

## Peace In a World of Trouble

Today, I want to talk to you about the peace God offers. We live in a world of trouble and worry and pain. Eliphaz, one of Job's friends, said something true in Job 5:7 when he said,

*Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward.*

Someone doesn't have to live long to figure that out. To actually know that to be true. In a fallen world, we are born to trouble. Big trouble, little trouble. Physical trouble, emotional trouble. Personal trouble, trouble in families, communities, churches, states, nations, and on a global scale. We live in a world of trouble, and we are born to trouble. Jesus promised it even to his followers: "*In this world you will have trouble.*"

COVID-19 hits on all of these. 148 (as of Thursday) countries, each state in the US, many communities, many churches, families, and then of course the individuals. And this doesn't include the indirect yet very real ways it is affecting people. Those out of work and losing income, seeing their wealth shrink, families and friends separated from personal contact. The future seems uncertain. How long is this going to last? How much longer can we go on like this? **And most importantly, how do we continue to live faithfully for Christ?**

Well, the peace of God is custom designed for times like these. When all around life is sunny and fun and abounding, peace seems irrelevant. We have it. Don't need it. But the reason peace is such a hot commodity is because there are enemies of peace lurking on every side. Life is like walking through a land mine field, and this coronavirus is exposing just how fragile people are - in reality. But also how close to the edge people are emotionally. The reason the scriptures tell us over and over again to "Fear not" is two-fold. One we are commonly given to fear, but the other side of it is that there is a lot to be afraid of when we live without reference to God. In a world of trouble, we need the peace of God.

Well, God wants to give us peace so that we can be strong and spread the peace. Jesus said, "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God*" (Matthew 5:9). When we know God's peace, like sons and daughters of God we resemble him and spread it to others. Only when we are strong and secure in God are we strengthened to look outward in love and concern for others. Fear turns us inward and gets us in self-preservation mode. Peace makes us strong and secure in the Lord for the sake of others - our family, friends, church, and neighbors for the glory of God. We live in extraordinary times and I believe God wants to do extraordinary things in this time. Perhaps drawing many to himself. Author Andy Crouch gave some powerful insight when he said,

*“[If you were a first-century Roman], after you had recovered from the plague, where would you want to worship? The pagan temple whose priests and elite benefactors had fled at the first sign of trouble? Or the household of the neighbor who had brought you food and water, care and concern, at great risk to themselves?”*

And so for our own soul, the glory of God, and the good of others, we want peace. Peace in uncertain, troubled times is what we need. So let’s read Isaiah 26:3-4, and then see what our God has to say to us:

*You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock.*

Here is what we see in this text: the promise of peace, the God of peace, and the recipient of peace.

## **The Promise of Peace**

*You keep him in **perfect peace***

You keep him in perfect peace. Perfect peace, that’s the promise. Literally, the text says, “You keep him in peace, peace.” Repetition is a Hebrew literary device used for emphasis. Whereas we would use all capital letters, exclamation points, bold, etc. Jesus: “Truly, truly...” The promise is of emphatic peace. Perfect peace. Peace, peace. But what is this when it is experienced? Well, it is a deep, abiding sense that everything is okay. There is no war in your soul, no concern about tomorrow, all is at peace. How can we know this peace? What does it actually mean? We don’t just close our eyes and turn in on ourselves and repeat the mantra “peace...” It is not a pretend peace. This peace means at least **3 things**:

First, this promise of peace is peace with God through the work of Christ on the cross. It all starts here. The peace of salvation. The peace of knowing that we are accepted by God, loved by God. The reason it starts here is because without it, any other peace is short-lived at best, and built on an extremely weak foundation. This is the foundation. And we must not overlook this, we cannot assume this. Everything else is built on this foundation.

Romans 5:1 - *“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* The work of Christ to remove the wrath of God and bring peace. Peace with God through Jesus Christ is where it starts. Is your faith in Christ alone (not self) for the removal of your sins and the wrath of God

because of your sins? If not, today is the day! If it is, then rest assured, you have peace with God and you truly have it made! But there is more. You can actually have peace right now in the middle of the storm.

Second, this promise of peace is peace in the midst of circumstances because God is sovereign. He is never taken by surprise (coronavirus or your personal trial). Sovereignty - word is used and sometimes people have a vast difference in what they mean. Here is what I mean. God governs all things in the universe mysteriously, yet infallibly (Ephesians 1:11). And he does so for his glory... and for our good. You can have peace in all circumstances because God is working all things for the good of his children. There is NO DOUBT! In perhaps the most sweeping promise in all the bible, Romans 8:28, we are told "*And we **know** that for those who love God, all things work together for good, to those who are called according to his purpose.*"

Do you hear the confidence in that? "We know". Not we hope or we are pretty sure or even, almost certain. We know. There is a certitude! Are you stir-crazy because you are stuck at home - anxious to get out (KIDS)? You need to ask yourself, what is God up to? And remind yourself that your loving Father in heaven is working for your good. Have you been temporarily (or permanently) laid off from work and lost your income? God wants you to have the peaceful assurance that he is sovereign, not taken off guard, not anxious, and is doing his best work in you when things appear so desperate. So we can have peace in the midst of troubles and hard circumstances because our good Father and loving and wise Father is sovereign.

