

WE STAND IN GRACE

- A. Introduction: We're talking about how the Bible gives us peace of mind. This topic is part of the theme we've been building on all year long—the importance of becoming a regular Bible reader (especially the New Testament). God imparts peace to our mind through His Word. John 16:33
1. Last week we pointed out that the Bible gives us peace of mind by assuring us that we have peace with God. We examined a passage written by Paul regarding the fact that because of sin, men and women are alienated from God, enemies of God. But, the Lord has remedied this through the Cross of Christ
 - a. Col 1:21-22—By (Jesus) God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of his blood on the cross. This includes you who were once so far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions. Yet now he has brought you back as friends...through his death on the cross (NLT).
 - b. The word reconcile means to make friendly again (*Webster's Dictionary*). The Greek word that is translated reconcile means to change from one state to another. Through faith in Christ and His sacrifice, we are changed from enemies to friends of God. We now have peace with God.
 2. We have more to say tonight about why we need peace with God, how we obtain that peace, and what it means for our lives.
- B. To appreciate what it means to have peace with God we must understand the big picture—why God created human kind and what He is working to accomplish in the earth.
1. God desires a family with whom He can live in loving relationship. He created men and women to become His sons and daughters through faith in Christ.
 - a. Eph 1:4-5—Long ago, even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure (NLT).
 1. God chose us (the Greek word means to select or choose for one's self). We have a purpose that is bigger than this life and will outlast this life. It was given to us before we existed, before the world began. Our destiny is to become God's holy, faultless sons and daughters. II Tim 1:9
 2. God's plan is unchanging will be accomplished. He will have a family that is fully pleasing to Him. Eph 1:9-10—For God has allowed us to know the secret of his plan, and it is this: he purposed long ago in his sovereign will that all human history should be consummated in Christ, that everything that exists in Heaven or on earth should find its perfection and fulfillment in him (J.B. Phillips).
 - b. Before God created the earth, He knew that human beings would sin. A holy God can't have sinners as sons and daughters. Therefore the Lord devised a plan to transform sinners into sons and daughters make them holy and without fault through Jesus.
 2. Rom 8:29-30 states God's purpose for men and women and outlines how He accomplishes this purpose. Almighty God's purpose is to have a family of sons and daughters who are like Jesus.
 - a. Rom 8:29—This passage gives information about the plan God devised before He made the heavens and the earth, His plan for a family. This verse reveals that God predestined (decided before hand) that His sons and daughters should be conformed to the image of Jesus.
 1. Jesus is the pattern for God's family. The Greek word translated conformed means jointly formed or having the same form as another.
 2. Rom 8:29—To be made like the pattern of His Son (Conybeare); to share the likeness of His Son (Weymouth); to be molded into the image of [and share inwardly His likeness] (Amp).
 - b. Before proceeding we need to review a few facts about who Jesus is. Jesus is God become man without ceasing to be God. Because Jesus is God, He (the Word) has always existed. Two

millennia ago Jesus took on a full human nature and was born into this world. John 1:1; John 1:14; Luke 1:35; Heb 2:14-15; Heb 10:5; etc.

