

Peace Like a River
By Martin Cisneros

Peace like a river is only possible when you refuse to build any dams between yourself and Christ. I'm not talking about in a way where you're becoming "lost," but thoughts create bridges to reach certain conclusions and possibilities in life, they build dams to cut off the flow of things -- often things we're not wanting to cut the flow of.

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:6-9 NKJV)

When you guard your mind with the Word of God, it is the fruit of the spirit known as "peace" that you're utilizing. God has peace that surpasses all understanding. It's not just peace that He brings that surpasses all understanding, but He has peace that surpasses all understanding because He fully believes that Jesus Christ is the ransom for all of Creation. Peace is a deliberate stand that you take, expecting that in your communion with Christ Jesus over the Bread and the Cup that He'll clothe you in His peace and joy.

Peace is something that you do, like patience, where praying for it is really pretty futile. The Word of God will strengthen your decisions for peace, patience, and self control, but you have to feed on it's rich treasures and act according to the profile of the prosperous believer that it paints for you within it's pages. Simply living like the New Testament is 100% true is what many people in the Word of Faith camp have gotten in trouble with other believers for. But either the New Testament is 100% true for every area of life, or we're left in the camp of the moral relativist that tries to decide which parts of the New Testament are true, which are fabrication, and which don't matter much any more.

A stand of faith and a stand of peace is a stand in the absolute truth of every line of the New Testament. Until you accept the New Testament as being strictly true not only in it's warnings and denouncements of ungodliness and covetousness, but also in it's promises for an abundant life in every area of life that's fully submitted to Jesus Christ, then peace will continue to allude you.

Peace like a river is only possible when you refuse to build any dams between yourself and Christ. I'm not talking about in a way where you're becoming "lost," but thoughts create bridges to reach certain conclusions and possibilities in life, they build dams to cut off the flow of things -- often things we're not wanting to cut the flow of.

"Nobody cares;

nobody's there for me;

nobody understands;

the ones that say they care and that they're there for me usually have their own reasons for why that's not really true or is only true up to a point or until I really need them;

yada, yada, yada, yada,"

then I know that my thanksgiving is running pretty low, that I'm listening to the lies of the devil, that I've lacked diligence in militantly casting all of my cares upon Him, and that I'm needing some serious Word, Bread, and Cup time.

When your cares are really cast upon Him -- which is a hard day's work until you've thoroughly retrained your spirit, your mind, and your mouth to keep all of those cares cast upon Him and to violently refuse to bare them -- but when they're really cast upon Him, then loneliness is surprisingly absent, from a guy's perspective there are no unmet "needs" whether you're married or not, you're not hungry all of the time, and you reclaim all of that energy that you forfeit when you've [by default through a lack of diligence] decided to carry every care that rightfully belongs cast upon the Lord.

When your cares aren't watchfully being kept on the Lord instead of on your own shoulders, then your preoccupation with your own thoughts and your cares creates being hungry all day long, being emotionally and sexually needy all day long, fretting over never having enough, and you're preoccupied by either the lack of depth in your relationships or the lack of relationships in your life.

When you're first starting to diligently keep every care cast upon Him, that's an honest hard day's work at first. But you really reclaim yourself and your relationship with God in a way that you won't any other way. You're going to spend the time and you're either going to be reclaiming your energies by not making them bare a multitude of burdens or you're going to continually be forfeiting your own soul moment by moment. You've just got to get mean about keeping every care cast upon Him. Under the New Covenant, in some ways, 1Peter 5:6-7 is the greatest commandment. Because think about it: if you're preoccupied with yourself, your emotions, what's not going on in your life, or what's not happening quickly enough for you in your life, etc., then do you really have the energy and the inspiration to love God with everything that you've got and to love your neighbor as much as Jesus has loved them? Under the New Covenant, we're not obligated to love one another as we love ourselves. Jesus told us to love as He loved us. That's higher, deeper, richer, and more powerful and takes you out of the realm of fretting over whether you're loving yourself enough which is total nonsense and not the perspective, priority, and commission of the New Testament.

