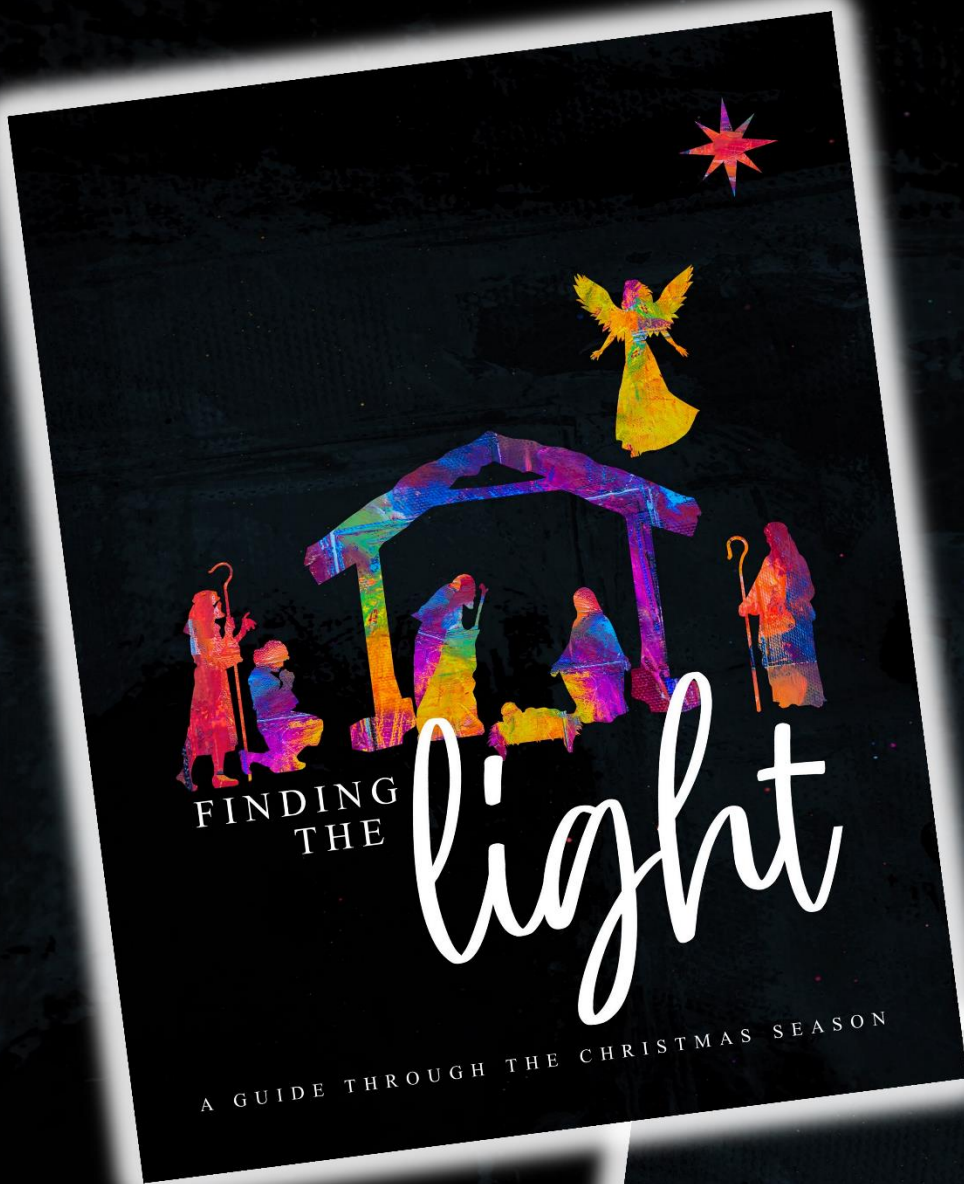




KINGDOM *peace*

FORTY DAILY DEVOTIONS



ALSO PICK UP A COPY OF THE "FINDING THE LIGHT" CHRISTMAS GUIDE!

DON'T MISS "EMMANUEL" DEC. 10 AT 10:45 AM!



## Introduction

This devotional is intended to be read during the Christmas and New Year's Season and focuses on the peace that comes from a right relationship with the One who was born in a manger many years ago. We know that Jesus did not come into existence at that time, because we know that "He was in the beginning with God" (John 1:2). John went on to say that "All things were made through Him" and that "without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:3). The One who created all things desires to bestow a deep, lasting peace in our hearts, minds, and souls. I say "bestow" because true peace is to have *His* peace dwelling within us. He 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). May you greatly enjoy this Christmas Season and may "the peace of God rule in your hearts" (Colossians 3:15).

## Daily Reading Schedule

Day	Scripture Reading	Date
1	Isaiah 9:1-7	11/29/23
2	Leviticus 26:1-8	11/30/23
3	Numbers 6:22-27	12/01/23
4	Judges 6:11-25	12/02/23
5	1 Kings 4:20-34	12/03/23
6	2 Kings 20:1-19	12/04/23
7	1 Chronicles 22:1-10	12/05/23
8	Psalms 4:1-8	12/06/23
9	Psalms 29:1-11	12/07/23
10	Psalms 37:1-11	12/08/23
11	Psalms 85:1-13	12/09/23
12	Psalms 119:161-168	12/10/23
13	Psalms 122:1-9	12/11/23
14	Proverbs 3:1-10	12/12/23
15	Isaiah 26:1-9	12/13/23
16	Isaiah 53:1-12	12/14/23
17	Jeremiah 29:1-11	12/15/23
18	John 14:25-31	12/16/23
19	John 16:16-33	12/17/23
20	Acts 10:34-43	12/18/23

Day	Scripture Reading	Date
21	Romans 5:1-9	12/19/23
22	Romans 12:1-18	12/20/23
23	John 1:1-14	12/21/23
24	Isaiah 7:1-14	12/22/23
25	Luke 1:26-35	12/23/23
26	Matthew 1:18-25	12/24/23
27	Luke 2:1-7	12/25/23
28	Luke 2:8-14	12/26/23
29	Matthew 2:1-12	12/27/23
30	Romans 15:1-13	12/28/23
31	1 Corinthians 1:1-17	12/29/23
32	2 Corinthians 1:1-7	12/30/23
33	2 Corinthians 9:6-15	12/31/23
34	Galatians 4:1-7	01/01/24
35	Ephesians 2:10-18	01/02/24
36	Philippians 2:1-11	01/03/24
37	Colossians 3:12-17	01/04/24
38	1 Timothy 1:12-17	01/05/24
39	Luke 24:36-53	01/06/24
40	Revelation 1:1-8	01/07/24

## Day 1: Isaiah 9:1-7

*“For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder. And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end.” (Isaiah 9:6-7a)*

### “Prince of Peace”

Prior to these verses, Isaiah spoke of many changes that were coming for God’s people. In this chapter, the Holy Spirit led Isaiah to speak of the Deliverer that was to come and bring these changes to reality. Israel had lacked joy and prosperity for years. The first verse in chapter nine spoke of “gloom” and God’s people being “distressed” and “oppressed.” Verse two states that, at least for a time, God’s people “walked in darkness” and “dwelt in the land of the shadow of death.” But, beginning at the closing words of verse two through verse five, we see God’s people described as those who had “seen a great light,” and upon whom “a light (had) shined.” That “light” was to be found in a person who was to be born as a “Child” and live as God among men! Among other things, His name would be “called...Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6 is an important verse because it includes the first of Isaiah’s 25 references to “peace.” Without the coming of Christ there can be no peace – not on earth – and not even in our hearts. I once observed a bumper sticker that read, “No Christ, No Peace. Know Christ, Know Peace!” The word translated “peace” here is a word that describes the peace that comes when we are in a right covenant relationship with God.

