

Peace ⁽⁴⁾ In The Church

Text : **I Cor. 12: 12-27**

INTRODUCTION :

A. We have had three lessons on the general subject of peace.

1. First, we studied how, above all else, man needs peace with God.
 - a. Man was given dominion over the earth, but not over Himself.
 - b. When man does his own will, he rebels against God's sovereignty.
 - c. Christ came as God's ambassador of peace to reconcile rebellious mankind.
2. Secondly, we discussed the concept of world peace and observed that :
 - a. God uses some conflicts between nations to administer His justice on the earth.
 - b. Wars carried out for sinful purposes are sin and are unjust.
(*They are sin and they are motivated by sin.*)
 - c. There are circumstances in which governments are obligated to wage war.
3. Thirdly, we learn that God commands each of us to live in peace with everyone.
 - a. Peace is not a unilateral decision, but Christians do all they can to live in peace.
 - b. Our responsibility is not just to be peaceful, but to actively pursue it. (*Peacemakers*)
 - c. However, there are some compromises one cannot make to achieve peace.
 - 1) Peace at any price is nothing more than surrender.
 - 2) Some conflict will come just because we are different.
 - 3) It is never right to do wrong, not even to appease others.

B. With this lesson we will examine the imperative of peace within the church.

1. Jesus taught us that we should give the greatest importance to the weightiest matters.
 - a. **Matt. 23: 23** (The Pharisees majored in minors.)
 - b. God spends more of His time on the weightier matters.
 - a. The volume of material about peace in the body indicates its importance.
2. With this one lesson we can do little more than touch the basics of the subject.

Lord willing, this lesson will observe four things :

1. Peace in the church is a realistic and an achievable goal.
2. There are some misconceptions about peace.
3. Peace in the body of Christ is a divine imperative.
4. There are specific things that make for peace.

I. Peace in the church is both a realistic and an achievable goal.

A. The church is united as the “kingdom of God.”

1. John the baptizer came preaching the kingdom of God. **Matt. 3: 1-2**
2. Jesus preached the soon coming of the kingdom of God. **Matt. 4: 17**
3. The Apostles of Christ went about preaching the kingdom. **Acts 20: 25**
4. The gospel calls people into the kingdom His kingdom. **I Thes. 2:11-12**
5. All who are saved are transferred into the kingdom. **Col. 1: 13-14**
6. As saved people are placed in the kingdom, they are given a citizenship. **Phil. 3: 20**

**** It is normal for those of the same heavenly nation to be at peace. Luke 11: 17-20**

B. The church is united as the one family of God.

1. When Christians are born again it is into the family of God. **John 3 -cf- I Pet. 1: 3, 23**
2. Christians all have the same Father, God. **Rom. 8: 16-17**
3. Being children of the same heavenly Father we must all obey Him. **I Pet. 1:14-16**
4. As His children, Christians are members of God’s “household.” **Eph. 2: 19**
5. God has set a standard of behavior for all in His household. **I Tim. 3: 15 -cf- I Pet. 4: 17**
6. All Christians are united by the blood of Christ and we all carry His name.

**** Therefore, as God’s family, the church of God should never be divided.**

C. Members of Christ’s church are united as the “body of Christ” on earth.

1. The church is the body of Christ. **Eph. 1: 22-23**
2. When one is saved, he is automatically added to the body of Christ, the church.
 - a. **Our text : I Cor. 12: 12-27 (Esp. 18) (cf- Acts 2: 47)**
 - b. As members of one body, we all have different functions.

Rom. 12: 4-5 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, **5** so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
 - c. The body only functions properly when all the parts function. **Eph. 4: 11-16**
3. Though all members have different functions, there is only one body. **Eph. 4:4**
4. Imagine one’s condition if the parts of his physical body wouldn’t work together.
 - a. The condition is called being “spastic.”
 - b. A spastic person is unable to function.

c. Likewise, a church in which the members will not work together is spastic.

Note : *Also, a person (church) whose members will not function is paralyzed.*

D. The body which is the church is the physical presence of Christ (God) on earth.

1. God is omni-present, **but** He is not equally present everywhere.
2. Where ever God plants His church He establishes His presents in that place.
3. **WE** are the presence of God in the town. **We must live accordingly.**

Therefore :

- a. To fail to pursue peace in His body is extreme disrespect for Christ.
- b. To say we love God (Christ) and not be concerned about the condition of His body is nothing more than double talk.
- c. Love for Christ (God) expresses itself in love for His body.

ILL. – Is this not the natural way ? Do we not express our love for our own children ... via their physical bodies ?

- If their body is sick or injured, our heart is broken and we act.

******* *What does it tell us when we care more about our own body or those of our family than we care about Christ's body. **Matt. 10: 37***

II. Some misconceptions about peace :

A. Peace is not the result of compromise. (If you don't preach about _____ I'll ...)

1. There is but one gospel.
 - a. **Gal. 1: 6-9**
 - b. The gospel is that Jesus died and rose again to pay for our sins. **I Cor. 15: 1-5**
2. The gospel must be defended, never compromised. **Jude 3**
- * 3. HOWEVER, Satan has deceived many into thinking this means that they should be contentious over every minor point of doctrine. (and also their opinions, etc.)
 - a. The Pharisees were condemned for majoring in minors. **Matt. 23: 23**
 - b. There is no passage that requires or endorses divisiveness in the church.
 - c. The Corinthian church had many severe problems, but God instructed them *"Ya'll get along now, ya hear."*
 - *d. **Acts 15: 28** ... The Holy Spirit said that only those things which are essential may be bound.