Every care has got to be kept cast upon Him if you're even going to be able to think straight with all of the distractions that we're all facing day and night. There is no soundness of mind without keeping every care cast upon Him. Jesus lived with every care of His cast upon the Father, otherwise His "sermon on the mount" would have gotten Him busted by the devil in an area of hypocrisy. No thoughts for tomorrow, beyond what you can honestly do something about today/tonight. If you know that you're scheduled for work, then obviously you need clean clothes and anything else that's obvious to you that you'd need to keep that commitment. But no more warfare in your life in areas where there are no spoils, ok? If there's nothing to be gained, then don't let anyone pull you into the argument.

Every care has to be cast upon Him, including all of the ones about personal reputation. Keep every other care cast upon Him. Nothing else matters but obedience to that. When every burden is genuinely off of your shoulders, then and then alone resume with the rest of your life. Loving God is easier when you're carefree. Fasting and praying for enemies as well as for Christians that don't understand you or that you don't understand becomes easier when you're not at the point of nearly slapping someone.

Every care. You're not entitled to a single one of them and then to claim that you're obeying your heavenly Father. This is where the rubber meets the road and this is something that I've had to get really mean with myself about over the last year and a half. I usually believe God for my words for the new year usually around October/November and do anything that I feel lead of the Lord to do where fasting, worshiping, and thanking God is concerned until I've got the assurance that in the coming year

that it won't be me that speaks but the Spirit of my heavenly Father speaking through me. As many of you might remember, June/July of 2007 the Lord told me to do something else and I had to start believing God RIGHT THEN for my words for the following 3 years from then. I posted a prayer request along those lines, per the leading of the Lord, and this was a subject He started pouncing on me about within hours of having posted that prayer request.

Those of you that have even any remote fleeting wish that you'd experience more of the leading of the Lord to where you genuinely knew that it was Him, this is one of the most important "keys of the kingdom" where that's concerned. Every care has to be cast upon Him and firmly held there with your faith. Again, this doesn't mean do nothing practical about upcoming plans and agreements that you have with others that at certain times and on certain days you'll be somewhere. I'm not talking about that at all. You do all you can along those lines without worry, fear, and anxiety and give God every single worry, anxiety; every ounce of fretting; every thought of "what am I going to do?" and if you've publicly embraced and confessed His Lordship over your life (Romans 10:9-13) then relax and realize that the Greater One is on the inside of you and you're going to have the answers that you need for those situations that you're facing as long as it's His care throughout and not yours.

Ever cried out to God in the midst of tragedy while you were a basket case about all that was going on, and felt like you were talking to the ceiling and not much else? Not a pleasant place to be in, right?

You were two yards/meters buried under your cares and not inhabiting the land of the living where what the Holy Spirit would have told you would register on your thick head/ears/heart. It's not Heaven or Hell as so many have preached. It's God or baring all of those burdens yourself and unwittingly/unknowingly trying to be your own God in doing so. If you're sick and tired of being sick and tired in any area of your life, then all of those cares have got to go. They're a major roadblock to the clarity of conscience and mind to know what to do. Buddhists and Hindus have gotten it wrong about inheriting the level they want by trying to strip themselves of desires and of self. That's not how you attain anything. It's not by deadening yourself, but by presenting yourself to God as alive from the dead and your members as instruments of righteousness, according to Romans 6. You've got to give it all to Him, relax, and thank Him super excessively that no matter what it is, He'll take care of it.

He cares for you and wants to exalt you over every situation you face in life, but 1Peter 5:6-7 gives the key. Father God must carry your cross daily! Not you. Him. Turn loose of it and give it all to Him right now. Don't take any more excuses from your emotions or from anything else in your life. None of 'em are reasons for having a single care in the world. Let Father God carry your cross daily and you just follow Him through Jesus Christ. God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. In 1Peter 5 the proud are those that are carrying the cares of their life on their own shoulders. Ever noticed His resistance while you're doing that? It's not in your head. 1Peter 5 promises it. 1Peter 5 calls the humble those that give it all to Him and make Him the General Manager of their universe.

