

## How To Experience Real Peace

### Part 1: How can I have peace with my past?

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 - [watch online](#)

#### Summary:

Our pasts have the power to haunt us for the rest of our lives. But shame, guilt, and regret doesn't have to define us. When we discover God's true peace we can make peace with our past.

#### Main Ideas:

[01:03] To experience true peace we have to make peace with our past, present, and future.

[02:05] We usually see peace as the absence of something negative in our lives.

[03:41] The peace of God isn't the absence of something. It's the wholeness of his people.

[06:13] Jesus invites us to become something other than our past.

[07:29] Through Jesus we can be more "us" than we've ever been.

[08:45] Experiencing real peace is a gift from God.

[12:12] Jesus' love is greater than anything in our past.

[15:31] In Jesus we are defined by God's love for us, not our past.

[15:57] We can't have peace now if we don't make peace with "then."

[18:26] When we discover the peace of Jesus we discover peace with our entire story.

#### Invitation:

[16:06] Address your past.

[16:25] Ask- What brokenness is too strong for Jesus' love?

[16:38] Accept your new identity: I am not my past. I am a beloved child of God whom he chose to live, die, and rise again for.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. If the angels were to announce a special message for you today, what do you hope they would say?
2. Read Romans 8:1 and 1 John 1:9. What are your initial thoughts, questions, or feelings? How do you think these passages relate to this week's discussion?
3. Jon said, "In Jesus we are defined by God's love for us, not our past." On a scale of 1-10 how easy is it for you to accept that idea for yourself? What about for others?
4. What are some steps you can take this week to accept God's true shalom in your life?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

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#### Transcript:

**IN:** When the angels (I know... angels) first announced the birth of Jesus they also announced something amazing and as hard to believe as angels...

- **Luke 2:13-14**

"Peace on earth?" 2000 yrs later... Where? When? Look around and don't see a lot of peace...

But what if it is more than some empty promise to make us feel kinda good during the holidays?

What if true/real peace actually is attainable and closer than we might think?

It is... When we discover the peace of Jesus we discover peace with our entire story.

So let's talk about it... together.

**WE:** Why don't we actually experience peace in our lives? Well Charles Dickens knew the secret... true whether JF or not...

To experience true peace we have to make peace with our past, present, and future.

If we don't have peace with the events/people that got us here... if the past keeps raising its ugly head... if we constantly dwell on the bad that has happened or what should've been we will never experience peace

If we don't have peace now with who we are and with those in our lives we will never experience true peace.

If we are always worried about tomorrow, focusing on the what if's, if we never have peace with our future we will never have peace now.

So we are going to take the next 3 weeks to talk about How to Experience Real Peace... with our Past, Present, and Future.

But first we have to make sure we are on the same page talking about the same thing...

When I say peace what comes to mind?

- Absence of war/conflict/struggle/arguing?

We usually see peace as the absence of something negative in our lives.

- "If only this situation/problem/person would go away. Then I'd have peace"

But what would happen if they did go away?

- You know... Something else would take their place... there's always problems, situations, people bringing conflict and chaos to our lives.

But... when the angels announce peace on earth... The word used for peace in the Greek is a translation of a very deep and rich Hebrew word... you've probably heard it before... in fact it's the origin of our city of Salem's name... Shalom.

"Shalom" and its Greek equivalent is translate as "peace" in our English bibles.

But Shalom is deeper than the absence of something negative (absence of war/conflict/ect)... it means completeness, wholeness, the way things ought to be.

So what the angels were announcing wasn't the removal of wars and conflict (though that will come too) they were announcing that God was bringing wholeness, completeness, giving us a chance to live life the way it was meant to be through the baby that was just born.

The peace of God isn't the absence of something. It's the wholeness of his people.

But when we think about our past it's so difficult to see how we can find this shalom/peace.

There's the things we've done... the hurt we've caused others and ourselves

The hurt that has been done to us

The missed opportunities... what could've been

All bringing their own clinging feelings of shame/guilt/regret... that can keep dragging us away from wholeness and experiencing the life we were made for.