1. God is the Father of Jesus' humanity (human nature). While on earth, Jesus did not live as God. He lived as a man in dependence on God as His Father (John 14:9-10). By living as a man, Jesus not only showed us the kind of relationship God the Father wants with His family, Jesus demonstrated what holy and faultless sons and daughters of God look like.
2. There are some ways in which Jesus, as the Son of God, is unique. He is the only God man (fully God and fully man). He is the only man who preexisted before He was born into this world. And He is the only man qualified to be an atoning sacrifice for sin.
 - A. But Jesus is also the first of family of sons and daughters like Himself in His humanity. Rom 8:29—For God knew his people in advance and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn, with many brothers and sisters (NLT).
 - B. Firstborn means chief or preeminent. The term is used of Jesus' position in relation to believers (the church) and because He is the first to come out of death. Col 1:18; Eph 1:22
- c. Rom 8:30 is a concise statement about how Almighty God transforms sinners into holy, faultless sons like Jesus. He calls them, justifies them, and then glorifies them.
 1. Call—The Greek word means invite to a banquet and is used of being invited into God's kingdom. God calls each one of us to become His son or daughter through faith in Christ.
 2. Justify—The Greek word translated justified means to render (show or regard) just or innocent.
 - A. All men are guilty of sin before a holy God. A holy God cannot have sinners as sons and daughters, nor can He overlook sin. It must be punished. Jesus took the punishment due us for our sin on Himself at the Cross and satisfied justice on our behalf. Isa 53:5
 - B. Because of Jesus' sacrifice, God can declare men and women not guilty—just or justified—when they believe on Jesus. The legal issue was settled at the Cross.
 1. Because of the Cross, according to God's own Law, you are justified (shown to be innocent), acquitted (all charges against you dropped), declared not guilty through faith in Christ.
 2. Col 2:14—He (God) canceled the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross. (NLT).
 3. Glorify—The Cross was a means to an end. Because we've been justified (declared not guilty according to God's own standard and Law) He can now deal with all who put faith in Christ and His sacrifice as though we never sinned.
 - A. To be glorified has to do with the transformation that will fully restore us to our created purpose as holy, faultless sons and daughters of God.
 - B. Rom 8:30—And those whom he called he has justified, and to those whom he justified he has also given his splendor (NEB); And those whom He justified He also glorified—raising them to a heavenly dignity and state of being (Amp).
 - C. When we believe on Jesus, because we are justified (declared no longer guilty of sin), God can do what He always planned to do—indwell us by His Spirit and make us literal sons and daughters through what the Bible calls the new birth. John 1:12-13
3. The new birth is the beginning of a process that will ultimately fully restore every part of our being to what God always intended—sons and daughters who like Jesus in holiness and power, character and love. This process is called glorification. We'll give more details about the process in upcoming lessons. But for now note several points.
 - a. When you believe on Jesus, immediate changes take place. Your standing before God changes from guilty to innocent. Your identity changes from sinner to holy, righteous son or daughter of God. (The words righteous and justified come from the same Greek word.)

1. Through the new birth God imparts His life (eternal life) to your innermost being (your spirit) and you are born of God. You become (you are now) a holy, righteous son or daughter of God by new birth. I John 5:1
 2. Your mind and emotions (soul) and body are not directly affected by this new birth. Both must be brought under the control of the Spirit of God and the Word of God (lessons for another day).
 - b. I John 3:1-2—Right now we're finished works in progress. We're fully God's sons and daughters through faith in Christ, but we're not yet fully conformed to the image of Christ in every part of our being.
 1. Our experience (the way we live) doesn't always match our position as holy, righteous sons and daughters of God. However, God deals with us on the basis of the part that is completed because He is confident that His plan and purpose will be fully accomplished. Phil 1:6
 2. However, when we fall short (act in an unChristlike way), what we do doesn't change what we are: So now Jesus and the ones he makes holy have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them his brothers and sisters (Heb 2:11, NLT).
 3. What we are will ultimately change what we do: So now, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith in God's promises, we can have real peace with him because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. For because of our faith, he has brought us into this place of highest privilege where we now stand, and we confidently look forward to actually becoming all that God has had in mind for us to be (Rom 5:1-2, TLB).
- C. For the rest of the lesson we need to address some issues that may come up because of the information we've covered in last week and this week's lessons. We could (but aren't going to) teach many lessons in answer to these issues. For now, consider these points.
1. Some might mistakenly say: Since our sins have all been paid for and we have been declared not guilty, then it doesn't matter how we live. Sin is not a big deal.
 - a. Anyone who believes that statement has completely missed the point—the big picture. We were created by God to be holy sons and daughter, without fault or blemish. We're meant to be Christlike in every part of our being. Jesus, in His humanity, is the pattern and the standard.
 - b. Jesus did not die to make sin acceptable. He died to deliver us from every trace of it—its power, its penalty, its corrupting effects—so that we can live as righteous sons and daughters of God.
 1. Titus 2:11-12—God's grace (which restored us to His favor) teaches us that we're supposed to live holy lives and “turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with self-control, right conduct, and devotion to God” (NLT).
 2. Titus 2:14—(Jesus) gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us his very own people, totally committed to doing what is right (NLT).
 - A. I Cor 6:19-20—We don't belong to ourselves anymore. We belong to Him who died for us and rose again on the third day. He bought us with His blood and we're to glorify Him.
 - B. I John 2:6—Whoever says he abides in Him ought—as a personal debt—to walk and conduct himself in the same way in which He walked and conducted Himself (Amp).
 - c. I John 3:1-2—The fact that we are in the process of being conformed to the image of Christ, and that He who has begun a good work in us will complete it, is supposed to have a purifying effect on us:
 1. I John 3:3—And all who believe this will keep themselves pure, just as Christ is pure (NLT).
 2. This hope and understanding influences your behavior and makes you want to live right, live in a way that honors and glorifies God your Father.
 2. Jesus' apostles Paul and John wrote almost all of the verses we've cited this week and last. They understood that genuine faith in Christ is preceded by repentance and followed by changed lives. Luke 24:47; Acts 20:21; etc.

