

Daily God Walk
Virtues Series

Peace



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Day One

Peace Is A Fruit Of The Spirit

The fruit of the Spirit is... Peace... Against such there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. - Galatians 5:22-23

It seems like everyone in the world is calling for peace. Politically those in leadership justify almost everything they do as attempting to bring peace. Whether it is peace between countries, peace within countries, peace in local communities, peace in the workplace, or peace in relationships; we all want peace.

What does it mean to be at peace? Many years ago in the “cold war” days our adversaries said they wanted peace, but their definition of peace was that the entire world would be under their domination - without resistance. That is not what most of us mean when we speak of peace.

Peace comes when there is confidence in a future and trust that leaders have our best interest at heart. Peace comes when people within a community have a common goal that is good for all. Peace comes in business when management and workers are in agreement on the purpose of the service or product being produced and can perform that process without taking advantage of others. Peace comes in

relationships when all parties involved are more concerned about the others than about themselves.

If all of this is true, and we all want peace, why isn't there peace? Notice how verses 19-21 contrasts with verses 22-23. The tendency of human nature is to arrange issues around self and that produces the behaviors and attitudes that Paul gives in the earlier verses. The Spirit working in us draws us to others and the concern we have for our neighbors, as Jesus defined neighbor, produces peace.

Peace comes not when we hold others under our power but when we use our authority to help others be blessed.

Prayer: Lord, I'm like everyone else; I want peace. I know that true and lasting peace only comes from you. Grant me the ability to live under the influence of your Holy Spirit so that the fruit of my life is peace. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: The Spirit working in us draws us to others and the concern we have for our neighbors, as Jesus defined neighbor, produces peace.

Affirmation: I submit to Holy Spirit as he calls me to be at peace with my neighbor.

Reflection: There is one paragraph in our text which gives several situations which produce peace. Each is prefaced by, "Peace comes when..." Reflect on each of these and write your thoughts below.

Day Two

Peace Beyond Human Understanding

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. - Philippians 4:6-7

A characteristic of anxiety is that it disturbs our peace. A paradox that most of us face is that we pray for peace then become anxious over the circumstances of our life. It appears that Paul, in this passage, is giving us a formula for sustained peace in the time of potentially disturbing circumstances.

If we start at the middle of this passage and work back to the beginning, we find a formula for peace. We start with a thankful heart, then, with a spirit of thanksgiving we prepare a list of our needs and present them to God trusting that he will take care of those things we have given to him. Strangely, when we have done that in faith with a truly thankful heart, anxiety just melts away and God gives us peace.

What are the circumstances of your life that are disturbing you? Do you, like so many others today, face financial challenges? How about your physical condition; do you suffer with a chronic sickness? Are you challenged by difficult relationships? The

answer to all of these circumstances is the same – submit them to God.

We must trust God and his word before we can have a thankful heart. We look to the word of God for assurance and pray until we are thankful for what God has done, then we are ready to petition him for the things that disturb us. Remember we are anxious because we are not trusting God. Trusting God demolishes anxiety and gives us peace.

Prayer: Lord, I am quick to become disturbed over circumstances that make my life difficult. Grant me the grace to trust you, particularly when I can't see any way these circumstances are going to come out good. Grant me a thankful heart for what you are doing in my life. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: When we trust God, with a thankful heart, anxiety melts away and we have great peace.

Affirmation: I do trust God and I am thankful. I have peace knowing that he is in control.

Reflection: We all have occasions to be stressed out and anxious about the way things are. What are some of the things which cause you to be anxious? How can you be relieved of that stress and anxiety?

Day Three

Spiritual Gifts Produce God's Peace

When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church...The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.

- 1 Corinthians 14:32-33

When Jesus ascended to heaven he gave his followers the promise that God would send a new comforter. This new comforter would also be a powerful agent in administering the kingdom of God on earth. He then identified this powerful force as the Holy Spirit which would be given to every believer. Throughout the New Testament the Holy Spirit is spoken of as producing righteous fruit in the believers as well as equipping believers with gifts of service to administer the kingdom.

In 1 Corinthians 12-14 Paul is giving instructions concerning the proper way that the gifts of the Spirit are to be administered. The work of the Holy Spirit, and his gifting for ministry, is to promote the kingdom and to produce peace.

Some have been reserved in giving the Holy Spirit freedom to minister in the gifts because they have been told that it will bring confusion and be divisive. That was the very reason Paul was giving the

instruction in 1 Corinthians. Of the gifts he says, “All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.” Then he gives instructions on the proper administration of the gifts and promises that “God is not a God of disorder but of peace.”

When the gifts of the Holy Spirit are in operation according to the order God established the result will be peace. That is the reason we need to seek God for the gifts to be manifest among us. The peace of God is administered through the operation of the gifts of the Spirit.

Prayer: Father, grant me the faith to allow the Holy Spirit to operate through me in such a way that peace is released in the kingdom of God. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: The orderly manifestation of spiritual gifts releases the peace of God.

Affirmation: I am thankful for the Holy Spirit who manifests his gifting through me and I express those gifts in a manner which results in peace.

Reflection: Paul was instructing the church about the importance of the gifts of the spirit, and of the importance of those gifts being administered in an orderly manner. Reflect on that, perhaps reading chapters 12-14 then write your thoughts below.

Day Four

Peace Is Getting Along With Others

If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter... do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother. Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.

- 2 Thessalonians 3:15-16

There is a fine line between not associating with someone who is rebelling against spiritual leadership and “shunning” them. What is the difference? I think the message Bible helps us understand what it is to “not associate” with someone without making them feel like an enemy.

The Message Bible reads, “If anyone refuses to obey our clear command written in this letter, don’t let him get by with it. Point out such a person and refuse to subsidize his freeloading. Maybe then he’ll think twice. But don’t treat him as an enemy. Sit him down and talk about the problem as someone who cares. May the Master of Peace himself give you the gift of getting along with each other at all times, in all ways. May the master be truly among you!”

It seems that the message here is that we should do our best to get along with those who are not participating as they should. The point is not to shun them, but to be careful not to endorse their

disobedience by allowing things to go along as if everything was in order.

When we see another in disobedience and act as if there is nothing wrong we cause a breach in the peace. That is, every time we see them we become a bit uncomfortable and we lose our inner peace. However, if we confront the issue in love as a brother or sister and reason with the person, we may win them to the Lord, but even if they do not change, we have not alienated them and we have kept the peace.

Prayer: Lord, It is hard for me to deal with those who are disobedient. I tend to either be too harsh or to just let it go. Grant me the grace to gently confront those who need more grace and thereby keep the peace. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: We can be at peace with those who are not walking in the faith without endorsing their lifestyle.

Affirmation: I can be at peace with those who do not share my faith and convictions without condoning their life choices.

