

The Peace of God

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

John 14:27



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*The Lord bless you
and keep you;*

*The Lord make his
face shine upon you
and be gracious
to you;*

*The Lord turn his
face towards you and
give you peace.*

Numbers 6:24–26

PEACE IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF all positive relationships. Peace is necessary if we are to experience the joy and well-being of a contented life. Many people today are not at peace with themselves, their neighbour or Creator.

This booklet asks “Where is peace to be found today?” Peace is desirable and has to do with our focus on life. Where is our focus? Is it on our problems, ourselves, or our Creator?

Our opening article is a commentary on the benediction, the blessing found in the sixth chapter of the Old Testament book of Numbers. Here God instructed Aaron and his sons in

the blessing of the nation of Israel. The benediction reminds us that God’s love and compassion are the foundation of peace. We will be looking into the riches of the benediction.

God’s blessing of peace is something we need, and he gives it to us through the Holy Spirit (Galations 5:22): *“But the fruit [result] of the Spirit is love, joy, peace”*

We have covered two fruits of God’s Holy Spirit in earlier booklets. This booklet focuses on God’s wonderful blessing of *peace*. □



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The Path to Wisdom is Peace

“Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold.

She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her.

Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honour.

Her ways are pleasant ways and all her paths are peace.”

Proverbs 3:13–17



GOD DESIRES TO BLESS US, WHICH MEANS HE LOVES US and wishes us the best in life. Many people believe God to be harsh and demanding, waiting for us to make a mistake so that he can punish us. However, the Old Testament, where this passage is found, says God wants to bless us. It is his desire to help us in life so that we can experience peace and everything that is good. God sees us in a positive light and wants the best for us.

That he will “keep” us, means he will take care of us and walk beside us every step of the way. He will protect us, keep us from evil and care for us as a mother and father care for a child. He is our Father and we are his children, his creation, which he loves. He allows trials and difficulties in life, but that is to help us learn from our faults and the fault of others; to learn to trust him in seeing us through.

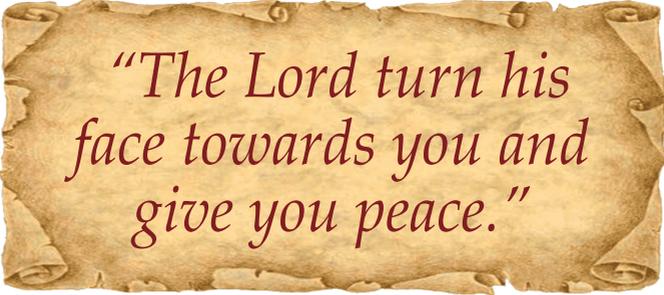
In the New Testament Jesus tells us that he will never leave us, that he will be with us until the end of this age. There is great security in these words. So if we feel we have lost contact with God, we can be sure it is not he who moved, but us.

“The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you”

THIS VERSE TELLS US HOW GOD LOOKS AT US. THE HEBREW WORD FOR “face” expresses a relationship and closeness. The verse states that God has a personal relationship with us, is close to us. More than that, his face shines when he looks at us! In other words God has a positive and happy approach to us and no-one is closer to us than him. He is closer than our spouse and children, even our parents. Because he is our Creator, he desires to save us. He knows everything about us, our every thought! No one is as close to us as God! In spite of our faults and mistakes he desires to help us, if we are willing to accept that help.

Our picture of God might be one of a disciplinarian, who is out to punish our every mistake, and it is true that we should have respect and be in awe of him. He is the Almighty, and Paul writes that it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of God if we trample on his gift of salvation or the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. But the basis of his relationship with us is grace. He is gracious towards us and desires that we accept his gift, rather than stand in judgement for our sins.

Grace is one of the great differences between Christianity and other major world religions, where the relationship between “God” and humans is based on works. Within Christianity God is a gracious God who loves us not because we are good, poor, successful or rich, but because we are his creation. We are his children and should accept his grace.



*“The Lord turn his
face towards you and
give you peace.”*

GOD SAYS HE WILL TAKE THE FIRST STEP IN A relationship with us! He desires to remove the barrier between himself and mankind. He desires to give us stability and security and help us understand our existence in this chaotic world. It is he who has created us, opened our minds to his existence and who offers us grace and forgiveness.

