

The Way of Peace

In His Word, God presents His government in a certain way. Isaiah was inspired to write and show how the government of God was going to be upon Christ's shoulder. He was to support and to uphold the government of God.

***Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.***

In most of the English Bibles, those concepts are strung together without any attempt to try to create a name as was intended in the Hebrew. The Tanakh does provide that.

***7 Of the increase of His government and peace
There will be no end ...***

The consequence of the government of God is going to be of peace without end!

Details of that government are provided for us in a section of Scripture that we look upon as being millennial. It provides an insight into that peaceable Kingdom:

***Isaiah 11:1 There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse,
And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.
2 The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him,
The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit of counsel and might,
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.
3 His delight is in the fear of the LORD,
And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes,
Nor decide by the hearing of His ears;
4 But with righteousness He shall judge the poor,
And decide with equity for the meek of the earth ...***

Today we use the term "equity" in a legal sense. In the Hebrew, it means that something is made flat and straightforward. It's not a twisting, contorted path, one that a person has difficulty following. It is a plain, flat pathway on which anyone can walk.

***4 ... And decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,
And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.
5 Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins,
And faithfulness the belt of His waist.***

He will be girded, attired with righteousness and faithfulness: Godly qualities.

As a consequence of that, we read Scriptures that we have no doubt helped our children pictorially describe or colour at feasts over the years:

***6 "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,
The leopard shall lie down with the young goat,***

The calf and the young lion and the fatling together;

And a little child shall lead them.

7 The cow and the bear shall graze;

Their young ones shall lie down together;

And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

8 The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole,

And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den.

9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,

For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD

As the waters cover the sea.

This is quite a contrast from the way in which God describes the world now.

Isaiah 59:1 Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened,

That it cannot save;

Nor His ear heavy,

That it cannot hear.

It isn't that God has become old, decrepit and incompetent!

2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God;

And your sins have hidden His face from you,

So that He will not hear.

A problem existed between humanity and its Maker at this point in time. The problem was not God's! It rests upon the *terra firma* of this world. The problem is with the human beings who have been deceived and held captive by Satan.

Isaiah talks about the human condition, about what society is like today.

3 For your hands are defiled with blood,

And your fingers with iniquity;

Your lips have spoken lies,

Your tongue has muttered perversity.

4 No one calls for justice,

Nor does any plead for truth ...

We can see the contrast with the government of God:

7 Their feet run to evil,

And they make haste to shed innocent blood;

Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity;

Wasting and destruction are in their paths.

8 The way of peace they have not known ...

Humanity does not know the way to peace!

Peace "efforts" are undertaken in the Middle East, in Kashmir and in various other areas of the world. In the United Kingdom we have a supposed "peace" in Northern Ireland, the end result of which is that more people are dying of violence than died when there was outright war!

We have to ask ourselves, what is this peace that humanity talks about? God says, "The way of peace they don't know. They don't understand the concept of peace."

8 ... And there is no justice in their ways;

They have made themselves crooked paths;

Whoever takes that way shall not know peace.

There is no hope of understanding peace because they have created inequitable paths for themselves. That is the world in which we live. It is the world in which you and I have been called - called to do something else.

Jesus laid down a challenge for us in one of the beatitudes, one of those Scriptures that goes right to the heart of the human condition. Jesus Christ said to us:

Matthew 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers ...

This world does not know the way of peace, but you and I have been called out of this world, as the firstfruits of God, to learn to make peace, to learn the ways that lead to peace, a peace that this world does not understand or comprehend or fathom.

***9 Blessed are the peacemakers,
For they shall be called sons of God.***

What greater calling is there for any human being than to become a son of God!

***10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.***

***11 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you
falsely for My sake.***

***12 "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they
persecuted the prophets who were before you.***

Blessed are the peacemakers who exist and learn their craft in a world that is full of persecution and tribulation. It is a challenge!

Matthew 23 provides the opposite of Matthew 5. It provides the curses as opposed to the blessings! Matthew 5 literally introduces the public ministry of Jesus Christ. Matthew 23 brings it to a close. After Matthew 23, Christ's time is basically spent with His disciples instructing them, providing insights into the future for the Church that were not for the public.

