What the Bible says about Peace

Peace is something everyone wants, yet few seem to find. What is peace? It can be defined as "tranquility, harmony, or security." Depending on the situation, it could mean "prosperity" or "well-being." Various forms of the word peace are found 429 times in the King James Version of the Bible. There are different types of peace, including false peace, inner peace, peace with God, and peace with man.

In the Old Testament, the primary Hebrew word for "peace" is shalom, and it refers to relationships between people (Genesis 34:21), nations (1 Kings 5:12), and God with men (Psalm 85:8). Peace is a desired status in each of these arenas, and shalom is often tied to a covenant or a promise kept. A familiar friend (literally, "friend of my peace" in Psalm 41:9) is one with whom you would be at ease, a trusted companion. "Peace" was the standard greeting (1 Samuel 25:6), still used in many cultures today.

Peace is directly related to the actions and attitudes of individuals; but it is ultimately a gift from God (Isaiah 45:7; Leviticus 26:6; John 14:27). The presence of peace indicates God's blessing on man's obedience (Isaiah 32:17; Malachi 2:5) and faith (Isaiah 26:3). There is no peace for the wicked (Isaiah 48:22).

As valuable as peace is, it is not surprising to find that it is sometimes counterfeited. Empty promises of peace can be used to manipulate others. Deceitful men speak words of peace while secretly planning evil (Obadiah 1:7). The Antichrist will confirm a treaty, producing a temporary peace which he will then abruptly shatter as he reveals his true colors (Daniel 9:27). False teachers proclaim peace when God is actually proclaiming judgment (Ezekiel 13:10-16). In Jeremiah's day, the religious leaders dealt only with the symptoms of the national problems, without addressing the sinful root of the crisis. These false prophets declared everything was well between God and Israel: "Peace, peace," they said, when there was no real peace (Jeremiah 6:14).

In the New Testament, the primary Greek word for "peace" is eirene, and it refers to rest and tranquility. A key focus of peace in the New Testament is the advent of Jesus Christ, as announced by the angels in Luke 2:14 ("Peace on earth . . ."). Isaiah had predicted the Messiah would be the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), and He is called the Lord of peace in 2 Thessalonians 3:16. It is through Christ's work of justification that we can have peace with God (Romans 5:1), and that peace will keep our hearts and minds secure (Philippians 4:7).

God commands us to seek peace (Psalm 34:14; Matthew 5:9). We should "make every effort to do what leads to peace" (Romans 14:19). Of course, there will be some people who do not desire peace, but we are still to do our utmost to be at peace with them (Romans 12:18).

Believers have an obligation to "let the peace of God rule" in their hearts (Colossians 3:15). This means we have the choice either to trust God's promises (letting His peace rule) or to rely on ourselves and reject the peace He offers. Jesus gave His disciples peace based on the truth that He has overcome the world (John 14:27; 16:33). Peace is a fruit of the Spirit, so, if we are allowing the Spirit of God to rule in our lives, we will experience His peace (Galatians 5:22-23). To be spiritually minded brings life and peace, according to Romans 8:6.

The world will continue to have wars and interpersonal conflicts until Jesus comes to establish true, lasting peace (see Isaiah 11:1-10), but God will give His peace to those who trust Him. Jesus took the chastisement of our peace (Isaiah 53:5) and has made it possible for us to have peace with God. Once His peace rules in our hearts, we are able to share that peace with others; we become publishers of peace (Isaiah 52:7) and ministers of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18).