How do we find wholeness and completeness... real shalom/peace?

**GOD:** The answer is found in the 2nd letter we have from the Apostle Paul to a community of JF's in the ancient city of Corinth.

Most were gentiles... who had grown up in this large Roman city and the culture/lifestyle that would entail.

They had some pasts to deal with...

- Pagan idol worship sometimes including temple prostitution
- Empire worship- don't act way supposed to empire and community could suffer... expectations
- Might makes right- Those with power could do what they wanted...it didn't matter who was hurt as long as you were socially above them
- Children/Women/Slaves- very few rights... a lot of abuse.
- Not to mention the uncertainty of disease and war.

Living in that time and culture there must have been many past ghosts to wrestle with.

But in his letter Paul shows us a remarkable truth and the path forward in having peace/shalom with our past.

Whether your past haunts you b/c of what you've done, what's been done to you, regrets of missed opportunities... or all of the above...

We'll discover an invitation to everyone no matter what your past is. Whether you consider yourself religious or not...

**2 Cor. 5:17b** (...anyone)

Jesus invites us to become something other than our past.

What you did doesn't have to be who you are

What was done to you doesn't have to be who you are

What you didn't do what you could've been/done doesn't have to haunt you...

You don't have to be the person chained to that past anymore.

The weight and load of what you've been carrying is cut off and you can be free to stand straight, dance, run, jump.

Our past no longer has any power to create chaos/disorder/turmoil in us b/c we are fundamentally remade.

If someone belongs to Jesus he takes them and remakes them... takes who they are... the broken pieces and all the junk we've accumulated in our hearts and minds and shapes/molds them into who they were meant to be from the beginning.

Other translations... a new creation... remade.

A new person. A whole person. A complete person. That can experience real peace/shalom.

Through Jesus we can be more "us" than we've ever been.

Sounds great, right?

But how does it actually happen...

You're smart... you know we need more than positive thinking, motivational posters, ted talks and podcasts.

- We need more than just telling ourselves over and over that our past doesn't define us.
- We can't just declare it, like bankruptcy and it magically makes it so.
- Just saying "I believe in God" doesn't change anything either...

None of it actually changes our past... or take away the memories... the regrets... the pain...

We need something we can't do for ourselves...

**V. 18** This is the difference between anything else you might have tried to deal with your past and what Jesus offers

Becoming new... experiencing real peace is a gift from God.

Can't earn our way to it by trying to put good out into the world to balance out the bad we've done

Can't discover it by studying hard, meditating more, spiritual podcasts/books

Not even catch it by getting more church/religion.

We don't have to clean ourselves up, make ourselves worthy.

It is a gift from God that we just get to accept.

We don't do anything different to become new... but once we are new we are different... and what we do becomes different.

Why don't we have to do anything... b/c the one thing we need to break the power of our past is the one thing we can't give ourselves... forgiveness.

**V. 19-21** In Jesus, God was reconciling all of us to himself.

Restoring our relationship with him that each of us have broken in so many ways.

In the beginning was chaos... and out of that chaos God created a perfect order...

And his most prized creation is us, his children created in his own image

He created us to live in a perfect relationship of love with him and each other and partner with him in bringing peace/shalom to the chaos around us.

But SIN is constantly trying to pull us out of God's design and push us back into a state of chaos.

And throughout our lives we repeatedly give in to the chaos by breaking the Law of Love.

- Hurting each other, God's children, and putting what we want higher than the person in front of us.

Now when someone hurts your kid... what happens to your relationship with them?

- It's pretty broken isn't it?
- There needs to be some justice.
- There's a price to be paid

But for God to bring justice against everyone who has hurt his kids... he'd have to bring justice to all of us... we are all guilty... we all have a broken relationship w/ our Heavenly Father

To end this chaos God would have to destroy those who keep creating it... all of us... his beloved children.

So Jesus, God/Human took that sin and its consequences on himself on the cross and made it die with him.

