

Peace | Galatians 5:22 & John 20:19-23 | 28 January 2018

What we find from the following research on *peace* is deep and thick soil rich with all the nutrients for personal and relational wholeness. I begin with Esther Meek offering a personal example of “wholeness” and its relationship to how we learn, grow and know. From there we move to Gordon Fee and the NIDNTT to lay out the history and depth of this word peace. Then close with a brief statement from Constantine Campbell connecting this *peace* to the transformative power of God in our lives.

1. What disrupts peace?
2. Do you relate to Esther’s experience? How?
3. How has God’s peace brought wholeness to your life?
4. What action do you need to take to bring His peace into your life?

Ester Lightcap Meek, *Loving To Know*, (Cascade Books, 2011).

A sense of personal beauty comes, I believe, only in the generous, self-giving gaze, the noticing regard, of another person... This description accords with two definitions of beauty: beauty is consent to being; and beauty says, “all will be well.” It speaks of a *wholeness* within that blesses surrounding people and environs with the same privilege. 299

I want to argue that a sense of personal beauty is a kind of self-knowing that develops within the gaze of another person. Here I make my point by telling you of the personal experience which led my thought in this direction. I grew up in a family of people all much older than myself, all of whom where, as I often say, “grandly good or grandly bad.” I was not noticed, and I found safety from personal attack in keeping my head down and not being noticed, all the while craving that notice. I realized neither of these consciously at the time. I only know I grew into adulthood and toward middle age with the feeling that inside me, if I ever turned my eyes there, was—nothing—a big hole of non-existence. I did not feel I knew myself; I did not feel there was anybody there to know. I do not mean to say that my family never noticed me, or was unkind; but I can say that somehow I didn’t take their notice to heart. Perhaps, out of fear, I was blocking the gaze. Add to this that I think it was very easy in my church culture, as a woman, to not be expected to think or to be heard. 299-300

But with the publication of my book, *Longing to Know*, I was given a voice. And that occasioned the marching into my life of new friends who all seemed to have taken to themselves a mission to help me know what I knew—if you know what I mean!—and to do so for me as a person. The first of these, actually, had nothing to do with the book, other than the providence of God: it was the tiny wild cedar waxwing, which grew back to flying health that summer of 2003 sitting on my shoulder. He wanted nothing more than to gaze at and be near my face. He wanted me always in his sight. He would fall asleep with his chest and bill gently touching my cheek. I learned that cedar waxwings are birds that dwell in groups. I was Bandit’s “group.” Bandit taught me that I may so gaze, even in my brokenness, at the life- and love-giving face of my Heavenly Father. 300

I termed this *noticing regard*... I felt immediately that in the gaze of my friends I was seeing the gaze of God... I felt that *this* was what the woman at the well in Samaria must have seen, in the face of Jesus, and what understandably lit her fire. His look of noticing regard conferred dignity. It was the noticing regard, not the naming of her sins... I felt as if the experience was retroactive, as well as indefinite in

duration. It transformed me and gave me, for the first time, a fledgling sense of personal beauty and *wholeness*. 301

What is more, for the first time in my life I began to think of God knowing me with specificity... I actually began to feel that God delighted in me... Noticing regard, as I experienced it palpably, was a transformative knowing by another. It was self-knowing by another. It was self-knowing engendered by the face of another. It somehow composed me as a being. I felt a sense of personal beauty. I connected it to seeing the face of God. It was a simultaneously self-knowing and God-knowing in reciprocity. And it changed me to invite the yet-to-be-known disarmingly. 301-302

[NOTE, earlier in the book: "It is interesting to note that the human child's first cognition is of the Other, not of him or herself." 228 Then in dialogue with Loder regarding the relationship between infant and mother: "The infant in the earliest months of life, in responding to the presence of a human face by giving a smile, seeks and finds in this interpersonal facial mirroring the primary organizer of the personality. He [Loder] calls this a nucleus of trust. The face, then, is the personal center that is innately sought by a child and the focus of the earliest sense of one's humanity. The smiling response focuses primal wholeness . . . the undifferentiated 'cosmos' of the child becomes personal and interpersonal, focusing on the face." 285-286]

Gordon Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, (Hendrickson Pub., 1994).

