

SERMON NOTES

From *In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley*



Peace With Yourself

KEY PASSAGE: Psalm 34:14 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Mark 16:15 | John 14:27 | 1 John 1:9

► SUMMARY

One word that is often associated with Christmas is peace.

It's written on Christmas cards, sung in carols, and preached in sermons, yet it is rarely experienced by most people. National conflicts, political disagreements, broken relationships, and internal anxiety are what generally characterize the world in which we live. The only way to have peace with God, others, and ourselves is through a relationship with Jesus Christ, who is our reason for Christmas.

► SERMON POINTS

The fact that the word peace is used 353 times in the Bible is a clear indication of its importance. Jesus told His disciples, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful" (John 14:27).

Jesus Christ came to give us peace in three areas.

- 1. He gives us peace with God.** Sin makes every person an enemy of God, who is holy. Jesus paid the penalty for our sins with His death on the cross. Now everyone who believes in Him and accepts Him as Savior and Lord receives the forgiveness of sins and is reconciled to God the Father. The war is over, and the enmity is replaced with peace.
- 2. Jesus enables us to have peace with one another.** The Greek word for peace means to bind together, and since believers have the Holy Spirit, He empowers them to forgive, mend relationships, and live in harmony with others. He even enables us to love those we don't know,

but our biggest problem is loving those we do know.

- 3. He gives us inner peace.** Christ's peace is internal quietness and serenity of the soul that is found in a relationship with Him. However, this is often the peace that eludes us because we let outside circumstances and inner thoughts disturb us. But God's peace enables us to love and live harmoniously with ourselves and others.

"Seek peace and pursue it" (Ps. 34:14).

Instead of passively waiting for harmony, we should actively search for it. Peace doesn't come easily or cheaply; some people are contentious. Therefore, living at peace with others often requires patience and forgiveness to relate to them in a godly fashion. Once we have achieved harmony, we must continue to pursue it because the Lord wants us to experience His peace and express it toward others, even if they are difficult to love.

What are the evidences of an internal war rather than Christ's peace?

The way we relate to ourselves affects how we relate to others.

- **Dislike of Appearance.** People who continually find fault with their appearance lack inner peace because they won't accept the way God has made them. Instead of focusing on who God says they are, they denigrate themselves whenever they don't live up to their own external expectations.
- **Feelings of Inadequacy.** When people struggle to accomplish what they desire or what they could once do and now can't, they often focus on their failures and feel inadequate. The result is a lack of inner satisfaction and peace.

- **Sense of Unworthiness.** There is no tranquility for those who think they are undeserving of anything good because they base their worth on their feelings rather than on the truth of God's Word.
- **Insecurity.** People who often feel insecure are not at peace with themselves. But Christ enables those who trust in Him as Savior to find their serenity and security in Him.
- **Sense of Not Belonging.** Everyone wants to be accepted by others. Therefore, when they don't think they fit into a group—whether it's a Sunday school class, a group at work, or their community—they are filled with inner turmoil rather than God's peace. But those who belong to Christ are always loved and accepted by Him.
- **Feeling Unloved.** This is one of the biggest problems in our society. Our world is characterized by criticism and blame rather than acceptance and love for others. This often affects children who grow up feeling unloved and unaccepted by their parents.

God wants us to accept ourselves as He has made us. If any of these evidences characterize us, then we probably don't have Christ's peace ruling in our hearts because our minds are filled with critical thoughts about ourselves. They affect how we function throughout the day, how we relate to other people, and how we perceive and interact with God. These thoughts could also prompt us to sin by trying to get our needs met in a way contrary to God's will as revealed in Scripture.

The Lord uses our difficulties and hardships to mature us, not to drag us down. When we are preoccupied with critical thoughts about ourselves, we forget about God and His love for us. Furthermore, self-focus prevents us from loving Him, experiencing His peace, and living harmoniously with others.

Christ can set us free from thoughts that steal our peace.

We must let God correct our wrong thinking and negative feelings, or we will continue to act according

to them. Jesus Christ is the central figure not only in our salvation but in all of life. He can deliver us from erroneous thinking so our hearts will be filled with peace instead of being troubled. As we submit to His authority, Christ expresses Himself through us in our relationships. But if we are at war within ourselves, we will never be at peace with others.

If we don't deal with these issues, we will carry them into the future, and they will adversely affect all our relationships, including marriage. God doesn't want us bearing a heavy load of ungodly thoughts and feelings regarding ourselves and others.

The only way we'll ever have Christ's peace is by surrendering our lives to Him. Jesus died for us to set us free from the dominion and guilt of sin. And after salvation, He continues to cleanse us from sin when we confess it to Him (1 John 1:9). We don't have to haul around a load of unforgiveness, hurt, and grief when we have a Savior who can heal and deliver us, replacing our burden with His peace and joy.

► RESPONSE

- What thoughts about yourself are you carrying around that rob you of God's peace? How do they contradict what He says about you in His Word? How do they compare with what the Bible says about God and His relationship with you?
- What thoughts about others are hindering you from having harmonious relationships? Is there someone you need to forgive? If so, who?
- Are you willing to lay your critical thoughts and feelings about yourself and others at Jesus' feet and ask Him to begin the process of correcting and healing your mind and heart so you can experience His peace?

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