



Peace

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Jesus said "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

Much is talked about peace and many spend their lives seeking it. The tragedy is that few seem to find it. In this study we will explore what the Bible says about peace. We will see that the kind of peace that God gives is deep, real, attainable and eternal. It is indeed a peace *that passes all understanding*. Philippians 4:7.

In the Old Testament

The most commonly used Hebrew word for peace is *shalom*. Shalom is often used as a greeting and has many meanings including *wholeness, health, security, well-being, and salvation*. It could apply to individuals (*Psalms 37:37; Proverbs 3:2*), people and their relationships (*Genesis 34:21; Joshua 9:15*); nations (*1 Kings 5:12; Psalm 122:6-7*), or to relationship with God (*Psalm 85:8; Jeremiah 16:5*).

In the Old Testament peace is seen as a blessing of God (*Leviticus 26:6; 1 Kings 2:33; Job 25:2; Psalms 29:11; Psalms 85:8; Isaiah 45:7*) rather than something produced by people, so it is often linked with covenants between God and His people. (*Numbers 6:26, Malachi 2:5*). Loss of peace comes from breakdown of the covenant relationship due to disobedience or unrighteousness (*Jeremiah 16:5, Jeremiah 16:10-13*).

A future peace is also looked forward to when Messiah comes. He will bring prosperity and well-being (*Isaiah 45:7*), no more wars (*Ezekiel 34:28-31*), good relationships (*Micah 4:1-4*), harmony in nature (*Ezekiel 47:1-12*), salvation (*Isaiah 60:17*), and peace on earth (*Zechariah 9:9-10*). Jesus is described in Isaiah 9:6 as the *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 forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.* Isaiah 9:7.

In the New Testament

The most commonly used Greek word for peace is *eirene*, which has a root meaning of rest. It has similar meanings to *shalom* and can also be used as a greeting or farewell (*Peace be with you. Luke 10:5; Galatians 6:16*); the end of conflict (*Luke 14:32, Ephesians 4:3*), and a state of right relationship in relation to God and others.

Jesus is the One who brings peace and He gives us this peace by the Holy Spirit. (*Luke 1:79, 2:14, John 14:27, 20:19-22, Ephesians 2:14*). The peace Jesus gives is not like the world's peace – 'good' relationships or the absence of war. Rather it is a state of reconciliation with God. It may even result in breakdown of human relationships where God is not accepted. (*Luke 12:51-53, Matthew 10:34-37*). God is known as a *God of peace*. (*Philippians 4:9; Colossians 3:15*).

In the New Testament peace is all about right relationship with God. But peace is also seen as a fruit of the Holy Spirit, and as a responsibility. Out of the peace we have with God we are to live in peace with others and be peacemakers. (*Galatians 5:22, Matthew 5:9, Hebrews 12:14*).

So in the Bible peace is a place of well-being, prosperity, and security that comes from relationship with God. It is much more than the mere absence of conflict or war. The world cannot provide this peace. It can only come from trusting God, because He alone embodies all the characteristics of peace. To find peace of mind and peace with others, you must find peace with God.

Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you. 2 Thessalonians 3:16.

We will explore a number of aspects of peace:

- Peace with God.
- The peace of God.
- The peace of Jerusalem.
- Peace on earth.
- Being peacemakers.



1. Peace with God

Peace with God is a place of right relationship with Him. It is only found in Jesus Christ. We have peace with God when, by faith, we accept Jesus as our Saviour; have our sins forgiven and become children of God. We then have access to God and can fellowship with Him.

Jesus said *In me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.* John 16:33.

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in His flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in Himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which He put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of His household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone. Ephesians 2:13-20.

Therefore since we are justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1.

Jesus came to *reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross.* Colossians 1:20.

Peace with God is maintained by walking in the light. i.e. by walking in obedience to the Lord in righteousness. Sin removes our right relationship with God and takes away our peace. When we confess our sin and repent God's peace comes flooding back in. It's always best to walk in right relationship with the Lord, but this is a lesson many Christians find they have to learn the hard way!

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:5-9

2. The peace of God

The peace of God is a sense of deep comfort, joy, love, 'rightness', satisfaction, calm, hope..... that we feel in our hearts when we are in right relationship with Him, and are doing His will. The Holy Spirit within us brings this peace and it pervades all areas of our lives; regardless of our exterior circumstances. We may be going through all sorts of difficulties but can still be experiencing the peace of God which passes all understanding! How wonderful!

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philipians 4:7.

The peace of God is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-25.

When we have to make a choice between two directions the peace of God is one of the ways that God uses to guide us. We may sense peace in one direction, and lack of peace in another. If we are walking in the light and maintaining our peace with God we can confidently move in the direction of the peace, and know this is God's will.

Let the peace of Christ rule (referee, arbitrate) in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Colossians 3:15.

We can be confident that the direction in which there is peace is God's will because Satan can't counterfeit peace. Peace can only come from God.

For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. 1 Corinthians 14:33.

Jesus is *the prince of peace.* Isaiah 9:6.

We will be *led forth in peace.* This principle is seen in Isaiah:

Seek the LORD while He may be found; call on Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will freely pardon. Isaiah 55:6-7. Then.... *You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.* Isaiah 55:12.



3. The peace of Jerusalem

In Psalm 122 we are enjoined to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. May those who love you be secure. May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels.* Psalm 122:6-7.

We know that Jerusalem is a key city in the purposes of God. It is central in the return of the Jews to their homeland and for the restoration of Israel to her true Messiah, Jesus Christ. Also, Jesus will return to Jerusalem and God's eternal purposes will be revealed in the New Jerusalem.

