

#41 “Peace that Surpasses Understanding”

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Many times in life things happen that we don't understand, and we may wonder why. This is particularly difficult if we were of the mindset that this life is supposed to be fair and just, for it is not. Things can be further complicated if we erroneously think that faithfulness to Christ is a guarantee of material blessing and reward in this life. God does exalt the humble, but only at the proper time (1 Peter 5:6), which could well be in the life to come when rewards and honor will endure forever. But if we were expecting God to reward us now or if we thought that God should make all things work out fairly in the present, we might find ourselves struggling if and when things collapse out from under us. What is a Christian to think and do when life isn't fair and hardship befalls the righteous?

First, we as Christians must understand and accept the reality that the rain falls on the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45). In this life, sometimes the wicked prosper, and other times the righteous reign victorious. Sometimes evil people get away with things, and the righteous are unduly condemned. In this world, we will experience trouble as Christ predicted we would (John 16:33). Our hope is that He has overcome this world, which means in part that He will render to each according to His deeds (Romans 2:6). He will settle all accounts, avenge all wrongs, and make all things fair and just. But in the meantime, things will be out of balance, unfair, and unjust. Thus, we must accept the reality of being in a fallen world, and we must then look forward to the day when Christ will make all things right. We will be rewarded for our faithfulness and stewardship because God sees all. He is a rewarder of those who seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). He will repay both wrongs and rights, so we must keep our focus on what is yet to come.

Secondly, we must by faith trust that God hasn't forgotten us or betrayed us as if He is giving somebody else preferential treatment or answering their requests and not ours. God knows what He is doing, and He shows no partiality (Romans 2:11). God cares for all of His children equally and perfectly. Thus, we must never conclude that God has forsaken us or betrayed us, for He has promised to never leave or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). He will be with us until the end of the age (Matthew 28:20). The difficult but true reality is that sometimes we must suffer with Him in this life (2 Corinthians 1:5, Colossians 1:24), yet suffering with Christ is far better than suffering without Him. At least we as Christians have the promise that our all-powerful and loving God will cause all things to work for our good as His children (Romans 8:28). God doesn't betray His children, and He will always be with us. He is aware of everything that happens to us, and all that happens to us is for a reason. He will work good out of all things, and He is the One fighting on our behalf (Deuteronomy 3:22). Ultimately, He will see to it that we are not unduly put to shame (Isaiah 49:23).

Thirdly, we must accept the fact that, though God understands all things, we don't

understand everything. But we have something that is of a surpassing value to understanding, and that is the peace of God. Paul says in Philippians 4:7, “And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” The idea of surpassing comprehension likely has a couple levels of meaning. First, it means that God’s peace is so wonderful that it is beyond our ability to understand it with our mere mental faculties and reasoning abilities. Somehow we can just have calm in our spirits and be tranquil internally even when life is chaotic and falling to pieces around us. Yet it also seems Paul is saying something in addition to this. The word translated “surpasses” could also mean “better than” or as it is translated in Philippians 3:8, “surpassing value.” Paul is saying that not only is the peace of God so wonderful that it defies our minds’ ability to understand it but that the peace of God is even preferable to our trying to figure out our lives and understand our circumstances. We are not God, and we don’t have all understanding. However, we can have His peace despite our lack of understanding as we trust God that He will help us know what we need to know. Peace makes it possible for us to have rest even when things don’t all make sense to us because we trust God that they make sense to Him. We only see such a small part of the entire picture that we are much better off simply trusting than trying to understand God’s every move. Life on this earth is not always smooth and easy, but God has not forgotten us. In fact, He is always busy at work causing all things to work for our good. In confusing times, we can still have rest and a supernatural peace that is a fruit of the Spirit. This internal tranquility and comfort requires that we trust God, that we rest in His plan, that we cast our cares upon Him, and that we accept the fact that we may not understand what God is doing. His peace, however, is better than knowing His every move, and we need to receive this truth in all humility and thankfulness. God will leave a legacy of goodness and mercy in our lives (Psalm 23:6), but we must trust Him even when we are confused in order to experience peace along the way.