

The Power of Peace

Franklin Church of Christ
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November 8, 2009

Introduction:

Consider the following verses of scripture:

Fight against them until idolatry is no more and God's religion reigns supreme. But if they desist, fight none except the evil-doers. (2:192)

Tell the unbelievers that if they mend their ways their past shall be forgiven; but if they persist in sin, let them reflect upon the fate of their forefathers. Make war on them until idolatry shall cease and God's religion shall reign supreme. (8:38-39)

When the sacred months are over slay the idolaters wherever you find them. Arrest them, besiege them, and lie in ambush everywhere for them. If they repent and take to prayer and render the alms levy, allow them to go their way. God is forgiving and merciful. (9:25)

Fight against such of those to whom the Scriptures were given as believe neither in God nor the Last Day, who do not forbid what God and His apostle have forbidden, and do not embrace the true Faith, until they pay tribute out of hand and are utterly subdued. (9:29)

Believers, make war on the infidels who dwell around you. Deal firmly with them. Know that God is with the righteous. (9:123)

When you meet the unbelievers in the battlefield strike off their heads and, when you have laid them low, bind your captives firmly. Then grant them their freedom or take ransom from them, until War shall lay down her burdens. (47:4)

I'm sure you have gathered that these are not verses from Christian scripture. Rather, they are from Islamic scripture—the Koran. While there is a great deal of argument about what these verses really mean and what they call Muslims to do regarding non-Muslims, the point is quite clear. Make war on those who do not believe.

This is the exact opposite of what we find in Christian scripture. Paul explained that though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh (**II Corinthians 10:3-6**). Ours is a warfare of the mind and spirit, not of the flesh. We do not evangelize at the end of a sword. Some try to point out that this battle cry of the Koran is not quite so harsh but is only a response to those who will fight them first. However, even with that interpretation we can't help but see the contrast of Jesus who said, "If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (**Matthew 5:39**). Sadly, many who have claimed to be Christians have not followed Jesus' message of peace. The Crusades and the Inquisition are blights on the history of those who claim to be Christian. But the problem here is not with Jesus' word. It is not even with those who twisted Jesus' word or misinterpreted Jesus' word. It is with those who ignored Jesus' word. Ours is a ministry of peace. In fact, Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (**Matthew 5:9**). Paul said, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all" (**Romans 12:18**).

While few of us would actually pull out a gun to evangelize, sometimes we can approach spreading God's gospel with a warrior like spirit. We blast away with Bible verses, dropping scripture grenades, firing our logic machine guns, and taking no prisoners. We brag about how we blistered folks with our logic or blew them away with the scriptures. When we were done with them they were wasted. I'd like to share a different approach, an approach that demonstrates the power of peace. Instead of trying to twist someone's arm into Christianity, examine what Peter said to wives whose husbands were not believers in **I Peter 3:1-6** and notice the power of peace.

Before we examine this passage, allow me to explain that I know this passage is not primarily about evangelism, but it deals with it. Further, I understand it doesn't cover all aspects of evangelism. Also, I recognize there are aspects to a marriage relationship that provide more influence than any other relationship. However, I simply cannot help but notice some principles in this passage I believe we should see in all of our evangelism. I want us to see the peace in this relationship, in the believer, and in the evangelism. I want us to see the power of peace in our lives and how it can be a big part of drawing folks to Christ.

Discussion:

