

LIVING WATER

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PEACE OF THE SAINTS

by Jim Bedsworth

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints – Psalm 116:15

Recently, I had someone tell me their personal creed is to have peace between all the people they knew and cared about when they die. At that moment, or maybe in the moment, it sounded very wise and kind. The person who confided in me, admittedly, was very emotionally broken. Later, as I reflected, I wondered if it is even possible to have peace between everyone we know or care about. Paul wrote to the Romans, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (12:18). Paul instructed it, so it must be possible. But this person's personal creed was more like human philosophy.

The problem with human philosophy is that it comes up short. Its concern is with the cares of this world and many times ends at death. As with this personal creed, the goal ends on the death bed. If that's our target, we will not only come up short of our own expectation, but especially, God's expectation.

When target practicing, we have a saying, "aim small, miss small." Runners in a race are not taught to run to the finish line but to run through the finish line with all their might. Not saving the best for last but sprinters give all they have through the end. Leave it all on the field, as they say. Paul, by the inspiration of

the Holy Spirit, puts it this way to the Colossians in 3:2, "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth." By not doing so, even those of the Jews who believed in Jesus, would not confess Him because they feared the Pharisees (John 12:42-43).



Jesus is the "Prince of peace" who came (Isaiah 9:6) but even He was not at peace with all men when He died. He didn't die of "natural" causes. His enemies put Him to death. Was His goal, His personal creed, not to have anyone have ill will towards Him when He died? Don't be mistaken, we are, as much as depends on us, to live peaceably with all men. However, the shortsightedness of men and their philosophies may not allow that to happen. We must live beyond that. If Christ, or any of His apostles for that matter, lived so that everyone they came across were at peace with them, they would not have transcended the world. Christ would not have fulfilled His mission and could not have been the unblemished Lamb of God. To please men, they would have come up short with the message from God. They would not have taught what real love was.

Unfortunately, it's impossible to have peace between all men because all men have different standards of peace. Outside of Christ, there is no consistent standard of peace. Not only that, anything men have, resembling a standard, is always changing. This world's "morals" continue to deteriorate and move further away from God's ways. The world's standards of peace are inconsistent and conflicting.



There is a peace that is attainable, though. You won't achieve it by setting your expectations lower, however. In fact, true peace is set at a much higher standard and goes far beyond our deathbed. The way of peace is firm, consistent and surpasses all understanding. Christ offers the only attainable peace, but we must want it in order to receive it. We must want that peace to last way beyond our deathbed if we are to achieve it. True peace can only be found when setting our sights on things eternal. We hide our life in Christ so that when He appears, we also will appear with Him in glory (Colossians 3:3-4).

It is through Christ that we learn the virtues that will bring us the ultimate peace. These virtues will bring us peace with God, with ourselves and with many, but not all, men. Man's philosophies cannot bring us peace between all we know and care about and it certainly cannot bring us peace with God. Remember what God said through Isaiah, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Don't get caught aiming too low. Don't settle for the hollow peace of man. It will leave you short of the finish line. Raise your sights and aim for the peace that surpasses all understanding.

