

Session 9

GOD IS PEACE

Hebrews 13:20-21

Memory Verse

Now may the God of peace, who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus—the great Shepherd of the sheep—through the blood of the everlasting covenant,²¹ equip you with everything good to do his will, working in us what is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

– HEBREWS 13:20-21, CSB



God is Peace

THEOLOGICAL THEME: The Bible speaks of two different kinds of peace. There is a peace that is unshakable and unchangeable, a peace that is not affected by any temporal circumstance. Christ made this peace between God and man on the cross. The Scriptures also speak of a personal peace that followers of Jesus experience in their hearts.

? What does it mean to be at peace? If you had to define peace in one sentence or one phrase what would you say?

? How would you describe the opposite of peace?

There are many ideas about peace in the world. Some people equate peace with being happy or content with present circumstances. Others may say peace is the absence of conflict. The way you think about peace and where it comes from influences whether you will actually have peace in your life.

If you view peace as a feeling, then the circumstances of your life will have a significant effect on your level of peacefulness. We all know the way we feel is about as predictable as the weather. If feelings govern our peace, then we should expect nothing less than glimpses of so-called peace from time to time. But there is another way. The Bible speaks of a different kind of peace that doesn't bow to the circumstances all around us. The Bible describes true peace not as a feeling, but as a settled fact, a reality.

Think about it like this: peace is the boxcar being pulled by a train engine. For many people, the train engine is their feelings, which are dependent upon their circumstances. In this scenario, a person's feelings are the primary force that keeps the peace moving along the tracks. But the Bible places something else as the engine that pulls peace along. In the biblical view of peace, feelings are the caboose. They follow along and come under subjection to the engine.

Session Summary

The Bible speaks of two kinds of peace—objective and subjective. When the angels announced Jesus' birth to the shepherds who kept watch over their flocks, they made the statement "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people he favors!" (Luke 2:14). Through His atoning sacrifice, Jesus provided objective peace between mankind and God. But the Bible also tells us that we should experience subjective peace. We should feel peaceful. That subjective feeling of peace in our hearts is rooted in the objective peace we have with God through Christ. Because of what Christ is done, we are freed from fear. We are freed from anxiety. "If God is for us, who is against us" (Rom. 8:31)? Objective peace clears the way for daily living in a state of subjective peace in our hearts.

It is important to remember that the objective peace we have with God because of Christ's merit is a settled fact. However, subjective peace for Christians is a matter of sanctification and daily dying to self. Peace in our hearts is there for the taking but it won't be forced upon us.

1. The God of Peace (Heb. 13:20-21)

The doxology that ends the Book of Hebrews is meant to cause the reader to turn their eyes and heart toward heaven. It helps the Christian remember Christ's great work on the cross on their behalf. It also reminds them that God is working in them to form them to the image of Christ. Notice the title that the author of Hebrews gave to God. He called Him "the God of peace." This wasn't by accident. One could hardly find a more appropriate title for the one true living God. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has made it possible for mankind to have peace with Him despite their sin. Furthermore, all who are reconciled to God have access to a peace that passes all understanding in a fallen and chaotic world.

? Why do you think the author of Hebrews emphasized the theme of peace in the doxology? Was the author of Hebrews referring to objective peace (reconciliation with God) or subjective peace (a feeling of well-being and wholeness)? How do you know?

Those who read the Book of Hebrews needed to set their minds on Christ and rest in His peace. In fact, they may have needed that more than we can comprehend. When the New Testament was composed, many Christians faced fierce opposition. The Jewish community did not accept them, and the Roman Empire saw them as a threat. Persecution, tribulation, and martyrdom were a stark reality for the early church. They needed the peace of God to guard their hearts day in and day out.

In this passage, the author referred to both objective and subjective peace. A Christian's subjective peace (the feeling of well-being) is rooted in objective peace (the reality of reconciliation between a person and God). In the doxology, we read that peace with God was obtained "through the blood" and that those who are in Christ can walk in peace each day because God is working in them "what is pleasing in his sight." In other words, God is the God of peace because His gift to people is both an eternal peace with Himself through Christ and a day-to-day peace despite the trials of life.

? How was it possible for these Christians to have peace, even in the face of persecution and martyrdom?

Here is the great mystery and joy of a life that has been buried and raised with Christ. Even in the midst of tragedy, persecution, and chaos, a person's heart can be at rest, settled, and peaceful. This is true because subjective peace is based on a reality that is unaffected by temporal circumstances. The early Christians (and Christians today) could have peace no matter what was happening around them or to them.

? Application: Do you have peace with God through Jesus Christ? How have you experienced peace in your heart despite your circumstances? What things undermine peace in your heart?

2. Peace with God (Heb. 13:20)

God is the God of peace first and foremost because He loved the world so much that he “gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). This is the good news, that “while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son” (Rom. 5:10). Those who are in Christ are no longer enemies of God, but have been adopted into His family. They have peace with God.

? What destroyed the peace with God that Adam and Eve enjoyed in the garden? Why did sin disrupt peace?

When Adam rebelled against God’s command, peace was replaced with discord, exhaustion, and fear. Genesis 3 records an astounding turn of events. The culmination of the loss of peace was found in Adam’s desperate and cowardly attempt to reconcile himself to God by sacrificing his wife to escape death. Adam put Eve between himself and God: “The woman you gave to be with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate” (Gen. 3:12).

Adam’s rebellion against God demolished peace because sin separates us from the source of peace and makes us an enemy of God. God cannot be in the presence of sin and there could be no objective peace until reconciliation was achieved.



