

PEACE FROM PRISON

By Pastor Paulus Budiono
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Shalom,

In this service, I can't deny that we are delighted to worship the Lord while listening to the song sung by the Vocal Group and the Youth Choir. We rejoice and admit that the Lord is alive and His miracles are real. But the question remains: to what extent do we rejoice in Him? Are we still able to be joyful when we are in a burden or imprisoned like Apostle Paul? Can we imagine the environment in prison? In real life, money is power: Inside the prison, drug kingpins can still run their illegal transactions to gain huge profit without thinking the future generation of the nation; corruptors could live in luxurious, air-conditioned-cells; convicted criminals made troubles and ran-away; etc. Is there peace in prison?

How's Apostle Paul's condition in the prison in Rome 62-63 AD? Was he frustrated and disheartened, begging to be freed because he did not do any crimes? He wrote a short letter to the Philippians expressing gratitude, "*May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you **grace and peace.***" (Philippians 1:2)

In the writings of the Apostle Paul that we hear and read not the least revealed sadness and suffering he experienced. Instead, he preached grace and peace to the Philippians even though he was in an uncomfortable situation and condition in prison (Philippians 1: 13-14). Plus at that time there were people who were actively preaching the Gospel not sincerely but based on envy, jealousy, self-interest etc. But their actions did not make the burden of prison heavier (v. 17).

The word 'peace' (Greek: *irene*; Heb.: Shalom) is not just a greeting that we usually say at the beginning of formal or informal encounters so that it seems to make small talk without understanding the real meaning. Do we ignore this greeting or respond to "shalom" too and believe in grace and peace from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ with us?

Remember, the Apostle Paul uttered shalom (peace) precisely when he suffered in prison. In ancient times the prison was a place where the king's employees, criminals, people who owed money but they could not pay, spread the heresy, etc. They were all put into jail. Example: Joseph was imprisoned because he was accused of desecrating Potiphar's

wife (Genesis 39: 14,20); Paul was imprisoned for preaching the gospel of Christ - a new doctrine which harmed the Jews.

Who is the Apostle Paul? He used to be the person who often imprisoned Christians in Jerusalem (Acts 8: 1-3). At that time he was even carrying a power of attorney from the high priest to arrest Christians in Damascus to bring them to Jerusalem (Acts 9: 1- 2). But on the way to Damascus, he repented after meeting Jesus. Then he was used as an instrument for Him (vv. 3-5,15). Paul changed completely, he preached the gospel and for that he was willing to suffer imprisonment for the sake of Christ. How about us? We are free and not imprisoned. Have we brought peace to the people around us?

The Apostle Paul emphasized that this shalom/peace came from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ even though the word 'shalom' was spoken by the Jews while 'greetings' or 'peace' were more commonly said and heard. Paul liked using the word 'shalom' not because he was a Jewish person who was quite proficient and understood the meaning of the word. That is why even from prison he could say peace and this is a miracle - coming out of the comfort zone into a terrible one. He still had peace - which we often underestimate because we think miracles are always associated with spectacular things. Honestly, don't we easily grumble when we experience uncomfortable conditions and situations that we don't expect? For example: we nag when the church's air conditioner turns off or when we're a little cold and so on.

The word 'shalom' also means to be safe, complete, friendly, prosperous. When we say 'shalom', we wish the recipient of the shalom to be safe (body, mental and all that belongs to him), complete, friendly and prosperous. Clearly, peace is an extraordinary wealth and the church is increasingly united into one body of Christ. Therefore, the pulpit should not be used as an arena of exclusion and division, not unification, simply because it boasts of its own dogma and cult of the priest. Remember, all churches must hold to only one dogma / doctrine that is the Word of Christ.

What are the consequences of saying the word 'shalom' carelessly?

- The word 'shalom' is so easily and automatically slides out of the mouth of the Jews without exception spoken by **Joram**, son of Ahab, king of Israel. Jehu was anointed by the young prophet to be king of Israel and assigned to kill the family of Ahab to avenge to Jezebel the blood of all God's servants (2 Kings 9: 1-8). Jehu went to Jezreel to meet Joram (v. 16) who was sick at the time after the war against Hazael, king of Aram (v. 15). Jehu was greeted by Joram's horsemen who asked for peace/shalom

but the messenger did not respond. Twice Joram sent an order of horsemen asking for peace but the two did not return. Finally Joram himself went out to meet Jehu and invited Ahaziah, king of Judah, who was visiting him at that time (v. 21). Each took a chariot and met Jehu in the Naboth orchard. Joram asked Jehu, *"Do you come in peace, Jehu?"* What did Jehu answer? *"How can there be peace as long as the idolatry and witchcraft of your mother, Jezebel, are all around us?"* (v. 22) Right away Joram turned to flee but Jehu pulled his bow with all his power. The arrow pierced his heart so Yoram fell in his chariot. Jehu further instructed his officers to throw the body of Joram into the garden of Naboth in return for the blood of Naboth and his children (vv. 23-25). Seeing this incident, Ahaziah tried to escape but he also died in the bow (v. 27).

