

Be at Peace With One Another  
I Thessalonians 5:12-13

Some might even go so far as to say that peace should come at any cost - whatever it takes.

Turn in your Bibles today to our one another passage. We find it in Paul's first letter to the church in Thessalonica.

I Thessalonians 5:12-13

We see from our text that we are called to be at peace with each other.

If I were to randomly ask people on a busy city sidewalk or shopping mall what peace means to them answers would be varied. Responses might include some of the following.

The absence of war or other hostilities either between countries, corporations, or people  
An agreement or a treaty made between two groups of people to end hostility even though tension continues  
Freedom from quarrels or disagreements  
Living in harmony with others, free from strife  
Public security and order after someone or a group of people were arrested for disturbing the peace  
Personal, inner contentment, serenity, tranquility, or peace of mind  
To be silent as when someone tells you to hold your peace  
Something used at times as a greeting or farewell

William Blake wrote the following in "The Divine Image" *Songs of Innocence*.

For Mercy has a human heart,  
Pity a human face,  
And Love, the human form divine,  
And Peace, the human dress.

In the opening statement of his chapter titled "What is Peace?" R. J. Roule makes the following statement: "Peace has always been among humanity's highest values – for some, supreme."

But peace isn't as simple as the absence of conflict that may follow after a peace treaty is signed between two or more warring countries and neither is it found on some secluded beach, mountain peak, or emptying oneself of all negative vibes while doing some exercise in meditation. There is much more to it.

When you take into consideration all of history from the moment of creation until now there has only been a very small amount of time, perhaps only days in which there was complete or total peace on earth. It was a time when Adam and Eve walked with God. They had peace with God because they were in a right relationship with Him. That resulted in perfect peace between them. It truly was a perfect world.

They didn't nag each other about dirty socks or a late meal.

They didn't quibble about who was responsible for what chores.

They didn't argue about finances or laziness, or being a slob.

There was beautiful harmony between the first couple because they were at peace with God – but then it all went south from there. Their perfect peace was shattered due to sinful disobedience. Then the nagging and complaining began. Sin brought dissension and peace was broken.

Did you know we have a day set aside for peace? The international day of peace is this week on September 2.

Google the top songs about peace and the number one selection is "Imagine" by John Lennon.

Imagine there's no countries

It isn't hard to do

Nothing to kill or die for

And no religion, too

Imagine all the people

Living life in peace... You...

You may say I'm a dreamer  
 But I'm not the only one  
 I hope someday you'll join us  
 And the world will be as one

Believe it or not second was "Somewhere Over the Rainbow."

Third on the list is "What a Wonderful World" by Louie Armstrong.

Then there is a song titled "Bomb the World" with lyrics that say you can't bomb the world into peace.

People long for peace but it remains elusive, some think it's just a pie in the sky kind of dream. Is peace possible? Jesus thought so and He said one way to do it was to love your enemies and do good to them. Paul also thought peace was possible. That's why he told the Thessalonian believers to be at peace with each other.

People, cultures, and countries long for peace. Here's a snippet of philosophies to find peace.

"We need to meditate on what is peaceful. Once we have 'filled up' in this way, we once again have an abundance of love to send out into the world."

~ Jean Shinoda Bolen

"Looking for peace is like looking for a turtle with a mustache: you won't be able to find it. But when your heart is ready, peace will come looking for you." -- Ajahn Chah

If there is light in the soul, there will be beauty in the person. If there is beauty in the person, there will be harmony in the house. If there is harmony in the house, there will be order in the nation. If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world. -- Chinese Proverb

"When we have inner peace, we can be at peace with those around us. When our community is in a state of peace, it can share that peace with neighboring communities." -- 14th Dalai Lama

Nothing can bring you peace but yourself.

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

They all leave out the most important ingredient, the solution to peace isn't found in yourself or through anything. Before we get to where real and lasting peace comes from, we need to see that lacking in peace brings trouble. Watch the news and that's quite obvious.

