

“Peace from the Inside Out”
Sunday April 26, 2009
By Pastor Edward J. Thomas Jr.

Because of some work being done on the floors in the church building at our world headquarters, service was held outdoors this morning. Pastor Thomas started by reminding us that only one thing will bring comfort, and it is not familiarity. It's God's presence.

Isaiah 9:6

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

The prophet Isaiah told us that God was going to bring a new way of governing. Everything would rest on the shoulders of the messiah that was going to come. Things would not be familiar, or even status quo. Change was coming. Before Jesus was born, everything was run according to the laws of the Old Testament. There were rules and regulations set in place that governed the lives of those who followed God, but things are totally different now. Jesus has raised from the dead. Now, we are governed by our relationship with a personal savior.

Pastor Thomas reminded us that while we are part of an organization with rules and regulations, our Christianity does not depend on them. They are there to support our relationship with God, not replace it. We can't follow all the guidelines set forth by an organization and expect it to save us. Instead, every Christian's personal relationship with God is what they have to depend on.

Jeremiah 32:37-41

37. Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely:

38. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God:

39. And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them:

40. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.

41. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.

Hebrews 8:8-13

8. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

9. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

10. For this [is] the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:
11. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.
12. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.
13. In that he saith, A new [covenant], he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old [is] ready to vanish away.

God's law is not about rules and regulations any more. We are living by a new covenant. Today, God's law is about his will being shown through his love in our lives. Jesus was sent to Earth to die for our sins and create a chance for us to have a relationship with him. Because of that amazing sacrifice, we have the chance to be governed by love. When we accept Jesus, his love starts to change the way we see things. It changes the way we act, the way we think and the things we say.

God's love for us is constant. In fact, the Bible teaches us in Hebrews 13:8 that Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is the only thing that won't change. Everything else is up in the air. When we learn and embrace this, it is easy to put Christ at the core of everything we do.

God is giving a chance to the common man. There is no background check in order to qualify for God's kingdom. It is free to anyone who accepts it. When we look at scripture and see that Jesus went to Calvary for our redemption, it was not just for those that were good enough. It was not for those that were qualified, or elite. It was for everyone! No one was left out of the option to accept his peace.

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

When God rules there is peace, and it cannot come by force. By choosing to have God run our life, we invite peace in. Our relationship with Christ brings it naturally. The life we live once we accept Him is completely new. We are not what we once were. Pastor Thomas pointed out that we are a church with very varied backgrounds. In Christian Fellowship Ministries International, we know men and women who have come to Jesus and been delivered from lives of drug abuse, alcoholism, years of anger and depression, and all kinds of pain. Once Jesus is the focus of our lives, we have his peace radiating from the center of our life, no matter what we were before. Then, no matter what comes at us in life, we can face it with peace.

There is an old saying that goes, "you can paint an old barn, but when you're done it's still old". Sometimes we fall into the trap of thinking that if we put on our Sunday best and come to church every week, that is enough. But to have true peace, a change has to

take place from the inside out. It has to be a shift in the way we see life, and what we rely on.

A surface makeover will not provide peace. Only a deep personal relationship with God can do that. That peace will come from knowing that even if we don't like what comes our way in day-to-day life, we can and must rely on God. There is nothing we can do to change circumstances, but we can trust God. That is when we will start to experience real peace. People will start to see it in our actions and the love we show. This peace will be a reflection of God in us (just like the early church started to be called Christians in Antioch because people could see God's love showed in the way they treated each other).

Romans 8:1-14

1. [There is] therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.
2. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.
3. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:
4. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.
5. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.
6. For to be carnally minded [is] death; but to be spiritually minded [is] life and peace.
7. Because the carnal mind [is] enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.
8. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.
9. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.
10. And if Christ [be] in you, the body [is] dead because of sin; but the Spirit [is] life because of righteousness.
11. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.
12. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.
13. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.
14. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

We can only find true peace, joy, and hope when we totally surrender to God and his will in our lives.

Galatians 2:20

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Pastor Thomas asked the question: "How do we get to the point where God has the kind of control in our lives where we want to do what he wants us to instead of what we want

to do ourselves?” The answer is that we cannot allow outside forces to dictate our emotions. If we do, our thoughts will be wrong because they are swayed by emotion. If our thoughts are wrong, our actions will follow. Instead the circle can be centered around God, and peace can begin to radiate from the center of our lives out. If we rely on God as the center of our life, God will keep our emotions, thoughts and actions all in line with his will. This is a great source of a confidence. David said in Psalms 23 that he had no fear even in the shadow of death because he knew God was with him.

We can have this confidence through God too. How? There are several things we can do to start experiencing this kind of peace and confidence.

1. Realize we are sinners saved by grace.
2. Accept that we need God in every part of our life
3. Communicating with God through prayer
4. Start speaking positively

Romans 12:2

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what [is] that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Pastor Thomas left us with the thought that nothing good comes easy. Accepting the kind of peace and hope that Jesus offers is not necessarily easy, but it is worth it. We have to know the truth, live in faith according to that truth, and allow our emotions to be a product of the trust we have in God. Putting God at the center of our lives will allow us a freedom, confidence, and peace that is unlike anything we've ever known.

Psalms 29:11

The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace.

Psalms 119: 165

Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

Isaiah 26:3

Thou wilt keep [him] in perfect peace, [whose] mind [is] stayed [on thee]: because he trusteth in thee.