

Peace Moment for October 2, 2022
Responsible Choices
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Peace Moment

Our theme for tonight is Responsible Choices but after reading through our focus scripture from Lamentations I felt that I had been involved in a Bait and Switch!

The first 6 verses of the 1st chapter of Lamentations talk about the aftermath of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. "How lonely sits the city that once was full of people!" begins the lament. Not such a different lament than one we often hear today – "This sanctuary was once full of people, but now very few remain." Only several verses later do we hear some ownership of the reason for the lament, but the blame is still not quite acknowledged. This has happened to Jerusalem because "the Lord has made her suffer for the multitude of her transgressions: her children have gone away..." The writer of Lamentations seemed to believe that God had abandoned the people of Jerusalem and indeed even directed their enemies to cause harm.

In Romans 8, Paul asks the question: "Who will separate us from the love of Christ?" His answer was that nothing can separate us. He then gives us one of the greatest and most comforting promises in all of Scripture: "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Those are all external factors; we must look to ourselves as the source of this separation.

What barriers do we allow or even court to give us permission to build a wall around ourselves? Am I looking for an excuse to keep separate? How do we work towards tearing out those barriers and allowing God back in? Carolyn Brock, in a chapter of the book, "Becoming a Transformed People," says this: "God is in all things and all things are in God. We can never be separate from God in any real sense. The atoms, quarks, neutrons, and electrons of our bodies are bathed in, permeated by, held together in precise elegant patterns by God's loving intelligence and will. It is this intermingling of spirit and body that creates the wholeness and joy of soul. And it is for this joy that we and all other beings have been created....We are wired for God, but somehow we must consciously choose, consciously open up to that relationship if it is to be part of our lived experience."

God does not force us to receive this unconditional, everlasting love. God allows us to choose whether we accept God's love and grace. One of the Enduring Principles states, "God gives humans the ability to make choices about whom or what they will serve." Doctrine and Covenants 163:10b warns of our action of not receiving God's gift

and tells us to not turn away from God's love because of personal emotions such as pride, fear, or guilt. The good news is that every day we can decide to receive God's love and grace. God is infinitely patient and is always waiting for us to accept the gift of love and yearns to draw us close.

Meditation Questions

1. Think of a time you may have blamed God for consequences resulting from your own choices. How did you resolve your feelings?
2. What is something that separates you from a relationship with God? How might you choose to alleviate the separation and strengthen the relationship?

Prayer for Peace

Our loving, patient, and gracious God:

We recognize the many gifts and blessings you have bestowed on us, your children. Intelligence, reasoning, empathy, curiosity, wonderment, and generosity are gifts that require nurturing and willingness to express.

We recognize also that fear, anger, selfishness, apathy, and pride can lead us to choices that limit our ability to recognize your blessings.

We ask for courage to replace fear with assurance,
anger with tolerance,
selfishness with generosity,
apathy with passion,
and pride with humility.

Help us use your gifts of intelligence to teach,
reasoning to find solutions,
curiosity for exploration,
wonderment to bring joy,
and generosity to offer liberation.

Help us to search out those things which separate us from you
and illuminate the path of reconciliation.

Amen.