

THE EXCHANGE

by Tricia Berg

"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

Do you ever worry? I think that if we're honest, we all have to answer 'yes' to that question. Things happen every day that we have no control over. Just watching the news could strike us with fear some days. Even if we feel safe from major disasters, personal tragedies are common. No one escapes completely—concerns about health, finances and other daily burdens weigh us down.

How do we deal with it? We trust. Whom do we trust? God. He's the only One who is able to handle it all and keep us in His perfect peace. When Jesus died on the cross almost 2,000 years ago, He conquered the world. When we place our trust in Him, we have become conquerors as well.

[Jesus said] "I have said these things to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." John 16:33 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 1 John 4:4 And who is the one who conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? 1 John 5:5

Jesus came to give us rest from our burdens. He was not talking about taking away every problem we might ever face, but that He will take us home to be with Him when this life is over—and while we're here, He promises to help us through whatever happens. So we can know that in the end, all is well, because we know that He is in control. If we know that He is good and all powerful, then we also know that we don't need to fear anything that happens to us, because He loves us. The wisest thing we could ever do is to believe in and trust Jesus. Let Him handle it. He is able. *"Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you. 1 Peter 5:6-7*

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:17b-19

The Bible is our instruction manual on how to live in this world that is our temporary home. We know what to do because the word of God says to pray continually. We don't even need to know exactly what or how to pray if we are truly born again, because God has adopted us as His dear children and given us His Spirit to help us. It's an unbelievably favorable exchange for us—we give something we need to get rid of (our worries) and He gives us what we desperately want and need (His peace).

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 4:6-7 And He who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. Romans 8:27

The best part is that God is pleased with this exchange! We are not annoying Him in any way to ask Him to work on our behalf and even expect Him to. That is exactly what He wants us to do—to acknowledge our helplessness and that only He knows what is best. To submit our will to His, because He is perfectly capable and we are not. To recognize that everything He does or allows is for our good, out of His love for us. *His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor His delight in the legs of the warrior; the Lord delights in those who fear Him, who put their hope in His unfailing love. Psalm 147:10-11*

But in my distress I cried out to the LORD; yes, I prayed to my God for help. He heard me from His sanctuary; my cry to Him reached His ears. Psalm 18:6 The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe. Proverbs 18:10 You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in You. Isaiah 26:3

And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in My name, and I will do it. John 14:13-14 Now this is the confidence we have before Him: Whenever we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears whatever we ask, we know that we have what we have asked Him for. 1 John 5:14-15

Sadly, most of us at one time or another have asked for things from God without a single thought about what His will is on the matter. We ask for what we want according to our own desires, then wonder if God hears or cares about us when we don't receive our request. This couldn't be further from the truth. He cares too much to give us what we asked according to our faulty understanding and knowledge when He has perfect knowledge and understanding, and His will is

always best. Our greatest desire should be to please Him, so what we ask for should reflect that. Our goal in making our requests should be to receive something we need to serve Him better, not to presume to know better than He does what is good for us. *You ask and don't receive because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your evil desires. James 4:3*

It pleases God to lavish His love on us. When we acknowledged our sinful state and need for a Savior, placing our trust in His Son, He made us His children. *But to all who believed him and accepted him, Jesus gave the right to become children of God. John 1:12 Look at how great a love the Father has given us that we should be called God's children. And we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it didn't know Him. 1 John 3:1*

We could never do anything to earn God's love or even deserve it. It's a gift. However, we can show our appreciation by doing what He said He expected of us in the Bible. *Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do what pleases Him. 1 John 3:21-22 The first and most important thing He expects is to believe. And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him. Hebrews 11:6*

In fact, this is love for God: to keep His commands. And His commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. 1 John 5:3-5

We want peace, right? We want to feel safe and secure, cared for and loved. We have all of that if we have Jesus. So what will be our response? God tells us in His word what it should be. *Flee from youthful passions, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. 2 Timothy 2:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. Against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23*

This dying world says that God changes with the times, and that much of the Bible is irrelevant for today. That is simply not true. We should continue seeking to do good and behave as a child of God until He takes us to be with Him. This is not always popular, but we each have a choice to make—the one that honors our eternal Creator and Savior, or the one that pleases our sinful self and this temporary world. *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Hebrews 13:8 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. 1 Peter 3:17 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God,*

the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. James 1:27

God values peace as well, and we are meant to reflect His beautiful nature—He will reward us richly if we do. Anyone who says that God doesn't expect anything of us is horribly mistaken. *Pursue peace with everyone, and holiness—without it no one will see the Lord. Hebrews 12:14 So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Matthew 5:23-24 And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also. 1 John 4:21*

