

Jerry Monette - Peace

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The word peace is common in most languages. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for peace is either shalom or shalom, two words that mean basically the same thing. In the New Testament, the Greek word for peace is irene, and the Latin word for peace is tax. The dictionary defines peace as mental calm and tranquility, or as the absence or cessation of war. Peace is sometimes used in the Old Testament in the sense of the absence of war, as we read in Ecclesiastes 3, 8, a time of war and a time of peace.

But to make peace means more than just the absence of war. In a purely negative sense. It includes also the idea of friendly relations between two peoples. So when rival kingdoms made shalom in the Bible, it doesn't mean that they just stopped fighting. It also means that they start working together for each other's benefit.

On a more personal level, in today's culture, peace is usually thought of as referring to inner calm and tranquility free from stress, and in the Hebrew Bible, peace sometimes does refer to inner tranquility, but it more often points to something much different and much better. The Basic Meaning the core meaning of shalom in the Old Testament is to be complete or whole in one way or another. The idea of completeness or wholeness is involved in all the different uses of the word shalom in the Hebrew Bible. For instance, the common greeting in Israel is shalom alakim, or peace be upon you.

Now we might roughly translate this as good day, but it really is closer to may you be well. Accordingly, shalom is often used to express such things as health, welfare, well being, and security. All these are ways of expressing wholeness or completeness, depending on the circumstances and the needs of the person. Another core idea of shalom deals with the reality that life is complex, that we have many relationships and situations that have a lot of moving parts, and when any of these parts are out of alignment, missing, your shalom tends to break down. So when some part of your life or relationships with others is no longer whole or complete in order to bring back shalom, the scriptures tell us that one of four things must either restitution, reconciliation, recompense, or payment of some sort must be made.

An example of shalom meaning restitution is found in Exodus 22:5, which says, if a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall put in his beast, and shall feed in another man's field, of the best of his own field, and of the best of his own vineyard shall he make restitution. The word translated here Restitution is the Hebrew word shalom. The root word that shalom comes from this law of restitution is saying, if your animal accidentally or otherwise damages or eats the produce of your neighbor's field, you shalom them. You make them whole by giving them restitution, a complete payment for their loss. In other words, you take what is missing and you restore it to wholeness or completeness.

An example of shalom meaning reconciliation is found in Proverbs 16:7, which reads, When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. When enemies become friends, it means the broken relationship has been reconciled and made whole. To reconcile a broken relationship is to bring shalom.

An example of shalom, meaning recompense, is found in Jeremiah 16:18, which reads, and first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double, because they have defiled my land they have filled mine inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable things. The word

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translated here, recompense, is the Hebrew word shalom. Because Israel had not kept the law, their relationship with God was out of alignment, incomplete and broken, and God is telling them the only way their relationship can be restored or made whole is through a process of recompense, in this case a period of disfavor, and after their 1845 year period of disfavor is completed, shalom shall begin to be restored.

There are two examples of shalom meaning pay. The first is in 2nd Kings 4:7 which reads, Then she came and told the man of God, and he said, go sell the oil and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest. The second is in Psalm 50:14, which reads, offer unto God thanksgiving and pay thy vows unto the Most High. In both of these scriptures, the word pay is the Hebrew word shalom. Both these instances are about paying a debt.

In one case the debt is owed to man in the other it is owed to God in the form of a vow. The widow made shalom of her debt by restoring that which is owed to her creditors. The one who is instructed to make shalom of his vows to God will do so by completing or finishing what is owed to God in that vow.

Now shalom is not only applied to people and relationships between people in the Bible. It is also applied to things that are finished that are then in the state of completeness or wholeness. An example of shalom, meaning finish is found in Nehemiah 6:15 where it says, so the wall was finished in the 20 and fifth day of the month Elul in 50 and two days. Here the word finished is shalom. Shalom was brought to the wall.

It was finished, made whole, it was completed.

