

PEACE, THE LONG SOUGHT-AFTER TREASURE

John 16:28-33

“Amid the horrors of **World War I**, there occurred a unique truce when, for a few hours, enemies behaved like brothers.

“**Christmas Eve in 1914** was all quiet on France's Western Front, from the English Channel to the Swiss Alps. Trenches came within fifty miles of Paris. The war was only five months old, and approximately eight hundred thousand men had been wounded or killed. Every soldier wondered whether Christmas Day would bring another round of fighting and killing, but something happened: British soldiers raised Merry Christmas signs, and soon carols were heard from German and British trenches alike.

“Christmas dawned with unarmed soldiers leaving their trenches as officers of both sides tried unsuccessfully to stop their troops from meeting the enemy in the middle of no-man's-land for songs and conversation. Exchanging small gifts—mostly sweets and cigars—they passed Christmas Day peacefully along miles of the front. At one spot, the British played soccer with the Germans, who won three to two.

“In some places, the spontaneous truce continued the next day, neither side willing to fire the first shot. Finally the war resumed when fresh troops arrived, and the high command of both armies ordered that further "informal understandings" with the enemy would be punishable as treason.”¹

Today we are looking at the last few verses of John chapter 16, but we will be zeroing in especially on the last verse, John 16:33 NAS, where Jesus says:

¹ James Hewett, ed., *Illustrations Unlimited*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS

"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world. "

The story we just told illustrates one small way Christ brought peace during the furor of a world war. We have all been designed in the image of our Creator to live in **peace**. It is only by the conditioning of Satan operating in a sinful world that we have been so vulnerable to hatred, jealousy, stress, violence, greed, selfishness, fear, and a lot more. Most of us have a basic desire for **peace**, that is until something we want is threatened, and then we open the door for Satan to do all kinds of damage in our lives. Far too often these feelings become compulsive and a person develops an unnatural lust for money and power so that he/she might control not only their own little world but also the lives and policies of an entire country. We have seen such evil ruling anything from a small village to great empires from the very beginning of time.

Many people talk about the desire for world peace. There are nations that strive for world peace but it has never been found. There may have been a

few years now and then when there were not any wars or conflicts between neighboring groups, but it would not last long before the fighting began again. Today, as we write these words, it is estimated that there are over a hundred conflicts going on around the world. Dick Cheney, vice-president of the United States from 2001-2009, has said that, "*War is the basic nature of mankind.*" I also remember someone having said that peace is a time when everybody stops to reload. Not a very pretty picture is it?

It is therefore impossible for a nation to survive without faith in and obedience to the one and only God who is the only source of protection for any nation. Thus far throughout the entire history of our world, there has not been a single nation that has shown such faith and obedience and consequently all the great empires and powers throughout history have fallen. Some have been defeated by other nations but many have destroyed themselves from within. Most world powers did not last any longer than two hundred years. We see the United States going down a similar path toward self-destruction at this very moment.

Why is it that people cannot find peace in this world. Why are they unable to live in peace one person and one nation with the other? It is because they try

to find it through human methods. They try peace treaties; they try sanctions against evil empires; they try diplomacy; and in some cases they even try conquering by military means. But none of these efforts have ever proven successful and they never will. Is peace therefore unattainable? From a human perspective, yes. But with God anything is possible. There is just one little problem. We can determine from the earliest writings in the Bible to the final book of Revelation that the great majority of human beings will reject God and Christ, who is the Prince of Peace, right up until the end. We may conclude, therefore, that world peace will never become a reality until Jesus returns and sets up His Millennial Kingdom and rules the world from His throne in Jerusalem.

John 16:33 provides the key, however, whereby believers may find **peace** even in this world no matter what the circumstances in which they find themselves. Are you experiencing financial difficulties that seem to have no solution? Are you experiencing a serious or even terminal illness? Are you experiencing severe depression and hopelessness? Are you experiencing the kind of guilt and fear that goes along with cheating others? Are you experiencing the guilt and fear that accompanies any kind of chemical addiction? No matter what the problem there is a way out. Hopefully you

will find that kind true **peace** as you read through these last verses of John chapter 16. But first it will be helpful to find out a little more about what the Bible has to say about **peace**. Do you think there is a difference between the kind of peace we feel within ourselves and the kind of **peace** that comes when one nation is not fighting another nation, or one neighbor is not fighting another neighbor? Let us keep that question in mind as we proceed.