In Matthew 5, Jesus Christ sets out a way that is Godly, the standards that God requires of His people. In Matthew 23, He sets out the standard of this world, a standard that is typified by the Scribes and Pharisees of any day, but especially of His day, because the Scribes and Pharisees considered themselves to be God's special people. So there is a very unique lesson in it for us as God's people.

In Matthew 23, we can see that the woes parallel the blessings of Matthew 5. Let's look at the woe that parallels the blessing that we read in Matthew 5:9 and associated verses:

***Matthew 23:29 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the
tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous,***

***30 "and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers
with them in the blood of the prophets.'***

"We wouldn't have been involved with them in murdering the prophets of God!"

But in various ways, they did.

***31 "Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who
murdered the prophets.***

32 "Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt.

... quoting from Isaiah 59.

33 "Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation (damnation) of hell?"

How can you?

34 "Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city,

35 "that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

36 "Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

What is He saying about peacemakers, or the contrary condition to being a peacemaker? Peacemakers are to be the sons of God! They will BE the sons of God! They will have a part in that government with Jesus Christ of producing peace for the benefit of ALL humanity! They are the sons of God.

Who were the people in Matthew 23 the sons of? They were the sons of their murderous fathers. That's the way in which Jesus Christ characterised them. They were those who would bring the persecution and the tribulation upon the peacemakers.

Jesus Christ showed that the prophets had been involved in the role of being peacemakers before us. He valued their contribution, the situation that they had occupied for Him, greatly.

Jesus Christ was able to look at these men, and look at the society around Him, and He understood very clearly what these people were going to do to Him. They were going to crucify Him and murder Him. That was to happen a short period of time later.

32 "Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt.

"Go ahead and do what your fathers started. Follow in Papa's footsteps."

The Jewish New Testament says:

32 "Go ahead. Finish what your fathers started!"

Jesus Christ knew what they were going to do to Him.

That is a statement of death, but by implication does it also not instruct US to finish what our Father has started? If we want to be called sons of God, don't WE have to be about our Father's business? Don't we have to be involved in finishing the work that our Father has set to do? It cuts both ways - in terms of the children of this world and the children of God.

In other words, the beatitudes that we read in Matthew 5 are not just platitudes, nice things to consider. They are RESPONSIBILITIES. They are standards that the Father requires from His children. He wants us to be peacemakers.

That is set out very clearly in Luke's gospel. Zacharias was the father of John the Baptist. Zacharias was silent for nine months. He lost his voice. God said, "You don't believe that your wife, Elizabeth, can have a child, so you are not going to question Me about it for the next nine months." He lost his voice for nine months - or maybe a little longer, because it wasn't until the child came to be named that his voice returned.

Luke 1:57 Now Elizabeth's full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son.

58 When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her.

59 So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias.

The relatives want to choose a family name. What better name than "Zacharias"? Elizabeth obviously had some communication from her husband who had instructed her that the name of the child was to be "John" because that's what God had instructed.

60 His mother answered and said, "No; he shall be called John."

61 But they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name."

62 So they made signs to his father - what he would have him called.

63 And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, "His name is John." So they all marveled.

64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed...

What do you do when God produces a miracle like that after nine months of silence?

64 ... and he spoke, praising God.

... because he was a devout man. His mind was turned to God.

67 Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

68 "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel,

For He has visited and redeemed His people,

69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us

In the house of His servant David,

70 As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets,

Who have been since the world began,

71 That we should be saved from our enemies

And from the hand of all who hate us,

72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers

And to remember His holy covenant,

73 The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:

74 To grant us that we,

Being delivered from the hand of our enemies,

Might serve Him without fear,

75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.

We are called to have a relationship with God, a relationship that God defines. It's one of righteousness and holiness.

Speaking to his son John, Zacharias continued:

76 "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest;

For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways,

77 To give knowledge of salvation to His people

By the remission of their sins,

78 Through the tender mercy of our God,

With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us;

79 To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death,

To guide our feet into the way of peace."

You might say that our calling, just like that of John, is to guide people into the way of peace! It's not surprising that the apostle Paul talked about the "gospel of peace," because that is the end result of the proclaiming of the gospel. He talked about "our feet being shod with the gospel of peace." That is a calling to which each and every one of us has been called - in preparation and in anticipation of our part in the Kingdom of God!

