



THE WAY OF PEACE

by Becky Combee

Over the years, I've taught on the subject of peace many times, and every time, my understanding increases. In recent studies, I realized that peace is like the two sides of a coin. One side rejoices in freedom—freedom from agitation, freedom from frustration and freedom from despair. The other side rests in oneness and harmony with God. What a powerful combination!

Peace is the will of God. It dominates our lives when we trust the leadership of the Holy Spirit that God has sent to dwell within us. We do not have to live in frustration, scratching our heads for answers, weeping in confusion, or trembling in fear. God is here, and He writes His Word on our hearts. Words of direction. Gracious words of counsel. The path of victory delivered to our spirit and soul by the Spirit of Truth.

The cry of God's Spirit is heard on every page of God's Word. If we listen carefully to Him, instead of ringing our hands in despair, we will hear His voice say, "Fear not. Be not dismayed. Don't worry about anything."¹ Then, as we draw closer to Him, His counsel is clearly defined. He advises us to, "Rejoice in the Lord always."² He says, "In everything give thanks,"³ and also, "Offer the sacrifice of praise."⁴

Praise replaces worry. Praise says, "I'm not afraid because God is with me." Our thanksgiving acknowledges God's power, recognizing that He is for us and His strength enables us. Joy conquers dread and despair as it embraces the Word of our Master, "I will help you."⁵

SMALL THINGS

by Suzanne D. Williams

Do not despise these **small beginnings**, for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin. (Zec 4:10 NLT)

The temple lay in ruins for 20 years when this was spoken. Add to that a great deal of skepticism amongst the Jews, contempt even, that the new version would ever hold a candle to the first, and it seemed the work would never get done and definitely not satisfactorily.

Of this verse, one commentator states, "Despondency paralyses exertion, but hope stimulates and supports it. Despondency is never so likely to be felt as at the commencement of an undertaking, when there are few to support it and many to oppose it; when the beginning is so small as to excite the apprehensions of its friends and the derision of its enemies. The Jews who returned from the Babylonish captivity felt this when they

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God's help, His counsel, His strength, promote peace in our lives. Like a child, who holds the hand of His father, we are secure, trusting Him to honor His Word. **His Word, His promise, His covenant are sure and certain.** God cannot and will not lie. He is here! He said so! He will help us. He promised! His Spirit will lead us, and with His counsel, we will conquer. More than conquer. We will overcome!

Overcome! Conquer! Triumph! These words are the way of peace. **Peace rows through the storm focused on the safety of the harbor.** As the boat rides the crest of the wave and then is suddenly plummeted below the waterline, the voice of peace thanks God for rescue. It celebrates the supernatural strength of body and mind, the Holy Spirit has provided. Through the wailing of the

wind, it hears God say, "Peace, be still."

Yes, we have peace! Peace through the storm of financial loss because God enables us to recover. Peace in spite of sickness and disease because He is the Lord our Physician. Peace for the repentant heart because God casts our sins as far as the east is from the west. He is the God of mercy!

One songwriter ably penned, "From every stormy wind that blows, from every swelling tide of woes, there is a calm, a sure retreat—'Tis found beneath the mercy seat."⁶ Oh, what glorious news!

The hymn writer was right. "There is a place of quiet rest, near to the heart of God ... There is a place of comfort sweet, Near to the heart of God."⁶ Let's go to Him. We can lay our burden at His feet and rest!

¹Is 41:10; ²Php 4:6 NIV ³1Th 5:18 ⁴Heb 13:15 ⁵Is 41:10 ⁶"Mercy Seat" by Lemuel Miller ⁷"Near To The Heart Of God" by Cleland B. McAfee, 1903. ⁸Biblical Illustrator ⁹Job 42:12 ¹⁰Pr29:18 ¹¹Lk 13:19

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applied themselves to the rebuilding of the temple."⁸

I've been there, at the end of a difficult task-job-year, unable to see how the next one will amount to anything, my mind locked in despondency. Like the Jews in this piece of history, all I could see was what was behind me, the things I'd failed at. Not the first time they'd had this mentality. We read in Number 11:5 how, after a great, miraculous deliverance from Egypt, with amazing signs and wonders, they got caught up, mourning the bad food.

We can take an additional lesson from the life of Job. He'd been through much, said and done wrong things. God gave him a chance to repent and pray for his friends and the Scripture states, "The LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning."⁹ The thing about hindsight is it only comes after you've survived something, whether that's bad choices or bad circumstances. You can only compare the past to the future when you have a past to see. **But God sees the bigger picture. He sees the end result—always.**

That's how endings work. A new beginning always follows, and whether its small or not, with God, it promises abundance. Read the remainder of

Zechariah 4:10, "For they shall rejoice." They would rejoice at the majesty of the second temple. They had only to wait patiently to see it.

For he that is mighty hath done to me **great things**; and holy is his name. (Lk 1:49)

For thou art great, and doest **wondrous things**: thou art God alone. (Ps 86:10)

Small things are followed by great things. Wondrous things. We are sometimes too shortsighted to see them. We lack vision, and the Bible says without it "people perish."¹⁰ Vision requires faith. Whereas we want the whole image mapped out far in advance, faith rejoices in the small things. It is a grain of mustard seed when it begins, with the power to lodge birds in its branches after its grown.¹¹

Faith looks at the first step, alone, then the next and the next. Buoyed by hope, outlined by patience, the whole process of growth and success is accomplished in peace, and soon what looked small has become great, and that was God's goal for us all along. Abundant life, which came because even when things looked incredibly small and insignificant, we believed otherwise.