There's a difference between what should have been translated as reverential awe or respect for God (perhaps "fear" included that idea in 1611), and terror, fear, apprehension, anxiety, dread, etc., which are all under the curse and according to the book of Revelation is put in the same category as sorcerers and adulterers that have their part in the Lake of Fire and Brimstone which is the Second Death. We're told to meditate in the Word of God day and night so that we'll see how to do all that's written in there and then we'll make our way prosperous and have good success (Joshua 1:8). That is our "fear," or reverence; to put Him first by putting His Word first place in our mouths, our minds, our bodies, etc.

Putting God's Written Word as first priority and as final authority is the Scriptural definition of having the fear of the Lord. It says that those that keep His Word in this way have the love of God perfected in

them, according to 1John 2:5. And 1John 4 says that perfected love CASTS OUT fear because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. Fear is an enemy. The Bible says at least 60 times to "fear not." The KJV and translations that by their own admission follow in it's traditions says to not fear those that can destroy the body, but to fear him that can destroy both body and soul in Gehenna. Unfortunately, they capitalize the "h" in the word "him" to give the wrong idea, when Jesus was saying to be leery of false teachers, and in context He was saying to be leery of the Pharisees of His day. Exercising good judgment about not getting too close to a rattle snake doesn't require for you to have fright in your heart.

Running from adultery as Joseph did in the book of Genesis and as we're all told to in Proverbs doesn't mean having to be frightened. It just means putting God first place in word, thought, and action. Your heart will always go in the direction of your most dominant words, according to Jesus in Matthew chapters 12 and 13 when He said that a good man out of the good treasure of his heart produces good things, while the evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart produces evil things because out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Jesus said in John 8 that if you'd continue in His Word in the way that He was continuing in the Word of the Father, then you'd know the same truth that He knew that kept Him walking in the light of life and you'd be just as free as He is. Jesus later applied that to the words of the Apostles and said that if they've continued in My Words then they'll continue in yours as well.

So, the whole New Testament, particularly from the perspective of all that we're redeemed from by His sufferings is the truth that we're to continue in that keeps all fear cast out of our hearts, torment out of our lives, and perfected love operating in all of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Romans 13:8 says to owe no man anything but to love him. The Amplified Bible translates that as to stay out of debt. That would be the reverential awe of the Lord in pursuing His grace because He that was rich became poor at the Cross that we through His poverty would be made rich. We become partakers in the fellowship of His sufferings by being conformed to all that He purchased with His sufferings. Our part of His sufferings is our deliverance. And we partake of His sufferings through the Bread and Cup and not through becoming a rug for the devil and the circumstances of life when our life is hid with Christ in God.

When the time had fully come, God chose to reveal His Son in our hearts, according to Galatians 1. His Son is not in defeat and cowering before His Father. Whether we sin or whether we don't sin, we run to the Father and He runs towards us and catches us and loves on us. The Scriptural way to fear the Father is by obeying the Written Word and what the Holy Spirit tells you to do in your heart. The Scriptural fear of the Lord isn't hiding in the bathroom with a bunch of fig leaves on you thinking that He's about to beat you bloody and senseless because you listened to the serpent and did eat what you shouldn't have. Jesus cursed that fig tree because He doesn't want us ever wearing those leaves of fear and shame before God ever again!

God trusts Jesus to bring you across the finished line. God believes in the Blood of Christ, that Jesus was raised from the dead, that Jesus sits at His right hand, and that all of Jesus' enemies will be made His footstool. Jesus is the Head and you're the Body of Christ. If Jesus' enemies are being made His footstool, guess where the feet are! God believes that Jesus is the Lord of your life, that His Blood has taken away your sin, and that His Word and Holy Spirit are at work in your heart. God sees Jesus in you. God sees Jesus Present in you. God sees Jesus active in you.