What is this peace? What is this peace that the world doesn't know? The way of this world is opposed to the way of God. This world is based upon competition as opposed to being complementary. This world is locked into a way of competition. They can't know the way of peace, just as Isaiah said. "The way of peace they know not."

The apostle Paul reiterated that, quoting from Isaiah:

***Romans 3:17 And the way of peace they have not known."
18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."***

... talking about the situation of humanity. They can't know it.

A little later, Paul said to the Church in Philippi - and to us:

***Philippians 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;
7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.***

What does the phrase, "the peace of God which surpasses all understanding" mean? In the Greek, it is saying, "Here is something that the human mind cannot grasp!" The word that has been translated "understanding" is *nous*. It is talking about the mind. The mind cannot grasp this. It is beyond humanity without access to the Spirit of God.

The peace of God is fundamentally a SPIRITUAL condition. It is something that comes as a result of God's Holy Spirit dwelling within a person. It passes all understanding, all rational understanding or comprehension of the human mind. It is able to KEEP our mind through Christ Jesus. It is quite remarkable.

Jesus Christ made some comments about that peace to His disciples at the last Passover. He talked to them about loving them, and the responsibility that they had to love Him, and to love the Father. He talked about how they were going to be given a Comforter, the Holy Spirit, and how the Spirit would enable them to understand and remember all of the things that they had been told. Having talked about the Spirit, He said:

John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you ...

This world has nothing to offer the human condition. It has just more of the same!

27 "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

These men were in a situation of great fear. It was only a matter of a few hours afterwards that they were all fleeing to their own homes, fleeing for fear of their lives. Jesus Christ was saying, "I am going to give you access to the peace that I have, a peace that is going to see Me through the trials and the tribulations of this night, that will enable Me to go through what I have to go through." He said, "You can have access to this as well. I want YOU to be able to share in the same concept of peace."

A little later He told them what was to happen to them as they left that Passover. He understood very clearly the consequences and how they, as human beings, were going to react.

John 16:32 "Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own ...

We talk about the human condition in terms of danger, in terms of "fight or flight." Peter had a very brief skirmish with the fighting aspect, and very quickly came to realise that he wasn't much of a soldier. They all took to their feet and disappeared - to the four corners of Jerusalem probably. Jesus Christ said, "You will be scattered. I know what you are going to do. You are going to flee, each to his own ..."

***32 ... and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.
33 "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace ...***

"You can have a condition that is known as a Godly peace."

33 ... In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

"You can have this peace, and you can face the difficulties, the trials that exist in this world, knowing that they are all going to be defeated. The defeat is written already. It just has to reach finality."

What is peace? How does humanity really look at peace? At best, peace is the absence of hostility or war. The most common way of looking at peace within this world is of something very passive. It's a state that exists when no one is fighting somebody else!

Peace can come about through various means. Genocide is a means whereby some people seek peace. They simply get rid of the opposition, so that there is no more hostility. They seek THEIR way of peace. Peace would come about when the other tribe does not exist.

Genocide is at one extreme, and compromise is at the other. Yet that is not peace.

The word that we use throughout the Scripture that is translated as "peace," comes from the Hebrew word *shalom*. It's a very wide-ranging word which ultimately speaks to well-being - or a sense of completeness.

You might say *shalom* is not passive. *Shalom*, ultimately speaking, is a very active word, because it requires something of a party. You might contrast the world's view of peace and what God speaks of peace as one that builds WALLS as opposed to one that builds BRIDGES! It builds relationships. The peace that this world seeks separates people. It builds walls.

On the other hand, God's sense of peace brings about a relationship. It builds a bridge! Peace, ultimately speaking, is the absence of evil!

Isaiah 11:9 (Jewish Publication Society translation) Nothing evil or vile shall be done in all my holy mountain ...

The King James Version is a little softer. It says:

9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain ...

Where does this peace come from? How can Jesus Christ be this Prince of Peace?

Isaiah 2:2 The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him ...

We have already established that peace only comes through God's Holy Spirit being coupled with the spirit in man. The Spirit of the Eternal shall rest upon Him, but it doesn't stop there. It goes on to describe God's Spirit in some of the component elements:

***2 ... The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit of counsel and might,
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear (reverence) of the LORD.***

His delight is in the reverence of the Eternal!

