



Peace on Earth

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,



Every December, we Christians proclaim and celebrate the birth of the Savior of the world, God's only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We love to tell and to hear the story of His birth, from Luke 2:1-20. We are always thrilled by the vision of a great



host of angels appearing to those humble shepherds out in the fields, proclaiming, **"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men."** (Luke 2:14 KJV)

The prophet Isaiah wrote this prediction of the birth of Jesus: ***For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.*** (Isaiah 9:6 KJV)

Do you see any peace? The war in Afghanistan seems endless; there is still no real peace in Iraq, North Korea is testing nuclear weapons and Iran is probably trying to build them; and genocidal civil wars are still raging or sputtering along in several areas of the world. The fighting has not ever stopped for very long since Cain killed his brother Abel.



Even in a prosperous and civilized country such as ours there are drug wars, turf wars, frequent shootings at bars, fist fights at sports stadiums, and deranged people who go on killing sprees at schools and restaurants. And terrorism, which for a long time was someone else's problem, not ours, has now profoundly changed the way we travel, if not the way we live.

As the Bible says, we cry, "Peace! Peace!" but there is no peace. What happened to "Peace on Earth"? Where is the Prince of Peace when we need Him?

Looking for Jesus's words about peace in the Bible, we find this: ***"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a person's enemies will be those of his own household."*** (Matthew 10:34-36)

Huh? What's going on?

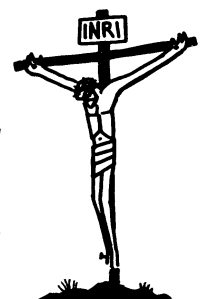
Two Kinds of Peace

The peace we have talked about so far is "world peace," or worldly peace. It is people getting along, not killing each other or even fighting with each other. "Live and let live." It's nice, when it exists, but something always happens to spoil it. Someone gets greedy, or gets insulted, or imagines an injury of some sort, or goes crazy, and Bingo! Peace is gone.

Worldly peace is pretty much just a temporary lull in the fighting. The causes of conflict still exist, because they are deep-seated in the nature of human beings. It is unrealistic to think that we will ever live at peace with one another because we are sinful, selfish creatures, and none of us wants peace except on his own terms.

There is another kind of peace—heavenly peace. Jesus said, ***"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."*** (John 14:27)

There are several aspects to the peace that Jesus brings us. The first is peace with God. His death on the cross has paid the penalty for our sins: ***... through him God was pleased to reconcile to Himself all things ... by making peace through the blood of His cross.*** (Colossians 1:20 NRSV)



Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. (Romans 5:1-2)

God promises His peace to those who love Him. **“For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,” says the Lord, who has compassion on you. (Isaiah 54:10)** The psalmist agrees: **Great peace have they who love your law; nothing can make them stumble. Psalms 119:165.**

Once we understand and accept the fact that we have peace with God—once we enter into this new reconciled relationship that He offers us—we are different. Maybe not all at once, but certainly over a period of time, we come to have that heavenly peace within ourselves. We become transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2) so that we become “a new creation.” (2 Corinthians 5:17). We learn to trust God, and to depend on His Holy Spirit to guide and protect us. By surrendering to His Lordship, we receive His peace that is beyond all understanding. (Philippians 4:7)

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Romans 8:5-8)



My Heart
Belongs to Jesus

In fact, we become not just new creatures who are reconciled to God; we become, in fact, His children. **For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, (Romans 8:14-16)**

When we have peace with God by the sacrifice of Jesus, and peace within ourselves by the presence and with the help of the Holy Spirit, we are well on the way to being at peace with others. Jesus commanded us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves, and we must do so. This means, as Paul put it, **If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. (Romans 12:18)**

In fact, go a step beyond: **Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2)**

In other words, don't fight with anyone if you can help it; don't hurt anyone; and help others when you can. In fact, be a peacemaker. **“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God,”** said Jesus (Matthew 5:9). The Gospel message hangs together, doesn't it?

How should we, as followers of Jesus Christ, react to the hatred and violent attacks of terrorists? The best way to react is to demonstrate the difference between the love of Christ and the hatred of the evil one, while maintaining the truth of our creed. For example, we should not say to Muslims, as some well-meaning Christians have mistakenly said, “We all worship the same God.” That simply is not true. But neither should we attack them by saying, “Your god is not really God,” though that would indeed be a true statement. What we should say to them, when God gives us the opportunity, is, “May I tell you what Jesus means to me? What He has done for me?” And, if God enables, lead them to accept Jesus also.

Likewise we should not confront Jews with their rejection of the Messiah, or Mormons with the falseness of their prophet, or Hindus with the demonic nature of their myriads of gods, and so on and so on. Rather, we should be prayerfully ready, willing, and able to share our own personal testimony of Jesus Christ, when God creates an opportunity. That seed, planted by our faithful obedience, will quicken and grow into heavenly peace in some hearts. And we will receive the joy of having done a good work that truly will remain eternally.

“Peace on earth.” What a wonderful idea. But there is no earthly peace, really, and there cannot be peace except in the victory of the love of Jesus Christ over the selfishness and death that rules in the hearts of human beings. If you have truly given your heart to Him, and if you can obediently plant the seeds of His love in the hearts of others, you will honor the Prince of Peace in the best possible way.

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, now and always.

