

## Let the Peace of God Rule in your Hearts

There are times in the lives of every Christian when the bottom drops out of our life. Some tragedy, financial setback or health problem comes crashing suddenly into our lives, leaving us stunned, shocked, and unable to process. What happens next is based on our spiritual maturity, spiritual mental health, and depth of trust we have in our God.

The death of a loved one, major health setback, war, depression, or this pestilence (Covid - 19) can bring two different outcomes. Some, like Job, a perfect and upright man, can take such tragedy in stride. After losing all his possession and his children, he was able to process all of it and come to a very powerful conclusion:

*Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. 21 And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord." 22 In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong. Job 1:20-22*

With all this already still fresh and powerful in his heart, the painful and noxious boils came upon him from head to toe, never giving him a respite or rest. Even then, Job was able to keep good spiritual mental health. But his wife hit her breaking point. With wealth gone, children dead and her husband incapacitated, she reached her breaking point. Her powerful emotions of grief, anguish, depression, or torment at these losses led her to exclaim: "*curse God and die.*" Where or not she had already done that is not stated, but her agonized cry came from her heart, and Job quickly rebuked it.

*Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!" 10 But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips. Job 2:9-10*

Can we empathize with Job? Is this how we have responded to all the tragedies that have come crashing into our own lives? James encouraged us to not only take Job to heart, but all the prophets whose lives are recorded in the Scriptures who were forced to endure, because something similar to Job suddenly came crashing into their own lives.

*My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. 11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful. Jas. 5:10-11*

It is evident that there is something different between how Job, the prophets, Jesus, and the apostles worked through the deprivations and tragedies of life and how the Israelites, who murmured and complained through their tragedies and deprivations.

*And let the peace of God **rule** in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. (Col. 3:15).*

While the term rule "*has*" many meanings in English, in Greek, the "*brabeuo*" is the "*activity of the umpire whose office at the games is to direct, arbitrate and decide the contest.*" Each Christian must learn how to use "*the peace of God*" as the umpire to guard against things spiraling out of control during times when circumstances have created a firestorm within our hearts. "*God's peace,*" can arbitrate, directing these powerful emotions, bringing order back into our hearts.

This is the difference! Those who have learned how to make God's peace the umpire that arbitrates and removes the powerful emotions of grief, bitterness and anguish will respond like Job. Those who have nothing in their heart when these emotions strike, have nothing to fight them with.

God's peace is a large component in the secret Paul had learned and sought to give to us.

*I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. (Phil. 4:12).*

With this umpire, Paul could be "*content in every situation.*" He knew how to "*be brought low or abound.*" He had "*learned the secret*" so that "*in any and every circumstance,*" he had peace and contentment. With this peace, Paul knew how to "*face plenty or be hungry,*" to have abundance or need."

Can we do this? Do we know this secret well enough to have it incorporated into our lives? Like other good habits that we have created is it now in our subconscious minds? When we learned to walk, talk, drive and type, we stored that in our subconscious and we don't even have to think about it. It comes naturally and without thought. This is what we have to do with this secret. First we have to learn, just like we did driving or typing. That is what this lesson is designed to do, to give us the first steps.

We begin with God's promise which He revealed is the first step down the path to the secret Paul learned.

*You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Isa. 26:3*

We must learn to understand that it is God who has the power to keep us in perfect peace. But He

can only do that if our minds are “*stayed on Him.*” The word *stayed* is a Hebrew verb that means “*to lean upon, take hold of, uphold, rest, or support.*”

Since it is passive, it is not something we do directly, but something that by fulfilling God’s conditions we allow Him. It actually begins one step back from this.

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths. 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil. Pr. 3:5-7*

We have to trust Him with all our hearts. We have to learn to let go of our own understanding and rest our lives solely upon Him. He will direct our paths, but only if we trust him. As David said, when God is directing our paths, we can walk through the valley of the shadow of death, as he did when facing Goliath and yet with this trust, the peace of God acts like an umpire, removing the emotions that are not appropriate or useful, leaving only the emotions of trust, confidence and peace.

When Daniel stood near the lions den and Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego before the fiery furnace, it was their trust in God that gave them peace and allowed them to lean on Him without question. They knew God had the power to deliver them and they knew that even if it was their time to die, God would still deliver them. This is the most difficult part of the secret. Trusting God enough to let go and trusting Him without any doubt. We must believe with all our heart that no matter what circumstance we are facing, God is with us, cares about us, and will deliver us.

The power of this promise is seen with Paul’s words to the Romans.

*“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” Rom. 8:28*

Do we “*know?*” have we learned the wonderful secret that God already knows every terrible experience that I will have to endure, but because I love Him and have answered His call to obey the gospel, everything that comes into my life can work to my good. If I believe then the umpire of God’s peace will arbitrate and direct all the emotions into the proper place. Those which are useless and counter productive will be ushered out of our heart, leaving only those bringing peace and contentment.

Just before Paul spoke of his “secret,” he commanded those in Philippi that they should utilize the power of prayer along with the umpire of God’s peace.

*In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus. Phil. 4:6-7*

This is a conditional promise, which means, only when we fulfill the conditions, will the promise be granted. In order to allow God’s peace become our umpire, we must not allow anxiety to remain festering within our hearts. While this is all we had before we were called, now we know that all things work together for good. Before we learn the secret, we have to wait for the outcome. If it is a favorable outcome then our joy and peace is restored. But when our heart is stayed on Him because we trust Him, the peace of God begins to rule and umpire the moment we begin our prayers and supplications. As we cast this anxiety upon Him, lean on him, and trust Him, the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding begins to guard and umpire in our heart.

During this time when the pestilence that has turned our world upside down, is the peace of God umpiring in our heart? Are we casting all our anxiety upon Him? Do we need a good outcome before our peace returns, or do we believe that all things (even this) can work together for good for those who love God. It is a great time to exercise and work on these things. If we can’t feel peace under these circumstances, then we have yet to learn the secret to be content. But we must place the blame where it belongs. With all conditional promises, if it doesn’t work for us, we have not yet fulfilled all the conditions. The peace of God cannot guard our hearts if we don’t fulfill the conditions.

Though God promises and offers to give this peace, it is left to us to allow it to play umpire in our hearts or overrule this umpire and be torn up with anxiety or frustration. God promises His peace **can** guard our thoughts and our hearts, but it is a *conditional promise* based not simply on His power, but also upon our *compliance*. We have to learn to allow the “umpire of peace” to cast all our anxiety upon him. We must stop being continuously anxious and learn that through prayer and thanksgiving, his peace will guard our thoughts and our hearts.

When we are being persecuted, under heavy trials and sorrows, or walking through the valley of the shadow of death, His rod and staff can give us great comfort and peace. The fact that His power is “*exceeding abundant above all that we ask or think,*” that “*He will never fail or forsake us*” and that “*all things work together for good to those who love God*” can bring us great comfort and peace. They can overrule the surges of doubt and fear that boil up in our mind. It was this peace that gave Jesus the power to face the cross and Paul to face persecution and death. It is a peace that results from a trust that is so absolute and full that there is no room for our own wisdom or doubt, and therefore a solid umpire to help us sort through the upheavals of life.