



## May 8 & 9: Peace

### Overview

There are times in life when we all feel like people have deliberately run over us, when we have been knocked down or deeply wounded. In the book of *2 Corinthians*, Paul emphasizes the special resources available to those who are Christians and who are hurting. This letter was written to a troubled church and a hurting people. Throughout the letter Paul encourages the church to remain faithful. Paul himself had faced many hardships; he was able to encourage them because Jesus Christ had transformed his attitude. As we look through *2 Corinthians*, we will see how God can change our perspective and take us BEYOND the blues.

#### Goals of the study guide:

- To look at the characteristics that help to develop peace of mind.
- To recognize that each of our lives is significant as we view our existence from God's perspective.
- To grasp the reality that our eternal destiny is in God's hands and therefore secure.

#### Key points:

- Christians experience pressure and anxiety like everybody else.
- Our faith in Christ should enable us to handle stress and have peace of mind.
- An attitude of thanksgiving goes a long way toward developing the peace of God in our lives.



### Take a second look ... Sermon Summary

Paul begins *2 Corinthians 2:13* by saying, *I still had no peace of mind...* That's surprising because we usually think of a Christian as always having an inner peace. But Paul admits that there was this period in the midst of a missionary journey when he did *not* have peace.

*2 Corinthians 2:12-13*. Paul had expected his co-workers to bring news about the Corinthian Church. Paul had sent a stern letter to that church and now he wondered what their reaction would be.

Notice as we read further that Paul's anxiety was temporary. He quickly recovered his peace of mind because of his faith in God. Christians experience pressure and anxiety like everybody else, but our faith in Christ should enable us to handle stress and have peace of mind.

A Christian can have peace of mind in the midst of a troubled world if you have...

#### 1. A grateful heart.

In *2 Corinthians 2:14*, Paul changes the pace of his thoughts, *But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession.*

Later he wrote in *Philippians 4:6-7*, *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, 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.*

When you focus on your problems, you increase your anxiety. When you praise God for His goodness, you increase your peace. The most important step in developing inner peace is to quit complaining and start praising.

I'm not saying be unrealistic and walk around saying, "Everything is beautiful." Sometimes you have to identify the problems, but you can be thankful, you can be positive and you will begin to experience the peace which goes beyond your comprehension. And you can have peace of mind if you have...

#### 2. A significant life.

*2 Corinthians 2:14*, *But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.*

We must believe that our life counts for something. Victor Franco wrote, "There is nothing in the world which helps a person surmount difficulties, survive disappointment, keep healthy and happy, as the knowledge of a life task worthy of his dedication."

That's where believers are today. We are following in Christ's triumph. Our heavenly Father has won the victory. We are glorying in His victory. So Paul knew his life *counted* for something.

*2 Corinthians 2:15-16*, *<sup>15</sup>For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. <sup>16</sup>To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task?*

You may never know how far your influence is spreading. It is an awesome thought to realize that maybe your influence could determine someone's eternal destiny. That kind of assignment gives life. And you have peace of mind when you have...

### 3. A pure motive.

2 Corinthians 2:17, *Unlike so many, we do not peddle the Word of God for profit.*

When your motives are not pure, there is a loss of self-respect. And there's a loss of inward peace. If you are always pretending, your conscience is going to bother you, and there will be no peace. Ultimate peace of mind comes from...

### 4. A guaranteed destiny.

There won't be any peace of mind if you think this life is all there is. The older you get, the more futile it becomes and the more anxious you become about dying. You have to believe that your life is going somewhere.

We know the outcome. There are detours or problems. But we shouldn't be uptight, because we know we'll have the victory.



## Take it to the source ... Bible Study

**Introductory question:** Do you have a favorite place where you know everything is peaceful? Did you have such a place as a child? What feeling do you get from that place? Why?

### Opening thought:

Peace is a primary component of a contented life. Many people say it is the thing they want most for the world. Jesus says that the peace He gives is much greater than the peace that the world can give; it is a God-given peace. Use this question to help your group start thinking about the concept of peace and how important it is in their own lives.

### Read *Philippians 4:4-7*.

1. This is the third time Paul tells this church to rejoice. (Also look at 2:18 and 3:1.) Why is rejoicing such a crucial part of a healthy spiritual life?
2. What is your immediate reaction when something makes you anxious? How might prayer and thanksgiving to God help you in stressful situations?
3. How would you describe a person that reflects the qualities listed in these verses?
4. Paul says that the peace of God will actually *guard* your heart and mind. What do you think that looks like, and how can you make that a reality in your own life?

### Key points:

- Rejoicing means that we are looking at the glass as "half full." We find the positive things that God has given us and is doing for us in every situation. *Numbers 11:1* says that complaining displeases the Lord, so an attitude of rejoicing is going to bring God's blessing as it sees God at work and thanks Him for the grace He pours into our lives.
- The mind is where our thoughts can easily get out of control. This can affect our heart, or our emotional well-being, and cause us to be anxious and stressed out. The peace of God will guard our heart and mind when we give God the chance to bring His perspective into our thinking. This can only happen as we involve Him in our lives through prayer and thanking Him for what He is doing in us. Help your group to consider what it means to make God an active part of daily life.

## Read 2 Corinthians 2:14-16.

1. What are some of the things that can help you to become the aroma of Christ?
2. What kind of aroma do you most often spread around your home environment? Your workplace? Your small group?
3. How does knowing God become a fragrance in our lives? What practical steps can you take to know God more?
4. How can one fragrance be both life and death at the same time?
5. What is your response to the idea that you have that kind of responsibility toward the people that are part of your life?

### Key points:

- The more we get to know God through prayer and by studying the Bible and living out the principles we find there, the more we will reflect the fragrance of Jesus Christ. This will change the way people view us and the way that we influence people.
- In a Roman triumphal procession incense and spices were burned openly as the soldiers paraded through the streets. For the Roman army, it meant victory and life. For the prisoners of war that were part of the procession, it usually meant death at the end of the procession. When any person encounters Christ, or the fragrance of Christ in any of His followers, they have the choice—they can choose eternal life and follow Christ, or they can choose eternal death and reject Christ.

## Read 2 Corinthians 2:17 and 2 Peter 2:1-4.

1. What are some ways that people *peddle the Word of God for profit* in our society?
2. What are character traits of a false teacher?
3. How highly do you rate sincerity when listening to someone speak about God? Why?
4. Is sincerity by itself enough, or does it take more than sincerity for someone to be a biblical and godly teacher? What other qualities are vital?

### Key points:

- False teachers will often display some of these traits: 1. They twist the message of Jesus Christ in some way. 2. Their lifestyle does not match up with the biblical message of Christ. 3. They usually have a lust for money and power.
- Sincerity by itself does not guarantee that a teacher is teaching a solid biblical message. A person can be sincerely *wrong*. It is important to test any person's teaching according to the Word of God and make sure it lines up with biblical principles. However, sincerity is a good indication that a person's motives are pure and that they are not merely seeking their own personal gain and advantage.



## Take it home ... Practical Applications

This week try to learn what it means to have the peace of God guarding your heart and mind:

- Find at least three things to be thankful for each day this week.
- Be sure the first person you talk to about any stressful situations is God.
- Make a decision that you will rejoice in every circumstance that comes your way.



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*All Bible references are from the New International Version unless otherwise stated.*

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