INTRODUCTION

Peace is a fascinating subject. November 27, 1990 marked the 95th anniversary of Alfred Bernard Nobel's WILL. Why is the date of a WILL commemorated? That WILL left the bulk of a vast fortune amassed from the invention of dynamite and other explosives to the establishment of the Nobel Peace Prize.

In 1867, at the age of 34, Alfred Nobel was granted a patent for dynamite and over the next 29 years, he became fabulously wealthy from the manufacture of explosives. These explosives were not only used commercially, but also in war. His WILL, dated November 27, 1895, provided for a trust to establish 5 prizes, one of which is known today as the Nobel Peace Prize. It is interesting how money made from war was used in the cause of peace. War and peace seem to be inseparably linked.

Our own country is extremely concerned about peace: The Motto of the Apollo 11 flight was, "We Come In Peace For All Mankind". This motto was on the plaque which was deposited on the face of the moon. The landing was on the Sea Of Tranquility. Astronauts Armstrong and Aldrin found a tranquil and peaceful scene on the moon. Perhaps it was because there never had been any humans there to disturb it.

Each of us is concerned about peace. War brings the loss of life and destruction of property. No reasoning person wants war and yet sometimes it seems inevitable.

In this study we will focus on several kinds of peace in an attempt to understand the importance and dynamics of each one.
Let's begin by defining peace. Webster's dictionary says that peace is:

1. A state of tranquility or quiet.
2. Freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts/emotions.
3. Harmony in personal relations
4. A state of mutual concord between governments

The overriding idea is that peace is a state of tranquility, serenity, calm, quiet, and rest.

The Hebrew word for peace in the Old Testament is shalom. It comes from a root word that means "to be complete or to be sound." The idea is that when we are at peace, things are complete and sound. Without peace, things are unsound and incomplete. Peace is part of the wholeness that God desires for each of us.

The New Testament word for peace is erene. It has an uncertain origin but may be from the word that means to join. When we are at peace it is like we join hands with others.

When someone mentions the word peace, what picture comes to mind: A baby sleeping, a quiet lake, a warm spring day with no sound except the gentle breeze rustling the leaves of nearby trees? During a hectic day a peaceful setting is quite appealing.

Do you have any idea of the different kinds of peace? In my own study, I have found at least four kinds in the Bible. Each one is important. They are:

Peace Among Nations - SOCIETAL PEACE
Peace Between Individuals - SOCIAL PEACE
Peace Within Oneself - SELF-PEACE
Peace With God - SALVATION PEACE

Let's look briefly at each to see what it is and how it works:

**Peace Among Nations - SOCIETAL PEACE**

It seems as though from the beginning of time there have been wars in the world. The Greeks, the Romans, the Persians and many other groups were great warriors who conquered others and then set about to maintain a semblance of peace in the world. Every time, peace was short lived. Even in our own country there have been wars: The War of Independence, the Civil War, and the Indian Wars.

In one periodical it was written: "Only eight percent of the time since the beginning of recorded history has the world been entirely at peace. In over 3,100 years, only 286 have been warless and over 8,000 treaties have been broken."

World War I was the war to end all wars, but World War II came soon after. Since then, there have been many wars and conflicts around the world. Many continue to rage today. It seems as though peace is the illusive carrot that men reach for and maybe even bite now and then, but soon is gone.

The United States is enjoying part of that carrot today at least in the homeland, and yet world conflict continues. War lurks on every side rearing its ugly head. I think most of us agree that the world situation is not getting any better.

I, for one, am extremely grateful for the peace we enjoy in our country. As most of us know, the United States is a rare exception in a world
filled with strife. But even here there are many factions at each other's throats.

If there is a God, why does he allow war in the world? Is He a warmonger? No! Listen to these verses of Scripture:

Psalm 34:14, "Depart from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it."

Romans 15:33, "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."

Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God".

2 Chronicles 7:14, "If My people, who are called by My name humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

It is clear that God wants peace, but He also gave men the ability to make their own choices. These choices gave rise to sin. Because of man's sin there is war.

Will there ever be total societal peace? No, not until Jesus returns to set things right once and for all. Listen to Matthew 24:3-8:

3 As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" 4 And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. 5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. 6 "You will be hearing of wars and
rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for *those things* must take place, but *that* is not yet the end. 7 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. 8 "But all these things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs.