We do not deserve God’s grace nor the relationship we have with him. It is his gift to us. Everything we have is from him. Our family, our lives are gifts from God that he has entrusted to us. All we see around us is a gift, even though what we see may be in the process of being destroyed by man.

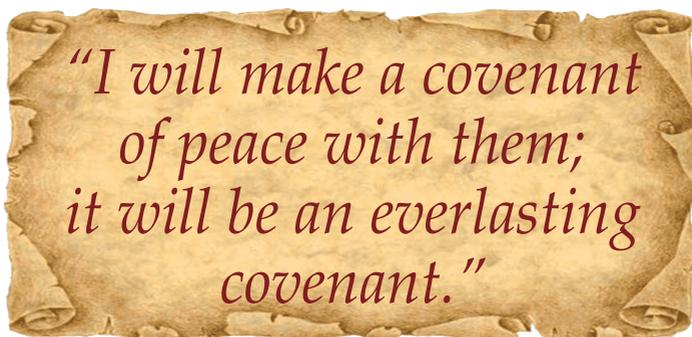
God has taken the initiative in a relationship with us. He wants to give us the foundation for all relationships: *peace*. Peace is a prerequisite for any good relationship in life; it is inner stability, confidence and security. This is what God desires for us.

Shalom (sjalom) *— Hebrew for “peace”*

The Hebrew word SHALOM, translated “peace” in the English language Bibles, is used as a greeting and has a great richness in meaning. It relates to much more than the absence of war or conflict. In using “shalom” a person wishes the very best for another, which includes good health, well-being, friendship and security. A prerequisite for all these is “peace”. “Shalom” means “whole” or “complete”, and peace is what we experience when life is complete!

Because it contains an all-enclosing desire for everything good, Shalom is translated a number of different ways in our Bibles. Peace is also the opposite of fear, insecurity, hatred and unrest.

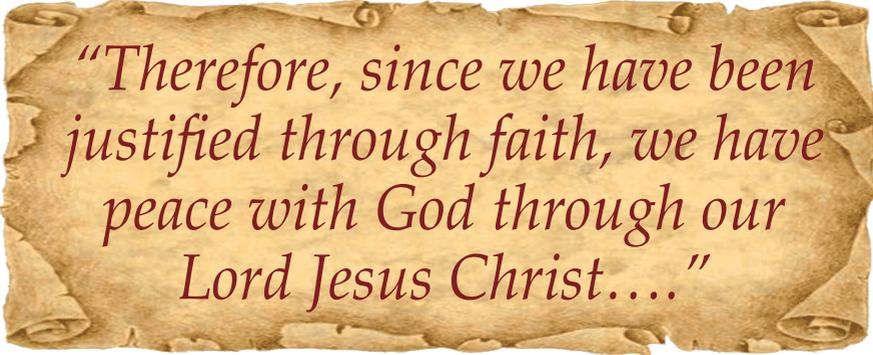
The Jews looked upon shalom as one of the pillars of social relations. Without peace it is impossible to maintain social order. Peace is an expression of security and trust between people. Peace with God is necessary for a good relationship with him. Peace with ourselves is necessary for a healthy, positive and constructive outlook, mentally, spiritually and physically. Peace with our neighbour is necessary for positive relationships.



PEACE FOR ALL MANKIND WILL FINALLY COME WHEN God returns to establish his kingdom on earth. Every day when we pray: "Thy kingdom come" in the Lord's prayer, we admit that we need God's help to bring peace to all people on earth. For that to happen we need God's peace, joy, love and leadership.

Millions of people are today living in situations of war, famine, poverty and injustice. War is the result of a struggle for power and of greed; it is the result of the wrong use of the free will God has given mankind. But when God's kingdom comes, he will enter into a peace treaty with all peoples on earth. This is the hope for the future expressed in the messianic prophecies of the Bible: that God will rule over all people and bring peace on earth.

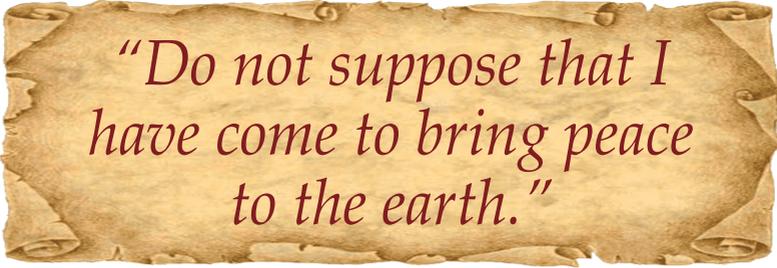
Throughout history millions of people have looked to this time, when God will intervene and force mankind to live at peace. Truly it is a day to look forward to!