Peace. As with love, peace for Paul is especially associated with God and his relationship to his people. And as with love and joy, peace for Paul is particularly a community matter. That is, Paul's first concern with "peace" is not "the well-arranged heart"—although again, it is difficult to have "peace" in a community where God's people know little peace individually. But here peace occurs in a list of virtues deliberately juxtaposed to the "works of the flesh," eight of which describe the causes or results of human discord. 448-449

First of all then, as with love, God is often described as "the God of peace," (1 Thess 5:23; 2 Thess 3:16; 1 Cor 14:33; 2 Cor 13:11; Rom 15:33; 16:20; Phil 4:9), the God who dwells in total *shalom* (wholeness, well-being) and who gives such *shalom* to his people in their life together. What is striking is that in every instance this divine ascription occurs in contexts where there is strife or unrest close at hand. Thus the antidote to unruly charismata in the community is the theological note that God is a "God of peace" (1 Cor 14:33); or in a community where the unruly-idle live off the largess of others, Paul prays that the God of peace will give them peace at all times (2 Thess 3:16); or in a context where believers are warned against those who "cause divisions and put obstacles in your way," he assures them that the God of peace will bruise Satan under their feet shortly (Rom 16:20). 449

Not only so, but in Paul the mention of peace in this letters (apart from the standard salutation) usually occurs in community or relational settings. Christ is "our peace" who has made Jew and Gentile one people, one body (Eph 2:14-17), who are urged to "keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (4:3); similarly in the argument of Rom 14:1—15:13, Jew and Gentile together are urged to "make every effort to do what leads to peace" (14:19); or in the community paraenesis of Col 3:12-4:6, they are urged to "let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace." Given the present context, both 5:15 and the fact that these fruit of the Spirit sharply contrast the works of the flesh just described, it is difficult to imagine that such is not the first setting for

this fruit of the Spirit as well—not the only one, to be sure, since lists by their nature can carry a kind of independent existence apart from their first context. 449

Peace = *eirene* (Greek); *shalom* (Hebrew)

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Classical Greek: ***eirene***, peace denotes in profane Greek the antithesis to war, or the condition resulting from a cessation of war. Peace is the state of law and order which gives rise to the blessings of prosperity. 776

Old Testament: In the LXX ***eirene*** is almost invariably used to translate the Hebrew ***shalom*** which occurs more than 250 times in the OT... The well-being that comes from God is, however, regularly expressed by ***eirene***. In some 15 passages *eirene* corresponds to various other Hebrew words which embrace the general area of meaning of rest, safety, freedom from care and trustfulness; “have rest from” (1 Chr 4:40); “trust, security” (Job 11:18; Prov 3:23; Isa 14:30; Ezek 34:27; 38:8, 11, 14; 39:6, 26); “walk” (2 Sam 3:24); “understanding” (Isa 29:24); “clear” (Isa 32:4); “ease” (Prov 17:1). 777

Unlike the Greek ***eirene***, the Hebrew ***shalom*** is the opposite not so much of war as of any disturbance in the communal well-being of the nation, a disturbance which, of course, may in certain circumstances make it necessary to go to war (cf. 2 Sam 11:7). Hence in the LXX ***eirene*** too acquires the sense of general well-being, the source and giver of which is Yahweh alone... ***Shalom*** includes everything given by God in all areas of life. *Eirene*, therefore, coming as it does from God, approximates closely to the idea of salvation (cf. Ps 84:11). When God withdraws his peace, mourning must inevitably take its place (Jer 16:5). 777

Throughout the Hebrew OT, ***shalom*** covers well-being in the widest sense of the word (Jdg 19:20); “prosperity” (Ps 73:3), even in reference to the godless; “bodily health” (Isa 57:18; Ps 38:3); “contentedness,” on departure (Gen 26:29), on going to sleep (Ps 4:8), and at “death” (Gen 15:15 etc.); “good relations” between both nations and men (1 Ki 5:26; Jdg 4:17; 1 Chr 12:17, 18); “salvation” (Isa 43:7; Jer 29:11; cf. Isa 48:18; Ps 85:10). 777