The world's definition of **PEACE** according to Webster can be defined as: *"a state of tranquillity or quiet: as freedom from civil disturbance."*² The Scripture would define **PEACE** as *"total well-being, prosperity, and security associated with God's presence among his people."*³ In the Old Testament **peace** was a conditional part of the **covenant** based on Israel's obedience, Leviticus 26:6: *"I shall also grant **peace** in the land, so that you may lie down with no one making you tremble. I shall also eliminate harmful beasts from the land, and no sword will pass through your land"* (NAS). In the prophetic writings (predictions of what will occur in the future), **true peace** is part of the end-time hope of God's saving grace through the rule of **Jesus Christ at His second coming**. That is when He returns to earth at some

² Merriam-Webster, Inc: *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. Eleventh ed. Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003

³ Achteineier, Paul J.; Harper and Row Publishers; *Society of Biblical Literature: Harper's Bible Dictionary*. 1st edition. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985, S.766.

time yet in the future.

In the New Testament, this **peace** is understood as having come with Christ at His first coming for all those who believe in His atoning death for their sins, and this **peace** can only be experienced by believers.⁴

In the Old Testament, **Shalom**, the most prominent term for “*peace*,” had several meanings (wholeness, health, security, well-being, and salvation) and could apply to an equally wide range of situations. For example: It could describe how a person was feeling;⁵ the relationship between one person and another;⁶ or nation to nation (e.g., absence of conflict),⁷ and the relationship of God and people.⁸

The presence of **shalom** in any of these contexts was not considered as the outcome of human efforts but as a gift or blessing of God.⁹ It is not surprising, therefore, to find “*peace*” tied closely to the Old Testament

⁴ Elwell, Walter A. ; Comfort, Philip Wesley: *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001 (Tyndale Reference Library), S. 1004.

⁵ Ps 37:37; Prv 3:2; Is 32:17.

⁶ Gn 34:21; Jos 9:15.

⁷ Dt 2:26; Jos 10:21; 1 Kgs 5:12; Ps 122:6–7.

⁸ Ps 85:8; Jer 16:5.

⁹ Lv 26:6; 1 Kgs 2:33; Jb 25:2; Pss 29:11; 85:8; Is 45:7.

notion of covenant. *Shalom* was the desired state of harmony and communion between the two covenant partners—**God and His people**.¹⁰ Its presence signified God's blessing in the covenant relationship¹¹ and its absence signified the breakdown of that relationship due to Israel's disobedience and unrighteousness.^{12 13}

Shalom becomes a pivotal term in the writing of the prophets about future events. It was the "*false prophets*" who, forgetting the conditions for their country's well-being specified in Leviticus 26 assumed God's loyalty to Israel (Psalm 89) would automatically guarantee their **political peace** forever.¹⁴ That was a big mistake although many people wanted to believe it. The true prophets, however, who wrote prior to the Jews' exile to Babylon around 600 B.C., did proclaim the coming judgment accurately as a loss of this *shalom* due to Israel's persistent disobedience and unrighteousness.^{15 16}

The prophets as well, looked beyond Israel's punishment of exile to Babylon and other trials they would experience after that. They pointed to a time

¹⁰ Nm 6:26; cf. Is 54:10.

¹¹ Mal 2:5; cf. Nm 25:12,

¹² Jer 16:5, 10–13; cf. Ps 85:9–11; Is 32:17.

¹³ op Cit., Elwell, Comfort.

¹⁴ Jer 6:14; 8:15; Ez 13:10, 16; Mi 3:5.

