

Peace with God

In 1736 when John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist church, was on board a ship bound for America when they went through some storms. He was terrified. However, there was a group of Moravian missionaries on board who were at complete peace even during the storms and they sang hymns during them. John Wesley, although going to America as a missionary, realized that he didn't have that same peace. He questioned his relationship with God and eventually got his life right with God and received the same peace that he had seen in the Moravians. We can so often go through the motions of being Christians or religious in any way, but do we really have peace with God?

Romans 5: 1 – 11

1) The Pursuit of Peace

- I have asked many people if they have peace in their lives and most have told me that they don't.
- Everyone acknowledges that they want peace and would pursue it if they knew where to find it.
- Different people have different reasons for the lack of peace in their lives:
 - Worrying about the future
 - Worrying about how to get through the present
 - Worrying about those they love
 - Enmity and strife with family members and/or colleagues
 - Fears of all sorts, including the fear of death
- Sometimes we have to make a decision about something and after making it we just don't have peace about it. It is often the Lord's way of guiding us not to make the wrong decision. It's better to change your decision, and have peace in your heart and mind.
- Have you ever been tempted to do something which you know is wrong and you are restless inside? Follow your lack of peace as it's the Holy Spirit convicting you not to do something wrong even before you've done it.
 - It could be something you're going to do that's wrong and you shouldn't do, or it could be something that you should do and don't want to do.
- People have different ways that they pursue peace:
 - Charitable works
 - Meditation
 - Going to church
- The problem is that peace is never truly found as long as we are at enmity with God.
- The root of our lack of peace is sin. Sin separates us from God and is the fundamental reason for the above reasons of a lack of peace.
 - Imagine that you have broken the law and you are about to face the judge. You are fearful and anxious. You are in despair because you fear the worst.
 - The reason for this lack of peace is because you have broken the law.
 - So it is for all of us who have broken the law of God and know that one day we will all stand before Him – the ultimate judge.
 - Hebrews 9: 27 "Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment"
 - As everyone has sinned – broken the law of God – it is no wonder that we do not have peace knowing that judgment awaits us all.

2) Finding Peace with God

- God, in all His love for us, sent Christ to die on a cross for us even while we were still sinners.
 - Take our example again of you having broken the law and have to face the judge. Before we enter the court room someone enters the court room in our place, stands before the judge and is judged for the law that we broke. Our attorney comes out of the courtroom to tell us that we are free to go as our judgment has already taken place. He takes out our criminal record and we see that it is blank – we don't have a criminal record anymore because someone else paid the price for us. Now we can go in and face the judge with confidence. We have peace because there is no more basis for judgment.
 - So it is that Christ paid the price for all of our sins. When we believe that he did so we enter into a new relationship with God – one of peace because we know that He won't judge us. When we believe He forgives us our sins and wipes our sins – our criminal record – clean. Jesus has already been judged in our place
 - We can now face death because we know that we will be with God forever.
- If you've been carrying a burden on your shoulders for years and it is suddenly lifted how do you feel?
 - Relieved, joyful, at peace
- Before ascending to heaven Jesus assured his disciples of His peace
 - John 14: 27 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.
- He assures us of peace in the midst of trouble
 - John 16: 33 "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."

3) Rejoicing in the Hope of the Glory of God

- So when we have entered into the new relationship with God we rejoice in the hope of glory.
 - Luke 15: 10 "In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."
- We don't have to face entering into eternity with fear and trepidation any longer, but with joy and confidence because our citizenship is in heaven
 - When we lived in India we always went through the Indian customs with some anxiety that they would give us some problem for entering their country. But whenever we returned to South Africa we went through customs with confidence and normally to a "welcome home" because we are citizens of South Africa.
 - We can go through the door of death and enter heaven with confidence because we have, through Christ, become citizens of heaven.
- We can face anything that lies ahead, including death itself, with peace in our hearts and minds because of our firm assurance in the hope of Christ.
- We rejoice, we pray and we rest in God who gives us an inexplicable peace regardless of what we're facing
 - Philippians 4: 4 – 7 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.