

Living Peacefully In An Unstable World (2020 Focus) Pleasant Plains 7-5-2020 Nick Angel

- ***READ Romans 12:9-21*** If ever there was a text that gave extremely pointed and practical advice that would help all people to live together in harmony, it must be these verses given by the Apostle Paul. While he does get very specific in this text concerning what he expects from God's people, he does give a summary statement that is found in **v.18**, *"If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."* What a wonderful experience this life would be if this single verse was followed by all of us and those around us!
- However, we know that this is sadly not the reality of our lives. There seems to be a sense in which peace is becoming less and less common in our society, and I would chalk that up to the fact that we are living in a very divided time in history. People are divided on almost every issue imaginable, and it is no wonder why we can't be a peace with one another. This leads me to this question...why is it that we are so divided? Why can't we seem to get on the same page with other people on issues that often seem to be on the level of common sense? Why can't we recognize that it is wrong to hate people because of the color of their skin? Why can't we recognize that life is precious and ought to be protected at all cost, especially innocent and helpless lives like those in the womb?
- Why can't we all just agree on these basic truths and get along?? I am convinced this is the case because the very foundation of our society has become unstable. Basic principles that we have longed believed are simply understood are simply not being believed or understood. When this happens, why should we be surprised that we cannot live peacefully with those around us? Why should we be surprised that the continual unrest leads us to living lives when peace of mind and heart are hard to come by?
- However, let me suggest to you that those cracked foundations of society, though they be difficult and frustrating to deal with, do not render us incapable of living lives that are according to this text in **Romans 12:9-21** and the text that was read for us earlier from **Philippians 4:4-9**. We can and are expected to be a people who are able to live peacefully even in an unstable world that often leads us shaking and scratching our heads based upon what we see all around us.
- I want to begin by recognizing that the peace God expects us to live by can legitimately be threatened by the circumstances of the world we live in. We might think that as Christians we are superhuman and unable to be affected by the world we live in, but I would suggest that simply isn't the case. Therefore, I want to recognize that reality and then consider the 11th Psalm, a Psalm of David which I believe teaches us some important lessons concerning how we can continue to live peacefully in a world where the very foundations of it seem to be falling apart.

I. Instability in the very foundational principles of this world can cause God's people great concern & worry.

A. As Christians and followers of God, we believe that God created this world and established it on some very important principles that are to dictate how it operates.

1. I am of the belief that the world God created was expected to operate in a way that is congruent with God's very nature. As those who are image-bearers of God (**Genesis 1:27**), it is His expectation that we live in a world that is founded upon the same type of characteristics that make up who God Himself is.
2. For example, we read in **Psalm 89:14**, *"Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; faithful love and truth go before You."* I truly appreciate the rendering of that second portion by the NET, *"...loyal love and faithfulness characterize Your rule."* We must recognize from this text that the Lord's *modus operandi* or standard mode of operation is to carry Himself in a righteous, just, faithful loving, and true way. Therefore, it stands to reason logically and within my mind that the world He created, which is ruled by those who are to reflect His nature and character, would operate in a similar way.

B. Sadly as we look around us, we see these foundational principles being threatened or broken down and it can cause us legitimate concern.

1. The sad reality is that our world is ruled by seemingly everything but righteousness, justice, faithful love, and truth. Those foundational principles have been seen as either unwanted or unnecessary, and we are reaping the consequences of such as we look all around us and see the breakdown of the

family, religious teaching, law and order, and even basic kindness towards our fellow man. Worst off...I believe based upon what I have seen in certain circles over the past couple of weeks, the breakdown of these foundation principles has had a strong negative influence upon those who been called to be better in Jesus. Nothing has been more discouraging during the last month than to see brothers and sisters failing miserably to live at peace with even their own spiritual family.

2. Let me ask you...have you felt the affects of the neglect of these principles within our society? Are you physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually tired of continually seeing the manifested consequences of living in an unstable world that has broken down the very pillars that are to hold everything together? If you are tired in these ways like I am, then let's seek to reenergize one another this morning by looking at a situation within the life of David in which he faced similar issues and shares some thoughts that can help us to continue to live peacefully with one another and within our hearts, minds, and souls. We are called by God to rejoice always and live in peace (**Philippians 4:4-9**), let's allow David to get us back to the place where we are doing these things day in and day out.

