

Peace: the Wholeness of Life – Isaiah Dau

Bible readings: John 14:27; Matthew 5:9.

What is peace?

Peace is the wholeness of life, *shalom*, nothing missing, nothing broken. It is soundness, wholeness and health. Peace is more than just the absence of war and conflict. It refers to life being holistic, encompassing all of the physical and the spiritual.

What are the implications of peace?

The meaning of peace may be understood in its implications:

First, there is **peace from above**, or the absence of hostility between God and us. This comes as the result of the sacrificial death of Christ, please read Colossians 1:20. And it produces the following:

- Instead of hostility and wrath from God, we are now His friends, Romans 5:1-3.
- Instead of condemnation by God, there is justification and adoption into His family, Romans 5:1, 8:1.
- Instead of guilt before God, there is a clear conscience that functions in the way God intends 2 Corinthians 1:12; Hebrews 10:22.
- Instead of bondage to sin, there is freedom and power over sin. We can choose to live a better way, Galatians 5:1, 13.
- Living in true peace therefore means that we are in good relationship with God. God has forgiven us our sins and has made us His children. We have been reconciled to Him through the death of His Son on the cross for us. We are therefore not His enemies but His children, 2 Corinthians 5:15-21; Romans 5:1-5.

Second, there is **peace from within**, or peace as a result of a regenerated human heart through the work of the Holy Spirit. This is being at peace because of the condition of the heart. It may be explained in the following ways.

- This experienced peace is a fruit of the Spirit cultivated in our lives, Galatians 5:22.
- It is so deep and such a profound calmness of attitude it is often more than our human understanding can grasp or explain, Philippians 4:7.

- The consequences of this peace include delight in the Lord and His ways, a desire and determination to serve Him and obey His commands. This peace also expresses itself by our loving God and our loving our neighbours, Romans 8:6; 14:17; Galatians 6:16.
- This peace is the inner assurance that God has all that goes on in our lives under control. Peace in that regard enables us to deal with anxiety and fear that so often threaten our lives. Philippians 4:4-8 urges us to be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and petition to make our requests known to God. And the peace of God which surpasses human understanding will keep our minds and hearts in Christ Jesus. Therefore it is not only important to be at peace with God. We must also be at peace within ourselves.

Third, there is **peace between the community of believers**. Our quality of relationships shows what peace is. A community of believers is a community of peace. This could be expressed in the following ways:

- Peace with God and peace within us result in peace between us. If we truly have peace with God, we will have peace with one another. Anyone who has peace with God will have peace with fellow human beings. We must therefore try hard to be at peace with all people, please read Hebrews 12:14. We must cry peace and try our best to create an environment in which peace will thrive. But as Martin Luther King admonishes us, "many men cry peace! Peace! But they refuse to do the things that make for peace".
- Peace in community is actualised in an atmosphere of equality. This means there should be no discrimination in the community of peace. No racial, gender, age, tribal or colour discrimination. For there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female in Christ, Galatians 3:28.
- Peace in community does not come easily. It requires believers to make an effort to achieve it, 2 Corinthians 13:11; Colossians 3:15, 1 Thessalonians 5:13.

- The ultimate result of peace is the unity of the brethren, described in Psalm 133. Peace results in the unity of believers, where race, colour and background do not matter, but Christ becomes all in all, Ephesians 2:14-16.

Pillars of Peace

Peace stands on pillars. Like a house, peace can collapse if it is not based on a solid foundation. So what are the pillars of true peace? Let us briefly consider the following:

- **Forgiveness and reconciliation:** what led to a situation in which peace was needed was some form of conflict. To resolve outstanding problems, there must be genuine forgiveness and reconciliation. Only then can peace truly prevail.
- **Understanding:** when we fail to understand one another, conflict results. When there is conflict, there can be no peace. But when we truly understand one another, it becomes easier to resolve conflict and therefore enhance peace between us. Whatever it takes, we must try very hard to understand one another, in order to maintain peace.
- **Truth:** truth and peace walk hand in hand. True peace must be based on truth. Without truth peace cannot survive for long. Where there is truth, peace prevails. Truth hides nothing because it fears nothing.
- **Negotiation:** to negotiate is to present one's view point in a two-way dialogue with an opponent. When rivals negotiate they chart a course for possible agreement. The end result of such a process is, in most cases, peace. If opponents or even enemies refuse to negotiate, they cannot achieve peace. When we give negotiation a chance we give peace a chance.
- **Patience:** peace is a process and therefore requires endurance, like a very long walk. True peace is not a quick fix but a taxing journey that demands patience and longsuffering. The tree of peace is irrigated by the mighty waters of patience. Its leaves refuse to dry up in the scorching sun of impatience and bitterness. Like salt seasoning choice meat to the taste of the eater, patience seasons peace, preserving it for our children who will follow us.

- **Love:** love covers a multitude of sin. Built on love and respect for others it is not easy for peace to fizzle out. Christ was the greatest peacemaker because he was the greatest lover. If the love of Christ, the Prince of peace, does not rule in our hearts, we cannot be peacemakers. But when the peace of Christ reigns in our hearts, we can live in peace with fellow human beings and we become instruments of peace.

Conclusion

Peace is the wholeness of life. To be at peace with God, to be at peace with oneself and to be at peace with others, is to be whole. It is to be able to be useful, like a clay water pot or ziiir, useful in one big piece but not when broken into pieces. When we live in peace the following become real in our lives and relationships:

- **Life becomes normal.** This is why peace is wholeness, normality and integral; nothing is missing, nothing is broken.
- **Opportunity prevails:** conflict destroys potential and opportunity. Peace makes them available for us to develop and progress. Individuals and whole communities benefit.
- **Freedom becomes real and meaningful:** in peace we can freely associate with everyone else. Our vertical and horizontal relationships grow and solidify. In peace, we can freely worship God and meaningfully relate to all of our fellow human beings.

Discussion guide

Using this chapter and Scriptures quoted:

1. Why do you think “peace from above” is put *first* in the list for understanding peace?

Consider Jesus’ words: “I do not give to you as the world gives”, John 14:27, together with Paul’s description, “by making peace through (Christ’s) blood shed on the cross”, Colossians 1:19-20.

2. Is it possible to live in true peace anywhere without a good relationship with God?

Why? Why not?

3. Why does a person “at peace within him or herself” find it easier to live at peace with those around and about?

The more we obey God the greater our confidence is in God. True or false? Why?

4. Hebrews 12:14 begins, "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy".

Share the best efforts you have seen being made by communities to live in peace.

What more would you like to see being done? How? By whom?

5. Of the six suggested "pillars of peace", which ones can be understood well by thinking about Philippians 2:4 and 21?

How is it best possible to look out for the interests of everyone – not just your own interests? Give examples if you can.

6. Why are patience and love both essential in the role of peacemaking?

Consider Romans 15:1-7.

Consider Colossians 1:9-12.

7. The angels who praised God at Jesus' birth blessed *peace to people on earth*, Luke 2:14.

Since Jesus is the "Prince of Peace", Isaiah 9:6, how should Christians, His followers, live? Be as practical as you can in your answer.