with how things turn out, the future, and not allowing fear of the unknown to control our actions and lead us to act selfishly. The war is still being fought in our own inner world.
- The helmet of salvation—this is a mind renewed to be like Jesus; “we have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16). It is being an understanding friend of Jesus (John 15:15), developing by practice the ability to discern right from wrong (Hebrews 5:14). This is, again, a growing up to bear the image of God more perfectly in all that we do.
- The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God that we wield in our thinking; when we are confronted with temptations; when we are faced with external attacks, questions, doubts, and uncertainties. Every day, we are to wield the Word of God as Jesus did to live out and advance the truth of God in all we do.

Our battle, our fight, is against the infection of sin, against fear, selfishness, guilt, shame, lies, distortions, all of which undermine our love and trust in God. Through the weapons God has provided,

- Those who belong to Christ Jesus have **crucified the sinful nature** with its passions and desires (Galatians 5:24 NIV84, emphasis mine).
- We have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit **you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live**, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God (Romans 8:12–14 NIV84, emphasis mine).
- **Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature:** sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ... You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now **you must rid yourselves of all such things as these:** anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator (Colossians 3:5–10 NIV84, emphasis mine).

We fight the good fight by using divine weapons, not earthly weapons, in the choices we make in governance of self when confronted with the pain, heartache, mistreatment, and abuse of this evil world. We have a different goal than the world. The world wants the “justice” that makes the perpetrator pay, that uses force to inflict punishment, that seeks to control others to make self feel safe.

The kingdom of God wants the justice that loves our enemies, that blesses those who persecute us, that controls self in order to win enemies to Jesus and turn them into friends.

As God’s people, we fight for a different outcome than the world. The worldly fight against others in order to empower self. We fight against sin and selfishness in our own hearts in order to eradicate evil’s corrupting principles from our inmost being so that we can be free from sin’s control. Then we fight to faithfully live out the principles of God in how we govern ourselves and in how we treat



others; we live to be lights in a dark world, demonstrating in word and deed that we belong to a kingdom that is distinctly different than the kingdoms of this selfish world. While the world pursues power to conquer others, the followers of Christ are empowered by God to conquer self.

- We fight by loving God and others, not by self-seeking.
- We fight by speaking truth, not by spreading lies, propaganda, deceit, or falsehood.
- We fight by giving, not by selfish taking.
- We fight by forgiving, not by punishing.
- We fight by disciplining those we love, not by fearfully indulging.
- We fight by saying no to evil, not by giving in to get along.
- We fight by showing mercy, not by retaliating.
- We fight by blessing and praying for our enemies, not by seeking to destroy them.
- We fight by being useful in our communities, not by neglecting our duties.
- We fight by seeking to serve, not seeking to be served.
- We fight by being kind, not by being cruel.
- We fight by being patient, not by being easily angered.
- We fight by rejoicing in the success of others, not by being envious.
- We fight by being meek and humble, not by being arrogant and prideful.
- We fight by standing for the truth, not by colluding with falsehood.
- We fight by sharing the good news of God's kingdom of love, not by promoting politics and worldly divisions.
- We fight by surrendering self to Jesus, not by promoting self.
- We fight by being faithful to our spouse, not by betraying their trust.
- We fight by talking with God, not by gossiping about others.
- We fight by being honest, not by being deceitful.
- We fight by distributing wealth to help others, not by accumulating wealth to aggrandize self.
- We fight by controlling self, not by seeking to control others.
- We fight by crucifying self, not by crucifying others.
- We fight by being respectful, not by being rude.
- We fight by taking responsibility for our own mistakes, not by blaming others.
- We fight by keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, not by being engrossed with life's problems or entertainments.
- We fight by persevering through trials, not by compromising to relieve the burden.
- We fight by trusting God, not by trying to make life go the way we demand.

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses on prayer and its importance in our warfare. What is prayer, how is it involved? Does it matter to whom one is praying? Does the attitude of the heart matter?



- The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. (James 5:16 NIV84)

What about the prayers of the unrighteous?

