

Ole Miss FCA Weekly Devotional: 3/29/10

The Power and Passion of the Master Coach, Elliot Johnson



Thought of the Week:

God's Glory is Declared in His Name, Yahweh-Shalom, "The Lord is Peace"

Verse of the Week:

So Gideon built an altar to the Lord there and called it "The Lord is Peace." Judges 6:24

Bob Richards, a theology professor from California, was one of America's great Olympic heroes of the 1950s. In 1952, Richards won the pole vault in Helsinki with a vault of 14'11". He won again in Melbourne in 1956, this time going 14'11 1/2". More importantly, Richards acted as a genuine peacemaker in 1952. It was the first year that the USSR sent a team to the Olympics, and many people envisioned the games as the frontline of the Cold War. Richards felt otherwise. He became a major force in encouraging peace and friendship between athletes of the USA and the Soviet Union.

In acting as a peacemaker, Richards showed himself to be a follower of the God who is peace. How did the Lord reveal this part of His nature? Let's return to our study of Jewish history for the answer. It had been over two hundred years since God revealed Himself as Yahweh-M'Kaddesh, the "God who sanctifies." The people of Israel had forgotten He was Yahweh-Yireh, the "God who provides redemption." They neglected Yahweh-Rophe, "the God who heals" and who would have healed them of all their sin and sorrow if they had returned to Him. They turned their backs on Yahweh-Nissi, their "banner of victory." They fell into the most hideous practices of their pagan neighbors—worship of idols, of self, and of pleasure. But when they lost their purity, they began to also lose their peace and their prosperity! The enemy they should have defeated now defeated them and drove them into caves of refuge. It was the period of the judges—repeating cycles of sin, repentance, and restoration—as God continually raised up leaders to deliver them. Gideon was such a judge.

For seven years, Israel squirmed under the attacks of the Midianites—roving, warlike raiders who took everything in sight. As Gideon secretly threshed what little wheat he had hidden, the angel of Yahweh appeared to him with a promise of deliverance. In Gideon's restless struggle and worry, Yahweh Himself (Judges 6:22) appeared to bring peace. By faith, Gideon built an altar as a memorial, naming it Yahweh-Shalom in anticipation of victory and peace.

What does Shalom and its various shades of meaning imply? It implies a "harmony of relationship based upon the payment of a debt." Shalom and its derivatives are translated peace some 170 times in Scripture.

Peace depends upon righteousness (Isaiah 32:17). The unrighteous do not know peace (Romans 3:11, 17). In fact, Isaiah 57:20-21 tells us that there is never peace for the wicked. Man must first give glory to God, and then he will enjoy peace on earth (Luke 2:14). Only when Jesus, the Prince of Peace, comes to rule will there be world peace. Israel should have been enjoying the peace and rest of their promised land. They had been saved (redeemed) from slavery in Egypt. But through disobedience, the peace of God was not theirs to enjoy. They had peace with God because of His covenant promises to their nation, but they did not enjoy the peace of God!

Are you enjoying God's peace? We only have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). He made peace for us by the blood of His cross (Colossians 1:20). Has

disobedience caused His peace to leave you? Then fix your mind upon Him, trusting Him completely. He has thoughts of peace toward you (Jeremiah 29:11). Isaiah 26:3 says, "You [God] will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast [fixed upon God], because he trusts in you [God]." The more we think of Him and trust in Him, the more of His peace we will experience.

Philippians 4:7 says that God's peace transcends all understanding. We need not be anxious about anything (Philippians 4:6). The amount of peace we experience depends upon our trust and upon our obedience. You can enjoy His peace today. His name, Yahweh-Shalom, guarantees it.

Like Bob Richards, let us be peacemakers by demonstrating the peace that exists between Yahweh-Shalom and His obedient children.

Time Out:

- (1) When the angel of the Lord addressed Gideon, He referred to Gideon as someone he *could* become through the power of God (Judges 6:12). How did the angel refer to Gideon?
- (2) Read Judges 7 and 8. Summarize the events that followed the visit of the angel.
 - What did the land enjoy during Gideon's lifetime?
 - How long did the peace last?
 - What later robbed the Israelites of peace (8:33-35)?
- (3) Name three reasons people do not enjoy God's peace today.
- (4) For what reasons do you not enjoy the peace of God?
- (5) How can you enjoy God's peace (Philippians 4:6-8)?