

The Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ can be found in the Old Testament.

Genesis 3:15 speaks of Jesus, the cross, and the victory that would be won on the cross. Jesus would conquer Satan and Satan would do all he could to bruise and halt the ministry of Jesus. In Genesis 12 God revealed Himself to the man Abram and told him that through his family line the Messiah would be born who would bless every family. This promise, this Good News was restated in Genesis 22:18, "and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me." I spoke last week about the blessings of obedience. Your obedience unto Christ today may and will impact future generations. There is no act of obedience unto Christ that goes unnoticed by Christ and yes, Christ has a way of blessing obedience. You may not even see the actual blessing in your lifetime, but future generations will. Even your prayers for your children and grandchildren will impact generations to come. Your obedience does not earn your blessings. Your obedience does put you in a position to receive even more fully God's grace for you and future generations. We can spurn God's grace, or we can be open to God's grace. Obedience opens wide our receivers to take in God's amazing grace poured forth in abundance so much so that years from now that grace is still touching lives. Of course, Jesus' act of obedience of dying on the cross for our sins opened the door for every blessing from God that we receive. Jesus paid the price, and we are graced with every spiritual blessing.

Many of you send out Christmas cards that are absolutely gorgeous. Not on all but on some of the cards is used the word peace. Such as "May Christmas peace be upon you." or "Peace on earth and goodwill toward men." The word peace and the word Christmas are often used together at this time of year. In the Old Testament no one prophet foretells more about the Messiah to come than the prophet Isaiah. He calls the Messiah to come the Prince of Peace.

Friends, if you and I could enter heaven right now for just a few moments all worry, anxiety, fear, hostility, rage, and more would no longer be felt. Peace, God's perfect peace

would take the place of all those negative and harmful emotions. I say that because Jesus is called the Prince of Peace. Coming from heaven Jesus knew exactly the peace of heaven, a peace that passes all human understanding. We will not know this perfect peace fully until we are with the Lord in heaven.

If I could put in one word the atmosphere that I sense in the news these days it is that of hostility. Open hostility is everywhere. We are a nation at war with each other. I am not going to mention politics but the rancor between the parties is detrimental to our country. The only answer to the hatred that abounds is found in Jesus Christ, our Prince of Peace. Only Jesus can bring the peace of God to a people who have declared war on God and war on one another. This type of behavior was spoken of by God when sin entered the human race in Genesis 3.

Let me remind you. It has not always been this way. When Adam and Eve were first created, there was no hostility or enmity; the peace of God reigned supreme. Adam and Eve were at perfect peace with God. They walked with God in the cool of the evening. Their oneness with God was unbroken. Their fellowship with God was as sweet as a honeycomb. Their enjoyment of God was constant. God was their everything.

Second, Adam and Eve were also at complete peace with each other. God brought the first man and the first woman together and performed the first wedding establishing the covenant of marriage. At peace with God each was at peace, one, with the other. There was no hostility at all. They were living with the Prince of Peace. The first couple enjoyed each other's company as much as they enjoyed being accompanied by God.

Third, Adam and Eve knew nothing of anxiety, worry, or fret. At one with God, at one with each other, at peace with God and at peace with each other, they were at peace within themselves. The emotion of peace reigned supreme in their lives as individuals.

And last, Adam and Eve were at peace with the creation itself, tending every day to the Garden of Eden as God had told them too. Their work was not toilsome. Even as the ground

produced fruit, the fruit of the Holy Spirit called peace abounded in their lives and the Garden itself was a place of unending peace. The Prince of Peace reigned supreme.

All of this was lost when Adam and Eve rebelled against God setting in motion a world no longer at peace with God, with one another, within themselves, or with the creation. Hostility, anxiety, worry, fret, hatred, and more entered the human race. This is why we are a nation filled with hostility toward God, toward each other, and within oneself. Where peace abounded, there is now conflict. The only answer is to fully submit, to fully surrender our lives to the Prince of Peace. Only the Lord Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit working inside of you can give to you God's promised peace as you trust the Prince of Peace.

Genesis 3:15 tells us God's answer and gives to us the key that opens the door to the peace of God and peace with God. As I look at our nation today, would it not be wonderful for all to bow down to the only one who can give true and lasting peace the Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Prince of Peace establishes in the life of every Christian a threefold peace: 1) Peace with God, 2) Peace within, and 3) Peace with other people. This was all made completely possible when Jesus died on the cross for He bore the hostility of the world and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation.

One of my absolute favorite authors, the late Jerry Bridges, writes this. "Prior to our salvation, because we were born in sin, our relationship to God was characterized by alienation and enmity (see Col 1:21). We were objects of God's wrath, in a state of rebellion against God. We were "like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud," because as God has said, "there is no rest for the wicked" (Isaiah 57:20-21).

