

## Peace!

### The Gospel Truth – Part VIII

Romans 1:7c

#### Introduction

Today, we complete the first sentence of Paul's letter to the believers living in Rome, Italy. In his introductory remarks, Paul has delivered a summary of nothing less than the gospel truth.

In verse 1, he makes sure we understand that the gospel was not originated nor conceived of by him. It is the gospel of God, or rather, the gospel whose source is God.

In verse 2, he makes sure we understand that the gospel is not new or novel. It had already been promised through God's prophets in the Holy Scriptures.

The sum and substance of the gospel truth is the Son. The Son was born of a descendant of David, according to the flesh, and thus, had the royal lineage and legal right to sit upon the throne, yet was also the Son of God, who was declared to be the powerful Son through the resurrection from the dead. This Son's name was given, by Paul, as that of Jesus Christ our Lord.

In verse 5, we are told that those who have received the true gospel are those who are obedient to the faith. That is, their lives mirror the demands and the distinctives of the gospel.

True saving faith is without works, but true faith is always revealed in works. The person who says they have a saving faith and are a Christian, but cares nothing for Jesus Christ; cares nothing about pursuing holiness; cares nothing for the Scriptures or the Christian assembly; cares nothing for purity and is not deeply grieved over personal sin which brings them to confession and openness before God their

Father; who cares little about surrendering to His name, is not a true believer, but is deceived.

In verse 6, we are told that true believers remember who they belong to.

In verse 7, we are told that true believers remember who deeply loves them and they remember what their new name is – saint! And, with all their desire and passion they attempt to live up to their name.

The Son has chosen the believers, and they have chosen the Son. And, those who choose the Son, according to II Peter, chapter 1, verse 3, inherit,

*... everything pertaining to life and godliness ...*

In other words, those who have chosen the Son, have everything they really need.

Paul describes that inheritance in the form of two words: grace and peace.

Paul then, concludes his salutation by writing in verse 7,

*to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

By the way, you cannot have that inheritance of grace and peace unless you have what Paul intimates that you have. In the last phrase of verse 7, he refers to God as our Father, and Jesus Christ as our Lord. Try as hard as you like, your life will not be characterized by grace and peace unless you have a living, intimate, active relationship with God as your

Father as well as, a submissive, surrendered, obedient life with Jesus Christ as your Lord.

Now, the words “grace” and “peace” are a clever combination on the part of Paul. The word “chairete,” from “grace” is the typical Greek greeting, and the Hebrew “shalom,” or “peace” is the typical Jewish or Hebrew greeting. So Paul combines the two and thus, properly greets both the Gentile and Jewish members of the church in Rome.

These words, however, convey so much more than a simple greeting. They are such deep words. In fact, we spent all of our last discussion uncovering the truths of the word “grace”.

## What is Peace?

Today, we will do the same, as we explore eight different contexts in which the word “peace” appears. We will learn what those eight different contexts have to teach us today.

### Peace is something the world does not have

1. First, peace is something the world does not have.

Twice Isaiah quotes the Lord stating this. In chapter 48, verse 22,

***There is no peace for the wicked,” says the Lord.***

And, in chapter 57, verses 20 through 21,

***But the wicked are like the tossing sea, for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up refuse and mud. “There is no peace,” says my God, “for the wicked.”***

The world just cannot arrive at peace. In the last five thousand years, there have been at least 14,000 wars. In the last four hundred years alone, the Western world has entered into eight thousand peace treaties with the average life expectancy of those treaties being two years.

“Peace,” one author wrote tongue-in-cheek, “is the glorious moment in history when everyone stands around and reloads.”

Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace. People today, want peace without the Prince. However, apart from the Prince, the world will never have peace.

Donald Grey Barnhouse wrote,

***Men may be able to create alliances among a few states which are drawn together by common need or common greed, but a real unity among peoples is not possible in this***

***world of sin and rebellion, where men wish to exalt themselves above the Creator of the universe. If the United Nations could really succeed, man would cry out, “Move over God! Get off your throne! We have succeeded in bringing peace to the earth, and we do not need you any more.”***<sup>i</sup>

Jeremiah decried the lack of peace in his generation because people were attempting to create peace without obedience to and reverence for the Word of God. Listen as Jeremiah writes, in chapter 6, verse 10b,

***. . . Behold, their ears are closed and they cannot listen. Behold, the word of the Lord has become a reproach to them; they have no delight in it.***

And, look at verse 13.

