

PURSUING PEACE



IN A CHAOTIC WORLD
PSALM 34

Steps Toward Peace

Psalm 34: 1-22

- ***Shalom***. That is the Hebrew word for peace that you have probably heard before. It's an important concept all throughout the Bible. But it may seem like something that is unattainable in this world, at least unattainable when we are experiencing various trials.
- **KEY VERSE:** Psalm 34: 14 Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it.
- **In the Old Testament**
- In the Old Testament, “peace” carries the fundamental meaning of welfare, prosperity, or wholeness as well as the absence of hostility. The term is frequently used as the antithesis of harm.
- *Peace in Greetings and Farewells*

- The biblical characters use the term “peace” in friendly greetings and farewell statements to communicate an absence of hostility. For example, when his brothers are unsure whether he will exact retribution on them for having extra money in their sacks, Joseph assures them of his friendly disposition toward them by stating, “Peace to you; do not fear” (Gen 43:23)
- *Peace in the Sense of Welfare*
- The Old Testament contains examples of people asking about “a person’s peace,” which equate to inquiries about how the person is faring.
- The biblical authors also use the term “peace” in prayers for prosperity for the king (Psa 72:7), Jerusalem (Psa 122:6–8), and Israel (Pss 125:5; 128:6). God speaks peace to His people (Psa 85:8) to bless them (Num 6:26).
- *Peace as the Absence of Hostility*
- At times, “peace” indicates the absence of hostilities. In texts where the term “peace” contrasts with warfare, it likely communicates a mere cessation of warfare instead of friendship. Ecclesiastes 3:8 places peace and warfare in direct contrast: “There is a time for war, and there is a time for peace.”
- Isaiah predicted that when the Messiah arrived, He would be called the “Prince of Peace”—presumably because He would achieve lasting peace over His enemies (Isa 9:6; compare Mic 5:5).
- *Peace in Relationships*
- In the Old Testament, the term “peace” is often used to describe a relationship characterized by friendship, care, loyalty, and love. These relationships can be with God

or between people. A close friend in the Old Testament is commonly called “a man of my peace” (Pss 7:4; 41:9; Jer 20:10; 38:22; Obad 7).

- A relationship with God marked by loyalty and love is also described as a relationship of peace (contra Westermann, “Peace [*Shalom*],” 40).
- Those possessing this peace have a future (Psa 37:37), joy (Prov 12:20), and long life (Psa 34:14).
- *Covenant of Peace*
- Peace with God and one another is fundamental to the promises of Israel’s restoration and the new creation. Isaiah 32:15–18 promises that when the Spirit, who is the sign of the new age, is poured out, He will create righteousness and peace. God has future plans of peace for His people (Jer 29:11); peace will characterize the new temple (Hag 2:9) and Jerusalem (Jer 33:9), whose inhabitants will “love truth and peace” (Zech 8:19). In the Genesis creation account, the narrative revolves around the notion of peace—the creation and maintenance of order and the reversal of disorder (Ollenburger, “Creation and Peace,” 147–58).
- Isaiah places emphasis on future peace with God.
- **Peace in the New Testament**
- The Graeco-Roman concept of peace held various nuances. For example, the Homeric literature portrayed peace as an ideal state that a hero achieved through war. This led to the common adage, “If you wish peace, prepare for war” (compare Vegetius, *Concerning Military Affairs* III [preface]).
- *Peace in Greetings and Farewells*

- The greetings and farewells in the New Testament also reflect those of the Old Testament in their use of the term “peace” (compare Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 5.5). For example, when Jesus sends out His disciples to accomplish His ministry, He instructs them to “let their peace be upon a house” (Matt 10:13; Luke 10:5–6)—referring to a friendly greeting (compare Heb 11:31). Jesus Himself issues the friendly farewell “go in peace” after healing the woman with a flow of blood (Mark 5:34; Luke 8:48) and forgiving a sinful woman (Luke 7:50). After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples several times with the greeting “peace be to you” (Luke 24:36; John 20:19, 21, 26).
- The greetings and farewells of the New Testament’s letters also use the term “peace.” The New Testament texts often open with the prayer that grace and peace would be given to believers (1 Thess 1:1; 1 Pet 1:2; 2 Pet 1:2; Jude 2)
- ***Peaching on steps to peace – STEP ONE – Start with the Lord.***

Main Point: Peace can only be found through a personal relationship with God.

- The Lord is central to the idea of peace because He is the one who brings true peace in our lives.
 - Ps 4:8** I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; For You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.
 - Is 26:3** You will keep *him* in perfect peace, *Whose mind is stayed on You*, Because he trusts in You.
 - Lk 2:14** “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”
 - Jn 14:27** Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.
 - Ro 5:1** Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
 - Php 4:7** and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

I. Praise the Lord

a. Chiastic structure to Psalm 34

P(34:1)	34:1 Of David (34:1)	
A(34:2-4)	34:3 My soul will glory in the LORD (נפש)	
B(34:5-8)	"34:7 In my misfortune I called, the LORD heard and saved me from all distress. (34:7)"	(שמעו מכל צרותיו)
C(34:9-11)	34:10 Fear the LORD (יראו את יהוה)	
C'(34:12-15)	34:12 I will teach you the fear of the LORD (יראת יהוה)	
B'(34:16-22)	"34:18 When the just cry out, the LORD hears and rescues them from all distress. (34:18)"	(שמעו מכל צרותם)
A'(34:23)	34:23 The LORD redeems the life of his servants (נפש)	

b. VERSES 3 and 23

- c. How can our soul be at peace with God? Peace is cultivated through praise and redemption.
- d. David understood what it meant to praise the Lord even when you don't feel like it.
- e. In fact, the superscription on this Psalm points us to David writing this in the midst of a difficult time in his life.
- f. It's easy to praise God when you feel like it, but peace comes when you can praise God and you don't feel like it.
- g. These verses point us to the supernatural relationship that exists between creator and creation.
- h. What we offer to God is praise. What God offers to us is redemption.

II. Cry out to the Lord

- a. At times, our praise may sound more like cries. Or they may sound more like laments.
- b. God wants us to bring that to Him as well. **VERSES 7 and 18.**
- c. There are times in our lives where we are overwhelmed by the circumstances of life. There are times when we are faced with conflict and we wonder – will it ever end?
- d. It's in those moments that we have to remind ourselves – *true peace isn't the absence of conflict – it's the presence of Christ.*

III. Fear the Lord

- a. We should respond to the Lord with reverence and awe. Understanding our proper role in the presence of a holy God.