Reflection: The easy way out is to judge those who are different and shun them. That way we don't have deal with the messy details of relationships. Is that the best way to be at peace with others? Think about it.

Day Five

*Trust Produces Peace
And Spiritual Power*

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. - Romans 15:13

A book could be written from all of the truth that is found in this one verse. First there is the “God of hope.” What a concept. When we gain knowledge about God, who he is and what he can do, hope grows up in our heart. Then we begin to put that hope to the test and discover that the Lord can be trusted. It is when trust is developed that our relationship with him really grows.

This verse mentions three benefits that grow out of trusting the Lord; joy, peace and spiritual power. Our relationship with the Lord develops in much the same way as our human relationships. As our experience with him grows our relationship grows stronger and deeper.

I remember the first date my wife and I had. By the time we parted that evening I had decided that this was the most wonderful woman I had ever met, or she was one of the best liars I had ever met, and I was going to find out which it was. Within just a few days I discovered that she was a most wonderful woman and she was perfect for me. When I came to that

conclusion I had great joy, and there was a calm peace that came over me when I was with her.

It is the same with the Lord. We hear all of these outrageous claims about him; he created the heavens and the earth, he heals and delivers from oppression, he gives peace in the middle of tumultuous times – and we don't know if it is true, but we want to find out. Then as our experience with him grows we realize that not only was everything we heard true, but we had not even heard the half of it.

There is great peace, joy and spiritual power in trusting God.

Prayer: Lord, I do love you, and I am learning to trust you even in tumultuous times. Grant me the patience and the tenacity to pursue knowledge and experience with you so that I might have joy, peace and spiritual power. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Our relationship with the Lord develops in much the same way as our human relationships. As our experience with him grows our relationship grows stronger and deeper.

Affirmation: I do trust in the Lord and he has given me his peace as well as the power of Holy Spirit.

Reflection: How is trust and peace related? Can we have peace if there is no trust? Where does the Holy Spirit fit into this mixture of trust and peace?

Day Six

The Kingdom Of God Is Peace

The Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

- Romans 14:17-18

The kingdom of God is not about achieving, it is about being. Usually we think of a kingdom in terms physical things like land, wealth and power over others, but the kingdom of God is just the opposite of that. God's kingdom is about serving others and living for a purpose greater than ourselves.

Serving in the kingdom of God requires that we find a contentment and peace in our life. We can only do that when we trust the master of the kingdom to perform as he has promised to perform. Paul reminds us that this kingdom is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but it is looking beyond those physical things to the purposes of God.

Jesus said, "Take no thought for tomorrow worrying about what you eat or wear, or where you will live, but first seek my kingdom and I will give you everything that is necessary for life" (my paraphrase of Matthew 6:28-33). He was telling us that when we trust him and are committed to serving him, then he will see that all of our needs are met and he will give us peace and joy as bonuses.

If our focus in life is what we can get out of it we are always going to be plagued with discontent and a sadness that cries out, “I don’t have enough.” We can not have peace living that way and any joy we gain will be short lived. We are soon dissatisfied with the thing we have because we want more.

The kingdom of God is about being, and when his kingdom is in us words like contentment, peace, and joy describe our state of being.

Prayer: Lord, give me the ability to trust you to be the God you have promised to be and help me to be content with who you have made me to be in your kingdom. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Peace in God’s kingdom is about serving others and living for a purpose greater than ourselves

Affirmation: I am committed to serving others and I live for a purpose greater than myself therefore I have the peace of God in my life.

Reflection: Typically the kingdoms of this world are about power over people. How is the kingdom of God different? What does Matthew 6:26-33 mean to you?

Day Seven

Peace Comes From A Quiet Inner Self

Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.

- 1 Peter 3:3-4

Before anyone gets too excited about how this passage is applied let me assure you that I am well aware that Peter was primarily addressing women, but the principles are the same whether we're talking about men or women.

Peter is contrasting the way we look to others on the physical side with how we look before God on the spiritual side. God is not really concerned about whether you braid your hair or brush it out straight, but he is very concerned about what motivates you to do what you do and look the way you look.

We have all known very beautiful and well dressed women as well as handsome and well dressed men who, when we met them, we did not notice what they were wearing but we were impressed by their presence. It was their inner person that touched us before we even noticed how the outer person looked. That is what Paul is addressing in this passage.

If our inner peace is determined by whether others approve of us then we will always be trying to look and

act in a way that is pleasing to others. Having that concern produces anxiety and destroys our inner peace. We cannot be anxious about how others accept us and maintain a quiet, peaceful inner person.

There is a peace that comes through committing our life to Christ in such a way that our inner self is content with being gentle and quiet. When we can accept the fact that God loves and accepts us just as we are and we don't have to prove anything to him or others, then his peace can rule in our inner person.

Prayer: Lord, help me to not be as concerned about how I am perceived by others as I about whether your peace dwells in my inner person. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: There is a peace that comes through committing our life to Christ in such a way that our inner self is content with being gentle and quiet

Affirmation: I am content with the person God has made me into and I am at peace with my inner self.

Reflection: In our passage today Peter is addressing how our inner person affects how we adorn our outer person. What other ways does our inner person affect our life?

Day Eight

Legacy of Christ: Peace I Leave With You

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. - John 14:27

Even with the guidance of the Law of God the world was still in chaos. Mankind had tried to live by righteous standards, but it was like he was trapped in a web of despair powered by his own ineptness. Once mankind listened to the deceptive seduction of the desire to become god something happened in his nature that changed him. He no longer enjoyed casual conversations with the creator in the cool of the day. In fact, he hid himself from God and began to feel that he was in competition with him to determine who was going to be lord of his life - God or himself.

Jesus was born into that world. It was a world of Chaos, religious hard liners, and emperors declaring themselves to be deity. In all of this, man still had an inner loneliness and was plagued by unrest; man did not know peace.

Seven hundred years before his birth Isaiah prophesied that a child would be born who would be called the Prince of Peace. Jesus was that child. It is interesting though that when the Prince of Peace came he declared that he had not come to bring peace but a sword and those who followed him would be persecuted, attacked and hated by the rest of the world.

How was he to become the Prince of Peace while speaking such rhetoric? When Jesus spoke of such things he was speaking to the religious bigots who would not listen, neither could they understand. They had been under the spell of religion for so long that they did not recognize who was speaking.

To those who would follow him he declared, “My peace I give you.” His peace is not filled with the seductive promises the world uses to deceive us into surrender to the base desires – His peace is genuine, lasting and based upon God’s law.

Prayer: Lord, I hear the voice of this world and it’s pleasures calling to my flesh, and I ask for the grace to walk faithful to you and be content with the peace of Christ. In Jesus Name, amen.

Message: His peace is not filled with the seductive promises the world uses to deceive us into surrender to the base desires – His peace is genuine, lasting and based upon God’s law

Affirmation: I have not succumbed to the seductive promises of the world, but I have his lasting peace.

