

The Peace of God Part 10 – When the Inside Is Stronger Than the Outside

Key Points:

- Peace is an internal, spiritual reality, not an external condition dependent on circumstances.
- The "sorrows" described in **Matthew 24** are birth pains that grow more frequent and intense as the return of Christ approaches.
- Hatred of believers is supernatural in origin, driven by demonic forces opposed to Christ.
- Persecution for the name of Jesus is an honor, and the proper response is rejoicing as seen in **Acts 5:41-42**.
- Being "offended" in **Matthew 24** refers not to casual offense but to a permanent turning away from God under the pressure of tribulation.
- Betrayal by those close to believers is a reality of the last days, but it does not have the power to remove the peace Christ has given.
- False prophets lead false religions built on extra-biblical or twisted revelation, and they pose a greater internal threat to the church than external persecution.
- Renewing the mind through consistent engagement with the Word of God is the primary defense against spiritual deception.
- Believers are called to live with eternity in view, motivated by an understanding that we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ one day to give an account for the life we lived here on earth.

The Peace of God Part 10 - 5-Day Bible Reading Plan and Devotional Guide

5-Day Bible Reading Plan and Devotional Guide

Peace That Surpasses Circumstance

Day 1: Peace That Lives on the Inside

Reading: John 14:27 and Philippians 4:6-7

Devotional: The world searches endlessly for peace through external circumstances -- better situations, better surroundings, better outcomes. But Jesus made clear that the peace He gives operates on an entirely different level than anything the world can offer. His peace is not dependent on what is happening around you; it is rooted in who lives within you. You do not live in your circumstances. You live in Christ. When the storms of life press in, the peace of God stands as a guard over your heart and mind. Today, choose to draw from the peace that already belongs to you in Him.

Reflection: In what area of your life have you been looking outward for peace instead of turning inward to Christ?

Practical Application: Spend five minutes in quiet prayer today, consciously releasing one worry to God and declaring that His peace is greater than your present circumstances.

Day 2: Overcoming the World Through Christ**Reading: John 16:33 and 1 John 5:4-5**

Devotional: Jesus never promised His followers a life free from tribulation. He promised something far greater -- the ability to overcome it. The word "overcome" is not passive. It is not simply enduring hardship with gritted teeth. It is actively standing in the victory that Christ has already secured. Because He overcame the world, and because He lives in you, you carry the nature of an overcomer. The tribulations you face do not define your outcome. The One who conquered death, hell, and the grave defines your outcome. Rejoice today, not because the trial is gone yet but because in Christ you are walking through to certain victory.

Reflection: What trial in your life right now needs to be viewed through the lens of Christ's victory rather than your own strength?

Practical Application: Write down one challenge you are facing and beside it write the words "Christ has overcome." Read it aloud each morning this week.

Day 3: Standing Firm Against Deception**Reading: Matthew 24:4-5, 11 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17**

Devotional: One of the most consistent warnings Jesus gave His followers was to guard against deception. False voices, false teachings, and distorted truths are not a new problem -- they are a sign of the times we are living in. The answer to deception has always been the same: know the truth deeply enough that a counterfeit is immediately recognizable. The Word of God is not merely a religious text; it is the anchor of your soul in an unstable world. A heart rooted in Scripture is a heart that cannot be easily moved. Read it, meditate on it, and let it transform the way you think.

Reflection: How consistently are you engaging with the Word of God, and are there voices in your life that may be competing with its truth?

Practical Application: Identify one area where you have been influenced more by cultural opinion than by Scripture and find a passage that speaks directly to that area.

Day 4: Enduring Persecution With Joy

Reading: Acts 5:41-42 and Matthew 5:10-12

Devotional: The early church understood something that the modern church often struggles to accept -- suffering for the name of Jesus is not a sign of God's absence, it is part of the believer's call. When the apostles were beaten and released, they did not leave in despair. They left rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to suffer for Christ. This is a radical perspective, but it is a biblical one. Persecution for righteousness is not punishment; it is evidence that your life is making an impact for the kingdom. The world does not persecute what it is not threatened by. Stand firm and rejoice.