The concept of peace is found at the climax of the blessing in Numbers 6:24 ff., where it sums up all the other blessings and where it is closely associated with the presence of Yahweh. The blessing is attributed to Moses who is commanded by Yahweh to transmit this blessing to Aaron and his sons as the form of blessing with which they are to bless Israel (Num 6:22 f.). “The LORD bless you and keep you: The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace” (Num 6:24 ff.). 777

J.I. Durham comments: “***shalom*** is the gift of God, and can be received only in his *presence*. But the use of *shalom* in the blessing also leads credence to the view that *shalom* serves as a cultic term and possesses a meaning from more comprehensive than the one usually given to it in the translations and by many commentators. For ***shalom*** in Num 6:24-126 is intended as a description of the man who is blessed (***barak***), guarded (***samar***) and treated graciously (***hanan***) and so ‘complete’... Durham contends that “***shalom*** is often indicative, in Old Testament usage, of a comprehensive kind of fulfilment or completion, indeed of a perfection in life and spirit which quite transcends any success which man alone, even under the best of circumstances, is able to attain.” 778

New Testament: eirene is found 91 times in the NT... Christ's farewell discourses in John (chapters 14-16; also chap. 20) contain the word 5 times, in each case denoting Christ's gift to his disciples (Jn 14:27; 16:33; 20:19, 21, 26). 780

It is not possible to trace any development of the idea of *eirene* within the NT. Both in form and content it stands firmly in the LXX and Hebrew OT tradition, though in addition the meanings set out under Classical Literature continue to make their influence felt. Thus, as in CL, peace is the opposite of war (Lk 14:32... In other words, the biblical concept of peace (from *shalom*) is primarily that of wholeness. This divinely-wrought reality exercises a mighty influence in the present world, though it still awaits final fulfilment. *Soteriologically* [having to do with salvation], peace is grounded in God's work of redemption. *Eschatologically* [relating to movement toward the final purpose of life] it is a sign of God's new creation which has already begun. *Teleologically* [the end game] it will be fully realized when the work of new creation is complete. 780

As opposed to disorder (*akatastasia*), peace is an order established by God as the God of peace (1 Cor 14:33; cf. also Rom 15:33; 16:20; Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 5:23; Heb 13:20). The wide-ranging scope of salvation is shown by the fact that peace is linked with love (*agape*) in 2 Cor 13:11; with grace (*charis*) especially in the introductions to the epistles. 780

Christ is the mediator of peace. He brings in the kingdom of God and is the bearer of reconciliation (Rom 5:1; Col 1:20; Lk 2:14 and 1:79, referring to the birth of Jesus and John respectively)... Indeed, he himself is peace (Eph 2:14-18), as is Yahweh in the OT. 781

Peace, in the sense of wholeness both for men and the world (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15), brings a newness to human relationships. Hence the injunction: Be at peace with one another (Mk 9:50; cf. 2 Cor 13:11, in association with "be of one mind") and with all men wherever possible and so far as it depends upon you (Rom 12:18). The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace (Rom 14:17) in the sense of establishing righteous harmony among men. The church is upbuilt in peace, and in the joy of the Holy Spirit (Rom 14:17, 19). The peace to which the church is called (1 Cor 7:15) is the gift of God; 1 Pet 1:2; Jude 2), who fills men with it (Rom 5:13). It is God who causes it to rule in the heart of men and so reign in the Christian community (Col 3:15), and manifest itself as the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). 781-782

Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, (Zondervan, 2012).

Colossians 3:15: *And let the peace of the Messiah, to which you were also called in one body, control your hearts. Be thankful.* In this verse, believers are being called to the peace of Christ in one body. There is an interesting interplay between the singular one body and plural your hearts. Evidently, each member of the body is to allow the peace of Christ reign for the sake of the one body; after all, peace among the many facilitates the unity that is in view in the wider context of this passage, as the previous verse expresses: *Above all, put on love—the perfect bond of unity* (3:14). As love forms a bond of unity, so too peace shapes the body. 287