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SESSION 3 | Strategies for Cultivating Peace

I. INTRODUCTION

Psalm 55:1-6

[1] Give ear to my prayer, O God,
and hide not yourself from my plea for mercy!

[2] Attend to me, and answer me;
I am restless in my complaint and I moan,

[3] because of the noise of the enemy,
because of the oppression of the wicked.

For they drop trouble upon me,
and in anger they bear a grudge against me.

[4] My heart is in anguish within me;
the terrors of death have fallen upon me.

[5] Fear and trembling come upon me,
and horror overwhelms me.

[6] And I say, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove!
I would fly away and be at rest;

Ask Yourself: Where am I like the Psalmist? Where is my heart troubled? Where do I observe fear and trembling?

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. I Cor. 10:13

II. DIMENSION #1: THE GOSPEL—GOD'S DECISIVE PROVISION OF PEACE

The Bible presents a cohesive and majestic storyline of redemption and reconciliation.

- The Creation Account presents a world at complete peace (Gen. 1-2)
- Man's rebellion brought alienation with God and one another (Gen. 3)

“It is difficult to overstate the horrendous impact of this one act of disobedience—all human history has felt its repercussions. Prior to the fall into sin, there was simply no pain, no aching longing that went unmet, no disease, and no death. No one was sinned against or sinned against another. Apart from an act of amazing grace, the outlook for the man and the woman was absolutely bleak.” — Ian Vaillancourt (from CJ's recent sermon: The Way Back to Eden)

Question: Where is there hope for the alienated? How can peace with God be restored?

But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. **For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of**

Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. (Isaiah 9:1-7)

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. **But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.** All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned-every one-to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:4-6)

- Redemption and Reconciliation Accomplished in Jesus

“All this is from **God**, who through Christ **reconciled us to himself** and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ **God was reconciling the world to himself**, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, **be reconciled to God**. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become righteousness of God.” (2 Cor. 5:18-21)

“Remember that you were at that time **separated from Christ, alienated** from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now **in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace**, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of **hostility** (Eph. 2:12-14)

Strategy #1: Preach to yourself about the Prince of Peace whose sacrifice has decisively (once and for all time!) secured your peace with Almighty God.

III. DIMENSION #2: PROVIDENCE—THE STAGGERING REACH OF GOD'S PEACE

As Christians, we must learn to rest in the ongoing providential care of God over every aspect of our lives.

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. **Are you not of more value than they?** And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, **will he not much more clothe you,** O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and **your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.** But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (Matt. 6:25-34, also Ps. 23 and 139)

“Our doctrine of providence moves us to really believe God’s control is detailed and powerful and merciful enough to clothe every lily on the planet and give us all we need to live out his righteousness.” (John Piper’s Providence, 244)

“And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8.28)

“It is, indeed, true that if we had quiet and composed minds ready to learn, the final outcome would show that God always has the best reason for his plan...”
(Calvin’s Institutes 211)

“Gratitude of mind for the favorable outcome of things, patience in adversity, and also incredible freedom from worry about the future all necessarily follow upon this knowledge.” (Calvin’s Institutes 219)

Strategy #2: Recount God’s faithfulness in your life. Give thought to specific expressions of care and provision God has personally shown to you. Declare your trust in his care for our current troubles and circumstances.

IV. DIMENSION #3: THE HOLY SPIRIT—GOD’S INDWELLING PROVISION OF PEACE

As Christians, we are indwelt by the Spirit of Peace who ministers the peace of God where to those who are anxious, fearful, and wearied from stress. He gives us genuine experiential peace where we would otherwise be tossed.

Jesus’s ascension to the Father’s right hand, meant the long awaited time for the outpouring of the Spirit had come. Through him who indwells us, we experience the promise of Jesus: My peace I give to you.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; **do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.** Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and

received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and **the God of peace will be with you.** (Phil. 4:4-9)

Strategy #3: Remember that you are indwelt by the Spirit of God, the third person of the Trinity, who loves to minister a greater peace than this world can offer. Cast your cares upon the Father and ask the Spirit to guard your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus.

Believers experience the Holy Spirit's ministry of peace as:

- We are reconciled to God through the death of his Son (2 Cor. 5)
- We live aware of the providential care of God (Matt.6)
- We recognize the nearness of the Lord (Phil. 4)
- We humbly present our needs to God, with thanksgiving
- God replaces our burdens with an experience of peace that transcends understanding
- God ministers his peace through our meditation upon “whatever is true.”
- We move forward in a confident pursuit of his Kingdom-priorities (Matt 6)
 - Where are the lies robbing you of peace and faith and instead producing anxiety?
 - What specific promises from God's Word counter those lies?
- Fight for peace within the community of peace: Move towards one another + Pray for One another + Remind One another

May Grace and peace be multiplied to you... (I Thess. 1.2)

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