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LIVING IN PEACE

Greetings in Jesus!

Over the years of my ministry I have encountered many Christians who struggle greatly when it comes to living in peace. Their lives seem to go okay for a while, then something comes up and, to coin a phrase from a song made popular many years ago, they fall to pieces.

The challenges of raising children, working mentally exhausting jobs, paying bills, cleaning the house, doing the laundry and so forth can seem relentlessly draining. Those in ministry, especially pastors, face even more trying situations: criticism, unkind words, people who fail to keep promises, immature Christians who think they are spiritual giants, and more. Add to this the knowledge that you really should read your Bible and pray, and a person could begin to feel hopelessly overwhelmed.

However, according to God's word He does not want us feeling so despondent. In fact, His will for our lives *never* includes going through such despair:

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. (Jeremiah. 29:11)

Just imagine God sitting on His throne and thinking about you. As He meditates on you and His plan for your life, there is not one moment of frustration or gloomy depression contained in that plan. Everything He lays out for the path of your life includes the glory of His presence. Furthermore, Jesus says,

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:27)

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

In His words Jesus is acknowledging that we will face trying times; but along with that He is explaining that we don't have to feel exasperated. When the circumstances want to overcome our life, Jesus says we can be of good cheer. But notice that He tells us to, "be" of good cheer, not that we will have good cheer. In other words, life's tribulations will at times pay us a visit, but how we respond is totally up to us.

I know for myself I used to get very frustrated over things. Troubles would arise and eat at me on the inside. I felt great anxiety and at times just wanted to throw up my hands and shout, “*I quit!*” although I never knew exactly what I would be quitting. I would fret and be short-tempered. Sometimes I felt if I could just get away and take a vacation that everything would be fine. Yet something on the inside of me knew that getting away didn’t solve the problems, it just delayed the inevitable.

What I have come to realize is that Christians who seem to have peace come and go in their lives haven’t reached the place of fully trusting God. In other words, peace is not the absence of problems; peace is trusting God in the middle of problems. Consider what the prophet Isaiah wrote,

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength (Isaiah 26:3-4)

Isaiah’s life was filled with challenges. Not everyone appreciated the prophecies that came through him. He experienced the transitions of four different kings in Judea: the reign of two of those kings, Uzziah and Jotham, saw peace and prosperity; but under the reigns of the other two, Ahaz and Hezekiah, there was strife and warfare. He lived during a time when Syria invaded the land.

Nevertheless, Isaiah uncovered one of the greatest truths ever prophesied and recorded in scripture: no matter what the circumstances, we can experience God’s peace if we focus on Him.

God’s peace *cannot* be conquered by any problem or adverse situation. The only way depressing emotions can displace God’s peace is if we, as Christians, turn our focus away from Him and on to the problem.

God has never worried about anything. He is God and He existed before time became a measured thing. He is God and is Omniscient, knowing all things and the outcome of every event of life before those events ever take place. He is God and He has never been intimidated by the existence of evil. God knows the problems you will face and He has already developed a plan to help,

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.
(1 Corinthians 10:13)

When adversity of any kind visits your life, there will be a temptation to give in to feelings of worry and stress. But God has made His peace the avenue of escape, and the strength of His peace will enable you to bear up in the face of the adversity. The question is this: do you really trust God enough to help you?

When people share with me problems that to them seem insurmountable, and their faces express emotions void of any genuine peace, they oftentimes say something like, “*I just don’t know what to do.*” In other words, the problem has been the center of their attention and they have exhausted themselves trying to figure out a solution. Throughout each day their minds drift back to what they’re dealing with and the worry or internal strife again starts to rise up.

But God says there is a better way,

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. (Philippians 4:6-8)

Many Christians struggle mightily with things other people say to them. When insulting, critical and demeaning words are spoken, these Christians “can’t get it out of their mind” what was said. They allow the hurtful words to wreck havoc in their thought life, which results in depression, anxiety, confusion and can even produce physical sickness and heart problems. Yet nowhere in the Bible are we instructed to meditate on the words of others. Instead, God tells us in Joshua 1:8, Psalm 1:2, Psalm 119:15, 23, 48, 78, 148 and 1 Timothy 4:13-15 to meditate in His Word. Why exalt the hurtful words of others (real or misunderstood) above the Word of God?