Paul described the peace of God as something that "passes understanding." The human mind cannot comprehend it. If it passes understanding, it is given that there is only one way it can be appreciated. There is something higher than understanding of God's Word. It's called wisdom. It is part of the Spirit that Jesus Christ has, with which to judge. It is also something that is offered to you and me.

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

God knows that we lack wisdom. He said, "You need wisdom - and it is available for the asking." It's a question of whether we ask for it, whether we seek it.

And why is this spirit of wisdom so important?

Let's read one of my favourite Scriptures:

James 3:13 Who is wise and understanding among you? ...

You consider yourself a sage. You consider yourself to have wisdom.

13 ... Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.

Show that by what you do!

14 But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.

15 This wisdom (that you claim to have) does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.

It's not the Godly wisdom that God seeks! That is wisdom of this world - which God spurns, a wisdom which God says will be destroyed. It will come to an end.

16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

18 Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Very clearly, the challenge for each and every one of us is to seek the spirit of wisdom. That is what Jesus Christ is going to use to judge humanity, to judge and to lead the government of God. It's an essential aspect of our part, in what we have in terms of the government of God at this point in time.

There is only one source of the right fruit of the government of God - and that is the Spirit of wisdom. That's the only thing that will produce the right, Godly fruit of the government of God. The government of God does not depend upon the whims of the majority - or the minorities! The government of God has to be locked into the very mind of God, and it must produce the fruits that are evident of the mind of God.

Some people see the government of God as being that of power. It is not. The government of God is about service. It's about service that is motivated by the Spirit of wisdom.

James said that the wisdom that is from above is first pure. The word that is translated "pure" is not relating to the "pure" that is referred to in:

Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart ...

... the purity that is brought about by catharsis and cleansing.

In James 3:17, the word "pure" comes from a Greek word meaning "being holy, being set apart for Godly service." The word is related to *haggios* which means "holy." Holiness is shown by its peaceableness.

The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

We could turn to many Scriptures in the Proverbs where God talks about peaceableness.

Proverbs 15:1 A soft answer turns away wrath ...

I find myself having to restrain myself at times. Somebody writes and I would LOVE to give them a "Smart Alec" answer - because their question "begs" one! I have to ask myself, "What is it going to do? Is it going to build a wall between myself and this other person?" If it does, it's not the right exercise of the government of God. It's not peaceable. I'm not being a peacemaker. I have got to build something. I have got to help that person.

God says that a soft answer turns away wrath. It does! I hope you have experienced that in your lives. It really does work.

***Proverbs 25:11 A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold
In settings of silver.***

... a beautiful rendition, a verbal "still life." A word fitly spoken, appropriately spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.

We speak to one another. We respond to one another. What are we trying to convey? What are we trying to do? Marriage and family life are, themselves, a microcosm of the Kingdom of God. It's interesting to look at the aspect of being a peacemaker. The problem with marriage and family life is that it is based upon competition. Up until the latter part of the last century, men had all the power, and the woman didn't.

Now, especially in the Western world, the woman has an increasing hold of power, and in some cases they are keen to let the men know! Various parts of society are driven by it. What's it all about? It's competition, conflict. It's not the way of peace at all.

What is the basic premise of marriage? The basic premise is that a man is not complete! He needs someone to be a suitable help for him - to COMPLETE him, or to COMPLEMENT him. He needs someone to *shalom* him - to provide him with a sense of peace or of completeness.

So if a husband and wife exist together for a state of completeness, where's the competition? There can't be competition! There cannot be conflict. There should not be conflict. There should be something else - something which requires God's Holy Spirit.

A wife is an extension of her husband. They operate in a spirit of cooperation together. That's what God intended - from the beginning, as Jesus Christ said.

As the head of the marriage, the husband has to seek the well being of his spouse, not himself. The way of peace, ultimately speaking, is outgoing.

The same is true in terms of children. If you look at a new baby, what do you see? You may see all sorts of things - the colour of the hair, the colour of the eyes, whether he looks like father or mother, like grandma or grandpa on either side of the family. You can see all sorts of things - but those are all physical things.

