

Aaron Kuehmichel - The Development of Peace

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When we talk about the development of peace, there is a verse. Our theme verse for today is Philippians 4, 6, 7, and it says, do not be anxious about anything and pleading with thanksgiving. Let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Now, I want you to pay attention to the Word, but do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and pleading. Brother Chris, can I have you come up here a second?

I got it solved. Thank you. The zoom window is over my notes. It's, like, kind of hard to read them. So notice the word but acting as a conjunction.

And but is a conjunction used to introduce two separate thoughts, and they put them together. In our culture today, when we encounter this sentence structure with the but, we are trained subconsciously to interpret it as ignoring the first segment and paying attention to the second segment. For example, how would you interpret this if your spouse came up to you and said, I love you, but I can't be with you? You're going to ignore the first part and you're going to concentrate on the second part. Now, in our personal communication, we want to be very careful about what we convey by the word but when we join two different sentences together.

And we want to make sure that we convey exactly what we intend to say when we use the word but. But in our theme verse here, the usage of the word but conveys exactly what the author intends. Even in our culture today. Forget about worry. Concentrate on prayer instead.

Now, in our theme verse, there's a starting place. Do not be anxious about anything, and there's also an ending place, and the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your thoughts and hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, and in between, where we may be, this starting place and where we want to be the ending place is a process.

That process is defined in three simple words, but in everything, and then we're told how to do it by prayer and pleading, with thanksgiving. So this morning we're going to spend our time on that process, because that process is our opportunity for growth.

Now, our goal is to explain that process to everything part, and we're going to cover five levels or stages of growth that I believe are necessary for the peace of God to dwell in our hearts and in our minds. These five levels, each one building upon the previous and culminating with the sixth level of peace, are the base truth, and then on that we build faith, and then upon that we build obedience, and that should lead us to consecration.

And within Our consecration, finally to surrender and, and the culmination of all of those leads us to the peace of God. Now, it's okay if you differ on the order of the various levels, and it's okay if you define the various levels differently. I'm simply trying to convey that peace is a developed skill or a developed mental state of thinking, and there's a substructure that each of us has to build and have to personally construct to obtain or have this ultimate goal of peace, the peace of God.

Now, this diagram does not reflect all that is involved in the process of obtaining peace. It does not address the growth of love that we experience as we walk with our Father. Nor does it address the transformative power of that love. Our diagram does not address the transformation some make from a literal fear of God in his retribution to a reverential fear, the aspect of love, respect,

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reverence and awe, and nor does it address the power and impact of that transformation.

Those items, the transformation of love and the transformation from fear to reverence are embedded in each of the levels that we're going to discuss today. So we're trying to do a statically diagram, a very fluid and lifelong process.

And when we get to the pyramid slides again, you will notice a small pyramid representing peace in every level, depicting that substructure, and as we progressed in our Christian walk, we obtain a degree of peace in each level, and the size of that pyramid in our diagram does not indicate how much peace you have. It simply depicts that peace is developing in every level. Now, each level has a thread running through it from the bottom level all the way up to the top.

And once we have faith, we carry it with us. Once we learn obedience, we carry the lessons forward with us and so on, and how much of the thread of each level we carry forward, unfortunately, may be situational. Sometimes our faith, our obedience, our trust is stronger in one experience and sometimes is weaker in another, and lastly, as fluid as our lives are, so also our walk with Christ is sometimes we are successful and we grow, sometimes we fail and we regress.

Our diagram does not reflect that ebb and flow or fluidity of our walk, and nor does it reflect the internal and all the external influences that affect our peace, and the last thing we want to note is that all the stages of development, all the experiences that we have are under an umbrella, and it's within the sphere of God's overruling in our lives, and our diagram depicts that as this fear encompassing the levels of development.

So with all that, let's get started.

So the pyramid of Peace, the foundational base upon which we build all other levels, is scriptural truth, and when we think of truth, the verse in John 17 may come to mind. It is recorded in the Lord's prayer for his disciples in the upper room before his crucifixion, and it simply reads, sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth.

Now there is also an Old Testament verse that says almost exactly the same thing. Perhaps the Lord Jesus was remembering that verse as he prayed, and it reads, Psalm 119, verse 160. The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous judgments is everlasting. So now we have two witnesses to the truth of God's word, one in the old and one in the new.