**Prayer Emphasis:** **Realize** that the “Child” who is described in today’s verses in none other than the “Mighty God” and the “Everlasting Father.” **Believe** that, as God, He is *powerful enough* to do all that we need Him to do, and that, as our Father, He is *loving enough* to do all that we need Him to do. **Allow** the “Prince of Peace” to fill your heart and life with the peace that only God can provide.

## Day 2: Leviticus 26:1-8

*“I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none will make you afraid; I will rid the land of evil beasts, and the sword will not go through your land.” (Leviticus 26:6)*

### A Promise of Peace

Leviticus 25:1 tells us that “the LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai.” God then began to speak in Leviticus 25:2 and then spoke without interruption through Leviticus 26:45. Leviticus 26 is filled with promises that God made to His people, and one of those promises is a promise of peace. Leviticus 26:1 begins with God saying to His people that there are some things “You shall not” do. Then, in verse two, God went on to tell His people that there were some things “You shall” do. Beginning at verse four, God begins to tell His people all the things that He “will” do. Some are great blessings for obedience, and some are chastisement for disobedience. In verses one and two there are two “You shall” statements to God’s people and verses four through 45 contain at least 25 “I will” promises of God! What was true then, remains true today. God does so much more for us than we do for Him. In verse four God promised His people *produce*. In verse five He promised *plenty* when He said, “You shall eat your bread to the full.” And in verse six, God promised *peace* when He said, “I will give you peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none will make you afraid.”

**Prayer Emphasis:** **Believe** that God has always been the source of peace for His people. **Experience** that peace for yourself by having a right relationship with Him! **Hear and heed** the “You shall” and the “You shall not” in the Bible and **live** like a true believer in the Prince of Peace!

## Day 3: Numbers 6:22-27

*“The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.” (Numbers 6:24-26)*

### Three Great Promises

The words of Numbers 6:24-26 are sometimes called “The Priestly Blessing” or “Aaron’s Priestly Blessing.” In these words, God has Aaron declare that He will “keep,” “be gracious,” and provide “peace” to His people. Notice that the divine name Yahweh (“the LORD”) is mentioned in all three promises. God has never left His followers without confidence that He is personally involved in their lives. When God promised to “keep” His people He was saying much more than He would not cast them aside for anyone else. The word translated “keep” here means that God was promising to protect and support His people in all their ways. The word “gracious” teaches us that God will “keep” us in a loving and tender way. God also had Aaron promise His people that He would “give” them “peace.” The promise of “peace” is much more than just a promise of an absence of war. It is a promise of God’s fullest “peace” that shelters and protects His people from within and without. A Hebrew professor once taught me that, in the original manuscripts, verse 24 contains three words, verse 25 contains five words, and verse 26 contains seven words. Then he said, “It seems like God’s promises just get bigger and better every step of the way!”

**Prayer Emphasis: Believe** that the source of the peace promised in the wilderness was the “Prince of Peace” that was promised in Isaiah 9:6! **Understand** that our Lord was “in the beginning” with the Father and present at the creation of the world (Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1). **Claim** God’s promises of His presence and peace and enjoy His many blessings today!

## Day 4: Judges 6:11-25

*“Then the LORD said to him, ‘Peace be with you; do not fear, you shall not die.’ So Gideon built an altar there to the LORD, and called it The-LORD-Is Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah...” (Judges 6:23-24)*

### “The-LORD-Is-Peace”

At the time of God’s great promise to Gideon, Israel had lived under the oppression of the Midianites for seven years (6:1). As a result of Midian’s evil oppression, God’s people fled to the mountains to hide (6:2). When we first meet Gideon, he is hiding behind the winepress to thresh some wheat and hide it from his enemies. When we read this part of Gideon’s story carefully, we will clearly see that God first revealed His power to Gideon (v.21) before promising His “peace” (v. 23). This was obviously a moment that Gideon wanted to never forget, so the Bible says that he “built an altar there to the LORD, and called it The-LORD-Is-Peace” (v. 24). Pardon the pun, but you might say that receiving God’s promise of peace was a monumental moment for Gideon! I am sure it was a moment to remember when Jesus promised His disciples “My peace I give to you” (John 14:27). Just as surely as God preserved that promise of Christ for us, He preserved His promise to Gideon for people to see for generations to come. At the time of the writing of the Book of Judges, Gideon’s altar was “still in Ophrah” for all to see! Through God’s Word we have visited that sacred place today!

**Prayer Emphasis: Notice** that verse 25 tells us that “on the same night” of Gideon’s great altar building day, God commanded him to “tear down the altar of Baal” that his father had built. **Realize** that we cannot deal with the negative things in our lives until we have first come into a right relationship with God.

## Day 5: 1 Kings 4:20-34

*“For he had dominion over all the region on this side of the River from Tiphshah even to Gaza, namely over all the kings on this side of the River, and he had peace on every side all around him.” (1 Kings 4:24)*

### “Peace On Every Side”

Yesterday we read about the “Prince of Peace” bringing blessings to a common man in his *trials*, and today we read about Him bringing peace to a much-honored man on his *throne*. While some of today’s verses focused on some of the things Solomon possessed, our focus verse focuses on the one thing that he “had” that probably mattered the most when it says, “he had *peace* on every side all around him.” This peace that Solomon enjoyed “on every side” was born from a peace that lived inside his heart – a peace that only God could provide. Solomon has peace “all around” but it was a peace that came from above! When a king experienced peace he had time to focus on things other than war. In a time of peace, Solomon was inspired by God to write “three thousand proverbs” and “one thousand and five” songs (v. 32). Instead of making war plans, Solomon could spend time reflecting on God’s creations, such as, “trees” and “of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish” (v. 33). It is amazing what one might notice in the world when one is at peace with God and his fellow man. It could have been in these days of peace that Solomon was inspired to write, “When a man’s ways please the LORD, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him” and “Better is a little with righteousness, than vast revenues without justice.” (Proverbs 16:7-8).

**Prayer Emphasis:** **Seek** peace “on every side” by seeking to be at peace with those with whom you live and associate in this world. **Seek** peace on the inside by striving to be at peace with God. **Follow** Solomon’s lead by paying attention to the world around you and **thanking** the God above and within you. **Place** God’s gift of peace first on your Christmas list this year!

## Day 6: 2 Kings 20:1-19

*“So Hezekiah said to Isaiah, ‘The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good!’ For he said, ‘Will there not be peace and truth at least in my days?’” (2 Kings 20:19)*

### Hezekiah

Hezekiah was a good king of whom the Bible says: “Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea...king of Israel, that Hezekiah ...began to reign...and he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done” (2 Kings 18:1 & 2). There is more written in the Bible about Hezekiah than any of the kings that followed David and Solomon. The story that we find in 2 Kings 20 comes at the end of Hezekiah’s life where, after Hezekiah prayed, God extended his life by 15 years. Hezekiah’s request for that gift was not for just 15 more years of productivity, wealth, or prominence. His request for those final 15 years was that they would be lived in peace. His question to Isaiah was “Will there not be peace and truth at least in my days?” When messengers from a fellow king came to visit, Hezekiah “showed them all the house of his treasures – the silver and gold...all that was found among his treasures” (v. 13). Like Hezekiah, there are many people living today who are proud of their possessions but would trade them all for real peace in their heart and life.

**Prayer Emphasis:** **Refuse** to look to possessions as the source of your soul’s delight. **Seek** God’s presence and peace and **praise** Him for every moment of life that you have. **Live** every day like it was the last day that you will have in this world.

