Victory Everlasting Gospel Free Seventh-day Adventist Church

July 16, 2016

The title of today’s sermon is:

 **“What is it that Steals Our Peace?”**

Today’s subject, “What is it that Steals Our Peace?” In Phillipians 4:7 it reads, **“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”**

The question a lot of Christians have is, “Why is it that since I became a Christian, I don’t have this perfect peace that passes all understanding every hour, every day?”

Well, I would like to suggest that it has more to do with what we think and how we think. And today I would like to cover thoughts that steal our peace.

Let us pray….

I have broken this subject of **thoughts that steal our peace** into 7 categories. The seven categories are: 1. Sinful thoughts; 2. Negative thoughts; 3. Erroneous thoughts; 4. Unrealistic thoughts; 5. Rebellious thoughts; 6. Obsessive thoughts; 7. Enslaved thoughts.

The first category, “Sinful thoughts,” I break into three areas:

First there is the lust for money. Not that money is bad, but indeed the love of money is the root of all evil, as stated in 1 Timothy 6:10 **“For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”** The love of money can destroy one’s health, family life and even their connection with Jesus.

I heard of an SDA pastor who made an arrangement with God. He was strong in the faith and was well liked in his church. If God would let him win the lottery, he was going to give the lion share to the church. I personally do not believe that God hears such prayer requests, but the man did win a million dollars in the lottery. The church never saw the money nor that pastor again.

Also #2 in the sinful thought category is the lust for power or position. Many people feel the need to climb to the top and it doesn’t matter to them who is hurt or toppled in the process.

Third in the sinful thought category would be the lust of the flesh or impure sexual thoughts. For the Christian, this is evidence that conversion either never happened, or the follower succumbed to the carnal and was drawn back into old familiar paths, where the lower animal passions hold sway over the higher moral powers of the mind.

If any Christian has longing thoughts of eternal life, they need to understand John’s message in 1 John 2:16 **“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”**Without a doubt, sinful thoughts do steal our peace.

The next category of thoughts that steal our peace would be:

2. Negative thoughts - Who can really have peace that passes all understanding with negative thinking? There is a saying that “Fear is the darkroom where negatives are developed.”

Now I know that the world has gone crazy and so many people who long for peace, live in constant fear. We have reached the time where Luke 21:26 is fulfilled every day as we see in the news **“Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth:”** What with terrorist’s attacks increasing, suicide bombers, fires, floods, earthquakes, diseases, epidemics, plagues, famines, droughts and the fear list keeps growing.

There is an expression: No Jesus, no peace, Know Jesus, know peace. Some say that life is how you look at the glass. Do you see it half-full or half empty? Frankly I see it as close to empty as it can get, because Satan knows his time to tempt and destroy is just about finished, 1 Peter 5:8 **“…your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:”**With God’s cup about full of man’s rebellion, His mercy and grace are about to become endangered gifts. Yes man’s glass is empty of peace and full of fear. He worries and imagines all sorts of negative thoughts that steal his peace.

Our third category of thoughts that steal our peace would be:

3. Erroneous thoughts- for example: God doesn’t love me or else He wouldn’t allow these things to happen to me. Or, God doesn’t love me or I wouldn’t be lonely. Or, I don’t need to go to a church to worship God. I even heard of one SDA who said if my dog doesn’t go to heaven, I don’t want to go. How can anyone look at Jesus on the cross, knowing heaven spent all it had to redeem us, and make such a self-condemning statement. I can understand a person’s love for their pet, but I’m sorry I cannot imagine any true Christian ever uttering such a statement. God loves the animals as He does all of His created beings. But are we to hold God hostage and refuse eternity if our pet can’t be there.

Another erroneous thought may be something like God doesn’t love me or else He wouldn’t allow these things to happen to me. Maybe it is because He loves you that He allows these things to happen to you. We who have enjoyed blessings far above what we deserve are too quick to complain when everything is not going smoothly. We are in many ways, worse than the Jews that Moses spent 40 years trying, but was unable to satisfy their never ending demands. But keep in mind, these people knew real hardship, living in tents on a desert. We really have no reason to complain, nor do we have cause for any erroneous thoughts, which constantly work to steal our peace.

Another erroneous thought is, God doesn’t love me or I wouldn’t be lonely. There are two ways to handle loneliness. We either grow in the faith, or we tend to follow a path that causes us to lose faith. When a person is growing in Jesus, Jesus will solve the loneliness issue. The important thing is to wait on the Lord, be of good courage. But often times we run ahead of the Lord and make decisions that would not be the Lord’s choosing. Therefore we live with the consequences of our choices…some consequences eternal.

Other erroneous thoughts include I don’t need to go to a church to worship God. Usually, this is the sentiment of someone who does not know God, nor do they seek to understand His will for their life. They want their life to continue just as it is without God interfering. Usually they have a long list of reasons as to why they don’t go to church. They often say the church is full of hypocrites. Isn’t it sad that a person thinks you go to church to observe hypocrites? How does Christ fit into their equation? Paul counsels us in Hebrews 10:25 **“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”**Erroneous thoughts will steal one’s peace.

Our fourth category of thoughts that steal our peace would be:

4. Unrealistic thoughts- striving to be something that God does not want you to be. Many Christians are waiting for the big job they think God is getting them ready to do. In the meantime they are unfaithful in the little things that they feel are beneath their calling. Not being faithful in small things disqualifies one from being used for the important things in God’s plan.

Also in the area of unrealistic thoughts is that person who has been putting off coming to God until they are ready. Oh they are doing good works in the meantime, however they either feel unworthy to come just yet and will when they are good enough, or they want to wait until the luster of the world’s attractions wear off, taking for granted that every beat of the heart is an extended gift from God. Unrealistic thoughts are a peace thief.

