

*November 13, 2016—Fall Quarter 2016—Sunday Morning Bible Class*

UNMERITED  
FAVOR

*Your supernatural advantage for a successful life*

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# *God's Peace for Your Success*

**P**eace is not the absence of trouble in your life. It is not the absence of turmoil, challenges or things that are not harmonious in your physical environment. It is possible to be in the midst of the biggest crisis in your life and still experience peace. That's the true kind of peace that you can experience with Jesus-peace that surpasses understanding. Naturally speaking, it does not make sense for you to feel completely at rest and at peace when you are in dire straits, but supernaturally, you can be filled with peace!

The world defines peace, harmony and tranquility based on what is happening in the sensory realm. The world's notion of peace would look something like this: A man lying in a hammock on a white sandy beach in Hawaii with luau music playing softly in the cabana, coconut trees swaying in perfect unison and warm, blue waves rolling languidly along the shoreline. The world calls that peace-until reality kicks in, and the transient peace that was experienced just moments ago dissipates into thin air!

You see, my friend, you cannot use your external surroundings to permanently influence the turmoil that you are feeling inside. Only Jesus can touch what you are feeling inside and turn that turmoil into His peace. With the Lord by your side, and from that abiding peace within, you can influence your external surroundings. It's not the other way round. With Jesus, transformation is always from inside out and not outside in.

### **Peace In The Midst Of A Storm**

I remember reading about an art competition where the

theme given was "peace." The artist who most effectively depicted peace in his artwork would win the competition. The artists gathered their paints, canvases and brushes and started working on creating their masterpieces. When the time came to judge the artworks, the judges were impressed by the various scenes of tranquility illustrated by the artists. There was a majestic piece capturing the brilliance of the sun setting over lush greenery, one that depicted a serene landscape of moonlit hills and another evocative piece that showed a lone man walking leisurely through rustic paddy fields.

Then, the judges came upon a peculiar piece that looked almost horrifying and perhaps even ugly to some. It was the very antithesis of every other piece that the judges had seen. It was a wild cacophony of violent colors and the aggression with which the artist had lashed his brush against the canvas was obvious. It depicted a raging storm where the ocean waves were swollen to menacing heights and slamming against the craggy edges of a cliff with thunderous force. Lightning zigzagged across the blackened sky and the branches of the single tree that was perched atop the cliff were all swept to the side by the force of the gale. Now, how could this picture be the epitome of peace?

Yet, the judges unanimously awarded the first prize to the artist who painted the turbulent storm. While the results initially appeared to be appalling, the judges' decision immediately became clear once you gave the winning canvas a closer look. Hidden in a crevice in the cliff is a family of eagles snug in their nest. The mother eagle faces the blustering winds, but her young chicks are oblivious to the storm and have dozed off under the shelter of her wings.

Now, *that's* the kind of peace that Jesus gives to you and me! He gives us peace, security, covering and protection even in the midst of a storm. The psalmist describes this beautifully: "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty ...He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge." (Psalms 91:1, 4)

*Jesus gives us peace, security, covering and protection even in the midst of a storm.*

There is no safer place than under the protective shelter of your Savior's wings. It does not matter what circumstances may be raging around you. You can cry to the Lord for His unmerited favor, as David did in Psalms 57:1 "Be gracious to me, O' God, be gracious to me, for my soul takes refuge in You; and in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge until destruction passed by." (NAS) The New King James Version says, "Be merciful to me, O' God, be merciful to me! For my soul trusts in You; and in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge, until these calamities have passed by." What blessed assurance we can have today, knowing that even if destruction rages around us, we can take refuge in the Lord.

### **Start Your Day With Jesus**

Do you know that your God has promised that no weapon formed against you shall prosper? (Isaiah 54:17) Now, He did not promise that weapons would not be formed against you. He promised that even if weapons were formed against you, they will not hurt or defeat you.

There are all kinds of weapons formed against humanity, especially in these last days. Just think of the many kinds of deadly viruses, sicknesses and diseases in the world.

When you turn on the television and watch the news, all you seem to hear about are wars, unrest, disasters, financial collapses, violence, unemployment, famines, a global meltdown, the subprime crisis, mounting credit card debts, crashing stock markets and large organizations filing for bankruptcy. It is amazing how many people wake up in the morning, and the first thing that they do is grab the newspapers and read bad news before heading to work. Then, just before they go to bed, they watch the news!

Now, please understand that I am not against reading the newspapers or watching the news, or watching television for that matter. But I want to encourage you to start your day with Jesus instead, practicing His presence, acknowledging Him, committing your plans to Him and trusting Him for His unmerited favor, wisdom and strength for the day. Remember to be like Joseph in the Bible. The Lord was with Joseph and he was a successful man! Your success does not come as a result of you being updated about the latest virus or you being cued in to the latest disaster. No, your success will come as a result of your being tuned in to the presence of Jesus in your life!