## Day 7: 1 Chronicles 22:1-10

*“Behold, a son shall be born to you, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies all around. His name shall be Solomon, for I will give peace and quietness to Israel in his days. He shall build a house for My name...” (1 Chronicles 22:9-10a)*

### “Peace and Quietness”

Some translations read “peace and quiet” or “peace and rest” here in 1 Chronicles 22:9. However, these words may read in your Bible, they represent something that Israel had not experienced for an exceedingly long time. The years under King Saul, Israel’s first king, had been nothing but tumultuous. The times under David were far from times of “peace and quietness.” David told Solomon that, when he had set his heart on building a temple for the LORD, “the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘You have shed much blood and have made great wars; you shall not build a house for My name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in My sight’” (v. 8). David had already begun to appoint “masons to cut hewn stones,” and he “prepared iron in abundance for the nails of the doors of the gates” and “cedar trees in abundance” (vs. 2-4). However it was obviously going to fall to Solomon to do the actual building of God’s house. And why was Solomon God’s choice to build the temple? Because he, unlike his father David, had been a man of “peace.” However, Solomon could not claim any credit for the peace that Israel experienced in his days. God clearly told David, “I will give peace and quietness to Israel in his days.”

**Prayer Emphasis:** We may not be kings, but we serve a God who is just as concerned about the “peace and quietness” of our days as He was Solomon “in his days.” **Pray** for God to give us “peace and quietness” in our days. Not just in our hearts, but also in our world.

## Day 8: Psalm 4:1-8

*“You have put gladness in my heart...I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.” (Psalm 4:7-8)*

### “Peace” and “Safety”

Many believe Psalms three and four were written together with Psalm four expressing the relief and peace that David experienced after he was spared from his problems, as described in Psalm 3:1. The “distress” mentioned in 4:1 may have been the “increased...trouble” that David wrote about in 3:1. Psalm 3:2 finds David reporting that “Many are they who say of me, ‘There is no help for him in God.’” Well, whoever “they” were, “they” were wrong! In 4:1, David speaks of having been “relieved” (past tense) from his “distress.” David learned something from his “distress.” Some of what he learned is expressed in verse three: “The LORD will hear when I call to Him.” From his earlier “distress” David also learned to avoid revenge, “meditate” and “be still” and to “Put (his) trust in the LORD” (vs. 4-5). By God’s help, David had gone from “distress” to saying to God, “You have put gladness in my heart” (v. 7). Now David could say, “I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.” The safety that David experienced here is the “safety” that God promised His people in Deuteronomy 12:10.

**Prayer Emphasis:** **Realize** that we are not the first generation of believers to experience “distress” and anxiety. **Believe** that the LORD will hear you when you call upon Him. **Meditate** on His goodness and **trust** Him enough to “be still” and let Him cause you to “lie down in peace” and “dwell in safety.”



## Day 9: Psalm 29:1-11

*“The LORD sat enthroned at the Flood, and the LORD sits as King forever. The LORD will give strength to His people; the LORD will bless His people with peace. (Psalm 29:10-11)*

### *The Blessing of “Peace”*

Psalm 29 is a psalm of praise to God. In it, David urges his readers to “Give unto the LORD the glory due His name” and to “worship the LORD in the beauty of His holiness” (v. 2). Several translations use the word “ascribe” at the beginning of verse two instead of the word “give.” That is a good translation of the Hebrew word used here and several times in this psalm. It helps us to understand that we do not have to “give” God anything, but we do “ascribe” or credit Him with such things as “glory and strength” and “the glory due to His name” (vs. 1-2). Some think David wrote this psalm after observing a powerful storm that reminded him of God’s great strength and control over the universe. They believe David heard the noise of the storm and thus declared “The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders” (v. 3). He went on to say, “The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty” (v. 4). In verse five, David described God’s “voice” as one that “breaks” and “splinters” even the mighty “cedars of Lebanon.” In verses seven through nine he added, “The voice of the LORD divides” and “shakes the wilderness” to the point that it “strips the forests bare.” Who is this powerful LORD that David is describing? “The LORD” that “sat” (past tense) “enthroned at the Flood” and “the LORD that sits (present tense) as King forever.”

**Prayer Emphasis: Note** that our psalm closes by reminding us that the mighty “LORD” that is described in this psalm is “The LORD who “will bless His people with peace.” The next time you observe a powerful storm, **remind** yourself that the same God who *created* the storm is the same God who can *calm* it.

## Day 10: Psalm 37:1-11

*“For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more...But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” (Psalm 37:10-11)*

### *“The Abundance of Peace”*

Three times in this psalm the readers are told “do not fret” (vs. 1,7, and 8). Some translations say, “Do not worry” or “Don’t be upset” at the presumed success of the “evildoers” and “the workers of iniquity.” David reminded the readers of his day (as well as all of us) that those people “shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb” (v. 2). What the Holy Spirit had David say here is that the presumed success of the “evildoers” will be short-lived. Rather than “fret,” believers are encouraged to “Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness” (v. 3). Then verse four commands us to “Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” I have heard that verse explained this way: “If we delight ourselves in the LORD, He will put the right kind of desires in our hearts.” If we “delight” in the LORD, we will have righteous desires that agree with God’s will. Those whose desires match God’s plans soon “delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” Jesus quoted from this psalm in His first recorded sermon (See Matthew 5:5).

**Prayer Emphasis: Claim** your promise of peace – and an abundant supply of it! **Refuse** to “fret” or be envious of those who seemed to prosper even though they are not living in obedience to God. **“Delight”** yourself in the things that please God and **ask** Him to give you holy desires that will lead you to live a holy life.

## Day 11: Psalm 85:1-13

*“I will hear what God the LORD will speak, for He will speak peace to His people and to His saints; but let them not turn back to folly.” (Psalm 85:8)*

### “He Will Speak Peace”

This psalm begins with a recollection of God’s past restoration of Israel when He “brought back the captivity of Jacob” (v.1). This may be a reference to the exile and God’s bringing His people back to the land. The opening verses are filled with declarations of God’s graciousness and all He had done for His people. The psalmist says, “*You have been favorable to Your land; You have brought back the captivity of Jacob. You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their sin. You have taken away all Your wrath; You have turned from the fierceness of Your anger*” (vs. 1-3). It seems that the psalm writers are saying to God, “It’s all about You!” Then the writer seems to move from the past to the present when he prays, “Restore us, O God of our salvation, and cause Your anger toward us to cease” (v. 4). Verses one through three speak of the past. Verse four speaks of the present. And then, the remainder of the psalm is a prayer for the future. The psalmist fully expects God to “speak peace to His people” (v. 8). His prayer is filled with expectation of peace and forgiveness. If God could speak peace to the raging sea, He can speak peace to our weary souls. What else would we expect from the “Prince of Peace”?

**Prayer Emphasis: Remember** the past as you walk through the trials of these present days. **Realize** that the same God who has “been favorable” (v. 1) to His people is the same God that we serve today. **Expect** God’s “wrath” and “anger” (v. 3) when we sin and **expect** Him to “restore us” (v. 4) when we turn from our sins and turn back to Him.