And there are other scriptures about God's Word being trustworthy, and additionally, we may be familiar with Isaiah 55:11. So will my word be, which goes out of my mouth. It will not return to me empty without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding for which I sent it. If we just stop and think about what that verse really says.

It says that everything he says is going to be true. Everything he says he's going to do, he's going to do, and he tells us that he loves us, and he holds us with his hand and he forgives us. All those things are true. The question each of us face is, do I believe it enough to change my behavior and to change my thinking based upon what I already know?

And in Hebrews 6:18, and in Titus 1:2, the apostle Paul tells us that it is impossible for God to lie. He simply cannot lie. Hebrews 6:18. So that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to hold firmly to the hope set before us. We say it is because his word is true, we can believe it, and we should

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therefore be encouraged and hang on to it in Titus 1:2, in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago.

Now we're told that the salvation of the world, of mankind, was established before the foundations of the world were even laid, and scientists vary on how the earth is. But even before the earth was made, God already knew about his Savior, His Son.

So God provides to many scriptural promises of his care over us to assure us. Isaiah 43:2-3. This is one of my personal favorites. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers they shall not overflow. You when you walk through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior, thy ransom.

And what that should be telling us is that there is not one experience that we have that he's not within it with us. Now we think of the Israel passing through the waters. We think of Daniel, Shadrach, or Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace, and God was with them. Daniel in the lion's den. God was with them.

Well, those are very visible manifestations. But in our own lives, God is with us too.

And if we believe that, then we start finding peace within the circumstances that we have, because God is greater than the circumstance that we're in. Romans 8:28, and we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. What shall we then say to these things? If God is for us, who or what can be against us?

What that means for all of us is that we can claim and expect fulfillment of the many promises that God has made regarding his care over us, and we know them as a collection of great and precious promises. That's what we think of these promises in 2 Peter 1:4. Now, this is from the ESV version, says, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature.

Just think about what that means, that those promises are the avenue by which we change from the human nature to the divine nature. That's how important these promises are, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

Now the apostle Paul, using the illustration or metaphor of armor, tells us how important truth is to those running for the high calling. Truth is the belt which holds all the armor of God together. It is what binds the armor in place to maintain both its defensive effectiveness and to contain the word of the Spirit, or the sword of the Spirit. It's the only one offensive weapon that we have is the sword of the Spirit, and that belt is what ties all of those, both the defensive and the offensive items together.

Ephesians 6:10. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on this armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For it's not flesh and blood that we struggle with, but it's the adversary.

And then verse 13, therefore take up the whole armor of God. In verse 14 stand firm, therefore, having belted your waist with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness.

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So all those verses, and we just extracted several of them out, remind us the importance of the armor. Nobody goes into battle without some kind of defensive or offensive equipment. In our offensive equipment and our defensive equipment is the same thing. It's truth. Additionally, we are told that we are to use God's word as a guide for our decision making and for behavioral modification.

Once we learn something, we're now responsible to adjust what we do with that information. Psalms 119:105, your word is a lamp to my feet and the light to my path. Psalm 86:11, Teach me your way, Lord, I will walk in your truth. Unite my heart to fear your name. In 86:11 tells us about this behavior of modification.

Teach me first, and then I will change, not just teach me. God's truth is the foundation upon which all else is built. So that leads us to our second level or component in this development of peace, and that is faith. Now, we have a very direct scripture that ties faith with truth, and we find it in Romans 10:17. So faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ.

Faith comes because of truth. Well, what is that truth? Or what is truth? Now, in Acts 3:15, Peter and John heal a crippled man from birth, and verse 16 reads, and on that basis of faith in his name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know.

And the faith which comes through him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.

So Peter and John were rebuked by the religious leaders because they healed the man, and Peter and John give this defense before the religious leaders. It's because of faith in that name.

So in Acts 4:12, Peter says, and there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name given among heaven or given under heaven that has been given among mankind, by which we must be saved, and Paul tells us the effect of Faith in Romans 5:1, and you recognize all of these verses. In fact, sometimes they're so familiar with us, to us, that we don't listen to what they have to say. It's like my wife is talking to me and I'm doing something else.