## I. LACKING IN PEACE BRINGS TROUBLE

### A. A Lack of Peace Brings Dissension

I Corinthians 1:10-12

I Corinthians 11:17-22

Acts 6:1

Even in churches and among Christians there is dissension. We cannot be at peace where we hold a grudge against someone; where there is bitterness or resentment, or where there is anger toward another. Peace does not mean uniformity where we all agree on everything. We can agree to disagree, but still be in unity and still maintain peace.

A lack of peace in the body of Christ will bring dissension and it can be ugly.

A lack of peace in the body of Christ brings disorder.

### B. A Lack of Peace Brings Disorder

James 3:14-18

Pride always gets in the way of peace and brings disorder.

Disorder in the body of Christ will not produce righteousness or godliness.

### C. A Lack of Peace Brings Destruction

Proverbs 13:10

Proverbs 17:14

Proverbs 18:6

Proverbs 19:13

Proverbs 21:19

Proverbs 22:10

Proverbs 26:21

Acts 15:39

A lack of peace brings trouble.

On August 20, 1866, President Andrew Johnson formally announced the end of the Civil War, although fighting had stopped months before. Proclamation 157 declared that “peace, order, tranquility, and civil authority now exists in and throughout the whole of the United States.”

100 years after the Emancipation Proclamation was signed on August 28, 1963 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. made his historic “I have a dream” speech. The hope was to bridge the large gap existing at the time caused by segregation and racial tension. And while vast improvement has been made there are still many on both sides who continue to fuel the hatred between us unwilling to join the effort of bringing peace in our nation between people groups.

In 1967 there were 159 race riots.

This past year the black lives matter movement has garnered support and escalated violence because of perceived inequality from racial prejudice. Vandalism, arson, theft and death has occurred throughout our land. You cannot have peace where there is anger, bitterness, hatred, revenge. Communities and businesses have been destroyed because of a lack of peace. Where there is a lack of peace there will be destruction.

Where there is a lack of peace there is dissension.  
Where there is a lack of peace there is disorder.  
Where there is a lack of peace there is destruction.  
It is a repeated pattern. Where peace is lacking there is trouble.  
But living in peace brings triumph.

## II. LIVING IN PEACE BRINGS TRIUMPH

So how do we live at peace with others because

obviously all the man-made efforts at bringing about peace clearly aren't working?

Looking at peace from a biblical perspective, Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology says that peace is larger than the general idea that we come to associate with it. “The biblical concept of peace rests heavily on the root word in the Hebrew, which means “to be complete” or “to be sound.” The verb conveys both a dynamic and static meaning “to be complete or whole” or “to live well.”

The noun has many nuances that can be grouped into 4 categories:

The wholeness of life or body

A right relationship or harmony between 2 parties often established by a covenant

Prosperity, success or fulfillment

Victory over one's enemies

The Jewish people also used it when greeting someone or bid them farewell. It was a form of blessing.

The Greek word used most often in the New Testament is very similar to the Hebrew word. To come to a clear understanding of the word used both in Hebrew and Greek we must understand that the only source of this peace is from God. It can't be found by hanging around the right people or in the pursuit of things whether it's marrying the right person, finding the right job, getting a promotion or a huge bonus. It's not found in hobbies or the bottom of a bottle or the euphoria of a bunch of pills. God alone is the only source of true and lasting peace and until a person has a relationship with Him there will be no peace.

We must begin with that premise in mind. Peace is not something we find within ourselves by our own effort that can then affect others in a positive way. The kind of peace we need, the kind of peace the world needs only comes from God. We don't begin with ourselves as the Dali Lama would suggest, we must begin with God. He is the source of peace.

According to Galatians 5:22 the Holy Spirit produces nine godly character traits in the Christian. One of them is peace.

The angels understood what they were proclaiming when they announced the birth of the Messiah exclaiming “peace on earth, good will to man.” Wrapped up in those swaddling clothes was the answer to man’s pursuit of peace.