Then he rose from the dead. Proving he is more powerful than sin and death.

And now he offers us his life, offers us a place in his family where we can become new creations, becoming more and more of the restored humanity he first created us to be.

He has the power to remove the stain, the power, the chains of our past... to wash us clean and make us new.

And all of it, the reconciliation, the new life, is the free gift he offers all of us.

And the more we experience life in that forgiveness... the more we become like him... the less power our past has over us.

Jesus' love is greater than anything in our past.

And as we continue to experience Jesus' love we begin to see that those "missed opportunities" were things that allowed us to get to this point to experience his love deeper.

We'll begin to see that the pain caused by others in our past were...

- Are results of their brokenness and enslavement to sin
- And we begin to release them from our past and allow Jesus' forgiveness to heal our hearts toward them.

I know it might seem easy for me to just say these things...

But some of you have truly and deeply suffered, have experienced pain I can't imagine through absolutely no fault of your own...

- Maybe even from people who had the same job title as me.

And happy go-lucky me sitting here saying these things might sound naive... or worse callous and uncaring.

- Trying to give happy little quotes to answer real deep pain.

And I'll be honest I haven't suffered as you have. I can't share from my own experience

But I can share what I've seen and heard from others.

Experiencing the love and forgiveness of Jesus doesn't change our past. It doesn't answer every question of WHY?

But I've seen mother's who have lost children

Children who have lost parents

Widows and widowers

Victims of childhood abuse

Victims of neglect and emotional abuse

Abandoned spouses and people who have been stabbed in the back by the friends they most trusted...

I have seen all of these people experience the love and forgiveness of Jesus.

I've seen how he can transform them from victims to beloved children who are able to love and forgive at the deepest levels b/c of the love and forgiveness they have experienced from their Heavenly Father.

Horatio Spafford exactly 150 years ago... It is Well. After losing all 4 of his daughters in a shipwreck.

When peace like a river, attendeth my way,

When sorrows like sea billows roll;

Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to know

It is well, it is well, with my soul.

My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!

My sin, not in part but the whole,

Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live:

If Jordan above me shall roll,

No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life,

Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul.

Often it doesn't make sense until you are in it and experience the love of Jesus carrying you and remaking you.

In Jesus we are defined by God's love for us, not our past.

**WE:** But to experience it we have to be willing and we have to be open to it... and there are some steps we can take to help us on our journey of discovery...

We don't find peace with our past by trying to forget it, ignoring it, justify it, or minimize it.

We need Jesus to help us make peace with it.

We can't have peace now if we don't make peace with "then."

Starts with being honest with ourselves and Jesus

Address your past

- This hurt me... I hurt them
- It wasn't right it wasn't fair
- This was brokenness and sin.

Ask: What brokenness is too strong for Jesus' love?

- What hurt is too much for Jesus?
- What pain did Jesus forget to die for?

Accept your new identity: I am not my past. I am a beloved child of God whom he chose to live, die, and rise again for.

(write down?)

This journey of peace with our past is rarely an overnight trip. It will take time and practice.

- It might be incredibly helpful to have a trained professional help sort out your feelings, experiences, pain
- Guide you through techniques to process what happened
- And in that Jesus will be with you guiding you, giving you peace as you work through it all.

**WE:** On that first xmas the angels announced peace on earth.

- It was no metaphor. It was no wishful thinking.

It was a proclamation that God's shalom/wholeness was coming for each of us through the baby that had been born to Mary and Joseph and was lying in a manger.

In Jesus, we are no longer defined by our pasts. We are defined by God's love for us.

And when we are defined by God's love for us... we discover his perfect wholeness, his peace, his shalom.

He invites us not to ignore our pasts... but to stare them in their ugly face with confidence, strength, courage, peace, and forgiveness.

B/c we know the love of Jesus is stronger than anything in our past.

We are invited to experience true full life now as we make peace with our past

When we discover the peace of Jesus we discover peace with our entire story.