



Peace of God – for us

Inner peace

"And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:7

One of the things that we really desire is to have inner peace for ourselves. In a way this is something which everybody wants but in the case of the world around us many people see the only way to gain peace is to have war. This is totally against the principles of our individual service of God.

We know that there is going to be peace on earth at some stage in the future and we have faith that that will take place. Let us focus on the way that we can achieve inner peace for ourselves in our lives.

Verse seven in Philippians chapter 4 indicates, it is God's peace that leads to our peace. We can easily misread that verse and only say we can achieve peace in our lives ourselves. We think, perhaps, that we can achieve peace if we place our trust in God. While this is true, Paul is suggesting more than that. We overlook the fact that it is really God's peace that leads to our peace. That's what this verse says ... "the peace of God will guard our hearts and our minds through our Lord Jesus." That really is one of the key verses of Scripture and for a life in Christ. In our seeking for an inner peace for ourselves we must realise that peace comes through the peace that God provides for us through his Son.

Let us to consider God's peace that can operate in our own hearts through our Lord Jesus Christ, and that this comes about through the principle of connection. This principle is implied in many verses.



At peace ...

Connections

Connection. The word connection is good because, as one of the dictionaries indicates, it refers to an association and a relationship. In considering the ideas of connection we need to realise that there are numerous connections we have in our lives which build relationships and which can lead to our peace of mind or our inner peace. Let us look at some of these. They are firmly based on Scripture.

The first of connections of course is our **connection with God** through his Son. That is the primary and most important connection. The second connection which is always important to us is our **connection with others** this particularly includes our immediate nuclear family, and to people around us. The third **connection is to the creative side** of our lives.

This might seem unusual but, the way we create and express ourselves as part of our inner being can help lead us to inner peace through the way we use it in God's service. The last connection we will look at is **connection we have with our self**. That might seem unusual, but it is vital we get to think about our lives and the way we develop our faith and all this entails.

Connection with God..., ... through His Son

The greatest connection we can have with God and His Son is through our prayer. It is our prayer to our heavenly Father that enables us to develop that relationship which is so important to help in achieving our inner peace. To develop this connection, we must focus on the way in which we pray.

But it is not only the way we pray; it is also the content of our prayer.

Probably one of the most important things is to make certain that we pray at the beginning and the end of each day. The first four words of the Bible can lead us in this: "In the beginning God". So as far as we are concerned, it would be useful for us to follow that principle. "In the beginning God" ... God at the beginning of the day where we can praise His name, reflect on His wonderful works and reflect on the way He has helped us in our lives. The words of Psalm 77 verse 11 can be very helpful for us: "I will remember the deeds of the Lord". Every day, at the beginning, it is useful for us to remember the works of the Lord not only in a global sense but also for us on an individual basis. For example, how often do we reflect on our lives and express our thanks to our Heavenly Father for what is done for each of us individually, and where it is viable, within our family, or friends, or brothers and sisters? If we do not reflect on the deeds of the Lord as suggested by the Psalmist, then we are prone to think that we are just doing things and achieving things by ourselves not because of the way Heavenly Father has been with us.

Another thing about an early morning prayer is to follow the example of our Lord Jesus Christ when his model prayer was: "Our Father which art in heaven hallowed be your name." In other words, we address our Heavenly Father, recognising the exalted position He is in and to remember and confirm our understanding of his holiness. The word 'name', Yahweh, itself is important because it reminds us of his full name: He who was, He who is and He who will be. If we start our day this way, with this prayer as a model, then we will also think of His Kingdom that is coming, we think of the daily needs that He provides for us and, of course, it is important we realise that the use of the word 'us' in our prayer reminds us that is not just about the relationship between me and God, it is about the relationship we have with God and others as well.

Faith is another vital element of connection with God. We need to have faith that He will work in our lives the best as He only can know and do. If we have the faith that God will guide us, this will help lead us towards our inner peace, we can rest assured that the peace of God will be with us and that He will accomplish what he wants to accomplish in us. Such a good connection will lead to peace.

There is another aspect of our inner peace and a relationship or connection with God which we must also consider. What we are talking about is the ideal world but there are occasions in our lives when we feel that our connection is broken and needs repairing. We might, just every now and again, have a slight feeling that God is not with us. If we are losing that little bit of faith and belief in God and we are questioning His presence in our life, it can be helpful to reflect on the past and that He has done so many good things for us and that He will continue to do so. One of the important things we need to realise is that if life does not go as we would like it to go, and if we have expressed our confidence in God that He will guide us in the way we should go, then any stumbling blocks which come along the way are designed to help us to have more faith in Him and realise that He will constantly guide us for the best.



Bridges are connections. Do we build bridges?