Reflection: What was the event that changed the nature of man and how does that changed nature affect us today?

Day Nine

Peace That Overcomes The World

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. - John 16:33

Jesus spoke of hard truths that most could not accept. The concept of turning the other cheek did not sit well with people who for two millennium had lived with the concept of “an eye for an eye.”

The religious leaders did not understand his message or his purposes and because of that they accused him of being the messenger of Belial and Beelzebub (Matthew 12:24). It seems that they had been blinded to the good he did and they could not even see that in every way he fulfilled the prophecies that had been given hundreds of years earlier that spoke of a Messiah that was to come.

While the religious leaders rejected him and his messianic message of a new kingdom, the common people heard him and readily accepted the hope that he gave them. Though he was speaking to the leaders in Luke 4, his message was to the common people. His message was that he had come to relieve poverty, heal broken bodies, restore broken relationships and set people free of emotional and behavioral bondage (Luke 4:17-19).

The primary thing that the religious leaders of Jesus day did not see was that everything Jesus said and did

was from the motivation of love and the purpose of establishing the peace of God in the hearts of men. In his last word to the disciples he summed up his entire ministry with these words; “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.”

The hope that produces peace in us is this: because he has overcome the world we know that we can also overcome the world. It is our hope in Christ that gives us lasting peace.

Prayer: Lord, I know that on my own I cannot overcome the world but I trust what you have said. Grant me the grace to overcome the world as you have overcome the world. In Jesus Name, amen.

Message: The world system seeks peace through domination but Jesus brought peace through serving.

Affirmation: I am committed to bring God's peace through serving others in his kingdom.

Reflection: Why did the religious leaders miss the importance of the message Jesus brought? How was the message of the kingdom Jesus taught different from what the religious leaders were expecting from the Messiah?

Day Ten

His Punishment Brought Peace

He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

- Isaiah 53:5

The legacy of peace that Christ was to leave with the world did not come cheaply. He paid a great price, yes he even paid the ultimate price, so that you and I could enjoy the peace of God.

The world has never known, either before the Christ or after the Christ, one so willing to sacrifice for the purpose of establishing peace in the hearts of all men regardless of national origin, or where they fit on the socio-economic scale. Beside what the Bible says of Christ and his sacrifice for our peace there is no better way to say it than the words of President Lincoln spoken at Gettysburg, Pa.

This speech memorializing slain soldiers contained these words: "The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced...It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we

here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom,”

There is a difference between the sacrifice of men to bring peace to a nation and the suffering of Christ to bring peace to the world. The peace of a nation that is passed from one generation to the next carries with it the continuing struggle to further a task that can never be permanently finished – but when Christ was hanging on the Cross, of his work to bring peace to mankind, he said, “It is finished.” That’s it – he finished the work and we have access to his peace.

Prayer: Father, there is much I should do to make peace and keep peace with others, but that can only happen if I have peace with you. Grant it In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Christ endured the punishment that brought us peace. He gave us the opportunity to have peace with God and peace in our bodies through healing.

Affirmation: I am grateful for the price Jesus paid to secure my peace and to give me the opportunity to be healed.

Reflection: In thinking of President Lincoln’s address at the battlefield near Gettysburg, Pa., how do his words about those who died there and what they achieved compare to the death of Christ and what he achieved?

Day Eleven

Peace For All Through Faith In Christ

You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. - Acts 10:36

Peter was waiting on dinner to be fixed and fell asleep. In his sleep he began to have a strange dream. He saw what looked like a sheet that descended from heaven and on the sheet were all kinds of animals, even animals that the Jews were forbidden to eat. There were four footed animals, reptiles and birds.

Then a voice said to Peter, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." Indignantly Peter answered, "Surely not, Lord! I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." Then the voice spoke again, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." This happened three times then the sheet was taken back to heaven.

Peter was still trying to figure this all out when men arrived inviting Peter to come and preach to some Gentiles. He knew that it was against Jewish law to even talk to a Gentile, let alone visit in their home. All at once his dream became clear to him and he knew that he could not call unclean those to whom God had called him, so he went to preach to the Gentiles.

He told the whole story of Christ, but focused on the core of the message Christ preached. Peter told them, "You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all."

The message Jesus brought was not about heritage, national origin, clean or unclean things; his message

was about peace with God through faith in the Christ. For 2000 years the message has been the same; If you believe with your heart and confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord you will be saved (Romans 10:9-10).

He who is Lord of all offers peace to all – regardless of age, race, or social status. Who they are or what they have done is not important to God – he just wants to bring peace to the heart of man.

Prayer: First I thank you Lord for offering your peace to all, and that includes me. Then I ask for the grace to love all of those whom you love, even those who seem unlovely to me. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: He who is Lord of all offers peace to all – regardless of age, race, or social status. Who they are or what they have done is not important to God – he just wants to bring peace to the heart of man.

Affirmation: I am committed to the promoting the message of the peace of Christ for all of mankind.

Reflection: How does this story of Peter, things clean and unclean, and the house of Cornelius apply to the church today? Are there people groups today that we should not carry the message of Christ to? Think on that.

Day Twelve

Christ Made Peace With All Men

He himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two thus making peace. - Ephesians 14-15

Paul expands upon the message that Peter delivered to the house of Cornelius. Peter declared that the message Christ delivered was peace with God and even the Gentiles could participate in that peace. Paul gave a little more understanding on the subject by declaring that there is no longer Jew and Gentile in the eyes of God but that the two have been made one.

Though Peter accepted the Gentiles into the church, he still thought they should be “converted” Jews and this created a barrier between both groups of believers. This barrier became so defined that it was the focus of the first general council of the church.

It was the conclusion of this church council that the Gentiles would not be required to follow Jewish law. Paul was addressing this issue when he wrote, “[God] has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations.” And what was God’s purpose in this? “His purpose was to create in

himself one new man out of the two thus making peace.”

There are still people today who will use the occasion of differences in doctrine to divide the church by erecting barriers of separation. There will always be differences among us, but there is just one “new man” and that is the body of Christ we call the church. We who are called into the body of Christ are obliged to accept the whole body as one, tearing down any barriers and being at peace with others.

Prayer: Lord, it is so easy to become convinced that I am right and others are wrong, and it is even easier to build barriers between believers. Grant me the grace to be at peace with those who do not see things just as I do. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: God has broken down the barriers between people groups by making peace with all who would call upon the name of the Lord.

Affirmation: I have peace with God and I accept all others who have made peace with God regardless of who they are or what they have been.

Reflection: What did Paul mean when he wrote, “[God] has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations.”

