

## The Path to Personal Peace

John 14:27

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

**If you believe the Internet, peace of mind is big business in America.** Everybody thinks they have the key to it. As I was preparing this segment, I typed in the phrase “peace of mind” into an Internet search engine and it was interesting to see what the top ten responses were on the Internet. Number one was Self-Help studies. Number two was the Peace of Mind home security system. Number three was Peace of Mind funeral services. Number four was a raga band called Peace of Mind. The fifth thing was Peace of Mind candles, crystals and body soaps. And then number six was a company selling cancer insurance. Number seven is a company that sells home inspections that takes the guesswork out of buying a home. Number eight was a plumbing warranty plan that insures your toilet. (I know you’ve all been very anxious about that!) Number nine was the Hypnosis Therapy Clinic. And number ten was a Baptist church in Texas.

**Everybody thinks they have the key to peace of mind or at least wants you to think so, so you will buy their product.** I saw an ad for a perfume the other day called Peace perfume. The title said, “Wear it to feel serenity.” **Now, folks, if it were all that easy, it would be great – just put a little perfume on and you will have peace of mind.** Peace of mind is such an important concept in life that people will do almost anything to find it. They will travel to exotic places at great expense. They will sniff up their nose a brain-destroying drug. **They will experiment with New Age rituals.** They will try all kinds of things.

**But the truth is very few people in this world are at peace with themselves.** Most people carry a high degree of stress, of anxiety, of tension in their lives. As a pastor, I have noticed that there are three things that tend to rob our peace. Three things that steal the peace of mind that God intends for us to have.

1. **When circumstances are uncontrollable we often lose our peace.** As you know much of life is beyond your control. You get frustrated by delayed flights and stuck in traffic and there is nothing you can do about it; you just set there. **But even more than that the most important things in life are often beyond your control.** I have met with couples who have wanted to have a baby and it just was not happening. I have met with singles who wanted to get married and it just was not happening. **Lots of things just end up being out of your control.** When that happens we get frustrated and we lose our peace of mind.

2. **When people are unchangeable we tend to lose our peace.** People naturally resist change. And they resent it when you try to change them. **Have you ever tried to change anybody?** A personal improvement program for your husband or wife or children? And they just don't cooperate and you cannot figure out why they are not working on this. And you assure them, "It's for your own good!" **They resist it and they resent you.** The quickest way to lose your peace of mind is to try to change somebody else because most people are just not going to change. So we get frustrated and lose our peace.

3. **When problems are unexplainable.** We know that life is not fair. Not everybody has a happy ending and live happily ever after. **Things do not always turn out right.** What makes it more difficult is that you are not always going to know why. And when you do not know why things do not happen in your life the way you intend for them to do, you tend to get frustrated, you tend to get anxious, nervous, stressed. And you lose your peace.

**God has promised *peace of mind* because it is a fundamental need of your life.** One of the Hebrew names of God – we have been looking at these names of God and how they meet our deepest needs – one of the Hebrew names of God is Jehovah Shalom. Shalom means *peace*. Jehovah Shalom means, “I am the God of peace.” The most used greeting in the New Testament between Christians is “Grace” and “Peace.” We are to live peaceful lives. Jesus says three times in John 20, “Peace be with you.” And in John 14:27 He says this, “I am leaving you with a gift – peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is not fragile like the peace the world gives. So do not be troubled or afraid.”

If God says, “I’m offering you a gift of peace,” He means it. **It is not something you work for.** It is not something you *deserve*. It is not something you *try* for. **You do not beg for peace.** You do not *plead* for peace. It is simply a *gift*. **Then why don’t I have it?** In this segment we are going to talk about that. We are going to look at The Path to Personal Peace and we are going to hear what the Bible says about how to live at peace no matter what is happening in your life.

**I need to say right up front that *peace has nothing to do with problem-free living.*** If you have to wait until all your problems are solved to be at peace, you are never going to be at peace. Because Jesus said, “In the world you will have problems.” **You are going to have problems – count on it.** Peace of mind does not come from conflict-free living. Much of your life you are going to have conflict. But did you know you could have peace of mind *in the conflict*?

