

“Being Attractive Without Having to Look Good B Peace”

God’s Extreme Makeover

Romans 8:1-10

July 19, 2009

The ABC network thought they had a brand new idea - Extreme Makeover. They would find an individual, and do whatever was necessary to change his or her appearance. The idea sold because so many of us are dissatisfied with who we are and how we are. And in a nation that is moved more by appearances than realities, symbolism over substance, the concept was well received. But it was not a new idea. 2000 years ago the Apostle Paul talked about God’s Extreme Makeover. And God’s Makeover was Extremely superior to ABC’s, because where ABC dealt with the exterior, with our appearances, God is willing and able to change our interior, making us better persons.

Why is that important? Think about a pothole. A pothole shows up and eventually a road crew gives it a worldly makeover. They fill it in and cover it up. It makes things better, for a while. But that makeover is only a temporary fix. To fix it right, you have to get to the inside, to start at the bottom, build that foundation and pave it all. And that’s what God does. He gets inside us, builds that foundation, in our heart, our soul, our spirit. He changes us from the inside out, making us a brand new person. And it is that inner self that truly decides how we are going to live, and who we are.

Last week we began to talk about the Fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23. *When the Holy Spirit controls our lives He will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.*” This is the Extreme Makeover God wants to make in each of us. This week and next, we are going to talk about one of the fruits of the Spirit that many of us need - PEACE.

When I say peace, what thoughts come to mind? A bumper sticker advises us to *Visualize World Peace.*” That sounds good, but how are we to do that? And if I do visualize world peace, what does that look like? What is it? We talk about peace, but how do we define it. Actually, when I hear *Peace*”, I think about Jeremiah who said, *People are saying, >Peace, peace’ but there is no peace.*” (Jeremiah 6:14b) But even if we can’t define peace, hopefully we will know peace when we experience it. And we hope that peace will be one of the fruits in our life.

How many ways do we want peace in our life? We want it physically. That’s why so many people medicate themselves, because we want peace in our bodies. As a result, we have become a Prozac nation. We want our body to be at peace. And we want peace in our relationships. We often experience tension even in our significant relationships. I know that because of the number of broken families that I’ve seen. But we don’t want that. We want to be in harmony with one another. We want to be at peace with those around us. And we want peace in our future. Isn’t that so much of what our politicians talk about, planning a peaceful future? Actually the word politics comes from the Greek where it refers to getting along with those living around you. Granted, our politics don’t look that way, but it is our great desire. We want a peaceful future, where we can kick back on our lounge chairs, drink our prune juice, and be a burden to our children.

Last week we looked at the Picture, the Problem, and the Plan for Extreme Makeover. We will do the same thing with peace, only we are going to do it over two weeks. This week we will look at the picture and the problem. Next we’ll look at God’s plan.

What is the PICTURE of God’s peace? Well, the New Testament word for peace is "eirene." It means *to make one again, to be re-connected.* And isn’t that what we really want in our life, to be one with God, to be one in our significant relationships. And even to be one within ourselves, so we are not battling with ourselves as we so often do; robbing ourselves of the peace we desperately desire. I guess the word might be *Reconciliation* because that’s the word used in God’s picture. Colossians 1:20: *By Him [Jesus] God reconciled everything to Himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of His blood on the cross.* ”

Because of what Jesus did on the cross, I don’t have to be at war with God. I can have peace with God. And I can have peace with others, even though that can be a lot tougher than peace with God. Charlie Chaplin once said, "I’ve got peace with God all right. It’s just that I don’t have peace with man." We can understand that, for there have been times when we felt that way as well. But God’s desire and our challenge is to live in peace. Romans 12:18 *Do your part to live in peace with everyone.* 2 Corinthians 13 *Live in harmony and peace. Then the God of love and peace will be with you.* So let’s get the picture here. God wants us to have peace with Him. We’re challenged to have peace with others. Then because of what God has already done, what Jesus has done on the cross, we can have peace with ourselves.

In John 14, Jesus said, *I am leaving you with the gift. Peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give isn’t like the peace the world gives. So don’t be troubled or afraid.* ” The peace the world gives is empty at best and often painful. But Jesus says, "we don’t have to be at war with one another. I don’t want to fight with you." And in Romans 8, Paul tells us, *If the Holy Spirit controls your mind, there is life and peace.* ”

Now peace doesn’t mean that life is suddenly easy, that we will no longer have hardships or difficult situations. Sometimes it is just the opposite. Peace is the sense of contentment and confidence even in the midst of the difficulties. As I have often said, peace is when we know that everything’s going to be all right, even when we don’t know what all right looks like. Even in the midst of storms and sorrow, we can dwell in contentment and assurance. That’s God’s picture of peace. It’s what we want, but as it is with so many things, it is not easy.

So what’s the PROBLEM?

The problem is that there are enemies of peace. We all have our enemies list. Some enemies are pretty universal, on everybody’s list. Others are more personal. Nancy was asked about the things that irritated her, and in particular, "what does Chuck do that irritates you?" And without hesitation she said, *He breathes.* ” Hmm. I hope that’s not on your list. But there might be some other things on your personal enemies list. Kids, parents, finances, doubt, sickness, long lines, traffic, e-mail stories that I have to pass along to prove that I love God or country, or maybe so my hair won’t fall out.

Huh! I guess I should have forwarded that one. But that’s the personal list. What about the universal list?