If someone prays for something and the prayer is not answered in a way they can see or recognize, does that mean they are unrighteous?

Consider Moses:

- At that time I pleaded with the LORD: “O Sovereign LORD, you have begun to show to your servant your greatness and your strong hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do the deeds and mighty works you do? Let me go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan—that fine hill country and Lebanon.” But because of you the LORD was angry with me and would not listen to me. “That is enough,” the LORD said. “Do not speak to me anymore about this matter. (Deuteronomy 3:23-26 NIV84).

Consider Jeremiah:

- Do not pray for this people nor offer any plea or petition for them; do not plead with me, for I will not listen to you. (Jeremiah 7:16 NIV84).

Why is God not only not answering their prayers as they would like, He is telling them to stop praying these prayers?

Were these two men unrighteous? Or, were they praying for something that in God’s plan would be harmful, would interfere with the plan of salvation, though they didn’t realize it?

Could we ever do this? What was the response of Moses and Jeremiah? What enabled them to accept the directive from God?



ANNOUNCEMENTS:

JOIN DR. JENNINGS TREATMENT TEAM

Dr. Jennings is now in his new position as Medical Director of Honey Lake Clinic in Greenville, Florida. See their website at <https://www.honeylake.clinic/>

Honey Lake Clinic is the only Christ-centered residential psychiatric treatment program in the country. We have two campuses—adult and female adolescent (Dr. Jennings is Medical Director of the Adult Campus). The program takes a holistic approach to treatment integrating the best of modern neuroscience with biblical principles (design laws) to bring healing to mind, body, soul, and spirit.

As you likely know, the need for such whole-person Christian mental health care is huge and therefore we are expanding our services to be able to treat more people But in order to do that, **we need more staff**—staff who are both professionally competent and licensed but who are also committed Christians who have the vision to integrate Christ and Christian principles into treating the whole person.

If you are interested in becoming part of the treatment team at Honey Lake Clinic and working with Dr. Jennings, see the jobs posted below and contact Honey Lake for more details. (LCSWs should also apply). If you are interested in any of the positions below email HR@honeylakeclinic.com

Psychiatry Mental Health Nurse Practitioner- Advance Practice Nurse Practitioner

- Able to empathically and compassionately interview patients presenting with a MH issue using the organization's comprehensive psychiatric evaluation
- Able to elicit medical histories and assess for medical causes of the MH issues or for comorbid medical issues that are a result of the MH disorder and/or exacerbate the MH disorder
- Utilization of interview, assessment and diagnostics in comprehensive treatment of dual diagnosis patients
- Able to assess for level of detox and use standard CIWA and COWS for withdrawal severity and then initiate detox treatment
- Able to prescribe initial psychiatric and detox medications, monitor and document results and side effects, and perform follow-up medication management within accepted standard of care guidelines.
- Familiarity with ASAM or LOCUS for assignment of levels of care

Adult Program Clinical Director

- Masters in mental health counseling, psychology or social work required. Other graduate degrees that lead to MHC, MSW or MFT licensure are acceptable.
- Florida Licensure (LMHC, LCSW or LMFT) active and in good standing, is required.
- Experience providing therapy to adults with mental health and substance diagnoses 2 years post-licensure is required.
- Supervisory experience, minimum of 2 years is required, post-licensure is preferred.



- Experience in Clinical Supervision and Program Management, 2 years post-licensure is preferred.

Licensed Therapist

- Masters in mental health counseling, psychology or social work required. Other graduate degrees that lead to MHC, MSW or MFT licensure are acceptable.
- Licensure is required
- EMDR with other trauma modalities is preferred.
- Experience with adults with mental health and/or substance diagnoses is preferred.

Individual Therapist- Registered Intern

- Masters in mental health counseling, psychology or social work required. Other graduate degrees that lead to MHC, MSW or MFT licensure are acceptable.
- EMDR with other trauma modalities is preferred.
- Experience with adults with mental health and/or substance diagnoses is preferred.

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