And now we'd like to turn our attention from the secular to the theological use of shalom. The Old Testament speaks of berit shalom, which means covenant of peace. The covenant initiates or begins a relationship which is based in some sense on mutually assured obligations. Each side will undertake and perform certain actions in order to fulfill their obligations to the covenant. So in a covenant of peace or berit shalom, we see the notion of peace as an action, part of the mutually assured obligations or actions between God man.

One such covenant of peace is found in Ezekiel chapter 37. In verses 1 through 14 of that chapter, we have the prophecy of the dry bones coming back to life. At the time of this prophecy, the nation of Israel was in captivity in Babylon. The prophecy gives hope that the Israelites would be reanimated as a people and be restored as a nation again. It is also a prophecy of the millennial day when Israel will be regathered as a nation and their hope that was lost, of being heirs to the Abrahamic promise of blessing.

All the families of earth will be revived. The dry bones prophecy is followed by the prophecy of the two sticks, Judah and Israel, being rejoined and once again becoming one nation. They will be gathered and brought to their own land and have one shepherd, David, who is the Christ, rule over them, and in Ezekiel 37:26 28 we read of this. Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them.

It shall be an everlasting covenant with them, and I will place them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them forevermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them. Yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people, and the heathen shall know that I, the Lord, do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them forevermore. This berit shalom covenant of peace is the new covenant made with Israel.

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As Jeremiah 31:31 says, Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. God's obligation under this covenant of peace is that he will, through the Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant, bring mankind to a condition in which they can obey and live, where they can become whole and complete as perfect human beings. Jeremiah 31:33 tells us how God will fulfill his obligation under this covenant of peace in order to make it work so that the people under the covenant can be faithful to it. Unlike the law covenant that failed. God says, I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts will be their God, and they shall be my people.

And what are the obligations of Israel and the world of mankind under the covenant of peace? It is simply to listen to the Mediator and all that he says, and to obey and live. As Psalm 34:14 says, Depart from evil and do good seek peace and pursue it. Here the psalmist tells us that shalom is not something that simply happens. It is a thing that one can seek and lay hold of.

And this is what the world of mankind will do as they walk up the highway of holiness, as they seek after human perfection.

In Zechariah we have another prophetic picture of the kingdom and another meaning given to shalom, which is complete truth and justice. Zechariah 8, 16, 17 reads, these are the things that ye shall speak ye every man the truth to his neighbor. Execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates, and let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbor and love no false oath, for all these things are things that I hate, saith the Lord. Here Zechariah joins the notion of peace with judgment or justice. Shalom is used here in its meaning of complete justice, and shalom is also joined here with truth.

When truth and justice are done in the gates of the city, the city will have shalom, the city will have justice. In this scripture we see a profound truth to the meaning of peace. It is far beyond the simple idea of cessation of war or an inner calm and tranquility. It really comes very close to meaning justice. Peace is seen as a deep commitment to the work of justice, and this helps to explain the role of the work of the Prince of Peace in Isaiah 9:67 which reads, 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 of the increase of his kingdom and peace there shall be no end upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice.

From henceforth, even forever, the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. The Prince of Peace is not said to put an end to war or to bring inner calm, tranquility, although these things will be the result of the kingdom. Here Jesus, the Prince of shalom is seen as a bringer of justice, and his government or his kingdom will be established and sustained with complete justice and righteousness. This idea of the kingdom being wholly submerged and covered by justice is echoed in Isaiah 66:12, which reads, for thus saith the Lord, behold, I will extend peace to her like a river. This peace is the mark of the new heavens and the new earth.

Complete justice will flow over it as a river, and none will hurt or destroy, and no injustice will be done in the kingdom of the Prince of peace.

Now what made shalom unique for the people of Israel is that every aspect of their peace, whether it be freedom from war, wholeness in physical and mental health, personal prosperity, security against drought and crop failure, you name it. The peace, the shalom of Israel was all dependent on how well they kept their covenant. If they faithfully kept the law, they were promised to be

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blessed in every aspect of life. If they failed to keep their covenant, they were promised curses, both personal and national. The ultimate curse being captivity to a foreign power and loss of their promised land.