“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ....”

WE STAND JUSTIFIED BEFORE GOD AND THEREFORE THERE IS NO enmity between us. We stand cleansed before him, not because of our good deeds but because of his grace despite those deeds. Our sins are removed, atoned for. Therefore there is no longer a barrier between ourselves and God. We have the opportunity for a relationship with him and can approach him, something he wants us to do. We achieve that relationship through reading his Word, through prayer and meditation. We have peace with God, which is his gift to us because we cannot find it ourselves. We have a choice to make: either we accept God’s peace or we don’t.

The New Testament uses two Greek words to express a pact. These are translated as “agreement” and “covenant”. The first is used when parties, after negotiation, finally come to an agreement. The latter is used when one party lays down the conditions, leaving the other party the option of accepting or declining the offer. This is the word used in our relationship to God and the New Covenant. It is up to us whether we accept God’s peace or reject it; there is no room for negotiation. If we accept, we must change our way of life in order to experience God’s peace.



*“Do not suppose that I
have come to bring peace
to the earth.”*

THese words were spoken by Christ while instructing his disciples prior to sending them out to preach the gospel. Jesus says that his teachings will cause problems and he confronts the values of society on a number of points. We have to choose whether to follow where society leads or where God leads.

In reading the gospels we see that Jesus was often in disagreement with society. He was not popular with everyone, especially the Pharisees. Those who are ashamed of being Christian are those whom Jesus will be ashamed of when he returns. It is a paradox that the message of peace creates conflict, but it cannot be avoided because that message is in conflict with greed, lust, egoism and hate. Christians should not be ashamed of their Creator and should be willing to choose his peace.

In Matthew 10:38 Jesus says “...anyone who does not take his cross ... is not worthy of me. In verse 37 he says “Anyone who loves his father and mother more than me is not worthy of me”. These are hard words! But they show how seriously God looks upon our agreement. In a situation where we must choose, God is interested in seeing who is first in our lives.

Christ is the Prince of Peace

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called

*Wonderful Counsellor,
Mighty God,
Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace.*

Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and for ever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

Isaiah 9:5–6

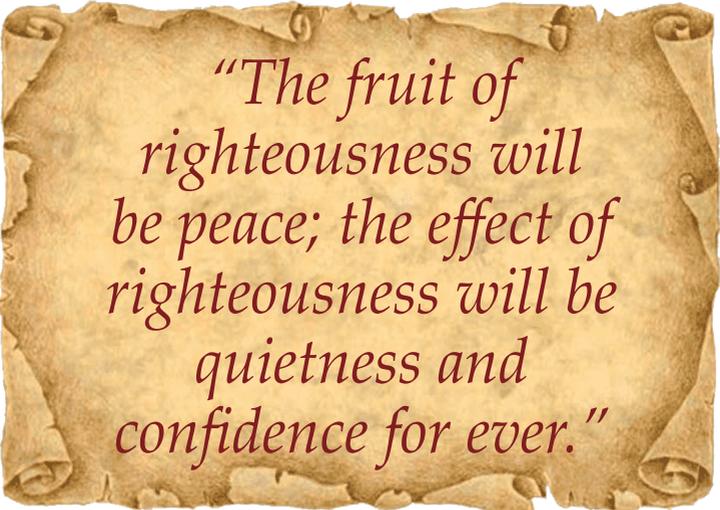
*“For he himself is
our peace ...”*

PAUL WRITES THAT JESUS IS OUR PEACE, AND IN THIS chapter of his letter to the Ephesians Paul explains that Jesus has removed the hostility between Jews and Gentiles, between God and mankind. There is no distinction made between Jew and Greek in the New Covenant as there was in the Old. No one is banned from fellowship with God. All peoples can become God’s people. Jesus has made it possible for man to have direct contact with God. He has removed the barrier of sin.

Peace is God’s presence, his security, and it is Jesus who has made this security possible. Peace is harmony with our Creator, something we experience when we focus on our Lord and Saviour, rather than on our problems.

Isaiah wrote about this in chapter 53 and verse 5 of the book that carries his name: *“...he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”* Only the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ can create peace between God and man. That is why he is our peace.

