

Peace: “The Peace of God...Will Guard Your Hearts”

Romans 5:1-8; 12:16-21; Philippians 4:4-9

Peace

We usually define *peace* in negative terms such as the “absence of tension” or “living without hostility.” When we regard peace only as the absence of conflict or tension, we may feel that the way to peace is in the manipulating our circumstances to eliminate stress.

Augustine of Hippo (commonly known as Saint Augustine) captured a more biblical view in his definition of *peace* as “the tranquility of order.” For the Christians, there are three applications of the experience of peace. We have “peace with God,” or spiritual order; “peace on earth,” or relational order; and “the peace of God,” psychological order. True peace is that overall sense of well-being that comes from knowing that our lives are in God’s control.

Think about it, when was the last time you felt “at peace?” What made you feel that way? For some, feeling “at peace” may have been because the phone was not ringing or just being alone. For others, just knowing that everything is done, and everybody is in their proper place and there is a calm. And spiritually being “at peace” is knowing that “all is well” with one’s soul.

Definitions:

Justified—to render (show or regard as) just or innocent; free, justify, be righteous. (The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible, Baker Book House)

Peace—(to join); peace (lit. or fig.); (by implication) *prosperity*:—one, quietness, rest, to set at one again. (The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible, Baker Book House)

Order—The arrangement or disposition of people or things in relation to each other according to a particular sequence, pattern, or method; a state in which everything is in its correct or appropriate place.

Psychological—of affecting or arising in the mind related to the mental and emotional state of a person.

I. Read Romans 5:1-8

Peace with God: Spiritual Order

- a. According to **Romans 5:1-8**, to have peace with God means to be in the correct spiritual order or relationship with God. Having been justified (acquitted of sin, declared blameless before God) by our faith in Jesus Christ, we have peace with God. **Ephesians 2:14** sheds more light on the peace with God, “For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.” Our sins separated us from the Holy, Righteous, and Just God. **Romans 5:10** reads, “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” Christ’s death brings us back to God, restores the relationship, reconciles us to God (set at one again).
- b. Because we are at peace with God we can rejoice in hope of the glory of God and glory in tribulation (vv. 2-3). These things contribute to our peace as we know that tribulation worketh (produces) patience endurance, and endurance produces proven character (spiritual maturity), and character produces hope and confident assurance. We have peace because we learn, through experience,

The Fruit of the Spirit (Fisherman Bible Study); *Fruit of The Spirit* (Life Guide Bible Studies), *Fruit of The Spirit* (Zondervan); *New American Standard Bible*; *Amplified Holy Bible*; *Open Bible KJV*

that God is at work in our lives, and we can trust Him. Through the pain suffering and process, He is working on our behalf.

- c. The Holy Spirit's part in the process (vv. 2-4) is to shed the love of God in our hearts. That love, according to **1 Corinthians 13:7**, "bears all things [regardless of what comes], believes all things [looking for the best in each one], hopes all things [remaining steadfast during difficult times], endures all things [without weakening]" (Amp.). Our part is to know what God says about the circumstance and trust Him.
- d. God's demonstration of love in Christ affects our overall peace of mind by reassuring us that through it all He loves us. We can rest our minds in knowing, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (**Romans 8:32**).

II. Read Romans 12:16-21

Peace on Earth: Relational Order

- a. Just some of the things that prevent us from living in harmony with others are pride, arrogance, hatred, jealousy, envy, misunderstandings, wrong information, improper communication, evil deeds, unforgiveness, and distrust, just to name a few.
- b. One reason not to repay evil with evil is that it can start an endless cycle of revenge and acts of evil. Also, the Lord says, "...Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." (**Romans 12:19**). See also **Deut. 32:35**; **Proverbs 20:22**; **2 Samuel 16:5-12**; **1 Thess. 5:15**; and **1 Peter 3:9**.
- c. In **Romans 12:18**, Paul calls for us, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." Taking this command seriously can lead to more acts of love, more peace, and a reduction in acts of evil and people who seek vengeance.
 - i. Living out this command requires us to control our responses to situations and may also require that we avoid certain situations. Some people may have to be loved "at a distance." It will also require prayer and the aid of the Holy Spirit producing peace in our lives.
- d. **Romans 12:20** reads, "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." This command is difficult because it requires that we deny ourselves and look beyond our feelings and love and serve others—in this case our enemy. We have a natural tendency to avoid our enemies. We need to be guided by the Holy Spirit.
 - i. Have you ever been treated like this by someone else? How did you respond?
- e. Having peace with God can affect our ability to live peacefully with others by allowing us to have access to God, developing a deeper relationship with Him, and under His guidance seeking peace with others.

III. Read Philippians 4:4-9*The Peace Of God: Psychological Order*

- a. To see Paul's prescription for the peace of God, one needs to look at all the verses in this passage, not just verse 6. The prescription includes: 1) rejoicing in the Lord, 2) allowing our moderation or gentle spirit to flow to all, 3) casting all our cares on God, 4) letting God keep our minds and hearts, and 5) thinking on the things listed in verse 8.
 - i. Paul's view for inner peace differs from the culture's view in that the inner peace that Paul speaks of is produced by the workings of the Holy Spirit, not outside things or forces. Also, one can have the inner peace of God in the midst of the world's issues and problems. As mentioned in the beginning of this study, the world's view of peace is the "absence of tension" or "living without hostility." Personal peace can be a reality even when things aren't going the way we desire.
- b. God's peace is not dependent on our figuring out a solution to what bothers us, nor is it dependent on our understanding how God will solve our problem. In fact, his help is often beyond our comprehension.
- c. Prayer is related to the peace of God in that it is the means by which we bring our concerns, worries, and anxieties to God. Also, by listening to God we can receive directions and reassurance that He is leading us through our situations and meeting our needs. Through prayer and supplication, we can make our requests known to God Almighty. Philippians 4:6-7 are connected by the word *and*, which causes them to go together.
- d. Now Paul encourages us not to be anxious about anything, but there are some "healthy anxieties" or times when anxiety and concern are appropriate. For example, the sudden illness or injury to a loved one or a friend can be the cause of anxiety or concern. If your car is swerving off the road, or you are facing an abusive situation, there is a need for concern. The possible fear for safety is not a sin.
 - i. But those who live with habitual worries or with a cloud of anxiety always hovering over them, need to recognize the command to not be anxious. It doesn't mean that anxieties will immediately disappear. But how one responds when anxieties loom large can change to a habit of "making our request known unto God."
 - ii. We all suffer from fears and anxieties of various sorts. Yet, if we fail to deal with our anxieties, they can cripple and immobilize us. In Philippians 4, Paul gives us a prescription for inner peace.
- e. Having peace with God does affect us having the peace of God because all aspects of the fruit of the Spirit, (love, joy, peace, etc.), comes from our obedience to God's commands and with His enabling. When we are walking in deliberate disobedience to God we are not experiencing peace with God, thus, we hinder the Holy Spirit producing the fruit of the Spirit through us.

Now or Later.

Psalms 27, 46, 49, 56, and 91 speak peace to our fears. Turn to them when you need comfort.

Taking the Next Step.

During anxious times, the psalmist encourages us to remember what God has done for us in the past (see **Psalm 77, 105, 143**). Read one or more of these psalms. Then take time to remember and record some of the ways God has helped, strengthened, or delivered you in the past. Allow his faithfulness to fill your mind and heart in the present.

Homework: Read **Matthew 18:21-35; Colossians 3:12-14**

Topic: **Patience: "Bear with Each Other"**