

DAY 1 - (week beginning 24 June 2019)**Read - Ephesians 2:13-18**

"So Christ came and preached the Good News of peace to all..." vs 17a

As Christians we are called to live in unity and warm fellowship with one another. It is tragic that the Church lets God down badly with infighting and criticism instead of love and acceptance. In verse 14, Paul says: "For Christ Himself has brought us peace by making Jews and Gentiles one people". In the place of 'Jews and Gentiles' we could read 'denominations'; 'Christians with different opinions'; 'races'; 'cultures'; 'those with different music styles'; etc.

But Christians are called to not only live together in outward peace, but to live in inward peace. Scott Coltrane says: "The Lord not only wants serenity between His followers but serenity within His followers."

The absence of both in many Christians and Christian communities displays a lack of faith and Christian discipline. It also shows that we allow our 'humanness' to determine our words and actions, instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to control our minds and thoughts. We react without surrendering our 'egos' and our tongues to God, fully and unconditionally. See Romans 8:5-6.

This week we will focus on how to live life in Christ's peace. How wonderful to be able to sing with confidence that, no matter what our circumstance, it is well with our souls!

Prayer: *When peace like a river attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea-billows roll, Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say: It is well, it is well with my soul! Kuhle ke moya wam!*
Horatio Gates Spafford

DAY 2**Read - Philippians 4:4-9**

"Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need..." vs 6

The much-loved hymn, "What a friend we have in Jesus" by Joseph Scriven, has the following lines and they apply perfectly to our theme on peace:

"Oh what peace we often forfeit,
Oh what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry,
Everything to God in prayer."

I believe that prayer is the first step towards a life filled with peace. Nothing is too trivial for our prayer conversations with God. He is interested and involved in all the details of our lives. If we get into the habit of bringing small matters to God, the big issues in our lives will be easily surrendered to Him.

The reason that prayer brings us peace, is that we know with certainty that God hears our prayers and that He answers them. He answers us by giving us what is good. We accept that God sees our lives and our situations differently from how we see them and that He will give us what is truly the best, based on His infinite wisdom, love and power.

In 1 Peter 5:7 we are told to: "Leave all your worries with Him, because He cares for you". So we should "throw the ball into His court". We wait for Him to make the next move, we rest in the Lord and we trust Him.

Prayer: *Our Loving Heavenly Father, we know that it is Your pleasure and Your joy to give good things to Your children. We trust You and we hand over to You everything which brings us anxiety and destroys our peace.*

DAY 3**Read - 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28**

"Be thankful in all circumstances. This is what God wants from you in your life in union with Christ Jesus." vs 18

The second key to living in God's peace is to cultivate a thankful heart. Thanksgiving is mentioned over 140 times in the Bible.

There were times when I was full of anxiety over the struggles my daughter was experiencing as a child. I was fearful for her future and wondered how she would cope with the limitations she had been born with. At these times, I would look back over the years of her life, and recount the many times God had provided the right people and resources at the moment we most needed them. My gratitude for God's absolute faithfulness in the past helped me to be grateful that He had my child's future in His hands. This gave me peace.

We don't only thank the Lord for past blessings and interventions, though. We need to thank Him for present blessings. No matter how tough our situation, we always have so much to be grateful for. As we 'count our blessings' we will be overwhelmed by God's goodness and his provision and we will be blessed by His peace.

How incredible the sense of peace John Newton had which enabled him to write: "Through many dangers, toils and strife I have already come. Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me home."

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, give me a thankful heart. Help me to find the deep peace which comes from total trust in You who provides all our needs. Teach me to be grateful for your amazing blessings and love.*

DAY 4

Read - Hebrews 12:3-15

"Lift up your tired hands, then, and strengthen your trembling knees! Keep walking on straight paths, so that the lame foot may not be disabled, but instead be healed. Try to be at peace with everyone..." vs 12-14

What great words of encouragement! The writer to the Hebrews acknowledges the struggle, but cheers his readers on. It is easy to despair and focus on our exhaustion and the fact that we feel overwhelmed, but if we can dwelt on the positive, we will keep moving forward in peace.

This is similar to having a thankful heart, but it **is** different in that it is an attitude. Dwelling on the positive changes the way we see things. Too often we allow ourselves to dwell on the negatives in our lives. We are swamped by negative conversation all around us.

Paul says: "Whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything is worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things." Philippians 4:8.

Let's choose an attitude of peace. Let's be the ones who look for the good in situations - let's see the "silver lining" on the darkest cloud. Let's be the positive people who point out the good in others and notice when someone does something right, so that we can spread smiles and peace to everyone. God, make us channels of Your peace!

Prayer: *"Make me a channel of Your peace, where there is hatred let me bring Your love, where there is injury, your pardon, Lord, and where there's doubt true faith in You." St Francis*

DAY 5

Read - Philippians 4:4-9

"Put into practice what you learned and received from me, both from my words and from my actions. And the God who gives us peace will be with you". vs 9

Yes, I have intentionally asked you to read this passage for the second time this week. It is such an important passage about Christian living, perhaps you could even memorise it!

The fourth key to a life in Christ's peace, in my opinion, is obedience to God. There are three ways that obedience leads to peace:

i) If we obey God's rules in His Word, we will escape many of the pitfalls in this life. If we truly tried to apply the teachings of Christ to our lives, we could stay away from many troubles and strife. Psalms 119:165 *"Those who love Thy law have great peace, nothing causes them to stumble".*

ii) Keep a clear conscience. In Acts 24:16 Paul says: *"I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men"*. With obedience comes a clear and clean conscience, which creates peace of mind.

iii) Look beyond yourself and serve others. As we take our focus off ourselves and our troubles and look for ways we can help others, our minds will be set free. It is a wonderful sign of our faith in an all-powerful, providing God, when we set aside our concerns and show concern for others.

Prayer: *When we walk with the Lord...While we do His good will, He abides with us still and with all who will trust and obey. Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey. John H. Sammis*

DAY 6

Read - Ecclesiastes 3:1-8,11

"There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven...a time for war and a time for peace". vs 1&8b

Jesus did not always speak comforting, comfortable words. In Matthew 10:34 He says: *"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword."*

Jesus is not interested in "painting over the cracks". He does not endorse disagreement, but we do need to confront our areas of conflict. Some of us have very serious conflict situations with family or ex-family and friends. Sometimes our commitment to Jesus is a source of conflict. Often, Jesus-followers have tried so hard to repair broken relationships, but they remain in pieces.

There are times when, for the sake of our inward peace, we have to walk away from people and situations that rob us of that peace.

We need to guard against trying to save people from themselves. We can only do as much or as little as God prompts us to do. We continue to pray, but there are times we have to leave those we love at the foot of the Cross, asking Jesus to work and to redeem, because we cannot.

Jesus said: *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God."* [Matt 5:9] So, in obedience we do what we can, but we need serenity, courage and wisdom.

Prayer: *God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can and wisdom to know the difference. R. Niebuhr*