If I am truly trusting God, then I will have absolute confidence in what He has said in His word:

- God has already determined in His mind to minister peace to me.
- Jesus has given me access to divine, eternal peace and I can refuse to be troubled.
- God will envelope me in His peace if I choose to focus on Him.
- God’s peace will strengthen my emotions against despair.
- I do not have to give in to the temptation to feel overwhelmed by problems.
- I don’t even have to think about my problems; I can direct my mind to think about everything Jesus is to me, and His peace will stand guard over my heart and mind.

Someone might counter by saying, “*Brother Martin, that last statement doesn’t make sense. You’re saying to ignore what is going on and live in some kind of fantasy world.*” No, that’s not what I’m saying. I’m saying that we can apply God’s admonition to us in 1 Peter 5:7, “*Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.*” This is not an instruction to ignore problems, but to release to God all of the responsibility for coming up with a solution.

Think about it: If I have no clue how to resolve a troubling dilemma, why should let I let it steal my peace as I expend hours of mental energy trying to figure out a natural approach, all the while having access to the wisdom of the ages? I can go boldly before God’s throne of mercy

and grace, explain my predicament, and ask Him for help. Do you think He'll just sit there and laugh at me? Absolutely not! He is my eternal Father and He will get involved.

If I genuinely trust Him, and have fully cast the care of a thing over on to Him, then I will not allow my heart and mind to be troubled. I can rest in the arms of His peace knowing that He is working out the perfect solution. How long it takes is not important; what is important is that I do not again allow myself to feel the burden of having to fix things by my own strength and reasoning.

Then, when I go to Him in prayer, I don't have to cry out, "*Oh God! You've got to help me. You've got to change all of this. You've got to do something. Why aren't you moving?*" Instead, I can lift my hands in worship and say, "*Father, I love you. I thank you that you are working this out. I thank you that your perfect wisdom is bringing about your perfect will. I thank you that your peace is guarding my heart and mind against fear, worry, and frustration.*"

There has never been a problem that God didn't know how to resolve. There has never been a crisis that God didn't know how to settle. Anyone who is smart enough to design the intricate details of the cellular structure of all living matter is most assuredly smart enough to solve my predicament!

Be encouraged to know that God wants to help you. Don't allow yourself to be pulled down by depression or feelings of hopelessness. There is nothing hopeless when God is involved. Trust Him that as God, He knows what you need, how to help, and can touch your heart with the kind of peace that fills the very atmosphere of Heaven. He is your Father and He loves you!

May His presence be ever so real in your life!

Jim

SPECIAL CD OFFER: I have a sermon that flows very well with this month's letter. The title of is, "God's Love, His Grace and Trials." If you would like to have a CD of this sermon, please use the order form on the next page.

>>>> 2017 PRAYER & POWER CONFERENCE <<<<

Our 2017 Prayer and Power Conference will be Sunday, April 23 - Friday, April 28. Our host hotel will again be the:

Country Inn and Suites

3971 Colonel Glenn Highway, Fairborn, Ohio 45324

(937) 429-2222, email shekira.kanemoto@countryinns.com,

web site <https://www.countryinns.com/beavercreek-hotel-oh-45324/ohfairbo/rooms>

Rates per night (tax not included): Double Queen: \$105; King Standard \$105; King Suite \$120. Room space is limited. Those attending are responsible for making their own hotel reservations.

VISA INFORMATION: If you plan to travel here from another country and you need an invitation letter to obtain visa for entry into the United States, please send me an email (PastorJimGCC@gmail.com). Our policy for issuing invitations letters has changed and you will need to know what is required. It is extremely important that you begin now to work on obtaining your passport and visa.

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