And she says, you're not listening to me, and it's like, yes, I am. What did you say? Well, I can't repeat it, but I heard what you said. It's the same thing with when we put our nose in the Scriptures.

Yeah, I read that. I read that. I read that read that. But now tell me what you just read, and it's like, I can't because I wasn't focusing, paying attention to what I'm reading.

Romans 5:1. Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. But why is it that even when we know this truth, faith gives us peace, that we still struggle with peace? We claim to be believers. Believers means we have faith.

So why is peace so elusive for us?

Let's consider the account of the Lord Jesus calming the storm in Mark chapter four, and the other citations are there too. Mark, Matthew eight and Luke eight. The thing to note is that all three accounts basically agree, and they each record a different plea to the Master for rescue. So Mark 35:41 says, on that day when evening came, he, Jesus said to them, let's go over to the other side.

And after dismissing the crowd, they took him along with them in the boat, just as he was, and other boats were with them, and a fierce gale of wind developed and the waves were breaking over the boat, so much so that the boat was already filling with water. That means it's foundering. That's

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the word. When water comes in over the top of the boat, it means it's foundering.

So just imagine the scene now. The men are on multiple boats making their way across the Sea of Galilee, and a very strong wind comes up. The wind is strong enough and sustained long enough that the waves are now large enough to spill over the tops of the boats. Now, not all the disciples were fishermen, but it's safe to conclude that when the wind came up, the disciples, who were experienced fishermen who knew how to control the boat, took control of the boat. Yet even with their experience, they were still starting to founder in verse 38.

And Jesus himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion, and they woke him and said to him, teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? And Brother Cyclemion suggests, in a discourse titled Peace Be still, he suggests three different calls for aid are indicative of three different positions of faith. Now remember I said each of the accounts state a different thing about their call out to the Lord Jesus. Brother Seclaimian suggests the Matthew 8, Save us, Lord, we are perishing. He suggests this is a cry of developed faith.

We know that you can save us. Cry of faith. Luke 8 records, master, master, we are perishing, and Brother Seclaimian suggests this is the cry of despair, or little faith, expecting the worst and it's too late for anything to be done, all is lost type of thing. In Mark 4 records, Teacher, do you not even care that we are perishing?

And he suggests this is one of distrust. They called into question the mercy and compassion and the ability of the Lord Jesus. Don't you even care? So the question then comes, when the storms test our faith. Not my faith, your faith.

When the storm tests your faith and my faith, what cry do we make to the Lord Jesus? Do we cry out in confident faith? Do we cry out in despair, thinking all is lost? Or do we cry out, even beginning to question his care over us?

In verse 39? And when he, the Lord Jesus, got up, he rebuked the wind, and he said to the sea, hush, hush, be still, and when the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. Now, the miracle of the calming of the wind can be explained away by the fact that the wind always stops.

However, the timing of the event at this rebuke was part of the miracle. That's the wind. But what about the waves? When the wind has whipped up waves high enough to swamp their boat, the sea has amassed a large amount of energy that would have to dissipate before the sea would be calm, and this may take hours, naturally, to dissipate.

But the Lord Jesus calmed the waves quickly, perhaps even instantaneously, and therein lies the rest of that miracle. Now, in the three Gospel accounts, there are no records of what the Lord Jesus said to calm the wind, and only one account records what he said to the waves. Peace or hush, Be still. Do you think the Lord Jesus needed to speak audibly to calm the wind?

No. Did he have to speak audibly to control the waves? No. So why then are we told what he said to the waves? Perhaps it has nothing at all to do with the waves and everything to do with the men who are in the boat or boats.

Some were of faith, some were in despair. Some questioned his ability even to protect them. So he said it aloud, peace, be still. For the benefit of the disciples to calm them.

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Now, at the appropriate time in the experience, the Lord Jesus rebuked the wind and calmed the sea, and he does so in our experiences as well. He rebukes the wind and he calms the sea. In each of our own experiences, 1 Corinthians 10:13, no temptation has overtaken you. Accept something common to mankind, and God is faithful.

