

# FINDING PEACE IN THE TIMES IN WHICH WE LIVE

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**Scripture:** John 16:28-33

<sup>33</sup> 'I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world' (NIV).

<sup>33</sup> 'These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world' (KJV).

<sup>33</sup> '*Dit het Ek vir julle gesê, dat julle in My vrede kan hê. In die wêreld sal julle verdrinking hê; maar hou goeie moed, Ek het die wêreld oorwin*' (AOV).

## Introduction

There are times that we need to truthfully talk to one another about what is happening and to find peace despite we see. That time is now.

You might have heard about the Doomsday Clock. It represents the probability of a man-made global catastrophe, i.e. nuclear threats, global warming, probabilities of war etc. Its time has been adjusted about 24 times.

- In 1947, it started at 23:53; 7 minutes to midnight.
- In 1949, it moved to 23:57 when the USSR tested its 1<sup>st</sup> nuclear bomb.
- In 1972, it moved to 23:48 when the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty was passed.
- The fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War etc. were well received by the Doomsday Clock.
- Where do we currently stand? 100 seconds to midnight on 23 January 2020 (pre-COVID). It's the closest to midnight it has ever been.

In the last year, there have been, according to Open Doors USA:

- Over 260 million Christians living in places where they experience high levels of persecution.
- 2,983 Christians killed for their faith.
- 9,488 churches and other Christian buildings attacked.

- 3,711 believers detained without trial, arrested, sentenced or imprisoned.

Yet, despite all this, Christ promises us His peace.

### **Opposing Realities, an Instruction and a Reason**

In this Scripture, we see two opposing realities, an instruction and a reason.

Opposing reality #1: You may have peace.

Opposing reality #2: You will have trouble.

An instruction: Take heart (be of good cheer).

The reason: Jesus has overcome the world.

On the one hand, Jesus tells us that while we are still on planet earth, we can expect suffering, trials and trouble, in other words, distress. On the other hand, Jesus says that at the same time, His peace is a present reality.

This is a coexistence that defies human logic! But you, brothers and sisters in Christ, are in a unique position because you have access to true peace in the most distressing of times.

I am not saying that the peace that you can experience in Christ will make all the bad stuff go away, I am saying that Jesus is coming again and this world will pass away. But the peace of Christ is already here, in the middle of the storm.

This is why Jesus instructs us to cheer up, meaning that the attitude of our hearts and minds must reflect the peace that He gives us in the crazy and distressing times in which we live. I must emphasize that it is Jesus' peace because Jesus has overcome the world. His is the victory, not ours. Ours is to be in Him.

It's worth repeating that the world cannot overcome His people because He has overcome the world, meaning that He has conquered, is victorious and He will prevail.

Let's find some context:

- What if God sends you to a place where there are high levels of persecution?
- What if you are sentenced to death for your faith?
- What if your place of worship is attacked?

- What if you are detained without trial, arrested, sentenced or imprisoned?
- What if God says to you, 'I am sending you to North Korea to witness to 1 person. You will also be arrested, tortured and die a gruesome death.'

Do you love Him? Will you go?

Do you realize that if you suddenly see nothing more in this world, you will see Jesus be with Him forevermore?

Let me tell you about Dr Nicholas Ridley. In 1555 he was sentenced to be burned at the stake in England because of his witness for Christ. On the night before Ridley's execution, his brother offered to remain with him in the prison chamber to be of assistance and comfort. Nicholas Ridley declined the offer saying, "I intend (God willing) to go to bed, and sleep as quietly tonight, as ever I did." Because he knew the peace of God, he could rest in the strength of the everlasting arms of his Lord to meet his need.

The peace of Jesus transcends persecution, attack, prison and even death. The world cannot rob you of Jesus' peace.

The context that we need to find is that worldly peace is not the same as Jesus' peace. Worldly peace requires the absence of something while Jesus' peace requires the presence of someone. Worldly peace and Jesus' peace are incompatible. Don't confuse the two.

A journal reported that the entire world has been at peace less than eight per cent of the time! In its study, the periodical discovered that of 3530 years of recorded history, only 286 years saw peace, and over 8000 peace treaties were made and broken.<sup>1</sup>

If your hope is world peace, then you are hoping on an 8.1% probability. But if your hope is Jesus, then you are hoping on a 100% probability because He has already overcome and you are in Him. His peace is your reality in this upside-down world. Where is your hope? At 8.1% or 100%?

100% means laying down yourself together with all your worldly desires and aspirations at the foot of the cross and allowing Him to lift you up.

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<sup>1</sup> (Personnel Journal) Moody Bible Institutes Today In The Word, June, 1988, p. 33

James 1:2-4 reads, 'Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything' (NIV). You are here – wherever it is that you may find yourself:

1. By God's appointment.
2. Under His care.
3. Under His training.
4. For His time.

### **Conclusion**

The Doomsday Clock is 100 seconds to midnight and the coming of Jesus is imminent. Jesus is not waiting for the Doomsday Clock to strike midnight; He is waiting for the Father's instruction (Acts 1:7). We don't exactly know how long people have to make right with God and in this light, 'right now' is a great time to do so. This starts with you and I witnessing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

If you are being dragged down and feeling despondent, reposition yourself into Him; shift your focus from the world that promises only distress and instead focus on Jesus. Sing His praises, rejoice be cheerful and celebrate His triumph over the world.

And know that you can only do this with His peace in your heart.

Jesus is your hope and peace.

Amen.