

the world Paul should have been feeling. He had suffered shipwreck and been stoned and lashed on several occasions- all because he was a follower of Jesus. The one foundational truth he knew was that God's peace, though mysterious and impossible to comprehend rationally, is able to see anyone through the journey of life. There are many things like this in life. We don't know all the intricate details of how automobiles work in order to drive them to work or all the processes involved in manufacturing in order to use various appliances. Likewise God's peace is functional in us far beyond our ability to understand it.

3. God's peace is extended to all His followers

God's peace is available to all who choose to trust and follow Him. It is extended to every person who accepts Jesus as his or her Savior, turns from his or her sin, and pursues a life in obedience to the guidance of God's Word and the Holy Spirit. Peace is a promise of God, and the promises of God are for women and men of all ages, in all cultures, in all nations, throughout all generations. God does not make promises and then take them back. He does not offer a gift and then fail to deliver it. The Bible has more than three hundred verses about peace. God wants us to be at peace with Him, and through our peace with Him, to have peace within our own hearts.

4. God's peace is intended to be an abiding state of being

The Greek word for peace means "to bind together" something that has been broken or disjointed. Many people think of peace as something as is fleeting or that comes and goes, which is occasional. But God's peace is constant, continuous, unperturbed and serene. It is a very real "state" of the soul. The followers of Jesus are not immune from circumstances that are trying or disturbing. The promise is that the Holy Spirit is present to help, so a problem need not throw us off or into a tailspin. Peace, deep, genuine, God given peace, can be the "norm" in which we live day to day. If we feel peace only in spurts, for example only on weekends, vacations or breaks then we are not living the way God intended. God intends for us to have an abiding peace all the time, a peace that includes joy and a feeling of purpose in every area of our lives, with anxiety or frustration being "spurts" that only come occasionally in crisis moments. A troubled soul is not God's desired norm for us, a heart anchored in peace is.

Recommended reading: "Finding Peace" by Dr. Charles Stanley

This plan was created so that we would have a relationship with Him. This relationship would be characterized by love: God's love for us and our loving Him. And through His loving presence, He would protect and provide for us. No matter what other relationships we share, what our status is in life, where we have been and what we have done on our life's journey, God designed us to have an intimate relationship with Him. Out of this intimate relationship we would receive a deep, lasting, abiding peace that only He can provide to the human heart.

The problem however is that many of us have rejected the plan which God designed. God created the world through His omnipotent power and intended for us to enjoy it. But our ancestors made wrong choices and we have continued to do the same thing. We have rebelled against God's principles and Word. What we have done is sinned. Because of sin we have become self-centered and wandered farther and farther away from God and His plan. We have rejected the idea that we need God's presence in our lives and follow after our own selfish desires rather than following God's plan which is to obey His Word and principles (laws). As a result we find ourselves vainly trying to find purpose and meaning in life because we have lost touch with our creator. God's desire is to bring us back into right relationship with Him. The bigger question is, is this the desire of our hearts?

If this is our desire, then God wants to meet it. But notice that God does not just want us to have peace, He wants us to have "His" peace. Jesus says, "peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you." (John 14:27) The peace Jesus gives is different from that which we find in the world. When Jesus speaks of the "world" He is speaking of the society and culture in which we live. What the world offers as peace is only an illusion, even though it may appear very concrete. It is like a mirage in the desert. The world regards peace as being the by-product of doing the right deeds, saying the right words, working in the right job or having the right intentions.

These aren't all the criteria for peace described in God's Word. Peace is an inner quality that flows out of a right relationship with God. What are the benefits of this peace?

1. God's peace transcends circumstances.

God's peace is not a denial of reality. He intends for us to confront reality with our faith and with an abiding peace in our hearts. Neither is God's peace an escape from reality. Rather, peace is an undergirding rock-solid foundation so that no matter the tears we cry or the sorrow we feel, deep down inside we know with an abiding assurance that God is with us. God is in control, and the joy of the Lord is going to emerge far greater than any depth of agony we may be experiencing. God's peace has keeping power in the midst of reality

2. God's peace surpasses understanding

The peace God gives is something we can't necessarily figure out. We can't always understand how it operates in us. God doesn't intend it to be understood by the human mind or explained in a natural manner. When Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians he was in prison in Ephesus. To the objective observer, peace is the last emotion in

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God knows where we are every second of every day, and God is bigger than any problem life's circumstances can throw at us. He is able to take care of any situation and provide an answer to any question or problem. He has everything in the universe to draw upon in helping each one of us through any type of crisis we face. If we are going to have peace in our lives we have to absolutely believe that God is always in control of our lives.

Let me ask you today, who is in control of your life?

This is the question anyone must ask if they are to find what their hearts so desperately desire, and that is peace. If God is in control of our lives only then will we have the foundation necessary to have what the Scriptures call "the peace that passes all understanding."

If we are controlled by a particular situation we are facing, we can't have peace, because at any second that situation can spin out of control.

If some evil power is in control, we're certainly in trouble.

If another person controls us or the circumstance in which we are involved, we may have peace for a while, but eventually that person may disappoint you and let you down in some way, and we can lose your peace.

If we are in control, we may appear to have the power to guarantee ourselves a peaceful existence, but eventually we are going to make a mistake or something/someone will enter the picture to rearrange our circumstances, and before we know it trouble with a capital T is at our door, and we will find that our ability to create and control our serenity was an illusion.

So we ask ourselves "how can God expect us to have peace in our hearts when everywhere we turn we are faced with greed, corruption, anger, terrorist threats, and other forms of evil?" Is it really possible to live in the world like the one we live in and have genuine peace?

The answer is yes, but only if we are living in relationship with God. The God who controls all things, whether we acknowledge or not, is the God of peace. His name is "Jehovah Shalom, the God of Peace" and He has designed the world with a plan in place, and that plan includes us. The problem is that many people do not realize that they are a part of God's plan and because of this they miss the signpost that God has placed in us to let us know that we need Him. What are some of these signposts that God has placed in us? Some are loneliness, purposelessness, anxiety, emptiness, etc.....