

Peace, Perfect Peace?

Micah 4:1-5. I believe this passage is fulfilled in the body of Christ. It's a picture of people who know the Lord, are at peace with one another, and walk in the name of God. Peace. Here's a passage that clearly describes the days of Jesus: **Isaiah 11:1-9.** Yet, there was much conflict in His day. So much hostility. It ended with His crucifixion. It ended with heartache, guilt, and regret. How do these passages align with reality? There was conflict outwardly and inwardly. Sermons about finding peace in outward conflict are valuable, and the desire for outward peace is addressed throughout the Bible. There is a sense in which God's people are at peace with one another, but generally speaking, the world is chaotic, and we have to channel our fears to God through prayer. Passages such as **Philippians 4:4-9** or **1 Peter 5:6-7** come to mind. If this life were easy, we wouldn't need such passages, would we? However, there's another kind of peace we struggle to find. This one is due to inward conflict. The one that faces our shortcomings. As Jesus said, "the Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." The one who requested the sermon described the challenge as, "striving to be like Christ but also at peace with the face that we're flawed and filled with imperfections and the results those flaws have on our lives." How do you find peace when the inside looks pitiful (or so we feel)? How do you feel peace when dealing with consequences (which keep pulling us back to feelings of guilt)? See, this is the day-to-day struggle many face. When you're trying to be more like Jesus, you continually see how good He is, and we are not.

Inward peace. Israel knew something about that . . . kind of. Not only was it the standard greeting (Shalom, meaning to be complete or whole, typically due to restoration), but it was also part of their sacrifices to God. Remember their peace offerings? Such a sacrifice was a show of fellowship, thanksgiving, and commitment to God. Yet, when the sacrifice was made, it was to be perfect (**Leviticus 22:21-22**). If it wasn't carried out completely, it wasn't accepted; the sacrifice was tainted, and the individual would still bear their iniquities (**Leviticus 7:18**). However, if correctly offered, it was received, and their sins were pardoned. YET, in all these sacrifices (even the Day of Atonement in particular), there was a weakness (**Hebrews 7:18**), and it couldn't perfect the conscience of the worshipper (**Hebrews 9:9; 10:3**), nor could the blood of animals actually forgive them (**Hebrews 9:15; 10:4**). Now, this is interesting.

Here are some FACTS (as I understand them):

- Sacrifices were commanded.
- The worshipper was forgiven.
- If they didn't offer a sacrifice, they were not forgiven.
- The blood of animals couldn't forgive them.
- Sacrifices didn't ease their conscience.
- WHY?
- They understood the inferior nature of animals.
- The yearly sacrifice reminded them of a sin ISSUE (probably better experienced than told).
- God was looking for faith, which was manifested in their obedience. Yet they all sinned... which led to another sacrifice year after year. Something is missing.
- WHAT?

- Jesus! **Hebrews 9:11-14; 10:5-18.**

Brethren, you can attain inward peace in two ways:

- Peace through Performance
- Peace through Propitiation
- I highly recommend the latter. Why? **Romans 3:21-31**

Realistic expectations?

- You're going to sin.
- You're going to feel bad (hopefully).
- You're going to suffer the consequences of sin.
- You're going to overcome this guilt through faith in Jesus.
- You're going to commit yourself to sanctification.
- You're going for a marathon.
- You're going home.
- I don't believe in "continual cleansing." We're not "automatically forgiven" in the sense that God doesn't look for repentance (as established by numerous passages. However, individuals in the church have struggled to find peace and security in the Lord. It's unfortunate, because it's as if we've totally missed the benefit of serving King Jesus under His New Covenant. Paul didn't have outward peace (the world was rough for him). Still, he lay hold of inward peace (even when he dealt with daily anxiety) because he knew the hands that held Him and the promise of not being snatched away. He had eternal security in Jesus.