There are many people in my church who start the day each morning by partaking of the Holy Communion, not as a ritual, but as a time to remember Jesus and the power of His cross. They look to Jesus for His strength, receiving His divine life for their physical bodies as they partake of the bread. They renew their consciousness of their free gift of righteousness purchased by the blood of Jesus on the cross as they partake of the cup. What a way to start the day!

I have also come to realize that the last thought before

you go to sleep is very important. I have tried this before and you can try it too—go to bed thinking about Jesus, giving thanks to Him for the day. You can also meditate on one of His promises, such as the one found in Isaiah 54:17. Just say, “Thank You, Father. Your Word declares that no weapon formed against me shall prosper!” Most times, I wake up feeling rejuvenated, energized and refreshed even though I did not sleep for many hours.

Conversely, if I go to bed with what I have just heard on the news swirling in my mind, I could sleep many more hours than usual, but still wake up feeling fatigued. Sometimes I even get a headache. Have you been there before? Well, you don’t have to experience that again. Sandwich your day with the presence of Jesus. Start the day with Him, enjoy Him during the day and end the day with Him on your mind!

You know, Psalm 127:2 aptly describes what we are talking about. It says, “It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; for so He gives His beloved sleep.” The bread of the world is the bread of sorrows, but Jesus is our bread of life. (John 6:35) When you feed on Him, you will be nourished physically, emotionally and spiritually, whereas the bread of the world only depletes you physically and drains you emotionally by adding stress, anxiety and worry to your life.

Isn’t it beautiful that quality sleep is a gift from God? If you are struggling to sleep at night, look to Jesus. Develop a knowing in your heart that you are His beloved and rest on the promise that “He gives His beloved sleep.” Are you His beloved? Of course you are! So you qualify to enjoy the blessedness of sleep. Insomnia is not from God. Sleep is!

## Guard What Comes Through Your Eye-And Ear-Gates

I was watching a popular program on television with the host of that program interviewing some so-called experts about the economy in America. One "expert" was very positive and gave his reasons for being so upbeat. Then, another "expert" interjected and gave his reasons for a bleak economic outlook. I watched this program for over an hour and none of these "experts" agreed on anything in the end.

The thing about such discussions, be it on television, the papers or the Internet, is that it's supposed to present two sides-one good and the other bad. No real resolution is reached at the end. Sometime after watching that program, I shared with my pastoral team that I realized that I had unknowingly been feeding on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That's all I got from watching such programs-more knowledge of what was good and what was evil, but this knowledge did nothing for me.

On the other hand, when we feed on the person of Jesus, who is the tree of life, we find that His wisdom, understanding, peace, joy and unmerited favor will flow in our lives! Again, I am not saying that you should not watch the news. I am just saying that it is important for you to watch your viewing diet. It is far more powerful to be full of Jesus than to be full of worldly knowledge.

*When we partake of Jesus, wisdom, understanding, peace, joy and unmerited favor will flow in our lives!*

I always encourage my church to be mindful of their eye-and ear-gates. Essentially, this means that we need to be conscious of what we watch and hear on a regular basis. The Book of Proverbs, which is chock-full of God's wisdom, tells us, "My son, give attention to my words; incline your

ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart; for they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh." (Proverbs 4:20-22)

God tells us to guard what we hear, what we see and what is in our hearts. He wants us to have our ears full of the gracious words of Jesus, our eyes full of the presence of Jesus and our hearts meditating on what we have heard and seen in Jesus. That's what "give attention to My words" means today in the new covenant, for Jesus is God's Word made flesh. John 1:14 says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace [unmerited favor] and truth."

*The more we hear and see Jesus, the healthier and stronger we become! Our mortal bodies become infused with His resurrection life and power!*

It is all about beholding Jesus, and as we behold Him, we are transformed more and more into His likeness, full of unmerited favor and truth! Don't miss this powerful promise my friend. The result of tuning our ear-gates and eye-gates to Jesus is that He will be **life and health** to us. The Bible shows us that there is a direct correlation between hearing and seeing Jesus, and the health of our physical bodies. The more we hear and see Jesus, the healthier and stronger we become! Our mortal bodies become infused with His resurrection life and power!

If we are constantly feeding on the news media, it is no wonder that we feel weak and tired. There is just no nourishment for us there. Please hear what I am saying. It is all right to keep yourself abreast of current world events and be in the know about what is happening in the Middle

East, trends in the economy and developments in the political arena. Such information may even be necessary for the industry that you are in. I am not asking you to become an ignoramus or to live in a cave. I am just saying that you should not overdose yourself on world news and developments and let them consume you.

