

INTRODUCTION

Is peace possible? It's an important question to consider as we read about the ongoing civil violence in Iraq. When we see the destruction created from the war between Israel and Hezbollah, we wonder if peace is possible in the Middle East. The conflict between the Jews and the Arabs isn't anything new. In fact this conflict traces its roots all the way back to the time of Abraham. Abraham had two sons, Ishmael, who became the father of the Arab people and Isaac through whom the Jews trace their lineage. There was animosity between Ishmael and Isaac four thousand years ago, and this family feud continues to this day.

It's no coincidence so much of the attention of the world is focused on Iraq and the Middle East. The books of Zechariah and Revelation predict the final epic battle of humankind will take place in this region. For those of us who understand a little about Biblical prophecy it seems all these nations are like pieces on a chess board being set up for the this final battle.

John F. Kennedy once said, "Mankind must put an end to war or war will put an end to mankind." We should all strive for peace, and pray for peace. But as long as there are evil men like Adolph Hitler, Osama Bin Laden, and Saddam Hussein in positions of power, good people will have to fight for human rights and freedom.

Is peace possible? Jesus predicted there would always be wars and rumors of wars, and history has verified His words. In 1968 the respected historian, Will Durant, wrote in his book *The Lessons of History*: "In the last 3,421 years of recorded history only 268 have seen no war." (p.81) The twentieth century was the bloodiest century in the history of mankind, but at our current rate, the 21st century will win the prize.

Peace is a popular topic. I Googled the word "peace" and found there are 480 million links addressing the topic of peace. Jesus was called the Prince of Peace, and when He was born the angels announced, "Peace on Earth goodwill toward men." But the peace Jesus came to offer is a unique kind of peace. Author and Radio Commentator Dr. Tony Beam wrote: "Didn't the Prince of Peace promise He would leave His peace behind? The problem with the modern day peace seeker is they miss the message of the ancient peace speaker. Peace is not the lack of conflict in the physical world. It is the presence of God dwelling in the heart of His people."

So is peace possible? Absolutely! In Colossians 3:15-17, we discover the reality of God's peace:

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

As you read this passage of scripture there are three themes that rise to the surface. (1) The peace of Christ; (2) The word of Christ; and (3) The name of Christ. If you want to experience life overflowing, these are three essential elements. Let's talk about each one. First:

1. LET THE PEACE OF CHRIST OVERRULE YOUR FEARS

We read in verse 15, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts." The word "rule" means to serve as a judge or umpire. It means to overrule. In a court of law, an attorney may stand up and say, "Objection your honor!" If the judge decides the objection is out of order, he or she simply says, "Objection overruled!" (Which means, "Sit down and be quiet.") That's what the peace of Christ can do for you. When fear leaps to its feet and says, "Boo!" The peace of God immediately calls for order and says, "Boo overruled! Fear, sit down and be quiet!"

We live in a scary world—and it seems to be getting scarier. Authorities in England disrupted a terrorist plot to take various liquids aboard a jet and then mix them in flight to form an explosive. Who would have ever thought you couldn't carry shampoo or contact lens solution on an airplane anymore? In a scary world desperate for peace, the Bible says peace is possible in three different directions.

(1) You can have peace with God (ETERNAL PEACE)

Peace with God is the most important kind of peace to have. We read in Colossians 1:21, "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior." It's as if our rebellious, sinful nature declared war against a Holy God. In our old sinful condition, we had no peace with God. Many people are afraid of death, and peace with God is the only way to have your fear of death overruled.

Sometimes people talk about "making their peace with God." We actually are incapable of "making our peace" with God. We have no terms to offer Him. The only way to find peace with God is to accept the terms of the peace treaty Jesus offered when He died on the cross. Colossians 1:20 says Jesus "made peace through his blood, shed on the cross." And Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The most important peace you can ever experience is to be at peace with your Creator.