- a. To repent means to change your mind from living for self (your will your way) to living for God (His will His way). Changed lives are lives that reflect this change of direction (repentance).
 - b. John wrote: If someone says, “I belong to God” but doesn’t obey God’s commandments, that person is a liar and does not live in the truth” (I John 2:4, NLT). John can’t mean that we never sin again once we are born again. We know this because of what he wrote just a few lines earlier.
 - 1. I John 2:1-2—My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if you do sin, there is someone to plead for you before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who pleases God completely. He is the sacrifice for our sins. He takes away not only our sins but the sins of all the world (NLT). (Men must accept Jesus and His sacrifice to benefit from it.)
 - 2. John did not mean that Jesus has to beg God to forgive us. John was making the point that if you do sin, the legal issue has already been settled through Jesus’ sacrifice at the Cross. Justice has been fully satisfied in regard to your sin. (More on this in a moment).
 - c. John later makes it clear that someone who is truly born of God, someone who has really repented (changed their mind about how they live) can no longer continue to sin like they used to.
 - 1. I John 3:6—No one who abides in Him—who lives and remains in communion with and in obedience to Him, [deliberately and knowingly] habitually commits (practices) sin. No one who habitually sins has either seen or known Him—recognized, perceived or understood Him, or has had an experimental acquaintance with Him (Amp).
 - 2. I John 3:9—No one born (begotten) of God [deliberately and knowingly] habitually practices sin, for God’s nature abides in him—His principle of life, the divine sperm, remains permanently within him—and he cannot practice sinning because he is born (begotten) of God (Amp).
 - 3. What about when we do sin—do we ignore it because it’s paid for? No, we deal with it. Now that we are sons, it is no longer a legal issue. It is a relational issue when we sin. Sin is an offense against our Father and it puts a breach in our fellowship with Him.
 - a. If you offend a family member, you aren’t thrown out of the family, it affects your interaction with them. God doesn’t change toward us when we sin, nor does our standing as a holy, righteous son or daughter. Our conscience condemns us which affects our confidence before our Father.
 - b. John wrote that if we acknowledge our sin God is faithful and just (can rightfully) forgive (Greek word means dismiss) and cleanse us of the effects.
 - 1. I John 1:9—If we [freely] admit that we have sinned and confess our sins, He is faithful and just [true to His own nature and promises] and will forgive our sins (dismiss our lawlessness) and continuously cleanse us from all unrighteousness—everything not in conformity to His will in purpose, thought and action (Amp).
 - 2. When we sin we lose our confidence before God. Forgiveness helps restore us relationally and helps cleanse our conscience—both of which give us peace of mind.
- D. Conclusion: We have much more to say next week. Consider one thought as we close.
- 1. True Christians work toward less and less sin in their lives because they want to please their heavenly Father and they understand their created purpose—to be sons and daughters who are like Jesus in every thought, word, and action.
 - 2. When you know that you stand in God’s grace because of the Cross of Christ, it gives you peace of mind when you fail, and it inspires you to be better.