

Peace, Peace (Part Two): Christ's Peace

"My Peace I Give to You"

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Many of you old-timers and maybe some of you new-timers will remember a song by John Lennon, "Give Peace a Chance." "Give Peace a Chance" is an anti-war song written by John Lennon. He wrote it in 1969, and it soon became the anthem of the anti-war movement in the US throughout the Vietnam War era. By the way, he wrote it while he was lying in bed. That should tell you something. The lyrics are pretty much nonsensical except for the chorus, and these lyrics essentially imply that everyone is talking about everything but peace.

Its chorus, which is the ultimate earworm, and I apologize for even saying the word, I will not sing it, but its chorus is, "All we are saying is give peace a chance." That phrase, that sentence is repeated 19 times throughout the song. It feels like 99 times after you listen to it and you want to say, I get it, please stop. The listener almost wants to disturb the peace to end the stupid song.

But today we are going to give peace, not a chance, but a thorough review.

My New Oxford American Dictionary lists three definitions of peace. The first is freedom from disturbance, and they give the synonym of tranquility to help us understand what they mean. The second one is a state or period without war, civil disorder, or dispute or dissension between individuals or groups. And the third one is part of the liturgy of some churches. It is a ceremonial handshake or kiss exchanged during a service symbolizing Christian love and unity. You have probably seen it in Scripture as the kiss of peace or that sort of thing. We are just going to forget about that one and we will talk more about the first two.

Now these meanings are standard fare. If you go to just about any dictionary, you will find something similar. But these definitions expose that our English word peace is not very descriptive. And as a stand-in for the concept

of peace found in Scripture, it is actually quite narrow. That is, our English word is quite narrow and thus a rather poor translation of the Greek word and especially the Hebrew word in Scripture.

To convey the richness of the Hebrew word *shalom*, the translators actually would need to have used a list of words, kind of like the Amplified Bible does with various things, to give the reader the full sense of what is being implied in whatever is said in any particular scripture that mentions the concept of peace. It is kind of impractical that they should do that, so they just use the word peace and then you have to scramble, go to your lexicons or hear a good sermon maybe about it to understand what it is all about. The problem, you see, is on our end, not the Hebrews' end and not the Greeks' end. It is our problem because we have such a simple and not very broad word, peace.

We define peace too simply in our own minds and we rarely think through the full ramifications even of the meanings that we ascribe to peace. We just hear peace and we think a certain thing and we do not go very far from there and think it through.

Shalom, on the other hand, takes the basic concept of peace, one that we understand, and adds its positive effects and benefits to the person who is blessed with it over the long run. So it is a word, you could say, that has a present and a future aspect to it, and they include all of that within it. It is not only the state or the condition but the result of this state of peace that we may have. Thus, the meaning of *shalom* is much richer, much deeper, and much farther reaching than mere tranquility or the absence of conflict.

Now, like my sermon a week ago on the first day of Unleavened Bread, this sermon is obviously going to focus on peace. Part One, if you will remember, dealt with Christ's voluntary sacrifice to create peace between God and mankind. Those who believe and accept that sacrifice are pardoned by grace. Justified, their sins are covered by Christ's blood. And so because of that, they have peace with God. There is no longer sin standing in the way. Now our relationship has been restored.

The second kind of peace which I mentioned just briefly in my first sermon, and I did that purposely. I did not want to give too many hints about what

this sermon was going to be about. That second kind of peace is related to the first, but it is not quite the same. It is available, like the first one, only to believers, those who have made the New Covenant with God.

Also this second peace is one that *Christ gives to us*, but we need to still seek it and maintain it and nurture it as we go through our converted lives. And if we do, the abundant life that Christ promises there in John 10:10 will be ours.

Let us start in the scripture where we started last week and we are going to go back to the book of Jeremiah, chapter 6, and we are going to read verses 10 through 15. This will give us a kind of overview and summary of some of the things that I discussed last week but we will add to it. God says,

Jeremiah 6:10-15 To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Indeed their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot give heed. Behold, the word of the Lord is a reproach to them; they have no delight in it. Therefore I am full of the fury of the Lord. I am weary of holding it in. "I will pour it out on the children outside, and on the assembly of young men together; for even the husband shall be taken with the wife, the aged with him who is full of days. And their houses shall be turned over to others, fields and wives together; for I will stretch out My hand against the inhabitants of the land," says the Lord. "Because from the least of them even to the greatest of them, everyone is given to covetousness [Mark was talking about that this morning]; and from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely. They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, saying, 'Peace, peace!' when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time I punish them, they shall be cast down," says the Lord.