- I. See the power of peace in this woman's story.
 - A. In an earlier lesson, "The Promise of Peace," we noticed there are three aspects to the peace God promises—Connection, Contentment, Conviction. I want you to see these aspects of peace in this woman and how it relates to evangelism in general.
 - B. *Connection:*
 1. Peace is a connection with God as seen in **Romans 8:31-39**. It is knowing that God is with us and we are with God. This sister in **I Peter 3:1-6** is definitely connected to God. She hopes in God and her demeanor is precious in the sight of God. God is with her and she is with God.
 2. In subtle ways, we can see how this peace impacts her evangelism. Because this sister is connected to God, she doesn't have to manipulate her husband to gain her emotional well-being. She can submit to him, accepting him where he is instead of demanding that he be somewhere else for her happiness's sake. She can even call him, "Lord," that is treat him with the respect he should have because she doesn't have to compete with him. She's got the connection she needs in God.
 3. How would that impact our evangelism? If we have our own personal peace with God, connected to Him, knowing that He is ours and we are His, would that change how we relate to lost people around us? Would that remove our fear that they might disconnect from us if we demonstrate the gospel to them? Would that remove our anxiety that we might lose out on something important if they get upset at us?
 - C. *Contentment:*
 1. Peace is contentment with what God has given us, where God has placed us, and how God has blessed us as seen in **Philippians 4:11-13**. This sister in **I Peter 3:1-6** is definitely content with her place. She submits to her husband. She does not search for another one, a better one, a more spiritual one. She is content with her situation. She does not scratch and claw for a better situation. She does not parade how awful her situation is to her husband or even to God. She is content.
 2. In subtle ways, we can see how this peace impacts her evangelism. Because this sister is content with where God has her she is not trying to take from her husband. Her husband is not her overriding source of money, joy, pleasure, happiness. No, her relationship with God provides all her desires. She is now free to support and submit to her husband. She is free to demonstrate the gospel to him because she is not worried about trying to get anything from him.
 3. How would this impact our evangelism? If we have our own personal peace, content with God's place for us, would that change how we relate to the lost people around us? Would that change how we view the purpose for our relationships? When we are discontent and have no peace, our relationships lose their focus. We normally work on relationships that will give us something. We steer clear of relationships with weird people, odd people, poor people, different people because we can't get anything out of that relationship. How would contentment impact our evangelism as we see people as God's creation and not as a source for something for us?
 - D. *Conviction:*
 1. Peace is conviction that God is in control. He is God and we are not. We don't have to try to do His job. We can simply do what is right and let Him be God and work everything out for our good as seen in **Romans 8:28**. This sister in **I Peter 3:1-6** is definitely convicted that God is in control and therefore she did not need to be afraid of anything frightening. God would take care of her.
 2. In subtle ways, we can see how this peace impacts her evangelism. Because this sister was convicted that God was working and in control, she did not have to try to manipulate how her husband was going to get converted. She didn't have lie awake at night trying to figure out what amazing thing she was going to do or what was the perfect lesson she had to teach to get her husband to finally listen and obey. She would simply surrender to God and let God do the work.

3. How would this impact our evangelism? If we have our own personal peace, convicted that God is God and we're not, would that change how we strive to present the gospel to others? Would that stop us from thinking we must be the power behind the conversion coming up with just the right approach, waiting until just the right perfect moment? Would that remove our fear that somehow we might mess it all up because we don't know what we're doing?
- E. Yes, I think we can see that peace will impact how we relate to others as we strive to pass on the gospel. But why will it cause others to be impacted by us?

II. The Power of Peace

A. There are four keys I see from this story that demonstrates how peace will cause others to be impacted by our lives.

B. *Key #1: We will stand out from the world.*

1. The world does not have peace. **John 16:33** demonstrates that this kind of peace only comes from Jesus. If we were in the world, we would have tribulation. Those who are in the world have tribulation. When they look at us going through all the same kinds of stuff they go through but doing so with peace, with contentment, connection, and conviction, we'll stand out. Look at this woman in **I Peter 3:1-6**. She stands out among women. She is not concerned with braided hair, gold jewelry, or fashionable clothing. Rather, she demonstrates respect, pure conduct, gentleness, and a quiet spirit. A made up woman trying to attract the eye of a man is a dime a dozen. But a woman like this is unique. She stands out. Her beauty is deeper than the surface and she refuses to go unnoticed.
2. I can't help but consider the place of peace in the fruit of the Spirit in **Galatians 5:22-23**. When we conduct ourselves with this fruit, including peace, we will stand out. We will be different. Others won't be able to help but notice. Think about Paul and Silas while in prison, praising God in prayer and song in **Acts 16:25-33**. They did not fight. They did not bask in bitterness. They did not repudiate the jailer. They conducted themselves in peace. When the earthquake struck and the jailer was brought face to face with his own mortality, he couldn't help but notice Paul and Silas.
3. Here is the point. We may be able to argue all the finer points of doctrine, we may be able to expound the plan of salvation with great fervor, but if people look at us and see that it hasn't helped us connect to God and face life, why would they ever listen to us. Sadly, too often we get it backwards trying to convince people to ignore our lives because our doctrine is so pure. Instead, if we can stand out because the gospel has changed our lives and given us peace, we'll stand out and people will want to listen to what we have to say.