How did Jesus reconcile mankind with God? Why is there not alternate route to peace with God apart from Jesus?

Jesus' shed blood on the cross ushered in peace between the one true and living God and mankind. As Paul said in Ephesians 2:14, "[Christ] is our peace." Jesus, through His flesh, broke down the "dividing wall of hostility" (Eph. 2:14) so that He could "reconcile both to God in one body through the cross" (Eph. 2:16). In this verse, Paul referred to an objective, static peace made possible by Christ's payment of the penalty for sin. God established this objective peace with Christians through the sacrifice of Jesus, removing the hostility between God and man. Sin's guilt was removed. God's wrath was satisfied.

The apostle Peter said, "He sent the message to the Israelites, proclaiming the good news of peace through Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all" (Acts 10:36). Paul wrote, "For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). No other way exists to real reconciliation with God except through Jesus Christ. In John 14:6, Jesus said that no one can come to the Father except through Him.

Some people question whether Jesus is the only way to peace with God. Because Jesus is God, He is holy and righteous in every way. Ezekiel 18:4 says that God, because of His sinless nature, demands that sin be punished. Jesus' holy and righteous life qualified Him to shoulder the punishment of sinners. Only a completely holy and righteous person could adequately pay for the sins of another. Because Jesus pleased God the Father in every way, His substitutionary sacrifice was accepted by God and satisfied God's justice in regard to the sins of people.



Application: Why is it impossible for non-Christian people to truly have peace in their hearts? How does this truth inform the way you will direct and encourage anxious souls who are not in Christ?

3. Peace in Trial (Heb. 13:21)

God is the God of peace because He has made a way for man to be reconciled to Himself through Jesus Christ. Further, He is the God of peace because those who are in Christ enjoy the presence of God in their lives and His peace guards their hearts as they face uncertain circumstances. This verse says God is working in Christians to help them live in a way that is pleasing to His sight. God is pleased when Christians live with settled hearts because of their trust in their heavenly Father. This kind of peace is subjective and describes a state of being in Christians' hearts. It is distinct from the objective peace (reconciliation to God) that is theirs through Christ, though the two are closely related.

 How does the subjective feeling of peace relate to the objective peace of God through Christ?

For Christians, the subjective feeling of peace in their hearts is rooted in their objective peace with God through Jesus Christ. Because of what Christ has done, Christians are set free from fear. Their hearts are strengthened by the grace of God in Christ when terror strikes. They no longer have to be tormented by anxiety.

Peace with God through Christ makes it possible for Christians to continually experience peace in their heart. It is important to remember that the objective peace they have with God because of Christ's atoning sacrifice is a settled fact. But their subjective peace is a matter of sanctification and daily dying to self. A settled, peaceful heart is available to those who are in Christ, but it isn't automatic.

 How can a Christian maintain a peaceful, settled heart?

There are three fundamental disciplines that help a believer maintain a settled, peaceful heart. First, they must repent of sin. If a Christian is walking in disobedience to God's Word then they shouldn't expect to have peace in their heart.

In fact, it is a mercy of God to remove peace when His children are in sin. The guilt, grief, and uneasiness that a Christian feels are a kindness of God to bring them to repentance.

Second, believers should continually cast all their cares upon God. The Bible is clear in its instruction about what God's people ought to do with their anxieties and worries. They should pray and hand them over to the one true and living God. (See Phil. 4:6-7 and 1 Pet. 5:7.)

Finally, Christians must keep their minds stayed on God. (See Isa. 26:3.) Christians keep their minds fixed on God through Bible reading, prayer, and not forsaking the gathering together of the saints. As they regularly, hourly meditate on God's character and promises, their hearts are drawn out to Him to worship and give thanks. This clears the way for their reconciled relationship with God to serve as the foundation for peace in their hearts, no matter how chaotic or terrifying the circumstances.

 **Application: Does the peace of God reign in your heart or do you find yourself often anxiety-ridden? What do you think is at the root of your worry? How can you submit this to God today?**

Conclusion

God is the God of peace for those who are in Christ. The peace Jesus secured for Christians is settled; it does not change and is not affected by flat tires, an argument with your spouse, or a potty-training disaster. Personal peace, however, is affected by all of those things. Personal peace in the heart of a believer, if not anchored to something deeper than circumstances, will remain elusive. It will come and go with every changing circumstance. However, God is working in His children to conform them to the image of Christ. A part of that sanctification is teaching them to live with settled, trusting, and peaceful hearts before Him, even when the world around them is unsettled.

? What do you look to in order to settle your restless heart? Where have you replaced God with an idol that you are hoping will bring you peace?

? What are some practical steps you can take to place yourself in a position to live with a peaceful, settled heart? How is God calling you to respond to His prompting today?

? How will you seek out gospel conversations with those who currently don't have peace with God?

CHRIST CONNECTION: A person cannot experience true, lasting personal peace in their heart if they are not at peace with the one true and living God through the shed blood of Christ on the cross.

MISSIONAL APPLICATION: Those who have been reconciled to God through Christ experience objective peace with God and subjective peace in their hearts as they navigate a fallen world. This peace leads them to see others in need of the gospel and seek ways to see their neighbors experience that peace as well.



FOR NEXT WEEK

Memorize

Now may the God of peace, who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus—the great Shepherd of the sheep—through the blood of the everlasting covenant,²¹ equip you with everything good to do his will, working in us what is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

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Daily Readings

- Monday - Hebrews 13:20-21
- Tuesday - John 16:33
- Wednesday - Isaiah 26:3
- Thursday - John 14:27
- Friday - Psalm 4:8
- Saturday - Psalm 23:4