Here is an Old Testament prophecy about the people of Israel. It was directed to those who were living there in Jerusalem and Judea at the time when the Babylonians were about to come upon them and be the rod of God, if you will, and punish them for their sins and their turning away from the covenant. But it also applies to the people of God at the end time. We have

to make sure that we are not of this attitude, not of this wickedness. Better to avoid it altogether than to be faced with the wrath of God where He says they are not even ashamed.

But notice that at that time when things were pretty much the absolute worst, you had the prophets and the priests, those who are supposed to be on top of things and telling the people what they need to do—they needed to turn back to God, they needed to stop sinning, they needed to renew the covenant, get back to it—they were saying, "Hey, peace! Things are going to be okay. Things are not as bad as you think they are." So they would say this peace, peace, and it was a lie. There was no peace. There was no peace externally or internally. But they tried to soothe and calm everybody, and then what do you know? The Babylonians came. And then there was certainly no peace.

But you have these people in the pulpits trying to put a band-aid on a gaping wound and it was not working. It only helped slightly, but it certainly was not giving the people a realistic look of what was actually going on.

Let us go to I Thessalonians 5 and we will read the first three verses.

I Thessalonians 5:1-3 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then comes sudden destruction upon them as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

So Paul here is giving a prophecy of similar proportions. He is definitely aiming it at the time of the end, the Day of the Lord. And as he says, we know that it is going to come suddenly. It is going to appear when most people are not looking for it. It is going to be a surprise to most people because they have their minds concentrated on other things and not what God is doing and not what is really happening in the world.

But Paul intimates here that the same thing will go on as happened in Jerusalem and Judea in the time of Jeremiah. There will be people saying, "Hey, all is peaceful. You're not going to have any problems. It's safe out there. We're not going to have these great global conflagrations, these great

conflicts between Europe and America or the Middle East or Asia or what have you. Yeah, the world is moving toward peace." And the outcome is going to be the same. The outcome is sudden destruction. And Paul says here, if you are on that side of things, they shall not escape. It is too late. The great destruction of the day of the Lord is going to come upon them.

So in just a few years, perhaps, we will be hearing these things. The world will seem to shift at the blink of an eye from relative supposed peace to total war. The whole world will be involved and as Paul says, the result is inescapable destruction.

Now the church has always framed these two passages this way. We say that peace or the absence of war, absence of conflict reigns, and then a sudden change to world war. It makes sense from what we see here. And I believe it is the primary prophetic interpretation of these two passages. That is the more literal way of looking at it and that is always a good place to start when you are interpreting prophecy. However, it should not be our only perspective of these passages, especially considering what the biblical words for peace imply.

This interpretation, the primary one that I was talking about, it is a physical interpretation. This is what is happening out in the world or will happen out in the world physically.

But the second more important perspective to us is the spiritual perspective. How does it affect us in the church right now? And how does it affect us, those who are converted, as we approach this time? It is going to be a little different for us because we should know what is going on. We should have a much more spiritual perspective of this, and even of what kind of peace there actually is or the lack thereof spiritually. I think you will understand that when we get a little further along.

So while these passages contrast the absence of war with actual violent war, an expanded understanding of peace exposes man's spiritually rotten interior. Now we have gone from a perspective of what is happening out there exteriorly in the world. Now we see that the absence of peace, that is, the fact that there will be conflict, exposes that the interior of people is sinful and wicked. Because they would not go to war unless there was wickedness

inside. And as I mentioned last week, since Eden, true peace has never existed. Not among human beings, certainly not among those whom God has not called.

There may have been a rare absence of bloody warfare going on, but we know that from the frequency of that kind of warfare, peace was never around to begin with, really. That somebody was always scheming one way or another to break the peace to get what they want. Just one way of looking at it.

Now, both of these passages, the one in Jeremiah and the one in I Thessalonians, portray a hypocritical people who claim to be spiritually healthy. They think that they are stable. Maybe in our modern vernacular, we would say they say about themselves, "we're good." They do not see themselves as bad people. They think they are pretty good people. They think they are fairly moral people. They think they get along with everybody. They are not trying to fight. But the sudden destruction that comes on them reveals they have been corrupt and rebellious all along.