¹⁵ Is 48:18; Jer 14:13–16; 16:5, 10–13; 28; Mi 3:4, 9–12.

when ***shalom***, represented by prosperity and well-being,¹⁷ absence of conflict, right relations,¹⁸ restoration of harmony in nature,¹⁹ and salvation²⁰ would again return. Often this eschatological (or end-time) expectation of peace in the Old Testament was associated with a messianic figure, as in Isaiah 9:6 where the future Messiah, is referred to as the “***Prince of Peace.***”²¹

Isaiah 9:6 NAS:

*⁶ For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, **Prince of Peace.***

Moreover, His reign would be one of “*peace*” not only for Israel but throughout the whole earth.²²

Zechariah 9:9-10 NLT:

¹⁶ op Cit., Elwell, Comfort.

¹⁷ Is 45:7; Ez 34:25–26.

¹⁸ Is 11:1–5; Mi 4:1–4; Zec 8:9–13.

¹⁹ Is 11:6–9; Ez 47:1–12.

²⁰ Is 52:7; 60:17; Ez 34:30–31; 37:26–28.

²¹ op Cit., Elwell, Comfort.

⁹ *Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey— riding on a donkey's colt.*

¹⁰ *I will remove the battle chariots from Israel and the warhorses from Jerusalem. I will destroy all the weapons used in battle, and your king will bring **peace** to the nations. His realm will stretch from sea to sea and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth.*

The Old Testament ends with this hope of **peace** still unrealized in its fullest sense.

In the New Testament the Greek term for “*peace*” is *eirene*, a word expanded from its classical Greek meaning of “*rest*” to include the various meanings of *shalom* we have just discussed. As with *shalom*, *eirene* could be used as a greeting or farewell (as in “*peace be with you,*”)²³ or could signify the end of a war;²⁴ or it could refer to our interpersonal relationships;²⁵ or the

²² Ibid.

²³ Lk 10:5; Gal 6:16; Jas 2:16; cf. Jn 20:19.

²⁴ Lk 14:32; Acts 12:20

²⁵ Rom 14:19; Eph 4:3.

presence of harmony in the home (1 Corinthians 7:15).²⁶

The most important thing to understand here concerns how Jesus incorporated God's promised Old Testament hope for **peace** in the end times into His ministry.

In Luke 1:68–79 NLT, Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, gives this prophecy:

⁶⁸ *“Praise the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has visited and redeemed his people.*

⁶⁹ *He has sent us a mighty Savior from the royal line of his servant David,*

⁷⁰ *just as he promised through his holy prophets long ago.*

⁷¹ *Now we will be saved from our enemies and from all who hate us.*

⁷² *He has been merciful to our ancestors by remembering his sacred covenant—*

⁷³ *the covenant he swore with an oath to our ancestor Abraham.*

²⁶ op Cit., Elwell, Comfort.

⁷⁴ *We have been rescued from our enemies so we can serve God
without fear,*

⁷⁵ *in holiness and righteousness for as long as we live.*

⁷⁶ *“And you, my little son, will be called the prophet of the Most
High, because you will prepare the way for the Lord.*

⁷⁷ *You will tell his people how to find salvation through
forgiveness of their sins.*

⁷⁸ *Because of God’s tender mercy, the morning light from
heaven is about to break upon us,*

⁷⁹ *to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of
death, and to guide us to the path of peace.”*

The coming of Jesus as the Messiah would be the event that would guide

them to the way of peace (verse 79). The angels announced to the shepherds at Jesus’ birth that He was bringing God’s **peace** to people: *“Glory to God in the highest, And on earth **peace** among men with whom He is pleased”* (Luke 2:14 NAS). **Jesus as the Messiah would usher in God’s reign of peace.** This long-expected **peace** of God is also Jesus’ farewell gift to the disciples: *“**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 NAS).

Peace was given to Jesus’ disciples when He breathed His Spirit into them.