Connection with others

There are many parts of Scripture which indicate that in our endeavour to achieve peace we need to work with the people around us. How do we do this?

There are some very helpful verses that will assist us. In Hebrews chapter 12 verse 14 the writer makes a statement that we should "make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord". There are two key phrases here. "Make every effort to live in peace" – this categorically implies that there are situations where being peaceful does not come naturally to us. In these cases, we must try to develop, with God's help, the peace of mind which is so important to us. The next phrase is "we make every effort to live in peace with everyone", not just those that we might like a little more than others. Everyone because this is often difficult. There can be a part of our natural living where there are some people we like and get on with much more readily than others. We have to realise that what the apostle is saying is that we make every effort to live well with all those people. This, of course, includes those who may not want to be peaceful with us. We need to make the effort to try to help in achieving a peaceful solution to difficulties.

Another statement in this verse is that we need to be holy and reasonable. Without holiness no one will see the Lord. So, in our efforts to live in peace with everyone we need to be holy so that we will be able to see the Lord. Interestingly enough, being holy is something we need to follow all the time. This idea is given from evil and do good. He must seek peace and pursue it". Again, this is a very good picture of what is involved. Sometimes we can go and look for something in a half-hearted manner, as if it does not matter if we do not find it. This is not what Peter is suggesting here. He is suggesting that we do look for it and pursue it. When we pursue something, we become single-minded. So, part of our endeavour in life is to follow as much as we can in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ to be at peace with everyone; that we pursue it. This ultimately gives us our own peace of mind.



Along the same lines the apostle Paul in Romans chapter 14 verse 19 says: "let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and a mutual edification". There are two things here. The first is that it is an active process, that we make every effort to do the best we can and act on anything that will help achieve peace to mutual benefit. Again, it is not a matter of just leading to peace for ourselves, but it is following a peaceful practice that will lead to mutual edification. The idea here is that our efforts to seek peace will help other people as well. It is not a matter of just me not wanting to have an argument with somebody else. It is a matter of working with another person so that both people can be helped towards peace.

The apostle Paul had another reflection on this as well in chapter 12 of Romans and verse 18. Paul was a realist. He knew that as well as talking about positive things, about living at peace with one another, this was not always going to be practical. What he said was if it is possible as far as it depends on you live at peace with everyone. Paul realised that there are going to be times when people were not going to be peaceful with him. He knew that he was persecuted in many places by people who did not want to live at peace with him.

That is why he said, "as far as it depends on you". The practical realities were that people can be non-peaceful towards us but if we make every effort to be peaceful, this will lead to our inner peace.

Connection with the creative side of our life

In the development of our peace we can find that the creative side of our lives can lead towards an inner peace. There are a number of occasions in Scripture where peace of mind or inner peace is implied through the way in which we or others have been creative in God's sight. Using our talents that have been God-given to us can help us and others in achieving inner peace.

One of the most pronounced avenues of creative expression leading to peace is through music. There are dozens of references to music and its role in the service of God in the Scriptures. Here is one that is particularly striking. In Psalm 62 and verse one, the psalmist David said, "My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from Him." Now, at first sight this implies that David is simply making the statement that his soul finds rest with God because of his recognition of salvation. So, what does this have to do with music? The answer is at the beginning of the chapter where there are the words "for the director of music; for Jeduthun. a Psalm of David". When David wrote these words he very much had in mind the fact that they would be sung so that in this way David was looking at the connection between the creative side of his life, music, the poetry of the words and his connection with God – he would find rest for his soul – his inner peace – through the recognition of the salvation possible through God expressed through singing.

The term at the beginning of the chapters in the Psalms "to the director of music" occurs 56 times. To assist in our connection with God that will lead to inner peace, singing, and in a number of instances the playing of instruments, were a vital element in the way people connected with God. We do this ourselves and this makes it so important for us to become involved enthusiastically in the music associated with the worship and reflection of God. Verse eight of that Psalm 62, still being sung: "I will listen to what God the Lord will say. He promises peace to his people His saints". What a beautiful promise and again it is the combination of words that David penned, the music, which was being sung and the meditation with God, which is so important.

Another element of creativity is through poetry. A lot of writing in Scripture is not just in normal prose language. Some of the most beautiful and expressive words in Scripture are through poetry. David of course was the great master of this. The whole point of poetry is the placement of words in a particular sequence that conveys an idea which means just that little bit more than a normal statement.

The fact that David wrote a lot of his own poetry and put it to music is an indication of the way in which the creative sides of our life can assist us in our connection with our inner peace and in our connection with our Heavenly Father. Solomon, of course, was another one who was excellent poetry.