Reflection: Have you ever experienced rejection, loss, or opposition because of your faith? How did you respond, and how might you respond differently in light of this truth?

Practical Application: Pray today for believers around the world who are facing genuine persecution and ask God to give you boldness in your own sphere of influence.

Day 5: Keeping Your Love from Growing Cold

Reading: Matthew 24:12-13 and Revelation 2:4-5

Devotional: One of the most sobering warnings in **Matthew 24** is that the love of many will grow cold because of the increase of lawlessness. This is not a warning directed at the world --

it is a warning directed at believers. Spiritual coldness rarely happens suddenly. It happens gradually, through neglect, distraction, offense, and the slow drift away from intimacy with God. The antidote is not more religious activity; it is returning to your first love. He who endures to the end will be saved -- and endurance is fueled by a heart that remains warm toward God. Guard your love for Him above all else. Keep the fire of the Holy Spirit burning hot.

Reflection: On a scale of warmth to coldness, where would you honestly place your love for God right now? What has contributed to any cooling you have experienced?

Practical Application: Do one thing today that reflects your love for God -- worship, a moment of gratitude, an act of service, or simply sitting in His presence with no agenda other than to minister to Him.

The Peace of God Part 10 – Scripture References from the Sermon

Here is a list of all scripture references mentioned or alluded to in the sermon:

Matthew 24:4-14 - The signs of the end times, including deception, wars, famines, persecution, false prophets, and lawlessness.

John 14:27 - Jesus promises his peace, distinct from what the world offers.

John 16:33 - Peace found in Jesus despite tribulation in the world.

Ephesians 2:6 - Believers seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Luke 21:12 - Persecution before the end times, being brought before rulers for Jesus' name.

Acts 5:41-42 - The apostles rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for Jesus' name.

Ephesians 6:10-12 - Spiritual warfare against demonic forces, not flesh and blood.

Acts 20:30 - Paul's warning to the Ephesians about men rising up to distort the truth.

2 Corinthians 11:14 - Satan transforming himself into an angel of light.

Psalms 119:130 - The entrance of God's word gives light.

Romans 1:18-32 - God giving people over to their desires when they reject him.

Matthew 24:37 - The last days compared to the days of Noah.

1 Corinthians 3:12-15 - Works being tested as gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or stubble at the judgment seat of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:10 - The judgment seat of Christ.

Revelation 20:11-15 - The great white throne judgment.

The Peace of God Part 10 – Personal and Small Group Study Guide

Overview

This guide is based on Part 10 of an ongoing sermon series on the peace of God, drawn primarily from **Matthew 24**. The central theme is that genuine peace is not found in external circumstances but in Christ himself. Even as the world grows more chaotic, believers can stand firm in the peace Jesus promised — because the one who overcame the world lives inside them.

Key Takeaways

- Jesus warned his followers that tribulation, hatred, persecution, betrayal, false prophets, lawlessness, and growing coldness of love would mark the end times — and none of it should surprise or shake us.
- Peace is not external. Believers live from the inside out. Spiritual reality in Christ is greater than any natural circumstance.
- The word translated "sorrows" in **Matthew 24** means labor pains — Just as labor pains increase in frequency and intensity as a mother gets closer to the birth of her child, it is the same for the end of the age and the return of Christ, the happenings described in Matthew 24 will become more frequent and more intense.