(2) You can have peace in the midst of pain (INTERNAL PEACE)

Not only can you have peace *with* God you can have the peace *of* God. The Apostle Paul was in prison when he wrote several of his letters, including Colossians and Philippians. In Philippians 4:7 he wrote "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." As he wrote those words, Paul was chained to a Roman soldier whose job it was to guard him. As he thought about being chained to that human guard, it reminded him that as a child of God, we are chained to and guarded by God's peace—and it is a peace that is so powerful it's beyond our understanding. Some people think they must understand why something is happening in order to have peace. But God promises a peace that doesn't require us to understand why we are going through a particular situation.

Jesus promised us this inner peace when He said, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

(John 16:33) Jesus promised life will be filled with troubling experiences, and He also promised that you can have peace in the midst of your pain.

One of my favorite scenes from the life of Jesus is described in Mark 4 where Jesus and His disciples were out on a big lake in a little boat in the middle of a dark night. A terrible storm came up and the boat was about to sink. The disciples were terrified by the wind, rain, and the waves. But through it all, do you know where Jesus was? The Bible says he was curled up in the stern of the boat sleeping. That's a perfect picture of the peace of Christ. Peace is not sleeping on a soft bed on a calm quiet night—peace is the ability to doze when you're on a little boat in the middle of a big storm.

We think of peace being the absence of stress—but the Bible teaches peace is the presence of God in the midst of your stress. This phrase "the peace of Christ" assures us we can have the same flesh-and-blood peace Jesus experienced. The believers in the book of Acts experienced this supernatural peace of Christ. It is the peace that caused Stephen's face to shine like an angel as those jagged stones impacted his body. (Acts 7:60) This is the peace that enabled Peter to sleep soundly on the night before he was to have his head chopped off (Acts 12:6). It is the peace that inspired Paul and Silas to sing songs at midnight in the middle of a dungeon. (Acts 16:25) It is the peace that empowered the prisoner Paul to stand tall on a rolling deck of a ship caught in a violent storm for two weeks (Acts 27:35). This is the same peace that is available to you when you hear about the next terrorist attack. This is the same peace available to you when you get that scary diagnosis from the doctor. This is the same peace available to you when you feel all alone and afraid. Let the peace of Christ overrule your fears!

(3) You can enjoy peace with others (EXTERNAL PEACE)

Verse 15 says, "As members of one body you were called to peace." Not only do we enjoy peace *with* God and the peace *OF* God, we can enjoy peace with others as well. Satan is the great divider. He wants to divide every nation, every church, every marriage and every family. The Holy Spirit binds us together as one. The Bible says, "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:3)

Sadly, too many churches and Christians groups are known more for their fighting and splitting than for their forgiving and submitting. Someone said whenever you have two Baptists you have three opinions. But the peace of Christ allows us to disagree without being disagreeable. There will always be differences of opinions, but when we are walking in the Spirit, the peace of Christ will serve as the "umpire" over our differences, and we will submit to the Spirit of God.

I had a friend who visited an Episcopal Church for the first time. There was a time in the service where the members were asked to "pass the peace." That's something like our fellowship time when we shake hands with each other. My friend didn't know what it meant to "pass the peace" and thought the minister said, "Let's stand and pass the peas." My friend started looking around for a pot of black-eyed peas to pass to someone until he realized the people were shaking hands and hugging while saying, "The peace of Christ." So he got into it like everyone else. That is, until a huge man came toward him with outstretched arms. My friend said, "Sorry, I'm all passed out!" But that's what we should all be doing—passing the peace of Christ to each other. The

second key to experience life overflowing is to:

2. LET THE WORD OF CHRIST OVERTAKE YOUR MIND

Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you." In the next message I am going to talk more about this verse as I speak on "The Kind of Music God Likes." The peace of Christ must can in our hearts and the Word of Christ can dwell in our minds. If you want to find the Word of Christ, simply open your Bible. You find the Word of Christ within the pages on scripture—and not just in the letters written in red. All scripture is written by God and Jesus is God—and the Bible says Jesus IS the Word of God.

