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**United
Prayer
Ministry**

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Spring 2002



Evelyn celebrates her 80th birthday at a UPM board meeting and luncheon. Marlene Lee, board member and hostess, pins on Evelyn's corsage.

ARE YOU PRAYING FOR PEACE?

By Evelyn Christenson

When I wrote the last newsletter to you entitled "Today's War on Planet Earth" it was sitting in the post office in mailbags when the terrorist planes hit New York's Twin Towers and the Pentagon. Many felt the timing was eerie, and some even said it seemed almost prophetic. Since that September 11, 2001 attack, people of every kind have been desperately seeking peace in our country. Our own country was under siege!

Amazingly, prayer suddenly became politically correct, even sought after by our leaders as they thanked us publicly for praying. Our President unashamedly asked us to pray and then repeatedly thanked people for praying. At the Houston, Texas, Global Celebration of Women, soon after September 11th, of the women representatives from 156 countries, 1500 came to my prayer seminar. But instead of just praying for their own countries' desperate need of peace, in one accord they prayed, wept and a few from ravaged countries wailed as they actually beat their breasts – praying for peace for the USA!

What Really is Peace? The 2001 New Oxford American Dictionary, among other definitions, includes: tranquility, mental calm, serenity, freedom from anxiety and distress, having become reconciled, freedom from or the cessation of war or violence.

In Rockford I gave my Sunday school class the assignment to come the next week with their definition of Christian peace. Anne, the daughter of one couple, helped her parents with her own definition:

"Peace is the undisturbed silt on the bottom of the ocean – while a hurricane is roaring on the surface."

Surprisingly, God also never promised to give us peace by always removing all the hurricanes, disasters, and tragedies almost engulfing us – but by giving us deep inner peace while the hurricane still rages.

But What Are We Praying to God For – That We Believe Will Bring Us Peace? Are we praying for all the terrorists to be captured and taken out of circulation globally? + For the current peace treaties, accords, trips and maneuvers to bring success to the right side? + For our security system to be able to catch every act of terrorism before it takes place? + For our intellectual leaders to be able to outsmart all of their undercover plotting? + Are we asking God for the elimination of all religious differences, pagan or not, that seem to be the root of all of this conflict? + For the two diametrically opposed major religions, Christianity and Islam, to get together to rule the world spiritually? + For all Jews, Muslims and Christians to go back to our roots in Abraham as one big family – without Jesus? + For God to eliminate all the abject poverty in the world, on which some blame the terrorist activities? + For reconciliation under everybody's gods, instead of God through Jesus?

These certainly would seem to be humanly logical solutions, with some to strive for. Today all are being tried as methods to bring global peace to Earth.

But the Bible Teaches that What Keeps All Humans From Having Peace is Not the Lack of Implementing These Things, But it is Their Sin.

Sin breaks humans' perfect relationship with God, thus hindering His blessing and peace.

“Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord: and who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood, and has not sworn deceitfully. He shall receive a blessing from the Lord.”

Psalm 24:3-4

Peace is produced by correcting broken relationships – whether with other people, nations or God Himself. And a right relationship with God producing His peace only can be restored through being forgiven of the sin that caused the ruptured or damaged relationship with Him in the first place. But when we are cleansed and forgiven, we have the incredible peace WITH God produced by a close, precious, unbroken communication with Him.

The Bible also Teaches There are Two Kinds of Sin, Both of Which Will Block Real Peace in Humans.

1. SINGULAR CLASS OF SIN – Making Peace WITH God (for non-Christians).

**There can only be the peace OF God
When there is peace WITH God.**

There can only be peace WITH God through His Son Jesus. **“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” Romans 5:1.** This peace never can come through peace accords, capturing terrorists, thwarting their attacks or recognizing all “prophets” as equal, including Jesus. Peace WITH God comes exclusively through Jesus Christ.

Jesus said in John 3:36, *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”* God’s wrath – not His peace.

This is original sin’s condemnation (singular) into which all have been born since Adam and Eve’s first sin in the Garden of Eden. Romans 5:18 says clearly that it brought condemnation to all people, *“So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men...”*

Also when sin was introduced to Earth through Adam and Eve’s sin, two spiritual kingdoms were established – Satan’s and God’s. It was sin that caused the separation of people into these two basic sides – which to this day are still in spiritual conflict.

There is no real peace for those trying to come to God through other gods which today is becoming politically, and often theologically, correct; for Jesus said: *“I am*

The way, The truth, and The life; No One Comes to the Father But Through Me.” John 14:6

The original sin that is forgiven at salvation produces peace WITH God.

“In Him (Jesus Christ) we have forgiveness through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses.” Ephesians 1:7

Peter explained to Cornelius that God is not a God of partiality, but has sent His PEACE to the Gentiles as well as the Jews by preaching peace through Jesus Christ:

“The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus (He is Lord of all)... that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.”
Acts 10:36 and 43

It is only true Christians who are eligible for the peace OF God, having made peace WITH Him through the forgiveness of their original state of sin into which they were born. Are you expecting to have the peace OF God when you haven’t made peace WITH Him yet?

2. PLURAL CLASS OF SIN – Sins that Hinder the Peace of God – After Making Peace with God at Salvation (for Christians.)

But are you saying, “I am a Christian, but I still don’t have peace. Why not?”

