

The Only True Peace

Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 3:16–18

Code: B121203

With the fear and uncertainty generated by the current COVID-19 pandemic, we consider this series by John MacArthur to be even more timely now than when it was first run eight years ago. The following blog post was originally published on December 3, 2012. —ed.

Any anxious Christian would love to have this prayer offered on his behalf: “May the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. . . . The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”

Those powerful, encouraging words come from the apostle Paul at the end of his second letter to the Thessalonian church (2 Thessalonians 3:16, 18). They serve as a potent reminder of where we can and should turn when anxiety threatens—to “the Lord of peace Himself.”

Peace is commonly defined as the sense of calm, tranquility, quietness, bliss, contentment, and well-being that we feel when everything is going the way we’d like it to go. That definition, however, is incomplete because those feelings can also be produced by a pill—or by alcohol, biofeedback, a nap, a generous inheritance, or even deliberate deception. The reassurance of a friend or someone you love can also produce that kind of temporary peace.

That’s not the kind of peace Paul had in mind. Godly peace has nothing to do with human beings or human circumstances. In fact, it cannot be produced on a human level at all. Any manufactured or manipulated peace is very fragile. It can be destroyed instantly by failure, doubt, fear, difficulty, guilt, shame, distress, regret, sorrow, the anxiety of making a wrong choice, the anticipation of being mistreated or victimized by someone, the uncertainty of the future, and any challenge to our position or possessions. And we experience those things *daily*.

The peace that God gives is not subject to fluctuations and uncertainties of life. It is spiritual peace; it’s an attitude of the heart and mind when we believe and therefore know deep down that all is well between ourselves and God. Along with it is the assurance that He is lovingly in control of everything. We as Christians should know for certain that our sins are forgiven, that God is concerned with our well-being, and that heaven is our destiny. God’s peace is our possession and privilege by divine right.

Paul defines this peace for us in several ways in 2 Thessalonians 3:16. To begin with, it is divine: “May the Lord of peace *Himself* . . . grant you peace” (emphasis added). The Lord of peace is the One who gives it. The pronoun *Himself* is emphatic in the Greek text and underscores God’s personal involvement. Christian peace, the peace unique to believers, comes personally from Him. It is the very essence of His nature.

To put it simply, peace is an attribute of God. If I asked you to list the attributes of God, these are ones that would probably come most readily to mind: His love, grace, mercy, justice, holiness,

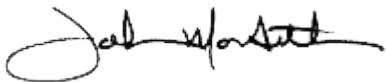
wisdom, truth, omnipotence, omniscience, immutability, and immortality. But do you ever think of God as being characterized by peace?

In fact, He *is* peace. Whatever it is that He gives us, He has and He is. There is no lack of perfect peace in His being. God is never stressed. He is never anxious. He never worries. He never doubts. He never fears. God is never at cross purposes with Himself. He never has problems making up His mind.

God lives in perfect calm and contentment. Why? Because He's in charge of everything and can operate everything perfectly according to His own will. Since He is omniscient, He is never surprised. There are not threats to His omnipotence. There is no possible sin that can stain His holiness. Even His wrath is clear, controlled, and confident. There is no regret in His mind for He has never done, said, or thought anything that He would change in any way.

God enjoys perfect harmony within Himself. Our Bibles call Him "the Lord of peace," but in the Greek text a definite article appears before the word translated "peace," meaning He literally is "the Lord of *the* peace." This is real peace—the divine kind, not the kind the world has. Paul's prayer is that we might experience that kind of peace. Its source is God and God alone.

Next time, we'll look further at the nature of that peace.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joel Osteen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

(Adapted from [*Anxious for Nothing*](#).)

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