Perhaps that's why Jerusalem is in a continual state of siege and unrest as other nations seek to destroy Israel. And that's why we need to pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

4. Peace on earth

When Jesus came as the *Prince of peace*, Isaiah 9:6. He was announced by the angels as One who would bring *Peace on earth. Good will among men.* Luke 2:14. He has done this by enabling all those who receive and follow Him to have peace with God, and peace in their hearts; one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

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.

But Jesus Himself said *Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth! I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.* Matthew 10:34.

So there won't be peace on earth - not until Jesus returns. That's because people are sinful and selfish and not all are following the Lord. All through the Bible we read of wars, suffering, distress and troubles between people and between nations. In Matthew Chapters 24 and 25 Jesus explains that in the last days there will be wars, famines, earthquakes, persecutions, wickedness, betrayals, and great distress. There will be a time of great tribulation *unequaled from the beginning of the earth* that will culminate in His return.

This is a gloomy picture, especially as we see many of the "signs of His coming" in the world today. Ultimately, though, we are not to worry because when we see these things taking place we know the return of Jesus is near. We are to *keep watch*, and *be ready* and can look forward with confidence to Jesus' coming reign of righteousness. Rather than being terrified by what is happening in our world, we can confidently await Jesus' return to bring justice and restoration to His people. In the midst of all of the world's troubles Jesus still offers us peace. After all He is the One who can still any storm. He's the one who whispered *Peace be still.* Mark 4:39.

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. John 16:33.

5. Being peacemakers

There is not much peace on earth – and there won't be 'till Jesus comes to bring in His Kingdom of peace. In the meantime we are called to be peacemakers.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Matthew 5:9.

Being a peacemaker could involve:

- Sharing the Gospel so that others come to know Jesus and find peace with God. Matthew 28:18-20.
- Maintaining our peace with God, and peace in our hearts. This will mean we will be good examples to others of what God can do in their lives.
- Shining with God's light and love in situations where people are in discord.

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:14-16.

How to experience peace

The Bible encourages us to seek peace: *Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. Psalm 34:14.* But how do we do this? Here are some Bible principles that may be helpful.

Be reconciled to God

Reconciliation with God comes about when you accept Jesus as your Saviour. When you do this your sins are forgiven; you are born again into God's family and you become a child of God.

You are "in Christ" and are declared to be righteous in God's sight. Because of this you are able to have a relationship with God. There is no more hostility between you and God and sin no longer blocks off your fellowship with Him. You have peace with God.

God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21.

Peace with God is possible only because Jesus paid the price for your sins through his death on the cross.



Turn from evil

Whenever you sin you lose your inner peace (the peace of God) because you are no longer in harmony with God. To regain this peace you need to *turn from evil and do good*. This is called repentance.

Repentance involves recognizing your sin; asking God to forgive it, and then deliberately turning away from the sin so that you don't get involved in it again. When your sins are forgiven the peace comes flooding back in!

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9.

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord. Acts 3:19.

Once you have repented you then need to obey the Lord in all that He wants you to do.

Depend on God

If you begin to doubt that God loves you, or stop depending on Him you will lose your peace. Often this is a gradual process and you hardly notice that it is happening. You finally realise that you have lost the peace that you once had.

If you turn back to God and trust Him you will find that He is trustworthy. He really does love you and wants the best for you. Place your life in His hands; trust Him and follow Him. Recognise that He is better at running your life than you are! Leave your doubts, worries and fears at the foot of the Cross and go forward into your future hand in hand with Jesus.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5,6.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6,7.

Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. 1 Peter 5:7.

You love Him even though you have never seen Him. Though you do not see Him now, you trust Him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. 1 Peter 1:8. NLT.

You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in You. Isaiah 26:3.

Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. Matthew 28:20.

God is in control. He is sovereign. He knows what is best. He is trustworthy and can be depended on. And He will always love you!

Allow the Holy Spirit to come in

Sin, fear, uncertainty, doubt, and numerous other forces are continually trying to take away your peace. As you submit to the Holy Spirit and let Him fill every area of your life you will experience more and more of the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-25.

Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5:18-20.

When the Holy Spirit is filling your life He will bring that inner peace that *transcends all understanding*, and this will *guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus*. Philippians 4:7. Even in the midst of outer turmoil you will experience His peace, comfort, joy and hope. How wonderful!

So, the world seeks after peace in all sorts of directions and in lots of different ways. But true peace is only found in the Lord Jesus Christ. The peace that He gives is deep, real, attainable and eternal. Hallelujah!



Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Hebrews 13:20,21.

Discussion questions

What is peace? How does the Bible's description of peace differ from the world's view?

Ask someone who is not a Christian what they think peace is. How does their answer differ from your view of peace?

How does the concept of peace in the Old Testament differ from that in the New Testament?

What is the difference between peace with God and the peace of God?

How can someone experience peace? What can they do to lose this peace? What can they do to re-gain it? What can they do to maintain it?

Why do people seek for peace? Where or how do they seek it? Where or how should they seek it? Where or how can it be found?

Look up each verse in the New Testament where the word peace is mentioned. What do you learn about the various aspects of peace that are covered in the New Testament?

How can we be *led forth in peace*? Isaiah 55:12.

Making peace by the blood of His cross. Colossians 1:20. What does this mean? How did Jesus make peace through the blood shed on the Cross? How can someone benefit from this?

Give examples of situations when you were peace-maker? Were your efforts valued in these situations? Why? Why not?

What have you learned from your study of peace? How will you apply this in your life?