



“He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us” (Ephesians 2:14).

PEACE

Central Truth: Salvation in Christ establishes peace between God and the believer.

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Topic: Peace: With God.

Thank God!

You may ask, “Thank God for what?” The answer is, “Thank God for thinking of us.” The psalmist wrote, *“How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them”* (Psalm 139: 17). What does God think when He thinks of us? Jeremiah 29:11 answers, *“I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”*

When the sovereign God of the universe is concerned enough to think thoughts of peace toward each of us, that is an occasion for thanks. Let this study of peace be an inspiration to you to be filled with thanksgiving. Then express your thanks to God in the presence of people. God commands, *“Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name”* (Psalm 100:4). God's people respond, *“Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms”* (Psalm 95:2).

One of the greatest reasons for thanking God is that we have peace with God and the peace of God governs our lives. From that peace with God there flows peace with people who are made in the image and likeness of God. Peace with God is the cause; peace with people is the effect. “Salvation in Christ establishes peace between God and man.”

We need peace today. Look at the suicide rate, the widespread problem of emotional/mental illness, abuse in families, violent crimes, and the

general tension in society. God offers peace in Jesus Christ. Receive Him.

I. PEACE MEANS NEARNESS (Ephesians 2:11-13)

A. Peace means nearness to God. The great problem with natural man is that he is far from God. That spiritual separation which sin brought is called “*death*” in the Bible (Romans 6:23; 5:12). Ephesians 2:12 describes sinners as “*without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.*”

But consider the difference Jesus makes: “*Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ*” (Ephesians 2:13). It can be said of all Christians, “*Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God*” (Ephesians 2:19).

The change from “*far off*” to “*made nigh*” is the miracle of Christian conversion. That is why so many appeals in the Bible and in our hymnals are for the sinner to come to Jesus. “*Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father*” (Ephesians 2:18). Peace with God makes it possible for us to be near Him. The peace of God results from our being near Him.

B. Peace means nearness to other Christians. The “*middle wall of partition, . . . even the law of commandments contained in ordinances*” has been abolished in Christ, “*to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace*” (Ephesians 2:14, 15). Unity between Christians is not based on such matters as age, race, politics, education, or finances. It is a unity produced by the Holy Spirit who lives within each believer. In Him the distinctions between Jew and Gentile, bond and free, male and female disappear and each Christian becomes one with every other Christian because of Christ (Galatians 3:28). When one became ambitious for authority over his brethren, Jesus taught, “*One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren*” (Matthew 23:8). Look on each Christian as a brother or sister in Christ. “*Receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God*” (Romans 15:7).

At what a price was that nearness bought! You were “*made nigh by the blood of Christ*” (Ephesians 2:13). We should exert every effort possible to maintain that nearness, “*endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*” (Ephesians 4:3).

II. PEACE MEANS ONENESS (Ephesians 2:14-18)

A. Peace means oneness with God. The Bible term for our oneness with God is *reconcile*. It means that the sinner is so changed by being born again that there is nothing in his being which God would reject. Therefore, He is accepted in peace before God. There is such a unity between Christ and the Christian that the believer's body becomes the sacred temple of the Holy Spirit and a limb of Christ himself (I Corinthians 6:15, 19).

The new birth means that one receives the divine nature while living in this earthly body (II Peter 1:4). He is indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9), who fills him and ministers to make him more and more like Christ (Galatians 5:22-24). God's purpose is ultimately to conform every Christian to the very image of Christ. Meditate on your union with God. It is a real and present birthright.

B. Peace means oneness with other Christians. There is much to separate us, if we permit it. National citizenship, race, language, culture, and religious customs all make us tend to feel closer to some than to others. "*The handwriting of ordinances*" was a particular problem to the unity between Jewish and Gentile Christians (Colossians 2:14). They differed over clean and unclean food, the observance of "holy days," races with whom to fellowship, the place of traditions in Christian conduct; and much more. What a problem we have with our differences.

But there is much more to unite us than there is to separate us. God says, "*Ye are all one in Christ Jesus*" (Galatians 3:28). If you feel yourself drawing away from a fellow Christian, know that it is of the devil. God unites His children; the devil separates them. Our mutual faith in Christ as Savior, our prayers to God as Father, and our relationship with the Holy Spirit as companion unite us as one body in Christ (Ephesians 4:4). As one body in Christ, each of us belongs to Him and to one another (Romans 12:5). Let us be loving, kind, forgiving and always guarding the unity of the Spirit which we share.

III. PEACE MEANS FELLOWSHIP (Ephesians 2:19-22)

When a Sunday School teacher asked her class what fellowship means, a little lad replied, "I guess it means two fellows in the same ship." He was correct. *Fellowship* means "mutual sharing, companionship, association." That is one of the blessings we receive in Christ.

A. Peace means fellowship with God. He has called us into the fellowship (participation, friendly association, and mutual sharing) of His Son (I Corinthians 1:9). When John considered Christian fellowship between believers, he based it on a prior fellowship which each believer has with God

(I John 3:3-7). How do Jew and Gentile become one? Ephesians 2:14 says that union is effected in Christ. God promised, *“I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee”* (Exodus 25:22). What was pictured in the tabernacle over the mercy seat is experienced in the believer whose heart is the temple of the Holy Spirit today. Do you have a sense of personal participation and fellowship with God? It is your spiritual birthright.

B. Peace means fellowship with believers. What Jesus did in His earthly ministry broke down the middle wall which separated Jew and Gentile: He made peace between them because He made them both to be at peace with God through faith in Him.

The axiom of algebra is true: “Things equal to the same thing are equal to each other.” When the Jew is in fellowship with God and the Gentile is in fellowship with God, they are in fellowship with one another. (That same principle applies to Latin and Anglo, black and white, Oriental and Occidental, and all other races or nationalities.) People from every kindred, tongue, people, and nation have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ (Revelation 5:9) and are one in Him. If we live in fellowship with God, we will have fellowship with one another (I John 1:7). *“Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren”* (Hebrews 2:11).

Meditate often on this great truth. Remind yourself over and over that you are at peace with God through Jesus. When troubles come, console yourself with the assurance of the faithfulness of God. Submit to His lordship over your life. Embrace His peace with all its blessings. Then show the peace of God ruling your life by spreading its blessings to others.

“Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee” (Job 22:21).

Questions

1. How do you define peace?
2. How is peace with God distinguished from the peace of God?
3. How is peace with God related to our being near to God?
4. What does Ephesians 2:14 say about peace between believers?
5. What does oneness with God mean in daily affairs?
6. How does peace with God create fellowship between Christians?
7. How is Exodus 25:22 fulfilled in Christian experience?
8. What things might disturb your peace with God?
9. How can you maintain the bond of peace with fellow Christians?

10. How can you show the peace of God in your life this week?