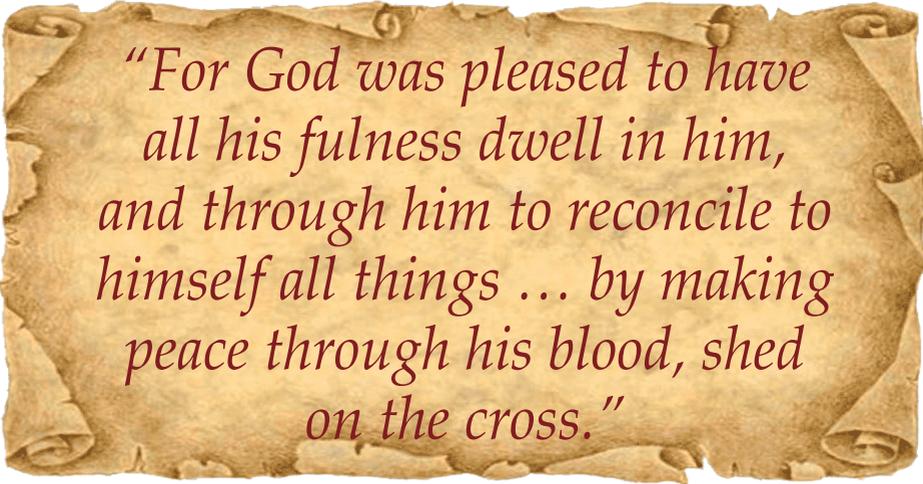




*“The fruit of
righteousness will
be peace; the effect of
righteousness will be
quietness and
confidence for ever.”*

ALTHOUGH PEACE IS THE RESULT OF DOING WHAT is right or of providing for a right relationship between people, it's not always easy to do the right thing. To be in conflict over an important issue is not necessarily wrong, but it must be in accordance with God's standards and not in the interest of revenge or in anger. Should we enter into conflict, we must do so with a feeling of concern for the other party, because we know that in the long run that is what's best for them. When handled correctly, conflict results in peace.

The writer of Psalms puts this quite beautifully: *“Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other”* (Psalms 85:10). There is clearly a connection between doing what is right and finding peace.



“For God was pleased to have all his fulness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things ... by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”

PEACE DOES NOT COME WITHOUT COST. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD COST the life of Jesus Christ. God’s gift of grace and forgiveness were not given without a terrible price: the life of our Creator.

Paul expresses this thought in his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 6, verses 19 through 20: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.”

Jesus created peace through his sacrifice. He removed the barrier of sin between God and his creation. By his sacrifice heaven and earth will be cleansed from sin. Let us remember that if we accept his grace then we must give our lives back to God for his use. We no longer belong to ourselves but completely to God because he bought us by his blood.

God’s blessing of peace (shalom) has a price: the life of our Creator. Let us have deep respect for his sacrifice and when we use his name remember what he has done for us: given his life for our sakes.

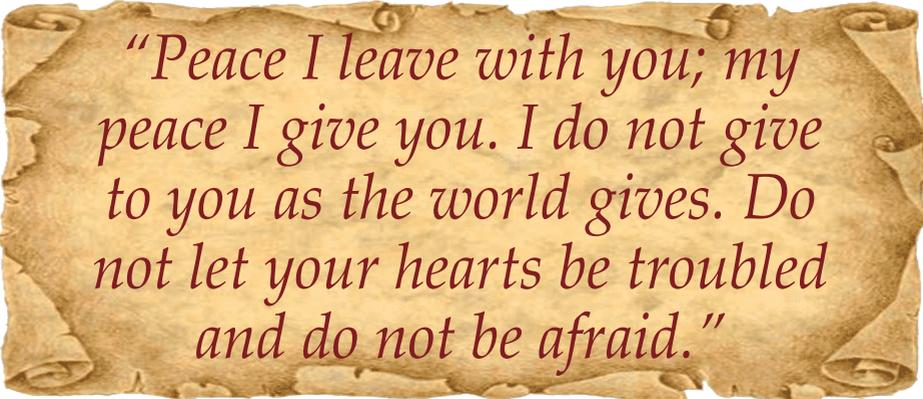
*Lord, Make Me
an Instrument of
Your Peace!*

by
Francis of Assisi

*Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.*

*O, Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.*

*For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
it is in dying that we are born again to
eternal life.*