I know you have probably heard me say this before in a sermon or two, but the Roman poet Juvenal wrote, "*nemo malus felix*." That is great, is it not? Did not take Latin, huh? In English, that means "peace visits not the guilty mind." Another way to translate it is, "no bad man is happy." Or, "no rest for the wicked." Or maybe we can just say, wickedness precludes happiness. God says it very simply in Isaiah 48:22 and also Isaiah 57:21, "There is no peace for the wicked." Both of them say basically the same thing. Wicked people, people who have sin in them, will not have any kind of happiness or peace, will not have any contentment, will not have that tranquility. And it is likely more likely than not that they are going to break out into conflict with others.

Maybe more concisely, we could say outward peace, that is, the absence of conflict or war, hides inner turmoil and discontent. Even though they may not be caving in another person's head or plotting somebody's destruction, sending their armies here and there, people still are in conflict with themselves. Conflict inside, conflict with what is right, conflict with maybe

their own ignorance. I do not know. But most people in this world who have not been called, have not been given God's Spirit, war with themselves. And they are ignorant or confused about what is true and right.

So there is a conflict of conscience. And there is a lot of weakness there that allows them to do things that maybe a stronger conscience would forbid them to do. We can spot it today in man's manic search for identity. Who am I? Am I a woman? Am I a furry? You know, am I a post or, you know, people do these stupid things, thinking strange things, wherever their imagination takes them, and not accepting the reality of who they are. And so they search for an identity that can make them feel unique in some way or make their minds rest a little bit, have a little internal peace, and so they come up with these strange identities of who they are. I mean, some today cannot tell even what sex they are because they are so confused.

Part of it is the external confusion because of their teaching, their upbringing where they were not told what is right. And part of it is their own discontent and immaturity, and sheer foolishness, which at its base is found in ignorance and rebellion.

At this point in the sermon, we need to get some definitions clear about these words that I have been throwing around and one or two others. So let us start with the New Testament word for peace.

It is the Greek word *eirene*. At its root, it describes the state of no war. It is a lot like our word for peace in English. So it is war's opposite. A period or interlude in the everlasting state of war, as one German lexicographer said. It describes an external state of rest or absence of hostility. There is no conflict around, so we are in a state of peace.

That is the common Greek definition of the word *eirene*. However, this is **not** the principal usage of *eirene* in the New Testament. That is the common secular definition of the Greek term. Instead, we have to realize that the New Testament was written by Jews who were translating everything into Greek from a Hebrew mindset. And so *eirene* is actually a stand-in for the Hebrew word *shalom*.

Now on to *shalom*: while it can imply the absence of war, just like *eirene* and just like English peace, *shalom* is not only far broader in meaning, but it also is infused with religious meaning, spiritual meaning, theological meaning.

In his *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Gerhard Kittel, who is thought to be one of the greatest lexicographers of Greek, says that it is an imprecise word. Since it is "a general expression of a very comprehensive nature." It is like a holder for a lot of ideas. *Shalom*, we hear it fairly a few times in our life, even though we do not speak Hebrew, it is a word that has come into the general lexicon and we think of it as equal to our word peace. But there is so much more to it. So in other words, we limit *shalom's* broad meaning if we equate it strictly with a limited definition of peace as no war.

I like to think of *shalom* as an iceberg word, that is, a great deal of its meaning hides beneath the surface. So what is some of this hidden meaning beneath the surface? At its core, *shalom* means well-being, implying both bodily health and we would call it, mental health. Or maybe more specifically satisfaction or contentment. So when somebody wishes you *shalom*, if they are not just giving you a greeting or a farewell in using it, they mean that they wish that you had good bodily health and you are satisfied with your life.

Now from here, from this point on, the meaning of *shalom* expands into the idea of prosperity. Because if you have your good health and you are satisfied with life, you are probably fairly prosperous. You have been given blessings and you think life is good. "May you prosper and be in good health." That is kind of the idea here. And when you expand this beyond the individual into a group, a larger group or a nation, it edges closer to our normal definition of peace because it is difficult to maintain prosperity in times of conflict. And so if we have *shalom* in the nation, we usually think that we are living in a time when there is no war, there is no conflict to disturb our ongoing prosperity.

