

Peace in Our Lifetime
(Scripture Reading: Romans 5:1-11)

Peace is the desire and longing of humanity, and it is important to God. The Apostle Paul starts each one of his epistles with a declaration of peace. God intends for us to have peace, but it is such an elusive thing. History is characterized by wars; peacetime is fleeting. The current crisis in our country makes this issue even more relevant. In our personal lives, peace is even more of a mirage. How do we understand peace, and how do we get it?

- I. Peace is the longing of humanity
 - a. Historically
 - b. Modern History (UN, peaceniks, etc.)
 - c. Why?
 - i. We are created in image of God (Genesis 1:26-27)
 - ii. God desires peace
 1. He rested after Creation (Genesis 2:2-3)
 2. He desires final rest/peace (Psalm 132:13-14, I Chronicles 22:6-10 (illustrates God's general desire for peace), Isaiah 18:4).
 - iii. His very nature (and name) is peace (Isaiah 9:6, Philippians 4:9, I Thessalonians 5:23, and many other references)
- II. Why is there no peace? To properly understand peace, we have to understand why there isn't peace in the world around us.
 - a. Sin
 - i. The Curse (Genesis 3:14-19)
 - ii. The destructive nature of sin (Isaiah 57:20-21, Romans 3:15-17 (which quotes Isaiah 59:7-8), 1:28-31, Galatians 5:19-21). These passages are not references to "good times" like the world would like us to think.
 - b. Human nature. Really the same as above, but to emphasize, man's very nature prevents him from obtaining peace.
 - i. Plato: "Only the dead have seen the end of war"
 - c. Satan is in an epic war with God (Isaiah 14:13-14, Revelation 20:7-9)

Again, God desires peace, but clearly there is not peace in the world. When will it come or how do we obtain it?

- III. Peace dispensationally understood
 - a. Time Past. In "Time Past" the Gentiles were at enmity with God and, according to Romans chapter one, God had given them over to sin. So there was no peace for the Gentiles. Only to Israel did God promise peace.
 - i. Gentiles were at enmity with God. There was no peace for the Gentiles (Ephesians 2:11-12, Matthew 15:22-27). Only by going through Israel could Gentiles have blessings of peace.

- ii. Israel's promise of peace. Note: it was physical and earthly (Leviticus 26:1-6, Psalm 25:11-13, Isaiah 11:9-10, Ezekiel 34:25-26, Jeremiah 30:8-10)
 - 1. Peace was conditional on Israel's obedience (Leviticus 26)
 - 2. Final peace would come with the fulfillment of the new covenant and the kingdom (Jeremiah 31:31-32). (Occurs in the ages to come.)
 - 3. An earthly peace was Israel's hope and longing throughout their history.
- iii. Claiming the wrong promises. Many, failing to rightly divide, mistakenly claim the promises made to Israel. (e.g. II Chronicles 7:14)
 - 1. Earthly peace
 - 2. Physical peace
- b. But now. This dispensation, more than any other, is characterized by peace. Now, Jew and Gentile alike have peace
 - i. Christ's work at the cross. Luke 2:14 tells us Jesus' purpose on earth, but only through the Apostle Paul do we discover that God's ultimate purpose was peace for all mankind. (Ephesians 2:13-18, Colossians 2:13-14)
 - ii. God's declaration of peace (Romans 5:1). The Apostle Paul opens every one of his epistles with a declaration of peace from God. He closes nearly every one on the same theme of peace. Clearly peace is important in this dispensation, but it is not the same kind as promised to Israel.
 - iii. Our promise right now? All who live godly lives will suffer persecution (II Timothy 3:12). Doesn't sound like peace.
- c. Ages to Come. Dispensation of the fullness of times (Ephesians 1:10)
 - i. Peace on earth—Israel's kingdom
 - ii. Peace in heaven—the Body of Christ

- IV. Personal peace. So we understand that God made peace through the cross, offered reconciliation (peace) to all, and that He will eventually bring complete and final peace, but is peace possible for us personally right now ("nasty now and now")? If I asked, each one of us could describe terrible conflict, problems, etc., in our lives. Can there be peace in all of that?
- a. What peace is not
 - i. Not a warm, fuzzy feeling ("I felt peace about this decision.") Our faith is not based on emotion, but on knowledge and understanding.
 - ii. Not a state of oblivion. We do not find peace by living in a monastery, by meditating, or by shutting out reality (ostrich).
 - b. What peace is
 - i. A constant state of being (Colossians 3:15, II Thessalonians 3:16)
 - ii. Depends on the right view of life. To have peace we have to understand it properly
 - 1. Right division

- a. Claiming the right promises. Claiming Israel's promises will lead the frustration and disappointment.
 - b. Understanding God's purpose in this dispensation—which is a spiritual purpose.
 - 2. Understanding our current standing in Christ. These are spiritual realities. We have a hard time seeing spiritual realities since our entire frame of reference is physical (I Corinthians 2:14). (We gain spiritual understanding by knowing God's Word.)
 - a. Dead to sin (Romans 6:6-7). In other words, dead to the strife sin produces.
 - b. Saved from wrath (Romans 5:9)
 - c. Reconciled to God (Romans 5:10-11)
 - 3. Understanding God's future purpose. Knowing God's ultimate purpose gives us peace now. We don't have uncertainty; we know how the "story" ends (Romans 8:17-18, 35-39, Titus 2:13). (Analogy of tolerating lousy job while waiting for a better one.)
 - 4. Proper view of present reality. Peace is not just a future dream. We have peace, not *in spite of* our circumstances but *because of* what we know. We have peace because we understand not only what God is going to do but also the spiritual work He is performing in us now. We don't have to be an ostrich (Romans 5:1-5).
- iii. Walking in Spirit. This is peace in action. Our thinking, actions, identity.
 - 1. Strife=carnal thinking (I Corinthians 3:1-3).
 - 2. Fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:16, 18-22 (compare to works of flesh), Ephesians 4:31-32).
 - 3. How do we put this peace into action? (Philippians 4:4-9, Colossians 3:15-16)