II. David experienced such a situation in his life, and he shares his thoughts from it in Psalm 11.

A. The Circumstances Of Psalm 11

1. In a moment of trial, David is told to run away from the situation in order to find peace & safety. (vv.1-3)
 - a) The superscript, which is a part of the manuscripts of Scripture, attributes this Psalm to David. We have no reason to not believe these are the words of David, and in fact this would fit very well with a number of Psalms that are attributed to David that express great confidence and trust in the Lord as he is facing a great trial within his life. **Psalms 3, 17, 27, 40, & 62** are just a handful of examples of Psalms attributed to David that clearly show he was a man who had full confidence and trust in God. Additionally, the Psalm begins with the strong statement of, *"I have taken refuge in the Lord."*
 - b) But why would he need to clearly express this trust and confidence in God? Some of these Psalms of confidence and trust also give us a little insight into what David was going through that led him to penning these Psalms. **Psalm 3** is attributed to David as concerning his flight from his son Absalom's insurrection. A number of other Psalms are attributed to what David was feeling/thinking as he ran for his life from Saul. (**Psalms 34, 52, 59, & 63**)
 - c) However, this Psalm doesn't specify in any greater detail what David was going through. Some, perhaps many, have attributed the circumstances of this Psalm to one of those situations. The admonition to flee from those who sought to kill him and David's world being turned upside down would fit either of those situations. However, this Psalm doesn't portray David as being willing to run in this instance. He seems content on remaining wherever he is and toughing out the situation he was enduring.
2. Instead of running, David acknowledges God's awareness & power over the situation. (vv.4,5)
 - a) He was willing to do this because he fully acknowledged that even though his world was falling down around him...God continued to remain on His throne. The language of God being in His holy temple might be initially confusing since the temple was not yet built, but we must recognize that this language is given as a way to describe God being on His heavenly throne which is clarified in the next line. That throne that we saw in **Psalm 89** described as being founded upon righteousness, justice, faithful love, and truth is from where the Lord sits and looks out upon His creation.
 - b) David acknowledges that as the Lord does this, He is perfectly capable of seeing all of the unrighteous, hatred, and falsehoods that are defining society and the way it operates. Those who are living counter culturally and doing the will of God...He loves! But those who are wicked and love violence are said to be hated by God. That might sound abnormal for us to talk about the hatred of God since He is so often defined by love, but there is no way to escape the fact that this text tells us that God hates those who pollute the good world that He created He cannot stand them, and they will not prevail. God is fully aware!

3. David has full confidence that God will bring about justice for those who have been faithful to Him. (vv.6,7)

- a) Based upon God's awareness and the fact that His throne is founded upon justice, David's full confidence is in his belief that God is going to hold those who live wickedly accountable. The language of raining "*burning coals and sulfur*" surely take our minds back to the **Genesis 19** where God strikes down the cities Sodom and Gomorrah because "*The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is immense, and their sin is extremely serious.*" (**Genesis 18:20**) David's point seems to be that God will judge the evil doer of his day just as assuredly as He judged those wicked people of those wicked cities.
- b) On the flip-side, God will bless those who are upright and work righteous deeds. David says, "*The upright will see His face.*" This language is poetic language that is used to signify that those who are upright will experience blessings from God. In the context of our study, those blessings very well could and will be peace of mind and living as we seek to do what is right before the Lord. Though the very foundations are destroyed, David was fully confident that the Lord's blessings would continue to be upon him as he did what was right.