God sees His New Creation within you. God sees His Word growing in you. God sees more courage in you than you think that you have, because He sees Jesus inside of you. God still believes in all that

Jesus is doing inside of you. God sees you perfected in Christ and at rest in His completed work. God doesn't doubt for a minute in your ability to hear His Voice. God loves you. He sees the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness within you. An angel is very reverently polishing your scepter right now.

God loves you as if you were the only one that Jesus had ever had to die for. God loves you as if you were His only child in all of existence. God loves you as if there were no Jesus. Don't ever think in any of your weaker moments that God, your Father, only "puts up with you" because of Jesus. God loves you as if it were only you and Him in the entire universe or multiverse.

I hope that you realize that in saying this that I'm not dismissing redemption, it's process, it's history, and it's outcome. Neither am I in any way ever claiming that there's ever been or ever would be a Way to the Father except through Jesus. I'm just saying, as the prophet of God said so long ago to his servant, "there's [a lot] more with you than against you!" There's more at work in your favor than you can possibly imagine.

God loves and adores you. He's your Father and He's never going to let go. He's not only never going to let go of you, but He's never going to let go of your loved ones; of your situation and of theirs. God is intimately aware of each of your bills. If you're ill, God's intimately aware of each of your symptoms. God's going to pay the bills and heal your body. Don't worry about it any longer. Any of it. He loves you and through Christ you've found a ransom for your life...God's aware of every strained relationship and Christ's Blood is [redemptively] Bleeding on the whole situation. Trust Him to make all things new. Trust Him to wipe away your every tear. Don't be afraid.

12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;

13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (Colossians 3:12-17 NKJV)

Putting on love as the bond of perfection and letting the peace of God rule in your hearts is only going to be accomplished to the degree that the Word of Christ dwells richly in your heart and to the degree that from that you're saying and doing everything that you're saying and doing in the Name of Jesus. This short passage of Scripture mentions being thankful twice. That's not without significance. Giving thanks for the finished work of Christ and your stand of faith for your deliverance as the necessary consequence of His shed Blood and broken Body goes a long way towards your putting on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another.

You're either nursing and rehearsing the curse that's trying to work it's way into your life, or you're actively participating in the redemptive processes of the New Testament towards seeing the application of the Blood of Christ to every relationship that you have, to everything that you own, and to every purpose of God for your life. You'll not deal in both bitter and sweet water at the same time. Either

your tongue is set on fire of Gehenna or your tongue is set on fire from the Holy Spirit. At absolutely all times you're either a part of the problem or a part of the solution. For every situation that you can think of, and for every person that you can think of, if you're seated with Christ in heavenly places, then you're either a part of the problem or a part of the solution. What you curse, you will not inherit a blessing from or regarding.

The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is His faithfulness! (Lamentations 3:22-23 NASB)

For I will not contend forever, nor will I always be angry; for the spirit would grow faint before Me, and the breath of those whom I have made. (Isaiah 57:16 NASB)

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. (1Corinthians 15:22 NIV)

Here's a radical thought: embracing the Lordship of Jesus is about embracing life and not about embracing death. Passing through death in order to attain life is nothing more than passing from whom you've been into living life in and through and with Jesus Christ. Jesus' yoke is easy and His burden is light! (Matthew 11:30)

Do you come from a religious background that makes the Christian life an intolerable ongoing process of death? While there are further and further levels of life that are there for the taking, the embracing, the inheriting, and the becoming, yet it's a process of going from life to life and peace to peace and joy to joy and not an ongoing gory abhorrence to all flesh, like something dreadful out of the movie "Stigmata."

