

Peace – but only through Holiness – separation from evil.

In the Pentateuch – commonly called the Law – there are 45 references to the requirements and regulations for a peace offering to God.

There are 32 more references to a peace offering to God in the remainder of the OT.

That makes 77..... out of 367 references to “peace” in the whole Bible.

The essence of the problem of sin was that it separated men from God and made us enemies. To be restored to God we had to make peace – to once again become voluntarily subject to Him and His ways. That peace was purchased temporarily by blood sacrifice in the tabernacle and later the temple.

Once God had taken a people for Himself out of the world, He instructed them to be holy unto Him – to keep separate from the nations around them – not only that, but once in the Promised Land to destroy the surrounding nations completely.

There are only a few references to Israel making peace with the nations around them – they are usually in the context of those nations becoming ‘subject’ to Israel. This was a prophetic picture of the heathen nations – the Gentiles – becoming God-followers too. When we are away from God; rebellious and self-serving we have to submit to the people of God, and God Himself to have peace and reconciliation with Him.

2 Samuel 10 19, *And when all the kings who were servants of Hadad-ezer saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel and became subject to them. So the Syrians were afraid to save the Ammonites anymore.*

1 Kings 4 24, *For he (Solomon) had dominion over all the region west of the Euphrates from Tiphshah to Gaza, over all the kings west of the Euphrates. And he had peace on all sides around him.*

God instructed the Israelites to destroy the nations around them..... when they did not do this God sent them into exile. Ezra, a prophet after the exile said this.....

Ezra 9 10, *"And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken your commandments, 11, which you commanded by your servants the prophets, saying, 'The land that you are entering, to take possession of it, is a land impure with the impurity of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations that have filled it from end to end with their uncleanness. 12, Therefore do not give your daughters to their sons, neither take their daughters for your sons, and **never seek their peace** or prosperity, that you may be strong and eat the good of the land and leave it for an inheritance to your children forever.' 13, And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great guilt, seeing that you, our God, have punished us less than our iniquities deserved and have given us such a remnant as this, 14, shall we break your commandments again and intermarry with the peoples who practice these abominations? Would you not be angry with us until you consumed us, so that there should be no remnant, nor any to escape? 15, O LORD the God of Israel, you are just, for we are left a remnant that has escaped, as it is today. Behold, we are before you in our guilt, for none can stand before you because of this."*

When we mix with the ‘world’ – heathen, unbelievers, Gentiles - we inevitably pick up their bad habits, their ways and eventually worship their gods..... the gods of personal gain, hedonism, and others. We are **in** the world but must not be **of** the world. This is a fine line to walk.

Only when we see an opportunity for the worldly person or people we are mixing with regularly to receive Jesus should we pursue peace with them. This should be our only motive. So can we have non-Christian friends? The obvious answer is “yes” – you can after all do anything you want to. A better question would be “*Should we have non-Christian friends?*” The answer to that with a caveat would be “No”. The caveat would be, as above, only if it gives us the opportunity for a solid Christian witness.

The simple fact is that we can never have a meaningful 'peace' with ungodly people. If we are to honour and obey God we should be being holy – separated – and if we don't we run the very real risk of becoming ungodly just like them.

"But surely" you say "God is a God of peace and He wants us to be at peace with all men."

Yes God wants all men to be at peace, but without worldly compromises. Jesus is the Prince of Peace and the only true peace there is to be found is peace with the Father through Him.

James 4 4, *You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*

Strong words, you might say! What about this quote from Jesus?

Luke 12 51, *Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. 52, From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. 53, They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."*

Jesus came to fulfill the OT prophetic picture set up in the tabernacle. Only by the shedding of His blood, and our acceptance of His death on the cross for our sins, can we have peace with God.

Isaiah 53 5, *But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.*

Romans 5 1, *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Colossians 1 19, *For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. 21, Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. 22, But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation -23, if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel.*

It's hard for us to reconcile these Scriptures when we think of our friends and neighbours, family members, and maybe even spouses who haven't made this covenant of peace with God.

How can we not spend time with them, love them, care for them, and yet still please God who wants us to come out from among them, and be holy to Him?

Part of the answer is grace. We need God's favour to overlook our transgressions SO LONG AS OUR MOTIVATIONS ARE TRUE! If we slip up and fall into worldly ways whilst we are pursuing a friendship with an unsaved person then we still have forgiveness and His mercy.

If we get into these situations, and we will if we are serious about our faith, then we need accountability. Accountability to another Christian who is NOT involved in the relationship will provide the cover you need. You would need to be very open and honest with this person for them to speak to you frankly to guard against you slipping into worldly ways.

We cannot and must not condone or join in with any activities that are in any way dishonest or ungodly. If we are amongst friends or family and we see these things we must speak out – carefully – being 'full of care' - lovingly, but firmly. If we speak Biblical truth to them in love then God is free to work in their hearts and minds for their ultimate good. If we keep the truth a secret though fear or embarrassment then we deny Jesus.

If we have peace with ungodly and worldly people then we have to consider our Christian standing. We simply cannot have true peace with the world and peace with God – its mutually exclusive.

James 4 *4, You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*

God's ultimate will is that Christians everywhere reach out to the ungodly and love them into the kingdom – doing unwarranted acts of kindness – and when the time is right, or if they ask, tell them why you are doing them and loving them.

In this process we must take care not to fall into their ways. This would be poison to our souls and will draw us away from God. The *separation* will return with the *sin*, and we may find ourselves in exile.

1 Corinthians 15 *33, Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals." 34, Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning.*

2 Corinthians 6 *14, Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15, What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? 16, What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17, Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, 18, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."*

Revelation 18 *2, And he called out with a mighty voice, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast. 3, For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living." 4, Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; 5, for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.*

If we are to, and we should, mix with the ungodly and testify the truth to them, we must be strong and faithful to all that we believe. Yes, we have God's grace and His mercy when we slip up..... but when our *slip ups* become our *habits* then we are in big trouble. We are in danger of exile.

Let's watch out for each other, pray for each other, be honest with each other, and be merciful toward each others weaknesses..... but most of all, lets be holy to God, separate from the world, and not expect peace with them at any cost. The cost would have to be theirs – their lives dedicated to God too and THEN you can have true peace with them.

Matthew 10 *32, So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, 33, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven. 34, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but **a sword**. 35, For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. 36, And a person's enemies will be those of his own household.*

The sword is the sword of truth, and the truth will divide because some will not accept it.