



God's Peace in Jesus in the Midst of the Storm

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Are you at peace? Do you know what it means biblically and truly to be at peace? Do you want to be at peace? If so, there is hope in God through Jesus.

Our world goes through sovereign cycles of relative prosperity and relative crisis, some worse than others. Things that come into our lives unannounced, unrequested, and with the potential to cause harm to ourselves, our loved ones, and others around us are legitimately regarded as "threats" and it should be treated as such.

But as followers of Jesus Christ who plainly said to his disciples, "In THIS world, you WILL HAVE TRIBULATION. . ." we are the last people who should be surprised when—not if—hard times come. Hard times always come. . .in THIS world.

But is it possible to be at peace even in the pain? Is there anything that Jesus has to offer IN the hard times except the hope of his ability to remove our hard times, whatever the tribulation may be?

Of course the answer, biblically, is a resounding and resolute, "YES!"

*What if you could have peace in the midst of the storm?
What if you could have a settled sense of calm in the midst
of the crisis? Would you want it?*

I'm not talking about a non-chalant, care-free, complacent attitude toward the real problems and real pain of this world. We know that Jesus was called "a man of sorrows" and two of the most powerful words in all of Scripture are, "Jesus wept."

Of course Jesus knows pain and his attitude toward it was not reckless and insensitive toward those who were hurting. If there ever was a right response to hurting people, Jesus was—and still is—the epitome of what it means to truly care and truly love.

But Jesus did NOT promise the immediate removal of problems for his followers. In fact, he promised Saul/Paul an INCREASE of suffering as he called him to service.

An INCREASE of suffering? Yes.

Part of our human nature is to avoid as much suffering as possible. When we are cold, we want to be warmer. When we are too hot, we want to be cooler. When we are hungry we want to be filled. When we are thirsty, we want our thirst quenched. And even when we have eaten too much, we wish we had eaten less. We all tend to suffer from "Goldilocks Syndrome" where everything has to be "just right."

Our natural desire for a perpetual and perfect balance of personal homeostasis is pervasive. In some ways, it is good and right if applied in God-honoring ways. But left on its own, without biblical guidance, this desire will run amuck and we will all eventually become individual tyrants, demanding that *everyone* bow to my wants and wishes without question as though I am divine. . .or at least a legitimate demi-god.

When we face painful situations, it is good and right to seek to relieve the pain in God-honoring ways. But what if you can't relieve the pain? What if there are no easy answers? What if the conflict won't budge an inch? What if there is no end in sight? What if it be God's will that we suffer *for doing right*?

These kinds of questions have perplexed many throughout the centuries, but the biblical authors were guided by the Holy Spirit himself to help those who have entrusted their all to a Savior who promised to be with them—in all circumstances—till the end of the age.

The Apostle Peter says this to the exiles scattered abroad and suffering great persecution:

*"For it is better to suffer for doing good,
if that should be God's will, than for doing evil."*

1 Peter 3:17

Not only is it *better* to suffer for doing good, but it could BE GOD'S WILL that one suffer FOR DOING GOOD!

To some, this dissonance between suffering and doing good makes no sense whatsoever. They use it to impugn God's morality and say, "Good people shouldn't

suffer for doing good!" And to a degree, they are right. Those who do good—by God's standards—should not suffer for doing good, UNLESS, God has some more grand design in bringing about a greater good which takes the injustice of suffering to be brought about.

Think of the cross. The greatest injustice ever is the primary means of our forgiveness. A perfect, sinless man—God incarnate—was put to death for sins he had never done and for a sinful people who largely rejected his offer of salvation.

Jesus is the perfect picture of unjust suffering and yet, he humbled himself to take on the form of a servant, take up the cruel cross, and bear away each and every sin of those who would place their full trust in him.

This is the foundation of our peace.

No matter the storm, no matter the situation, no matter the circumstance, Jesus Christ is at the very center of our hope of peace.

Look at what Paul says to the church in Ephesus who apparently struggled at times with a "social distancing" between Jews and Gentiles, a common problem in the early church:

Ephesians 2:13–19

"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.."

He—Jesus Christ—IS OUR PEACE!

Temporary suffering tempts us to think that it is the worst kind of suffering with which we should be concerned. But there is no pain in the world that can compare to the pain and suffering that will be experienced in an eternity separated from the grace of God.

THIS is why we can have peace in a world full of suffering and pain. Jesus has overcome the world through bringing eternal salvation to those who trust him. He did not die in order to make our earthly lives free from problems. He died in order to remedy once and for all our primary problem, that of removing us from the penalty of our sins and ending our rebellion against God, bring us near to God by his blood.

Our peace in the midst of trials is founded upon Jesus preaching peace to every kind of hostility we can face in this world, not the least of which, is the hostility we encounter—not from COVID-19—but from man against man and ultimately man against God.

As followers of Christ, our peace is compromised when we lose sight of what God did for us in Jesus to bring us to HIM, not keep us healthy and wealthy. If our "peace" is defined as being healthy or wealthy or free from problems, when problems arise or wealth is lost or health declines, so will our sense of "peace." But this is not the peace that Jesus came to give. Nor is it the kind he promises us today.

Just before going to the cross, Jesus said:

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I will come to you.' If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe."

John 14:27–29

Peace is rooted somewhere. Some of the roots are rotten. But the peace that Jesus left with his followers, his peace that he gives is the only true peace that exists. This is the peace that causes troubled hearts to be calmed. This peace causes fears to fall away. This peace rejoices that our home is in heaven with the Father. This peace flows from not only hearing the words of Jesus that he spoke before the problems came, but the peace of Christ comes when we believe.

If we are not presently at peace, could it be that we are not presently believing what Jesus has said?

May God give us grace not only to hear, but to believe so that we can have peace in the midst of the storm.