

Biblical Theology of Shalom

That You May Experience Peace

Introduction

- Jesus says, ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.
- When Jesus met his disciples after his resurrection, he continues to say to them, “peace” (Jn 20:19, 21, 26)
- It’s obvious that the term “**peace**” is full of meaning under the circumstances
- What is this peace that Jesus gives us?
- In order to understand Jesus’ words, we must reflect on the many facets of the Hebrew term *shalom*, which lies behind the English term “peace”

SHALOM IN THE OT

- “The webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight is what the Hebrew prophets call *shalom*. In the Bible shalom means universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight—a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder at its Creator and Savior and opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom he delights. *Shalom*, in other words, is the way things ought to be” (Plantinga 1995, 12).

Shalom with God

- Fundamentally, *shalom* means reconciliation with God
- God can give us peace with himself:
- I will listen to what God the LORD says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants—but let them not turn to folly (Ps 85:8)
- Or, because of sin, he can take it away peace from us:
- ⁵ For this is what the LORD says: “Do not enter a house where there is a funeral meal; do not go to mourn or show sympathy, because I have withdrawn my blessing (*shalom*), my love and my pity from this people,” declares the Lord (Jer 16:5)
- Because Phinehas repented and turned away from sin, he and his family are given a “covenant of peace with” God (Num 25:12)

Shalom with Others

- *Shalom* also means peace with others, particularly the end of hostilities and war:
- ¹² If they refuse to make peace and they engage you in battle, lay siege to that city (Deut 20:12)
- Most importantly, *Shalom* refers to reconciliation to social relationships between individuals and people
- Jeremiah insists that unless there is an end to oppression, greed, and violence in social relationships, there can be no *shalom* (Jer 6:1-9, 14):
- They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace (Jer 6:14)

Shalom with(in) Oneself

- *Shalom* consists of not only outward peacefulness—between parties—but also **peace within**
- Those who trust in the Lord have inner security. Therefore, they can sleep well:
- In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, LORD, make me dwell in safety (Ps 4:8)
- God gives “perfect peace” (*shalom-shalom*)—i.e., profound psychological and emotional peace—to those who steadfastly set their minds on him:
- You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you (Isa 26:3)

Jesus: the Prince of Peace

- The prophets in the OT explain the invasions and exile—the loss of *shalom*—as a curse on Israel for breaking the covenant and as punishment for their disobedience:
- The fruit of that righteousness will be peace; its effect will be quietness and confidence forever (Isa 48:18; cf. Jer 14:13-16; Mic 3:4-5)
- But they also point to the coming of complete *shalom*, not only for Israel but also for the whole world:
- Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. ¹⁰I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the warhorses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim **peace** to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth (Zech 9:9-10; cf. Isa 11:1-9)

Jesus: the Prince of Peace

- Not only will God create *shalom* (Isa 45:7), but this gift will come through the work of the Messiah, the Prince of Peace:
- For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this (Isa 9:6-7)
- In other words, *shalom* will be the basic characteristic of the future kingdom of God, a time when God himself comes to heal all that is wrong with this world

Jesus: the Prince of Peace

- When the angels tell the shepherds about the birth of Jesus, they call him the one who will at last bring peace on earth:
- “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests” (Lu 2:14)
- For Paul, true peace is first of all **peace *with* God** through faith in Jesus:
- Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God (Rom 5:1-2)
- This is not experiential peace but position peace
- In Christ, we are declared righteous

Jesus: the Prince of Peace

- Jesus also brings us the **peace of God**—peace within
- The peace of God guards our hearts against anxiety, emotional difficulties, and sorrows:
- ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Phil 4:4-7)

Jesus: the Prince of Peace

- Finally, Jesus brings us peace *with* other humans
- Our peace with and from God gives us the resources to maintain unity and love with others through continual forgiveness and patience:
- ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. ¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful (Col 3:13-15)

Discipleship Pointers

- Theme of *shalom* can shape how believers think about our lives in this world. We are to be people of peace
- We are holistic beings. When the physical, mental, and emotional aspects of human existence are rightly related to each other, we experience joy and peace
- In Eden, Adam and Eve walked with God. All things were marked by *shalom*. Their bodies were healthy and their hearts were without sin. All their relationships were perfect because their relationship with God was perfect
- Because of sin, there are few forms of *shalom* in the world
- The resolution is to restore a relationship with God

Discipleship Pointers

- The most important thing we can do about the misery of this world is to say to others:
- ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:19-21)