

Be Still...peace is possible
Week One Notes/God is Faithful

Psalm 46:10 is our starting point for this study. In a world that seems to be falling apart, and if our personal world seems to be falling apart, God says to BE STILL. In the stillness of our hearts and minds we are to know that God is still God. God is in control. The chaos has not affected Him in the least. In fact, as we know and trust Him, we can experience peace even while the chaos and difficulties swirl around us. But what exactly are we to know about God? And what is this peace He offers us?

Defining Biblical Peace. In the English translation of the Bible, the word *peace* is used over 400 times. In the original Hebrew Old Testament, the word is *shalom*. It means *to be whole, sound, safe, complete, quiet, tranquil, restful, or not attached to chaos*. The New Testament word for *peace* (eirene) means *untroubled, undisturbed, secure*.

In John 14:27, Jesus says, *"Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you, not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be trouble, nor let it be afraid."* He is contrasting the world's definition of peace and His. The world defines peace as the absence of strife or difficulties. Good circumstances determine our peace. Sadly, Christians have bought into the world's definition of peace. We have equated peace and good with easy and pain-free. Yet the peace of Christ is available in the pain and suffering of this world. (Psalm 29:11, Psalm 4:8)

What has God Promised us in Christ? We have been promised Peace with God through Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1, **"Therefore, having been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."** We have been made right with God because of the work of Christ on the Cross. He paid the price for our sins (Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23) While we were enemies of God Christ died for us, making peace with God possible. We believe and trust Jesus Christ by faith (not works). Romans 5:8 assures us of God's love for us and His desire for us to know Him through knowing and trusting Christ. This is the Gospel (Good News) of Peace (Ephesians 6:15). Peace with God through Christ is our new position, we are no longer enemies of God. It is a permanent position.

Now that we are positionally at peace with God, we are given the opportunity to live in peace daily, experiencing the *peace of God*. Ephesians 3:16 reminds us we have the Holy Spirit living within us permanently. We are to submit ourselves to His leadership and control. However, often we put ourselves in control—that is when peace is illusive. When we surrender to Christ within us (the Holy Spirit) He produces good fruit within us. Galatians 5:22, *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace....."* Our inner peace, however, is proportionate to the degree of our surrender to Christ. Peace within and our daily trust in Jesus are connected! (Romans 15:13)

Paul gives us a "recipe" for peaceful living in Philippians 4:6-9. Study and read these verses on your own. Let the Holy Spirit guide and correct, encourage and remind you of these wonderful truths.

What can we expect from the enemy as we pursue Biblical peace? Genesis 3 gives us a clear picture of Satan's tactics and his weapons against us. I see three primary weapons in his evil arsenal. Doubt, fear, and shame. The serpent of old, convinced Eve that God was holding out on her and Adam, that God was a liar. She doubted God's word and believed the lie. Satan still wants us to doubt God's Word. In his craftiness, he will attack when we are hurting and vulnerable. He will speak with lies like, "God doesn't really love you, or God doesn't care about your suffering, or God is unable to handle a crisis of this proportion." Satan is a liar, and he will tell us anything that plants a seed of doubt in our minds about the character of God. When the enemy whispers doubt, run to the God's Word. Run to a still place in prayer. Run to the God who loves you so much and is not at all alarmed by or powerless in your difficult circumstances. Trust Him.

When we doubt God and His Word, the first response we will have to difficult circumstances is fear. Fear is the second weapon of Satan. While fear is a common human response, we are not meant to constantly live in it. We are to rest in Christ, trusting Him to meet our needs and provide unexplainable peace. Shame is the third weapon of Satan. In the adverse circumstances of life, the enemy will accuse you, saying you deserve

this; that you have sinned too much, disappointed God, or failed at too many junctures. He will try to drive you away from God. Shame, like fear and doubt, is a lie. Christ has forgiven our sins and shattered any shame the enemy tries to lay on us.

So, if we want to experience the peace of God, we must KNOW Him—not book knowledge or informational knowledge. We must know Him intimately. We must change our focus from the cares of this life to His Word and His character. To help us know God, we will be observing the life of David (King David) in 1 and 2 Samuel. David wrote many of the Psalms we love. While David writes about the faithfulness and goodness of God, he is often experiencing a tumultuous life. David can write about peace when life is in disarray because he knows and trusts God. It's a very personal relationship. One that you and I can experience as well. We will study 7 attributes or characteristics of God that bring peace into our lives as we are still and know God well enough to trust and obey Him.

Peace is Possible because God is Faithful. Let's look at God's faithfulness to David in the early years of David's life. Faithfulness is the most often used description of God in Old Testament. It is the primary word for *truth*. It also means *steady, permanent, stable, unchanging, unfaltering, and unailing*. For the sake of study, I like to organize my thoughts under broad headings. When looking at Scripture as a whole, we see God is always faithful to **His plan**. He is always faithful to **His promises**. He is always faithful to **His people** (Both corporately and as individuals).

God has always had a plan for redeeming sinful humans. His plan began to unfold in the Garden, just after Adam and Eve sinned (Genesis 3). The plan continues through God's relationship with Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He will raise up a nation, a people to be His own people. He will bring them into their own land, and He will make them a light to the world. God has been faithful to His plan, His promises, and His people. Even when Israel was in bondage in Egypt, God promised to bring them out of slavery and into a new land. And He did! Read Deuteronomy 7:6-9. God has been proving His faithfulness since the beginning.

David understands the history of his people. He has heard the stories. David believes and trusts God and knows God is faithful based on God's dealings with Israel. But God's faithfulness includes David on a very personal level. The Lord will lay a foundation of faithfulness in the early years of David's life. The young shepherd will build on and draw from this foundation for the rest of his life.