He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able. But with the temptation will provide the way of escape. Also the peace, be still so that you will be able to endure it while we may not hear the audible, peace be still in our experiences, I've never had that happen.

But somehow, whether through prayer, study and experience or fellowship, the Holy Spirit reveals God's voice to peace, be still. In verse 40, he said to them, why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith? And they became very much afraid and said to one another, who then is this that even the wind and the seas obey him? The disciples asked the wrong question, and they directed it to the wrong audience.

Instead of asking each other, who is this man? They should have asked the Lord Jesus, how do we achieve the faith that you are talking about?

The question Jesus asked his disciples, why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith? Is it just as valid to the disciples of the Lord Jesus today as it was 2000 years ago? Why are you afraid? Why do you have no faith?

Faith and trust is a conscious decision, one that we may have to reaffirm repeatedly until it becomes a spiritual reflex, a spiritual mental muscle memory.

Our third component in the development of peace is obedience. Now, when we talk about obedience, it's important to note that we're talking about acting upon the truths that we learn. It's not just enough to hear it, we have to do something with it, and this acting is explained in James 2:20. But are you willing to acknowledge, you foolish person, that faith without works is useless?

Verse 26. For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead, and you know, the early church had a very difficult time reconciling these verses with Romans, and we understand what James is saying is that I don't care what you say about your faith. Your actions are going to tell me whether or not you have faith.

Your actions will speak for your faith.

Now we could use the progression of the priests through the tabernacle court illustrate obedience. We can't come to God unless He draws us, and when we respond, he reveals Himself to us by inviting us into his tabernacle. So we see the altar upon which the life of the offering was given. It's the recognition of the Lord Jesus.

Then we see the laver. It's a recognition of the sin in our lives and our need for cleansing, and as God continues to reveal Himself through His word, and as we respond and draw to him, we begin to understand what the eye cannot see. Because yet the Holy and the Most Holy is covered. The eye cannot see it.

We begin to discern the contents of the holies mentally, and as we learn more, we may start making the changes to our lifestyle and our life choices. We change our relationships. We change our behavior and we change our mindset, and that all of those things is simply called sanctification. It's also equally true that obedience follows consecration as well.

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We understand that the flesh and Holy Spirit work within each of us, are at odds with each other, and we are familiar with Romans 8. For if you are living in accord with the flesh, verse 13, if you're living in accord with the flesh, you're going to die. But if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. Putting to death the flesh is a very difficult thing to do, and we all struggle with it. It doesn't matter how old you are, we all struggle with it.

And when we think we have it mastered, we trip up and we realize we don't. Matthew 26:41 says, Keep watching and praying so that you do not come into temptation, because my word, the Spirit is willing and the flesh is weak. Now, obedience is a level which builds upon faith because faith is required before we are willing to obey. Faith in our Father's care, His protection, his love, and his forgiveness is what enables us to do what God says, even if we can't see the value in it yet. Even if we don't understand how things are going to work out yet.

And I don't think we can talk about faith and obedience if we don't talk about perception.

Our perception of a situation is influenced by our experiences, our prejudices, our fears, our expectations, and most definitely our perceptions influenced by our faith. Where some see luck, God's people must see providence, and when we filter out all the influences affecting our perception, things like prejudice, fear, expectations, doubts, disbelief, then what we finally have left. After we've taken all those outside influences that affect us and set them aside and acknowledge them, then what we finally have left is really simply truth. I do believe or I don't believe.

We have to get the truth first and before we can focus on what really is. I am obedient or I'm not obedient. If we aren't aware of these additional influences, then we also aren't aware of the impact they have on the way that we see and perceive. Now, we all know that the experiences of our childhood form the understanding of our adulthood.

So if that's so powerful, then don't you think that relates to our spiritual walk as well? The experiences we have help us understand the spiritual things as well. If I have a difficult relationship with my Father, it's very hard for me to transfer that relationship to my Father in Heaven. Because when I Hear the word Father. I think of that difficult relationship and that's my prejudice and that's my perception.

Perception plays a key role in how we deal with our experiences. What really matters is how we see those experiences, how we react to and inside of them, and the composure that we maintain through them, and so we have little sayings that we use to help us. Bite your tongue.