When the Lord takes pleasure in anyone's way, He causes their enemies to make peace with them. Proverbs 16:7 In just a little while, the wicked will be no more; though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there. But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace. Psalm 37:10-11

Want to stay in God's on "good side?" We can, by His power inside of us. Relying on His strength the only way to overcome our sinful nature and live in a way pleasing to Him. *Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is working in you, enabling you both to desire and to work out His good purpose." Philippians 2:12b-13*

If we love God, we should love what He loves. Most importantly, we would never reject the Father's unimaginably great gift of His Son to pay the penalty for our sin so that we can receive eternal life. *If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame." Romans 10:9-11 Anyone who believes in Him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the One and Only Son of God. John 3:18*

Then we will want to read the Bible (not a "special" version or supplemental material *claiming* to be from God) to find out what is important to God and put ALL of our trust in Him. That is the ONLY way to have true peace. Wait and rest in the assurance that He loves you and knows what is best, and when is best, if ever. *Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble. Psalm 119:165 Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD. Psalms 27:14*

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 Trust

in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6

If it seems as though our prayers are not being answered, then we might question whether the requests we made were within God's will. Or we may need to examine ourselves and see if we are honoring God with our lives. He is more concerned with our right relationship with Him and the big picture than with temporary concerns. If we always put Him first in all ways, in everything, we can be assured that we are in His will and He is working it all out for the best. *And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28*

If we stray from His truth or get distracted from loving Him wholeheartedly, then we can expect Him to deal with us in whatever way He needs to do in order to accomplish His good purpose in our life. In fact, it should trouble us deeply if we "get away" with anything for very long. ***If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. No discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it yields the fruit of peace and righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Hebrews 12:8, 11*** However, there is nothing He will not forgive except rejecting His Son. We need only ask, and turn from our sin. *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9 Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." John 8:11b* Jesus never approved of deliberate sin—an effort is expected.

Those who are born of God do not desire to dishonor God by making a habit of sin. We may think our sin is not as bad as someone else's, but actually all sin is against God and we are each individually answerable to Him. *God will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, and He will provide a way out so that you can endure it. 1 Corinthians 10:13 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. James 4:7 No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for His seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. 1 John 3:9-10*

For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 1 Peter 4:3-5

God knows what He is doing. He is perfect in every possible way, including His timing. If we honestly know Him, then we should have no doubts, questions, criticisms or concerns about His ways. Those very ways are the ones we should strive to make our ways. *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:9 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. James 3:17*

He values peace just as much, no more, than we do. His wisdom results in everything we should want, if we would just have the sense to accept and follow His way. He loves us. We can trust Him. *Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever. Isaiah 32:16-17 There is no fear in love; instead, perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. So the one who fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because He first loved us. 1 John 4:18-19*

He doesn't leave us to try to reach His high standards on our own. It's impossible. He is the only One who can enable us to succeed and help us to overcome our selfish nature. *For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact **the Spirit of God dwells in you.** Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him. Romans 8:6-9 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for He dwells with you and will be **in** you." John 14:15-17*

*Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to **His power** that is at work **within us**, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. Ephesians 3:20-21 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it. 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24*

*Now may the God of peace, who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus—the great Shepherd of the sheep—with the blood of the everlasting covenant, equip you with all that is good to **do His will, working in us** what is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ. Glory belongs to Him forever and ever. Amen. Hebrews 13:20-21*

Jesus concisely summarized His commandments to us. If we do what He said, we will have obeyed all of them by doing two simple things. We do them **not to save ourselves**, but out of obedience because of our love for Him for who He is and everything He's done, including saving us (if we have believed and confessed in Him, surrendering our will and making Him the Lord of our life). He finished it—we're free from being enslaved by sin, from the punishment we deserve, from trying to earn God's love and acceptance. Our walk in this life, carrying our cross, is to meant to be a walk in His footsteps. We are to be changed on the inside to be like Him, because that is the will of our Father. *For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.* Romans 8:29 This is exactly what we should want more than anything—because we love Him and belong to Him—He is our all in all.

"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." Mark 12:29-31

By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. 1 John 2:3-6

So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." John 8:31-32

Is there anything that could be considered too much for God to ask of us? The One who made the entire universe and everything in it loves us! He provided the means of peace between us and Himself, all of His own doing—an unfathomably precious gift to us. And yet, He asks nothing more than that we love, serve, honor and obey Him. We are here to glorify His great and holy name with our lives by showing our love for Him and shining his light of truth on the world. What a privilege!