Another part of the creative side shown in Scripture which help in the connection with the development of inner peace and service to God are in the skilled craftsmen. The writer in second Chronicles chapter 2 and verse seven said, "Send me therefore a man skilled to work in gold and silver, bronze and iron, and in purple, crimson and blue yarn and experienced in the art of engraving to work in Judah and Jerusalem with my skilled craftsmen who my father David provided". Here we have the fact that there were well-skilled men working in gold and silver – different metals, and, of course the purple, crimson, blue yarn – sewing. It wasn't just the Old Testament and the men who were involved in the creative sides of their existence to help give you peace of mind and help in their service of God – in Acts chapter 9 verse 39 we have the instance where Dorcas had become ill and died. It was recorded in chapter 9 that Peter went with the two men who were sent to him by the disciples, and when he arrived, he was taken upstairs to the room where Dorcas lay. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them. This is a beautiful description. Try to picture it. The widows were just so ecstatic about the wonderful work of creating that Dorcas had done you can imagine the ladies saying, "Look Peter, look at this beautiful example of work" and of course we know how that story ended.

This was another example of the way in which God's people were doing their best to help others using the creative side their life creating beauty which in this case was so very well accepted by Dorcas's good friends who worked no doubt with her. It wasn't just the charitable things that she did. It was the skill and the beauty of which with which the garments were created.

Connection within yourself

Now we come to an important element of the development of the peace of our mind and that is our connection with our self. This is a difficult concept that we need to consider. It means that we have to evaluate personally our service to God and the way in which we go about doing various things. This can lead us to a wonderful connection with our self, and ultimately, the peace of mind that God gives us through the way in which we relate to ourselves and determine the way in which we can communicate and connect with God.

One of the verses the most telling verses about our self-connection is in Ephesians 3 verse 16. Paul says, "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being". Typically, this verse is loaded with a lot of important ideas which can help us in achieving God's inner peace. For example, Paul is praying that God, will strengthen us with power through His Spirit in our inner being. Again, this relates to his verse in Philippians where he has talked about "the peace of God". There is the important connection between God, His Spirit and our inner being and peace. When we allow God to use His Spirit in our lives that we invite God to help us in every way and He will give us power in our inner-being and we will have that peace.

Another recognition of the way that it is God's peace that helps us can be found in Isaiah chapter 6 and verse 12 where the prophet pleads, "LORD, you establish peace for us; all that we have accomplished you have done for us". This is an acknowledgement that God establishes peace for us and anything that we have accomplished has been done by God. That is a remarkable understanding that in our endeavour to achieve a greater inner peace for ourselves we realise that this comes only through God and through establishing our connections with Him, our relationships with other people, through our creativity and through meditation of our own lives.

Of course, there are always times in our lives when it is difficult for us to achieve that entire peace of mind. There are times when we do not have peace because of our broken connections with other people, because of our faltering faith in God, because our creativity does not go the way we want to go - we do not sew the garments as well as we would like, we do not make our music as well as we would like. And there are, of course the illnesses – the physical things which challenge our faith by our thinking that God has not helped us as we would like Him to. Ultimately, our Lord Jesus Christ has experienced all the problems, and even more problems than we have experienced.



The peace and beauty of nature

He was able to say Matthew chapter 11 versus 28 to 30:

*"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

What beautiful verses. One of the principal ways in which we can assist ourselves to become more peaceful in our minds is to meditate for ourselves on the way in which our Lord Jesus Christ can help us through connecting with our own beliefs and that we can then also connect with our Heavenly Father. We learn most from the example set by our Lord Jesus: We take his yoke on us; he will help us he has been through it all. We need to connect with ourselves by reflecting on our life and have the faith that even while we are ill and things seem absolutely terrible, we still need to have the faith to recognise that God will help us through His Spirit – help us through the trials that we go through.

Did you notice that Jesus does not say the burden will disappear? The verse says that Jesus' yoke "is easy and his burden is light" – the difficult parts of our life are easier and lighter if we place our trust and confidence God. We will still have the problems, but they'll be easier because we place our trust and confidence in him. (Yoke is sharing.) As recorded in John chapter 16 verse 13, Jesus said; "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." Again, glorious words. Jesus is reminding us for our own benefit. The Psalmist reminds us: (Psalm 119:165); Great peace have those who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble." Jesus' peace

Jesus said: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." (John 14:27) Jesus indicates that there is only one place that we can get the most ultimate peace in our lives and that is by connecting with our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus gives us peace and he leaves peace with us. There is no other way. If we accept the presence of Jesus and his Father in our lives we will be helped in achieving God's peace which is so important for us to have a greater connection with our heavenly Father. If this happens, we will not let our hearts be troubled and we won't be afraid because God is always with us through His Son.



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will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:7*

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