Shalom also expresses completeness or perfection, a kind of wholeness, because when you have good health and you are content with your life and feeling satisfied, you feel complete. You do not need anything else to make

you feel at peace. We can say all is well. *Shalom* in that sense means that everywhere you look, you see only good. You see completion, you see maturity, you see prosperity, you see health, and you are satisfied with the whole of your life.

Now, I am thinking of a third sermon that goes into this. I may or may not do it, do not hold me to it. But I think that is a part of the definition that we need to explore in Scripture.

Another facet of *shalom* is the idea of stability and unity within a relationship. This is a big one, especially necessary and part of our relationship with God. But just in the normal aspects of life when spouses, let us say, or friends get along really well, the relationship is secure when it is free from conflict or any kind of disruptive influence that causes problems, there is *shalom*. Your group, your partnership, your marriage is prosperous because the two of you or the many of you are all doing each's part to make it work. The relationship is going well and you are prospering in that relationship.

In this vein, as I mentioned, *shalom* is frequently connected to the term for covenant. Because covenants are made for this reason, to bring peace to the relationship, whether it is between two people or whether it is between two groups, or whether it is between a person and his God. So covenants are made to secure or to ensure stable, secure, prosperous relationships between people. And it does this by providing boundaries. It is all in legalese. If you read the contract, they create boundaries to the covenant. It also creates expectations for each side. What is your part to play in this contract or covenant. And it also includes benefits for compliance. What are you going to get out of this if you do your part in the covenant? And unfortunately, yes, it also includes penalties for violations of the covenant or the contract, so it is all laid out.

In a good covenant, every aspect of what could happen is covered so that each partner in the covenant, in the contract, knows what he must do or he must avoid doing and all the other things, like how long does it last, what is he going to get out of it in the end, blah, blah, blah. It is all in that fine print.

But overall, the contract is there to create peace. To create an environment, a legal environment in which the two sides, who do not think the same usually because either one has more power or there are different reasons for going into the covenant, or one wants one thing and one wants another, but they have come to an agreement that they will get at least some of what they wanted.

But the covenant puts all this in legalistic language so that whatever the project is, is completed. And if you want to get the project completed, the best way to do it is to have peace. So that is what the contract does. It creates an environment of peace.

Let us go to Ezekiel 37 and we will start chasing this out a little bit. We are going to read verses 24 through 28. This eventually gets to the New Covenant.

Ezekiel 37:24-28 "David My servant shall be king over them [Meaning Israel. This is in the future after they have been brought back, after the second Exodus.] and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them. Then they shall dwell on the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's children forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever. Moreover [and this is the reason why they can live forever with David over them and do all the statutes and judgments and such] I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. The nations also will know that I, the Lord, sanctify Israel [I will set them apart and make them holy], when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.""

So this is the ultimate of a covenant with a group of people. At this point, they are still going to be human when they come back from the great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. They are brought back to the land of

Israel and the resurrected David is appointed to be their king, and they go through the covenant process again where they have to learn to abide by the covenant. And God says He will put His temple there, His sanctuary, and with this new group of Israelites He will do what He meant to do with Israel before. But this time, as we see from other scriptures, they will have the Spirit of God available and it will all go a lot better than the first time. So, the covenant of peace that is mentioned there in verse 26 between God and Israel establishes the bounds of the relationship.

God is very intelligent. When He gathers the people, He says, "Okay, we are going to sit down and craft this contract." It is not so much crafting as the lesser, the people of Israel, accepting what God says. That is exactly what happened at Sinai at the first time. But He is going to say, "Okay, this is the way it's going to be. This is David your king. And we are going to enforce this covenant and this is what you have to do. You have to keep My commandments, My statutes, and My judgments. You're going to have to come and do the things you need to do at My sanctuary, and that's going to be a sign then of our agreement that I've come to sanctify Israel and everybody will know, when looking from outside, all the nations will say, 'Hey, these are God's people.' Obviously, because He put His sanctuary in their midst." And they are the ones that have the contract with God that says that they do what He says, and they will be His people.

So this covenant of peace provides eternal stability and prosperity. Because of what the Israelites have just gone through, each side is now fully invested in the relationship. They come back weeping and say, we messed up and we want to do what is right now, so we are going to abide by the terms of the covenant. And so they will voluntarily, and entirely as well as they can, keep the terms of the agreement.

This is what God has prophesied; that it is going to take the worst years of their lives, the worst years of anybody's lives on the face of the earth, to finally pound it into the Israelites' heads that they need to follow God, but the ones that come out the other end are going to say, "We'll do it. We don't want to go through that again. We were dumb. We repent in dust and ashes."