**Peace of mind is the result of three important decisions you need to make.** Three choices. And when you choose these things it will produce peace in your life. It is the choice for acceptance, the choice for trust, the choice for surrender.

**1. Accept what cannot be changed.** Worrying about what cannot be changed certainly will not give you peace. Becoming resentful or bitter about what cannot be changed will certainly not give you peace.

**Feeling guilty about things that cannot be changed will not give you peace – so you can stop beating yourself over the head.** Having self-pity over things that cannot be changed in your life will not give you peace.

**There is only one thing that will bring peace in your life and that is acceptance.** **Acceptance of what cannot be changed.** In the Bible, in the book of 2 Samuel 12, there's the story of King David who had a baby that was dying and David did everything he could to keep that baby from dying. **He prayed in the temple for seven days all night long.** He fasted, he wept, he cried, he pleaded with God – “God! Please save this baby!” and on the seventh day, the baby died. **God did not answer his prayer.** I do not know why, but He didn't.

**When David's advisers heard that the baby had died, they were scared to death.** They thought, “This guy's nearly over the edge with the baby near death. When he finds out the child has actually died, he may lose it all!” So they were afraid to tell him. But David heard them whispering and he said, “Has the child died?” They said, “Yes, the child is dead.” **And David got up.** He went and took a bath. He put on clean clothes. **He ate a big meal.** And he went back to work.

**The advisors were astounded.** They said, “What are you doing? You were in agony when he was near death. Now that he has died, you are ok. What has happened?” David said, “The child has gone to heaven. And one day I will die and I will be reunited and go to heaven with that child. In the meantime there is nothing else I can do. I have got to get back to work.” **He accepted what could not be changed.**

**The Apostle Paul was taken to Rome, put in prison and was awaiting execution by Nero.** During that time he wrote the book of **Philippians, the most positive book in the Bible.** In that circumstance, Paul says, “I've learned to be content.” **Philippians 4:11-13 reads like this in the Greek,** “I have learned to be satisfied with the things I have and with everything that happens. [Notice the words “everything that

happens”] I know how to live when I am poor, and I know how to live when I have plenty. I have learned the secret of being happy at any time in everything. I can do all things through Christ because He gives me strength.”

**Notice several things: First, acceptance is a learned experience and you learn it from going through tough times – learning to accept in the experience. It is a choice and it is only possible by supernatural power. You are never going to learn to really accept the things of life without God’s power in your life.**

**Let me tell you the one thing that keeps you from peaceful circumstances, what keeps you tense and nervous and stressed out about the things in your life. It is your demand for an explanation.** When something goes wrong in your life, when something does not happen the way you think it ought to happen, you go, “Why?? Why, God? Why is this happening? Why did You allow this? Why is this happening to me?” and by going over and over it in your mind trying to figure out why something happened, you are kept in turmoil.

**I want you to see two or three things about your demand for an explanation of the things that happen in your life.**

**One, God does not owe you an explanation for anything. He is not obligated to explain everything that He does to you. You are the creation, He is the creator. God is a good God, He is a just God, He is a fair God, He is a loving God, and He understands things that you don’t. You need to just say, “Ok.” The fact is, God does not owe you an explanation for anything in your life.**

**Two, even if He did explain why things happen the way they do, you probably would not understand it anyway. God’s mind is so much greater than your mind, you cannot comprehend all the ways of God. There are forces at work in your life, in your family, in our world and throughout history that, if God sat down and took the time to**

explain to you how generations affect generations and on and on, you probably would not understand it anyway.

**Third, explanations never bring peace.** You think, “If I just knew why this happened, then it would make sense.” No, it won’t. Some of you have figured out why certain things happened in your life but it didn’t bring peace. **You still felt resentful or bitter or angry or upset or whatever.** Explanations never satisfy.

**What comforts us is the presence of God in our life.** Not God’s explanations, God’s care and concern and comfort. Stop looking for something that you really do not need.