According to Christ, wars will not cease until the end of time. When people thought that WWI was the war to end all wars, they would have known better if they had read Matthew 24.

Does the fact that there will be wars until Christ returns invalidate us trying to be peacemakers? No! Christ said that peacemakers are blessed. We should strive for peace as much as is humanly possible in a sin filled world. Our efforts will hopefully keep war in check in many parts of the world, especially at home. By the same token, we must realize that ultimate societal peace will come only at the return of Christ.

Let's now discuss peace between individuals - SOCIAL PEACE.

**Peace Between Individuals - SOCIAL PEACE**

Most folks want to be at peace with their neighbors. The Hatfield and McCoy mentality is not one that many people enjoy. Someone once said, "I love mankind, it's people I can't stand!"

James gives us a clue as to why individuals fight. James 4:1 reads, "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have, so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel."
These words are almost a perfect description of what is happening on the streets of our cities today. Unfortunately it is also what goes on in some homes and even churches.

Just as societal peace is broken by man's sin nature, so is social peace. It is shattered through jealousy, trying to Lord it over others, being inconsiderate, being selfish, the unwillingness to say, "Sorry," or admit blame, prideful behavior, and not giving God first place in our lives; the list goes on...

What are the realms of individual peace? They are the home, the workplace, the neighborhood, the church, the school... anywhere individuals meet and deal with each other.

Peace among individuals can be shattered so easily. Here are some examples of things that can trigger conflict;

A person's dog goes to the bathroom on a neighbor's lawn and one neighbor blames the other...
Someone plants a tree that blocks a neighbor's view...
Someone washes his driveway and the dirt gets pushed into the gutter of the house next door...
One neighbor buys a new car and jealousy ensues...
A thoughtless word is spoken to a family member or co-worker and trouble rears it ugly head...
Favoritism is shown and hate begins...
At church someone feels that someone else snubbed them. Instead of talking about it, they gossip and division creeps in...
Is there hope for peace in the social realm? Yes! Peace can only be maintained among individuals if they handle problems according to God's principles.

Let's discuss six of these principles for restoring and keeping peace among individuals.

1. **Be Committed To Peace, Make It A Top Priority:**
   First, God wants us to be committed to peace. Listen to the following verses:

   Psalm 34:14, "Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it."

   Zechariah 8:19 closes with these words, "so love truth and peace."

   Mark 9:50 says, "...be at peace with one another."

   We are to seek after peace. We are to love peace! Even if it seems illusive, we are to pursue it. Is this your attitude? Is peace such a high priority that you pursue it even when things turn ugly? I have seen many people who don't seek peace but instead seek revenge. That is not to be true of Christians. We must strive for peace at work, at home, in our neighborhoods, schools and at church. We must seek it with our whole heart.

2. **Realize That There Will Be Problems:**
   None of us is perfect. We will all eventually do things either intentionally or unintentionally that offend others. We may say the wrong thing or do the wrong thing. With God's help we should minimize these occurrences but they will happen. The problem is
not having problems as much as it is dealing with problems according to God's principles. God would not have written so much about peace and how to solve problems if He knew we wouldn't need this truth. The fact is, we need it desperately!

3. Follow God's Plan of Personal, Loving Restoration
What is the correct way to solve problems? In the military people use the chain of command. The spiritual realm is somewhat the same. The following addresses how we are to handle problems as Christians.

Matthew 18:15-17 reads,

15 "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 "But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. 17 "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

God has a very clear procedure for handling problems between Christians: try to work it our privately first. If that doesn't work, then elevate the problem to the attention of others.

Peace is of utmost importance to God and should be to us. Peace is so important because we are to be light in the world. If we don't handle our problems God's way then people who see us will be turned off. Ephesians 4:3 states, "be diligent to preserve the UNITY of the Spirit in the BOND OF PEACE." When Christians
promote unity, the world will stand up and take notice. When Christians fight, the world will turn away.

Here is an example of how God wants Christians to follow His principles to preserve unity. Let's say that someone offends you. Perhaps they say something that makes you angry. Maybe you feel they snub you in a meeting. Perhaps they don't follow through on something you think they said they would do. Whatever the reason, you feel offended. What do many people do at this point? They go tell someone else; they gossip. What should they do? They should talk privately to the person who offended them. Only if they can't work things out, should the problem be elevated to the next level.