Day Thirteen

Reconciling the World to Himself

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

- Colossians 1:19-20

There is no greater story in the history of the world than the story of God becoming a man in order to give his human life as a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of mankind. Paul writes, “God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him (Christ), and through him to reconcile to himself... making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”

I have heard some say that Christ was born to die, but that is only partially true. The whole truth is that he was born into humanity to be a vehicle of reconciliation so that there would be peace between God and man. His mission was peace, his purpose was peace and his message was peace and reconciliation.

First there was the fall of Lucifer and the angels that followed him that resulted in the creation becoming chaotic and needing the creative hand of God to restore order. We have the record of God bringing order to creation in Genesis 1-2.

Then there was the fall of man and the newly created order was disrupted as man lost his right standing with Father God. Man lost dominion over

the earth and the animals, but most importantly he lost his relationship with God, his creator.

For thousands of years man tried through religion to get it all back, but it was futile. Man had offended eternity and only the eternal one could make that right. That was why Christ came to the earth. He came to give it all back; to reconcile to himself all things... on earth and in heaven.

Jesus signed the peace agreement between man and God with his own blood and now the door of reconciliation is open to all who will come before the Father in Jesus name and allow themselves to be washed in the atoning blood of Christ.

Prayer: Lord, thank you that you, yourself, became the atonement that was needed to reconcile man to yourself. Grant me the grace to walk in that peace. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Christ was born into humanity to be a vehicle of reconciliation so that there would be peace between God and man.

Affirmation: I have been reconciled to God and have peace with him through faith in Jesus the Christ.

Reflection: How was Christ a vehicle of reconciliation between God and mankind? How did the death, burial and resurrection of Christ make peace between God and mankind?

Day Fourteen

The Peace of Christ Rules in Your Heart

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom. - Colossians 3:15-16

We have been looking at peace as the legacy of Christ and in this passage Paul is giving some instruction on how to allow the peace of Christ to rule in our hearts. Peace comes to us as we participate in the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) and escape the corruption of this present world.

In the first verses of this chapter in Colossians Paul uses terms like; “Put to death,” “rid yourselves,” and “you have taken off your old self with its practices.” He is talking about how to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts. We must put off the old ways and “put on the new self which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator” (v10).

Another peace issue that Paul addresses is the racial and socio-economic issues. Speaking of the kingdom of God he writes, “Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.” We must get rid of judgmentalism and bigotry.

We can only continue in the peace of Christ as we are led by the Holy Spirit in righteous living and righteous relationships. It is not unusual to be working among believers and discover that they have

never made the connection between their behaviors and their relationship with Christ. They see Christ as simply a fire escape mechanism and they have never developed a deep and consistent relationship with him. As a result his peace does not rule in their heart.

The very purpose for which Christ came to earth was to bring peace to the hearts of men. The only way the peace of Christ rules in our heart is to fully commit to him and walk in the righteousness that he has made available to us.

Prayer: Lord, I desire to have your peace rule in my heart, but I need your grace for righteous living and righteous relationships. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: When we participate in the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) we escape the corruption of this present world.

Affirmation: When I received Christ as my savior I escaped the corruption of this present world by participating in the divine nature.

Reflection: All of us have known people who claimed to be Christian but there was little or no evidence of that in their life. Why do you suppose some Christians show no evidence of being born again?

Day Fifteen

God's Way Produces Peace

Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble. - Psalm 119:165

Science teaches us that there is an order to everything. There is order in the way the planets in our solar system revolve around the Sun. There is order to the way plant life responds to the seasons. There is order to the way animals live and reproduce.

Where did all of this order originate? It all came from the God of order; the Lord God of creation. He created all things, both living things and non-living things, to exist according to a certain order – and that includes man.

Of all the creations of God, man is the one who has stepped out of God's order and declared, "It looks good, it tastes good, it sounds good, I'm going to do it!" and the divine order of things was broken and fellowship was broken between God and man.

The result is that mankind goes about doing things according to the desires of his own wicked and rebellious heart, creating chaos as he goes. James asks the question, "What causes fights and quarrels among you?" Then he answers his own question, "Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?" (James 4:1),

By following his own way man has made a wreck of this world. He is destroying the planet and destroying

each other simply because he wants to do it his way and will not submit to God.

Then the psalmist writes, “Great peace have they who love your law.” Great peace awaits those who will submit to God and his law. The answer to world’s chaos is to submit to God and his law. That may not happen on a large scale, but it can certainly become the rule in your life and my life.

Do you want great peace? Submit to God and his way and you will have peace.

Prayer: Lord, I’m just like every other human; I want to do it my way. I have learned, though that my way doesn’t work. Grant me the grace to surrender to your will and your law that I may live in peace. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: The divine order of things was broken and fellowship was broken between God and man when man declared, “It looks good, it tastes good, it sounds good, I’m going to do it!”.

Affirmation: I recognize how living my way violates God's order therefore I am committed to God's order so that his peace may rule in my heart.

Reflection: James spoke of desires that battle with us. What are those desires and why do they affect our peace?

Day Sixteen

His Way Is A Path Of Peace

Because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven, to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.

- Luke 1:78-89

When John, who was called “The Baptist,” was born the Holy Spirit came upon Zechariah, his father, and he gave the prophecy recorded in Luke 1:67-79. From his birth John was called to be one declaring the Messiah and the kingdom of heaven.

This prophecy about John concludes, according to Luke’s record, with the promise that that he would be a light shining in the darkness to guide our feet into the path of peace. Out of darkness there shines a light that illumines the path of peace.

What a hope this promise gives us. Isaiah first prophesied of the one who would come crying in the wilderness, “prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God... and the glory of the Lord will be revealed” (Isaiah 40:3-5). This highway, as Isaiah calls it, or path as Luke calls it, is the way that the glory of the Lord will be revealed.

What is the glory of the Lord? One aspect of it is peace. We just had 7 days of devotions that showed the legacy of Christ to be peace and it is no wonder

that the glory he opened to mankind was peace with God and with our fellow man.

The sad truth of mankind is that there is very little lasting peace outside of what Christ has to offer. For the most part, the world lives in darkness trying desperately to find something that will bring them peace and a hope for the future.

There is a light that can shine in their darkness, it is the same light that shined in our darkness and led us to the path of peace.

Those of us who have seen the light have now become the light to the world, according to what Jesus said, and we are to guide men and women to the path of peace.

Prayer: Father, I thank you for shining the light of your grace upon the path you have me to walk. Grant me the ability to stay on the path of peace. Amen.

Message: Those of us who have seen the light have now become the light to the world, and we are to guide men and women to the path of peace.

Affirmation: I am a light to guide others to the highway of peace.

Reflection: The world outside of those who are in Christ is in spiritual darkness. What are some of the evidences that they are in darkness? How are believers a light to guide them into the highway of peace?