Stoic philosopher Epictetus said “While the emperor may give peace from war on land and sea, he is unable to give peace from passion, grief, and envy. He cannot give peace of heart for which man yearns more than even for outward peace.”

Man’s religions and philosophies cannot bring the peace he so desperately needs and longs for.

Roy Zuck writes “God’s peace is not given to those who have good will, but to those who are recipients of God’s good will or favor.” That comes through faith in Christ. He didn’t bring instant peace to the world. Only through a personal relationship with Him can we find peace and give peace.

Let’s look back at what our passage has to say.  
I Thessalonians 5:12-13

#### A. Living With Peace Brings Respect

In the context of the passage Paul is talking to the church about showing respect to their leaders. It literally refers to those who stand before you. Most scholars believe that while it’s unclear specifically it’s possible that there was some tension between the leaders and the laity.

Maybe they wanted to relocate and the church folks didn’t want to.

Maybe the church folks wanted new carpet and the leaders wouldn’t buy it.

Something appears to be amiss in Thessalonica to give Paul reason to include this in his letter.

Other scholars suggest that the church folks were well aware of the background and previous life of these leaders before they got saved and came to the conclusion they weren’t going to follow their leadership. They knew all about their past and didn’t think they were qualified creating a rift.

Let’s be reminded that Paul and Silas rode into Thessalonica one day proclaiming the gospel. Many who made up the church Paul is writing to were saved around the same time and came from the same idolatrous background. Spiritually speaking they were all about the same age.

“Me follow him? No way!”

“I should have been picked to lead instead of him.”

You can understand how easily it would have been for feelings of resentment to build up within the church. It only takes a little thing here or there for tension to grow and soon a lack of respect. But where peace exists in the heart through a proper relationship with the Lord, peace will exist demonstrated in respect for those who lead and it will exist among each other.

Now, why should these leaders be respected?

Respect has been defined as a feeling of admiration toward someone else. In this case Paul gives us a couple ideas about how to respect our leaders.

Aretha Franklin had her idea about R-E-S-P-E-C-T, but what does the Bible have to say about it?

1. Respect them because their work is hard in the Lord

Every morning at 8:30 President Truman would have a staff meeting. One day the mail clerk brought in a lavender envelope with a regal wax seal and flowing purple ribbons. Opening it, the President found a letter from King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia, whose salutation began, “Your Magnificence.” “Your Magnificence,” Truman repeated, laughing. “I like that. I don’t know what you guys call me when I’m not here, but it’s okay if you refer to me from now on as ‘His Magnificence.’” Truman subsequently sent a message to the United Nations supporting the admission of 100,000 Jews into Palestine. Soon afterward he received a second letter from King Ibn Saud. This one began: “Dear Mr. President.”

Pastor is just fine with me.

Not much else loses someone’s respect faster than a person who doesn’t work hard at their job. It’s the same in ministry as well. When leadership works

hard there ought to be respect. Their hard work should result in your respect of them and brings peace in the assembly. But notice an important distinction here. Paul says it is hard work in the Lord. When leaders put forth good work in the Lord, they deserve respect, respect that is evident in two specific ways as we see here. They stem from the peace we have in the body of Christ.

Notice what Paul says in verse 13. “Hold them in the highest regard in love.”

- a. You admire them – honor them
- b. You adore them – love them

If your leaders work hard in the Lord there should be a fond affection that honors them. The Message says “Overwhelm them with affection and love.”

I believe and I’m sure Robyn would agree that you do that for us. Our Deacons deserve the same respect.

Warren Wiersbe wrote that leaders are God’s gift to the church “the battles and burdens are many and sometimes the encouragements are few. It is dangerous when a church family takes their leaders for granted and fails to pray for them, work with them, and encourage them.” Show love and honor.

Now that doesn’t mean that leaders are always right, but when they do their best to follow the Lord, they should be followed.

