

# LIFE CHANGING PRAYER

## Perfect Peace from God

### **The cure to anxiety is the peace that passes all understanding.**

Our world is “connected” by earthly standards. Almost everyone has a cell phone meaning you can call or be called anywhere any time. We text – we email – we are on Facebook and Twitter – striving to stay “connected” with friends and family. And yet, so many in our world are “disconnected” – disconnected spiritually from the Perfect Peace of God and His love. When you are at your wit’s end – when life is closing in on you or even at the moments when life is at its best for you – who do you call? After the homegoing of my mother, my sister became my ‘go to’ person to call with the good news and the bad news. And that is what I miss most about her leaving earth for heaven. She is no longer available to take my calls. But thank God there is always One available to hear my call any time – anywhere. *Jeremiah 33:2-3 (NIV)* <sup>2</sup> "This is what the LORD says, he who made the earth, the LORD who formed it and established it--the LORD is his name: <sup>3</sup> 'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.'

When I called my sister, I called her to tell her things that she didn't already know. However, when I call God He already knows. *Matthew 6:8 (ESV)* <sup>8</sup> ... *for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.* So, if God already knows all about us why do we need to pray? Just like when I picked up the phone to call my sister, it deepened our relationship.

*Psalm 145:18-19 (ESV)* <sup>18</sup> *The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.* <sup>19</sup> *He fulfills the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them.*

Effective prayer is the provision for every need and the solution for every problem. In most small groups that meet for prayer and Bible study, the time spent in taking prayer requests often far exceeds the time spent in actual prayer to the Father. The greatest argument for the priority of prayer in our lives is the fact that our Lord was a Man of Prayer. He prayed at His baptism. He prayed before He chose His twelve disciples. He prayed when the crowds increased. Jesus prayed before He asked the Twelve for their confession of faith and He prayed at His Transfiguration. He prayed just before He was arrested. He prayed on the cross. He prayed in His final breath. Before the cross, the disciples knew that He often prayed alone and they wanted to learn from Him His secret of spiritual power and wisdom.

*Hebrews 5:7 (ESV)* <sup>7</sup> *In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.*

Jesus made prayer His way of life. This passage is a reference to Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. It is a picture of the humanness of Jesus and how he was completely dependent upon His Father.

If we are to pray like Jesus – we must pray with an undivided heart – that is a heart that is singularly focused on God and learning His ways. If Jesus Christ, the perfect Son of God, depended on prayer during His life on earth, then how much more do we need to pray!

**Life as God intends for His people is  
a life free from fear and anxiety.**

***Philippians 4:4-7(ESV)** <sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. <sup>5</sup> Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; <sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Joy is something we cannot produce ourselves. God's Word tells us that joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. ***Galatians 5:22 (ESV)** <sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.* If circumstances were an excuse for not having joy, the Apostle Paul would have had such an excuse with all the trials he faced over the years. And yet even while imprisoned, Paul often spoke of joy and rejoicing and encouraged others to rejoice in Christ.

It is human for our hopes to pull us in one direction while our fears pull us in another! On one side we think, 'I need to put this into the Lord's hands.' And we pray, 'Lord, help me!' And on the other side, we fret, "What can I do to fix this?" All the while worrying about what will happen if we can't fix it and God doesn't fix it. If we are honest with ourselves, we know that many of the things we worry about never happen. The Old English root from which we get our word 'worry' means "to strangle." Worry has definite physical consequences. Worry affects our thinking, our digestion, and even our coordination. Physically and spiritual speaking, it is wise to be joyful.

We lose the peace of God by worrying. Another downside connected to worrying is that the sin of worry will rear its ugly head in our life to the point that our worry may harm our witness for Christ. 'Look at him, he's a Christian and he worries all the time.' 'If God bring peace, why does she worry so much?'

Paul says to be *reasonable*. How can we be reasonable people? It is accomplished *by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving*.

Worry is the greatest thief of joy. It is not enough for us to tell ourselves to quit worrying. The cure for worry is taking our fears to Jesus and trusting Him to the point of leaving our problems there. But, how can we do that?

