



Peace of God

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How the peace that God gives contrasts with what the world gives

Jesus gave us this promise about peace as He told His disciples that He would be going to the cross to die for them and all who believe He is the Messiah...

John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Everyone talks of peace

The "peace process" in the Mid-East

World peace

Personal peace

But the only real peace is that which Christ gives

The Gift

What is peace?

- As the world gives, example: MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction).
- Many limit their concept of peace to the absence of strife or smooth interpersonal relationships.

What is true peace?

- But true peace is more than just a cessation of hostilities with others with others...
I heard about an art contest on the theme of peace. Everyone entered some kind of pastoral scene and there were a lot of lakes with still waters. But one artist entered a portrait of ocean waves crashing against rocks at the base of a cliff. When the judges asked the artist how this showed peace, he pointed out a bird sitting on her eggs in a nest on the cliff well clear of the turmoil below. You see true peace is not the absence of turmoil, it is peace in the midst of turmoil. The artist who was questioned won the contest.

What is the prerequisite for true peace?

- But the prerequisite for a lasting peace with others is to have peace with God...
Rom 1:28-31 - And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of

evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful;

- A "debased mind" is what gives rise to irrational conflicts like:
 1. The Palestinians wanting the see the end of Israel.
 2. The Catholics and Protestants in Ireland.
 3. India and Pakistan over Kashmir.
 4. The animosity of the Islamic world against the U.S.
- If you don't retain God in your knowledge, you will do evil to others.
- The quality of our relationship with God has a direct impact on the quality of our relationship with others.
- To enable peace with others, you must first have peace with God.

How do we come by the true peace that Jesus gives?

Who was Jesus speaking to here?

- It is a gift which Jesus gives those who know Him. Peace is a byproduct of knowing the Holy Spirit, see Galatians 5:22-23.
- Note that this promise is not being made to all people, Jesus made this promise to His disciples...
 - This promise is applicable to us too if we become disciples of Jesus.

What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?

A disciple of Jesus is simply a follower of Him...

Luke 14:27 – "whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."

- It is necessary to set aside our clinging to this world so that we may take hold of the gift Jesus gives us.
- We usually think of following Jesus as learning about His teachings and applying His example to our lives but it is also following after Him in eternal life. Jesus was the firstfruits of the resurrection and His followers will likewise be translated into eternal bodies like He has now.

I Jn 3:2 - Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

The Giver

What is the contrast in John 14:27?

The peace that Christ gives versus the peace that the world gives.

What is the difference between the peace that Christ gives versus the peace that the world gives?

- The peace that Christ gives is real peace. It is delivered on His promise so the very character of God is at stake in His following through. The peace that Christ gives is also continuing... as soon as you are born again, God's Holy Spirit indwells you and peace is a by-product that will be with you through eternity.
- The world's peace always falls far short of expectations, it is undependable and temporary. Perhaps its greatest shortcoming is that it is limited to this world.

How can we know what the Peace of Christ is like if we have not personally experienced it?

- The same peace that Jesus knew is what He gives so we should be able to look at His experiences and get an idea of what this peace is like...
- You should also be able to observe the peace that Christ gives in the lives of Christians.

How would you describe the Peace that Jesus had during His ministry on earth?

- It was inner peace in the midst of strife.

Why was there so much strife associated with Jesus' ministry?

- Jesus was not what the established religious leaders expected the Messiah to be so turmoil and strife marked His ministry.

You may ask since there was so much turmoil associated with Jesus' ministry, where is the peace? Indeed, Jesus said:

Matt 10:34-36 - "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. "For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; "and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'"

If Jesus was the Prince of Peace as Isaiah 9:6 prophesies the Messiah to be, why was there so much turmoil resulting from Jesus' coming?

- Jesus was not what the established religious leaders expected the Messiah to be so turmoil and strife marked His ministry. ? Indeed, Jesus said:
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daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; "and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'"

- The peace Jesus gave was what He demonstrated... calm in the midst of turmoil, steadiness of purpose, rightness with the Father, and the quiet confidence of full trust in God the Father.
- Jesus' coming shined light on the dark recesses of men's souls and naturally this causes conflict. And if we follow after Him, there will be clashes with people who are holding on to this world with all their might because this world is all they know.

What examples of Jesus demonstrating the peace He had come to mind?

His not speaking out in His own defense when He was before the governing authorities who sought to crucify Him...

Isa 53:7 - He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.

The fulfillment of this prophecy:

Mark 15:3-5 - And the chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing. Then Pilate asked Him again, saying, "Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!" But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled.

The Giving

How else is the peace that Christ gives contrasted with that which the world gives? How do people in the world come by whatever scraps of peace they can find?

- The world gives peace grudgingly, half-heartedly and occasionally. In the world, peace is not a gift at all, you have to work for the peace you get or pay for it as is the concept behind insurance.
- In contrast, Christ gives His peace freely, fully, and finally.