You know you have two eyes or you have two ears and only one mouth, right? Listen before you speak. Count to 30 if you have to. All those little things are helping us, just mental stimulations to remind us to be careful how we interact within the experience and the composure that we decide to keep within an experience.

Our perception is the one and only thing that we have control of.

That's it. The event or experience itself happens. It's objective, it happens. What we make of it, how we see it, is my choice. It's subjective.

We can decide and frame the story we tell ourselves about this event and the experience and what it means. It means God doesn't care for me, or it means God loves me enough to let me have this experience so that I can grow from it. It's my choice as to how I look at the experience. In other

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words, are we choosing to think vertically or horizontally now? Perception is the factor that determines how we deal with our experiences.

And when something is so key, then it also has a tremendous power in our lives. So how we interpret the events in our lives. The perspective we take becomes the framework for our response.

If I believe the Lord Jesus is my Savior, I'm going to show him devotion, respect, reverence, fear, awe. If I have no relationship with him at all, I'll use His name in vain.

The perspective we take becomes a framework for our responses. The answers to the questions Do I believe? Do I trust? Do I submit? Are predicated upon my perception of that particular experience and my Father in heaven.

The story we tell ourselves about the situations we are in, true or not, is self fulfilling. In other words, whether you think you can or you think you can't, you are right.

And this saying is just another way of expressing the biblical statement in Proverbs 23:7. As a man thinks in his heart, so is he. As a man thinks in his heart, so is he. The perspective you and I take is a choice. It's based on factors apart from the immediate experience.

And as believers in Christ, the factors with the largest influence should be our faith and our obedience. As believers, we are biblically taught to frame our experience under the umbrella of our Heavenly Father's. Care. That's what we're taught. How good of a student are we?

The apostle Paul reminds us of the role of our faith in perception in Hebrews 12:11, and you're familiar with this verse now? No chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous nevertheless. Afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness, and here's the key unto them which are exercised by the experience.

Now, regarding obedience, God tells us many things about Himself, and He tells us that it is better to obey than to sacrifice, and that's because obedience follows genuine faith, and faith is based upon love and truth, and the ultimate indicator of our faith is whether we love God with all of our heart and keep his commandments. That's it. But the problem is it's not as simple as that because we're tested in the good experiences and the not so good experiences just how much we love him in adversity and without adversity, in good times and in difficult times.

1 John 2, 3 says, Hereby do we know that we love him if we keep his commandments, and whoever keeps his word in Him. The love of God has truly been predicted, sorry, perfected by this we know that we are in Him.

So our faith in God and His plan changes the way we view the world, and it changes the perspective that we should be taking in our experiences. If this change in perception is not taking place in our lives, then we should be asking him in prayer to help us adjust the way we think based on his promises to us. If I have a hard time claiming the promises, I should ask him to change my thinking and to help me trust him more. Now, when you looked at this pyramid, we talked about the six, five stages leading up. I didn't mention love in there at all, nor did I mention forgiveness.

They are not forgotten, they're not missing. They're simply embedded in the component of obedience.

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So two verses. John 15:12 this is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. This is agape love, and Agape love is a conscious decision to love everyone, friend, foe, and fellow sinner. Agape love is the choice of the will, not the choice of the heart.

Ero's love. Filial love is love of the heart. Agape love is love of the head from the head. Loving our enemies is a conquest of our natural inclinations and emotions. Second verse Ephesians 4:32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you, so we have the love and the forgiveness.

And forgiveness is a conscious, deliberate decision to release resentment or to release vengeance, regardless of whether or not they deserve it.

Obedience means embedding both agape love and forgiveness in our daily lives, in our interactions.

So our fourth level in the development of peace is consecration. The verb consecrate is the act itself. I make that decision. Consecrate, the word consecration is the process of setting ourselves apart, the sanctification part for a holy purpose, and that is not a once and done decision.

That act of consecration was made fully, unreservedly and knowingly, and making this decision to give our lives over to God fully means we are all in. We signed the papers. We jumped into the water. We are committed.

There's no turning back. Making this decision unreservedly means we're not holding anything back. There are no second thoughts. There are no escape plans. There are no prenuptial agreements.