Day Seventeen

Sleep In Peace When We Trust The Lord

Let the light of your face shine upon us, O Lord. You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound. I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety. – Psalm 4:6-8

How many times have we gone to bed frustrated and a little fearful for the future? For most of us that has happened many times along the way. When it does happen we have a choice to make; am I going to fret over things that I can do nothing about or am I going to trust the Lord?

Those who do not know the Lord in the way that born again believers know him do not have the same peace as believers have. I remember as a teen ager feeling so lonely when I went to bed at night that I would turn on my small transistor radio, turn it down low and put it close to my ear, so that if I woke up in the night I could hear a human voice speaking.

As the years have gone by my experience with the Lord has grown and my faith has deepened. Now when I lay my head on the pillow at night it is easy to commit the day to the Lord and trust him for tomorrow. I have learned that there are many things I cannot control, and tomorrow is one of them. Only God knows what I will meet tomorrow, and only God can guide me through those uncharted waters.

How is it for you when you lay down for the night? Do the events of the day linger in your mind and keep you from peaceful sleep? Have you learned to commit it all to him and trust him to protect you through the night and guide you through tomorrow? You can truly trust him you know.

Jesus gave us great insight into trusting God in Matthew 6:25-34. He reminds us that he feeds the birds of the air, yet he is more concerned for us than for them; He looks to the beautiful lilies of the field and promises to clothe us as well. Yes, there is great peace for those who will trust the Lord.

Prayer: Lord, it is sometimes hard to look beyond the circumstances and trust you so I need your grace to strengthen my faith. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Only God knows what I will meet tomorrow, and only God can guide me through those uncharted waters.

Affirmation: I don't know what tomorrow holds, but I do know who holds tomorrow. I have great peace in knowing He will guide me through the uncharted waters of tomorrow.

Reflection: Jesus was teaching us about trusting God in Matthew 6:25-34. How has trusting God for tomorrow affected the way you live today?

Day Eighteen

Pray For Peaceful Lives

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

- 1 Timothy 2:1-2

We live in a tumultuous time. The economy has been badly damaged, opinion polls indicate that confidence in the government is at an all time low; congress is making decisions that could adversely affect us for generations; and the world around us is in turmoil. That's the bad news, but there is good news.

There is power in prayer to change the course of government and the economy. We must remember that our hope is not in the people and circumstances around us; it is in the Lord.. Our hope is in the one who said, “Try me and see If I will not open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing” (Malachi 3:10).

Very few, if any, of us have endured the kind of persecution and rejection that the early church endured. In fact, Paul was writing this message to Timothy while he was in chains awaiting his execution. In one of his writings he lists his hardships and persecutions and it is a wonder that he survived at all. He says he was ship wrecked three times, beaten with the whip five times, thrown to the wild beasts at Ephesus, stoned and left for dead at Lystra. Then he

writes, “Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for the churches (1 Corinthians 11). Yet he said to pray for our government.

Complaining about the way things are will never produce the peace that comes from truly trusting the Lord to be in control. Paul tells us to pray with thanksgiving for everyone – including kings and all those in authority. Here’s a suggestion; instead of complaining about the way things are and the way the government is doing things, try praying for them and being thankful to God that he has given us these men and women who govern us.

Prayer: Lord, it is not always easy to pray for our leaders, and it is certainly difficult at times to be thankful for them, but I know that if I am to be at peace I must do so. Grant me the grace to be thankful for our leaders. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: There is power in to change the course of government and the economy. Our hope is not in the people and circumstances around us; it is in the Lord.

Affirmation: I pray daily for the government, the economy and my own life circumstances because my hope is in the Lord alone.

Reflection: The world is in a mess. From the government, to the economy to crime statistics the world is in turmoil. How can we have peace in the midst of all this turmoil and chaos?

Day Nineteen

Trusting God Produces Peaceful Pastures

Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. – Psalm 37:3-4

It isn't always easy to do good, and it is even more difficult to trust the Lord. I keep a box on my desk where I put the bills as they come in. Every month it seems that we aren't going to be able to pay everything that is expected of us, and every month I have to go through the ritual of recommitting it all to the Lord and trusting him to supply all my needs.

In difficult times I have found it easy to manipulate things to come out right and then to “give God the glory” for providing. You know what I mean: Things like using a credit card to pay a debt and saying “The Lord provided.” Here's a tip on understanding when the Lord provides: He doesn't charge interest.

Of course we're always going to have those who aren't that concerned about doing good, but they are always looking to the Lord to bail them out saying things like, “I don't know why the Lord would let this happen to me.” Trusting the Lord is at the very core of doing good. If we don't believe in his word, and we don't believe he can take care of us, why should we do good? You see they go hand in hand.

If we are going to “dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture,” then we are going to have to learn to trust the Lord to make provision for us. This passage gives us the promise that when we delight in the Lord and his ways then he gives us the desires of our heart.

God wants us to have all of the things we want that are good for us, but God wants us to have them in his time and in his way. He just asks us to trust him, do good and delight ourselves in obeying him. That’s the formula for being at peace.

Prayer: Lord, it is easy to trust you when I am in safe pasture, but when safety seems far off and doom appears imminent, I tend to trust my own abilities rather than trust you. Grant me the grace to trust you in all circumstances. In Jesus name, amen

Message: When we trust the Lord and do good he will make us feel safe and secure.

Affirmation: I daily commit my life and circumstances to the Lord as I do the works of the kingdom and he makes me feel safe and secure in him.

Reflection: We sometimes manipulate the outcome and say, "God did it," when in fact it was our own ingenuity. How have you done that in the past? How can we avoid doing it in the future?

Day Twenty

Peace With God Through Faith In Christ

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

- Romans 5:1-2

There are countless millions who have heard the story of Christ and have recognized him as God in the flesh, and yet they have not believed upon his name to justify them before God and reconcile them to the Father.

Even though Christ came to the world for the purpose of bringing peace to mankind there still are those who are willing to risk peace in this life, and in the life to come, just so they can do it their way. Unfortunately, their way does not lead to peace and life but rather to chaos and death.

There are many millions more who have heard the story of Christ and have accepted the truth of God in Christ and have placed their faith in Christ. Those of us who are in that number have learned that it is only through faith in Christ and the finished work of Calvary that we have peace with God.

When we have believed the message of Christ, and have by faith made a commitment of our life to him, there is something released to us from God. In

another place Paul wrote, “By grace are you saved through faith” (Ephesians 2:8).

It is by faith that we gain access to God’s favor, or grace. Once the door of grace has been opened to us we move beyond the realm of what man can do and move into the realm of what God can do.

Mixed in among the millions who hear and don’t believe, there is a significant number of those who hear, believe and open their heart in faith to the Son of God. When that happens all of the hopelessness, fear and chaos of this world evaporates and the peace of God reigns in our hearts. Because we have been justified through faith we have peace with God.

Prayer: Thank you Lord for allowing me to hear of Christ and to believe upon him. You have opened the door of heaven and by your grace I have entered in. Thank you for your faithfulness.