### **Receive Jesus' Shalom For Every Stress In Life**

The best way to know if you are embroiled in the things of this world is to be objective and ask yourself this: "Is my heart troubled?" I believe that the number one killer in the modern world is **stress**. Medical doctors in my church have told me that if a patient has high blood pressure, they can advise the patient to cut down on sodium. They can also advise their patients to cut down on other excesses such as sugar or cholesterol. But as doctors, there is one thing that they cannot control in their patients, and that is their patients' stress levels.

I personally believe that the physical root cause of many medical conditions today is stress. Stress can produce all kinds of imbalances in your body. It can cause you to age prematurely, give you rashes, cause gastric pains and even lead to abnormal growths in your body. To put it succinctly, stress kills! Doctors tell us that certain physical symptoms are "psychosomatic" in nature. That's because these symptoms are brought about by psychological problems such as stress. Stress is not from God. **Peace** is from Him!

I trust that you are beginning to understand why Jesus said, "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." (John 14:27) Now, Jesus would not have used the word "peace." The Greek New Testament renders "peace" as *eirene*, but since Jesus spoke

Aramaic-Hebrew, He would have used the word "shalom"--"Shalom I leave with you, My shalom I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you."

In the Hebrew vernacular, "shalom" is a very rich and loaded word. There is no English word that can accurately encapsulate the fullness, richness and power contained in the word "shalom."

Hence, English Bible translators were only able to translate it as "peace." But while the word "shalom" includes peace, it means so much more. Let's look at the Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon to get a better idea of what Jesus meant when He said "Shalom I leave with you."

The Hebrew Lexicon describes "shalom" as **completeness, safety, soundness (in body), welfare, health, prosperity, peace, quiet, tranquility, contentment, peace used of human relationships, peace with God especially in covenant relationship and peace from war.** Wow, what a powerful word! This is the shalom that Jesus has bequeathed you: His completeness, His safety, His soundness, His welfare, His health, His prosperity, His peace, His quietness, His tranquility, His contentment, His peace in human relationships, His peace with God through the covenant made at the cross and His peace from war. All these, my friend, are part of your inheritance in Christ today! I don't know about you, but I am jumping up and down in my heart and shouting praises to the Lord as I let this sink in!

Can you picture the full implications of what it means to experience Jesus' shalom in your life? Can you picture your life being free from regrets, anxieties and worries? How healthy, vibrant, energetic and strong you will be!

## **The Peace Jesus Gives Sets You Up For Success In Life**

Jesus gives you His shalom to set you up for success in this life. You cannot be a success in your marriage, family and career when you are crippled and paralyzed with fear. Today, as you are reading this, I believe with all my heart that Jesus has already begun a work in your heart to liberate you from all your fears, whatever they may be. They may be the fear of failure, the fear of success, the fear of people's opinions of you or even the fear that God is not with you.

**All the fears that you are experiencing in your life today began with an untruth, a lie that you have somehow believed.** Perhaps you have believed that God is angry and displeased with you, and that His presence is far from you. That's why the Bible says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love." (1 John 4:18)

This scripture tells us that when you begin to have a revelation that God loves you perfectly (not because of what you have accomplished, but because of what Jesus has accomplished for you), that revelation of the unmerited favor of Jesus will cast out every fear, every lie, every anxiety, every doubt and every worry that God is against you. The more you have a revelation of Jesus and how He has made you perfect, the more you will free yourself to receive His complete shalom and succeed in life!

*The shalom of Jesus is on your side to make you a success in life.*

My friend, know that as a believer in Jesus Christ, you have absolute peace with God. The new covenant of grace

is also known as the covenant of peace. Today, you stand upon the righteousness of Jesus and not your own. Today, because of Jesus, God says this to you: "I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke [condemn] you. For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall My covenant of peace be removed." (Isaiah 54:9-10)

God is on your side. The shalom of Jesus is on your side to make you a success in life. All of heaven's resources are on your side. Even if you are caught in the midst of a storm right now, just think of the picture of the eagle chicks nestled under the wings of their provider, sleeping soundly in spite of the storm. And may the shalom of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your heart and mind through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7) Go in this peace, my friend, and rest upon His shalom!

### PRAYER:

Father, give me a greater revelation of how perfectly You love me, for Your perfect love will cast out every fear in my life. You don't want me fearful of failure, of people's opinions of me or of what the future may hold. Because of Jesus, I am in a covenant of grace and peace where I will always experience Your kindness, and where the shalom (peace) of Jesus is always on my side to make me a success life. Father, You are not angry with me. You do not condemn me, but You love me perfectly because of Jesus' perfect sacrifice for me. Thank You again in Jesus' Name.