There are no exchanges. There are no let's try it out and see what happens scenarios. There's no reservations, and making this decision knowingly means that we understand that it is a life and a death decision, not one to be taken lightly during a burst of enthusiasm or emotion. Knowingly means we understand that we are exchanging the promised earthly resurrection and restoration to this life on earth for the opportunity to be with the Lord Jesus as a spiritual jointentire.

Now, as Bible students, we closely couple the terms consecration and sacrifice together. Sacrifice means to purposely give up something of value. That's what it means. It is a choice. I can't take it from you or make you give it because it's done by force.

It is not free will. It is not willing, and the word willing is the key to understanding sacrifice. Sacrifice implies personal cost, doing without giving up something of value. You and I go to work.

And yes, work can sometimes be difficult, and when we love what we do, then work no longer becomes work, even if the work is difficult. In the same way as we develop our love for and develop our relationship with our Lord Jesus and our Heavenly Father, sacrifice no longer becomes sacrifice.

It becomes a willing offering. Even if it may be costly or difficult to do. You see the change in perspective? Oh me, I have to do this. I don't have to do anything.

I want to do this.

As we follow the Lord Jesus, let's reframe our perspective, which just means let's retrain the way we think to change the word sacrifice to willing, offering or gift. Everywhere it is contextually

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possible to do so. Let's not focus on the cost.

Let's focus on the willingness to give, and the result of that giving will be the joy that we experience because of the willing giving and the willing gifting. 2 Corinthians 9, 7. Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion. For God loves a cheerful giver.

So, consecration. What does it mean to live a consecrated life? I suggest the answer, simply stated, is it's a lifestyle in which loving, honoring and serving God is more important than serving yourself. A lifestyle in which loving, honoring and serving God is more important than serving yourself. In other words, living for God is more important than living or more important than your own life.

Well, what does that mean? Let me suggest some characteristics. So we talk about reverential love of God. So it's the proper balance of proper fear and respect with love and devotion, love of truth and righteousness. We live to a high personal standard because we love and we love to share God's word and God's kingdom.

We have a love of God's people, in which case we extend love, compassion, mercy, assistance and comfort. Now, for some of us, it's easier to love someone else, a stranger, a fellow co worker, than it is to love our families than our brethren. Why is that? It's because we hold the brethren in our families to a higher standard, and when they fall short of that standard, we have a hard time reconciling it.

If they were a Bible student, they wouldn't say that. If they were my family, they shouldn't do that. Well, we're human. I'm not saying it's right. What I'm saying is that love and mercy and forgiveness are required.

So love of God's ruling kingdom, love of God's people, love of service, having a servant's heart, love of others.

So our fifth and last component in the development of peace is surrender.

Now, surrender for the purpose of our discussion is the thought of voluntarily giving in, voluntarily submitting and willing acquiescence, and I believe myself personally, the levels of obedience and surrender are two different things.

Obedience is the act of being obedient, while surrender is about the condition of the heart within that obedience.

And when our little girl, Therese, when our girl Teresa was a little girl, we'd have to stand her in the corner for time out, and she would stand there like this.

We have pictures of her, and so she was willing, she obeyed, standing in the corner. But her heart wasn't in the right place. Right. So sometimes we can obey and I'll do it because I'm supposed to do it.

I'll do it because you can make me do it. But I really don't want to be doing it right where the aspect of surrender is totally different. Surrender means obedience too. It's just the attitude is different. The condition of the heart is what the psalmist reveals in Psalm 48 I delight to do your will, my God, your law is within my heart.

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Psalm 119:35 make me walk in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it. Verse 174 I long for your salvation, and your law is my delight. It's not talking about just obedience, it's talking about submission. Surrender within it. So let's apply a practical application to submission.

Now we're going to tell a story. Our story is titled Half Full or Half Empty. So a psychology professor walked around the stage as she taught stress management principles to an auditorium filled with students, and as she passed the lectern, she stopped. She took a long drink from her full glass of water, and she held the glass out in front of her for everybody to see and you know where I'm going with this, don't you?

Everyone expected her to ask the typical is the glass half empty or is the glass half full? Question.

Instead, she asked, how heavy is this glass of water? That's all. She asked, how heavy is this glass of water? So there's a brief moment of silence as the students this is a psychology class, stress management class. Try to figure out where she's going with this.