Message: It is only through faith in Christ and the finished work of Calvary that we have peace with God.

Affirmation: When I heard the message of the grace of God being released to me through faith in Christ I believed and gained faith to commit my life to Christ.

Reflection: You have known people who have claimed faith in Christ but had no peace, and you have known those who claimed faith in Christ and had peace - What has made the difference in them?

Day Twenty One

Being Salt Preserves The Peace

Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with each other. - Mark 9:50

This passage could be just a bit confusing. In the verses that come before verse 50 Jesus is talking about dealing with temptation and that if one is to avoid falling into sin one must cut off the member of his body that is drawing him to offense. In the process of teaching that Jesus speaks of judgment on those who do not follow his instruction and continue to indulge in sin.

Then he says something that is a little hard to understand. He says, “Everyone will be salted with fire” (verse 49). Now what does that mean? We know, at least in that time, salt is used primarily as a preservative.

Some believe that verse 49 is the concluding verse to the warning of judgment and verse 50 speaks of hope in the believer. It appears that the salt is preserving the one judged so that they are not consumed but endure the fire of torment for eternity. That is an ugly and scary thought if we are in disobedience.

Verse 50 gives the other side of the picture, and using the same analogy of salt as a preservative, encourages believers to allow the “preservative” of the

Holy Spirit to keep the peace. I find it interesting that one of the primary purposes of salt in the believer is to preserve peace with other believers.

Another way to look at this concept is to realize that when we are being wayward, not caring about how our life affects others, and allowing our actions and attitudes to be offensive to others, then we are destroying the peace.

We are called to be submitted to the entire body and we are called to be salt, or to preserve, the peace. If we are truly salt, as a preserver, and we are called to preserve the peace, then we must carefully guard our actions and attitudes.

Prayer: Father, I understand that you give grace to maintain unity among believers and to keep the peace. I need your grace because I tend to become focused more on what I want and sometimes offend others. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: One of the primary purposes of the believer being salt is to preserve the peace with other believers.

Affirmation: I recognize my role in the kingdom as being salt to the world and to other believers. The peace of Christ in me affects the world and other Christ followers.

Reflection: Salt is a well known preservative. What do you think Jesus had in mind when he spoke of salt losing it's saltiness? What did he mean by, "Have salt in yourselves"?

Day Twenty Two

If Only You Had Obeyed

This is what the Lord says - your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel... If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river your righteousness like the waves of the sea.

- Isaiah 48:17-18

We are going to look at three passages in Isaiah over these few days. The first is dealing with, “If you had obeyed,” the next is “Peace Promised For The Children,” and finally, “Perfect Peace to Those Who Are Steadfast.”

God had called Israel to be a special people. From the time of Abraham God began to set them apart to be nation who would bring the Christ to the world. He called them to be separate, but they continually fell into the sins of the world.

Among the saddest words of Isaiah’s prophecy are these, “If only you had paid attention to my commands.” These words were uttered by Isaiah but they came from the heart of God. God, who calls himself “your Redeemer” was saddened by the Jews who could not receive his best, his peace, because they would not hear his voice and submit to his law.

I recall a passage in the gospels when Jesus made a similar cry. In Matthew 23:37 Jesus cried, “How often I have longed to gather you children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not

willing.” God offers something that only he can give, yet people consistently seek to find what he offers in other places.

We cannot gain peace through the law, because none of us can effectively follow its tenets, and if that is true, then how can anyone gain peace with God?

How can we deal with the sin that separates us from God? “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). Sin separated us, Christ made the opportunity, faith reconciles us to God and gives us his peace.

Prayer: Lord, I don’t want you to say to me, “If only you had obeyed.” Grant me the grace to walk in obedience to you so that the blessing you have planned for me can be released. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Peace with God is the result of paying attention to, and obeying, his commands.

Affirmation: My peace flows like a river and his righteousness in me rises like the waves of the sea because I pay attention to his commands.

Reflection: Reflect on this statement from today's devotion: God offers something that only he can give, yet people consistently seek to find what he offers in other places. What does that mean to you?

Day Twenty Three

Peace Promised For The Children

All your sons will be taught by the Lord, and great will be your children's peace. In righteousness you will be established: tyranny will be far from you; you will have nothing to fear. – Isaiah 54:13-14

Isaiah is prophesying of a time when the people of God would be returning from their years of captivity with promises of restored glory. Comparing the prophecies which pertain to Israel being restored and the reality of what actually happened upon their return from Babylon there seems to be something missing.

There were prophecies of restored glory that seem better than what was lost, yet history does not record a time of lasting peace for the Jews, neither does it record a time of unrivaled prosperity. If that is true, then what do the prophecies in this chapter of Isaiah and in other places really mean?

Many see a people of God emerging from these prophecies that includes the Jews but is much broader in scope than just the Jews. Some see a new nation of Israel emerging, not one born of woman but a nation born of the Spirit of God. Paul refers to this nation in Galatians when he writes, "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise," (Galatians 3:29).

It is to this expanded vision of God's chosen ones that Isaiah is referring. There has come a time when our sons and daughters are taught the ways of God by the Lord himself through the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Great peace has come to our children because they have been born by the Spirit into a spiritual nation whose God truly is the Lord.

Some time ago my son in law became suddenly sick and passed out. When he came to my granddaughter, just seven years old, was standing over him with her hand on his forehead praying for him. That is a fulfillment of the promise, "Great will be your children's peace." We are in that day now.

Prayer: Lord, You said to bring the children to you. You also said that we must become as little children. Grant me the faith of a child. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: We are the children of God and great peace has come to us because we have been born by the Spirit into a spiritual nation whose God truly is the Lord.

Affirmation: I have been born of the Spirit into a spiritual nation and Jesus, the Christ, my Lord, has given me great peace.

Reflection: Isaiah was making a prophecy concerning national Israel, but some think it has a much broader application. Can you explain that?

Day Twenty Four

Perfect Peace For Those Who Are Steadfast

You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock eternal.

- Isaiah 26:3-4

Insecurity is one of the most common causes of broken peace. The primary cause of insecurity is the inability to trust. Most people who have difficulty trusting others have had their trust betrayed by those who should have been trustworthy.

We have ministered to many people whose lives were marked by broken trust. All too often those who should have been their care givers were their abusers. Mental, physical and sexual abuse mark their past. Their experience is that those whom they trust will take advantage of them.

These people will often close themselves to emotional intimacy because they don't want to be hurt anymore. They are insecure and fearful of becoming vulnerable. If that is where you are, or where you have been, I have good news for you. *You can trust in the Lord because he is the rock eternal.* Friends and relatives may fail you, but the Lord will never fail you.

Throughout the Bible the Lord God is portrayed as being a rock, a strong tower, a fortress, a hiding place. A common thread of promise is that the Lord

is safe and secure; put your trust in him and you will not be disappointed.