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. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over His kingdom, To

establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this. Isaiah 9:6-7

Lovingkindness and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Psalm 85:10 Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Romans 5:1

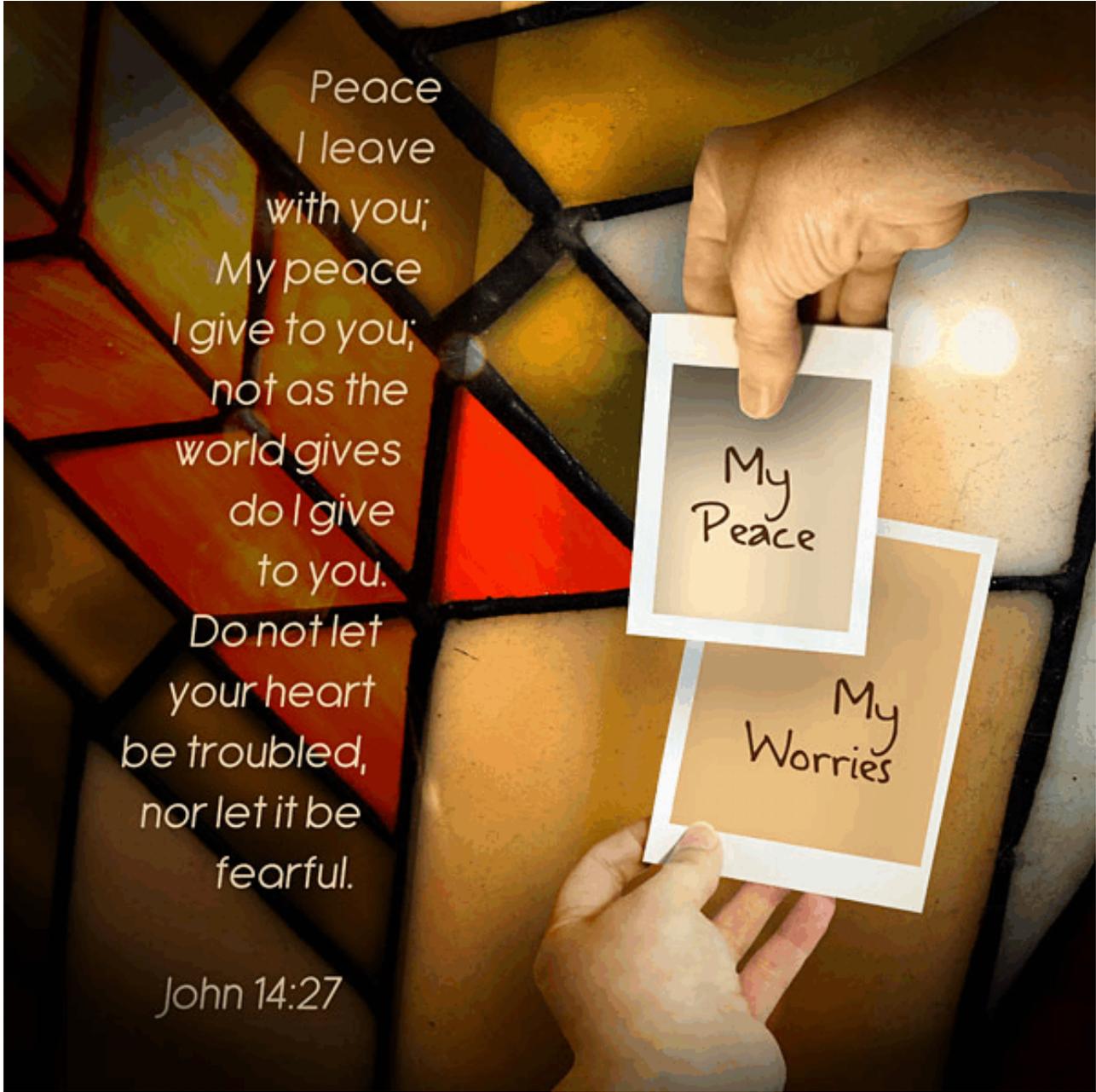
Good news! We don't have to worry! Isn't that a relief? I sure think it is. Such a relief that I want to share this Good News with everyone! I'm so thankful, aren't you? This is true freedom. "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." John 14:6 If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. John 8:36

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Colossians 3:15

Dear brothers and sisters, I close my letter with these last words: Be joyful. Grow to maturity. Encourage each other. Live in harmony and peace. Then the God of love and peace will be with you. 2 Corinthians 13:11

The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace. Numbers 6:24-26

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