When God saves us by grace through faith, when we are born again, when we enter a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ the Prince of Peace, all of this changes. The Bible says, "Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God

through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). This is the point at which all peace begins. “We cannot have peace within or peace with other people until we have first peace with God (Jerry Bridges, “The Practice of Godliness” pg. 158).

When we are saved, God is now for us and not against us. When we are saved God will never leave us nor forsake us, nor will he ever condemn us. We are adopted into God’s family and given an inheritance that will never run out. God becomes the source of our peace because we are rightly related to the Prince of Peace. We are no longer at the mercy of circumstances for God promises to work in all of them for our good (Rom 8:28).

If you were to look at my teeth you would see a number of gold crowns. Every new dentist I go to is surprised at the amount of gold I have in my mouth. They complement the work that my dad did putting in most of my crowns. I love going to the dentist. It is one of my favorite things to do. My dad was my dentist and my mother his assistant. All I had to do is open my mouth wide, which is easy for me, and Dad and Mom did all the work. It was hard to stay awake. The peace of God is not like that. Yes Jesus did the work on the cross for us so we can know God’s peace, but we just don’t sit back and open wide. We pursue what makes for peace. We cooperate with the Holy Spirit resulting in continued peace.

When we are saved by God’s grace through faith, we are then at peace with God. The second aspect the Prince of Peace works in our lives is that of personal peace, a release of those horrible inner conflicts and anxieties that keep us awake at night and tire us all the day long. We are surrounded by circumstances or adversities that often rob us of our personal peace. We worry, fret, and get all bent out of shape over things that stress us to the max. A person is rude to us and we just want to clobber the person. At school, a person gets mistreated by a fellow student and it ruins your entire day. We all experience things that rob us of our personal peace.

A few years ago, my youngest son called me and said, "Dad I got fired." Now my heart did not stop but breathing became instantly difficult for me. Do you know how many thoughts can go through your head in one second? Oh no! How is his rent going to get paid? Who is going to make his car payment, his car insurance payment? Should I make him move back here?" I had other thoughts too that I can't remember. I lost all of my peace in an instant. His next words were, "Dad, I am only kidding." Talk about a peace robber. I told him never to do that again. "You almost made my heart stop." In that split second I had no thought of God at all. Romans 8:28 did not come to mind. I felt terrible for him being fired. Friends, if I was a more mature believer in Christ, if I could learn to thank the Lord in all circumstances and did not have a template of worry and anxiety that I return to in moment's notice, I never would have sunk like I did in that split second.

Jesus says to us, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may find peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). The Prince of Peace promises us two things in this passage: 1) we will have trouble in this world, and 2) Jesus has overcome the world. God's eyes are always on us. Nothing happens to us that He does not see. God's watchful care on us is constant. So why do we worry and fret. Why do we lose that sense of personal peace with God? The answer is unbelief. We are not convinced that God's care is right there. We doubt God's love and constant help. We doubt God.

Personal peace with God is a result of consistent trust in the Prince of Peace knowing that no matter what happens God will bring good out of it and God has not turned against you but is for you. It means you do not have to rely on yourself to fix everything for God is trustworthy in all things. Nothing is too big for God to handle or too small for God to care about. The Bible tells us to be anxious for nothing and to pray about everything. Peace is produced within by the

power of the Holy Spirit. It takes continued yielding to God of all things for this to be a reality in our lives.

And last, the peace of God works its way out in our lives by producing peaceful relationships one with another. Time will not allow me to go into this like I would like to so I will in another sermon. Romans 12:18, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge." As sinful human beings, we all have relationships that we struggle with. We have all experienced broken friendships, broken relationships that have hurt us to the core. I would love to tell you that if you do certain things all of your relationships will be healed and you will no longer get hurt, but that is not the case. You will have some relationships that will never be right this side of heaven. On the other hand, the Prince of Peace has the power to heal and reconcile any relationship where both parties allow the grace of God to reconcile them. The Prince of Peace came so we can be right with God and also so we can be right with each other, so we can be at peace with God and at peace with one another.

I have a particular broken relationship in mind. Sometimes through no fault of your own a person will turn against you and there is nothing you can do to heal the relationship. Yes you have apologized for hurting the person in any way, but they refuse to be reconciled. I have learned the best way to pray in such situations is for softened hearts. God, please soften that person's heart toward me. At the core of such broken relationships are hearts hardened by sin and a refusal to let go of any and all offenses. God is grieved when it happens, and I know hearts are broken. Healthy Christians who love Jesus are always letting go, forgiving, and no longer hold those offenses against a person. Unhealthy, immature believers, acting out of self-righteousness refuse to surrender all to the Prince of Peace. Yes it is sad indeed.

The Good News Jesus proclaimed in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament is the reason one day we will see the Prince of Peace face to face and we will know

a peace that passes all human understanding, a perfect peace that will never end. Amen and Amen.