Even though your original sin with God’s condemnation was forgiven when you accepted Jesus as your Savior and Lord, there is another class of sin that STILL muddies up your relationship with God. These are the plural sins which we commit after becoming a Christian. I John 1:8-9 was written by the Apostle John only to his “little children” who already were saved. Yet, including himself, he said, *“If we say that we (Christians) have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

Yes, the peace OF God is like that undisturbed silt at the bottom of the ocean when a hurricane is roaring on the surface. The peace He gives His children does not depend on absence of terrorist planes hitting our buildings, assurance no anthrax is lurking in the mail we open, our water supply not being poisoned, our nuclear plants being safe from attack, or our satellite communication system floating peacefully in space. No, this is that awesome INNER PEACE, deep down where nothing can touch it.

But this peace only comes to us from God when we have not let our sins hinder His answering our prayers that produce peace. I Peter 3:12 tells Christians (to whom it was written) that when we do evil, God's eyes, ears and face are turned away from us.

“For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those (Christians) who do evil.”

Peter was quoting the Old Testament prophet Isaiah to whom God also gave the secret of God hearing our prayers:

“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not so short that it cannot save; neither is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God. And your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear.” Isaiah 59:1-2

But it was the same prophet Isaiah, while still in the continuously recurring wars of the Old Testament era, whom God told to prophecy that He would send the Prince of Peace – Jesus. (See Isaiah 9:6.) And God did. Then at Jesus’ birth, the angels shouted on the Judean hills, *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth – PEACE...”* (Luke 2:14).

Romans 5:18-19 also gives the answer to the state of sin into which all were born: *“For as through one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One (Jesus), the many will be made righteous.”* Forgiven through Jesus!

But earth’s humans rejected and crucified the Prince of Peace. They replaced Him with another prophet. Vast numbers of other religions tried to substitute their pagan gods for the Son of God. And they still continue doing so to this day.

But Jesus never promised peace through anyone but Himself. Just before leaving Earth, Jesus said to His disciples that He would leave peace with them – but not as the world gives.

“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”
John 14:27

Every true believer in Jesus has been offered this peace from Him. This is the undisturbed silt at the bottom of the ocean. In fact, Jesus said that before He came back there would be wars and rumors of wars – but His promise still stood. His peace for Christians.

How can I be Sure of What God Calls Sin – So I Won’t Keep Depriving Myself of Receiving the Peace OF God?

The answer is quite simple. James 4:17 says it clearly: **“Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him (or her) it is sin.”**

Knowing what is right from the Word of God, the Bible, and then not obeying it God calls sin – not a shortcoming, personality quirk, nor human weakness – but sin.

Here are just a few of the things God counts as sin in Christians’ lives from the Bible: Not forgiving so the Father will forgive us (Matthew 6:14-15). Not praying for and loving those who spitefully use us (Matthew 5:44). Not confessing what was our fault in a severed relationship so we could be forgiven by God (I John 1:8). Living in constant “if only” guilt, not accepting God’s forgiveness after repenting (I John 1:9). Practicing an inordinate concern for our own body because of not having given it to God as a living sacrifice and trusting Him with it (Romans 12:1). When weak, not stepping out to serve Jesus because of not enough faith to believe His power will then rest upon us (II Corinthians 12:9-10). Complaining about being alone because of not believing Jesus when He said He would be with us always (Matthew 28:20). Needing to get even when God said that vengeance was His and we should leave that to Him (Hebrews 10:30). When money, not the Lord, is really what we live for (Hebrews 13:5).

These are just an incredibly small percentage of all the things God calls sin. But if we stay in the Bible, recognize sin as sin, admit to God that sin is in us, and then truly repent and ask Him to forgive – an incredible peace will fill our whole being. The relationship between us is repaired. Nothing stands between God and us – so that His peace can and does flow unhindered.

Often God will wake me with a start in the middle of the night, bringing to my mind – something I said, did, thought, a reaction I had, or when not obeying His Word, my own sin. I sometimes shudder, often weep, and then ask Him to forgive me. But always when I truly ask for forgiveness, there follows an incredibly sweet peace engulfing my whole being, flowing through me, ending with a surprising, spontaneous smile on my face. Peace!

Are You Still Praying for Peace? Good! Great! Keep praying for the victims of violence and terrorism. Pray for those causing the war to make their peace with God through Jesus. Multiply your prayers for the leaders

and soldiers of peace-loving countries in their sacrificial efforts to eradicate terrorism and war.

But be sure you are not only praying for the kind of the peace the world is striving to attain. Remember, Jesus did not promise that peace. Human solutions at best will be temporary and never can bring soul-satisfying peace to fearful and distraught people. It is Jesus' peace for each one who individually believes in Him that is the deep down peace the evil of the world cannot touch.

Most frightening, however, is that the final eternal destiny of those who die in their original sin is total lack of peace. Revelation 20:15 warns, "*If anyone's*

name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." Jesus described this place as everlasting (Matt. 25:46 and Mark 9:47, 48), a place of fire (Matt. 13:49-50), torment (Matt. 13:50), and banishment (Matt. 7:23). Pray for them to find forgiveness through Jesus before it is too late for eternal peace with Jesus.

But for those who have made peace WITH God through Jesus, He is coming back to take them unto Himself – to rule eternally in peace. But in the meantime, no matter how the hurricanes and battles rage, we can have that unequivocal deep peace of Jesus that truly does surpass all human understanding.