- Offense, as Jesus used the word in this passage, refers to permanently turning away from God — not simply feeling slighted. Believers must guard against becoming so overwhelmed by circumstances that they reject their faith.
 - Knowing, studying, and meditating on the Word of God is the primary defense against spiritual deception.
 - We are called to rejoice even in persecution, as seen in **Acts 5:41-42**, because suffering for the name of Jesus is an honor.
 - The judgment seat of Christ should motivate how we live, the decisions we make, and how seriously we take our calling to share and live the gospel.
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Discussion Questions

Opening

1. When you hear the phrase "the peace of God," what comes to mind first? Has your understanding of that phrase changed or deepened over time?
 2. The pastor said, "You don't live out here. You live in here." What do you think he meant by that, and how does it challenge the way most people pursue peace?
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Digging Into the Text

3. Read **Matthew 24:4-14** together as a group. Which of the signs Jesus described — wars, hatred, offense, betrayal, false prophets, lawlessness, or growing cold in love — do you see most clearly in the world today? How does it affect you personally?
4. Jesus said in **John 16:33** that in the world we will have tribulation, but then immediately told his followers to be of good cheer because he has overcome the world. Why do you think people often stop at the tribulation part and miss the second half of that statement?
5. The sermon described "offense" in **Matthew 24** as meaning to permanently disbelieve or fall away from God — not just feeling hurt. Have you seen this happen in someone's life? What circumstances seemed to trigger it?

6. The pastor drew a distinction between losing your salvation and rejecting God. What is the difference, and why does that distinction matter?
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Going Deeper

7. The sermon described hatred as a supernatural force — motivated by demonic opposition to Christ, not just personal dislike. How does understanding the spiritual source of hostility toward Christians change the way you respond to it?
 8. **Acts 5:41-42** describes the early disciples rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus. Be honest — is that your instinct when you face opposition for your faith? What would need to change in your thinking to get there?
 9. Rick Renner was quoted as saying that the way to circumvent spiritual seduction and deception is by knowing, understanding, and being rooted in the truth of God's word. How rooted are you in the Word right now? What is one honest adjustment you could make?
 10. The pastor said that our culture has more access to the truth of the Word of God than any generation that has ever lived, and yet people still choose deception. Why do you think that is? What does it reveal about the nature of people's hearts toward God? What does it reveal about the nature of deception?
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Personal Reflection

11. The pastor mentioned that thinking about the judgment seat of Christ motivates the decisions he makes. Does that reality shape your daily choices? If not, what tends to occupy that motivating role instead? Are you motivated by love for God and eternity or by personal natural desire?
 12. In what area of your life right now is it hardest to believe that the peace of God is available to you? What would it look like to stand in faith in that peace this week? Are you, by faith, actively choosing to submit your whole being to God and resisting the devil or are you just wishing the circumstance will change on their own?
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Practical Applications

This week, choose at least one of the following:

- **Renew your mind daily.** Identify one passage from this sermon — such as **John 14:27**, **John 16:33**, or **Ephesians 2:6** — and spend time each day this week reading, meditating on, and speaking that verse aloud over your circumstances.
- **Audit what you are feeding your mind.** Take an honest look at what you listen to, watch, and read throughout the week. Replace at least one regular media habit with time in the Word — whether reading, listening to an audio Bible, or working through a teaching series.
- **Practice the right response to opposition.** If you face any form of pushback, criticism, or hostility this week because of your faith, resist the urge to complain or shrink back. Instead, take a moment to thank God that you are counted worthy to stand and to suffer for his name.
- **Pray for the nations.** The sermon emphasized that the gospel must go into all nations before the end comes. Set aside intentional time this week to pray for a specific nation or region where the gospel faces significant barriers following the pattern given in **1 Timothy 2:1-6**.
- **Share your faith with one person.** Considering the 888 people reached at the fair and the call to populate heaven, identify people in your life who do not know Christ. Pray for them by name and look for an opportunity to share the love of Christ with them.

Closing Prayer Points

- Pray for one another to walk in the peace of God that surpasses understanding, regardless of circumstances.
- Pray for protection against spiritual deception and for a deepening love for the Word of God.
- Pray for boldness to share the gospel and for open doors in nations that have not yet heard.
- Pray for anyone in the group who is struggling with offense toward God or is tempted to walk away from their faith.