Stress. How many of you feel attacked by stress during your week? Bunches of us. I even preached about ways to deal with stress, a six part sermon series. And we still have trouble dealing with stress, and that includes me and I wrote the thing. Stress is a reoccurring enemy. We just can’t deal with it once and then forget it. It keeps coming back and we have to keep remembering how to deal with it.

Noise is an enemy of peace. We love noise. We even get nervous and anxious if it’s too quiet. AWhy’s it so quiet? What’s wrong?” We wake up to the noise of an alarm clock. We flip on radios and TVs. Some people have their meals in front of the TV. We get in the car and turn to music or talk shows. How many times have you seen someone biking or jogging and they’ve got headphones on? MP3 players were invented so we could take our preferred noise with us. And many fall asleep with the TV on, so we can hear Letterman’s top ten on why there’s no silence.

And with noise comes information overload. We’re surrounded by information. Growing up we had maybe a handful of stations on the television, if we had a television at all. Now we have hundreds of channels and still can’t find much that is worthwhile. We have CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, and all sorts of 24 hour news stations. The Revelation speaks about events that the whole world will see, and years ago we couldn’t figure out how that would happen. Today we wonder if there is anyone in the world who hasn’t heard and seen about the death of Michael Jackson. All this information all the time and we are on overload. It is an enemy of peace.

Relational conflict. Dealing with people is a big enemy of peace. God created one, and then had to create one more. Humanity was told to spread out over the face of the earth. Why? So we wouldn’t have to deal with other people. And maybe the biggest enemy of peace is me. Not me, Chuck, but the person we see in the mirror. We are all enemies of peace. It’s not just the other people around us that create confusion. It’s me. I’m unsettled about my past, uneasy about my present situation, and unsure of my future. I’ve seen an enemy of peace and it’s me.

Now when these enemies come bounding into our life our natural instinct is to react to them. We become combative. We want to beat them down and fight them off. They cause us to react and that makes us uncomfortable. We look for ways to cope with the enemies of peace. What are the coping strategies we use?

Worry is a coping strategy. How many of you have a master’s degree in worry? Some people can worry about anything and everything. And then they worry about how much they are worrying. Personally I always liked the church sign that says, "Don’t let worry kill you. Let the church help.” We worry to help cope with the enemies of peace.

Then there is Control. Say an enemy of peace comes in, like stress. We try to control things that we actually think we have control over. We try to control people or environment or our schedule. Because if I can control something, then my life feels a little more in control. Arguments about

climate change crack me up, because first of all, climate has always been changing since the beginning of time. Why do we think that we are smart enough to decide which climate is best for the

world. And even if we could know what’s best, what makes us think that we can actually control the environment. We are not that powerful, or that good. But still we try to control.

Sometimes to cope with the enemies of peace, we Consume. If we have the financial resources some of us will try to consume in order to buy peace in our lives. Then we always have our eyes on something that we know would give us peace, would bring peace into our life. That car, that house, that electronic gadget. Buy a new phone, a new IPOD, a new toy, a new life. Or we try to buy peace for other people. If I can just get you this or that, then you can have peace. No, it doesn’t work, but still we consume to cope with the enemies of peace.

And sometimes we do nothing at all. Our preferred means of coping is Procrastination. We don’t worry, don’t try to control things, don’t consume. We just don’t do anything, and just pretend that all those enemies of peace are going to go away. But it’s just another way to cope.

Now all of these coping strategies, and I’m sure there are more, have one thing in common. They don’t work. It’s like a ping pong game where this enemy comes bouncing into our life and we take our favorite paddle, worry, control, whatever, and we whack it away. But just like ping pong, those enemies keep bouncing back and we just keep swinging at them. Now I ask you, can you really find peace in the midst of a ping pong game? No. And what’s worse is that these enemies of peace just keep us playing the same game. And peace eludes us.

It’s not that difficult to look at someone’s life and know whether they have peace or if they are just playing the game. God doesn’t want us playing games. He wants to come into our life and give us peace, a peace beyond anything we could ever imagine. But in order to get this peace we have to stop playing games and start digging a little deeper. We have to put aside these shallow, surface enemies, and begin to look deep inside ourselves to see what’s really going on. We have to take off the masks, peel away that hard cover over our hearts, and see what’s really going on.

For some it is Fear that infects us and often that fear is related to the future. What’s going to happen, or will happen next? We fear what is to come, and it’s gripping our hearts and stealing our peace. For others, it’s Anger. We can’t have peace when we’re filled with anger. The smallest thing will set us off, and rage erupts. Our anger keeps us imprisoned and we can find no peace. And for others, there is guilt. We feel guilt or shame about something from our past. We can’t live with it and yet we can’t get past it. And peace is beyond our grasp. Fear of the future. Anger in the present. Guilt from the past. Sometimes we visit those places, and sometimes we live there. And sometimes they feed one another. Fear has us on edge on what is to come and so the first thing that happens, anything makes us angry, so angry we over react. And then we feel guilty about how angry we were. Our world is chaos and we cannot find any peace.

It is not God’s desire for us to live without peace. And we have pretty much proven to ourselves that the ways we have been trying to find peace just aren’t working. It is time to try a different way. It is time to try God’s way. And God does have a plan for us, but we do not have time for it today. But this week, think about the ways you have tried to cope with the enemies of peace, and look deeper within yourself to see the true issues that you are dealing with. And then turn toward the Lord and

pray everyday, at least once, saying, ALord, I have tried the ways of the world, and they have only left me troubled and in pain. Lord Jesus, come into my life in a big way, for your peace is what I need. Come to me, Lord Jesus.” And in your life may it be so. Amen.