

In Matt 5:9 Jesus plants an important seed for the Kingdom of God culture. He tells His disciples that children of God are peacemakers. Jesus Himself is called the Prince of peace by the prophet Isaiah. Peace is a trademark of the culture of God.



Peace

The dictionary definition of peace is as follows: a calm state, state of normal relationships between parties, healthy understanding and peace of conscience.

What does Jesus mean by peace?

1) Eph 2:11-17

Peace is a state of normal relationships between people, states and countries.

As a result of sin in paradise, hostility arose.

God made a covenant with Abraham and eventually with the people of Israel. The arrival of the law, which was given to the Jews by Moses, meant that there was a set of rules of behavior which would ensure the Jewish people could live in peace with God and one another.

Ps 147:19,20 The intention was that other nations would follow this example. But the opposite happened. The law did not bring the desired result; the law put its finger on the sore spot. Sin now became obvious. Judgement and punishment followed.

The law and other regulations were fulfilled by Christ. The wall of hostility was torn down by Jesus and His death on the cross, thereby making it possible for both Jews and gentiles to live in peace with one another.

Conference

The first time that I saw Eph 2:14 put into practice was in Moscow. During a leaders' conference there were lots of Christians together from various nations which had been ruled by the Russians. There was an altar call for forgiveness. Russian church leaders publicly asked for forgiveness from their Christian brothers and sisters from Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and so on. Those who had been oppressed, some having suffered great poverty and persecution, spoke out forgiveness. What happened next I shall always remember. Russian leaders washed the feet of the leaders from the leaders of the oppressed nations. Many tears were shed.

What does Jesus mean by peace?

2) Col 1:18-22

Peace of conscience is another way to describe peace. God gave us a conscience. This is something we have been given to have peace on earth and with God. Our conscience helps us to make correct decisions. The conscience is God's contact point with our being. The big question is, who has control of our conscience? The law of God or the Spirit of God?

The pilot of an airplane can choose to fly with automatic pilot on or he can steer the plane himself. As a tourist you can choose to buy your own book to find your way around or you can ask a guide.

The law says how something should be done but it does not provide solutions. Jesus however came to fulfill the law. He has also provided a way for those who are not able to keep the law to live in reconciliation with God

and others. He paid the price on the cross with His blood. The law requires a blood sacrifice for sin. A blood sacrifice from an unblemished lamb that is completely innocent and without fault.

Lev 3:1-5, Ex 12:3-7

Jesus was without sin, without fault and He lived completely according to the law. That is why there was no judgement and no punishment. And yet He decided to give His life.

John 10:17,18

Everyone who believes this will be free from the law and its regulations.

Heb 9:6-9

Heb 9:14

Zacchaeus

What happens to Zacchaeus when he let Jesus into his house?

Luke 19:2-8

The law leads to judgement and punishment. It does not change a person. Your conscience judges you; you feel 'bad' and want to do better, but often that does not work.

Jesus enters Zacchaeus' house. While others reject him, Zacchaeus is accepted by Jesus. Jesus knows his heart. Zacchaeus receives forgiveness and the result is restoration. Peace reenters his heart and there is peace with those around him.

Two courts

Heb 4:16

Rom 8:2-4

I personally grew up with a strong sense of needing to keep the law. Unfortunately I was not able to do this. There was a sense of judgement every time I didn't manage to keep it. When Jesus came into my life, the law was fulfilled and I was made free from judgement. The peace this brought was indescribable.

How can you get this peace and a clean conscience?

James 4:6-10

1 John 1:7-9

If we confess our sin to God we see restoration and have a clean conscience. There is peace again. The same happens when we do this in damaged relationships. If one person is willing to humble themselves, ask for forgiveness and admit their mistakes then this often leads to restoration.

What does Jesus mean by peace?

Peace is having healthy relationships and a state of calm. How do we obtain this with God?

3) Rom 5:1

A healthy relationship and a state of calm is another aspect of peace. Our relationship with God and with others can only be healthy if we are able to value, respect and accept ourselves. Paul writes to the Romans about how they can live in peace with God again. He writes about what God thinks of us. By faith in Christ we are justified. In other words: we can stand forgiven before God and can live in peace with Him.

Testimony

As a teenager I was addicted to pornography. Nobody knew about it. Once I had quit I kept on struggling deep inside. When I became a Christian this was also initially the case. Then the Holy Spirit in me showed me that I no longer needed to fear that people would know about this. God had forgiven me and there was no longer any condemnation. I was free but could not forgive myself. I regularly had really bad dreams. What would my wife think of me? One evening I decided to tell my secret. I confessed to my wife and some others who were present what had happened. The freedom that brought changed my life. What especially helped me was the thought that I was righteous before God. There was no longer a barrier between us. The relationship was good and peace returned.

Peacemakers, children of God

Heb 4:10

Isaiah 9:6,7

God is peace and rest. That is His character. Jesus is also called the Prince of peace. Now we can be children of God and live in His peace and rest.

All the apostles write in their letters to the early churches that it is important to seek peace, to aim for peace.

What do the apostles say about peace?

1 Pet 3:8-11

Col 3:15

Phil 4:2-9

James 3:18

2 John 1:3

Peter

Peter becomes a different person once he has been filled with the Spirit of God.

Acts 2:1-17

God uses this man as a shepherd to the early churches to demonstrate how they should continue. It is evident in Peter's letters that his temperamental character has changed and that he is much more willing to live in peace with God.

Peter the peacemaker, what does he think is important for the early church?

1 Pet 3:8-11

Be like-minded

Be sympathetic

Love one another

Be compassionate

Be humble

Don't repay evil with evil

Don't insult

Bless one another

Keep your tongue from evil speech and lies

Turn from evil and do good

Continue to seek peace

Compare this list with Matthew 5:3-14. Can you see the difference between the words of Peter and those of Jesus?

Is there always peace between Christians?

Phil 4:2-8

All apostles call for unity. It would appear that being a Christian does not mean that everything always goes well in your relationships. You will have to work at it. Paul gives some helpful tips in order to protect unity. He encourages believers to think about what is true, what is pure and lovely. Think of honorable things. In our team we try to apply this test. In situations of conflict we want to quickly (don't wait too long), openly and honestly (looking at conflict from both sides) to resolve the problem.



EXERCISE:

Think about how you live. Is there continuously peace in your heart? If not, what robs you of this peace? Are there relationships with people which aren't good? Do you hate other people groups or those from other countries? Is there peace between you and God?

Ask the Prince of peace regularly to fill your heart with peace!

PRINCIPLE 37

Jesus is our Prince of Peace. He forgives, that brings peace. He also helps us to restore bad relationships. He wants us to be peacemakers.