Our fifth category of thoughts that steal our peace would be:

5. Rebellious thoughts- this is the person who thinks, “I’m going to have my way no matter what. OR “I know what the commandments say, but here’s what I’m going to do.” (Samson was such a person and he ruined his life, with this rebellious nature.) When God commands for obedience, there should be no delay. No putting off for another day what should have been done yesterday? Holding back in one aspect of your life steals your peace. Making a lot of money for example and giving 25% or even 50% does not give you peace, and certainly, God does not need your rebellious money.

Our sixth category of thoughts that steal our peace would be:

6. Obsessive thoughts- these are minds that are so divided their peace is stolen by divided thinking. They obsess over goals, relationships, money, power, self, or the faults of others. These people are never happy and they affect the peace and happiness of everyone they come in contact with. Most obsessions are negative in nature and are usually self-destructive. There is however an obsession that is positive and leads to great peace and that is when we are obsessed with Jesus. The closer you come to Him the more you realize you need to be closer. Oh that we all could become obsessed as was Enoch.

Our last category of thoughts that steal our peace would be:

7. Enslaved thoughts- something that has absolute control over one’s life. In other words, “Addictions.” Work, alcohol, tobacco, drugs, sex, money, TV, gambling, sports, the Internet, shopping, food and edibles posing as food. The thoughts are I’ve got to have it, I can’t live without it. Whatever the “addiction-holic” is, it must be recognized for what it actually is. A master and the addiction-holic is the slave. It is impossible to serve Jesus and an addiction. Jesus said so himself in Matthew 6:24 **“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”**

So here we have seven categories of thoughts that steal our peace, and perhaps there are many more. Proverbs 23:7 says **“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he:”** We ultimately become what we think.

If you have found that there is something in your life that seriously affects your thinking and steals your peace, then it is time to surrender you heavy load and put it where it belongs. Psalms 55:22 **“Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.”**

There is only way to have that lasting peace that can’t be explained:

1. Accept Jesus as your personal Savior. Know Jesus, know peace.
2. Daily like Daniel we must not neglect our prayer life nor should we ever miss a spiritual meal in God’s Word.
3. Jesus holds the key to a meaningful peace that he wants us to have. We possess the key to our will and Jesus would have us make an exchange, His peace that is beyond explanation, for our will. No person and no thoughts can steal from you the peace that God gives. It’s a choice daily that you can keep or surrender.

AH 127 *“We are commanded to crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts. How shall we do it? Shall we inflict pain on the body? No; but put to death the temptation to sin. The corrupt thought is to be expelled. Every thought is to be brought into captivity to Jesus Christ. All animal propensities are to be subjected to the higher powers of the soul. The love of God must reign supreme; Christ must occupy an undivided throne. Our bodies are to be regarded as His purchased possession. The members of the body are to become the instruments of righteousness.”* AH 127

And also regarding sinful thoughts, I read this from DA 173 – *“While the wind is itself invisible, it produces effects that are seen and felt. So the work of the Spirit upon the soul will reveal itself in every act of him who has felt its saving power. When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the light of heaven.”* DA173

There is another area that can really steal the peace that passes all understanding, and that is when a disagreement in a family can cause needless pain and sorrow. I want to illustrate with the following story, what so typically happens in families, how the situation worsens, and how it can be resolved.

There were two brothers who loved each other and lived on adjoining farms, but fell into conflict. It was the first serious rift in 40 years of farming side by side, sharing machinery, and trading labor and goods as needed without a hitch.

Then the long collaboration fell apart. It began with a small misunderstanding and it grew into a major difference, and finally it exploded into an exchange of bitter words followed by weeks of silence.

One morning there was a knock on John's door. He opened it to find a man with a carpenter's toolbox. "I'm looking for a few day’s work" he said. “Perhaps you would have a few small jobs here and there I could help with? Could I help you?"

"Yes," said the older brother. "I do have a job for you. Look across the creek at that farm. That's my neighbor, in fact, it's my younger brother. "Last week there was a meadow between us and he took his bulldozer to the river levee and now there is a creek between us. Well, he may have done this to spite me, but I'll go him one better. See that pile of lumber by the barn? I want you to build me a fence, an 8 foot high fence, so I won't need to see his place or his face anymore."

The carpenter said, "I think I understand the situation. Show me the nails and the post hole digger and I'll be able to do a job that pleases you." The older brother had to go to town, so he helped the carpenter get the materials ready and then he was off for the day. The carpenter worked hard all that day measuring, sawing, nailing. About sunset when the farmer returned, the carpenter had just finished his job. The farmer's eyes opened wide, his jaw dropped. There was no fence there at all. It was a bridge …



a bridge stretching from one side of the creek to the other! A fine piece of work handrails and all and the neighbor, his younger brother, was coming across, his hand outstretched. "You are quite a fellow to build this bridge after all I've said and done."

The two brothers stood at each end of the bridge, and then they met in the middle, taking each other's hand. They turned to see the carpenter hoist his toolbox on his shoulder. "No, wait! Stay a few days. I've a lot of other projects for you," said the older brother. "I'd love to stay on," the carpenter said, "but, I have many more bridges to build." Many a family problem can be resolved by a simple apology and the peace that was shattered can be restored.

In closing I would like to go back to the words of Paul once more in Phillipians 4: 4-7 and conclude with verse 8 *“Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise,* ***think*** *on these things.* Paul is telling us what should occupy the thoughts of the truly converted.

Let us pray….