National sovereignty, and of course we know how it worked out.

We know how much peace they had. They certainly had their failures when it came to being faithful to God in the law covenant. They worshiped idols, they had false prophets, their leaders didn't rule justly. As a result of their lack of loyalty to keeping their covenant, both on a personal and a national level, the ultimate penalty was brought to bear. They went into captivity.

First Assyria, then Babylon, then Medo, Persia, then Greece, and finally Rome. When they rebelled against Rome, their nation was destroyed and they were dispersed into the surrounding nations. So all in all Israel's *berit shalom*, their covenant of peace was not a picture of perfect peace. Instead of being made whole, they were a broken people and a broken nation. But that is as it was meant to be.

Because Israel was a type that demonstrated that *shalom* could not be achieved through the keeping of the law. The law was a schoolmaster to bring them unto Christ and into a personal covenant of sacrifice that brought peace with God through faith in Jesus blood, and that is what *shalom* is all about in the Old Testament.

In the New Testament, the word most often translated peace is from the Greek word *eirene*. In Christian thought, *Irene* is quite naturally deeply influenced by the use and meaning of *shalom* in Jewish thought. Like as in the Old Testament, peace in the New Testament is also used as a greeting and as a departing salutation. It is also used to describe the security involved in peace. Security from theft or from averting war or from release from persecution.

It is also used for reconciliation after an altercation between two people or at the end of a disagreement within the Church. It can also describe a relationship of goodwill and a state of wholeness among a group of people. As followers of Jesus, for instance, we are instructed in Romans 12:18, if it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men as well as within the Church. I might add, Jesus urges us in Mark 9:50 to have salt in yourselves and have peace one with another. Jesus wants the relationships amongst his disciples to have integrity, and he wants us to make real efforts to keep our fellowship whole and intact.

Along this line, Paul urges in Ephesians 4, 3, saying, Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace and what will be required of us if we are to do this? Verse 2 says, it will require humility and patience and bearing one another in love. It will take real effort. In total in the New Testament there are 11 imperatives to seek or preserve peace, and several specify to live at peace with all people. So as we can see, for the consecrated peace is a high priority.

But Jesus makes it plain that we are not to live at peace solely by what the world terms peace, because what the world terms peace is not our goal. It is not what we are laying down our lives for. In John 14:27, Jesus tells his disciples, peace I leave with you my peace I give unto you not as the world giveth, giveth I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. The implication here is that the world's peace is not God's intention for us.

While it is important to try to live peaceably, having peace in this world is different from the peace Jesus gives. This false peace Jesus is referring to might be the type of peace the world was under

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during Jesus lifetime, which was the Roman peace. This would be the Pax Romana, Pax being the Latin word for peace. Caesar's peace. The Pax Romana, was obtained through military conquest, and it was enforced by violence of a most brutal nature.

The Roman Emperor was very proud of the Pax Romana that he had brought to the empire. He was so proud that on one side of the denarius, the coin of the realm, is pictured a seated lady who represents the goddess Pax, the embodiment the peace of the empire. In first Thessalonians 5, 3, in an allusion to the coinage of all worldly empires, Paul warned that the rulers who promised peace and security, he warned of the rulers who promised peace and security with these for when they shall say peace and safety, then suddenly destruction come upon them as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape. As impressive as the Pax Romana or any other type of worldly peace may be, Paul is saying it is a mistake to elevate the contributions of the Caesars or the kaisers or the czars or the kings or the presidents that have made peace because their kind of peace, obtained through the oppression of worldly governments, will be destroyed and discarded in the day of the Lord. Worldly peace, then, is not true.

Lasting peace now we've looked at the typical and ordinary uses of the word peace. We've also looked at the false peace that the world can provide. Let's now look at the true peace that the world cannot give. Our peace starts and ends with Jesus. Jesus birth was announced as the arrival of peace, as the angel proclaimed in Luke 2:14 saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.