**The classic example of accepting things that cannot be changed is the story of Job.** In the Old Testament, Job played in the Super Bowl of suffering. This guy was the wealthiest man who had ever lived. **He was a very godly man, very dedicated, very devout to God.** One day, actually a 48-hour period, he lost everything. **First, all ten of his kids were murdered.** Then **he lost all his wealth, his crops were destroyed.** His *flocks* and *herds* were destroyed. **He went bankrupt instantly.** He lost everything he had overnight. Then, as if that weren’t enough, **he got a terrible, painful disease that left open soars on his body oozing and left him in pain 24-hours a day.** **You think you had a rough day!** That is pretty tough. The only thing that he was left with was a *wife who nagged him!* And she comes to Job and says, “Why don’t you just curse God and die?” That is what I call emotional support!!!

**But the most difficult thing about Job’s circumstance is this: there was no apparent explanation given.** He had no reason why all these things had befallen him. There was no understanding, no hint, no God saying, “This is why I am allowing this in your life.” **Looking back, we can see what was going on because, as we read the book of Job, we find out that there were forces at work, that God was allowing a test, that Satan was involved – there were all kinds of**

**things that were going on that Job didn't understand.** We can see that looking back, but he had no idea in the moment. It simply did not make sense and the most difficult part of it was this: Job says, "Why is this happening, God? I'm a good guy!" And for 37 chapters God says nothing! Zip!

**Have you ever been in a crisis when God was silent?** That is one of the most difficult things to handle in life. When you are going, "Why? Why is this happening?" and heaven is like brass heaven and your prayers are bouncing off the ceiling and nothing is coming through. **Job was going through the greatest test of his life.** It was a test of his peace of mind but it was also a test of his character. This is the guy who said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." And it was a major test.

Here is the point of the story: When God is silent you need acceptance.

**Remember when you were in school and you took a class, the teacher is always silent when a test is being given.** You can count on that in your life. God's not going to give you the answer in the test. **You might get it later.** You might possibly get it when you get to heaven, but you are certainly not going to get it in the test.

**Millions of people pray the Serenity Prayer everyday.** You are familiar with this: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." That is a very famous prayer by a man named Reihold Neibor. But it is edited. **There are eight more lines to the Serenity Prayer that you may never have heard.** That is where all the power is. The power of peace is not in the first part of the prayer, it is in the part that they have cut out.

"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,  
The courage to change the things I can,

And the wisdom to know the difference.  
Living one day at a time  
Enjoying one moment at a time  
Accepting hardship as the pathway to peace  
Taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is not as I would have it  
Trusting that You, God, will make all things right if I surrender to  
Your will  
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life  
And supremely happy with You forever in the next.  
Amen.”

**It makes a little bit of difference, doesn't it? All of the power is in the second part of the prayer. It is through the acceptance, the trust, the surrender that you find the path to peace.**

**Here is what you do: When you go through an experience that you don't like, you do what you can but then you accept what cannot be changed. God says this is the starting point to peace – accepting what can't be changed.**

**2. Trust in God's loving care. Isaiah 26:3 says, “You, Lord, give true peace to those who depend on You because they trust in You.” God gives peace to those who trust in Him because they depend on Him.**

Proverbs 3:5-6 says, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and don't lean on your own understanding. (Don't try to figure it all out.) In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.”

**As I said earlier, you will never live a problem-free life. There is no such thing as a problem-free life. Because... It's always something. If it isn't one thing it's another. You have a list of problems in your life, the moment you knock off your biggest problem, Number Two gets promoted. Now you have another Number One problem. When you get that knocked off, Number Three has moved up to Number Two and now it is Number One. The rest of your life, you're going to**



have one problem after another. There is a word for a series of problems – **LIFE**. **You have got to learn to have peace in the middle of your problems or you are never going to have peace.** As soon as one pops up and you deal with it, another one is going to take its place.

**Why does this happen?** Why is my life just one problem after another?

There are three reasons:

**In the first place, Adam choked.** He blew it. He and Eve gave into temptation, allowed sin to come into the world and we are all paying the result. **We live in a fallen world.** So this is not a perfect world. There are things around you that cause problems. We live in an imperfect world.

