

## 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. <sup>17</sup> But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. <sup>18</sup> 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? <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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, <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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, <sup>28</sup> 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.” <sup>29</sup> But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. <sup>30</sup> The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. <sup>31</sup> 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. <sup>32</sup> 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.