## Day 12: Psalm 119:161-168

*“Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble. LORD, I hope for Your salvation, and I do Your commandments.” (Psalm 119:165-166)*

### “Great Peace”

Although we are not told who wrote Psalm 119, we can easily conclude that he was a person who genuinely loved God’s word! Even though the writer was being persecuted “without a cause”, his heart still stood “in awe of (God’s) word” (v. 161). It is obvious that God’s *word* was of great *worth* to this person because he rejoiced at finding it as one would rejoice “who finds great treasure” (v. 162). Even though this person was experiencing some persecution, he declared that God had given him “great peace.” That “great peace” was experienced because of the writer’s “love” for God’s “law.” The writer went on to say that, when a person has a right relationship with God and His word, “nothing causes them to stumble.” The life of a faithful student of God’s word will be filled with “hope” (v. 166) and “love” (v. 167). When the writer states “For all my ways are before You” (v. 168), he is declaring that he acknowledges God’s presence in his everyday activities. Our focus verse declares that our *feet* are sure when our *faith* is strong! What should we expect from our “Prince of Peace” other than “great peace”?

**Prayer Emphasis: Consider** your own Bible to be a great treasure chest filled with hope, love, and great peace! **Read** your Bible every day like you would read a letter from home. **Believe** that it was written *to* you and *for* you. As you read, **ask** God to fill your heart and life with the “great peace” that He has promised to those who love His word.

## Day 13: Psalm 122:1-9

*“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: ‘May they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls, prosperity within your palaces.’ For the sake of my brethren and companions, I will now say, ‘Peace be within you.’”* (Psalm 122:6-8)

### “Peace Be Within You”

Psalm 122 is another psalm written by David, and it is titled “A Song of Ascents.” All the psalms from Psalm 120 through Psalm 134 bear this title. There are a few differing ideas on exactly what that title means, but most believe these were psalms that the people sang as they made their way up to Jerusalem for the Holy Days and events. Since Jerusalem was Israel’s highest habitable point of elevation, Jerusalem was an uphill walk – or ascent – from any direction. As they marched toward their holy city, the Jews would sing these “Songs of Ascent” along the way. David began this psalm by expressing his delight to be going to Jerusalem and “the house of the LORD” (v. 1). As the people walked, they prayed for Jerusalem. Their prayer began with these words: “May they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls, prosperity within your palaces.” Later they would add, “Peace be within you.” It is always appropriate to pray for the peace of Israel and Jerusalem. But it is also appropriate to pray for the peace of every individual that we know. Today would be a good day to thank our “Prince of Peace” for the peace He has put within us.

**Prayer Emphasis: Seek** to climb higher and higher every day as you walk in the ways that God has prepared for you. **Pray** for Israel and “the peace of Jerusalem.” **Ask** God to fill your own heart and life with the peace that only He can give. **Share** that peace with others that you interact with daily by introducing them to the “Prince of Peace.”

## Day 14: Proverbs 3:1-10

*“My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands; for length of days and long life and peace they will add to you.”* (Proverbs 3:1-2)

### A Promise of Peace

On day five we read that Solomon wrote “three thousand proverbs” (1 Kings 4:32) and today we are seeing some of the most famous of those proverbs! God has given us the Book of Proverbs to help us deal with the varied aspects of the human experience. In it, we find moral and ethical instructions that teach us how to live godly lives in a not so godly world. Most Christians are at least somewhat familiar with Proverbs 3:5-6, but we are promised great blessings in verses one and two that enable us to enjoy the way of life that is described in verses five and six. In Proverbs 3:1, we are reminded to have a heart that desires to remember and obey God’s commands. I have heard it preached that this chapter in Proverbs promises at least two things to those who love and remember God’s law. First, there is the promise of longevity (v.2) and second, there is the promise of prosperity (v. 10). But we cannot go from that first promise to the second promise without passing over another precious promise. And that is the promise of “peace” (v. 2). What more could we ask of God other than a long life that is filled with peace?

**Prayer Emphasis: Realize** that peace is not a gift that comes in a box, but from the Bible. The Hebrew word translated “law” in verse one is “torah,” the word from which we get the name for the first five books of the Bible. **Notice** the word “let” that is used here in the NKJV and several other translations and **ask** yourself, “Why wouldn’t any believer “let” their heart “keep” (obey) God’s commands?”

## Day 15: Isaiah 26:1-9

*“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Trust in the LORD forever, for in YAH, the LORD, is everlasting strength.” (Isaiah 26:3-4)*

### “Perfect Peace”

Isaiah 26:1-15 is a song of praise to God for the deliverance and restoration that He was to eventually bring to His people. I say “eventually” because the opening verse of the song speaks of “that day” as if it is a day to come in Israel’s future. Verses one and two speak of “a strong city” with “walls and bulwarks” and “gates.” But the “perfect peace” that is promised in our focus verses is not based on such external things. It is based on what the believer knows in his heart and “mind.” Our minds are to be “stayed” on God. Some translations use words such as “steadfast,” “fixed,” or “unmoved” to describe the stability that only God can provide as we endure the present without losing hope for the future. One translation uses the word “dependent” here. To us, our situations may seem hopeless, but with God it is a customary thing for Him to support and stabilize His people in times of trial and affliction. This is a wonderful time of year to ask our “Prince of Peace” for the “perfect peace” that comes when we allow Him to be a stabilizing force in our lives. Verse three reminds us of a particularly important fact. This promise of a “stayed” or “steadfast” mind is made to the embattled believers that place their “trust” in God.

**Prayer Emphasis:** Obey the command found in verse four and “Trust in the LORD forever.” **Believe** that in Him is “everlasting strength” that can carry us through this life and all the way to Heaven. The words “everlasting strength” come from the Hebrew “Rock of Ages.” Some translations say here that He is our “everlasting” or “eternal” Rock! “Perfect Peace” is promised to those who choose to stand on that Rock!

## Day 16: Isaiah 53:1-12

*“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:5)*

### “Our Peace”

Today’s Scripture reading may not seem to fit the Season, but it describes the greatest gift that was ever given and the greatest price that was ever paid. The Bible clearly states that “the chastisement for our peace was upon Him.” There are many translations that use the word “punishment” rather than “chastisement” here because that is exactly what happened on the cross. Jesus took upon Himself the “punishment” that was due us, and by doing so, He purchased “our peace” by giving His life for us. This gift of God was clearly given to all people. There is not one person for whom God has not given His only begotten Son. Verse six clearly states, “the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of *us all*.” There are several things we should remember about “our peace.” First, *it is a purchased peace*. 1 Peter 1:18-19 teaches us that we are “redeemed” (bought back) “with the precious blood of Christ.” Those words lead us to add that “our peace” is also a *precious peace*. But there is more. Our “peace” is a *purchased* and *precious peace* that is also a *personal peace*. It is “our peace.” Look to the cross today and claim the “peace” that God has provided for you.

**Prayer Emphasis:** Circle the word “all” in verse six and **realize** that your name could be written in its place. Romans 5:8 clearly states, “Christ died for us.” An old gospel song contains the line “When He was on the cross, we were on His mind.” **Praise** God for His greatest gift to you and **enjoy** the peace that He purchased with “the precious blood of Christ.”

## Day 17: Jeremiah 29:1-11

*“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.” (Jeremiah 29:11)*

### “Thoughts of Peace”

The first verse of today’s Scripture reveals that God had His prophet, Jeremiah, write a letter to “the elders...the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon.” Jerusalem means “City of Peace” and Babylon represents “confusion.” We have all, sometimes suddenly, been carried from peace to confusion at one time or another in our lives. Perhaps there are some words in Jeremiah’s inspired letter that will help us endure some of the confusion that trials and tribulations may bring. Verse four clearly indicates that this letter is more than a word from a prophet when it begins with the words, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel.” That same verse goes on to say that what the LORD had to say was to “*all* who were carried away captive.” So, when God mentioned “the thoughts that I think of you,” He meant everyone. When He stated that it was His intention to “give you a future and a hope,” it was to each one who had been taken captive. Here is a blessed “thought” for us today: God promises us peace and that peace provides us with great hope for the future. Jeremiah’s letter was to be a reminder that God had better days in store for His people.

**Prayer Emphasis:** Look for the word “peace” again in verse seven. There God told His people to “**Seek** the *peace* of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its *peace* you will have *peace*.” **Believe** that, when we **think** like God would have us to **think**, a place of *misery* may very well turn out to be a place of *ministry*!

## Day 18: John 14:25-31

*“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)*

### “My Peace”

Although Jesus was speaking to His disciples collectively, His address to them seems to be singular and to each as an individual. Notice that He said, “Let not your *heart* (singular) be troubled, neither let *it* (singular) be afraid.” Even though His words were spoken to all of them, He did not say “hearts” but “heart.” This promise of having His “peace” in our hearts was for them then and for us now. If Jesus warned His followers that they should not “let” their “heart be troubled” or “afraid,” it must have been that He knew that a troubled and fearful heart was possible, even in His most committed followers. I am sure if they had known then what we know now, they would indeed have experienced a “troubled” heart. We all experience trouble along the way, and sometimes that trouble is so severe, so trying, that we need His peace to carry the day. Christ explained to those men, and now to us, that His “peace” was nothing like the peace that “the world gives.” A peace based on the things of this world will prove to be a pitiful peace indeed when we face the trials and disappointments of life. We need the peace that Jesus promised if we are to be witnesses in this world.

**Prayer Emphasis:** **Refuse** to bow your head in shame when your heart is troubled and afraid. Rather, **bow** your knee to God and **ask** Him for His promised peace – the peace of which He alone is the source. **Rely** on God’s peace to calm your heart and soul in troublesome times.

## Day 19: John 16:16-33

*“These things have I spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)*

### “A Little While”

Seven times in the first four verses of today’s reading we see the phrase, “a little while.” It is obvious that those words were confusing to the disciples in that day, and they remain somewhat confusing to many believers today. In verse 20, Jesus told the disciples they would “weep and lament” and they would “be sorrowful.” But He quickly added, “but your sorrow will be turned into joy.” Jesus chose to illustrate how pain can be turned into joy by explaining how the labor of an expectant mother was soon forgotten after her precious child was placed into her arms. It may have seemed that she had labored for hours, but as soon as it was over, she “no longer” remembered “the anguish” that she just experienced. Jesus then said, “You now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you” (v. 22). As Jesus closed this conversation with His disciples, He warned them that “the hour” had “come” that they would “be scattered” and abandon Him (v. 32). But even in their hour of great failure, Jesus promised them “peace.” His promise that He would see them again was enough to carry them through. We can bear anything when we know that it is just “a little while” until we see Him and our loved ones again!

**Prayer Emphasis: Believe** that the promise of His imminent return is enough to strengthen us through this life’s laborious journey. **Endure** the hardships of life with the understanding that it will be just “a little while” before our sorrows are turned into joy. **Remind** someone today that He has “overcome the world.”

## Day 20: Acts 10:34-43

*“The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ – He is Lord of all – that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea...” (Acts 10:36-37)*

### “Peace Through Jesus Christ”

In today’s Scripture, we find Peter doing something he might have never imagined he would do. He was spending time with Gentiles and preaching the gospel to them. In verse 38, Peter told these Gentiles about the life of Jesus, how He “went about doing good and healing” many because “God was with Him.” In verse 39, Peter told them about the death of Jesus, how He was “killed by hanging on a tree.” Then Peter went on to speak to them about the resurrection of Jesus, how by God’s power, He was “raised up on the third day, and showed Himself openly” (v. 40). Peter explained how he, and the other disciples, “ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead” (v. 41). That same Jesus was the One who had “commanded” Peter and the others “to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be the judge of the living and the dead” (v. 42). But, to many, this was nothing new. For years “all the prophets” had given “witness that, through His name, whoever” believed “in Him” would “receive remission of sins” (v. 43). Peter was now preaching to these Gentiles the same thing that he had been preaching to the Jews: “Peace through Jesus Christ.”

**Prayer Emphasis: Recognize** that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a message for the entire world and it is our responsibility to deliver it to all people. **Realize** that there is no person to whom God does not offer “peace through Jesus Christ.” **Dare** to get out of your comfort zone by sharing at least some of the gospel or your testimony of salvation with someone today.

## Day 21: Romans 5:1-9

*“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand...” (Romans 5:1-2)*

### “Peace With God”

Paul’s comment about the believer being “justified by faith” comes after a compelling argument that the Holy Spirit had him present about a faith-only salvation that was made in chapter four. In Romans 4 we learn that our justification is a gift, and therefore, cannot be earned by doing good works (4:1-8). We also learn that Abraham was justified *before* he was circumcised; therefore, circumcision does not bring justification (4:9-12). Paul then argued that, since Abraham was justified before God gave the Law, then justification cannot come by keeping the Law (4: 13-17). The conclusion of the matter was that Abraham, and all the Old Testament saints, were justified by faith and faith alone (4:18-25). That’s what Paul’s “therefore” is referencing here in Romans 5:1. And now, the Holy Spirit allows Paul to reveal a great benefit that comes from our being justified, and that great benefit is that “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” This “peace” that belongs to the believer causes us to “rejoice in hope” and to even “glory in tribulations” (vs. 2-3).

**Prayer Emphasis: Understand** that the result of our rejoicing “in hope” and our glorying “in tribulations” is a “hope that does not disappoint” (v. 5). Paul speaks of “hope” more often in Romans than any other letter that he wrote. **Believe** that the “hope” that God puts within us will never “disappoint” us or let us down in any way! Among all that you choose to be today, “**be hopeful!**”

## Day 22: Romans 12:1-18

*“Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.” (Romans 12:17-18)*

### “Live Peaceably”

Some translations read “live at peace” or “be at peace with all men” here. While we cannot be responsible for the actions of others, we can pursue peace as much as it “depends” on us. Unfortunately, the words “if it is possible” implies that there are some people with whom we move about or associate who simply have no desire to be at peace with anyone. It may be that you have an ardent desire to “live peaceably” with someone who has absolutely no desire to be at peace with anyone! We must remember that, while we are not responsible for *their* actions, we are fully responsible for *our* actions. We are entering the most special Season for believers as Christmas Day draws near. It is a Season where people are thinking more about the One who came to be our “Prince of Peace” than any other time of the year. This is a good time to consider whether or not we are doing all that we can or “as much as depends on” us to see that peace and goodwill are among the gifts that we plan to give to others at Christmastime. Our desire to “live peaceably” may sometimes seem foreign to those around us, but I am sure that such action punctuates our witnessing efforts in a powerful way!

**Prayer Emphasis: Choose** to be the peacemaker that God has called you to be. **Ask** God to make your heart one that truly desires to “live peaceably with *all* men.” **Refuse** to pick and choose who you will love and befriend in this world. **Remember** the words of Proverbs 17:17 where we are told: “A friend loves at all times.” **Be** a friend to someone today!

## Day 23: John 1:1-14

*“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 and truth.” (John 1:14)*

### “The Word Became Flesh”

John’s gospel begins with the same words as the Book of Genesis, “In the beginning” (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1). The Holy Spirit then had John repeat the phrase in John 1:2. John referred to Jesus as “the Word” three times in that opening verse. John used the Greek word translated “Word” here more often than any other gospel writer. When you include the number of times he used it in 1, 2, & 3 John and Revelation, we see that John used this word almost as often as the other three gospel writers combined. He went on to proclaim that Jesus was a participant in the creation of the world: “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (v. 3). In the closing verse of today’s reading John told us that “the Word became flesh and *dwelt* among us.” John was the only New Testament writer that used this word for “dwelt” in his writings. He used it here and then another four times in Revelation. The Greek word that is translated “dwelt” here comes from a root word that is translated “tabernacle” or “tent” in 1 Corinthians 5:1 & 4. The word implies that Jesus “became flesh” for only the time that He lived in a human body on earth.

**Prayer Emphasis:** **Believe** that God literally came and “dwelt” temporarily in a human body like ours. **Understand** that the Bible states that Jesus did more than simply appear, or look like a man, He *became* a man! **Remember** the words of Philippians 2:7 where we are told that Jesus “made Himself of no reputation” and took “the form of a bondservant...coming in the likeness of men.”

## Day 24: Isaiah 7:1-14

*“Therefore the LORD Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14)*

### “Immanuel”

There are at least 22 astonishing Messianic prophecies in the Book of Isaiah, and today’s focus verse contains one of the best of them! This prophecy in Isaiah 7:14, like all the others, finds its fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ. The “Son” that was to be born to “the virgin” was to be God in the flesh. He was to be “the Word (that) became flesh and *dwelt* among us” that we read about yesterday (John 1:14). Isaiah 7:14 is one of the clearest and dearest prophecies of the birth of our Messiah, Jesus Christ, in the Bible. I realize that some translations use the words “young woman” instead of “virgin” here, but you can rest assured that this word means “a woman of marriageable age who was not married and still a virgin.” The first time we find this word in the Bible is in Genesis 24:43 where this word is first translated “virgin” in respect to Rebekah’s status as an acceptable bride for Isaac. When Isaiah 7:14 is quoted in the New Testament, the meaning of the name is given to us. In Matthew 1:23 we read: “‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel’ which is translated, “God with us.” The “Son” of which Isaiah prophesied was to be none other than the immortal, invisible, eternal God.

**Prayer Emphasis:** **Note** the word “Behold” in our focus verse and **realize** that it is translated from a demonstrative particle that requests, or even demands, the full attention of the reader or listener. A “virgin” conceiving and bearing “a Son” is surely something to see, especially if that “Son” is the only begotten Son of God!



## Day 25: Luke 1:26-35

*“Then the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus.’” (Luke 1:30-31)*

### “Jesus”

Although the first of our focus verses only says that an “angel” visited and spoke with Mary, the first verse of today’s entire Scripture reading clearly identifies this messenger of God as “the angel Gabriel (v. 26). A look back at Luke 1:18-19 reveals that Gabriel was also sent by God to Zacharias to announce the birth of John the Baptist. When we read the phrase “Then the angel said to her,” it implies that the angel was responding to Mary’s reaction to seeing and hearing him. In verse 28, we read that, after he had “come in” the angel said to Mary, “Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!” Verse 29 tells us “when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying.” While the NKJV simply states that “she was troubled”, several translations use the words “greatly troubled” or “deeply troubled” to describe Mary’s reaction to the angel and his message. It was only after she was “troubled” that the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary.” She was told that, after her son was born, she would “call His name Jesus.” The name “Jesus” means, “Yahweh Saves.”

**Prayer Emphasis: Realize** that Jesus is God’s Son and our Savior! There is no other way to Heaven but through Him! As we draw near to Christmas Day, **remember** that old saying that “Jesus is the Reason for the Season!” **Thank** God today for the wonderful gift of His Son, our Savior, and **mention** Him to someone that you meet today!

## Day 26: Matthew 1:18-25

*“Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son...” (Matthew 1:24-25)*

### “Joseph”

Joseph was a descendant of King David who lived in Nazareth of Galilee. We know truly little about Joseph from the Scriptures. He is last mentioned in the Bible when Jesus was only 12 years old. After that, he is conspicuously absent from the pages of the gospels. When Jesus was at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, Mary was there, but Joseph was not with her. At that time Jesus was about 30 years old. Then, while Jesus was dying on the cross at about age 33, He entrusted the care of His mother, Mary, to the Apostle John. He would not have needed to do that if Joseph had been still alive. Joseph was the adoptive father of Jesus during the early years of our Lord’s life. Matthew 1:19 states Joseph was “a just man” who loved God and his espoused bride, Mary. Perhaps the greatest statement about Joseph is found in our focus verse, where we read, “Then Joseph...*did as the angel of the Lord commanded him* and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son.” Some translations use the words “did not know her intimately” or “did not consummate their marriage” to help us better understand what the words “did not know her” mean.

**Prayer Emphasis: Believe** that Mary became pregnant through the Holy Spirit and not Joseph (v. 18). **Learn** from Joseph that a man who is a believer is to be faithful to God and loving and compassionate towards his wife. As you **celebrate** Christmas tomorrow, take some time to **ask** God to help you be more like Jesus *and* Joseph.

## Day 27: Luke 2:1-7

*“And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.” (Luke 2:7)*

### “Her Firstborn Son”

It's Christmas Day and we are celebrating the birth of the “firstborn Son” of Mary who is none other than Jesus Christ, the “only begotten Son” of God (John 3:16). Jesus is referred to as Mary's “firstborn Son” because the Scriptures clearly reveal that she later had other children. However, the word “only” in John 3:16 reminds us that there was never anyone like Jesus before His coming to this world as a man, and that there will never be another like Him, either. The reason there was “no room for them in the inn” was because the small town of Bethlehem was filled with people who had come home to register for the census. The “swaddling cloths” in which Mary “wrapped” the baby Jesus were strips of cloth that were used to keep the baby warm and comfortable. Mary and Joseph had to travel nearly 100 miles to get to Bethlehem from Nazareth. The census and the travel probably presented a great inconvenience to this young couple, but it was necessary to fulfill the prophecy of Micah 5:2: “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be the Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.”

**Prayer Emphasis: Refuse** to allow any of the inconveniences or frustrations of the day to spoil your Christmas joy! When “Tab A” does not fit into “Slot B,” just **be thankful** that your Christmas is certainly more convenient than that first Christmas in Bethlehem! Please have a Merry Christmas!

## Day 28: Luke 2:8-14

*“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!’” (Luke 2:13-14)*

### “Shepherds”

Although it is the day after Christmas, we are reading once more about the night of Jesus' birth. We read yesterday where Micah 5:2 referred to Bethlehem as “little.” Some translations use the word “least” there to describe the hometown of Joseph. So, the Bible tells us that Jesus was born in what might have been considered one of the *least* places. Today we learn that His birth was first announced to men who were among a group that was considered to be some of the *least* people in society. For various reasons, shepherds were considered unclean and were forbidden to worship in the temple. They were also not allowed to testify in court. It was to these shepherds that “the glory of the Lord” appeared along with an “angel” who said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy.” The angel went on to say, “For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (vs. 10-11). Then that angel was joined by “a multitude of the heavenly host” who were “praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!’” How precious it is that our “Prince of Peace” would first be announced to some who were considered to be the least among their fellow men.

**Prayer Emphasis: Realize** the One of whom the angel said to the shepherds was “born to you” (v. 11) is also the One that has been “born” to us! **Praise** God for the gift of His precious Son and let every day be Christmas in your heart!

## Day 29: Matthew 2:1-12

*“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.’” (Matthew 2:1-2)*

### “Wise Men”

There has been much speculation about who the “wise men” mentioned in our focus verse were and where they were from. The general consensus is that these men “from the east” were some of the astrologers of Persia that Daniel mentioned at least four times in his prophecy. It is believed that they learned about the One who was to be “born King of the Jews” from Daniel’s writings. When it comes to their actual number, the Bible never mentions how many “wise men” there were. We often see three of them in our art or theatrical productions, but I suppose that we get that number because they came bearing three gifts. We hear or see them often referred to as kings. However, they are never referred to as kings in the Bible. It might be that the idea that they were kings came from verses like Isaiah 60:3 where we read, “The Gentiles shall come to your light, and *kings* to the brightness of your rising.” These men were obviously “Gentiles” and have been assumed to be “kings.” It is obvious that they finally saw Jesus when he was “a young child” and not a babe and in a “house” rather than a manger (v. 11).

**Prayer Emphasis: Learn** this lesson from the “wise men”: Their sole purpose was to “worship” the One who had “been born King of the Jews.” **Emulate** their actions and allow neither time nor distance to prohibit you from seeking Jesus. **Remember** that saying of old: “Wise men still seek Him!”

## Day 30: Romans 15:1-13

*“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 15:13)*

### “Joy and Peace”

As we move past Christmas week and rapidly toward New Year’s Day, we will finish our devotional guide by returning to biblical references to the peace that can be received from our “Prince of Peace.” In Romans 15, as Paul begins to close this particularly important letter to believers, Paul prayed that “the God of hope” would “fill” them “with all joy and peace” and that they would “abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” “Joy and peace” are words associated with Christmas, but it is sad to say that many people in our world today experience very little of those blessed gifts. There are multitudes who simply do not know what it means to “abound in hope.” It is clear from our focus verse that the blessings of “joy,” “peace,” and “hope” are found “in believing.” Our faith in God is what sets the believer apart from this world in which we live. “Hope” produces “joy” because it causes us to anticipate the blessings of God upon our lives. “Peace” comes from the assurance that we have that God will fulfill our hopes. Verse four of today’s reading clearly states that it is the “comfort of the Scriptures” that provides and strengthens our “hope.”

**Prayer Emphasis: Commit** to your daily Bible reading and study time. **Experience** the peace, joy, and hope that only the Word of God can bring to your heart and life. **Refuse** to allow other things to distract you from what you need most, that being a right relationship with God and His Word. It has been three days since Christmas but **allow** our “Prince of Peace” to make every day a special day!

## Day 31: 1 Corinthians 1:1-17

*“Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother... Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 1:1 & 3)*

### “Grace” and “Peace”

In Paul’s first letter recorded in the Bible, he greeted the believers in Rome with these words: “To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: *Grace* to you and *peace* from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 1:7). He included that prayer for “grace” and “peace” in all nine of his church letters, as well as in his letter to Philemon. In his letters to his fellow preachers, he said something slightly different. To them he said, “Grace, *mercy*, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord” (1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; and Titus 1:4). To the pastors he wished “grace” and “peace,” but he also prayed for them to experience “*mercy*.” The fact that pastors need mercy is another message for another time, but I wanted to at least mention it here. Even though this prayer for “grace” and “peace” was first mentioned in Romans, I waited until it’s second mention here in 1 Corinthians to write about it. In verse 10, Paul said, “I *plead* with you, brethren...that there be no *divisions* among you.” Then, in verse 11, he added, “It has been declared to me...that there are *contentions* among you.” It would certainly seem that “grace” and “peace” were things that the Corinthian believers really lacked, but very desperately needed.

**Prayer Emphasis: Notice** that “grace” is mentioned first, then “peace.” **Realize** that there can never be real peace in any heart or life that has not first experienced “grace.” For there to be “peace” in a church, or any organization, there needs to be a lot of “grace” in the hearts of the people. **Practice** “peace” and show “grace” to others on a regular basis. The “Prince of Peace” would be proud of you!

## Day 32: 2 Corinthians 1:1-7

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)*

### “Comfort”

One of the ways we can exhibit grace and advance peace is to learn how to “be able to comfort those who are in any trouble.” God, who here the Holy Spirit describes as “the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,” is the One who “comforts us in all our tribulation” so “that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble.” The beautiful part of this is, while we are being comforted by God in “all our tribulation,” we are also learning how to “comfort” others “with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” Notice the phrases “God of *all* comfort,” “*all* our tribulation,” and “who are in *any* trouble.” The word from which “all” and “any” are translated is a little Greek word that means, “any,” “all,” “each,” and “every.” It is the word that is translated “whoever” in the “whoever believes in Him” part of John 3:16. We know that the “whoever” in John 3:16 means that “any” or “all” people can be saved if they only believe the gospel. This word teaches us that there is no person who cannot be saved. When we apply that definition here, we see that there is no “tribulation” or “trouble” in which God cannot provide “comfort.”

**Prayer Emphasis: Trust** God to be your source of “comfort” in “all” and “any” of the trials and tribulations you may face. **Believe** there is no problem that God cannot handle or see us through. **Allow** God to “comfort” you in your tough times so that you can learn how to “comfort” others in theirs.

## Day 33: 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

*“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.” (2 Corinthians 9:8)*

### “God Is Able”

We would surely experience more peace in our lives if we lived everyday with the understanding that “God is able!” The little Greek word that we talked about yesterday, the one that can be translated “any,” “all,” “each,” and “every,” or even “whoever,” is found four times in today’s focus verse. It is the word from which we get the “all” in “*all* grace,” “*all* sufficiency,” and “*all* things.” It is also the word translated “every” in “*every* good work.” We might say that our “Prince of Peace” is working hard to assure us that He is “able” to meet “any” and “every” need in our lives. Two other important words in our focus verse are “abound” and “abundance.” Both words come from the same Greek word, and, in some translations, it is translated “abound” both times. In one translation this verse reads: “And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.” Another translates it: “And God is able to make every grace *overflow* to you, so that in every way, always having everything you need, you may excel in every good work.” However you read it, it certainly translates into a great promise from a great God!

**Prayer Emphasis:** **Believe** that “God is able!” **Refuse** to ever think that you have a problem that is too big for God to handle, or a ministry need that He cannot provide! **Find** a “good work” that you can do in the church and **serve** the Lord in that ministry. **Trust** Him to provide you with what it takes to be successful in your every spiritual endeavor.

## Day 34: Galatians 4:1-7

*“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” (Galatians 4:4-5)*

### “The Fullness of the Time”

The phrase “the fullness of time” is translated several ways in various versions of the Bible. One translation reads “when the completion of the time came” and another says, “when the set time had fully come.” But there are others! Some read “when the time arrived” while others read “when the completion of the time came.” However translated, the phrase helps us to better understand that “God sent forth His Son” at just the right time! The old gospel song says, “He’s an on-time God, yes He is” and I can offer a hearty “Amen” to that! God was preparing the way for the coming of His Son to be our Savior from the beginning of time. The apostle Paul uses the phrase “the fullness of time” to represent the time when God’s people would finally be able to claim their promised inheritance. Once Jesus had come to this world to offer Himself as an atoning sacrifice for our sins, we could enjoy our full rights as children of God. God is never late, and unfortunately, He is never early either. Sometimes we are forced to wait, but I promise you, God always makes it worth the wait!

**Prayer Emphasis:** **Thank** God for always keeping His promises and for always doing so, right on time! **Reflect** on some of His timely blessings you have experienced in your life. **Praise** Him for the many good things that He has given you – especially the gift of His precious Son, Jesus. **Live** with purpose and be where God wants you to be when He wants you to be there.

## Day 35: Ephesians 2:10-18

*“And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.” (Ephesians 2:17-18)*

### “He...Preached Peace”

Today’s reading is a splendid example of how the Old Testament “Prince of Peace” is at work in our New Testament times. It is clear from the first verses in today’s reading that the “you” referred to in our focus verses were Gentiles while the “those” later referred to were Jews. As Gentiles, some of Paul’s readers were once “afar off.” As Jews, some “were near.” But Paul wanted the Jew and Gentile believers alike to realize that the wall of enmity between them had been “broken down” by Jesus, our “Prince of Peace.” Verse 14 reads, “For *He Himself* is our peace, who has made both (Jew and Gentile) one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation.” That is why Paul could say, “For *through Him* we both (Jew and Gentile) have access by one Spirit to the Father.” Verse 15 clearly states that Jesus “abolished in His flesh the enmity” and created to “Himself one new man from the two, *thus making peace.*” There is absolutely no reason for God’s people to live at odds because of the One who is called our “Prince of Peace.” When we war and fight among ourselves, we are only living as if we do not fully understand all that God has done for us.

**Prayer Emphasis:** **Resolve** to live in peace with God and with others. **Realize** that we cannot be fully at peace with others if we are not first at peace with God. **Live** as though you are “His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (v. 10). **Ask** yourself: “Am I walking in the work that God prepared beforehand for me?”

## Day 36: Philippians 2:1-11

*“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. (Philippians 2:5-7)*

### “This Mind”

As we near the close of this special, Christmas devotional on **Kingdom Peace** and our “Prince of Peace,” let us once again be reminded that we celebrate this season because Christ Jesus came to this world to be with us, and He came “in the likeness of men.” To do this, our Savior had to make “Himself of no reputation.” The Holy Spirit instructed Paul to tell us to “let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” Some translations read: “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.” The word that is translated “this mind” here in the NKJV, or “attitude” in other translations is the same word that is translated “like-minded” in verse two. The only way to *live* like Jesus is to first learn to *think* like Jesus. When we think like Jesus – when we truly have His “attitude” – we will be selfless, humble, and motivated by a great love for others. True humility before God and those whom we serve is a sermon without words. People see our humble service, sense our genuine love, see our sacrificial attitude, and they are reminded of Christ. The One who was “equal with God” surrendered His heavenly rights out of His obedience to God and His love for man.

**Prayer Emphasis:** **Decide** to begin thinking like Christ and **express** His attitude in your words and deeds. **Witness** through a godly *walk* as well as through godly *words*. **Realize** that there are many people in this world who are visual learners, so let them see Christ in you!

## Day 37: Colossians 3:12-17

*“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of God dwell in you richly in all wisdom...” (Colossians 3:15-16a)*

### “The Peace of God”

I remember the first time I read the words of Hebrews 13:1 where God says, “Let brotherly love continue.” When I read that command, I had to ask myself, “Why wouldn’t any believer choose to *let* brotherly love continually flow among God’s people?” In the same way I must ask why any believer would not be willing to “*Let* the peace of God rule” in their heart or “*Let* the word of God dwell in (them) richly.” Who would ever desire to hinder the flow of “brotherly love,” “the peace of God,” or, “the word of God?” The word “let” there implies that all these things are possible if only we will not hinder the word of God from doing a great work in our lives. Our desire to be more like our “Prince of Peace” should inspire us to heed these words that the Holy Spirit had Paul pen to the Colossian believers many years ago. How do we “let brotherly love continue”? We do so when we choose to “let the peace of God rule in (our) hearts!” The Greek word from which we get the words “let the peace of God rule” comes from a word from which we get our modern-day word “umpire” or “arbitrator.” How do we learn to allow “the peace of God (to) rule” in our hearts? By allowing “the word of God (to) dwell in (us) richly.”

**Prayer Emphasis: Read** verses 12-14 of today’s reading again and **realize** that none of those things can be accomplished if we do not allow God to “rule” in our hearts and lives. **Remember** that our “Prince of Peace” desires that we exhibit His peace in the way we treat others. **Choose** to “let” God make the call the next time you are upset or angry with a person or situation.

## Day 38: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

*“Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” (1 Timothy 1:17)*

### The “Chief” of Sinners

It is difficult to believe that the man whom the Holy Spirit had to pen these beautiful words of praise to God would consider himself as the “chief of sinners” (v. 15). The words of our focus verse reveal that Paul knew who Christ was and the glory and honor that He deserved “forever and ever.” As we read our way through Paul’s writings, it is evident that the more clearly he saw Jesus, the more clearly he saw himself. Somewhere around 56 AD Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “I am the least of the apostles” (1 Corinthians 15:9). About five years later, he wrote to the Ephesians and, referring to himself said, I “am less than the least of all the saints” (Ephesians 3:8). Then, here, near the end of Paul’s life and ministry, he wrote to his fellow worker, Timothy, and said, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” After just six or seven years as a Christian in ministry, Paul’s opinion of Christ *increased* and his opinion of himself *decreased*. It seems that the higher Christ was lifted up in his life, the lower he bowed before Him. When we put Christ in His proper place, we will have no problem in finding our place in service.

**Prayer Emphasis: Trust** Christ as your Savior and **follow** and **serve** Him as your Lord! **Make** your own “forever and ever” commitment to Christ and **live** it out for others to see. **Surrender** your life to Christ and **grow** closer to Him every day.

## Day 39: Luke 24:36-53

*“Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, ‘Peace to you.’ But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit.” (Luke 24:36-37)*

### “Peace to You”

The disciples had just heard from the two who met Jesus as they walked the road to Emmaus. Their report to the remaining disciples was, “The Lord has risen indeed” (v. 34). Our focus verse reveals that, as the two disciples “said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them.” Then He spoke to them and His first words to them in that meeting were “Peace to you.” No doubt He sensed that they were, as the Bible reveals, “terrified and frightened and supposed they had seen a spirit.” The first thing that Jesus did to give “peace” to His terrified disciples was to *reveal Himself to them*. He said to them, “Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see” (v. 39). After those words “He showed them His hands and His feet” (v. 40). He even took “a piece of broiled fish and some honeycomb” and “ate in their presence” (vs. 42-43). The second thing that Jesus did to bring “peace” to His distraught disciples was to *remind them of the Scriptures*. After speaking of “the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms” (v. 44), “He opened their understanding that they might comprehend the Scriptures” (v. 45).

**Prayer Emphasis:** **Search** the Scriptures and you will surely find peace because they are the story of the life of our “Prince of Peace.” **Take** the words “Peace to you” personally and **believe** that Jesus still speaks those words to His disciples today. **Remain** committed to daily Bible reading and prayer and remember to **share** what you are learning with others as opportunities arise.

## Day 40: Revelation 1:1-8

*“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End” says the Lord, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.’ (Revelation 1:8)*

### “The Almighty”

In John’s greeting to “the seven churches” to which he originally wrote, we see the words, “Grace to you and peace from Him *who is and who was and who is to come*” (v. 4). Then, as he closes out his introduction, he once again is directed to refer to Christ as the One “*who is and who was and who is to come*,” but this time he was directed to add the title “the Almighty” after that phrase. Earlier John said, “He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him” (v. 7). Not every eye saw Him while He was *in the cradle*. Not every eye saw Him while He was *on the cross*. But every eye will see Him when He comes *in the clouds*! At that time, all people, past and present, will see Him as who He is, “the Almighty.” The word translated “Almighty” here is found nine times in the Book of Revelation. If you search your concordance for the word “Almighty,” you may find it only eight times. However, the same word translated “Almighty” here is also found in Revelation 19:6 where John heard “as it were, the voice of a great multitude...saying, ‘Alleluia! For the Lord God *Omnipotent* reigns!’”

**Prayer Emphasis:** **Realize** that the “Almighty” One can give you peace! **Lean** hard on our “Prince of Peace” today and **allow** Him to fill you with **Kingdom Peace**, which is “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding” (Philippians 4:7). Thank you for reading with us. Please reach out to us at [gary@seminolebc.com](mailto:gary@seminolebc.com) or 850-562-8069 if we can pray for you or minister to you in any way.