

Having Peace in Every Circumstance, Part 3

2 Corinthians 9:8; 2 Thessalonians 3:16-18

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by John MacArthur

Believers often find themselves living in contradiction to the world, and we should. The runaway anxiety and constant fear that grips so much of the world does not have the same hold on us—or at least, it shouldn't. Over the last few weeks, we've been looking at anxiety from a biblical perspective, and examining God's care and provision for His people, and how that should free us from worry.

Today we're bringing our *Attacking Anxiety* series to a close with part three of our discussion on Paul's prayer that we would know and rest in God's lasting peace and grace. The apostle wrote, "May the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. . . . The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you" (2 Thessalonians 3:16, 18).

A final characteristic of God's peace is that it is not subject to circumstances. Paul's prayer was that we might continually enjoy it "in every circumstance" (v. 16). This peace is not subject to anything that happens in the worldly realm. It is not built on any human relationship, and it's not dependent on human feelings, decisions, or situations.

Rather, God's peace is built on a divine plan and promise from an unfailing God who will secure you in Himself, and who will do everything for your good. This peace is a product of an unchanging divine relationship, and it is unbreakable, unassailable, and transcendent.

As we noted earlier, Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful" (John 14:27). He was saying, "There's nothing to fear or be anxious about because I'm giving you a divine, lasting peace that cannot be fractured or damaged by the world." We demonstrate that Jesus keeps His promises when, in the midst of worldly upheavals that would normally tear us up and trouble our lives, we remain calm.

Paul's great desire was that we enjoy that kind of well-being, which is why he prayed toward that end. His parting wish was this: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all" (2 Thessalonians 3:18). He wanted every man and woman who would ever put his or her faith in Christ to experience the abiding presence of God's grace.

Grace is God's goodness or benevolence given to those who don't deserve it. "Grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). It was in the person of God's Son that "the grace of God has appeared," making salvation available to all (Titus 2:11). Once we embrace this saving grace through faith in Christ, we are blessed with God's grace, enabling us to withstand any difficulty that

would tend to make us anxious. Paul described this grace while confessing to a difficulty that brought him great anxiety:

There was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me. . . . Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)

As believers, we also are blessed with the grace that equips us for divine service. Paul expressed his appreciation for this grace in saying, “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy . . . the grace of our Lord was more than abundant” (1 Timothy 1:12-14).

Grace is what enables us to grow spiritually in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). In the material realm, Paul appealed to God's grace in encouraging the Corinthian church to be generous in giving to the Lord's work: “God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed” (2 Corinthians 9:8).

God's grace saves us, helps us cope with our anxieties, equips us for service, and enables us to grow spiritually and to be rich in God. Like God's peace, it is always available, and there is no limit to it. And again, like God's peace, the conditions for receiving it are trusting God, forsaking sin, enduring the refining process, doing good, and living by the Word. As we are what we ought to be, God infuses us with His peace and grace. And that has a wonderful way of crowding out anxiety.

I want to close this series on a personal note. Just a few days after preaching a sermon on the peace and grace God bestows on His people, I had an unprecedented opportunity to apply it to my own life: I was notified that my wife and youngest daughter were in a serious auto accident, and that my wife, Patricia, would probably die. Everything seemed like a blur to me, the details frustratingly sketchy—I was afraid she was already dead. During my hour-long drive to the hospital, I had a lot of time to reflect on the severity of the situation. Yet I experienced a deep and steeled peace simply because I knew God had not failed me—His grace was in complete control.

I am happy to report that God spared both their lives, and that Patricia recovered beautifully. If you too rely on God's grace, He will see you through the most difficult trials.

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

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