First, a person is to confront the offender one on one. If the problem gets resolved then that is the end of it. If it does not get resolved, it is time to take the next step. The next step is to take a couple of witnesses so that everything that is said can be confirmed. If this doesn't solve the problem, it should be elevated even further.

Have you ever wondered why people don't follow God's pattern but instead gossip about those who have offended them? Here are a few reasons:

**Ignorance**
The first reason is ignorance. Some people don't know about God's pattern. That is understandable.
Fear Of Confrontation
Some people are afraid to confront others face to face. There is no doubt that confrontation is scary but it is God's way and we need to do it.

Rebellion
Some people who know God's pattern don't particularly care. They aren't concerned about solving the problem, only getting even. When we are offended, our emotions get hot. Instead of doing what is proper, it is easy to let our feelings do the talking. Ephesians 4:26 reads, "Be angry, and yet do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your anger."

If we are offended and let our anger take control, we sin. If we gossip, we sin. If we work things out God's way we do not sin. It is really that simple.

Notice, too, that we are not to let the sun go down on our anger. We are not to brood over things for days on end. If we are offended, we need to approach the offender before the sun goes down. In other words, we are to take care of problems the same day they happen.

Unfortunately there will be those people who do not follow God's principle of private confrontation in the face of problems. Instead they will spread rumors and gossip. How should such people be handled? If someone comes to you complaining about someone else, here's what you should do. Ask them, "Have you talked with the person who offended you?" That will nip many problems in the bud and point people back in the right direction. Peace will hopefully
be maintained. It is hard for people to gossip if no one will listen to them. The sad thing is, gossipers usually know who they can gossip to. It is usually someone just like themselves, another gossip.

Nothing destroys peace among individuals, especially in the church, quicker than gossip. That is why God hates it.

Proverbs 6:16-19 describes seven things that God hates. One thing is people who spread strife among brothers. Gossiping is exactly that; spreading strife! It destroys peace among individuals.

Someone once used this example. If you took a down pillow and cut it open in the wind and let all the feathers fly out, it would be almost impossible to find all the feathers and rebuild the pillow. Once in the wind, the feathers fly everywhere and make a big mess. Gossip is like that. When someone begins spouting hurtful things against others, they can never clean up the mess even if they want to. That is why Proverbs 20:19 reads, "He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets, therefore do not associate with a gossip." That is also why God puts gossip in the same list of sins as murder in Romans chapter one because gossip is really an attempt at character assassination.

Not only are we to personally talk to those who offend us, we are to do it a certain way. Ephesians 4:15 says that we must "speak the truth in love." Instead of confronting them and giving them a piece of our mind in anger, we are to
gently tell them why we feel offended and that we desire to work things out.

Only as we confront those who offend us and do it in a loving way will we preserve UNITY in the BOND OF PEACE in the home, the workplace, the neighborhood, the church and at school.

4. **Be Tenderhearted and Forgiving**

Ephesians 4:32 states, "Be kind to each other, tenderhearted forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

Forgiveness must mark the life of the Christian. Peace can often be restored to broken relationships if people bury the hatchet and forgive each other. If we realize how much God has forgiven us, it is fairly easy to forgive one another. If we can't forgive others it is a strong indicator that we have a problem with pride.

5. **Be Fervent In Loving Others**

If we make it a point to love others in spite of their offensiveness, we can often restore peace to broken relationships. 1 Peter 4:8 reads, "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins." God desires there to be peace among individuals but it can only be had on His terms.

6. **Leave Any Revenge Up To God**

When others offend us our natural response is to hurt them back. If they break the peace we often want to finish the fight. This is not God's way. Listen to Romans 12:18,19,  "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.  Never take your
own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' says the Lord."

Lets move now to the third kind of peace:

**Peace Within Oneself - SELF-PEACE**

A person can live in a peaceful society and be at peace with those around him and yet not be at peace on the inside. The suicide rate, drug and alcohol problem, the number of people on medication for depression and loneliness are ample evidence of this fact. People go to great lengths trying to find inner peace.

I believe that for those without God, inner peace is an elusive thing. Perhaps it is because of the basis that many people have for peace within:

...financial security
...good health
...a sense of purpose
...lack of negative stress

There is nothing wrong with any of these, but there is a problem basing personal peace on circumstances. Circumstances change. If a person loses his financial security or health, then his peace is gone.