Jesus is the true peacemaker. How did he make peace? How did he put an end to war? Did he teach everyone to be calm and tranquil? We're told how Jesus made Peace in Colossians 1:20, where it says, and having made peace through the blood of his cross by him to reconcile all things unto himself by Him I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven, by placing himself between warring parties, by atoning for the sin of Adam, and in him all humanity, Jesus has made peace by reconciliation.

Remember the core meaning of shalom in the Old Testament. It is to make complete, to make whole. We saw also that shalom can be accomplished by restitution, reconciliation, or payment. The New Testament understanding of peace teaches us that the relationship between God and man had been broken because of sin, and it was through the blood of his cross that Jesus made payment for sin. He made full restitution, thereby reconciling the broken relationship between God and man and making it whole again.

This is the true meaning of peace, and this is how Jesus made peace, and this is why Paul can say, in Ephesians 2:14, for he is our peace, and in Romans 5:1 we are told how we have this peace. Romans 5:1 reads, Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

When we are justified by faith through the blood of the cross, we have peace with God. Our broken relationship with God is made whole, and we are no longer strangers or servants. We have been made children of God, and so when Ephesians 6:15 says, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. The gospel of peace is another way of saying that through his death and resurrection, Jesus has made peace between God and man.

So preaching the gospel is the same as preaching peace. Even as Acts 10:36 says, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, the word peace here is interchangeable with the gospel. To preach peace is to preach the gospel, and this understanding of peace made through the blood of the cross gives

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new meaning to Jesus. Words in Matthew 5, 9, where he says, blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

As footstep followers of Jesus, we are called on to be peacemakers, to make peace like Jesus did. By being part of the sin offering. Through sacrifice unto death, we can, with Jesus, bring mankind back into harmony with God. We can take what is broken in their relationship with God and restore it to wholeness. So we see the true idea of peace in the New Testament is that Jesus made peace between God and man when he died and rose again.

The idea is that through his ransom sacrifice, he restored to fullness the broken relationship between humans and their Creator. He brought peace. He restored shalom between God and man. Now, for us personally, the peace that Jesus gives really has nothing to do with the absence of warfare or with the feelings of inner calm and well being. We don't have these in the world, for in the world we have trouble and tribulation.

For us, true peace is a whole and complete relationship with God made possible through faith in Jesus, who is our peace, and that's the rich biblical concept of peace. Now, this peace transcends whatever situation the world is in and whatever situation we might be in. It is not dependent on how tough we are or on how weak we are, how talented we are, or how flawed we are. Because our true peace doesn't come from within our own selves, it comes from God.

We have peace through the rest of faith in Jesus.

But what about that other kind of peace, that calmness among life's raging storms, the peace of mind when things are going terribly bad, the tranquility when we are under tremendous mental stress and strain? We are not to just ignore this aspect of peace. We are to strive for inner peace and tranquility because it will help us in our lives, our spiritual as well as in our temporal lives. How many of us can say we focus just as well on our studies when we're feeling totally stressed out? How many of us can say we that we make our best decisions when our nerves are shot?

So yes, we are to try to obtain to the best of our ability this aspect of peace in this life. But notice that I said strive and try to obtain, not positively attain in every situation. The reason I say this is while our peace with God, our Shalom is complete, our peace in this world is only partial and piecemeal. We all have our ups and downs and we are not to judge our peace with God on our inner peace and calm because some of us are just more naturally prone to feel anxious than others. So when we are feeling like we have lost our peace in this world, take a few deep breaths and think about the perfect peace you have through faith, Jesus blood, and after you've done that, strive as best as you can to find peace in this troubled world.

As you go about your business of laying down your life as part of the sin offering, it is my hope that we will all be successful in our consecration vow and by so doing become peacemakers for this poor groaning creation Shalom and pray for the peace of Israel.