B. The Lessons We Learn

1. The righteous solution to the instability of this world is not to shrink away in fear or flee from this world.

- a) In a society such as the one we are currently living in, we might be tempted to simply shrink away from our faith and convictions simply because we don't want to experience the backlash that is likely to come when others find out that we are people of faith. It is not uncommon at all for religious people to be ridiculed as believing in the flying spaghetti monster, being bigoted, or having lower intelligence because we believe in God and live by faith in Him. The temptation is to shrink away from our faith and simply blend into the world so that people will not recognize us as having faith. If we do such a thing, then how are we doing anything but what Jesus warned against in **Matthew 10:33**? If we are not living by our faith then we are denying Christ, and He says He will deny us in turn. We cannot simply blend into society or shrink away in fear when the world around us is crumbling.
- b) Additionally, we cannot simply remove ourselves from this world in order to never experience people who are living against the will of God. Paul says in **1 Corinthians 5:10** that it isn't our job to completely remove ourselves from this world and the sinners within it. If we do so...then how are we to fulfill our charge to be lights in a dark world? (**Matthew 10:14-16**) We are not to either shrink away and blend in or completely remove ourselves from wherever it is we find ourselves. We are to be that bright light in the darkness around us... pointing the way for others to find Christ so they can have the peace that we possess.

2. God is well aware of what is taking place in this world, and He will hold each person accountable for their actions.

- a) Someone might respond, "*Nick, how can we be bright and shining when it seems that the focus of evil and wickedness have the upper hand? How can we speak for God when He isn't acting upon the wickedness that is all around?*" While I can understand this response, let me suggest that it assumes that God is not aware of what is going on or He is simply failing to respond. To begin with, recognize David's awareness of God knowing exactly what is going on. It can be so easy for us to think that God is so far removed from this world that He is either unaware or disinterested when bad things happen and His people suffer because of it. I don't believe that could be any further from the truth.
- b) It seems abundantly clear to me that God is fully aware of what is taking place as He sits on His throne, and He is capable and ready to render judgment when the time is right. You see, we often look at issues from a short-term perspective. "*How can God be allowing such wickedness to happen without Him punishing them?*" Firstly, this assumes that God is not using the wickedness to bring about a positive result. We know well from **James 1:2-4** that trials that test our faith, even the efforts of wicked people, can bring about a great result.

c) Additionally, we are assuming that the wicked doer is going to elude punishment. Friends, that simply isn't going to happen! God is ready to hold each person accountable for what he or she has done in this life. Texts such as **Ecclesiastes 12:14, II Corinthians 5:10, & Hebrews 9:27**. Though people might not experience judgement in this life...God is waiting to pronounce justice in the next. We must allow Him to have His rightful vengeance. **(Romans 12:19)**

3. We can live peacefully in knowing that God's promises remain firm even if the world is falling apart.

- a) This leads to the point of our lesson this morning. We can find ourselves so discouraged and flustered thinking that God isn't doing anything as all of the evil and wickedness around us seemingly continues to grow worse and worse. However, we must always remember that God's judgment doesn't work on our time. In fact, how are we so certain that this evil and wickedness isn't a part of God's plan for judgement at this time?
- b) We might respond with, *"But why would God's faithful people suffer judgement alongside wicked people?"* We need to recognize that God has never made a blanket promise that His people would be spared judgment in this life. The reality is that we very well will, and have seen God's people in Scripture, suffer judgment that is being rendered upon this world. The good news, however, is that though we might be caught up in some sort of judgment sent by God in some form or fashion...we don't have to worry about being condemned if we live upright and righteously before God!
- c) It is here where we find ourselves being able to live peacefully in an unstable world. Even if judgment is being rained down all around us...we are being kept safely in the loving embrace of our God. Even if we are constantly being assaulted for our faith...God is there to heal us. No matter what the enemy throws at us we have a God who loves us, gave His Son to prove His love for us, and who will keep us through to the very end. **(Romans 8:31-39)**

Even today, we very well might find ourselves feeling as if we are in the very same position of David. Society seems to be hanging on by a thread, basic decency has been abandoned, and all hope seems as if it is lost. While the evil one would love for us to give up and give in, David reminds us that God is still in control, He sees what is going on, and in His right time He will bring true judgment of condemnation upon the evil doers. Our job is simply to shine His light as best we can and be helped in doing so by coming to possess the peace of God that surpasses all understanding. We can leave at peace with others and within ourselves by trusting in the Lord and embracing His great promises for us. As we feel the pressure of this difficult world pressing in all around us this week, may these verses be recalled, may we pray and trust, and may we experience true peace in this unstable world.

*"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. **And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.**"* (Philippians 4:4-7)