***For from the least of them even to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for gain, and from the prophet even to the priest everyone deals falsely.***

In other words, Jeremiah said, “Everybody in my generation, among my people, are consumed with greed. They just want more and more gain, and all of them, from the leadership down, are living deceitful lives; lying to one another; deceiving and being deceived.

Continue to verse 14,

***They have healed the brokenness of My people superficially, saying, “Peace, peace,” but there is no peace.***

The people talked about peace, but they did not have it. They patched things together for a few weeks or months, but it did not last and it never will.

In the New Testament, during the tribulation period on earth, after the church has been raptured to heaven, the world will be occupied with talk of peace. They will think they finally have it. Paul wrote, in I Thessalonians, chapter 5, verse 3,

***While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.***

My friends, the world, with its greed and selfishness; with its rebellion against God and His Word, can have one peace summit after another; one peace accord after another, but they will never last. Peace comes to those who have knelt before His majesty; to those who call Christ their Prince. To them, He gives peace.

## Peace is an attribute of God

2. Peace is an attribute of God.

Paul wrote later, in Romans, chapter 15, verse 33,

*Now the God of peace be with you all.*

A descriptive moral attribute of God is peace.

In I Corinthians, chapter 14, verse 33, Paul writes,

*for God is not a God of confusion but of peace . . .*

In Ephesians, chapter 2, verses 14 through 16, Paul speaks of Jesus Christ by saying,

*For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.*

You have peace only when you come to the cross, where the peace treaty, as it were, was signed between God the Father, who represented holiness and just wrath against sin, and God the Son who represented the satisfaction of the Father's wrath by dying for sinful humanity. The peace treaty is signed in the blood of Christ, and it will last, not for only two years, but forever.

## Peace is a description of the gospel

3. That is one reason why peace is also a description of the gospel.

The gospel is the declaration that the peace treaty has been signed and that mankind can now have peace with God.

Every believer is to spread the news of the gospel. Therefore, Paul wrote, in Ephesians, chapter 6, verse 15, that believers should have their,

*. . . [feet] shod . . . with the preparation of the gospel of peace*

Paul also wrote, in Ephesians, chapter 2, verses 17 through 19,

*And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So*

*then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household*

## Peace is something you receive at the time of your salvation

4. Peace is something you receive at the time of your salvation.

Look at Romans, chapter 5, verse 1,

*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*

Then, turn over to Colossians, chapter 1, verses 19 through 22,

*For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach.*

Now, the average person in America might think that they can assume some neutral position before God. In fact, the average evangelistic approach to unbelievers is, "You know, you ought to try Christ. He'll make everything better in your life. You ought to give Him a chance. I know you really want what the world has to offer, but God has something even better."

That is not the gospel truth, that is a sales pitch. There is no such thing as neutrality before God. To not belong to Christ is to be an enemy of God.

James wrote, in chapter 4, verse 4,

*. . . whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*

Whatever happened to preaching like Jonathan Edwards, who preached a hundred years ago? He once preached, "Sinners in the Hands of An Angry God". There is no sales pitch in that sermon.

That is the urgency of the apostle Paul, who wrote, in Romans, chapter 10, verse 17,

*. . . faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*

Then, he asked, in chapter 10, verse 14b,

*. . . And how will they hear without a preacher?*

I remember one time, many years ago, my family made our annual summer trip to Minnesota, the place of our forefathers. On the way, we usually zigzagged to different homes and churches, in the north, that supported my parents as missionaries. We stopped at the home of a godly, elderly couple who had faithfully supported my family for decades. They had living with them, an aged father (I do not remember whose side of the family he was on). He was old and hard of hearing, but still fairly lucid, and had evidently, come to live out his last days with them. This couple pulled my Dad aside and whispered the news that they were not sure of their father's salvation. They asked if my dad would have a word with him.

Now, usually my brothers and I would be outside playing kick-the-can, or hide-and-seek, or something to keep us occupied while my parents did what missionaries were supposed to do. On this afternoon, however, for some reason, we were all sitting in the living room. I remember the elderly man sitting in a chair with a blanket pulled about his legs and a heavy sweater on. His breathing was labored and his head was drooped down a bit. At one point, my father pulled his chair over near to this man, so that he was facing him, and said, "Sir, do you know for sure that if you died today, you would go to be with the Lord?"