One of the reasons I always liked to call my sister would be to get things ‘off my chest.’ After telling her what was going on, I would feel better. That feeling of peace that came from sharing with my sister is even greater when I share my worries and fears with God.

### **How can we expect answers for new grace when we haven’t thanked Him for what He’s already done?**

Another way to receive the peace of God comes through thanksgiving. Jim Cymbala calls it thanksgiving spice. In the cooking world, it is the spices that enrich the flavor of the food. Thanksgiving spice will enhance our prayer life. Sometimes we find that ‘spice’ by looking to the heavens. Other times it comes from thanking God for past experiences of His Presence. Sometimes it comes just speaking a word of favorite praise from a scripture. *Psalm 103:1 (ESV)*  
<sup>1</sup> *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!*

I love *Philippians 4:7 (ESV)* <sup>7</sup> *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* In times of great personal trials, God’s children can experience the peace of God. We may not be able to explain it since the verse says that His peace passes all understanding. But this we know: a guarded heart and mind comes from *the peace of God*. As I think of this magnificent blessing I am reminded of a line from an old gospel song: This Joy that I have the world didn’t give to me. The world didn’t give it and the world can’t take it away. And as I think of song lyrics about joy – lyrics about peace come to my mind as well: I’ve got peace like a river – I’ve got peace like a river in my soul.

### **Jesus is our Yahweh Shalom.**

*John 14:27 (ESV)* <sup>27</sup> *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.*

*Shalom*—peace—is a precious word. Our God is the God of Peace. Yahweh Shalom – Jehovah Shalom– our LORD is Peace.

In some very dark hours of Israel’s history, God revealed Himself to Gideon as Yahweh-shalom. Gideon was the first one recorded to call on the Lord by that name. By every standard, this young man was an unlikely candidate for divine revelation. Gideon’s family was one of the least in Manasseh. *Judges 6:6 (ESV)* <sup>6</sup> *And Israel was brought very low because of Midian. And the people of Israel cried out for help to the LORD.*

When the hour is dark, when the situation is desperate, when we are humbled and brought very low, we finally begin looking and longing for God’s peace. Trembling, we grope through the darkness, longing to know that all will be well.

The Angel of LORD appeared to Gideon as he was hiding in the darkness of a winepress threshing wheat in secret no doubt worrying and fretting over things to come.

Yahweh-Shalom is one of three names of God actually given to an altar. When the Angel of the LORD visited a person the world would consider as an unlikely candidate to lead and be a judge over Israel, Gideon was afraid. He thought that he would die because he had seen this Messenger from God. God spoke to Him in **Judges 6:23 (ESV)** <sup>23</sup> *But the LORD said to him, "Peace be to you. Do not fear; you shall not die."* The incident made such an impression on Gideon that he built an altar on the spot (Ophrah) and gave it the name *Jehovah Shalom*. Gideon had seen the LORD and that brought him peace.

**Judges 6:24 (ESV)** <sup>24</sup> *Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD and called it, The LORD Is Peace. To this day it still stands at Ophrah, which belongs to the Abiezrites.*

*Shalom* is not just an absence of noise or strife. *Shalom* speaks of wholeness and harmony with oneself and others, and of completion and fulfillment. Jesus said in **John 16:33 (ESV)** <sup>33</sup> *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."*

Paul called Jesus **our** peace in **Ephesians 2:14 (ESV)** <sup>14</sup> *For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.* Paul also said in **2 Thessalonians 3:16 (ESV)** <sup>16</sup> *Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all.*

It is a common tendency to look ahead and wonder what will happen next. That is why astrology is big business today. It is not ours to know the future – only to trust in the One who holds our future. The early Christians for the most part lived under great persecution and yet they were able to live their lives day by day. **Acts 2:46-47 (ESV)** <sup>46</sup> *And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,* <sup>47</sup> *praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.* Day by day that is how any of us walk with the Lord – in the good times and the bad times. Day by day, we are welcomed by our Lord into a place of perfect peace. It is up to us whether we journey into God's peace in the here and now or live on the edge of fear.

**Romans 14:17 (ESV)** <sup>17</sup> *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*