We face a problem when we try to substitute our word and our thinking for the Word of Christ. The problem arises when our minds say one thing and the Word of God says just the opposite. Our minds are logical computers. We want to believe only the thing we can see, taste, touch, hear or smell. But the Word of God often presents reality that supercedes the sensory perception of our feeble minds. When there is a conflict between what I think and what the Word of God says, I should surrender to the Word of Christ.

This verse isn't speaking of just knowing the Word of Christ. It means to allow the Word of Christ to dwell richly in your mind. The word "dwell" means to "be at home." It means to be given the run of the house. If you came over to our house to visit we would probably say, "Just make yourself at home!" But how would we react if you walked straight into our closets and started rummaging around? Or if you sat down on the couch and started using my remote control? When we say "make yourself at home" we don't mean for you to make yourself *that* much at home! There's a difference between a guest and someone who dwells in a house. The Word of Christ should dwell—live and have full access—in your mind. God's Word must not be a resident in your mind; it must be the President of your thoughts.

Evidence of a Word-filled mind: Gratitude

Do you know what the evidence is of a mind filled with the Word of Christ? It's not being able to quote scripture, or holiness—and it's not piety or good works. The evidence of a Word-filled mind is gratitude. The common thread pulling these three verses together is gratitude. Verse 15 ends with "and be thankful." Verse 16 speaks about singing with "gratitude in your heart." And verse 17 includes "giving thanks to God the Father." People often ask me how to find God's Will for their lives. The first place to look to find the Will of God is in the Word of God. There are several places where the Bible specifically says, "This is the will of God." One area in which you can know for certain you are following God's will is in being thankful. The Bible says, "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thessalonians 5:18) When you have a thankful heart, you are always looking at your blessings rather than at your blisters. A thankful heart is a sign you are focusing on what you have instead of focusing on what you lack.

I heard a funny story about two old friends, Ed and Johnny, who met on the street after being separated for years. Ed asked, "Johnny, it's good to see you, why are you so sad?" Johnny said, "Well, two months ago, my uncle died and left me \$10,000." Ed said, "That's great!" Johnny

said, "And then one month ago, a cousin I never knew died and left me \$50,000." Ed said, "Wonderful, Johnny, it sound like you've been blessed!" Johnny said, "You don't understand. One week ago, my great aunt died, and left me quarter million dollars." Ed said, "That's great! But I still don't understand why you look do gloomy!" Johnny sighed and said, "This week...nothing." Too many of us are like Johnny. Instead we should be filled with Word of Christ and we should be filled with gratitude.

You can choose to go through life either being humbly grateful or grumbly hateful—the choice is yours. The most joy-filled people are those who are thankful in every situation. Nobody enjoys being around people who are always complaining. You must let the peace of Christ overrule your fears; the Word of Christ overtake your mind; and the last element in experiencing overflowing life is to:

3. LET THE NAME OF CHRIST OVERCOME YOUR NAME

The Bible says in Colossians 3:17, "Whatever you do...do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus." The twin truth verse for this scripture is 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." The only way we can do things for the glory of God is to do them in the name of Jesus. And the Bible says we are to do everything in the name of Jesus. Everything includes *everything!*

Years ago, I used to play in a church softball league. Before each game, the teams would line up for an opening prayer. One team would line up on the first baseline and the other team would line up on the third baseline. We'd all take off our caps and the umpire would ask someone to pray. When I was there, I was usually asked to pray. I'm pretty competitive, so I was always ready to get the game going, so I often would pray a prayer without really thinking about what I was saying. On one particular night, I finished my prayer and without realizing it I closed it by saying, "In Jesus name we play." I completely missed it, but the other guys caught it. Nobody said anything at first, but after a few seconds, they started laughing. You know how you don't really want to laugh sometimes so you hold it in, and then it finally bursts out? That's what happened that night. They guys were laughing and I was saying, "What's so funny?" One of them finally said, "You said, 'in Jesus name we PLAY' instead of 'In Jesus name we PRAY.'" Well, I didn't really like them laughing at me so I had to come up with a reasonable theological excuse so I said, "Well the Bible says we should do all things in the name of Jesus. We should play in the name of Jesus; work in the name of Jesus; eat in the name of Jesus and even sleep in the name of Jesus." The might have bought it...but they kept laughing. All I know is whenever one of them prayed for the rest of the season they ended their prayer with, "In Jesus name we (snicker snicker) Play!"