John 6:37 - "the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."

How do all the religions in the world offer peace to you?

- You work for it. Religion is all about what to do and not do to merit salvation which is peace with God.
- Christianity is unique from all the world's religions. The peace we get from Jesus is a gift. You can't do anything to earn it. It wouldn't be a gift if you could do anything for it, this would be a payment.
Eph 2:8-9 - For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

- Because the world has such a wrong view of what religion is, Christianity is not a religion at all, it is better described as a relationship.
 - I heard a great quote that "religion has lead more people away from Christ than anything else in the world." (This is very true, I wish I knew who said this).

The world's religions say what you must do for salvation, Christianity says all that is required for your salvation has already been done.

- I have an Indian friend who can explain the good news about Jesus as well as I can. He knows what Christianity is from an intellectual standpoint but he does not believe Jesus. His perception of Christianity is that it is a very American religion since you don't have to do anything for salvation.
 - My friend is basing what he believes on human tradition and human reasoning which is flawed because it is based on only experience that is common in the world.

Prov 14:12 - There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.
 - Christians base what they believe on the Word of God which was inspired by an Almighty God who is powerful enough to accurately bring us his Word and preserve it through the ages even using His imperfect creation.

Isa 55:8-9 - "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

The Goal of the Giving

Why does Jesus bless His followers with peace?

He does not want His people to be troubled or fearful (and there are a lot of things in the world to be troubled or fearful about).

What happens when you are troubled or fearful?

- You freeze up (the deer-in-the-headlights image comes to mind here). You become ineffective since you are preoccupied and distracted by what is troubling you.
- You see, if you are saved, God saved you for a purpose...

Eph 2:10 - For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works
- God wants you free from the world's encumbrances so that you may do what He has called you to do.

- It is Satan's agenda to keep you distracted and troubled by the world to keep you from doing God's will.

Closing Comments

How did the peace that Christ give a by-product of knowing Him?

- You don't work to receive it, it is a result of having a relationship with Him.
- The peace of God comes as Christians grow in their relationship with the Lord...

Phil 4:6-7 - Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

How does the peace of God guard our hearts and minds?

It reminds us that God is in control and thus keeps both our thoughts and emotions from running wild and worrying about what we can not control.

How does the peace of God surpass all understanding?

The inner peace in the midst of turmoil that Christ gives is observed by those who do not know Him and seen as a curious thing. They don't understand it because they have not experienced it.

Can you think of a time when the Lord gave you a peace that surpassed all understanding?

If you have not experienced the peace which surpasses all understanding, I'd encourage you to give Jesus a try. I did when I became perplexed by world events in the midst of the fall of the Soviet Union. News reporters were gushing that it was time to cash in our peace dividends but it seemed even more destabilizing than before since all those nuclear weapons were now in the hands of an increasingly desperate people. I had been reading a book on Bible prophecy that my father-in-law had given me and all these events made sense in light of what the Bible said would happen prior to the Lord's return. It had seemed like we had just entered an era where...

1Thes 5:3 - For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

I thought that if the Bible could make sense of world events, maybe it was also right about Jesus. It suddenly occurred to me that in God's eyes, I was a lost sinner and that if I didn't have Jesus in my life that I'd be going to hell. Well it was a no-brainer, I prayed that Jesus would

come into my life and He did. I knew instantly that my life was changed forever at that moment. I had the peace which surpasses all understanding.

How about you? If you haven't experienced the peace of God, you can before you leave here today...

Jesus has already taken the initiative to save you...

- He paid the penalty for the sins of all who trust in Him
- He provided His Word so that we may know the Truth.
- He brought you here today.
- And if this message is resonating with you it is because He has already prepared your heart.

All that is left is for you to respond to Him

Romans 10:13 - whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Don't let this moment pass you by, there are no guarantees that God will give you another opportunity...

2 Cor 6:2 - Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

If you haven't received Jesus in your life but you want to, we are going to have a moment of silent prayer so that you may ask Jesus to come into your life. Just pray something like this:

Heavenly Father, I know that I am a sinner. Please forgive my sins. Thank you for sending Jesus to pay the penalty for my sins. And thank you for raising Him from the dead so that we may know the truth about eternal life. Please help me to trust in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In Jesus Christ's name I ask, Amen.

If you pray a prayer like that believing that God recognizes the death of Jesus as full payment for your sins and that Jesus was resurrected, He will save you. You don't have to get the words just like I said them. It's not a special incantation that saves you, it is believing in Jesus.

One last thing before we close in prayer... if you are going to pray for Jesus to come into your heart this morning, it is important to tell someone. Let me know me at the end of the service, I'd love to rejoice with you. If you don't believe the good news about Jesus enough to tell others about His saving you, it is not real in your life yet...

Romans 10:9 - if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

All right, lets bow our heads for a moment of silent prayer then I will close our prayer time...