So they started off shouting out answers, and she replied, from my perspective, it does not matter if the glass is half full or half empty, and from my perspective, the absolute weight of this glass is irrelevant. What does matter is how long I hold it.

What does matter is how long I hold it. If I hold it for a minute or two, it's fairly light. If I hold it for an hour straight, the weight will make my arm cramp. If I hold it for longer than that, my arm will cramp, feel completely numb and paralyzed, and force me to drop glass of water. It doesn't matter if it's half full or half empty.

In each scenario, the weight of the glass doesn't change. But the longer I hold it, the heavier it becomes. So the class nodded their heads in agreement, and so she continued, your stresses and worries in life are very much like this glass of water. Think about them for a little while and nothing happens to you.

Think about them a bit longer and you begin to ache. Think about them all day long and you will go completely Numb and paralyzed, incapable of doing anything else. Until finally something gives and then something breaks because you can't hold it any longer. So let me tell you the moral of this story by telling you another. A funny Joke A wise man held a seminar to teach how to get rid of worry and have a less stressful life.

Many people attended what he had to offer because they wanted to learn. So the man started out by introducing himself, and then, as an icebreaker, he told a very funny joke. The seminar attendees roared and laughed. It was a funny joke, and it made his point. A couple of minutes later into the seminar, he told the same joke.

This time, only a few smiled and laughed. When he told the same joke later, for the third time, no one laughed. It wasn't funny anymore. So the wise man smiled, and then he said, you can't laugh at the same joke over and over.

Why then do you worry about the same things over and over?

So the lesson with the repeated joke is re examined and rehearsed. Worries bring us no joy, and the lesson about the glass is that the longer we carry a worry, the heavier it becomes.

So if you haven't discerned it yet, the moral of both stories simply is let go, trust God.

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Perhaps you've heard this quote. Worry is a conversation you have with yourself about things you cannot change. You ever have that? Talk to yourself about things you cannot change. Look at the last, the second part, Prayer is a conversation you have with God about things that he can change.

It's important to consciously let go of our worries. Who better than our Heavenly Father turn our worries over to? And why do we find it so difficult to do that? And why do we want to take them back once we give them to Him?

We didn't submit first. By giving them to him without trusting him, we show our distrust of Him. When we keep holding on to the things that we are supposed to let go. What we're really saying is, I don't trust you, God. Is that really something we want to say to Him?

You can have all these parts of my life, but you can't have my money, can't have my heart, can't have my home name. The thing doesn't matter. You say, you can have here, God, you can have this, but you can't have that. So all we're saying to him is that I don't trust you enough with it, and I'm saying, I know better than you about how this affects me and what I should be doing with this.

That's exactly what we tell him when we don't trust him with all that brings us joy or sorrow, pleasure or pain, peace or worry, doubt or fear. I don't trust you with it. I'm a better keeper than you are.

So we've come full circle back to our theme verse Philippians 4, 6, 7. Do not be anxious about anything, but we really should cross that word but out and put the Word and in there. Do not be anxious about anything and in everything by prayer and pleading with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God, and the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guide your hearts and minds in Christ.

A similar sentiment is expressed in Isaiah 26:1 4.

I'm just going to read one verse.

It's two verses, verse three. That's Isaiah 26:3, 4. The steadfastness of mind you will keep in perfect peace because he trusts in you. That's very similar to what he read in Psalm 119, 165. That will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you.

It's a quote of it.

So what gives us peace? Does closure in a situation give us peace? Yes, it gives our minds a sense of closure and a sense of calm. Does confidence give us peace? If I'm confident about what I'm doing, I am at peace with it, typically.

So confidence gives us peace, and we're not worried or uneasy about the situation. But that's not what the peace of the Scriptures refers to. Jesus tells us he gives us peace in John 14:27. Peace, I leave with you. My peace I give to you.

Not as the world gives, do I give. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful, and then John 16, Jesus tells us that we find peace in him. So he gives us peace, and we find peace in him. These things I have spoken to you, said in me, you may have peace in the world, you have tribulation, but take courage I have overcome.

