

Live Peaceably (Part 2)

Introduction:

1. God's Word teaches that every believer should be striving to live a life of peace. Romans 12:18, 14:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:13; Hebrews 12:14
2. God is deeply interested in peace. So much so, that God sent His Son into this world to make "*peace through the blood of his cross...*" Colossians 1:20
3. Last week, we learned that there are three dimensions to the peace that God offers to us through Christ: peace with God, peace with one another, and peace within ourselves.
4. These three are inseparably joined by God's design. If we desire internal peace, we must first be at peace with God (through our faith in Christ), and second, we must seek harmonious relationships with God and with those around us.
5. What happens when a believer strives to live peaceably with all men? We will explore this question in tonight's lesson.

First, living peaceably enhances our Christian witness.

1. Unity is an essential element in our Christian witness. When peace and unity characterize our relationships with other people, we show that God is present in our lives.
2. But when our lives are filled with unresolved conflict, it will hinder our ability to be an effective witness for Christ.
3. Jesus' prayer in John 17 is very insightful.
 - Jesus did not pray that His followers would always be happy, or that they would never suffer, or that their rights would always be defended. vs. 14-16
 - Jesus prayed that His followers would get along with one another and display unity and oneness. vs. 20-23; cf. John 13:34-35
4. The love that Jesus commands us to show one another has very little to do with warm feelings. In fact, He commands us to show love even when it is the last thing in the world you feel like doing. Luke 6:27-28; cf. Romans 12:20-21
5. Peace and unity were so important to Jesus that He commanded Israel to seek reconciliation with an offended brother or sister even before worship. Matthew 5:21-24
6. Our Christian witness depends greatly on our commitment to deal faithfully with unresolved conflict. 1 John 4:19-21

Second, living peaceably defeats Satan.

1. Since peace and unity are essential to an effective Christian witness, we can be sure that there is one who will do all he can to promote conflict and division within the fellowship of believers. 1 Peter 5:8
 - Satan's name means "adversary."
 - His chief occupation is accusation. Revelation 12:10

2. Satan takes advantage of unresolved anger (Ephesians 4:26-27) and unforgiveness (2 Corinthians 2:10-11). Unforgiveness is said to be one of his devices.
3. Satan prefers that we do not recognize his role in our conflicts. As long as we see other people as our only adversaries, and focus our attacks on them, we will give no thought to defending ourselves against our most dangerous enemy. Ephesians 6:12
4. Of course, it would be a serious mistake to blame **all** our conflict on Satan.
 - We need to take responsibility for our sins, and encourage others to do the same.
 - We must also face up to the practical problems that conflict raises, and develop realistic solutions.
 - At the same time, we should be aware of Satan's goals, and guard against his influences.

Third, living peaceably always requires effort.

1. We live in a chaotic world that is presently being governed by the prince of this world (Satan). Between the world, Satan, and our own sinful flesh, conflict is inevitable, and will enter our lives quite naturally (conflict with friends, spouse, family members, children, coworkers, neighbors, fellow believers at church).
2. Peace will not naturally follow us. This is why the Bible commands us to **seek** peace, and **pursue** it.
3. The apostle Paul strongly admonishes the church in Ephesians 4:1-3 to actively seek to promote peace in their relationships with one another.
 - "Endeavor" is a word that a gladiator trainer in Rome might have used when he sent one of his men to fight to the death in the coliseum. It means "make every effort; strive eagerly, earnestly, and diligently."
4. So, too, must a Christian agonize for peace and unity. In other words, token efforts and halfhearted attempts at reconciliation fall far short of what Paul had in mind.
5. Every New Testament epistle contains a command to live at peace with one another. This reveals the depth of God's concern over this issue.
6. Harmonious relationships please God, but unresolved conflict grieves the Spirit of God. Ephesians 4:29-31
7. Like everything else, relationships will naturally decay and deteriorate unless every effort is made to maintain and build them.