As we grow in faith and our ability to trust the Lord matures then we find ourselves having perfect peace because we know that regardless of the circumstances the Lord is in control. Paul writes to the Romans, “We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

A key to trusting God and releasing his peace is keeping our focus on him. If our focus is past hurts then we will continue to experience hurt and insecurity. When our focus is on the faithfulness of God then great peace is our reward.

Prayer: Father God, help me to see you as you really are not as the other authority figures in my life have been. Help me to be steadfast in my faith and my walk with you. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: You can trust in the Lord because he is the rock eternal.

Affirmation: Friends and relatives may not be faithful to me but I have great peace in knowing that I can trust the Lord because he is faithful.

Reflection: Many people have trust issues because of the way they were treated in their formative years. How does that affect their ability to trust others? How can we come to trust God?

Day Twenty Five

*Submitting To God
Brings Peace And Prosperity*

Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you. Accept instruction from his mouth and lay up his words in your heart.

- Job 22:2-22

All of us desire prosperity. In fact, most of our waking hours are used to produce a prosperous life. We focus on what we can do to make things more comfortable for us and our family in this life. What we wind up doing is trusting our own ability and ingenuity to accomplish that.

It isn't always about trying to get ahead, sometimes it's just trying to get by. My wife has coined a phrase that we use often. One day she was talking about our desire to be free to minister without the worries of house payment, food, clothes, cars, and everything that goes with our modern life. She finally just said, "I'm tired of serving survival." And that is what most of us do. We begin in the morning and work all day just to serve survival.

In all of our scurrying around trying to produce enough to survive, and maybe a little to get ahead, the Lord is calling out, "Just submit to me. Listen to my instruction, follow me with all your heart, and I will give you peace and prosperity."

I have concluded that it is not what we do, but what drives us to do it, that determines the outcome. We can often achieve similar results when we are driven by our own desire and ambition as we can when we are submitted to the Lord, but what takes place inside of us is vastly different. Jesus once said, “What profit is it to gain the whole world if you get lost in the process?”

Prosperity without peace is like pie crust without the filling. True and lasting inner peace comes not from prosperity but from having heard the voice of the Lord and following his instruction with our whole heart. It is interesting that as we seek God and his will, listening very carefully to his instruction, peace comes and prosperity follows.

Prayer: Lord, I am no different than anyone else; I desire to be prosperous. Help me to realize that life is more than what we eat and what we wear. Grant me the grace to live for your kingdom and to trust you for my needs. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you.

Affirmation: I accept God's promise of peace and prosperity as I commit to submitting to him, accepting his instruction, and laying up his words in my heart.

Reflection: The devotion speaks of spending our life serving survival. What does that mean to you and do you see a solution to that problem?

Day Twenty Six

Turn From Evil And Seek Peace

Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies. Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. – Psalm 34-14

“I know I am not perfect, but God understands.” Have you ever heard anyone say that? Have you ever said it yourself? There are two very important truths in that statement. The first is “I am not perfect,” and none of us are. The second is, “God understands,” but what he understands is the question.

Most of the people I have heard make that statement are saying they know the way they are living is not right but they feel justified in living that way because of the their circumstances. When suffering the consequence their actions produce these same people will say, “I don’t know why God would do this to me.”

We must understand that there is a direct correlation between the level of peace in our life and the evil we allow in our life. It is contradictory to pursue our own way and expect God to reward us by giving us his best.

The psalmist opens this passage by addressing an issue that reaches us all; “Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days.” Who doesn’t want

that? Then he gives us a two step formula to achieve a life filled with good days.

First he says to avoid something: “Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies; turn from evil.” God will not release his best to us if we are going about our life doing things the way we have always done them.

Then he tells us what to do: “Do Good; seek peace and pursue it.” As we turn from serving our base desires to doing good and seeking God then he makes himself available to us. Doing good does not mean we are a “do gooder,” but it does mean that we look outside ourselves to a greater purpose and pursue it passionately.

Prayer: Lord, I do love life and I desire to see many days of blessing and prosperity. Give me wisdom to speak the truth and act according to truth. Grant me the grace to turn away from every evil thing and to do good. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: There is a direct correlation between the level of peace in our life and the evil we allow in our life.

Affirmation: I am careful to not allow anything in my life which might lead me into evil and destroy peace.

Reflection: What thoughts do come to mind when you think of this statement: "I know I am not perfect, but God understands."

Day Twenty Seven

Peace And Holiness Produce Unity

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

- Hebrews 12:14-15

It is interesting how the writer connects peace and holiness in this passage. This was not by accident. When we live holy, we will have peace. When we don't have peace, we are probably lacking somewhat in our holiness.

God gives us grace to have peace with others, but according to this passage, we can miss the grace (favor) God has provided. How do we miss God's grace on this issue? We miss it by allowing a root of bitterness to grow inside of us.

A root of bitterness will always cause trouble and will not only prevent us from having the peace of God but it will disrupt the peace of others. According to this passage a root of bitterness grows up to cause trouble and defile many. Bitterness grows out of a seed of offense and when it is full grown its fruit is discord.

Most of us can look back to a time when someone had done us wrong, or at least we felt they had wronged us. Instead of letting it go we kept it inside us and let it fester. Every time we saw that person, or thought about them, we remembered the thing they

had done. Before long that seed of offense grows a root called bitterness and prepares to produce fruit that will defile any who come in contact with us.

The only solution is to forgive any perceived offense before it takes root. If a brother or sister has committed an offense against you that is on them; if you allow that seed of offense to grow a root of bitterness then that is on you. It is easier to forgive an offense than it is to restore the damage caused by a root of bitterness. Be at peace with all men and you will find it easier to live a holy life.

Prayer: Lord, it is not an easy thing to be at peace with all men. I find there are times when I carry things against others in my heart that I should not carry. Grant me the grace to forgive easily and not allow any root of bitterness to grow up in me. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: When we live holy we will have peace. When we don't have peace we are probably lacking somewhat in our holiness.

Affirmation: I make every effort to live in peace with all men and to live holy before the Lord.

Reflection: Can we have a root of bitterness and still have peace in our heart? How does a root of bitterness affect my relationship with others?

Day Twenty Eight

Mind Set On Spirit Brings Life And Peace

The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.

- Romans 8:6

God created man to live forever in the garden he had created. It was God's plan that he and man would walk together in harmony. All of that changed when Adam and Eve chose to try it their way, and their way led to their eventual death.

Ever since Adam and Eve the way of man has led to death. Every person born since then has lived with the knowledge that it would be just a little while until death overcomes this body.

