

Peace In Our Hearts And With All People

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of cleaning the inside of our hearts to reflect true cleanliness on the outside, focusing on the need for inner peace as a reflection of God's pleasure and our pursuit of peace with others. It delves into the progression of holiness in the Apostle Paul's life and the significance of letting the peace of Christ act as a referee in our hearts. The message highlights the Sabbath rest as a symbol of finding rest and peace in God amidst life's challenges.

Scripture: Matthew 23:26, Isaiah 57:20, Luke 2:14, Romans 5:1, Hebrews 12:14, Colossians 3:15

Topics: "Inner Cleanliness", "Peace with God and Others"

Description

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Transcript

So I was thinking of this memory verse that we memorized today, Matthew 23. Sometimes we can read it a little carelessly, as I did in the beginning. Matthew 23 and verse 26.

You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and the dish so that the outside of it may become clean also. Have you ever thought of how it is possible, any cup, all these cups that we saw just now, is it possible to clean the inside in such a way that the outside will automatically become clean? Not possible. You have to clean the outside separately and the inside separately.

So what did Jesus mean when he said, read carefully, you clean the outside of the cup and then clean the inside of the cup so that, why do you clean the inside of the cup? So that the outside of it may become clean also. We can understand that in the human body, if you have some sores or some sickness in the body and the doctor gives you an antibiotic or something that goes inside and you get rid of that sore on your skin, something inside takes care of the outside. Something like that, it says here, if you want the outside of your life to be clean, there is only one way.

You got to clean the inside. What do we mean by the outside of the cup? The outside of the cup is our external testimony of our life. Now many of us, or probably most of us, when we look at our external life,

what other people in the church think of your external testimony, the way you speak, the way you behave, the way you conduct yourself in the church, you may think, yeah, I've got a pretty good testimony.

People think pretty highly of me. You're fooling yourself. That's what the Pharisees said.

And Jesus said, you're not really clean. You can say you're clean on the outside only if you have worked on cleaning the inside. So if you're not working on cleaning the inside every day, you're fooling yourself that the outside or outward testimony is okay.

It is not. That's the meaning of this verse. In the Old Testament, it's described like this.

Turn with me to Isaiah 57 verse 20. Isaiah 57 verse 20, the wicked are like the tossing sea. It cannot be quiet or silent or peaceful.

Its waters are always tossing up refuse and mud. You know, when a sea or a lake tosses up a lot of things and there's a storm, it only tosses up what somebody has thrown into it earlier. It could be old tires or bottles or tin cans or whatever it is.

They're all lying at the bottom, and storm comes and stirs it all up, and it all comes up to the surface. It's not created then because they're all along. And he says, the wicked are like that.

The tossing sea tosses up all this rubbish. And for the wicked, it says in verse 21, there is no peace. There is no peace with my God for the wicked.

Peace is one of the great gifts that God gives to his children. The fruit of the Spirit is peace, love, joy, peace. And when Jesus was born, the angel said, glory to God on the highest and peace on earth among men with whom God is pleased.

That means if God is pleased with you, that's in Luke chapter 2. One of the proofs that God is pleased with you is that you'll have peace in your heart. So it says in Luke 2, 14, peace among men with whom he is pleased. Many times I have read that word that came to Jesus when he was being baptized.

This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. And I cannot remember the number of times I have prayed to the Lord and said, Lord, can you say that about me? This is my beloved son in whom I am pleased. Well, it says here, peace among those with whom he is pleased.

So one mark of God being pleased with me is that in the inside of the cup, there's perfect peace, peace with God, peace in the way I think about other people around me, especially difficult people, especially those who have hurt me or harmed me maybe ages ago. Peace inside is the only proof, is one of the main proofs anyway, God is pleased with your life. Otherwise you can do 101 things.

It says here, peace among men with whom God is pleased. I believe Jesus lived 30 years in that peace in his heart always. And so God could say, the father could say at this baptism, I'm well pleased with you.

So as I said, that's a prayer I've prayed many times, Lord, will you say that about me? This is my son in whom I'm well pleased. And I find peace is a very important factor. And that's why the devil knows that even if you don't know it.

And so he tries his best to disturb that inner peace in your heart, so that the outside of the cup will always be dirty. I mean, you can have a good testimony before people, but as far as God is concerned, the

outside is dirty, because the inside is not clean. If the inside is not clean, whatever testimony you may have before others in the church, God says, I'm not pleased with you.

You're not clean. You just have a reputation before man. So never seek just a reputation before man.

When you come to the end of Jesus, this is the beginning of Jesus' birth. When you come to the end of his time on earth, that is after his resurrection, have you noticed whenever he appeared before people in John 21 after his resurrection? He always said to them, John 20, 21, first of all 19, the disciples were meeting together on the first day of the week. And Jesus came and stood in the midst and said, peace be with you.

That was his favorite word. That was the thing that angel said when he was born. And that's what he said when he was raised from the dead.