- **Adonijah**, son of King David and Hagit, made himself king to succeed David (1 Kings 1: 5) but Solomon, son of David and Bathsheba, who ascended the throne (vv. 28-30).

One day Adonijah went to Bathsheba and was asked by Solomon's mother, *"Have you come with peaceful intentions?"* Adonia answered, *"Yes, peace."* Then Adonia said, *"As you know, the kingdom was rightfully mine; all Israel wanted me to be the next king. But the tables were turned, and the kingdom went to my brother instead; for that is the way the Lord wanted it. He replied, "Speak to King Solomon on my behalf, for I know he will do anything you request. Ask him to let me marry Abishag, the girl from Shunem."* (1 Kings 2: 13-17)

Apparently behind the word "shalom", there is a sex problem! What happened to Adonijah? His life ended being beheaded (vv. 23-25).

Be careful, do not say shalom carelessly or with bad intentions behind it because it is not peace that will be obtained but pain that befalls!

Who is the Giver of shalom / peace?

- **THE LORD** (Yahweh) told Moses to inform Aaron and his children (priests) that they were given peace with the aim of blessing the Israelites (Numbers 6: 22-27).

It is very clear that God (God the Father) is the Giver of peace and assigns priests to carry on/channel peace to others.

From the beginning, God had promised the ancestors of the nation of Israel, Abram, *"I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and **you will be a blessing to others.**"* (Genesis

12: 2)

Did the priests carry out their duties according to God's will? As time went by, God was very disappointed and even angry with the priests because they did not listen to Him nor respect His Name (Malachi 2: 2,8). They even made offerings of defective sacrifices (Malachi 1: 6-8).

Hasn't God shown His love and given Jesus as a perfect sacrifice for sinful humans? But what was the appreciation of the priests who had been redeemed by the sacrifice of His Only Begotten Son? They have abused peace and sacrificed carelessly.

- **Jesus Christ rose** from the dead. Before going into agony to death on the cross, Jesus told His disciples, *"But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you."* ***"I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid."*** (John 14: 26-27)

Jesus said peace when Judas would betray (John 13: 26-27), Peter would deny (vv. 36-39) and the other disciples would leave Him alone but He was not alone because the Father was with Him (John 16:32). Jesus told them all this so that they might have peace in Him and reminded them to be strong in the suffering of persecution in this world because He had overcome the world (v. 33).

The peace given by Jesus is way different from the one from the world because His shalom is marked with His own blood. Therefore, God entrusted shalom to the priests because they always brought the blood of the sacrificed bulls, rams, and birds for the atonement of the Israelites' sins. However, the sacrifices according to the Law are just the shadow of Jesus' sacrifice that He offered His own body as the perfect offering (Hebrews 10:1-10). For this very reason, His shalom is truly incomparable.

Truly *shalom* from Jesus is related to His Person. If (promise) peace runs out and is lost, the world will grip us with misery and hopelessness. With the death of Jesus, no one can provide certainty and proof that Heavenly Father forgives the sins of those who crucified Jesus (Luke 23:34) also witnessed God giving the miracle of salvation in exchange for the miracle of healing. Were not his two disciples with grim faces walking away from Jerusalem down to Emmaus because Jesus whom they hoped to come to free the Israelites was dead? They did not recognize the risen Jesus who was walking with them (Luke 24: 13-21).

We should be grateful that Jesus rose from the dead and through Paul's writings we are increasingly convinced of the hope and peace of the Lord Jesus Christ with us. Evidently after Jesus rose from the dead, He met His disciples at night that Sunday in a place with a locked door for fear of the Jews. He gives peace to those who fear and lose shalom, making them glad again (John 20: 19-20).

Jesus has the right to give peace to anyone on condition that peace is not enjoyed for oneself but passed on to others; in other words, He sent us just as He was sent by His Father (v. 21). Example: the Apostle Paul (old) and his spiritual son, Timothy (young), shared peace with the saints (church) in Philippi, church overseers (elders) and deacons (Philippians 1: 1-2).

Peace comes from the triune God but the devil steals that peace and offers this world a false peace full of pretense and hidden interests. Be careful not to get caught up in the devil's tricks! His peace to be shared with anyone is not limited to certain people because Jesus died for all nations of the world. Indonesia needs peace (from the crucified Jesus) coming out of the mouth of Christians these days. Peace that begins with the suffering of Jesus to death on the cross on Golgotha produces victory. And peace/shalom is no longer limited to symbols or small talk but the result of renewal of life. Is not everyone in Christ a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17)? Reason (= mind) relates to thoughts, desires and feelings renewed not behind our words; therefore, we can preach peace to anyone after we ourselves are filled with peace from God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Video ibadah ini dapat Anda lihat di sini [Ibadah Umum - 21 Juli 2019 - Pdt. Paulus Budiono.](#)