What, ultimately, is that child? That child, ultimately speaking, is a POTENTIAL MEMBER of the God Family! As a parent, what is your responsibility? It is to help COMPLETE that child, to help LEAD that child to the point where it can make the decision, "I want to be part of the God Family."

So often that doesn't happen in this day and age. Children turn against their parents, or parents turn against their children. Children want to put their parents away in old-age homes, separated from the family because they are "too much bother." Our competitive society has worked its poison, and they are divided.

In terms of children, so often discipline is administered for the benefit of the parent - not for the benefit of the child. It's administered because the parent's well-being is being disturbed by the child - not because the child needs to LEARN something. If a child is treated in that way by its parents, it will eventually turn against the parent or parents that it sees as being selfish.

On the other hand, if discipline is administered for the well-being of the child, with the care and

concern of the child uppermost in the mind of the parents, there will never be a barrier, a wall, erected! The child will accept it, because God has given the child the ability to see that the correction is given in love, out of concern.

Isaiah 11:1 There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse ...

What does Jesus Christ use the rod for? It is the same way we should use discipline with a child. Oftentimes we have to use a bit of discipline to get their attention, to bring them back to where their focus needs to be, and to help them understand that they have a responsibility to others also. That is a lesson they have to learn.

Jesus Christ administers discipline within the government to bring people back to where they should be. This isn't some woolly, soft-soapy concept that Jesus Christ inspired Isaiah to talk about. Discipline, when it is administered, is administered for the person's benefit so that they can become, in the ultimate sense, part of the God Family. So you might say that the example given of children is very, very valid for us.

Let's look at some Scriptures relating to this way of peace.

In Romans 12, Jesus was inspiring Paul to write about the very basics of the Christian life.

Romans 12:16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble ...

Don't get carried away with yourself and your own sense of importance.

16 ... Do not be wise in your own opinion.

17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

Do we seek to do that? Do we seek to live peaceably with all men? There are some people I would find it very difficult to be at peace with, to build a bridge with, at this point in time. I don't feel that I have the wisdom to be able to handle the situation in a way which would be to God's honour and glory. I try to avoid such people - until God gives me the wisdom whereby I can convey that right approach towards them. I don't mean that there are a whole bunch of people around the world that I avoid, but there are some.

But, as much as depends on YOU, make sure that you are doing your part to be peaceable with all people.

There are some people who it is very difficult to be peaceable with - because of their background, because of their approach to life. Thankfully they are very much in the minority.

The apostle Paul speaks to people about their relationships to one another within the Church, to people who had difficulties with various aspects of the life they had been called to in terms of what they had learned in the past.

Romans 14:19 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace ...

We are to pursue a way of life that makes for peace!

19 ... and the things by which one may edify another.

What does it mean to "edify" another person? Egypt is known for its "edifices" - pyramids! They have withstood millennia of sandstorms. They look a little worse for wear today but they are still there. They have existed for vast periods of time. They are edifices.

When we "edify" another person, we make something lasting of that other person. We build something of value and consequence in terms of that other person.

So in terms of our relationships one with another, we are to follow a way of peace - one which BUILDS the other person up in a Godly manner.

Husbands and wives need to seek to be at peace with one another. They do that by seeking to build the other person up - not to tear them down, not to destroy them which is the very opposite to what Paul is saying.

Hebrews 12 deals with the subject of correction and the way in which God corrects us in a loving manner. Having talked about the aspect of our fathers' correction in the past, it says:

Hebrews 12:10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He (God) for our profit ...

God chastens and corrects us for our profit ...

10 ... that we may be partakers of His holiness.

As James wrote, the first aspect of the wisdom of God is that it was pure. It is related to holiness. God is correcting us so that we can be partakers of His holiness! We can be called the sons of God.

11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Correction given in a right and Godly manner produces the right result! It yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

12 Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees,

Take care of one another! Build one another up!

13 and make straight (equitable) paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated (turned out of the way), but rather be healed.

14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:

If I don't make peace a priority in my life, I'm not going to have the opportunity of being a son of God. I won't see God! It is a challenge for each and every one of us.

We have to ask ourselves, what impact do I have on other people? Do I engender peace and the well being of the other person? Do I build up a relationship or do I build up a wall? Do I separate myself from others?

