

The Peace We Have in Christ

Rev. Taek Kim

Scripture: Colossians 1:15-20

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; ¹⁶ for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

A minister was finishing up a workshop on. At the end of the workshop he gave out small wooden crosses to each married couple. He said, "Place this cross in the room in which you fight the most and you will be reminded of God's commands and you won't argue as much." One woman came up after the service and said, "You'd better give me five."

A little girl was being punished by eating alone in the corner of the dining room. The family paid no attention to her until they heard her pray: "I thank Thee, Lord, for preparing a table before me in the presence of mine enemies."

Whether funny or not, we all have circumstances and times when conflicts arise, tensions grow, misunderstandings are not cleared up, and forgiveness is not readily offered or really accepted.

Sometimes peace seems like a nice thing to have, but not something we can easily obtain or maintained. You can look around the world as well as within your own heart, and peace can be hard to find at times.

Regarding Peace, writer Lloyd Cory included in his book of quotes that, "Peace is the brief glorious moment in history when everybody stands around reloading."

How sadly funny, but sometimes true. When it comes to times when there are conflicts between people, the reloading times can be literally when both are out of breath, out of words, and out of verbal or other kinds of ammo. Other times the brief moment of peace is when everyone is stuffing their faces at the table, rather putting good food than spewing words that create more conflict and hurt, even when naps and sleep are brief moments of rest, especially when the conflict or battle at hand seems to be overwhelming and unceasing.

Sometimes when we read the Bible or hear the Word of God being read or talked about, we just can't help but think something like, "Yeah, right. I live in the real world. I wish it were like the way the Bible described things could be or even how I could be."

Unfortunately, just like every person who ever lived, from the first two people, Adam and Eve, we all make mistakes.

Could you imagine the argument and fighting Adam and Eve had after they ate of the tree they were forbidden to eat from? I hope that they didn't talk about it every again after being kicked out of the garden. But knowing human nature, I'm sure it came up here and there when things were tough for them and their family.

It's hard not want to blame others when things do not go right. Just as Adam and Eve, we can be tempted to lie about them or cover them up, blame someone else, or even wait to see if the other person will give in and say they are wrong when in fact you were.

Unfortunately, this is human nature, to not actually say "I'm sorry" at times, or to ask for forgiveness when needed. Instead of fixing relationship and mistakes, no matter who is at fault, sometimes one person who can help restore things doesn't take that step for one reason or another. And things just get worse. And when forgiveness is not offered or truly accepted, then even bigger problems arise, not always immediately, but in time.

Today we are reminded that God's plan is to restore everything, to make things right, and to use us who are imperfect to do his perfect will.

Today we are reminded that we have peace with God through Jesus Christ. With that peace in Christ we are also to remember to live in peace with one another.

Peace is not always to be thought about in relation to conflict. The peace in Christ we have is also to sustain us when we face difficult times in life, when we go through circumstances that are not to do committing sins and need for forgiveness.

The peace we have in Christ carries us when it seems nothing else can.

Peace is not the absence of the storms in life, of certain emotions that seem never to leave us. Peace that is found in Christ actually transcends understanding (Philippians 4:6), at the same time, though not understood, you surely know and experience that peace in Christ when you have it.

It's a peace that runs deep within, such as Horatio Spafford, a businessman in Chicago, experienced in light of tragedy in his life. He sent his wife and three daughters to Europe by ship while he remained back in the states, intending to join them later. In route there was a terrible storm and a shipwreck during which their three daughters drowned. Mrs. Spafford made it to safety and wired back saying, "All of our daughters have been lost. Only I have been saved."

He took the next vessel. As they came near the place where his daughters drowned, the skipper of the ship pointed to the place where the ship had gone down. It was there on the deck of the ship he wrote these stirring words:

When Peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
“It is well, it is well with my soul.”

--John Haggai, *How to Win over Worry*

In light of this story, the understanding of peace is not about replying with something like “It’s all okay” or “It’ll all be ok.” or “It’ll all just work out.” Sure, in some cases, those words do work and fit. And sure, one day God will renew all things and make all things right. Yet, as we walk on earth, we can sometimes have to admit to things are no doubt incredibly difficult, challenging, depressing, terrible, wrong, broken, hurtful, sad, anger-filled, and all that we would like to think does not exist with peace.

Just as hope exists when things look bleak, and just as courage is not the absence of fear but the ability to act rightly and lovingly in the presence of fear, peace is that gift from God we have in Christ that allows us to see, face, and go through even the valley of the shadow of death and have within us the words that with Christ it is truly “well with our souls.”

As God tells us in the Bible, 2 Corinthians 4:7-9,

“⁷ But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. ⁸ We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed...”

Though we may go through afflictions, events that perplex and try to bring us to a place of no hope, persecution, and even brought to our knees emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and physically, the peace and hope we have in Christ allows us to persevere and not be driven to utter despair, forgotten or forsaken, or crushed and destroyed.

Yet this peace can elude us, even as Christians, when we forget that Christ made it possible to have peace with God, and for us to have peace with one another. As God told us in the Bible, we cannot claim to have the love of God in us when do not love those around us. And we are called to the ministry of reconciliation. As Christ forgave us, we are to forgive others. Just as we pray every week in the Lord’s Prayer, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us.”

Among the many ways we can remember that peace is dependent on Christ having paid the penalty for our sins, as well as dependent on us accepting and giving the same forgiveness to those around us, just simply look to the cross for a moment. See how the long vertical beam of the cross can remind us of the peace we have with God through the blood of Christ, his death

and resurrection. And the horizontal beam can remind us of the peace through reconciliation God calls us to have with one another.

Peace and reconciliation are not needed if there is no conflict, no fighting, no sins to be forgiven, or other types of walls that divide. God is telling us that he knows there will be conflicts, sins committed, fights, and all that has and will continue to happen in our world and in our lives. It's what we do as followers of Jesus Christ that determines whether we walk in the peace we have in Christ or not.

What Christ has done, remember and continue to hold on the peace you have in Christ with God. And continue to persevere and do all you can to seek peace and reconciliation with those in your life that God calls you to have peace with. Sometimes that means forgiving and praying for the person, knowing that God will take care of him or her. Sometimes it means to work as hard as possible to make peace possible in the relationship. And sometimes it means making peace as a last parting act, entrusting each other to God as you go your own ways.

And when it comes to difficulties in life and loss in life, and though during holidays such as Christmas there seems only the emphasis of joy and happiness, the gift of peace God gives us through Christ is that peace that allows us to see by faith what we cannot see with our eyes, and a peace knowing he walks with us and those we love.

So today, take a hold of the gift of peace we have with God through Christ, placing our faith in Christ for the forgiveness of our sin through his death on the cross. We truly have peace with God in life and even in death.

And let us remember we are to share that same peace with everyone, so that they may know that peace too, the peace of knowing they are forgiven by God and when they have sinned against you, by you too.

May the gift of peace be a real gift in your life, peace with God and with one another.

Remember the cross and look to it to remember the peace you have with God, represented by the vertical beam, that is to allow you to have peace with one another through Christ, representing the horizontal beam. And each day, begin and end each day with thanking God and entrusting your life to him, saying you will live your life for him, no doubt asking for God's help to do so...when you rise and when you go to bed.

So daily take up your cross and follow Christ, rededicating yourself to God with great thanksgiving and always remembering the great gift of peace you have in Christ.

Amen.