

One Another – Pursue Peace

Text : **Romans 12: 14-21 ; I Thessalonians 5: 9-15**

INTRODUCTION :

A. What is the most obvious difference between Christianity and Muslims?

1. We both worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
2. We share many common concepts of right and wrong. (*Theft, murder, adultery*)
3. Christians don't kill people who disagree with them or evangelize by conquest.

B. Living peacefully with others is a fundamental premise of Christianity.

1. Paul commanded it to every congregation except at Philippi. (*strive 2gthr w/ 1 mind*)
 - a. Rome ... Do your best to be at peace with everyone. (*conquerors*)
 - b. Corinth ... Don't divide the church or seek prominence (*Competitive*)
 - c. Galatia ... Teach the same thing, leave ethnicity out of it. (*Jew vs Gentile*)
 - d. Ephesus ... Most famous unity chapter in the bible. (*Chapter 4 .. unity & bond*)
 - e. Thessalonica ... They should not let their doubts divide them.
2. All of the general letters to the church as a whole included appeals to be at peace.
 - a. **Heb. 12: 14** – Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.
 - b. **James 3: 16-18** For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. ¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. ¹⁸ And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.
 - c. **I Pet. 3: 11** – He must turn away from evil and do good; (**Psa. 34:14 .. fear God**) He must seek peace and pursue it.
 - d. **II Pet. 3: 14b** – ... be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,
 - e. **Jude 17-19** ... Three out of 25 verses devoted to peace and unity.
3. Jesus Himself taught the value of promoting peace.

Matt. 5: 9 – Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

C. Peace has long been the prayerful greeting of God's people.

1. For Example : **I Pet. 1:2** – Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;
2. All of Paul's epistles start with "Grace to you and peace ..."
3. Jews still greet each other by saying, "*Shalom.*" which means peace.

Since God obviously places a high value on this subject it is one we should revisit from time to time so we couldn't leave it out of a "One Another" series.

I. God wants peace in His church because it is within His nature.

- A. Six times in the N.T. God is referred to as "The God of peace."
 - 1. **I Thes. 5: 23** – Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - 2. See also : **Rom. 15: 33, 16: 20 ; Phil. 4: 9 ; Heb. 13: 20 ; I Cor. 14: 33**
- B. Jesus is referred to as "The Lord of peace." **II Thes. 3: 16** (**Isa 9:6** .. Prince of peace)
- C. That which we preach is called "The gospel of peace." **Eph. 6: 15**
- D. The presence of the Spirit of God within us produces peace.

Gal. 5: 22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, self-control; ...

II. Though required of Christians, peace is not typical of those who are in the world.

- A. People in the world do not have the character required for peace. (*"me" focused*)
 - 1. **Gal. 5: 19-21** Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, **20** idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, **21** envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, ...
 - 2. All of these things are obstacles to peace. (**strife, jealousy, dissensions, factions**)
- B. When these things were present at Corinth, the Apostle told them they were NOT spiritual. (KJV = Carnal)

I Cor. 3: 1-4 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. **2** I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, **3** for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? **4** For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men?

(*Must change from "Me" to "thee"*)
- C. The difference is focus :
 - 1. People of the world are ME focused. (e.g. chapter **14**)
 - 2. Christians are focused outward at others. (e.g. **Phil. 2**)

D. The inward focus of non-Christians prevents their living in peace. (*ME attitude*)

1. Slightly below 50% of marriages end in divorce because people go into it to receive.
(*Statistic dropped a little because people are not even getting married, cohabiting.*)
2. The attitude of the world is obvious at children's sporting events.
 - a. The example of the parents makes it difficult to teach sportsmanship to children.
 - b. Soccer game was stopped because of the conduct of the parents. (*on the field*)

*** *Like a stream feeds a river, the source from which peace flows is the heart.***

III. As Christians we are commanded to actively pursue peace. (*Not passive*)**A. Peace is more than the absence of open conflict or war.**

1. That which is translated peace (*eirene*) carries with it a much broader meaning.
 - a. Rest ... quietness ... tranquility
 - b. Exempt from rage
 - c. Harmony, concord, etc. (*These are all conditions of heart.*)
2. Hostilities stopped along the border of North & South Korea, but there is no peace.
3. Many marriages and congregations have a ceasefire, but no real peace.
 - a. Negative emotions lurk in the heart, but they are restrained.
 - b. Over the years pressures build until they eventually erupt like a sealed steam pot.