So what we have here in this covenant is the establishment of peace, a condition of peace, a state of peace through the covenant, so that, what?

What is the endgame here? What does God establish the covenant to do? Well, just like the covenant has always done, it is the environment, if you will, for spiritual growth and entry into the Kingdom of God. God wants His people to be righteous, and so He makes a covenant with them so that they can achieve those things with His help.

So we have the verse that I went to last time.

James 3:18 Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

What is going to happen is that after Christ's return, He is going to establish an environment of peace in order to produce righteousness and growth. And eventually those people, those Israelites who are part of the covenant because they have accepted it, agreed to it, will become members of God's Family. But they will have to go through the same process that we are going through now. Because this same covenant has been made with us and those same conditions of peace exist. You may not realize it, but they do. The same covenant rules your life and if you agreed to it and you are doing what you should do as a party in the covenant, the conditions of peace are yours.

So this understanding that true peace is the ultimate expression of a right relationship with God through the covenant brings out an opposite observation. When we are not in a right relationship with God, peace is impossible. In other words, our sins, or iniquities as Isaiah 59:12 says, have separated you from your God. So you are not at peace. That is what we went over last time. I do not think I need to go into that anymore. Our sins create a state of war, or at least conflict with God.

Now let us look at this peace that we have. Let us go back to the book of John and we will go to John 14. We touched on this in the Passover service but I want to expand on this quite a bit. We will read verses 25 to 27 and then we will skip down to John 16:33. Jesus says,

John 14:25 "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you.

So He said, there is a change coming. I have given you instruction while I am here and that is good stuff, but it was coming at you fast and furious. So He says, there is a solution to this because I know you do not remember everything. I am paraphrasing quite a bit.

John 14:26 "But the Helper [or the Comforter, Parakletos], the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

He gives them some hope there that as they are going through life without Him, they are in the flesh, they will remember His teaching and they will be guided by it. Verse 27 is where I am really heading here. Right on the heels of this, He says,

John 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."

John 16:33 "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. [*In Me*, notice that, in Me, you may have peace.] In the world, you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Let us think about all this. Now Jesus promises His disciples peace in concert with receiving God's Spirit. So the giving of God's Spirit, bringing to remembrance the things that they had heard, will also come with a measure of peace. We know that peace is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. We find that in Galatians 5:22. So we know that the Holy Spirit produces peace in us.

Now if we would go through the epistles, I do not know if you have noticed this before, we would find that in most of them, almost all of Paul's, and some of the others in the general epistles, what we would find is a verse either at the beginning or the end, that says, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Let us just go just skip through these very quickly. Romans 1, verse 7, we will skip in the middle.

Romans 1:7 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I Corinthians 1:3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

II Corinthians 1:2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 1:3 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I think I have gone through enough to kind of convince you that this is what is happening. But notice what that says. True peace, the peace that He leaves with His people or He gives to His people comes from the same place grace originates. Paul almost equates the two in terms of importance. "Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." We get it from the Father. We get it from the Son through Their Spirit in us.

Makes me ask the question. Do we as Christians value peace as much as grace? But that is what the apostle says first thing. God gives us grace. God gives us peace. We value grace a lot. We came out of religions that made grace everything. But did they make peace everything? Was it even mentioned? Not a whole lot, I do not think. It was all grace, grace, grace, and grace is great. It is wonderful, it is necessary.

But if we leave out peace, if we do not emphasize peace, there is a whole lot missing from our Christian lives because it is a gift from God that we need! We need peace all the time. Remember what James says in James 3:18. We need the peace to produce righteousness. And the only way we are going to get that peace or to get the righteousness is that God gives us grace. Especially early on, grace is the thing that gets us moving because we have been dealing with sin and God gives us grace so we can start out, and gives us grace in an ongoing way throughout our lives, but peace is at least as

important during our sanctification. Because only in an environment of peace can we really produce the fruits of righteousness.

Now, let us consider what Jesus said back in John 14:27. He says He leaves His peace with us or with His disciples. Now, the more cynical scholars say that this is really just a form of farewell, you know, the Jewish *shalom* as they leave your presence. But it is far deeper than that. I do not know how they can say that and still keep a straight face. What Jesus says, "peace I leave with you" it is far deeper than just goodbye. Its intent is steadier and more long term.