Wiersbe adds “In spite of their limitations, God’s spiritual leaders should be respected – unless it is obvious that they are out of God’s will. As the spiritual leaders of the church meet together, plan, pray, and seek God’s will, we can be sure that God will rule and overrule in the decisions they make. The result of the church family following the spiritual leaders will be peace and harmony in the church. Whenever you find division and dissension in a local church, it is usually because of selfishness and sin on the part of the leaders, or the members or both.”

We are to show leaders respect for their hard work in the Lord through admiring and adoring them – hold them in high regard with love.

Secondly we see that we respect them because their warning is helpful.

## 2. Respect them because their warning is helpful

On occasion leaders must admonish. There are times when we must tackle difficult issues. Believe me when I say that it is no fun. Any spiritual leader who is humbly walking with the Lord will tell you this is the part of ministry and leadership that is most difficult. Yet at times it is necessary. We have to confront sin. We have to warn about growing spiritual concerns in someone’s life. We’d rather have teeth pulled without Novocain or smash a finger on an anvil with a hammer.

When admonishment must occur in the church know that leadership has taken the Biblical steps to approach the matter with fear, trembling, and a lot of prayer. At times it may be necessary to seek wise and godly counsel, but it is always with the hope of repentance, reconciliation and restoration.

If you respect your leaders, you will pray for them that when they have to admonish it is done with those three goals in mind. That they do it deserves respect.

Living in peace brings respect because of their hard work and their helpful warning.

Living in peace brings restoration.

## B. Living in Peace Brings Restoration

When admonition must occur in the body of Christ the hope is for restoration. Without restoration there is no peace.

Matthew 18:15 speaks of repentance.

Matthew 5:23-24 speaks of reconciliation.

Only when conflict has been dealt with in the proper way and restoration and reconciliation occur will there be peace in the body of Christ. Forgiveness has been offered and accepted. Relationships have been restored.

Until Christ returns and only when Christ returns will we see peace in homes, in communities, in countries, around the world. Without Christ no



matter what we do, no matter how hard we try, pursuing after peace will be like trying to catch the wind. If we do happen to catch the wind, it will only be temporary.

Camp used to have a little sailboat we could take out on the lake. A big wind would come out of the North end of the lake and you could catch it and ride it for a ways, but if you turned the wrong way you could easily lose it. Peace by any others means is temporary at best.

Without restoration, there will not be peace.  
Without repentance, there will not be peace.  
Without reconciliation, there will not be peace.

C. Living in Peace Comes from Resolve  
Romans 12:18

Did you catch what it said about peace? Let me read it again this time from the Phillips translation. “As far as your responsibility goes, live at peace with everyone.”

Peace with others is up to you. Jesus stated it a bit differently in two of the passages we already looked up. In the one passage if someone has offended you, you go and seek restoration. In the second passage He said that if you have offended someone, you go and seek restoration. Regardless of who offended you have the responsibility to seek after peace.

In Matthew 5:9 Jesus pronounced a blessing on the peacemakers. They will be called sons of God.

I can't think of an instance in which we should wait for the other person to come to us.  
“They need to because they started it...”  
“They need to because what they did was greater than anything I ever did to them...”  
“I don't think I could ever forgive them...”  
A peacemaker can't use any of those kinds of statements.

We must resolve ourselves to seek after peace. We are commanded to do everything possible to bring about peace. The word Paul uses comes out of the Gladiator arena. They were to do everything they

possibly could to come out alive. It's the same with peace. YOU do everything possible.

I'm willing to step out on a limb and say that most of us growing up, mostly in our younger years played the game “Simon says.” How many remember that game?

There was Simon and everyone else. The rules were simple. Simon would give a command and the other players had to do it. Simon would start out by saying “Simon says, move forward one step.” And everyone had to move forward one step. Sometimes Simon would try and trick the contestants up by not saying “Simon says.” If Simon gave a command, without saying Simon says a player who moved had to go back to the starting line.