Peace be with you. And again, he said to them, verse 21, as if he wanted to repeat it. Peace be with you.

After eight days, verse 26, he came a second time when Thomas was there. And what does he say first? Peace be with you. Okay, after 2000 years, he comes to you and me.

What will he say to you? You know what he'll say. Every time after his resurrection, he always said, peace be with you. So I believe if he comes to me, he will say, I want you to have peace in your heart.

Always towards God, always that assurance that I'm at peace with God. That means not a single sin is convicting me which I have not confessed, et cetera. Not even one.

Like it says in Romans chapter five, Romans five and verse five, sorry, verse one, Romans 5.1. Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God. It's more than forgiveness. Perfect peace.

The absolute assurance that I can look up at a father who is smiling at me, delighted in me. Dear brothers and sisters, that is your birthright. Don't give it up.

How eagerly when a father dies, children want to know what's written in his will. What is left for me? Which part of his wealth is for me? I'll tell you what the father's left for you and me. Perfect peace.

Not a lot of money. Something better than that. Peace.

We have peace with God. That means I don't look up and say, I wonder if he's angry with me. You ever feel like that? That's the devil.

Well, if there's sin in your life that's not confessed, you better feel like that. Because we read there in Isaiah 57, there is no peace for the wicked. That's the last verse of Isaiah 57.

They're like this trouble seed that's tossing up dirt all the time. Something not set right. Maybe some wrong attitude towards somebody.

You say, but he did such terrible harm to me or to my family. Okay. Live with that dirt being tossed up every now and then.

You will live without peace and you will always have a God who's frowning at you. I'll tell you that's the reason why many of our prayers are not answered. That's the reason why there's so much unrest in our life because the devil makes sure we have always something disturbing our heart.

I want to say to you in Jesus name, your birthright is peace. That's what's written in the father's will, his final will, is your inheritance. Peace be with you.

We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. In Hebrews in chapter 12, there's something that we have to do. Hebrews 12, 14.

Pursue peace with all men, all human beings. It doesn't matter who that person is. Run after peace.

You know, I remember many times in India when I traveled by bus. The buses in India don't have doors. I mean, now they probably have it in the olden days, there were no doors.

You could run and catch it even if the bus had started. So the buses left the bus stop and you didn't get there in time, but you see it's moving and you run to catch it. That's the picture I get here.

To run to catch this peace. I want to get in. I don't want to miss the bus.

Pursue peace with all men and sanctification without which you will not see the Lord. Now the religious Christendom, religious Christendom has taught people, you accepted Christ once, right? You will definitely see the Lord. But the Bible says pursue peace with everybody.

Otherwise you will not see the Lord. You better go by the Bible and not what you hear from religious Christendom. You will not see the Lord.

And if in the final day, because you refuse to listen to this word and you don't pursue peace with all men and you don't see the Lord, don't wonder why you heard it today. Pursue peace with all men because that's what Jesus came to earth for. He's called the Prince of Peace.

It's a very, very important requirement in our life. And it's something which I find so many people ignore. And you know where it must begin? Listen carefully.

It must begin between husband and wife. Between wife and husband. Not with the troublesome neighbor.

He can wait. Between husband and wife. Pursue it.

You say, well, my wife's a troublesome type of person. Okay, you pursue peace. Forget about her.

Unfortunately, she may not see the Lord one day. Okay, can't do anything about it. You tried your best.

But your wife went to hell. What can you do? But you pursue peace. And maybe your example will help her also to see the importance of peace.

And that without peace, you will not see the Lord. Or maybe the other way around. Maybe you see your very difficult husband always kicking up a row.

Okay, maybe he'll end up in hell. I hope he won't. But you pursue peace.

And perhaps that way, you may save his soul. These are, I'm not trying to scare anybody. No.

But when a doctor says a cancer is serious, I would suggest you take it seriously. And when the Word of God says, pursue peace with all men without which you will not see the Lord, I take it seriously. It's not just for that.

It's not because I want to go to heaven, so I'll pursue peace. No. No, not at all.

The Bible says, forgive others as God has forgiven you. When we are young in the Christian life, we think God has forgiven us very little. But the more I have grown in the Lord, the more I've seen the seriousness of sin, small things, which in the younger days you take lightly.

And I realized that I have sinned probably more than anybody else. I can fully understand the growth, spiritual growth of the Apostle Paul. I mentioned this before as well.

When Paul was around 55 years old, he says this in 1 Corinthians 15. 1 Corinthians 15 verse 9. What does Paul call himself at the age of 55? Among all the apostles, I'm the last. All the other apostles are much better than me.

Name it. Peter, James, John, Bartholomew, every one of them is better than me, Paul says. That's what he felt about himself after having planted churches, after having written scripture, after having done a thousand times more than any of us have done.

He says, I'm the least of the apostles. Five years later, he writes Ephesians, and in Ephesians, he says in Ephesians 3 and verse 8, he says, I'm the least of all the believers in the world. Forget the apostles now.