**Two, you have an enemy and his name is Satan.** You say, “Do you believe in a personal, real devil?” Of course I do. God does. **The Bible talks about him.** And all you have to do is pick up a newspaper and see his work all around the world. Evil is a real entity in this world. **Satan wants to mess you up.** He wants to mess with your *mind*. He wants to mess with your *family*. **He wants to mess with your health.** He wants to mess with your *finances*. He wants to mess you up. **Particularly if you are a follower of Christ if you are trying to do the right thing, you are the enemy of the devil.** He is going to try to mess you up anyway.

So you have the world competing against you – a fallen world – and you have a personal enemy who is competing against you.

**On top of that, you just make your own mistakes.** You blow it. Most of the problems and pain in my life come from my own poor decisions, from my own lousy choices. **When I make dumb decisions, I pay the penalties.** Most of the time the devil does not have to

worry about me because I'm messing up my own life. Most of us just make stupid decisions in life.

Those things are always working to bring problems into your life and pain comes as a result.

**But sometimes the pain in your life is no one's fault.** Sometimes the problems in your life, you cannot blame anybody for. One day Jesus was walking down the street and He found a man who was born blind. **He was blind from birth.** The disciples looked at the man and said to Jesus, "Ok, Lord, who sinned? This man or his parents?" Implying that he had this problem because of sin. And that is a common therapy today; it is either your fault or your parent's fault. **The idea is still around.** It is either blame yourself or blame your parents. That is the reason for every problem in your life. **It is not a new idea.** When they asked Jesus whose fault it was, Jesus said in John 9, "Neither. It is neither the man's fault or the parents' fault. This happened so the work of God maybe displayed in his life."

**Sometimes there is a problem in your life so that the work and power of God may be displayed in your life.** Regardless of why you have the problem that you have that is unsolvable, unchangeable, unexplainable, uncontrollable. Regardless of the problem, regardless of the source whether it came from the world, the devil, yourself, or you don't know where, you still need the same response every time -- trust in the loving care of God.

Philippians 4:6-7 say, "Don't worry about anything; instead pray about everything. Tell God your needs and don't forget to thank Him for His answers. If you do this, you will experience God's wonderful peace which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand." **That is the path to peace.** Trust God's loving care in the situation.

Most people respond to the uncontrollable, unexplainable, unchangeable situations of life with one of two responses and both of them are fatal mistakes.

Some of you, when you face an uncontrollable situation, you just try harder. You become more controlling. And the more your life gets out of control, the more controlling and compulsive you become, “I am going to make this thing work!” And you make everybody around you miserable. The more controlling you become and the more compulsive you become, the more unhappy you become.

Others of you are at the exact opposite extreme and you just want to give up, not try anymore. You give in to despair. You basically say, “I’m a victim! And I will be a victim the rest of my life.” You swallow and wallow in a giant pity party. You give in to despair.

Both of those responses are foolish mistakes that do not work. Instead, you need to take the third step in the path to peace. The third important decision.

3. Surrender to God’s loving control. The real reason some of you are in turmoil, you have so much anxiety, you have so much tension in your mind is because you are fighting a war with God in your mind. You think you know better. Every day you wake up you have a decision to make: who is going to be in charge of my life? Me or God? Who is going to be in control of my life? Am I going to be in control or is God going to be in control? Because you think you know better, there are verses in the Bible you just want to ignore. You want to make up your own rules. You want to play your own games. You think you are God. You think you know better. The more you take control yourself, the more miserable you become and the more out of control your life becomes. Because it does not work. You are at war with the real God when you try to play God.

