

**Intro: Peace.** Sounds nice doesn't it? Who doesn't want peace? Just a little peace. Rest for your souls. But we live in a world of chaos. Noise. Distraction. Sin. Suffering. Hurt. Pain.

>**Selah is that age. 10months.** Cries a lot. Whines a lot. Cranky a lot. Also crawling. Well, if things get quiet, something is wrong. Not normal. She's probably getting into trouble.

**But when things get really quiet, we get anxious. Feel like we need to stay busy. Distract.**

- **Can't be alone with ourselves and our thoughts.** Why? Maybe we don't like ourselves. We don't like our thoughts. Memories of sins. What we've done. Who we are. We carry guilt all the time. Live behind a curtain of shame. Ruminating all the time. We need peace. We want peace.

- **Maybe we really can't be alone with God.** In silence. Because we feel too dirty. Too sinful. Too undeserving. Too burdensome. Too unlovable. Too unworthy. Too insignificant.

**Thesis: "Lasting Peace comes through New Life in Christ"**

## I. Past Forgiveness (1-3)

A. **Grace** = "Favor." Generosity. Forgiveness. Atonement (**covering for sin**).

B. **Mercy** = Withdrew your wrath. Turned from Hot Anger.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Mercy is not having to eat leftover vegetables from dinner for breakfast. Grace is getting the ice cream anyways.

## II. Present Need (4-7)

A. Restore US! Revive US! The individuals and the Church. God's People.

B. God has to do the restoring and reviving.

C. **What is Revival?** Spiritual awakening? Renewal. New Life.

**ILLUSTRATION: Richard Lovelace:** "revivals and renewals are a necessary part of the life of the church. Because of the default mode of the human heart, revival is a pattern repeatedly used by the Holy Spirit to reconnect Christian communities with the power of the gospel."

... "He describes renewals and revivals as "broad-scale movements of the Holy Spirit's work in renewing spiritual vitality in the church and in fostering its expansion in mission and evangelism." "Renewal is needed because Christians so easily fall away from a full understanding of the gospel into cheap grace, legalism, and moralism...often described as *religion*." "When individuals and churches see the immensity of God's love and believe the gospel deep down, they are more open to the Spirit's renewing work. "We must first make real to them the grace of God in accepting them daily, not because of their spirituality or their achievements in Christian service, but because God has accounted to them the perfect righteousness of Christ" (211). Putting the gospel front and center is the key."

**APPLICATION: Kingdom-Centered Prayer.**

## III. Future Peace (8-13)

A. He **will** Speak Peace. He **has** spoken Peace to us in Christ. He will bring **more** Peace.

B. **Romans 5:1-11** (We are forgiven. Justified. Reconciled freely by grace through faith.)

C. **Romans 8:31-32** (He's going to give us all things in Christ. Everything we need.)

D. **Matthew 11:28-29** (Rest for your weary souls.)

E. **John 14:18-29** (The Holy Spirit is Peace.)

**ILLUSTRATION: Orphans don't have peace.** Constantly fending for themselves. Watching their back. Wondering about next meal. Staying out of trouble. Insecure. **Not an orphan.**

F. **Philippians 4:4-9** (Think about Good. Positive Thinking?)

**APPLICATION: Do you have Peace in Christ?** Sins forgiven? Father loves you? Reconciled to Him? Nothing to fear? Worry? Ashamed? Accepted and Acceptable. Loved. Adopted.

**Benediction:**

**1 Thessalonians 5:23-24**

## Kingdom-centered Prayer

People are used to thinking about prayer as a means to get their personal needs met. However, we should understand prayer as a means to praise and adore God, to know him, to come into his presence and be changed by him. We need to better learn how to pray, repent and petition God as a people.

Biblically and historically, the one non-negotiable, universal ingredient in times of spiritual renewal is corporate, prevailing, intensive and kingdom-centered prayer. What is that?

**1) It is focused on God's presence and kingdom.** Jack Miller talks about the difference between "maintenance prayer" and "frontline" prayer meetings. Maintenance prayer meetings are short, mechanical and totally focused on physical needs inside the church. But frontline prayer has three basic traits:

- *A request for grace to confess sins and humble ourselves.*
- *A compassion and zeal for the flourishing of the church.*
- *A yearning to know God, to see his face, to see his glory.*

It is most interesting to study biblical prayer for revival, such as in Acts 4 or Exodus 33 or Nehemiah 1, where these three elements are easy to see. Notice in Acts 4, for example, that the disciples, whose lives had been threatened, did not ask for protection for themselves and their families, but only boldness to keep preaching!

**2) It is bold and specific.** The characteristics of this kind of prayer include:

- Pacesetters in prayer spend time in self-examination. Without a strong understanding of grace, this can be morbid and depressing. But in the context of the gospel, it is purifying and strengthening. They "take off their ornaments" (Exodus 33:1-6). They examine selves for idols and set them aside.
- They then begin to make the big request — a sight of the glory of God. That includes asking: 1) for a personal experience of the glory/presence of God ["that I may know you" (Exodus 33:13)]; 2) for the people's experience of the glory of God (Exodus 33:15); and 3) that the world might see the glory of God through his people (Exodus 33:16). Moses asks that God's presence would be obvious to all: "What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" (Exodus 33:16). This is a prayer that the world be awed and amazed by a show of God's power and radiance in the church, that it would become truly the new humanity that is a sign of the future kingdom.

**3) It is prevailing, corporate.** By this we mean simply that prayer should be constant, not sporadic and brief. Why? Are we to think that God wants to see us grovel? Why do we not simply put our request in and wait? But sporadic, brief prayer shows a lack of dependence, a self-sufficiency, and thus we have not built an altar that God can honor with his fire. We must pray without ceasing, pray long, pray hard, and we will find that the very process is bringing about that which we are asking for — to have our hard hearts melted, to tear down barriers, to have the glory of God break through.