

Peace is Possible

Have you ever had tension in a relationship with someone? Have you ever been hurt? Have you ever hurt someone? Have you ever found yourself caught up in the middle of two people who can't get along?

GOD IS IN THE BUSINESS OF PEACEMAKING.

From verses 1-3, I believe God wants us to make 3 considerations.

Consideration #1 - He has done it before. v. 1

In the midst of what seems to be an impossible situation, God has brought about peace before.

¹ Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,

Paul never considered himself a prisoner of Rome. He said he was a prisoner for Christ Jesus. He was locked up in prison for preaching the Lord Jesus Christ. He had become a prisoner because he loves Jesus and told people about the saving grace of Jesus.

Paul was the kind of man who wanted to invest in the younger generation. He did that by taking Timothy under

his wing. Timothy was the man who would take the teaching of the Word of God to the next generation.

At one point in Paul's life, he himself seemed like a hopeless case. Before he was known as the apostle Paul, he was known as the Christ-hating Pharisee Saul of Tarsus. If there was anyone who seemed like he'd never make peace with Christians or with Jesus, it was the apostle Paul, but God turned his life around. Paul went from hating Jesus to loving Jesus. He went from an enemy of Jesus to at peace with Jesus.

Now, after Paul got saved, the church was not quick to accept him. The Christians were still afraid of him. They didn't believe he had actually become a Christian, but God was gracious to Paul. Eventually, Paul was fully accepted by the Christians - the very people he used to threaten.

Paul was writing as a man who had experienced firsthand the grace of God that can bring peace to people who were once enemies.

When Paul mentioned his improvement, Philemon would be reminded that Paul is a man who knows what it's like to be mistreated. Paul could feel his pain.

Imagine how these words would make Onesimus feel. Not only was Paul someone who had a horrible past, just

like Onesimus, but Paul knew what it was like to be accepted into a group that he once hurt.

Consideration #2 - He can do it again. v. 2

To Philemon our beloved fellow worker ² and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house:

Paul wanted to encourage Philemon by saying he was beloved - beloved of God, and beloved of God's servants. Not only did they love him, but Paul wanted to highlight that Philemon was a fellow worker. Imagine how that would've made Philemon feel. The Apostle Paul just said that this wealthy businessman had the same focus as Paul. They both had the same goal in life - serving the Lord.

We assume Apphia is Philemon's wife. When Paul said she was a sister that tells us she too was a Christian. She probably played a huge role in hosting the church every Sunday morning.

Archippus Philemon and Apphia's son. As a fellow soldier, Archippus was on the battleground of full-time ministry. He was responsible for preaching the truth of God amidst a world that wants nothing to do with God.

Paul wanted this letter to be read by the entire church. Personal conflict with others has a way of affecting the people around us.

I personally wonder about all the emotional drama of this event. The entire church had the potential of growing bitter toward Onesimus. When this letter was delivered to them, you can imagine the hearts of people softening. God, through Paul, was offering hope of reconciliation.

He's done it before, and he can do it again

Consideration #3 - He does it through grace. v. 3

The key ingredient is the grace of Jesus. Without grace, there is no peace.

³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you want peace, it comes from God the Father and God the Son. You cannot have the Father without the Son, and you cannot have the Son without the Father.

Now, just as you can't have the Father without the Son, you cannot have peace without grace.

What the Bible makes clear to us over and over again is this: It doesn't matter who you are, none of us, on our own, have peace with God. All of us have sinned against Him and in order to have peace with Him we desperately need His grace. Grace is getting something wonderful that we don't deserve. Where do we find God's grace? The cross of Jesus. That's where His blood was shed for us so that God could offer us peace.

When a person is at peace with God, the door is open to being at peace with others.

In Philemon's case, he knew he was at peace with God because he had received the grace of God. Now God was calling him to treat someone else the way God had treated him. In order to have peace with Onesimus, he needed to be gracious.

For Onesimus, he knew he was at peace with God for the same reason - the grace of Christ. Now God was calling him to do what he knew he needed to do - apologize and trust God to handle the consequences.

What about you? What is God calling you to do?

God is in the business of peacemaking. He's done it before. He can do it again. He does it through grace.