

With An Expected End in Mind

It was a low point for Abraham, perhaps the lowest. The 'father of faith' was despairing. You see, he had heard the voice of the Lord while living in Ur – a place where the moon god (now known as Allah) was worshipped. But, the true and living God had spoken to him, telling him to 'forsake all', to leave his home and family and to travel to an unknown place.

Well, Abraham, then called Abram, obeyed; at least he left. He took some family along though and at first, they journeyed as far as Haran, about 600 miles to the northwest along the 'fertile crescent'. Some years later, after his father died, the Lord once again called him to travel onward to the land that he would inherit. And again, he pulled up stakes along with his wife, nephew and their entourage, caravanning to the modern day land of Israel.

Now, you're all familiar with the life of Abraham – you recall his journey into Egypt, his accumulation of great wealth, his longing for an heir, his courage, his fears, his deceptions, his integrity and ultimately, his love for God. But do you know that he came to a crisis of faith? - a point of real despair? He lost his peace and was wavering.

God had appeared and/or spoken to him personally several times (Gen 12:2,3,7; 13:14-17). With great valor, he'd rescued Lot from an army of four kings with just his 318 servants (Gen 14). After this, He had been blessed by

Melchizedek, who was a type or manifestation of Christ. Talk about spiritual 'highs'!

But then the 'bottom fell out.' This man of faith was not yet a man of abiding inward peace. And the two are inextricably linked.

Abram feared greatly. We know this because right after these things, God spoke to him in a vision, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield..."

Abram despaired and complained. The Lord said, "...[I am] your exceeding great reward." To which Abram replied, "...Lord, GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless..." In other words, 'I don't get it, Lord. I've followed and served you, and what good has it done me? No family, no kids, I'm a hunted man...probably...here I am alone in this place and I've just made some long term enemies...I don't get it. What good would it do to receive anything from You? I don't have anyone to pass it on to anyway."

"Look, You've given me no offspring..." he said.

And, save Christ, this is the condition of every heart among those on earth who truly follow the Lord, at some time or times. That's because the Lord, Who knows all and ultimately guides those who seek to follow Him, also allows some incredibly difficult things to transpire in their lives.

At this point, the Lord, unperturbed by Abram's perturbations, gave him what we now call the Abrahamic covenant. First, He declared that He would make his descendants as numerous as the stars in the heavens and

then, that He would give to him, and his descendants the entire land around him.

After unilaterally guaranteeing this by 'cutting covenant' with Abram, God declared that he would go to his fathers "**in peace.**" And this is my principle point – His peace became his peace.

This word, "peace" is not understood well at all. That's because it is not of this world. And yet, it is what our hearts cry out for every moment of our earthly existence. In the Hebrew, it literally means, 'to be safe' and directly implies 'to be sound or well', 'to be content or happy' and my favorite, 'to be complete.' In the Greek, it means, 'to be joined or at one.'

Now, these last days in which we live are so evil, some would say treacherous, that you can just 'smell the flame,' you can almost sense 'the heat,' so to speak. Paul the apostle wrote, "*But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God...*" (2Tim3:1-5a) and this is speaking of those who wear a 'mask' of godliness if you would. How much worse the unabashed unbelieving world!

Evil times indeed.

But the Bible positions God's peace as being opposite of evil – "*I form the light, and create*

*darkness: I make **peace**, and create evil: I the LORD do all these [things]."* (Isa 45:7) and, "*And the work of righteousness shall be **peace**...*" (Isa 32:17a) and that is why He says, "*[There is] no **peace**, says the LORD, unto the wicked.* (Isa 48:22). In this day, real peace is increasingly rare.

In contrast, we who look to Jesus in sincerity have a grand promise, "*You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You because he trusts in You.*" (Isa 26:3) (BTW, for you Bible students, "perfect peace" here is really "peace peace" in the Hebrew – an amplified peace. This is the peace in the midst of the storm so to speak.)

You might say, this quality of soul is what was lost in Eden and what was made recoverable at Calvary. It is also a principle characteristic of God's thoughts toward you. He says, "*For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of **peace**, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.*" (Jer 29:11) The NKJV says, "*to give you a future and a hope.*"

This security, this soundness, this contentedness and completeness, this unity with God is found powerfully and uniquely in Christ. Jesus said to His disciples, "**Peace** I leave with you, my **peace** I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John 14:27) and, "*These things I have spoken to you, that in me you might have **peace**. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*" (John 16:33)

So God blessed Abraham **exceedingly** when He promised him that he would go to his fathers in

peace. What He was saying was, 'You're will go into the next life in safety, in security, in soundness, in completeness and perfectly content.' Wow!

How can you die and yet be perfectly sound? How can you leave loved ones behind and yet be perfectly complete? How can you be absolutely content when your body fails?

The peace of God.

The first century church in Thessalonica lost their peace also. They were looking for the appearing of Christ, trusting in the promise that when Christ appeared, He'd snatch 'em up. Then deceitful teachers came and told them that, "Oops, you missed it. Christ came and left, and you got left behind." (2Thes 2) Well, Paul set them straight with an awesome epistle and then concluded with these words, "*Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way.*" (2Thes 3:16)

Believers of all ages have, upon occasion, lost their peace. That's one reason the Lord says, "...*seek peace and pursue it.*" (Psa 34:14) In fact, although God is known in scripture as the God of truth, of love, of knowledge, of glory, of mercy, of justice, of grace, of hope, of all comfort, of patience and of my strength, He is referred to most often in character as the God of peace.

So how do you secure such peace, especially in times of turmoil, grief or fear?

There was a radio announcer who I liked listening to while driving cross country, Paul Harvey. He's still on the air, and his trademark was

always to give you a few details of some story and temporarily leave you hanging. You always knew more was to come and sure enough, after his ads were over, he'd tell you the conclusion of the matter which was inevitably quite interesting and often uplifting. Anyway, he'd always finish with, "And now you know the rest of the story."

And that's what the Lord does too, sort of. You see, just as with Abraham and the Thessalonian believers, He's told us the rest of the story. Jesus is indeed coming again and soon. He will reign on earth and we will live forever with Him in wonderful peace – heavenly peace. Don't get images of harps and clouds – rather remember we're talking of perfect security, soundness, well-being, an awesome sense of completeness and unity with our Maker.

That's where you'll find your peace – when you know Him and believe Him, when you know that despite desperate or discouraging circumstances, the end of the story is coming and it's perfect. He will make all things right whether you can imagine it now or not.

In these last days, men's hearts will fail them for fear of things that are coming upon the earth. But you can rest. The 'end of the story' is only the beginning of a grand existence that is too exciting, too wonderful, too fun, too joyful, too engaging, too ... huge to describe. As for now, don't 'hold your peace', hold His and tell everyone about it.

"Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, says the LORD..." (Isa 57:19) Shalom!