When he was 55, he felt he was the least of the apostles. When he is 60, he feels he's among all the believers. That was not artificial humility.

Now, a lot of people have artificial humility. Oh, I'm just an ornery person. I cannot believe that the Holy Spirit would have allowed the Apostle Paul to write some hypocritical word here in Scripture.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, 100% truthful, he says, I believe I am the least of all the believers in the world. If you don't feel like that, it's just because you haven't grown as much as the Apostle Paul. That's all it means.

So, another five years goes by, and he's 65 years old now. He writes in 1 Timothy in chapter 1 and verse 15. 1 Timothy 1 15.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners among whom I am the foremost of all. I'm the chiefest of all the sinners in the world. You see, Paul's progression in holiness, and the least of the saints—no, sorry, least of the apostles when he's 55, least of all the saints when he's 60, and the greatest sinner in the world at 65.

How did that happen? Was he committing more sins when he was 65? Not at all. I believe he was probably the holiest man on earth at that time, along with John the Apostle. It was the awareness of sin.

The closer you come to God, a lot of things that earlier on you didn't think were sin, you suddenly discover they are sin. Have you had that experience, that you suddenly discovered the way you're saying something? You shouldn't. A godly person will never speak like that.

And yet you can't pinpoint something that this particular thing was, that word was wrong. Yet it was a certain way of speaking, particularly in husband-wife relationships. We take so much for granted.

Have you heard the English expression, familiarity breeds contempt? The simple meaning of that is when we become very familiar with a person over years, usually husband-wife, we no longer treat them

respectfully, ah, in a careless, casual type of way. Familiarity breeds contempt. We speak respectfully to the stranger who comes to the door, knocking at the door.

But to the ones whom we know so well, we can be rude, crude, and unloving sometimes. Familiarity breeds contempt. Clean the inside of the cup, then the outside will be automatically clean.

It's not a question of always trying to be on our guard. No. Forget the outside of the cup.

You don't have to be always on our guard. No. Clean the inside, and the outside will automatically take care of itself.

Colossians chapter 3 says, Colossians 3 in verse 15, it says here, let the peace of Christ, and the margin of my Bible says, act as a referee in your heart to which you are called. We all know what a referee is. Soccer game, basketball, baseball.

A referee blows a whistle. When the whistle is blown, you have to stop. It doesn't matter how close you are to scoring a goal, you have to stop.

And the meaning of this is, anytime you lose peace in your heart, stop. Something is wrong somewhere in your life at that time. Even if you justify yourself and say, no, no, no, I never said anything wrong, and you can prove that this is right, and what I did was right.

Yeah, the louder you shout inwardly, there's another voice which says, you're disturbed, you're disturbed, you're disturbed. That is the referee blowing a whistle, even though you're outwardly trying to prove that you never said anything wrong, you never did anything wrong. What a lot of arguments there can be between husband and wife and in a home, each trying to prove I was right in what I said.

No, I didn't say it like that. I didn't mean it like that. And the more you talk this inward, the referee is blowing a whistle inside.

Listen to that. Keep your mouth shut a little bit and listen to that inner voice. Let the peace of Christ be the referee.

That means when the peace is disturbed in my heart, it's the referee blowing a whistle, even if I can justify myself and prove that I did nothing wrong. That is to convince people. But however much we try to convince others, if the referee inside is blowing a whistle, that means I'm at unrest in my heart.

I have tried to follow this principle for a number of years, and I want to tell you, it has blessed me immensely. It's made my life more restful. It's delivered me from discouragement 100%.

It's delivered me from unrest and being agitated by the way other people behave or the way they talk or the way they do things, or all the wrong that they did to me or plan to do to me. It cannot disturb me if I listen to the referee in my heart. It's got nothing to do with them.

It's got to do with me. Let the peace of Christ... Isn't it a wonderful life that the Lord has planned for us that other people cannot affect my life? It's only God and me. And if I am careful to keep peace in my heart, well, the maximum they can kill my body.

Okay. I won't lose peace in my heart. God has called us to that.

The Bible speaks about a Sabbath rest for the people of God. You read Hebrews 4 sometimes. This is the Sabbath rest.

When God created man, his first day was not a day of work. No. He said, Adam and Eve, the garden can wait.

The work can wait. You spend your first day being at rest, the seventh day rest. And he established as a law that one day in seven must be a day of rest.

He taught that to the Israelites to such an extent that if anybody violated the Sabbath, they had to be killed to teach them the importance of rest. What is the meaning of that Sabbath for us today? It's the same thing. The peace of Christ.

Rest in our heart. Jesus said, come to me, all you who labor and are agitated and heavy laden and worked up with what that person did and what that person did 10 years ago. I will give you peace in your heart.

I will give you rest. The Lord has given you forgiveness. Has he given you rest? If not, pursue it.

Pursue peace, it says. With all your heart, catch that bus before it goes away. Amen.

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