As you have therefore received Christ, [even] Jesus the Lord, [so] walk (regulate your lives and conduct yourselves) in union with and conformity to Him. Have the roots [of your being] firmly and deeply planted [in Him, fixed and founded in Him], being continually built up in Him, becoming increasingly more confirmed and established in the faith, just as you were taught, and abounding and overflowing in it with thanksgiving. (Colossians 2:6-7 Amp)

The Bible teaches a growing process of sinking your roots deeper into Christ and into your new life through thanksgiving, and through embracing the infinite grace of God that is already abounding towards you. And you grow in this thanksgiving and in the consciousness and experience of His grace through knowing and growing in obedience to His Covenant of grace. Your knowledge and growth in obedience to His Covenant of grace grows in your heart through spending quality time in His Word so that you are progressively yielding up your life to His Word and His Holy Spirit more and more fully throughout the rest of your life.

You ought to get your Bible and find the book of Colossians in the table of contents and from there turn to the book of Colossians and read verses 12 through 17 in the third chapter again and again and again. That outlines for you the extent of your responsibilities throughout your whole life as a Christian. And that is your success formula for everything that ever has or ever will be important to you as you pursue your life in Christ:

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in

one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (Colossians 3:12-17 NKJV)

You ought to read Colossians 3:12-17 out loud for at least 30 to 45 minutes a day for one to three months, or until it starts sinking in that the Christian life is a romantic joy and a journey as well as a continual act of self sacrifice. Too many Christians seem to focus on the self sacrificial part to the everlasting exclusion of living an easy going, carefree life.

Don't worry about anything, but pray about everything. With thankful hearts offer up your prayers and requests to God. Then, because you belong to Christ Jesus, God will bless you with peace that no one can completely understand. And this peace will control the way you think and feel. Finally, my friends, keep your minds on whatever is true, pure, right, holy, friendly, and proper. Don't ever stop thinking about what is truly worthwhile and worthy of praise. You know the teachings I gave you, and you know what you heard me say and saw me do. So follow my example. And God, who gives peace, will be with you. (Philippians 4:6-9 Contemporary English Version)

You can be true, pure, right, holy, friendly, and proper. Holiness and friendliness are not opposites! Your heart is your garden. And it is your responsibility to cram the Gospel of Christ into it, so that eventually all your words, your deeds, and your presence are reflecting [little more than] the Words, Deeds, and Presence of Christ. The Gospel, in its pure form as found in the Bible, will never produce legalism. The Gospel, as contained in the Scriptures, can never produce religious and political venom. Christians have often slipped into traditions that have brought venom into the local fellowship of believers, and consequently to the society at large. Because the Bible says to be holy, then interpretations have been layered to texts that required all kinds of legalistic applications that dried up the fountain of any genuine Gospel being treasured in the hearts, mouths, and minds of believers. And then it became a matter of looking religiously acceptable and focusing on appeasing and maintaining and spreading traditions that had no reflection of the life of Christ and no positive consequences on the genuine flow of life between and from believers.

Tread softly on applications of Scripture and be teachable your whole life long in how to express the Biblical truths of Redemption through Christ. Don't just stay flexible when it comes to new methods of bringing others to Christ. But stay flexible regarding how you pursue the application of every truth. The specific concepts in the Bible of our redemption never change. But none of us fully understands all that there is to be understood of the full depth of all that Christ has accomplished, will accomplish, and will yet express Himself through each of us from generation to generation. Again:

As you have therefore received Christ, [even] Jesus the Lord, [so] walk (regulate your lives and conduct yourselves) in union with and conformity to Him. Have the roots [of your being] firmly and deeply planted [in Him, fixed and founded in Him], being continually built up in Him, becoming increasingly more confirmed and established in the faith, just as you were taught, and abounding and overflowing in it with thanksgiving. (Colossians 2:6-7 Amp)

If you'll do these things then Jesus' yoke being easy and His burden being light will not only clarify more and more to your understanding and how you express Christ to others, but you'll start to experience it. And as you begin to experience it, then you'll find yourself, one day, truly enjoying newness of life!