Each and every one of us has to ask that question of ourselves. We have to ask ourselves, "How is my relationship with other people? What effect does it have? Does it build a wall? Or does it build something in the other person?"

Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

The peace of God is to rule in our heart. What does it mean to have the peace of God ruling in our heart?

Although it is translated "rule" here, it means "to act as an umpire." Someone is calling the shots! Someone is saying, "If you treat that person that way, that is foul. If you treat them this way, it's the way of peace."

God gives us a Spirit of wisdom so that we can determine ahead of time, "What effect will my action have upon another person?"

You may not know exactly, but God calls us to account. God gives us something to call us to account, to ask ourselves, "What impact will this have upon another person? Will this make me a peacemaker? Or will this make me a destroyer of another person? Will this help build another person up, or will this belittle the other person and build a wall between us, a wall that I may never be able to demolish?"

We are to let the peace of God rule in our heart. Allow it to be there to examine the way we relate to one another, to act as an umpire, to call us out if we stray - so that we don't destroy, so that we don't break down, but rather that we build up.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom ...

We are back to wisdom again ...

16 ... teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Then it goes on to talk about the marriage relationship. It talks about the role of a wife and a husband towards one another. It talks of the place of children within a family. How is a marriage to be undertaken? It is by the way of peace. We are to let the Word of God dwell in our lives richly in all wisdom.

From time to time people find themselves at loggerheads because they see the same thing differently. What do you do? There's a very simple answer. You get on your knees and you ask God for wisdom to handle the situation. That's where it begins - and that is where it ends. Oftentimes problems within a marriage or in terms of children get large because we haven't done that in the first place. We haven't got down on our knees and asked God for the wisdom to handle it.

The sad thing is that we live in a world in which competition and conflict are the norm. We are surrounded by conflict in the newspapers, news magazines and television. "What can I get for myself?" That is not the starting point of a Godly relationship! That is not the starting point of the government of God. That is not the way in which Jesus Christ is going to administer the government of God on this earth.

We have a great challenge.

Colossians 3:15 (Jewish New Testament) Let the peace of God be your heart's decision maker.

This translation gets a little more of the idea across rather than the term "rule in your heart," which can be somewhat abstract. How does something "rule" in my heart? He said, "Let the peace of God be your decision maker." If you have a decision to make, which way is going to engender peace? Which is the peace of God as opposed to self-centredness?

Jesus Christ is our example. At the Feast of Tabernacles prior to the Passover when He was betrayed and His life ended, He knew that some of the people in the crowd from the Temple had been sent to try to trap Him, to try to ensnare Him so that they could take His life.

How do we react to people like that? How do we react to people who set themselves up as enemies against us? How did Jesus Christ react? You can guarantee that He reacted differently than I would react. I may be given over to "fight or flight." But neither fight nor flight was part of Jesus Christ's thinking. He spoke to them in a way which sent them away with their minds reeling, as we can see John 7:31-53. Let's break into it:

John 7:40 Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, "Truly this is the Prophet."

41 Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Will the Christ come out of Galilee?"

43 So there was a division among the people because of Him.

... based on their reading of the Scriptures.

44 Now some of them wanted to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

That included those people who had been sent to do so.

45 Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why have you not brought Him?"

"You were deputed to go and bring this Man. Why didn't you bring Him?" What was their response?

46 The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man!"

Jesus Christ just told them the truth of God! He let them really know where it was at. He didn't berate them. He didn't undermine them. He just told them the truth.

47 Then the Pharisees answered them, "Are you also deceived?"

Who was building walls? Did Jesus Christ build a wall with these people who had come to entrap and take Him? No. Their superiors did. Their cynical response, "Are you deceived also?" was a real putdown.

48 "Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him?"

It's an interesting example of how to conduct yourself in a hostile environment. Having talked of the destruction of all the physical things that exist, the world that we understand and that we relate to, Peter said:

2 Peter 3:11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

All of this is going to come to an end! All of the glitz and glamour is going to end. What people should we be?

12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

14 Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;

The challenge for each and every one of us is to learn that way of peace, so that we can administer that peace with Jesus Christ in His Kingdom!

... Peter Nathan
12 Jan 02

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