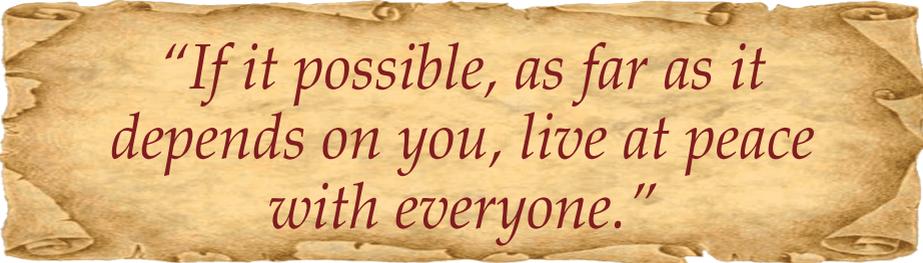


“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

GOD’S PEACE AND THE “PEACE” OF THE WORLD ARE NOT THE SAME THING. The peace of this world is the absence of war or conflict. God’s peace is much more, it is positive and embraces everything that is good. God’s peace is not the absence of something, but the presence of goodness, a feeling of security and wellbeing.

God’s peace is eternal and divine, a spiritual peace independent of material things and circumstances. Though we might experience difficulties—even war and great suffering—we can, at the same time, have an inner peace of both mind and spirit. This is possible because the peace we experience is a gift of God. It is a consequence of the Holy Spirit in our lives (Galatians 5:22). It is not our peace but God’s peace, which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

When God is our master we experience an inner peace and don’t allow problems to dominate our lives. We believe that God is almighty and that he can and will take care of our needs. We understand that he has a plan for us and a solution to world problems. The future is in his hand and when we have learned to accept his will, then we will experience peace in life. But this is not the peace of the world. The world does not have that peace to give.



“If it possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

PAUL WRITES THAT AS MUCH AS IT IS POSSIBLE, WE SHOULD TRY TO BE AT peace with all people and have a positive and constructive relationship with them. This produces mutual respect and happiness.

Paul is talking about relationships with people in general, not just fellow Christians. There were conflicts in the church at Corinth, where members in dispute even resorted to taking one another to court. Paul uses strong words to condemn such behaviour among Christians.

Christians should always strive to live at peace, with Christians and non-Christians alike, strive to be good examples of how to live at peace with their neighbours. God has called us to be examples to our families, our friends and those we meet in our daily lives. He has called us to live a good life that will inspire others to do the same.

In loving our neighbour as ourself, we lay a foundation of peace in our relationship with them. Sometimes, however, it doesn't work that way, and we are forced into conflict. But our motive for entering into conflict must be that of love for neighbour and not out of lust for revenge or because of self-righteousness. By love, we mean *agape*, God's love. *Agape* has been defined as having genuine concern for other people and doing what is best for them in the long run.

God's peace surpasses all understanding and misunderstanding.

Unknown

If Christ is Lord in daily life, peace is Lord in the mind.

Unknown

Peace comes from love, giving up of oneself and forgiving oneself and others.

Horace W. Donegan

Peace is not established in treaties, but in our hearts.

Herbert Hoover

He who desires peace should not talk with his friends, but with his enemies.

Moshe Dayan



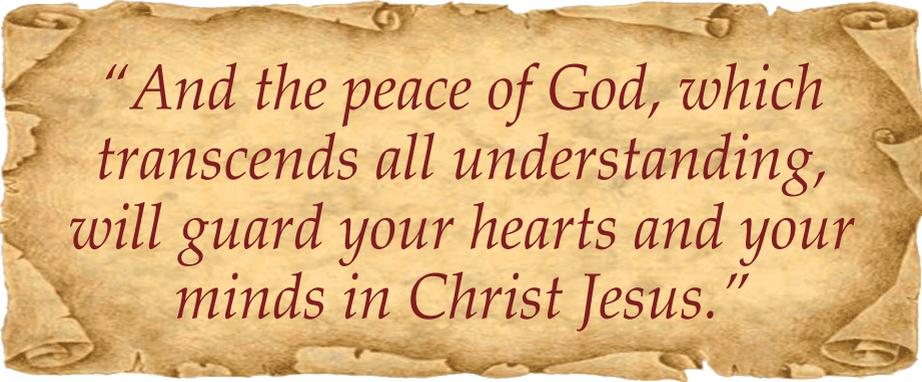
*“Blessed are the peace-
makers, for they will be
called sons of God.”*

THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WANTING PEACE AND MAKING peace; when for example people think they do right in refusing to handle a difficult situation or refuse to enter into a conflict they ought not ignore. They close their eyes to the problem because they believe that if they did otherwise then they would no longer be exercising peace. But that’s the easy way out.