The man paused and then, finally said, "I don't believe I do."

My father launched into God's plan of salvation. He explained that salvation was necessary because we were all sinners, and that, because we were sinners, we could never earn salvation, but can only accept it as a free gift from God. That is why the proud cannot be saved. They would rather point to some accomplishment, or some act of obedience, or some morality or philanthropy, and think that they surely deserve it. But, it is free and only sinners who admit they are sinful, can receive the gift of salvation.

I remember sitting there and thinking, "Surely this man will accept Christ today."

Finally, my father asked, "Do you understand what I've been saying?"

He said, "Yes."

"Well then, sir, would you, right now, be willing to confess your sinfulness to God and accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal savior?"

He paused a long time and then, said, "I don't believe I will."

I could not believe my ears. I thought, "Well, that's one stubborn old man. My Dad gave it his best shot. Too bad."

Then, my father got up, took his chair, brought it directly beside that man, and started over. With greater urgency than ever, my father reminded this man that he would soon die, and it would be forever too late. He, once again, explained the gospel and then asked, "Would you today, accept Jesus Christ and confess to Him your sin and need of the Savior?"

He paused, for what seemed like an eternity, with his chin on his chest, contemplating his answer. And then, he said, "I believe I will."

I remember tears coming down my cheeks as they prayed together. Another unbeliever was rescued from the wrath of God.

That is why there is true urgency in true evangelism. The gospel truth is a warning, as well as a promise. We are not talking to people who have just chosen to not accept Christ; we are talking to people who are under the condemnation of God and who will face the wrath of God as enemies of His.

I stand before you today, as a warning from God. The opposite of peace with God is not lack of sleep or a case of indigestion. The opposite of peace with God is condemnation. And, if you die without His peace, you will suffer eternal wrath and condemnation as His enemy who refused the peace treaty in Christ.

As an unbeliever, you will be a sinner in the hands of an angry God. It will be too late, unless you come to the Peace Giver; the Peacemaker, the embodiment of the peace treaty between God and man, and receive from Him salvation, which delivers you from condemnation and gives you peace with God.

Now, for the believer, there are several additional contexts where peace is displayed or observed.

### **Peace is something independent of circumstances**

5. Peace is something independent of circumstances.

Look at Isaiah, chapter 26, verses 3, in the King James Version,

*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee . . .*

It is not the outward pressure, but the inward focus. Peace is not something you have when everything goes right; peace is something you have even when everything goes wrong.

Why? Because your mind is stayed, or fixed, on Him.

Paul wrote to the Romans, in chapter 1, verse 7, . . . *Grace to you and peace . . .*

Frankly, what an odd word to choose, “peace”. Rome was already beginning to decay. Nero, the latest leader, was bringing, and would bring, anything but stability and peace. He had already poisoned Britannicus and, about the time the Roman believers would read Paul’s letter, Nero had his own mother brutally murdered. He had already married, divorced, and murdered his first wife. While Rome itself was immoral, they were still amazed at his debauchery, not the least of which were his public marriages to two different men. Nero revived the law of treason and began executing people on mere suspicion of disloyalty.

He had begun to roam the streets at night, visiting brothels and bars, and starting fights with people. On one occasion, he attacked a woman. He was beaten instead, by her husband, who happened to be a Roman senator. After returning to the palace, Nero laid low for awhile, because of his bruises and black eyes, wondering if the Senator had realized whom he was beating. Then, Nero received a note of apology from that senator, who had not realized until too late. Now it would be known publicly, so Nero, without any conscience at all, had the senator executed.

Nero then wanted a new palace, but lacked the land. So, he personally set fire to Rome, burning more than half of it to the ground. He blamed the fire on the Christians, and persecution against them ignited. He was known for great cruelty. He would impale believers on stakes, cover them with pitch, and then, use them to light his gardens during his evening parties.

It was an incredibly dangerous place for a Christian to live. What tremendous storms and grief they would share.

You would think Paul would write, “Grace to you and courage . . .” or “Grace to you and perseverance . . .”, not, “. . . Grace to you and peace . . .”.

Yes, peace! Because peace is not found in the absence of grief, it is found in the presence of God. Peace is something you experience when you fix your focus, not on the storm, but on the Savior.