B. Peace is not appeasing negative behavior to avoid turmoil.

1. That which we reinforce, we invite to be repeated.

- a. In Sept. of 1938 Neville Chamberlain negotiated *the* “Munich Agreement” with Adolph Hitler. He came home declaring, “*Peace in our time.*” On May 10 of 1940 Britain was at war with Germany.
- b. When a child throws a tantrum and we give him what he wants to shut him up we know that the next time he wants something he’ll throw a tantrum to get it.
- 2. In the same way, appeasement has never been acceptable in the church.
 - a. The Apostle would not allow Titus to be circumcised. **Gal. 2: 3-5**
 - b. Paul withstood Peter in front of the brethren. **Gal. 2: 14**
- 3. Some boisterous people have gotten away with being bullies in the church.
 - a. This is sinful behavior and must not be tolerated in God’s church.
 - b. Those who give in to the demands of the bully are just as guilty as the bully.
- * 4. Being contentious is one of the few sins for which one MUST be disfellowshipped.
 - a. **Titus 3:10-11** **Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, 11 knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.**
 - b. **Rom. 16: 17-** **Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. (NKJV) (avoid = Exclude from fellowship.)**

C. Peace is the fruit of love, not just the absence of turmoil.

- 1. There’s no turmoil in the grave. By that definition it’s the most peaceful place in town.
- 2. Peace only comes when all the issues are resolved. (**That results from love.**)
- 3. The shooting stopped in Korea, but there is STILL no peace there.
- 4. The shooting of W.W. II gave way to the cold war.
- 5. ONLY when brethren are able to maintain loving hearts can peace abide.

III. Peace in the church is a divine imperative.

A. It was the ardent prayer of Jesus that all of His followers be united.

- 1. **John 17: 11-** **I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are.**
- 2. **John 17: 20-21** **I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.**

**** *Jesus knew that the unity of His followers would affect the world's opinion of God.***

B. It was the plan of our Lord that the relationship between Christians would be that which distinguished them from the rest of the world.

1. **John 13: 34-35** A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.
35 By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.
2. If we are in God's will, the world can observe that we are different.

C. The Lord's Apostle directly commanded all Christians to live in peace.

1. **I Thes. 5: 12-13** But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, **13** and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.
2. Compare ... **Rom. 12: 18**

D. Peace in the body of Christ is not a naive aspiration.

1. God will not command what cannot be done.
2. Peace is attainable.
3. Peace should be norm.

IV. There are a few specific things we can do to bring about peace in His body.

A. Set peace as our goal and work to achieve it.

1. **Rom. 14:19-** So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.
2. Be aware ! Peace cannot just be assumed.

B. Truly commit to being a Christian. (Turn your back on the world.)

1. Bury the old man of sin and leave him behind. **Rom. 6**
2. Let the old things pass away, live for Jesus and become that new man. **II Cor. 5 14-19**
3. Surrender yourself and be transformed from the inside out. (mind) **Rom. 12: 1-2**

C. One must reject sin because the pursuit of peace is linked to the purging of sin.

1. **Psa. 34:14-** Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it.
2. The New Testament has the same message :
Heb. 12:14- Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. (*peace & sanctification = parallel course*)

D. Never stop striving to mature into the likeness of Christ.

1. Maturity is achieved together as the body of Christ. **Eph. 4: 11-16**
2. **Read & briefly exegete ... Phil. 2: 1-8**
3. The objective of Christianity is to become like the one who gave Himself.

E. As a congregation our challenge must be to be active and centered on this goal.

1. Functionally, there is little difference between comatose and dead, neither functions.
2. Congregations that work together are most often at peace.

ILL- Armies are most likely to have morale problems in times of peace.

- a. Fossilizing on a pew has no positive aspect. It will cause us to be lost.
- b. Working toward common goals will unite us. (*reaching the lost with the gospel*)
- c. Fighting against our common enemy will unite us. (*opposing sin and Satan*)

CONCLUSION :**A. Love and faithful service are the keys to peace in the church.****B. The peace we should enjoy in the church brings great joy.**

Psa. 133 1- A Song of Ascents, of David. Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity! 2- It is like the precious oil upon the head, Coming down upon the beard, Even Aaron's beard, Coming down upon the edge of his robes. 3- It is like the dew of Hermon Coming down upon the mountains of Zion; For there the Lord commanded the blessing—life forever.

C. When the church has true peace :

1. God is glorified.
2. It grows.
3. And, it is a great joy.

INVITATION :

Lesson Text :**I Cor. 12: 12-27** (NASV)

12 For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. **13** For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

14 For the body is not one member, but many. **15** If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a *part* of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a *part* of the body. **16** And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a *part* of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a *part* of the body. **17** If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? **18** But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. **19** If they were all one member, where would the body be? **20** But now there are many members, but one body. **21** And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." **22** On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; **23** and those *members* of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, **24** whereas our more presentable members have no need *of it*. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that *member* which lacked, **25** so that there may be no division in the body, but *that* the members may have the same care for one another. **26** And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if *one* member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

27 Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.