

Living in the Peace of God

We say we want peace, but most of us are chasing something far smaller. We want the absence of trouble. We want the phone to stop buzzing, the diagnosis to come back clear, the difficult relationship to resolve itself, the bank balance to settle. And so we treat peace as a destination we arrive at once the circumstances finally cooperate. The trouble is that the circumstances rarely cooperate, and even when they do, the calm never lasts. There is always another wave behind the one that just broke over us.

The peace the Bible speaks of is something altogether different. When Paul writes to the Philippians from a prison cell, he does not promise them an easier life. He tells them, "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 to 7). Notice what that means. This peace is not the fruit of understanding your situation and concluding it will all be fine. It is a peace that comes precisely when you cannot understand, when the situation gives you no rational grounds for calm at all. It stands guard over the heart and mind like a soldier at a gate. It does not depend on the storm stopping. It is given in the middle of the storm. This is exactly what Jesus offered his disciples on the night before the cross: "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).

This is because biblical peace, shalom, was never primarily about feelings. It meant wholeness, completeness, the way things were always meant to be. To live in shalom is to be rightly related to God, and from that, rightly related to everything else. Isaiah captures its secret: "You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you" (Isaiah 26:3). Our restlessness, then, is not finally a circumstantial problem. It is a relationship problem. Augustine saw this clearly when he prayed that our hearts are restless until they rest in God. We were made to find our security in the love of our Maker, and when we look for that security anywhere else, in our achievements, our reputation, our control over the future, we are building our peace on sand.

Here is the gospel that changes everything. We do not manufacture this peace by trying harder to feel calm. Peace is not a technique. It is a person. Speaking of Jesus, Paul says plainly, "For he himself is our peace" (Ephesians 2:14). On the cross, Christ absorbed the hostility, the alienation, the deep disorder of our relationship with God, and he reconciled us. "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). The war is over. We are no longer enemies of God, working anxiously to earn his favour. We are children, beloved and secure, whose standing rests not on our performance but on his finished work. That is the bedrock under our feet. The peace that guards your heart is not wishful thinking. It is the settled reality that the worst thing, your separation from God, has already been dealt with forever.

So how do we live and breathe this? We breathe out, and we breathe in. We breathe out our anxiety by naming it honestly before God. Paul does not say pretend you are fine. He says, in everything, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known (Philippians 4:6). Peter puts it just as tenderly: "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7). Anxiety hidden grows in the dark. Anxiety brought into the light, handed deliberately to a Father who loves us, begins to loosen its grip. And then we breathe in. We take in again the truth of who God is and what he has done. As Paul writes, we let "the peace of Christ rule in our hearts" (Colossians 3:15), until the gospel is not merely something we believe but something we are resting our full weight upon.

This is daily work, and it is unhurried work. The peace of God is less a thunderclap and more like learning to breathe well. You will forget. You will snatch your worries back from God a hundred times before lunch. That is alright. You simply hand them over again. Remember the invitation of Jesus: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Over months and years, something shifts. The anxious reflex slowly softens. The fruit of the Spirit, which includes peace itself (Galatians 5:22), grows quietly in us. You find you are no longer ruled by the next wave, because your life is anchored to something the waves cannot reach.

The world cannot give this and the world cannot take it away. It is not the peace of a person whose life is easy. It is the peace of a person who knows, beneath every trouble, that they are held. May "the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13). Living and breathing the peace of God is simply learning, one breath at a time, to rest where we have always belonged.

Questions

1. Paul tells us to bring everything to God in prayer rather than carry it alone. What is one anxiety you have been holding in the dark that you could honestly name before God this week? (**Philippians 4:6 to 7**)
2. Jesus promised a peace that the world cannot give. How is his peace different from the kind of calm we usually chase, and where have you been settling for the lesser version? (**John 14:27**)
3. Isaiah links perfect peace to a mind that stays trusting and steadfast. What practically helps you keep your mind fixed on God when circumstances are pulling your attention elsewhere? (**Isaiah 26:3**)
4. Peter invites us to cast our anxiety on God because he genuinely cares for us. Do you find it easy or hard to believe that God cares about your specific worries, and why? (**1 Peter 5:7**)
5. Jesus calls the weary and burdened to come to him for rest. What burden are you carrying right now that you sense he is inviting you to bring to him? (**Matthew 11:28**)