1 Samuel 13:14 is the beginning of the end for King Saul. Saul was the people's choice for king. Tall and handsome. But he wasn't God's choice. God chose a man after His own heart. A man who would love and obey God and in turn lead God's people to do the same. God wanted a king who would shepherd His people. God chose David before time began...now the plan was unfolding with perfect timing. *1 Samuel 16-17 is a must read!* Interestingly, God's plans never look like our plans. His ways are higher, and His thoughts are greater than ours.

Samuel the prophet, under God's direction, anoints young David as the next king. The anointing is a promise that young David has been designated by God, it is a setting aside of David for God's use. As a seal or sign of God's plan and promise, the Spirit of the Lord comes mightily upon David. God's Spirit would remain with David for his entire life.

The story of David and Goliath is familiar. But it is not the story of a young shepherd beating unfavorable odds. It is a story of God's faithfulness to His plan, His promises, and His people...especially to David.

Hearing the taunts of Goliath, David volunteers to fight the giant warrior. (1 Samuel 17:32). Saul questions the young shepherd, doubting his ability to fight such a warrior. But David is confident he can do it. Why is he so confident? Because God has been laying a foundation of faithfulness in David. God has been faithful to the young shepherd who by the power of the Spirit of the Lord has killed a bear and a lion. David learned that God is faithful in the everyday events of shepherding. God was ever present and ever working in the pastures, right where David lived. The "everyday" is our learning place too. God teaches us and proves Himself faithful in the everyday circumstances of life—not just in the big battles. As we continue to study the life of David, we will see over and over the faithfulness of God to His servant David.

God's faithfulness continues today. He is faithful to His plan. The New Covenant through His anointed King Jesus Christ. A King born in the City of David. A King often called the Son of David. A King who would shepherd God's people. A King who rules eternally. A King we will see face to face someday. God continues to be faithful to every promise given to us who are in Christ. 2 Corinthians 1:20 declares all God's promises are punctuated with God's 'Yes!'. He is faithful to keep His promises! And God is faithful to His people, the church and each of his children as individuals. (1Corinthians 1:9, 1 Thessalonians 5:24, Philippians 1:6). God is faithful to call us to Himself and then continue the good work of making us like Christ for the remainder of our lives.

Each week, we will look at a Psalm of David that corresponds with characteristic of God we have studied.

Psalm 23. Most scholars agree, David wrote the beloved and familiar psalm later in life. He is looking back on his long and eventful life, marveling over the *faithfulness* and the goodness of God, presented in Psalm 23 as the Good Shepherd. Jesus is our Shepherd. John 10, Jesus describes Himself as the Good Shepherd who knows each sheep by name and willingly lays down His life for the sheep. Also, His sheep know His voice and follow Him. For the Christian, every line of Psalm 23 points to Jesus.

The Lord...everything about the entire psalm hinges on these two words. Yahweh. The promise- keeping, relational God.

is my shepherd.... not just a shepherd, but **MY** shepherd. This is a personal relationship.

I shall not want.... I have everything I need because God is faithful to take care of me.

He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.... David is not saying all of life will be peaceful and quiet. This verse is about provision. The shepherd gives the sheep everything they need so that they are satisfied.

He restores my soul... Our soul is everything about us—mind, will, emotions, personality. Our soul gets beat up living out in the world. But the shepherd restores. *To restore* means *movement back to the point of departure*. The Good Shepherd moves us back to the place we departed from His care, or took our own path, or ignored His voice. He brings us back to Himself and refreshes and restores us. Restoration is a daily need. Each day, we humbly ask Him to refresh and restore our souls, lest we wander from His tender care.

He leads(guides) me in the paths of righteousness for His name sake...the word path means a well-worn path. The Shepherd knows this path perfectly. He leads us in righteous lifestyle that honors Him. The reputation of a shepherd mattered. If he was not a good shepherd or if he was a negligent shepherd, no one would want him watching over sheep. The way we live is a testimony to God's faithfulness. We are living proof that Christ is the Good Shepherd.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...this is not about death itself, rather a time of deep distress. Notice the pace. *I walk*. The sheep follow the shepherd, and the shepherd is walking. If left to our own devices, we would run as fast as possible to get out of the valley. Or we would take a shortcut, or skip along, trying to fool ourselves into thinking it isn't so bad after all. BUT the Shepherd walks, leading us at His pace, and in His footsteps. He is with us all the way, as we face every dark valley with His strength and His care.

I will fear no evil, for You are with me...the presence of the Shepherd brings peace. Evil has no power over us, even in times of distress. We belong to the Good Shepherd.

Your rod and your staff, they comfort me...The rod of the shepherd was a thick stick. It could be used as a weapon to ward off any enemy of the sheep. It could also be used to correct the sheep. God will correct us. He will get our attention and keep us on the right path. He disciplines those that He loves, and indeed the Shepherd loves His sheep. The staff was often used to rescue a sheep that had gotten itself in trouble. Sheep are notorious for getting into trouble, but the Shepherd patiently draws them back to Himself.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows...it seems to me the writer has changed the metaphor of sheep and the Shepherd to a wealthy host who prepares a lavish banquet. (Some interpret this verse in the context of the sheep and Shepherd, and that works too). Again, a picture of provision and overflowing blessings at the hand of someone with resources of

magnificent proportions. The host of course is the Lord. We have been invited to sit at His table and enjoy His lavish hospitality, even while the uninvited enemy looks on.

Surely (only), goodness and mercy (loving kindness) will follow me all the days of my life... the sheepdogs of God! Following us, surrounding us, having our back for all our lives. The Shepherd leads and as we follow, we are surrounded by His goodness and mercy. Beautiful!

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever... Dear one, we will never be alone. We will always be in His presence both here on earth and one day in heaven.

Be Still. Peace is possible because God is faithful.