Key question: Who gets the "credit" for your acts of kindness?

But truthfully, we should do everything in the name of Jesus. Are you doing things in *your* name or in the name of Jesus? Here's the key question to consider: Who gets the "credit" for your acts of kindness? If you perform an act of kindness and don't mention Jesus, then you get the credit. Jesus said if you do your acts of kindness to be seen of men, then the only reward you'll ever receive is the applause of men. But if you do your acts of kindness in Jesus name, you will

receive another reward. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of cold water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward." (Mark 9:41) So make sure you always let the name of Christ overcome your own name.

CONCLUSION

Is peace possible? Can there be peace in the Middle East? With God all things are possible. A more pressing question is, "Is peace possible for you?" In the midst of your pain and suffering, it may seem impossible. But with God all things are possible.

I have always been fascinated by what happened when Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. The Bible says, "As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, 'If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes.'" (Luke 19:41-42). All the inhabitants of Jerusalem could have experienced peace if they had only recognized Jesus as the Messiah. But because they rejected Jesus, they forfeited the peace that could have been theirs. And because they missed this peace, Jesus wept over the city. In the same way Jesus must weep over our world, because millions of people reject Him as the Prince of Peace. The Bible says, "If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river." (Isaiah 48:18) Can you sing that old song that says, "I've got peace like a river, I've got peace like a river. I've got peace like a river in my soul?" Here's how you can let that peace take control of your life. We find this wonderful promise in Isaiah: "You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in You." (Isaiah 26:3)

And that's the kind of peace God offers you. Would you like to obtain that peace? Here's the secret. Did you notice the first words in verses 15 and 16? The word is "let" not "make." Most of us think we can *make* things happen—but when it comes to experiencing peace, we have to *let* it happen. We have to give the peace of Christ permission to overrule our fears. In John 14:1, Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled...." Will you allow the God of all peace to fill your heart and mind with His presence and peace today?

I read recently about a lady who lived on the west coast and served as the pianist at her church. They had a visiting preacher who spoke on what it means to abide in Christ. He stressed this truth several times: "Whatever the circumstances you face, you can always say: 'For this I have Jesus.'" He kept repeating that phrase, "For this I have Jesus." She never realized how soon she would need that truth. After the service her cell phone rang and she learned her mother in Philadelphia had suffered a sudden stroke. Instead of losing control she said, "For this I have Jesus." She was deathly afraid of flying, but she had to book an immediate flight. As she got on the plane and flew across the country she kept repeating, "For this I have Jesus" and she found the ability to fly without fear. When she arrived in Philadelphia she learned her mother had died. Instead of falling apart she said to herself "For this I have Jesus." Later she wrote to the guest preacher and told him how his message had been just for her and throughout her entire ordeal she experienced peace by saying, "For this I have Jesus." Maybe this message is for you today. Who knows whatever you will face in the days to come? Whatever it is, if you are a follower of Jesus you can say, "For this I have Jesus" and you will find His peace flooding your soul!

OUTLINE

1. LET THE PEACE OF CHRIST OVERRULE YOUR FEARS (3:15)

(1) You can have peace with God (eternal)

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." *Romans 5:1*

(2) You can have peace in the midst of pain (internal)

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." *John 16:33*

(3) You can enjoy peace with others (external)

"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." *Ephesians 4:3*

2. LET THE WORD OF CHRIST OVERTAKE YOUR MIND (3:16)

Evidence of a Word-filled mind: Gratitude

"Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." *1 Thessalonians 5:18*

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Key question: Who gets the "credit" for your acts of kindness?

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes