PEACE

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I've not done a survey or anything, but I suspect that most Christians would say that *peace* was important to them. Mind you, I also suspect that many Christians might be a little hazy about what they actually mean by *peace*, but they know it is important!

Lately, I've found myself reflecting on what we mean by the peace of Christ or the peace of God. Perhaps the most quoted passage on the subject is found in Philippians 4:6- 7

> *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

"Do not be anxious" is straight forward. As Christians we should have confidence in God and we should prayerfully trust him that things will work out for our ultimate good. Worry is pointless and doesn't get us anywhere. So far, everything is straightforward.

Then Paul goes on to say that the peace of God will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. At first glance, this seems to be an expansion or explanation of the first statement. If we avoid worry and live prayerful lives, then we will have the peace of God. You may be relieved to know that I believe this to be true. However, I don't think that the story stops there.

All to often, the peace of God is presented as some sort ofÂ "morphine haze" that allows us to float above life's troubles and worries; totally untouched and unaffected by the mayhem all around us. Life may be going completely to pot, but we are unperturbed because we have the peace of God.

However, our calling is not simply to experience peace, we are called upon to make peace (Matthew 5:9). Christ reconciled everything on heaven and earth to God, making peace by his blood shed on the cross (Colossians 1:20). Bringing peace, cost Jesus his life and we are called to take up our crosses and follow him (Matthew 10:38). No one ever said Christianity was supposed to be easy! Our experience of God's peace, *shalom,* is not something that allows us to be unaffected by the trouble and suffering in the world, it is something that equips us to get involved in the trouble and suffering. Peace does not protect us from suffering, it protects us in suffering. Part of our role as Christians is to work for peace and reconciliation in our communities and our workplaces. When there are disputes and arguments, we should not be sitting on the sidelines, uninvolved, but peaceful. We should, prayerfully seek to bring reconciliation, to share the pain of our co-workers and colleagues. When we do that we are likely to be misunderstood by both sides and we may well be insulted and isolated. And that is where the peace of Christ kicks in. It is his *shalom,* his wholeness which guards our hearts and minds, keeps us from worrying as we struggle with the suffering and conflict in our world. God's peace in our heart equips us to bring peace to our world; it does not help us float above the world feeling good about ourselves!