

Putting First Things First (Increasing in Holiness)

The Holiness of Peace

Intro: Our fourth priority for this year is increasing in holiness. Holiness might be simply defined as sharing in the character of God, because He is a holy God. Paul gives a detailed description of this holiness in Galatians five. He calls these qualities “the fruit of the Spirit.” In other words, they are the holy qualities that the Holy Spirit produces in Christians that make them holy like God.

The third word in Paul’s list, viz. peace, is not one that we would ordinarily associate with holiness. In fact, we might even imagine that being holy might cause us to be in a state of perpetual inward agitation and conflict with others. Yet one of the things that makes God and His dwelling wholly different from our world and the people in it is the peace of His being and the peace of His dwelling. Can we imagine heaven in any other way other than a place of sublime peace?

Yet the good news of the gospel is that that heavenly peace has been brought down to earth and can become a distinguishing feature of those who serve God.

THE NATURE OF THIS PEACE

This peace is not....

Merely the absence of conflict; we cannot opt out of the battle between good and evil and the conflict that it produces. That struggle against evil stands behind Jesus’ statement of Mt. 10:

Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. (Mt. 10:34)

Becoming so stoic and uninvolved in life that we feel nothing or want nothing. The ancient Greek philosophers sought peace in principles like death of emotion, lack of desire, indifference to life, and a lack of dependence upon others. Having an empty soul is not the same thing as experiencing peace.

This peace is...

It is a state of mind and life in which there is active fellowship, harmony and concord between man and God and between man and man.

It is interesting that the Greek greeting was “charein” meaning “joy be to you.” The Hebrew greeting was “shalom” meaning “peace be to you.” This Hebrew greeting did not merely mean may your life be free of conflict, but let it be full of the well-being that comes through the blessing of God. Not surprisingly then, the apostle Paul and others combined both greetings in their letters—“grace and peace.”

This divine peace is the peace of a quiet conscience, of a restful mind, of a surrendered will, of a hopeful heart, of loving fellowship.

Would you like to know this peace? How can we experience it?

THE SOURCE OF THIS PEACE IS GOD.

He is the “God of peace” (1 Thes. 5:23), called that 6 times in the Scripture. He has made peace possible through the coming of His Son!

It was prophesied He would be the "Prince of peace"

“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. (Is. 9:6)

When he was born the angels of God proclaimed

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.” (Luke 2:14)

Peter said this was the message God preached to Israel:

“The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)— (Acts 10:36)

The result of His work and word is a three-fold peace...

Peace with God

Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (Rom. 5:1)

Peace with others

For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; (Eph. 2:14-17)

Peace within

“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, nor let it be fearful. (Jn. 14:27)

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.” (Jn. 16:33)

THE KEYS TO THIS PEACE

Trusting in God's providence

“The steadfast of mind Thou wilt keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in Thee. (Is. 26:3)

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 15:13)

Loving God's word

Those who love Thy law have great peace, and nothing causes them to stumble. (Ps. 119:165)

Submitting to God's rule

for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 14:17)

For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, (Rom. 8:5-6)

Depending upon God's help

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 comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:6-7)

Pursuing peace with God's creation

So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. (Rom. 14:19)

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. (Col. 3:15)

“And let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it. (1 Pet. 3:11)

However it should be remembered that the pursuit of peace does not require compromise of truth

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. (Jas. 3:17)

Conclusion: Those tornadoes in the Midwest this week are yet again a reminder of life's unpredictability and the brutality with which misfortune can strike. We cannot change the world in which we live; but we can change the way we live in this world.

**We can live in peace. Will you make peace with God and others around you?
Will you give your life to the Prince of Peace?**