Think of this passage as a command.  
“God says live in peace with each other.”  
Now if I tell David to go clean his room and the expectation is that he cleans it because it was a command David can't return an hour later and say, “Hey Dad, I thought a lot about what you said and it's a really good idea for me to clean my room.” He can't say,  
“Hey Dad, I'd like to invite some of my friends over to have a discussion about what you said.”  
“Hey Dad, I'll get to it next month.”  
“Hey Dad, I got someone else to do it.”

What God says here through Paul is a command – “Live in peace with each other.” And it's in the present tense meaning do it now, do it with everything you have. Put your all into it. Living in peace comes from resolve.

We have looked at the fact that we should live in peace with others and even considered why. So how is it possible?  
Let's look at our final point.

### III. LASTING PEACE BRINGS TRANSFORMATION

I said earlier that God is the source of peace. But He is not just the source of peace. The Bible says He IS peace.  
Judges 6:24

Back in the book of Judges Gideon was chosen by God to deliver Israel from the oppression of the Midianites. Gideon had a visit by the Lord at which time Gideon asked why it is that if God was with Israel why had all these terrible things happened? Then he told God that he was the wrong guy for the job. His tribe was least of the tribes of Israel, his clan was the least in their tribe, his family was the least among the clan, and he was the least in his family. The Lord told Gideon that He would be with him, so go in what strength he had.

Gideon wasn't really convinced yet and asked for a sign that it was really the Lord he was speaking to. He ran off to get an offering and returned. He was instructed to put it on a rock and when he did the Lord touched it with His staff and instantly fire consumed the offering and the Lord disappeared.

Immediately Gideon built an altar to the Lord and called it "The Lord is Peace." Jehovah shalom.

When we realize that God is the God of peace a tremendous transformation takes place in us. Such a transformation affects three relationships that result in peace.

#### A. We Have Lasting Peace With God Romans 5:1

A lack of peace can be directly related to what kind of relationship we have with God. I tell that to every couple who come to me for pre-marital counseling. How you love God is seen in how you love others.

We cannot know the peace of God or have peace with God apart from a personal relationship in His Son Jesus Christ. A relationship that begins with faith comes as we repent of our sin and claim His gift of salvation for ourselves.

In his book *The Peacemaker*, Ken Sande writes "Genuine internal peace cannot be obtained directly, it is a gift God gives only to those who believe in the Son and obey His commands (I John 3:21-24)."

Peace with God came through the death and resurrection of Christ on the cross.

Peter declared to Cornelius: "You now the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all" (Acts 10:36).

Christ brings lasting peace with God. (John 14:27)

#### B. We Have Lasting Peace With Others I Corinthians 13:4-7

Here is the great love chapter. Peace results when we intentionally practice the 2<sup>nd</sup> great command to love our neighbor as our self. (Matthew 22:39)

Peace with others is only possible first through a personal relationship with God who made it possible through His Son and then as we practice these love principles with one another.

When we allow God's Spirit to develop the fruit of peace in us we see an amazing transformation take place that can only be attributed to divine work in us. When we are transformed by the Holy Spirit there is lasting peace with others.

#### C. We Have Lasting Peace With Self Romans 8:1

If you are anything like me, then I'm sure you have spent some time with guilt feelings over how you treated someone or something you did you should not have or something you should have and didn't. Guilt can feel like a 10 ton brick weighing us down. We beat ourselves up over it, but we don't have to. We need to remember that because of our new life in Christ we aren't condemned anymore. That should be emotionally freeing. That doesn't mean we can continue to sin, but we don't have to allow guilt to control us or bind us any longer. Through Christ we have been set free and that transforms us to be at peace with ourselves.

If you are not at peace with others take a quick check into your relationship with God. It may be that you need to begin there and then you are free to live in peace with others. Someday there will be nothing but peace. Until then we are to do all we can to make it happen. Yield, obey, be humbe.