John 20:19-23 (NLT)

¹⁹ *That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! “**Peace be with you,**” he said.*

²⁰ *As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord!*

²¹ *Again he said, “**Peace** be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.”*

²² *Then he breathed on them and said, “**Receive the Holy Spirit.**”*

The nature of this gift of peace brought by Jesus may be easier to explain by stating what it was not. It was not an end to tension or the absence of hostility or warfare among peoples and nations. It was not what the world would consider peace to be. Listen to Jesus’ words in the following verses:

Luke 12:51-53 NAS:

⁵¹ *"Do you suppose that I came to grant **peace** on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division;*

⁵² *for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three.*

⁵³ *"They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."*

John 16:33 NAS:

³³ *"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have **peace**. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."*

The **peace** that Jesus brings may actually upset existing relationships, being a dividing "sword" even among families.

Matthew 10:34-37 NAS:

³⁴ "Do not think that I came to bring **peace** on the earth; I did not come to bring **peace**, but a sword.

³⁵ "For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law ;

³⁶ and a man's enemies will be the members of his household .

³⁷ "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

Jesus' gift of **peace** is the kind of **peace** that comes with **the new covenant of His blood** that reconciles God to people. "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have **peace** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). "For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made **peace** with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross (Colossians 1:19-20 NLT).

Ephesians 2:14-18 NLT:

¹⁴ For Christ himself has brought **peace** to us. He united Jews

and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us.

¹⁵ *He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made **peace** between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups.*

¹⁶ *Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.*

¹⁷ *He brought this Good News of **peace** to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and **peace** to the Jews who were near.*

¹⁸ *Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.*

Jew, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, atheist; no matter what one's religious background, the one and only true God will give you salvation the moment you believe and accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

The early church understood "**peace**" to be the final, end-time salvation of

God given already through Jesus Christ.

Philippians 4:6-9 NLT:

⁶ *Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything.*

Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.

⁷ *Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.*

⁸ *And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.*

⁹ *Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.*

This understanding of “*peace*” altered the content of the common greeting “*go in peace*” as it was taken up in the Christian community. In Paul’s quite frequently used “*grace and peace*” greeting,²⁷ Paul provides a reminder of

²⁷ 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2, etc.; cf. also 1 Pt 1:2; 2 Jn 1:3; Jude 1:2; Rv 1:4.

the gifts that Jesus provides in this present life for all who accept Him by faith. Paul even describes Jesus as *“peace”* itself: *“For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us”* (Ephesians 2:14 NLT). God too is referred to as a *“God of peace”* in Philippians 4:9 and Colossians 3:15.

Now another interesting aspect of this Philippians 4 passage is that it gives us a kind of how-to regarding peace. We are to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in order to have this peace on a daily basis. The first step, in verse 6, is to *“pray about everything”* instead of worrying about it. Also cultivate a thankful spirit. Look again at verses 8 and 9, remembering that this passage is written to believers. Notice that Paul's next directive is to *“fix your thoughts.”* This suggests a conscious, willful decision to center our thoughts on what? On what is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, and admirable. This is not what many self-help advocates would term as positive thinking. It goes way beyond that. In the first place *“true,” “pure,”* and *“lovely”* are terms that are used to describe Christ (for instance, John 1:14; 1 John 3:3; Song of Solomon 5:16). So the next step in finding peace is, in the words of Hebrews 12:2, to be *“fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of*

faith." Because we become what we think (Proverbs 23:7); that is we become what we spend our time listening to, thinking about, and looking at, then the subsequent step is for us to focus our thoughts not on what is always wrong in our lives, but rather on other things that are "*true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable.*" What might those things be? Scripture does not tell us explicitly, but most certainly it would be to focus on God's Word; and then also on answers to prayer, and on other things that "*are excellent and worthy of praise,*" as verse 8 tells us. The final step in this how-to is to be obedient: "*Keep putting into practice all you learned and received.*" This coincides with what Jesus emphasized to His disciples in John chapter 14 (verses 15, 21, 23-24): "*If you love Me, you will keep My commandments*" (verse 15). These five steps (**pray, be thankful, fix our minds, think, obey**) are essential for the Christian who wants to experience the inner peace "*which exceeds anything we can understand.*"

The gift of peace is reconciliation with God and is made possible only through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. This gift in itself requires the Christian to work for "*peace*" in bringing people together and reconciling their differences through the Church which Christ has created.

