temporary; God's character, His faithfulness, His promises are eternal. When in the natural realm there seems to be no peace, we can find the peace of God

which goes beyond the natural. The peace of God is not a quiet, gentle thing that makes you feel good when things are going well. It is a spiritual compass that keeps you on course and sustains you when everything seems to be falling apart. Indeed, Philippians uses a military metaphor, when it says the peace of God will "guard" your heart and mind. The image is that of an armed soldier or body of soldiers, patrolling an area and standing guard to protect it and to repel all invaders.

If the circumstances seem impossible and overwhelming, we need to fix our eyes on the God who is greater than the circumstances. When Elisha's servant saw their city surrounded by enemy troops the circumstances looked very bad. But Elisha said "those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then he opened his servant's eyes so that he could see "the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha" (2 Kings 6:16-17). To the Israelites Goliath seemed huge, but David saw that God was greater and that "the battle is the Lord's" (1 Samuel 17:47). King Jehoshaphat said, "We have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us," but God's prophet said, "Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's" (2 Chronicles 20:12, 15). No matter how big our problems may seem, God is always bigger. "Nothing is impossible with God" (Luke 1:37). No circumstances are too difficult for God to handle. When we focus on the greatness and faithfulness of God rather than on our physical circumstances, we can find the peace that "transcends understanding." This aspect of peace is related to the first; when the authority of God is in force, we need not fear or be anxious.

Psalm 46:1-3 declares that "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way, and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters quake and foam and the mountains quake with their surging." When we are in the midst of trials, when our world is being shaken, and we are faced with uncertainties, we focus on the "Kingdom that cannot be shaken" (Hebrews 12:28). That is the peace of God.

**D. PATIENCE.**

Patience has the sense of perseverance, endurance, long-suffering. *Makrothumia*, the word used here, relates especially to patience in respect of persons. KJV translates it "longsuffering". Another word translated "patience", *hupomone*, relates especially to patience in respect of things. Patience, in both senses, means seeing things in God's time perspective, not ours. We expect quick results; we live in a "fast food" society. We want God to answer our prayers and fulfill our prophecies "right away"; we want others to change their character and behavior "right away." God's time schedule is often slower, but His schedule is always right.

14

This is not the faith that brings one to salvation, but the continuing faith that enables a saved person to live out his Christian life. This kind of faith means believing God's word. It means believing in God's character. As we step out in faith we increase our faith. Faith, like love, undergirds everything we do. Our prayer should always be, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

**1. The central importance of faith.** "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6). "Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love" (1 Corinthians 16:13). "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12).

**2. Faith is believing God's word and his promises rather than the circumstances.** "We live by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7); "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1). "By faith Abraham, even though he was past age - and Sarah herself was barren - was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who made the promise" (Hebrews 11:11; see also Romans 4:18).

**3. We are to grow in faith.** "But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith" (Jude 20). " So then, just as you received Jesus Christ as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness" (Colossians 2:6). Abraham "did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God" (Romans 4:20). "We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing" (2 Thessalonians 1:3).

**4. We are warned against unbelief.** Hebrews 3:12 warns "See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God." This passage recalls that the Jewish people failed to believe the promise of God that he would give them the land of Canaan. Their unbelief is referred to as "rebellion" and "disobedience" (Hebrews 3:16, 4:6), and as "contempt" for God (Numbers 14:11).

James 1:6 reminds us that when we pray we "must believe and not doubt." He who doubts is a "double-minded man" who cannot expect to receive anything from God.

**5. Faithfulness includes dependability.** The dictionary defines faithful as trustworthy, dependable. This also is an aspect of the fruit of the Spirit. "God... is faithful" (1 Corinthians 1:9, 10:13). "Great is your faithfulness"

19