*** *Real peace flows from a loving / forgiving the heart.***

B. True peace requires work to accomplish.

1. **Rom. 14: 19-20** So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. **20** Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. ... (*He referred to people as "the work of God."*)
2. We must seek and pursue peace with diligence. (*It doesn't just come, or come easily.*)
 - a. **II Pet. 3: 14** – Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless
 - b. **Eph. 4: 1-3** Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, **2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, **3** being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (*diligent = great effort, one's best*)
 - c. Compare ... **II Tim. 2: 15** – Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

3. Peace requires a change of lifestyle.

- a. **II Tim. 2: 22** – Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.
- b. Stop pursuing the self-centered lifestyle (lusts) and pursue holiness, love.

C. Living in peace requires discipline.

1. **Heb. 12: 9-15** Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us for our good*, so that we may share His holiness. ¹¹ All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. ¹² Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, ¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that *the limb* which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. ¹⁴ Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵ See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that *no root of bitterness* springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;

(Righteousness motivates the pursuit of peace.)

2. **Matt 18: 15-17** If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, *you have won your brother*. ¹⁶ But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. ¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax

- a. The objective is peace ... to “have won your brother.” (cf. – **Prov. 18: 19**)
- b. This process does more than stop negative actions, it reconciles hearts.
- c. It lets the steam out of the seething pot before it explodes.

D. Peace in any group requires structure to prevent competing interests.

1. There must be structure in the home.

- a. Who will work to earn ?
- b. Who will care for the children ?
- c. Who does which chore ?

2. There must be structure in the church.

- a. **I Thes. 5: 12-13** But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, ¹³ and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.

- b. God gave His church structure so that steam would not build up.

* Each of us must cooperate with the elders in creating an atmosphere of peace.

IV. We are not required to have peace at any price.

A. Some rules have absolutely no exceptions.

1. “Thou shall have no other gods before me.” *It is always and forever wrong.*
2. “The wages of sin is death.” *Anyone / everyone guilty of sin is separated from God.*

B. The command to live in peace with others has two exceptions.

Rom 12: 18 – If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace.

1. “If possible”

- a. It is not always possible to live in peace. (*David wanted peace with Saul, but ...*)
- b. During times of persecution both the Romans and the Jews refused peace with us.

2. “so far as it depends on you,”

- a. **Prov. 18: 19** – A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, ...
- b. There are times when the other party refuses to live in peace. *“It takes two to tango.”*

C. The exception can never be allowed to become the rule.

1. When both parties become unyielding both have sinned.
2. *“It’s not my fault, he just won’t get along.”* Translation ... *He won’t admit I’m right.*
3. We must learn to live **Phil 2** as our daily walk.
4. Love in one’s heart causes him not to seek his own.
 - a. **I Cor. 13: 5** – (Love) does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,
 - b. **I Cor. 8: 13** – Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble. (*sincerely – heartfelt*)

D. Sometimes peace requires distance. (*Christians fled the persecution, didn’t fight.*)

1. Paul and Barnabas separated over the disagreement concerning John Mark ... **Act 15**
2. One whose spouse refused to stay with him as a Christian was free to leave, BUT separation was neither required nor encouraged.
 - a. **I Cor. 7: 15-16** But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. ¹⁶ For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?
 - b. Example : A Muslim person would not stay with a spouse who converted.

V. One cannot withhold the gospel to prevent conflict.

A. When the Jews tried to prevent Christians from sharing the gospel, they refuse.

Acts 5: 27-32 When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them, ²⁸ saying, “We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” ²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. ³⁰ The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. ³¹ He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. ³² And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.”

(*Satan has tried to stop the gospel from the beginning.*)

B. You and I have been commissioned to be His witnesses today.

1. As we go about in the world we are to tell people the good news. **Mk 16: 15-16**
2. We are to teach people about the Christ and make disciples. **Matt 28: 18-20**
3. This will cause us conflict on the earth. **Matt. 10: 16f**
4. The conflict will not come from us. (*Conflict is contrary to our goal.*)
 - a. That which we preach is “the gospel of peace;” **Eph. 6: 15**
 - b. **James 3: 18** – And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.
5. **John 3: 20** – For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

CONCLUSION :

A. I leave you with the words of Jesus.

1. **Matt. 5: 9** – Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
2. **Mark 9: 50** – Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

B. And with these words of the Apostle to the gentiles.

1. **Rom 12: 18** – If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.
2. **II Cor. 13: 11**– Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

INVITATION :

Most important is to be at peace with God. Jesus gives peace. **Rom. 5**

Lesson Texts :**Romans 12: 14-21**

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. **15** Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. **16** Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. **17** Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. **18** If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. **19** Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,” says the Lord. **20** “BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD.” **21** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

I Thessalonians 5: 9-15

9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, **10** who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. **11** Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

12 But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, **13** and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. **14** We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. **15** See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.