Peace is also included in the gifts one receives through **the fruit of the Spirit** (Galatians 5:22) and should be the goal of every Christian when dealing with others (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control).²⁸

1 Timothy 2:1, 2, 8 NAS:

¹ First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men,

² for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.

*⁸ Therefore **I want the men in every place to pray**, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.*

Romans 3:9, 10, 17, 20 NLT:

⁹ Well then, should we conclude that we Jews are better than others? No, not at all, for we have already shown that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under the power of sin.

¹⁰ As the Scriptures say, “No one is righteous— not even one.

*¹⁷ They don't know where to find **peace.**”*

²⁸ Rom 12:18; 14:19; Heb 12:14.

²⁰ *For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are.*

Jeremiah 6:13-15 (NLT)

¹³ ***“From the least to the greatest, their lives are ruled by greed. From prophets to priests, they are all frauds.***

¹⁴ *They offer superficial treatments for my people’s mortal wound. They give assurances of **peace** when there is no **peace**.*

¹⁵ *Are they ashamed of their disgusting actions? Not at all—they don’t even know how to blush! Therefore, they will lie among the slaughtered. They will be brought down when I punish them,” says the Lord.*

Isaiah 48:22 (NLT)

²² *“But there is **no peace** for the wicked,” says the Lord.*

Now let us look at this last passage in John, **John 16:28-33 NAS:**

²⁸ *“I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.”*

²⁹ *His disciples said, "Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech.*

³⁰ *"Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God."*

³¹ *Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe?"*

³² *"Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.*

³³ *"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."*

Jesus sums up His ministry in verse 28. His Incarnation ("I came forth from the Father"); His humiliation ("*I have come into the world*"); and His resurrection, ascension, and exaltation ("*I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.*"). This is what the disciples had come to believe.²⁹

God became man in the form of Jesus and came into the world for one

²⁹ Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*

purpose: to redeem man. When the mission was accomplished, He returned to the Father. But before He left He wanted them to understand that victory was at hand. He wants them to understand that what He has taught them is about to happen and victory is just a few moments away.

The apostles' then acknowledge that they finally understood and believed. They felt that Jesus had now made everything clear to them and they could now see that He knew all things, that He came from God, and was the Messiah Savior that He claimed to be. Yet they still do not quite understand that He would die and then rise again before going to the Father.

Do you believe and understand these truths?

The time was drawing close when these men would all scatter. They would leave Jesus alone to face the false accusations that would be brought against Him. But we are told that He was not alone "*because the Father is with me*" (John 16:32). God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, 2 Corinthians 5:19 NLT:

“For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation”

Imagine it! At the very moment of death, God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. This is something that we do not believe the human mind can quite understand. It is something truly out of this world.

In order to protect His beloved apostles Jesus provided them with His **peace**, John 14:27 (NLT): *“I am leaving you with a gift—**peace of mind and heart.** And the **peace** I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.”* The apostles were going to need this kind of **peace** in order for them to survive the persecution they would suffer in a hostile world.

This is not only a **peace** to help get them through hard times, but a **peace** which comes from the assurance of a victory now won by their Master over the world. Christ’s victory over Satan and this sinful world is what makes possible the inward gift of this kind of **peace** provided by the Holy Spirit.

The child of God can find **peace** in this life because true **peace** can be found

in Christ and in no other place. You will not necessarily find **peace** in the Church. You will not necessarily find **peace** in Christian service. True **Peace** is found only in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus has overcome the world and His victory is our victory.³⁰

When you and I learn to identify ourselves with Jesus and come into close fellowship with Him, then we will begin to experience the **peace** of God in our hearts. Also we will be of good cheer.

There is trouble in the world but in our lives there will be joy. Peace and joy!

*"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have **peace**. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; **I have overcome the world**"*
(John 16:33 NAS).³¹

AMEN! and AMEN!

³⁰ J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1983), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Chapter 16".

³¹ Ibid.

