



# The Second Great Word

Ephesians 1: 2 NIV

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

## What Is Peace Really?

Last week we looked at grace, this week we will consider peace. Both are found in Paul's greeting to the church of Ephesus. As was mentioned, grace was the way the Greeks said hello to each other, peace was the Hebrew greeting. Shalom is how it sounded, and it meant "well-being" or "may you be well". Peace, for the Hebrew, was more than just the absence of warfare or strife. Shalom had internal ramifications; that within you all was well and free of turmoil. There are more of us in turmoil and a state of chaos within than perhaps ever before. As I mentioned in a devotion I recently shared online, mental health experts are concerned suicide rates and depression and anxiety could be on the rise and reach troubling levels. You might be among those in need of shalom or peace.

The Bible provides us with plenty of examples of those who could have used a bit more peace. You may not realize but Moses had a sister as well as a brother. His sister actually helped save him when Moses as an infant was at risk of being killed during the Egyptian massacring of Hebrew male babies. Eighty years later, after Moses returned to Egypt with the God ordained mission of leading the Hebrew people out of Egyptian slavery, Miriam was given a critical position in Moses's leadership team. He depended on her to mentor the Hebrew women as well as provide him with needed counsel. Miriam was important to Moses. Yet Miriam struggled with her sense of worth and became upset with Moses for not giving her enough power in the leadership team. She became so angry that Miriam staged a mini rebellion along with her brother Aaron against Moses. **Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite. "Has the Lord spoken only through Moses?" they asked. "Hasn't he also spoken through us?" And the Lord heard this.** (Numbers 12:1-2 NIV)

Without peace, you get like that. You are easily offended and judgmental. Little things perturb you and make you frustrated. You overreact when you lack peace and get bent out of shape over small things. Peace keeps you from getting upset and maintains inner joy! It wasn't Miriam's business who Moses married, and it was God who put Moses in charge. You know people like that who get angry or depressed too easily because they lack peace. You may have seen the video of a couple who stood in front of their mansion waving a pistol and a semi-automatic rifle, yelling at protesters marching down their street. Now their faces are splashed all over the internet and they look ridiculous. What if they had God's peace instead of that pent up rage and fear? They would not have embarrassed themselves and their neighbors. Their profound lack of faith in God to protect their home and keep the protesters calm and nonviolent made things worse! Wouldn't it have been much better if they just sat in front of the house smiling and prayed for each one of the demonstrators marching past them? Have you ever wished you had the peaceful disposition needed to keep you from making rash decisions or acting impulsively? Have you ever embarrassed yourself because anxiety or anger led to your behavior rather than peace?

Jesus made you a promise in 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.** God is offering you supernatural peace, peace that springs straight out of Jesus. In fact, it is His peace He wants you to have. How many times have I wished I had someone else's intelligence or sense of humor or courage? Christ wants to give you the very peace He owns if you want it. Do you notice how calm Jesus was when the soldiers spit in His face or when He was approached by Judas Iscariot and the soldiers in the garden of Gethsemane, knowing full well what was coming? Jesus wants His own peace to pour into you so that you can relax when you lose your wallet, or the driver cuts you off. Christ peace is what you need this week because stressful situations will arise, and you can face them with the peace of Christ managing you within!

Paul the Apostle wrote, "**Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts...** (Colossians 3: 15 NIV) Wouldn't that be so much better than an unpredictable temper or lingering anxiety? Paul is literally commanding you to be ruled by the peace of Christ. He isn't suggesting it; he's demanding you make sure the peace of Christ controls your heart. Why? So that you might enjoy that peace, experience the pleasure of it taking over when you are tempted to either get angry, pout, or slip into depression. Make sure the peace of Christ rules the day in you. Don't you just love how calmly Paul reacted when a poisonous snake latched onto his hand as he gathered firewood the day he survived a shipwreck and swam to shore. The islanders who saw what happened thought Paul would die from the venom, but he didn't. Paul had peace God would take care of him.

The problem is that we tend to be resistant to the work of God and don't always let the peace of Christ rule over us. You can see this for yourself. The peace of Christ is worked in you by the Holy Spirit, but you resist it and fret and fuss and get in arguments and become discouraged or even depressed without turning at all to the peace of Christ. It is strange but true. It is kind of like trying to shout at your sister living two thousand miles away rather than using your cell phone. The way God overcomes this odd tendency of ours is through discipline. Hebrews 12: 11 points out how God gets the patience of Christ activated in us. **No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.** There is a caveat here. If you fight against God's discipline, the peace of Christ won't have any effect on you but if you let God work supernaturally in you through discipline, His peace will rule over your personality.

You may have forgotten what God had to do to work into Moses the peace he needed to lead Israel out of Egypt. When the Lord first started to stir in Moses a desire to see his fellow Israelites freed from slavery, Moses did not yet have the character needed for the job. He was impulsive and self-reliant. Wandering out among the Hebrews while still considered the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, Moses came upon an Egyptian supervisor beating one of the Israelite slaves and thinking he was about to start an uprising, killed the Egyptian. That was of course not part of God's plan and it was simply Moses in a rage acting upon his impulses rather than in the direction of God. The Lord did want Moses to lead the Israelites out of slavery, but not that way and certainly Moses wasn't to be in charge; it was to be God working through him. Moses fled into the desert of Midian when Pharaoh heard about the attempted rebellion of Moses and wanted him killed. For forty long years the Lord worked out of Moses his pride and developed in him peace as he seemingly wasted his time caring for sheep.

God may waste many of your best years giving you no real responsibility in the Kingdom until He has gotten that moral rightness and emotional stability in place so that you are fit for the task He has. It could spring up in a flash...all that waiting and difficulty you have had and then it flies upon you. God working through you and in you in a new and beautiful way. God is training you right now, working your spiritual muscles so that you have the perfect peace He imagined for you when He first called you into eternal life. Peace is not something you develop; it is what Christ develops in you. In time, you will wonder how it could be possible

that so much peace is yours. God will have done it and you will possess it. Peace like a river. Peace that passes all understanding!