This is a misunderstanding of what Jesus tells us. We should both love peace and make peace. Making peace comes from solving a conflict, not by ignoring it. If we do not make the effort to solve a conflict, then the problem will grow until it becomes unsolvable. The road to peace must sometimes go through conflict.

The Jewish rabbis looked upon the word *shalom* as being the highest ideal, that of a person being able to create right relationships between people. To make peace is to create relationships of trust, openness and concern.

In modern English the Greek word translated “blessed” means “happy”. When we modernize this important verse from the Sermon on the Mount, it becomes: “Happy are those able to create right relationships, for they will be called sons of God.”

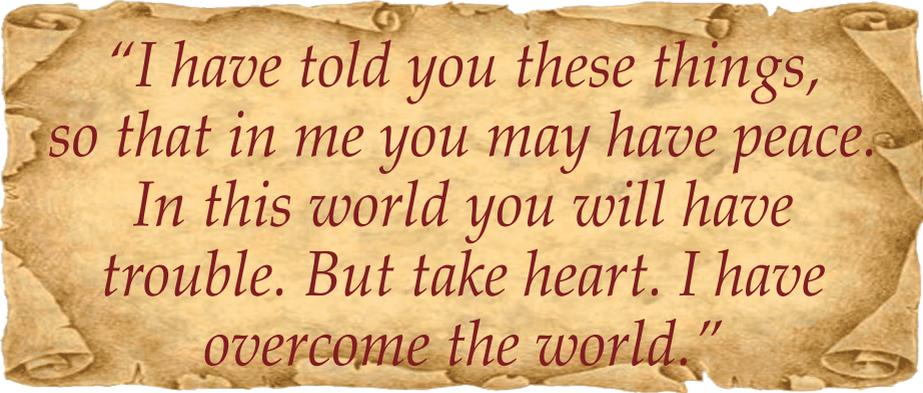


“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

GOD’S PEACE IS A FEELING OF SECURITY IN HIS PROMISES AND HIS PLAN. We experience this peace when we put our lives in his hands; when we place our worries, problems and sicknesses in his care and pray for his help. We experience God’s peace because we come to know that he is in charge of our lives and that we accept his will. There is no animosity between us.

The peace he gives is an inner calmness, a feeling of security that nothing can take away. Nothing we experience in this life, nothing that is said about us can affect our feeling of security with God. This is his peace, a joy and calmness that cannot be expressed in words. God’s peace protects our hearts: our emotions and thoughts.

How many of us are devoid of worries or wrong thoughts that are difficult to control? How many haven’t experienced problems in controlling fears and lusts? God’s peace helps us with this! It protects our minds and emotions. God might not solve our problems in the way we would wish, but he will give us his peace and faith so that problems will not overcome us. If our focus is on our problems, they may destroy us. Focusing on God and on his peace will preserve us.



*“I have told you these things,
so that in me you may have peace.
In this world you will have
trouble. But take heart. I have
overcome the world.”*

THESE WERE JESUS’ CLOSING WORDS TO HIS DISCIPLES AFTER THEIR LAST meal, just a few hours before he was taken prisoner, scourged and crucified. Jesus said these words to strengthen the disciples through the knowledge that he had overcome the world, its temptations and even death. Jesus doesn’t hide the fact that we will experience trials and sufferings in this life. But we must understand that these things are necessary and that there is a solution to the world’s problems: God’s solution.

God allows suffering and pain because he gave mankind free will. But he has a plan, of which Jesus Christ is the foundation, a plan that will save mankind and prevent the destruction of life on earth. When the time is right, according to his plan, God will step in and stop this destruction. We can experience joy and peace in our hearts and love for our neighbour because we understand God’s plan of love. Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the barrier of sin between man and God has been removed and he can give us his Holy Spirit and eternal life. Jesus has taken upon himself our sins and shame.

We must exercise courage, not focus on problems. These we must take to God in prayer, and ask him to give us wisdom in how to handle them. It is then that we experience God’s peace.

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Thank you!

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