I mean, we say goodbye to each other and half a second later, we forget about it. But the peace that Jesus is talking about leaving us is something that remains with us. It approaches a constant state or condition, like the state of grace. That is a constant state as long as we do not sin and do not rebel. God applies grace to us through the blood of Jesus Christ covering our sins, and so we still have His favor. We still have His pardon. We still have the gifts that He gives us. And so you could say He reapplies it to us automatically upon repentance.

And the same happens with peace. It is not a temporary, "see you, be well," like Jesus was going out the door to His crucifixion. It is so much more than that. Under the covenant, within the relationship with God, we have peace. And like grace or with grace, it is the reigning condition or should be the reigning condition, making righteous living possible. We need both. We need the grace and we need the peace.

Now whether we remain in that state is entirely up to us. Again, like grace, sin pulls us out of that state of peace. We must repent. I mean, if we become hostile toward God because of sin, we need to run back to Him and say, "I'm sorry. I let my human nature get ahead of me. I want peace with You as well as forgiveness." So we hurry back to God for His peace to be applied to us, both peace with God in terms of sin under the covenant and for the inner peace that we so desire so we can make progress growing into Christ's image.

The peace Jesus leaves with us is necessary for our inner tranquility even in times of trouble. Because it will help us to reduce or even eliminate fears and anxieties we may feel about the times or the certain conditions that we may be living under.

Let us go to Philippians 4 and just see a couple of verses here. We will also go to Colossians 3. But in Philippians 4:7, we get a kind of a measure of this. Let us start in verse 6 here.

Philippians 4:6-7 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

He is saying here that when we go back to God in prayer because of things that are happening in our world, in our families, in our relationships with others, that one of the things that comes back to us is the peace of God. And it is interesting here. It is *beyond understanding. It surpasses all understanding*. How can a God millions or billions of miles away at the time of our prayers send peace? How does that work? What is the mechanism for that? I do not understand.

Well, it is obviously through His Spirit. But He can give us at that moment, in that instant, peace, an inner satisfaction, an inner contentment, a confidence. Paul admits, I do not understand it. I do not understand it fully. But it happens. And you know what? That peace guards our minds and our hearts. It guards us from slipping away, from doing wrong. It is not going to reach out and say no and stop you from doing something, but it will certainly undergird and strengthen you to do what you need to do. But we still do not understand it. Just enjoy it. Just make use of it.

Let us go on to Colossians 3, verse 15. Here is a similar thing.

Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts [Let the peace of God command you. Let the peace of God guide you and direct you and show you the right way.], to which you also were called in one body; and be thankful.

I do not think we have given peace the serious thought that it should have made us give it.

But let us go back to John 14:27 because there is more to this obviously. Notice here in this particular verse that Jesus does not leave it as a mere, peace I leave with you. I mean, if it were there only, we could say that He was saying "*Shalom*, guys." But He clarifies that; He does the Hebrew thing and gives a parallel. Like the Hebrew poets did, often giving parallel verses that one explains the other. He says, "My peace I give to you." A very important clarification.

His peace is divine. It is transcendent. It is totally unlike human peace. It is as we saw in Philipians there, *impossible* really to understand. It surpasses our ability to understand it because it is from God. It is such a high-level peace that we cannot understand it quite fully. But one thing we can tell is that it is a secure peace. How can I say that? How can I say that it is a secure peace? It is definitely more secure than the peace that is in the ceasefire between the Trump forces and Iran.

Why can I say that? Because the peace of Jesus Christ is backed by the power of a holy and sovereign God, not some upstart king or president or emperor or military leader. It is a peace made possible by the dominion, the *sovereign* dominion of the Kingdom of God. That is what rules in the church—the Kingdom of God. We have signed on to the Kingdom of God. We have been translated to the Kingdom of the Son of His love. God rules in the church with all His sovereign power. And the peace that He gives us is peace and it will remain His peace. He will control His peace.

Knowing that the sovereign God rules *us* in the church, and the whole church, we can have a still peaceful spirit even when the worst things come upon us. We are in the Almighty God's hands. So why should we fear what

men can do, as the psalmist said. You can find that in Psalm 118:6 and something similar in Psalm 27:1. We do not need to have anxieties about what is going to happen, although we do. I am not saying that we are Superman or anything. But if we really sat down and thought about it, we are secure in God's peace, if we would just believe it and then act on it.

