

## Making Peace in this Present Age

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Unraveling Peace, Making Peace, Securing Shalom.

### Unraveling Peace

Perhaps now more than ever we feel the *absence* of peace: social injustice, family conflict, political strife, division in the church. This unraveling of shalom in Scripture is accompanied by groans *from creation*, [For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now](#) (Rom 8:22). These groans are ancient and deep *creation* longing to be set free from corruption. There's a place in Tolkien's *Two Towers* where Saruman the wizard says, [Together, my Lord Sauron, we shall rule this Middle-Earth. The old world will burn in the fires of industry. The forests will fall. A new order will rise. We will drive the machinery of war with the sword and the spear and the iron fist of the Orc. We have only to remove those who oppose us.](#) Their solution to a new world order is to make war, not peace. To remove the opposition. Is that not the sentiment today? If we can eliminate those who oppose us, we will have peace. Our presidential candidates said as much to one another in their debate. And if we're not careful we too will take up the pitchfork against our fellow man. This is a particular problem because of presentism. **Presentism** privileges the present moment over the wisdom of past and hope of the future. Alan Jacobs, Distinguished Professor of Humanities, explains how presentism distorts our reading. We may justly excoriate older authors for their point of view on gender, race, or sexuality, but then refuse to read another page. If we were to reject authors who did not have the sophistication of our present moment, then we would have to throw out Aristotle for his sexism, Kant for his racism, Isaac Newton for spiritualism, and Jesus Christ for his exclusivism. When we become disciples of the present we foolishly discredit the past. Suddenly contemporary authors are lifted above the eternally breathed Scriptures. We narrow down our influences to a select pool of ideas, so exclusive that anything that doesn't align with our presentist ideology is dismissed. We become so immersed in the *ultimate Now* we lose our footing in the city of God. **Presentism seduces us with the promise of omniscience.** With a universe of information in the palm of our hand, and the ability to respond immediately to any current event, we are tempted to take the place of God. To wield omniscience correcting all who oppose us. Hell hath no fury like *the triumphant Now*. A picture of the president pops up on your feed with a salacious headline. You scan the article, feel the outrage, and punch out a response on social media. Suddenly you're embroiled in a nasty debate with strangers. Why? *Presentism*. Instead of being formed by the wisdom of the past (count to 10 before responding or a gentle answer turns away wrath), you react as if all that matters is an intense, underinformed, unreflective now. **Presentism also violates the mystery of the heart.** A city group member says something you totally disagree with. Rather than ask for clarification or overlook a wrong, we quickly categorize or label them: *racist, feminist, conservative, immature, don't get it*. Instead of being slow to judge, the triumphant now compels us to pass judgment on the hearts of others. Sadly, I have done this with my children: When you said that you were full of pride! Come to find out they'd received conflicting messages from two different parents. If I had asked What do you mean by that? Could you explain more? I would have loved my child not assaulted her heart. The heart is a complex thing and [the purpose in a man's heart is like](#)

deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out (Prov 20:5). Church, we should not violate the mystery of the heart. And we certainly ought not presume omniscience—for that is God's alone. What we should do, Jesus says, is make peace not war.

### **Making Peace**

How do we make peace? *First, we must recognize who our true enemy is.* Your enemy is not one another. Disruptions in shalom are not merely the result of social inequalities or politics or presentism; they are spiritual provocations. Revelation 6 describes the conquest of red horse, *And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword* (6:4). Notice peace is removed *by spiritual forces.* Satan is an agent of chaos. He incited the heart of David, entered the heart of Judas, you better believe he's lurking about your heart. He removes peace from the earth *so people will slay one another.* When we tear one another down, we play right into the hands of our Enemy. Nelson Mandela: *"When we dehumanize and demonize our opponents, we abandon the possibility of peacefully resolving our differences, and seek to justify violence against them."* Have you justified verbal violence? Are you seeking to remove those who oppose you? You have joined forces with *your Enemy.* Church, that political party is not your foe, and it is most certainly not one another. Your enemy is Satan and his hordes. Your friend is Christ and his Church. We battle not against flesh and blood but principalities and powers. So make peace not war. How? *Second, get on your knees.* Pray for your church. Pray for your pastors. Pray for your enemies. It is difficult to hate those you carry to the Lord of love. To despise those you plead for. To abandon those you join. When we are told our battle is not against flesh and blood but cosmic powers, we are instructed to take up the whole armor of God so we can stand in the evil day. A helmet to protect our thoughts, a belt of truth to gird us, a breastplate of Christ's righteousness, a shield of faith, and peace—the gospel of peace—on our feet. Church, ground yourself in Christ, take your stand, and fight with the two weapons *God* has given you—the word and prayer. These aren't quiet time trinkets; they are weapons of war forged in the eternal fires of the divine counsel. Against them, our Enemy cannot stand. Church, renounce backbiting and division. Wield the Word. Counsel the Word. Obey the Word. Love the Word. Pray for hearts; don't violate them. Make peace not war.

### **Seeking Shalom**

Now, does this mean we turn our backs on the peace taken from the earth? No, not at all. We serve, we march, we counsel, we vote, we advocate. We seek the shalom of the city: make great culture, redeem social, share a whole gospel. Renew the city socially, spiritually and culturally. But don't become so beholden to the present, so embroiled in social and cultural renewal that you look patronizingly at spiritual renewal. Social and cultural inequalities are symptoms not the disease, the weed *but not the root.* Although he could have, **Jesus** did not secure the peace of Galilee, Jerusalem, Rome, or the world in his first coming. He did not merely clip the weed only for it to grow back. No, he came to take up evil by the *root.* He knows the heart is deceitful above all things, desperately sick. It is no mystery to him. As the truly omniscient one, he sees its evil, wickedness, and proud resistance. And instead of slaying us, he was slain. Instead of seeking to remove all who opposed him, he sought to redeem them. He loved his enemies to the death. The rejected he eternally justified: *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord*

**Jesus Christ** (Rom 5:1). In a stroke of staggering sacrifice, Jesus established *peace with God*. Merton: Without peace with God, all other attempts at peace are temporal. Jesus secures shalom, pulls the root, heals the disease. The destiny of middle earth hung on this. An innocent being whose quest was divesting himself of power—a ring—to overthrow evil and restore peace. He did not seize power but embraced sacrifice. And the king will return. Christ will reappear on a white horse to make war and secure shalom. Those who oppose him will be slain, but those who worship him will be saved. And he will usher in a never-ending age of peace. It is the long way round to shalom but it is the only way if a single soul is to enjoy the new creation. What kind of doctor treats only the symptoms when they can administer the cure? So, church, lets make peace not war.