



*“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”
Romans 12:18*

“Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.”

Hebrews 12:14

I’ve made a habit of reading and reflecting on many devotions each day. It’s become a welcomed part of my daily routine. Yesterday one came across my desk that I feel warrants repeating. So, for this morning’s devotional I would like to share these timely words, which were penned by Lysa Terkeurst. I hope they give you reason for deep reflective thinking just as they did for me.

“Paul didn’t write what became the book of Romans while on a peaceful vacation with peaceful people and peaceful circumstances. He wrote this instruction in the midst of people opposing him and situations filled with hardship.

One of the reasons he wrote his letter to the Romans is that peace would not have been easy for them. It would have felt as unnatural to them as it does for us in the midst of constant hardships, never-ending opposition and relational differences.

I relate to this so much. It seems I wake up each day with a new set of issues. Maybe today it isn’t a big, heartbreaking, life-changing event that’s eroding your peace. Maybe it’s an ongoing frustration or disappointment with a family member. Or a misunderstanding with a friend. Or even a rude comment someone left on your social media. Conflicts seem to never end.

Yet, Paul is reminding everyone who will read these verses that peace is possible.

The Greeks thought of peace was the absence of hostility. But Paul taught that peace is the atmosphere we can bring into hostility. That peace is a wholeness we have because of our relationship with God.

In John 14:27, Jesus said, *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*

The peace referred to here is “to keep or maintain peace.” Peace is a gift that God gives believers, and that gift is evidence to the world that we are different because of our union with Christ. Our union with Christ makes this peace possible.

But it’s our demonstration of this peace, especially in the midst of hardships, that makes it recognizable as particularly rare and odd.

To live peaceably with all seems like such a ridiculous impossibility. And yet, when the impossible is made possible because of Jesus in us, there’s no greater testimony that can be shared.

This kind of peace is rich evidence of the reality of Jesus. There is nothing more powerful to bring into a situation than the Prince of Peace Himself. (Isaiah 9:6) At just the utterance of the name of Jesus, peace is there.

And don’t miss the context of all of this. Paul doesn’t say, “As far as it depends on other people bringing peace.” Nor does he say, “As long as the conflicts end in a peaceful way.” No, he says, “So far as it depends on you.”

In other words, peace in my life isn’t being prevented by other people’s choices. It’s made possible by my choices.

And that’s when I admit I just want to lay down on the floor and loudly declare, “But I am not Jesus!” Ugh.

Friends, this truly is possible. But only if we surrender our offenses daily, keep our hearts swept clean of bitterness and remain humble even when we are hurt.

So, while this teaching can feel challenging, it’s also eye-opening and empowering. I always thought peace was possible when there was an absence of chaos. But chaos comes and goes as it pleases in this sin-soaked world. I can’t control the chaos. But I can control my choices.

Now I’m realizing the antithesis of peace isn’t chaos. It’s selfishness. And the very best way for me to uninvite selfishness is in the humility of forgiveness.

Peace is the evidence of a life of forgiveness.

It’s not that the people all around you are peaceful, or that all of your relationships are perfectly peaceful all the time. Rather, it’s having a deep-down knowing that you’ve released yourself from the binding effects and constricting force of unforgiveness and the constraining feelings of unfairness.

You’ve traded all that drama for an upgrade: peace.

Living in the comfort of peace is so much better than living in the constraints of unforgiveness.

This makes such a difference in my life. It's part of my process of cooperating with God. Overcoming evil with good. Living at peace so long as it depends on me.

Leaving room for God to work on the one I need to forgive. Praying for the mercy of God. Seeking the face of God. Knowing the goodness of God. Living in the presence of God.

And in that, I'm seeing the beauty of God."

Prayer:

Jesus, today I pray You would show me how to be a peacemaker. As the Prince of Peace, steady my heart to surrender control of situations over to You. Help me untangle any feelings of unresolved hurt in my heart so I can truly walk in the beauty of forgiveness.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.