C. *Key #2: We have what they want.*

1. Why would this husband be remotely impacted by his wife's life? Was it because she so impressed him with how amazing she was that he had to try to live up to it to? I doubt it. That would probably have caused him to think he could never make it. Was it because he wanted to earn heaven just like her? No. Neither could do that. It was because he saw something in her that he wanted. When you've live for years with a person who has taken everything thrown at them and walked through it with connection, contentment, and conviction, you can't help but be moved. You can't help but be a bit jealous. You can't help but want what they have.
2. No doubt, some folks see women dressed up in gold and designer clothes and they want that. But that never satisfies. **Proverbs 23:4-5** points out that the desire for wealth never satisfies. There is never enough. But seeing the contentment of the righteous who is satisfied (**Matthew 5:6**) can't help but impress. I don't think everyone will be moved and want what we have. But some will.
3. Again, I call to mind the Philippian jailer in **Acts 16:25-33**. When face to face with his mortality, he wanted what Paul and Barnabas had. He wanted the connection, contentment, and conviction that allowed them to sing and pray instead of fret and worry while in the Roman stocks.
4. Once again, I call to mind how we get it backwards sometimes. It is good to be right about God's things. However, I think sometimes we so try to impress people with how right we are about so many things and yet fail to impress them with the idea that when we are doing

God's right things it works. **Matthew 7:15-20** says we can know a tree by its fruit. Sadly, we too often expect people to ignore the fruit in our lives and just listen to our teaching. However, if we show them the fruit of Christ's teaching by demonstrating love, joy, peace, etc. (**Galatians 5:22-23**), they are much more likely to listen to what we'll have to say about how to have those things.

D. *Key #3: We'll be on their side.*

1. The main point Peter is making to sisters in **I Peter 3:1-6** is about submission to their husbands even if he is an unbeliever. But notice what that says about her relationship with her husband. She is on his side. She is his supporter. She is not an antagonist. She is not the enemy. She did not live in her relationship like she was the enemy of her husband, so he didn't see her as the enemy.
2. I understand that in our relationships with other people we are not in a role of wifely submission. However, when we are governed by peace, our evangelism is not combative. We do not see those to whom we are displaying the gospel as the enemy. We are on their side. Satan is the enemy (**Ephesians 6:11-12**). Let's face it. If we approach people with the gospel as if they are our enemies, they will naturally respond by treating us like we are their enemies.
3. Because we are connected to God, content with where God has us, and convicted that God is God and we're not, we won't have to manipulate or fight with people. We can simply come alongside them and help. We can recognize them as the prisoners of war that they are and strive to free them (**II Timothy 2:24-26**). What a difference it will make if we share the gospel with them from a standpoint of friends helping rather than adversaries beating them.

E. *Key #4: Since we are concerned with pleasing God, we'll not be intimidated by others.*

1. This sister was concerned about what was precious to God. Her hope was in God, not her husband. When she lived according to that hope, she didn't have to fear anything from her husband (**I Peter 3:6**). Don't misunderstand, that didn't mean that there were never good women who surrendered to the Lord who endured abuse from their husbands. They did. But they didn't have anything to fear by it. They knew the Lord would see them through to eternity with him just as any other persecuted Christian knew when they face abuse at the hands of unbelievers.
2. When we are governed by peace, having connection, contentment, and conviction, we need not fear anyone. What can man do to us, God is on our side (**Psalms 118:6**)? The other points demonstrated how our peace will impact others. This one shows how it will impact us. When we have personal peace from God, then we have no fear of others.
3. The point we need to understand here is that the power of peace is not some namby-pamby watered down, don't say anything about the gospel to anyone but hope they just kind of pick up on it. Rather, the power of peace means that when saying something is the right thing to do, we have the confidence through God's grace and power to speak up. We can be like the apostles who stood up to the Jewish council in **Acts 4:19-20; 5:29** and speak because we know God is with us.

Conclusion:

God is the power. His is a power of peace. When we have His peace in us, it will produce a power for evangelism that we cannot imagine. Now please do not misunderstand. Peter was not telling wives that their husbands would not have to hear the gospel if they lived right. We know that faith comes by hearing and hearing by Christ's word (**Romans 10:17**). His point was that if these men saw the gospel in their wives lives, they would not be won through verbal argument, but would rather be won so that they would willingly listen to the gospel their wives knew. The same is true for us. I'm not trying to say that if you have peace in your life, folks will line up to find salvation in Jesus by being baptized for the remission of their sins. No. They will have to be taught the gospel. You need to be ready to teach them the gospel. But, if they see the peace of God in your life, before even uttering a word you will have won them to heed whatever it is that you show them in God's word. Sadly, all too often we hope to get someone in a Bible study and convince them of the truth of what we believe while ignoring what they see in our lives. Evangelism is so much easier if we win them by our lives and then teach them because they can tell we know what we're talking about because our lives are governed by peace.

If we really want to win people to Jesus, we don't need to threaten them with swords, fly planes into buildings, or blow ourselves up as suicide bombers. We need simply show them the peace God offers through His gospel. When we do, I think we'll be amazed at the power of God's peace.