

Peace

Edited and posted by Bob Young

Introduction: Understanding Peace

Our environment is not conducive to finding the peace of the Christmas season that the gospel proclaims.

As I get older, reflecting on the biblical message and its promise of peace impresses me more and more. The OT word for peace, Shalom, comes from an ancient Akkadian word 'salaimu' that means to be 'healthy, whole, complete.' Physically it signals health; emotionally, it means to be centered-- at one with yourself; spiritually it means to be rounded or complete, to have balance and values that not only allow you to address the challenges of life with equanimity but also to creatively shape the world and make people and things around us grow. Morally, it suggests congruence between your inner disposition and your outer actions, consistency and integrity. The Greeks had a word for that (galene); the same word they used for the calm sea, when your conscience is calm and you have integrity. Economically, it is what follows when you have repaid your debts; interpersonally it is what follows when you live up to your vows and are faithful and responsible. Socially, it is the consequence of people in agreement. The Greek word homonia, Paul uses to describe what the church looks like when we are in harmony with one another.

Plato said that if we are intentional about becoming wise, when we are in the mature years of our life and have our passions under the rein of mind and our morals, there settles over us a deep peace, the Greek word is eirene, a spiritual balance or equanimity. Marcus Aurelius said this spirit of peace in our mature years enables us to deal with the world falling apart around us and ultimately prepares us for dealing with our own death. There was a popular saying captured first in Latin, "if you want peace, then prepare for war."

In the Bible, peace has two parallels—truth and justice: one translation of Isa. 32:17, "Peace is the work of justice." Not merely the absence of overt conflict—that is détente. The deeper peace of Shalom is structured by truth and social justice. It looks forward to the eradication of the very root causes of conflict and friction.

The vision of Isaiah is not simply a kind of justice that is imposed upon us. It rather fills the soul of each person and emanates out. There is justice socially because each person is filled with compassion and meets the needs of those around them. The simple prayer attributed to St. Francis describes the spiritual disposition.

"Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred . . . let me sow love

Where there is injury . . . pardon

Where there is doubt . . . faith

Where there is despair . . . hope

Where there is darkness . . . light

Where there is sadness . . . joy

Divine Master,

grant that i may not so much seek

To be consoled . . . as to console

To be understood . . . as to understand,

To be loved . . . as to love

For it is in giving . . . that we receive,

It is in pardoning, that we are pardoned,

It is in dying . . . that we are born to eternal life

Today we think about....you and your relationship to peace....five possibilities...

*1 Peace breaker, Proverbs

*2 Peace dweller, but not make peace, only lives where there is peace

*3 Peace lover

*4 Peace keeper, Eph. 4:1-3

*5 Peace maker, Matt 5

Imperatives in Philippians 4: 4-9

1. Rejoice in the Lord always
2. Rejoice in the Lord always
3. Let your gentleness be made known to everyone
4. Do not worry about anything
5. In everything let your requests be made known to God
 - a. in prayer (general)
 - b. in supplication (specific)
 - c. with thanksgiving
6. Think about these things - -
 - o whatever is true
 - o whatever is honorable
 - o whatever is just
 - o whatever is pure
 - o whatever is pleasing
 - o whatever is commendable
 - o any excellence
 - o anything worthy of praise

Keep on doing the things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me

Assurances in Philippians 4: 4-9

1. The Lord is near
2. The Peace of God (which surpasses all understanding)
 - a. will guard your hearts (emotional control)
 - b. will guard your minds (mental stability)
3. The God of Peace will be with you

"Because the day of Christ is near and because the peace of God stands guard, the church can rejoice. In the face of abuse and conflict the Philippians do not have to press their case. They are to stand firm, yes, but they can be forbearing not overbearing. In full confidence of their trust in God, they can devote time to prayer, praise, and thanksgiving." -- Professor Fred Craddock

Principles for Peace, from Philippians 4:6-9

Let us read the text. Peace of mind is something we all want. We want to be able to rest, to not have to worry, to feel free to enjoy life, family, friends, work, church, hobbies, entertainment, etc. We want to be able to enjoy ourselves and not be burdened with worries that rob us of vigor, life, and purpose. When we cannot find peace of mind, we get depressed. We get angry and lash out at God or someone else near us. What do we do to get peace, real peace in our life? Where do we start? What do we do?

The best place to start is with God.

God wants you to have true peace

Phil. 4:6a, Pray to Him for anything. God does not want us to worry about anything (act of thinking). Worry is sin to the extent that it means we are not trusting in God. Do not worry. The word for "anxious" means to be troubled with cares. God has not given us a command we cannot obey.

Jesus said to the man with the withered hand, "Stretch forth your hand" (Mark 3:5). The man could not--yet he obeyed and did it!

We are able to live by faith, and not worry...no matter what happens.

Matthew 6:25,27,31, 33,34

God provides true peace

Phil. 4:6b, Meditate on what is holy.

God does not want us to worry because worry means we do not trust God, that we are not taking Him fully at His word.

1 Peter 5:7; John 14:1

God wants us to have true peace by praying about everything (act of doing)

God has been providing for us all along. Remember the cross.

Phil. 4:6: "But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

All things in our life are of concern to God. The big and the small: where to move, who to marry, what job to get, even your hobbies, and leisure times.

The peace that God gives us will guard our minds.

The peace that God gives us will strengthen us.

Through the cross we have access to the throne of God, "with thanksgiving," because of the cross, the proof of God's faithfulness. In the presence of God there is peace.

God provides true peace by filling our heart and life.

Phil. 4:8, Romans 15:13; Psalm 16:11

Practice the presence of God, pray! In prayer we are transformed

By praying you will intern want to think about holy things. That is why...(next point)

God wants you to have true peace by meditating on what is holy (act of thinking)

Your minds have been set free from slavery to sin.

Romans 8:6, God wants you to fill your heart with what is good.

Phil. 4:8, God wants you to think, to meditate on truth, purity, and excellence.

Psalm 119:78, the precepts of God, the Word of God, is truth, purity, and excellence.

Meditate on the Word of God so that you will be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

God wants you to have true peace by putting into practice what you have learned.

He wants you to... trust Him for everything

Take-Aways: 10 Steps to Peace Making

1. Yearn to see peace restored
2. Pray for self-cleansing and guidance
3. Sincerely bring the estranged together
4. Empathize with all concerned
5. Listen to all with full attention
6. Restate the view points objectively
7. Analyze the stated problem, identify the real issue
8. Propose a solution respectful of all
9. Allow God's Holy Spirit and timing
10. Thank God for his reconciling work

Conclusion

These things are written to you so that the God of peace will be with you. Not simply peace...but the God of peace will be with you. Ultimately this is about God dwelling with you. He wants you to be holy, pure, right. Will you trust Him and not worry? Will you pray about everything in your life? Will you meditate on the Word of God? And finally, will you practice, will you do, what God calls you to do?