

## Blessed Assurance

-Ryan Parsons-

Philippians 4:7, *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Have you ever been in that place where things were completely out of control? That awareness that no matter how hard you try (or tried) you could not create a “favorable” outcome?

How would you handle argumentative people whose argument can't be quenched regardless of the logic? How would you respond to people who take you to court with a roster of false witnesses and are hinting the death penalty?

What would you do when they gnash their teeth and give in to pure rage against you?

How would you receive the abuse of an angry mob and the stinging scrapes as they drag you outside of town?

When that first stone strikes your body bringing you insane levels of pain, what would your mindset be knowing the stones will not stop until you are dead?

I'm not sure how I would respond. I know that my brain would likely be screaming “RUN!” “FIGHT!” “RUN!” “FIGHT!” “RUN!” “FIGHT!” “RUN!” “FIGHT!” “RUN!” Anyone with enough nerve to tell me to calm down would probably get a knuckle sandwich. The suggestion of “Peace” would probably elicit uncontrollable laughter. “Yeah, right!”

It's hard to think about peace when there is a war waging around you. Moreover, it is seemingly impossible when that war is aimed at you!

This was not the case with Stephen.

After they had testified against him, he wasn't tripping out. He wasn't begging for mercy, and he didn't renounce the Gospel. It says the leaders looked up and Stephen's “face was like the face of an angel” (Acts 6:15). Nor did fear get in the way. When his opponents asked, Stephen spoke up. He preached God's message of reconciliation with confidence and rebuked their hard heartedness (Acts 7:1-53). When they drug him out of town, abusing him along the way, Stephen didn't fight back. As he arrived at the place he would be murdered, his focus was singularly upon his redeemer. Acts 7:55 says he “gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.” As he was dying from the brutal wounds of stoning, he asked Jesus to receive his spirit and for forgiveness to be bestowed upon his murderers (Acts 7:58-60). What!?!?

What happened in that place 2000 years ago strikes us as super human. Actually, it was. Paul calls it the “peace of God,” and he says it is a greater tranquility that comes from more than what the human mind and efforts can produce. It is a blessed assurance which surpasses all comprehension. Paul tells us in Galatians that this kind of peace is only produced from God's Spirit within us.

The Amplified Bible describes the peace of God as a *tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and being content with its earthly lot of whatever sort that is.*

In addition, Paul tells the Philippians that peace given by God is what provides overwatch over their souls and minds. It *will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus* (Phil. 4:7). Paul anticipated the Philippians were going to need that peace very soon. Is it possible we need to seek it as well?