

The Shalom of God

Jo Gardner, Adullam News, November 1997

Biblical peace is more than an absence of conflict or war. It has a very positive meaning. God's peace – *shalom* – comprises the idea of completeness, soundness, and wellbeing. It includes the notion of being in harmony with others (1 Kings 5:12). It can include material prosperity or physical safety. It has relevance to all aspects of life: personal, family, social, national, international, creational, etc., but basic to everything else is the idea of spiritual wellbeing (psalm 34).

Peace spiritually is always associated with grace (Romans 1:7); life (Romans 8:6); righteousness and joy (Romans 14:17), and truth - and never with wickedness (Psalm 85:10; Isaiah 48:18,22; 57:2,19-21). It is often used in greeting and benedictions (1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:20f [cf 2 Peter 3:14]) because the upheaval and chaos in the universe brought about by human sin and rebellion against God means that peace is a rare commodity, though fervently sought by all. People are often willing to give up prized freedoms in exchange for it, but true *shalom* only comes as a gift from God.

Peace is a characteristic of the Messianic Age (Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:1-9; Haggai 2:7-9). Christ is known as the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6f; Jeremiah 33:15f; Ezekiel 34:23f; Micah 5:5; Zechariah 9:9f), is the way to peace (Luke 1:79; 2:14,29f), and is the one who bestows peace (Mark 5:34; Luke 7:50; John 20:19,21,26). Jesus is our peace (Ephesians 2:14). We are called to follow His example and be messengers of peace (Luke 10:5f; Acts 10:36).

The sinful man needs to realise that his sin is utterly abhorrent and deserving of God's wrath and come to repentance of his rebellion against God and His laws, together with the need to accept that the sacrifice of Christ on the cross as the only way the enmity of his sin can be removed and he can be at peace with God (Romans 5:1; Colossians 1:20).

For assurance of peace to reign continually in our hearts, this must be followed by voluntary submission to Christ as Lord, and therefore to His Word of truth as the only rule of life. Then inward peace can follow and be maintained unhindered by the world's strife (John 14:27; 16:33; Philippians 4:7).

A life in which prayer is a regular and serious communing with God is a life which will know much of the peace and power of God. The Holy Spirit works in us forming the fruit of the Spirit of which one part is peace (Galatians 5:22). The Holy Spirit's witness within also works on the principle of peace. If our peace is disturbed we can be sure we need to investigate and take action in some way or other.

Sin can bring turmoil to our hearts and hidden sin rob us of peace. There will be guilt, condemnation, and fear. But praise God, acknowledgement of the sin and a turning in repentance to Him will restore us to a right relationship with Him and peace. False teaching also can disturb our peace, or a decision which is out of God's will for us. It is important that we take note and act as God directs.

The phrase 'let go and let God' is deceptive (Ephesians 4:3; Hebrews 12:14). God expects our active co-operation in seeking to eliminate discord, to promote harmony and the true function of the Body, but not at the expense of truth (Romans 14:19; 1 Corinthians 14:33). In the sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:9) peacemakers are called 'blest'.

Since making peace is positive, this does not refer to those who compromise to avoid conflict or war at any cost. The sort of people meant here are those who 'seek peace and pursue it' (Psalm 34:14) and who, by the truth, harmony, and control in which they habitually live, are a source of peace wherever they are (Psalm 120; Romans 14:9; 2 Timothy 2:22). The peacemaker pursues justice and seeks to actively overcome evil with good, i.e. he is true to the nature of God Himself.

If we are faithless, He remains faithful (2 Timothy 2:13). God's almighty heart beats for us and it is in His steadfast love that we find final security and peace.