

Real Peace

Across the meadow from where we live is a pool. It is a place of peace. No fish ever breaks the surface of the water; no kingfisher ever disturbs the reeds; no water fowl ever calls to its mate. Across the surface of the pool there is a layer of thin green weed. There is peace at this place – peace by stagnation. It is the peace of death.



There is an equivalent to this in real life. An existence which avoids the challenge of faith and is detached from the issues of life is never disturbed because it is never interested enough to be concerned. The cares of life give no anxiety because they are ignored. It is not upset by the pains and problems of others because it seldom recognizes them. This is in its way is a life at peace. But it is the peace of stagnation.

The Peace of God

The peace of God is something altogether different. It is the peace to which the Apostle Paul referred when he said *“Let the peace of God rule in your hearts”* (Colossians 3:15).

Consider for a moment the circumstances under which these words were written. They were penned from Rome where Paul was in prison, daily and hourly expecting a violent death. They were written in days of persecution, when political and religious animosity was fierce. This tells us something fundamental about the peace of God.

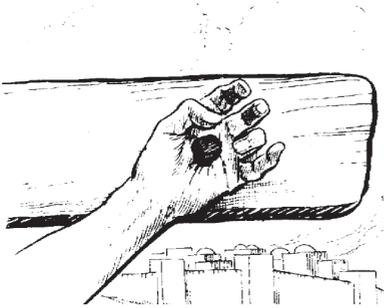
A man who had it and urged others to keep it, was in danger, at the point of death, surrounded by bitterness and hatred – yet there in his heart was the peace of God. So evidently we do not have to buy a cottage in the remote seclusion of the country to enjoy this peace; it is an internal condition, a state of the heart and mind.

To understand this, we need to look at the context: read Colossians 1:15–23. Notice what Paul is saying: The Lord Jesus Christ is the pinnacle of God’s creation, and he is the centre of God’s plan. Then he declares that this unique, perfect man spilled his blood to reconcile men and women to God. And then as a consequence, he is able to present us absolutely faultless in the sight of God.

Just think of those words again – holy, blameless and above reproach before God. Could there be anything more peace-inspiring? In a distressing world we are seldom at peace. We often find ourselves wanting harmony, but finding only discord; wanting to do good but struggling to carry it out; blown around by ambition, desire, endeavour – but no peace. Perhaps we think we have found peace and then it is broken by some event; it seems we have tranquillity and then some new adversity invades our little world.

The Dreadful Cost

There is a powerful and moving backdrop to this. The Lord Jesus, the one who best represented God, suffered the awful and lonely tragedy of crucifixion. In that bruising death he made peace through the blood of his cross.



This is challenging, especially when we consider the awful discord and lack of peace in people's hearts and in the world. Even those trying to please God will recognise that they disobey Him and sometimes feel powerless to do better. Then we take up the New Testament and read that: *Justified by faith we have peace with God (Romans 5:1).*

Free from Fear

We need no longer be afraid. Our disobedience has been cancelled. This is something to cling to at all costs. The Creator of the universe gives us absolution through the death of His Son.

The supreme example of this peace is in the Lord Jesus himself. Think of him in the presence of Pilate, who held Jesus' fate in his hands (or so he thought!). Of the two men, Pilate and Jesus, who do you think had the most peace? Jesus going to his death or Pilate to his breakfast? Pilate's mind was in turmoil and his conscience was

tearing him apart. There is a sense in which he was a microcosm of restless humanity.

Jesus could have had the other kind of peace, the peace of stagnation. He could have avoided the danger and sidestepped the cross. But he was not that kind of man. He faced life with all its reality. He met sin and death face to face, and he defeated them. By dying despite his perfection, he overcame human weakness for himself and for all of us, giving true peace today and the hope of life in the kingdom of God.

He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed (Isaiah 53:5).

Peace Ruling in Our Hearts

We can have great peace in the knowledge that this has been done for us. Through Jesus we can enter a new life, pardoned for our faults and reconciled to God. Not only this, but God cares for us now:

All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

The best is yet to be. The Kingdom of God is soon to transform His people and the whole world.

This does not mean that we shall never worry, indeed sometimes worry is necessary. But with the right perspective this is concern without panic, anxiety without despair. The peace of God is a lifeline in today's world.

Dennis Gillett