**The Bible is very clear about the results of these decisions.** Romans 8:6 reads like this in the Greek, “If a person’s thinking is controlled by his sinful self, then there is death. But if his thinking is controlled by the Spirit, then there is life and peace.” **Those are your alternatives – death or life and peace. Who is going to be in charge?**

**I don’t know if you have thought this through but it is very obvious.** In a war with God you are going to lose. There is no way you are going to win that war when you are arguing with God. As the old saying says, “Your arms are too short to box with God.” I remember years ago, Mohammed Ali was the World’s champion and he was going around saying, “I am the greatest! I am the greatest!” **I will never forget that tragic scene at the Olympics when Ali was chosen to light the torch.** He climbed up the stairs and with a palsied, Parkinson’s shake in his hand he could barely light that torch from the shaking in his body. Later in an interview he said, “God gave me that so I could remember that I am not the greatest, but He is.” **Folks, you fight with God, you are going to lose.** And He loves you too much to let you win.

**If you want to have deep, personal, satisfying peace of mind in heart and soul, you have got to surrender control of your life totally to God.** How do you know if you have done that?

**The evidence is this.** Evidence of a surrendered life is always obedience. When God says, “Do it!” **I do it.** I don’t care if I don’t understand it, I don’t care if anybody else is doing it, I don’t care if it’s possible, I don’t care if it’s hard or easy – I do it. If God says to do it in His word, whether it makes sense to me from a human point or not, I do it. **Why?** Because I am surrendered to His control.

**When I listen to His word and follow His direction, what is the result of that?** It is always the same. Peace. Psalm 119:165 reads like this in the Hebrew, “Those who love Your teachings will find true peace and nothing will defeat them.”

**Today, you may be in an uncontrollable circumstance.** You may be married to an unchangeable person. You may be experiencing an unexplainable problem. **But the good news is you can have peace.** You can have the peace of God in your life. But first you have got to make peace with God. **You cannot have the peace of God until you first make peace with God.** How do you do that? By surrendering your entire life in faith to Jesus Christ, as seen in Romans 5:1, “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.”

**Aren’t you tired of being at war with God?** Don’t you realize that is the single greatest source of stress in your life when you get up and say, “I am going to be God today, not God.” **What is the result of being in control of my own life?** Worry, guilt, bitterness, resentment, anxiety, fear, fatigue, depression, despair. And many of you are familiar with those emotions. **What is the result of having Jesus Christ being number one in my life and being fully surrendered to whatever He wants?** Peace, power, strength, wisdom, purpose, meaning, eternal life, significance, joy.

**Then why don’t we surrender to God in every area of our life?** Because some of you are holding on to a resentment of God. You say, “Me? I certainly am not resentful of God.” Yes, you are.

**What is it that you are still angry with God about?** That marriage that did not work out? That marriage that never happened? **That handicap in your life or that of a loved one?** That birth defect? That big disappointment that you hoped would happen and it didn’t? **Those plans that you planned that did not go the way you planned them?** That loved one who died before you thought it was their time because you know better than God? What are you still resentful of God about? Do you realize that when you hold on to your anger and you are saying, “I know better than God,” you are cutting off the very source of hope, healing and help you need in your own life. **And you need to**

**let it go.** You need to realize that you are at war with God over that issue and that has kept you from having the peace of God in your heart.

**Let me say this as clearly as I know how to say this: There is not a single bad thing that has ever happened in your life that God could not have prevented.** Nothing has happened to you that God could not have prevented. Please understand what I am saying, He did not cause it, but He could have prevented it!

You say, “Then why didn’t He?”

**I don’t know.** I don’t know all the details. **I do know this.** **We live in a fallen world where we are free to make bad choices and as a result people get hurt.** I do know that God has a greater purpose for your life than the problems you are going through. I do know that He is more interested in your character than He is interested in your comfort. **And He wants to build you up.** I do know that if everything went great in your life, you would be a spoiled brat, if you got everything you wanted. **And I do know that God knows just how much you can handle in your life.** **And I do know that this earth is not heaven.** Heaven is where we get the ultimate comfort. I do know that if you think you are due a problem free life on this earth you are kidding yourself and it is not going to happen. **And I do know hat God has a plan for your life and that plan involves pain because He wants you to grow.** And I do know that He has already determined the rewards that you will receive in heaven based on how you respond on this earth. **And I do know that He loves you deeply.** And I do know that He wants you to trust Him.

**And I do know that there is only one way to peace.** Through acceptance, trust and surrender.