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So how do we harmonize that he gives us and we find peace? Well, the word peace means biblically, a mental attitude of tranquility based on our relationship with God, and it's a word which describes the result of a person's correct response to God's grace, and the Bible uses peace in two main ways. There's the peace with God, which comes when a person accepts Christ Jesus as their Savior and enters into a covenant relationship with them.

That's that peace with God. Then there's the peace of God which we have as sons of God. As we walk our lives daily, we're talking about this latter peace, the peace of God, peace in the trouble, peace in our problems, and peace in the storms of our lives.

Now, do we have peace because we don't have difficulties or experiences in our lives? No. We all have experiences, and as we age, those seem to become more comprehensive, involving life and death, loss of health, loss of jobs and income, loss of insurances, loss of spouses, and the consequences of decisions that we've made throughout our lives are starting to be bearing fruit, or the decisions that we've made with our children are starting to bear fruit, and the peace that we have in our lives is probably not because we don't have difficulties. So where does this peace come from then?

Remember, he says, I will give and you shall find. Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble, and you will find rest.

So we see that peace comes through Christ Jesus. But how? The moment we yield to obey, the Lord himself gives us the strength and the joy to do it. To obey Faith leads to obedience, and the combination of faith and obedience leads to consecration, and that's a milestone of submission in our walk.

But it's just the start of submission. First we recognize our relationship and God's doing in our lives, and then we have to do something with it.

So who or what do you think has the greatest influence of peace in our lives? There are many external factors that can both positively and negatively affect our peace. But the who or what part of our question is best answered with another story. A Man of peace so there once was an old man who had the reputation of being peaceful. He prayed and meditated night and day, and he was at peace with himself and others.

And one day a man started to antagonize him. He spent days insulting, intimidating, and harassing the old man. But the old man would not falter. Finally, in exasperation, the antagonistic man said, I have tried for several days to rouse your anger with insults, harassment, and intimidations, but to no avail. Then he asked the old man this why is it that you can stay so peaceful?

And the wise man replied with a question of his own. He asked, if someone gives you a gift and you refuse it, to whom does the gift belong?

If someone gives you a gift and you refuse it, to whom does the gift belong? Peace is our choice. It's our choice to receive the peace that God has for us. It's our choice to accept into or reject out of our lives, the things that destroy peace.

So let me pull all this together, 1/4 and final story, and then we'll close. It's called through the Storm. A man applied for a job as a farmhand. During the interview, the applicant said, I can sleep

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through a storm. This puzzled the farmer, but he liked the man.

The applicant had the experience, so he hired him. A few weeks later, the farmer and his wife were awakened in the night by a violent storm. They both jumped out of bed, went to get their hired hand, but they found him sleeping soundly in the middle of this storm. They went and checked the house to see if all was secure and for any damage. The shutters of the farmhouse had been securely fastened.

A good supply of firewood had been set next to the fireplace. So they put on their wet weather gear and they went outside. They inspected their property. They discovered the farm tools were stored in the shed. All the elements, the hay bales had been securely covered with tarps.

The farm machinery had been moved into the sheds and were locked. The animals in the barn had been fed and watered and were resting. The farmer and his wife discovered that all was well. They then understood the meaning of the hired man's word. I can sleep through a storm.

Because the farm did his work loyally, faithfully and proactively. When the skies were clear before the storm, he was prepared for the storm. When the inevitable storm came, he was not concerned, nor was he afraid. He slept in peace. So the moral of the story is, the development of peace is not peaceful.

It takes knowledge, effort, application, and experience. Mark Twain said it takes him a long time to write an extemporaneous speech.

That's an oxymoron, isn't it? And when we see someone peaceful in the storm or full of grace under pressure, it is because they have done the work in building this substructure which supports peace and supports grace, and the fruitage of peace is confidence and rest, even in the storms of Life. In Psalm 119, 165, those who love your law have great peace, and nothing causes them to stumble. So there's our development of peace, truth, faith, obedience, consecration, surrender.

And ultimately the goal is this peace which permeates and protects all those phases of our lives. But we don't get there on day one, and it's because we're building all of these infrastructure, superstructure that we finally have the peace in the storms and experiences of our lives, and with that, we'll turn it back over to our chairman.