And third, the promise is for peace regarding the future because in Christ God is 100% for me... now and forever. Romans 8:29-30: From foreknowledge (eternity past) to glorification, God keeps his people safe. Then comes the question, "*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us.*" He could not be more for us. David confidently declared in Psalm 56:9: "*This I know, God is for me...*"

We do not know what our future holds. We don't know. Anyone who says confidently they do is lying. We don't know how long we will live, how long the coronavirus will last, whether it will infringe upon our lives more or less. We do not know. And that is humbling. But praise be to God, he does. He holds the future in his hand. And if you are in Christ, He is for you! 100% for you! And he has a future for us that cannot be taken away, which will include peace without trouble of any kind for endless days and ages. Eternal peace with the Lord. That is our future. Until then, peace in the midst of trouble. Then, unending peace with NO trouble! Settle it in your mind. 17th Century pastor, Thomas Brooks said,

*Ah, believer, it is only heaven that is above all winds, storms and tempests; God did not cast man out of paradise, that he might be able to find himself another paradise in this world. The world and you must part, or Christ and you will never meet.*

The promise of peace. Let's look at what we see about the God of peace.

## The God of Peace

*You keep him in perfect peace...*

Isaiah speaks to the Lord himself. It is the Lord himself who keeps us in peace. If you go to a doctor who diagnoses you with bronchitis and gives you a prescription which may make you feel better. It's not the doctor that makes you feel better, but the prescription.

It is God himself who keeps us in peace. And he is able to do this not by giving us some product called "peace", but by giving us himself, because he is the God of peace. Romans 15:33 says, "*May the God of peace be with you all.*" In fact, peace is so much a part of the nature and character of God, that his name is Jehovah Shalom, "the Lord is our peace." But notice how the Lord is described in **verse 4**: "*the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock.*" ***The God of peace is an everlasting rock!!***

The description "everlasting rock" is more literally translated "Rock of Ages". It's obviously a metaphor describing God as our immovable and eternal strength. But there is another glorious truth we need to flesh out here. He does not change. The Lord God is immutable, unchanging. And this is a good thing.

We all know people - in fact we are those people - who need to change. Change is good for us. And thankfully, by the grace of God, every Christian is changing. It can be frustrating when we realize the changes that need to take place in our lives and the lives of others, because we are aware of flaws. But God is flawless. He doesn't need to change because he is impeccable in character and his ways.

Hebrews 13:8 says, "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forevermore.*" And so is he Jehovah Shalom, the Lord our peace today? Of course! Will he be 10 years from now and on our deathbed? Yes, a thousand times yes! The God who is for us today and is sovereignly working all things for my good... will this be true tomorrow? What if I get coronavirus? Yes. Most emphatically yes! He is the Rock of Ages. Jesus Christ is our immovable, unstoppable, strong, and loving Savior yesterday, today, and forever.

**The Recipient of Peace.** Who is this promise for?

*You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you...*

A certain kind of person is described here. Him... whose mind is stayed on you. Notice that this is what it means to trust in the LORD. The reason given is "because he trusts you..." This is why peace escapes so many - even those who would call themselves Christians. They are a slave of their ever wandering emotions and fleeting thoughts. They are more in tune with the 24/7 news, the financial markets, and their desires and feelings than God and what he says.

We trust in whatever our minds are steadfastly fixed upon. And it produces something. So when our mind is stayed on God, peace because we are trusting him. But when our mind is stayed on trouble, worry. In Romans 8:6, Paul says: "*For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.*" Over and over again, we are commanded to set our mind or stay our mind in a certain direction.

*Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth. (Colossians 3:1)*

*For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)*

Do you see the connection between what you set your mind on and your emotional and spiritual health? We have to keep our eyes fixed on Christ; our minds stayed on him and his truth.

## **Look To Christ**

Well, you know the story in Matthew 14 of Jesus walking on the water. He calls Peter to come to him on the water as well. And Peter was walking on the water - in the storm **until** he took his eyes off Christ and onto the wind and waves. Then what happened? He was afraid and began to sink...

Do you realize Jesus is the Lord of glory over every storm? He is the giver of peace, because he is the God of peace and you need to keep your eyes fixed (stayed) on him. Hebrews 12:1-2. Let's pray.