Brother Roland

The "Peace Prayer of St. Francis" apparently dates from the early part of the 20th century, and its author is unknown. It was found in Normandy in 1915, written on the back of a holy card of St. Francis, from which the name comes. Other histories ascribe it to a time before St. Francis, and some believe he indeed did write it, but the above is the most commonly accepted history of the prayer. The last line is seen both with and without the "to ourselves" phrase.

***Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
when there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.
Grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood, as to understand,
to be loved as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying [to ourselves] that we are born to eternal life.***

Let There be Peace on Earth

Words and music by
Sy Miller and Jill Jackson
1955

Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me,
Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.
With God as our Father, brothers all are we,
Let me walk with my brother, in perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me, let this be the moment now,
With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow,
To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally.
Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me!

Feel free to ask ...

If you have questions or concerns about the Bible or the Christian life, you can send them to me, and I will try to address them in coming months in the "Good News Guide." If I can't answer a question adequately, I'll try to find someone who can. I can't promise every question will get a satisfying answer because, frankly, there are a lot of questions that we won't have answers to until we're in Heaven with Jesus, and maybe not even then. But I'll try. The answers to your questions will, I hope, be a blessing to others who may have the same questions and concerns. Send them to me at this address:

Brother Roland, P O Box 14, Fayetteville, PA 17222

Peace Be With You

The Bible helps us learn how to live in peace with God and with our neighbors. Mostly it's just a matter of using your head, being reasonable instead of unreasonable, giving instead of grasping. Enjoy the puzzle.

Puzzle:

Y B Y P J D L J W Y K M C A H H A G B I Q B T L A U R L K I N S J
N N Z T A V T N Q V C W H N T I X N Y F Z M M I T R U A I B V H T
G J O X I K Q H A Z B B G O R L E R S I T S W N F Z L B K T Y P W
V N I M E L I N S U L T S I J Y U I W Y E Y E K Q Q L D Z O S Y B
N Q O S R T I G B F N N M T V D X Z O D R M F E W P R T S P E T I
F I V I S A S U L N C U I C O O P E R A T I O N Y O C A I W W I S
R Q S T T E H A Q K L N M A C V X H I N X E E Y C E Q T E U G R D
Q M N N S A N U H N S N Q F T Y C R E M L B T N L S E L Q T K U S
J P Z E P E R R N U A E I S L J N T P S E I O G U O U N N W D C M
N B U M C C F E E F O R G I V E N E S S N C E F G P T E S P S E A
D N R E W N J R D D O H T T K O B H A E O N B T M E M E Y H V S D
I H X E E E I E O I N R A A C W A G R N D L F A I S T T L J D L V
S C H R I D Y P R D S E G S V Y E E F N G T A U S U E I N J U R Y
O R H G L I N O O Y S N T I R U S R C R Y E Q A P I U S G D J D Y
B Q Q A S F V S P E Y F O E V O I A R O I Q R S X E N N T V E V N
E K J O Z N H E T W E C C C K E R E X B S A I N H T I N Y R R O W
D J W R A O V T Z L N O W J N E N B B B H D A M Y L E N T S N V N
I T J S B C L W L S N A S D L Z G E D U F E A R A M O A S G X O O
E L V A E E L O S C I M S E F S E U S T H S J E U I H E Y L I S H
N Z V D D L W P I M C H S U U S N U U S N G H G T P N T D S Z T W
C C C N O S F L V O I S Q N V Q E F A M K S R A R D B F S J G A J
E B E R H A I I N P N I C U S O R G W V J A R Z E E T A K U Z F C
Q S G I O A O F S E M E W I S D O M D O T T V K Y W P L Z D B J T
S D P R T L L B S H R E C Q W S S L Q U S A C P L M T U J G K I V
S I D I E I G S Z T N A U R M Y I R O U R I H X O L S G S M W Y V
B E O N C I Y V A T W E T B U Y T S R V W G K C O T U K D E V U F
R N C T V I J I N E L F S E F E Y F V L I U X N F O R P N N Y Z C
S E G I E C N E I T A P U S H E L P F U L N E S S S T R O T N Z L
V P N S P T G N I R A C S G W Q M T Y K D N G P O Y Q I X Y L G L
Z G V B Y C O Q B R P B N Z M N E S Y C N T G P F V X Z T V C F U

Words:

For PEACE

AGREEMENT
CARING
COMPASSION
CONCORD
CONFIDENCE
CONSIDERATION
CONTENTMENT
COOPERATION
FELLOWSHIP
FORGIVENESS
FRIENDSHIP
GENEROSITY
GIVING
HARMONY
HEALING

HELPFULNESS
LOVING
MERCY
ORDER
PATIENCE
QUIET
RECONCILIATION
REPOSE
SATISFACTION
SECURITY
SERENITY
SETTLEDNESS
TENDERNESS
TRANQUILITY
TRUST
WISDOM

Against PEACE

ANGER
ANXIETY
ARGUMENT
CARELESSNESS
CONFLICT
CRUELTY
DISOBEDIENCE
DISPUTES
FEAR
FRUSTRATION
GRUDGES
HARASSMENT
HASTE
HATRED

INJURY
INSULTS
JUDGMENT
NEGLECT
SELFISHNESS
SIN
SPITE
STUBBORNNESS
UNCERTAINTY
UNFORGIVENESS
VIOLENCE
WICKEDNESS
WORRY