But we allow our fears to mount up and cause us to do silly things because we did not trust in God's peace. Not only that, Jesus gives us—this is important—not the hope for peace that a greeting or a farewell gives. I mean, when somebody says *shalom*, they are wishing you, hoping that you would have peace. But Jesus' peace is *actual peace*. It is *real peace*. It is present. It is not future. When God gives you peace, it is peace *now*. Not coming in an hour or a day or a week or sometime in the distant future. Jesus gives us His peace *immediately*. It is real. It is not a wish.

Thus we have His final command there in verse 27, back in John 14. His command here is, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." You do not need to be troubled or afraid because you have His peace. It is real peace. Why ruin it by being troubled or afraid? You know, those two words, troubled actually means shaken. You talk about somebody who has heard some news and he is shaken by it. That is a person who is quite disturbed and afraid. Troubled, distressed.

He says you have no reason to get that way because you have My peace. He says the same thing about being afraid. Afraid is kind of a general term here, English wise. In Greek, it means do not be a coward. Do not be timid. Be bold! Be bold in your convictions. Why? You have My peace. It is here now. You can move forward. So, in this sense, we can say that the opposite of peace is not as much war as it is fear. We say *War and Peace*, Leo Tolstoy, his book. He is talking about war, conflict, and not-conflict, a peace. But really in spiritual terms, it should be fear and peace. They are opposites. We can have boldness and put down fear if we have God's peace.

So the peace He gives allows us to be steady and courageous no matter what the outward circumstances. Do you know why Paul and the other apostles were able to face their executions? The peace of God. "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." I am sure those words went through their heads. They knew that God was with them, that He had given them peace.

I mean, He basically makes this explicit in the other verse we read.

John 16:33 "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world, you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

He has already done it. So whatever tribulation we may have in the world, whether it comes to persecution or even martyrdom, He has been through it. He can help you through it and give you peace even in the midst of that. Why were the Christians able to sing as the lions destroyed them in the Colosseum? The peace of God. "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Let us look at something that seems to contradict this. This is the Man Himself.

Luke 22:39-46 And coming out, He [Jesus] went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him. When He came to the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, "Father, if it is Your will, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. When He rose up from prayer, and had come to His disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow. Then He said to them, "Why do you sleep? Rise up and pray, lest you enter into temptation."

Now you may think, if you are of a cynical mind or a skeptical mind, that Jesus' peace which He gives to us, failed *Him* right here. However, we need to understand that the peace of God does not consist in absolute freedom from turmoil or suffering. As a human being, remember, He was God in the flesh here, He, like us, had to grapple with worry and fear and uncertainty, and this is what I think was really getting Him, the foreknowledge of pain and suffering. He knew what was coming.

What He does here is show us how to overcome those disturbing emotions. He was hit with these temptations to totally give in. To surrender and not fulfill His mission. But He did not. He did not give in and this is how He did it. Four points here.

First thing He did was He took His problems to the Father in prayer. He immediately got down on His knees and asked for help.

Secondly, He aligned Himself to God's will. And the Father immediately strengthened Him by sending the angel. So what the prayer did, even though He may have, in a sense, expressed His anxieties, the prayer worked out that God sent Him the peace and the strength immediately because He admitted and He turned so that He was in complete agreement with what God wanted Him to do.

Thirdly, He continued praying even more earnestly. It is very interesting here. He just did not get up and go away. He sought God's help even more because He knew the Father was the one who would help Him. So He continued in prayer.

And fourthly, He accepted what was in store for Him and He went forward. In faith He trusted God. He found peace, if you will, in an undeviating devotion to the will of God. So Jesus' mind was at rest because He trusted the Father, He trusted the sovereign God of the universe. "If God says it, I'm going to go through it even though it will hurt." And He was convicted. And with that conviction came peace. He was at peace with what He had to do.

We can say He found tranquility in adherence to the will of God, even to the brink of death and beyond. You know why Jesus was able to speak as He did while He was on the cross and do all those good things and forgive those who crucified Him? He was full of the peace of God and knew what He had to do. And you know what? We can have that same peace when facing any kind of distressing trial that we may have. It is going to be a lot less than what Jesus went through. And so we can have the peace of God, as it says here at the end of Hebrews.

Hebrews 13:20-21 Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

So give the peace of God, the peace of the Prince of Peace, a chance.