Are you at peace with yourself and your current situation? I hope so.

I think peace can be equated with contentment.
Paul the apostle went from riches and fame to rags and rejection, yet he had peace within. Why? Because he learned that real inner peace comes from God. Paul said:

"I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to love in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:11-13)

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity. 11 Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. 12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. 13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Inner peace comes not only from learning contentment but also learning the wonderful truth of Philippians 4:6,7, "Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." This verse states that we are not to worry about things. Worry destroys peace. Instead we are to take everything to God in prayer with thankful hearts. We are to tell Him our needs and He promises to give us His peace which surpasses all human understanding.
Have you ever experienced God's inner peace in the midst of tough times. I've talked with people who prayed in the hospital before surgery and felt God's overwhelming peace flood their soul. I have experienced God's peace when I have taken worrisome things to Him in prayer. If the worry returns, I take it to Him again.

Isaiah 26:3 states, "The steadfast of mind Thou wilt keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in Thee.

If we keep our minds on the things of God, God promises to keep us in perfect peace.

That is why a person can live in a war torn society where there is no societal or social peace and yet be at peace within himself.

Walter Baxendale wrote, "Upon the plains of Waterloo there stands a great bronze lion, forged from the captured guns of Britain's foes in 1815. The beast's mouth is open and snarls through his teeth over the battlefield. When I saw it last, one spring noonday, a bird had built its nest right in the lion's mouth, twining the twigs of the downy bed where the fledglings nestled around the very teeth of the metal monster, and from the very jaws of the bronze beast the chirp of the swallows seemed to twitter forth timidly the song of peace...."

Though the world's problems rage around us, we can be at peace if we stay close to the Lord because He is not only the author of SOCIETAL and SOCIAL peace, but of SELF-PEACE.

The final category of peace that will be addressed is "Peace with God" or SALVATION peace.
Peace With God - SALVATION PEACE

Did you realize that those that do not know Christ as personal savior are at odds with God. Philippians 3:18 states, "For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ."

James 4:4 reads, "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

Ephesians 2:12 states,

Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace...

If a person wants to be at peace with God, the only way to do it is to come to God through Christ. The Bible teaches that all of us have sinned (Romans 3:23) and that the penalty for our sin is death; separation from God (Romans 6:23). If we die as sinners we will be eternally separated from God. In order to pay the penalty for our sin God sent his own Son, Jesus to die for us on the cross (John 3:16). Christ's death on the cross pays the penalty for our sin. Our salvation is not automatic however. We need to admit our sin, turn from it and ask Christ to come into our lives as Savior and Lord. We must accept His death on the cross for us and ask Him through His Holy Spirit to take
control of our lives. When we place our faith in Christ we are saved and justified in God's sight. Justified means that God declares we are forgiven.

Romans 5:1 states, "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Peace with God comes through Christ. It is interesting to note that in Isaiah 9:6 Jesus is called, "The Prince of Peace." He came that we might have peace with God.

Do you have peace with God? Are you SAVED? In other words, have you invited Christ to come into your life as Savior and Lord? It is the most important thing you can do. I believe it is impossible to have lasting SELF-PEACE until you have SALVATION PEACE. Having a personal relationship with Christ is the first step to having true, lasting peace.

If you desire to ask Christ into your life right now you can do it through prayer. Here is a simple prayer you can pray right now:

Dear Lord, I know I am a sinner. I also know that my sin separates me from You. I confess my sin, turn from it and ask Jesus to come into my life to be Savior and Lord. I give myself to You. Make me the kind of person You want me to be. Thank You for sending Jesus to die for me on the cross. AMEN

**Final Thoughts**
There are four kinds of peace.....

  - SOCIETAL
  - SOCIAL
  - SELF
  - SALVATION
Who is the author of each? God is! Which one is most important? SALVATION PEACE! Why? Because:

1. When God finally sets up SOCIETAL peace you will be part of His kingdom.
2. With God you can have SOCIAL peace because with His power within, you can love others like you should.
3. With God's Spirit in you, you can have SELF-PEACE, the peace that surpasses all human understanding.

Peace comes at a price. When we think of the peace we enjoy in our country, we know that it came at the cost of shed blood. Although God's peace is free to those that ask, it was not free to Jesus. He shed His blood for us.

Let's never take for granted the peace God gives us. Today may we commit ourselves anew to the task of being peacemakers in a troubled world.