## Peace is something that you invest in others

6. Furthermore, peace is something that you invest in others.

Look at Romans, chapter 12, verse 18,

***If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.***

I love the realism of Paul. A religious writer, trying to sound spiritual, would have left off the first two words, “If possible . . .,” but not Paul. He writes, “If possible, so far as it depends on you,” or, in other words, “do everything you can,” to, “be at peace with all men.”

Paul did not say, “Let all men be at peace with you,” because some people will not be a peace with you, no matter what you do. Instead Paul writes, “You, be at peace with all men.”

He goes on to write, in verse 19,

***Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.***

Then, in verse 20, he writes,

***But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.***

You might like that “burning coals” part. That sounds better than revenge, doesn’t it? The only trouble is, we do not understand this phrase any more because of our lifestyle. In Paul’s day, as it still is in more primitive cultures, people carried things on their heads. I have seen them, in India and Africa, carry buckets, bowls, pots, and pans, filled with goods, balanced on top of their heads. Paul is referring to one of your enemies whose fire goes out. He has to start over, which takes a long time before there is a good bed of hot coals for cooking. But you are going to give him some of the hot coals from your fire, so that he can quickly build a fire and cook his dinner. When you do acts of kindness to your enemy, Paul says, it is like giving him a bucket of hot coals for his own fire.

Paul’s point to them was that it is hard for somebody to remain your enemy when you invest in him by helping him rebuild his fire.

Paul wrote in II Corinthians, chapter 13, verse 11,

***Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace;***

*and the God of love and peace will be with you.*

He wrote to the Ephesians, in chapter 4, verses 1 through 3,

*Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

#### **Peace is something that accompanies gratitude**

7. Peace is something that accompanies gratitude.

In Colossians, chapter 3, verse 15, Paul commanded,

*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, . . .*

(the word “rule” is the Greek word “brabeuo,” (βραβεύω), which means, “to umpire, to referee, literally, to call the shots”),

*. . . and be thankful.*

Notice that “. . . be thankful” is in the present tense. This indicates a continual action leading to a habit of life.

Is thanksgiving a celebration with turkey and cranberry sauce or is it a way of life? Would believers, who know you well, say of you, “He (or she) is such a grateful, thankful person,” or are you known for complaining, whining, and griping? Are you one who has the attitude that life is never good enough; the weather is never pleasant enough; people are never kind enough; your paycheck is never big enough . . . complain, complain, complain?

To the Philippians, Paul wrote, in chapter 4, verse 6,

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*

Trench wrote, “Thanksgiving is that element which should never be absent from our devotions.”

What happens when thanksgiving is a constant element of your devotions? Continue to Philippians, chapter 4, verse 7,

*And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Peace is experienced when thanksgiving is expressed.

#### **Peace is something you surrender to learn**

8. Finally, peace is something you surrender to learn.

Paul wrote to the Galatians, in chapter 5, verses 19 through 22,

*Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace . . .*

What does the fruit of the Spirit mean? It means, “that which grows in you by means of submission to the Spirit.” In other words, when you surrender to the Holy Spirit’s control in your life, characteristics grow inside of you – and one of the qualities that surfaces in the submissive heart is peace.

Paul said basically the same thing, in a different way, to the Philippian believers, in chapter 4, verses 8 through 9.

*Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise,  dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me,  practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*

Believer, do you have a sense of peace? What do you dwell on? What do you put into your mind? What do you mull over? Is it true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, or gracious?

Do you lack a sense of peace? What do you practice? How do you live? Are you practicing truth? Do you live an honorable and right and pure and lovely and gracious life?

If you dwell on these things and practice these things, you will sense the pleasure and peace of God. When you submit to God’s Spirit, you sense God’s presence.

## Summarizing the Principles of Peace

Let me summarize all of the contexts in which we have read about and talked about peace, by these four statements:

- You have peace with God through Christ – that is a fact.
- You have peace from God through obedience – that is a feeling.
- You have peace within through mental and spiritual discipline – that is the fruit.

- You have peace with each other through humility – that is our fellowship.

God, through Isaiah, pictured, for Jerusalem, their future rest and redemption, when He said, as recorded in chapter 66, verse 12,

*... I extend peace to her like a river ...*

That phrase has become a song for the redeemed who have found, in Christ, their Prince of Peace. Only the redeemed can truly sing, “I’ve got peace like a river in my soul.”

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<sup>i</sup> Donald G. Barnhouse, Romans Vol. 1 (Eerdmans), p. 84.