Paul writes in the passage for today, "The mind of sinful man is death." We don't have to look very closely at the way of man to see the death that comes from his way. In Romans seven Paul references the frustration faced by mankind of wanting to do good, but being driven by a sinister force he calls sin, to do evil. He sums up his frustration in verse 24, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"

Paul answers his own question in verse 25; "Thanks be to God - through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Through Christ he discovered life and peace.

Knowing that his life is short man seeks all the pleasure he can from life. Unfortunately, the thing

that looks so appealing to him is the very thing that keeps him from God's peace and life.

Just as Eve looked at the forbidden fruit and, "saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom," so today we look at forbidden fruit and think, "Why not? It looks good, it feels good, and besides that, I only live once!" So, we go our own way - and our way leads to spiritual and physical death.

But, praise be to God, there is hope. Because of what Christ has done for us we no longer live after the dictates of the sinful nature. We can submit to the work of the Holy Spirit and have life and peace with God.

Prayer: Lord, I have learned that my way takes me away from you and your peace. Grant me the wisdom to submit to you. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: When our mind is controlled by the Spirit we are no longer captive of sin and death but we are now freed to life and peace.

Affirmation: Because of what Christ has done for me and in me I no longer live after the dictates of the sinful nature, but I live in the peace of Christ.

Reflection: If God created man to live forever why doesn't man live forever today? How does knowing that our life is short affect how we live?

Day Twenty Nine

Sow In Peace and Reap Righteousness

The wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. – James 3:17-18

People who declare their spiritual wisdom, yet leave chaos and discord in their wake, are usually projecting their own heart rather than the heart of God. Some people feel like it is their “gift” to shake things up and cause people to be ill at ease. Those are usually lonely people because others grow tired of all the shaking and just don’t hang around them much.

The characteristics of wisdom that comes from God are very desirable. James writes that the first thing we notice about heavenly wisdom is that it is pure. The Greek word translated, “pure,” means perfectly clean, modest or innocent and is related to holy. Wisdom which comes from God produces holiness.

The words James uses to describe this pure, or holy, wisdom from heaven should be the adjectives used to describe believers. Believers who are peace-loving will be considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

A peace-loving person is considerate of others. Have you ever noticed that some people walk into a room and immediately people begin to become tense,

and other people walk into a room and people begin to relax and feel at ease. Have you wondered why that is? The first person is usually interested in their own agenda and they are not that interested in how others are affected. The first consideration of the second is how he relates to others.

A peace-loving person is moved by mercy to deny himself and submit to the needs of others. And, it is because they care more about others than themselves that the fruit of their life is righteousness. James says it this way; “Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.”

Prayer: Lord, help me to see that what I want or expect is not the most important thing in the world. The needs of others must be high on my priority list. Grant me the grace to consider others first. Amen.

Message: Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

Affirmation: I seek the wisdom which comes from heaven that is pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

Reflection: Some people who claim spiritual wisdom leave a wake of chaos in their path. Is it the wisdom of God if it produces chaos and discord? Think about it.

Day Thirty

Unity of Spirit through bond of peace

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. - Ephesians 4:3

Among the characteristics of a peacemaker is humility. In fact, a person who is proud, or arrogant, cannot really be a peacemaker because they are most often concerned about how they appear and whether others are responding to them. A humble person is gentle, patient, and will bear with those who need special love and consideration.

Paul speaks of making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit. How does one do that? Paul's answer is, "through the bond of peace." Unity begins with a commitment to peace. The Greek word used in this passage is "*sundesmos*" and means "a joint tie." It is sometimes translated "ligament." Figurative it is a uniting principle. In this verse it would mean that we are attached to one another through peace in the same way that our joints are held together by ligaments.

There is only one way to be joined in this manner. That is to be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. The way we become completely humble is to become completely empty of ourselves. One word is translated "completely humble." It is *tapeinophrosunē* and it

means, “a deep sense of one’s littleness; modesty, humility, lowliness of mind” (Thayers). The point being made is that being bound by peace involves considering others first.

I have counseled many people in relationships over the years and my counsel is always real simple. Act and react toward the other person according to their perceived needs not according to the way you think it ought to be. When two people do that they will have unity and they will live in peace.

That is a tall order, but that is exactly what being completely humble looks like and it is what it means to be bound to peace.

Prayer: Lord, help me to see others and their needs before I consider my own needs. Help me to be completely humble so that I’ll be united in peace with my brothers and sisters in the faith. Amen.

Message: A spirit of unity is possible when we are bound together in peace. Literally, tied to one another as ligaments are tied to the bone.

Affirmation: I can bear with others who are as human as I because the love of God binds us together with a bond of peace.

Reflection: Can you explain how it is important for a peacemaker to be humble? What are some of the characteristics of humility in a peacemaker?

Day Thirty One

*Aim For Perfection
and Peace Will Be With You*

Finally, brothers, good-by. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

- 2 Corinthians 13:11

Paul finally says good-by, and we are finally leaving this series on peace. My hope is that through this series you will have come to an understanding of the value of peace with God and with others. I also hope you have learned that living in peace is only possible when we focus on the needs of others rather than our own needs.

Early in this series we talked about peace being the very purpose for which Christ came to earth. When Lucifer was cast from heaven over his rebellion earth and all that was in it was thrown into chaos. What God had created in perfect peace and unity Lucifer, the deceiver, who had become known as Satan, has perverted and turned into chaos.

The story of creation we have in Genesis is the story of God restoring order and creating a caretaker for his creation. In Genesis three we are given the story of the fall of man and the loss of peace with God. From that time, according to Paul in Romans 8, “The whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.”

Isaiah prophesies that one would come and be called, “The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). When Christ was born the cry of the angels was, “Peace on earth and good will toward men.” The entire Bible is a guide leading us to Christ and to making peace with God.

In his final appeal to the church Paul cries out, “Aim for perfection.” Then he points the way; “Be of one mind, and live in peace.” We can only accomplish that when we have been emptied of ourselves and have the mind of Christ. When we have accomplished that, “The God of love and peace will be with you.”

Prayer: Lord, Grant me the grace to hear the instruction in your word, to walk submitted to you and committed to peace through unity. I know to do that requires that I surrender my will to you and live for the good of all. I need the grace to do that. Amen

Message: Living in peace is only possible when we focus on the needs of others rather than our own needs.

Affirmation: The God of peace and love is with me because my focus is on him and serving others rather than being served myself.

Reflection: Since the fall of man in the garden God has desired to restore the peace he had created in the beginning. What is the way that peace is restored today?

Tips for Leading a Small Group

In our Scripture passage for day 3 Paul gives some good advice for a small group meeting:

When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church...The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. - 1 Corinthians 14:32-33

When we are in fellowship with a small group, and we are experiencing a healthy daily devotional life, we will come to the group with a song of praise, a word of encouragement, or a revelation. And that is the beauty of small group ministry.

In the corporate body of believers which meet in larger groups there is no opportunity for each one to share in the meeting. In a large group usually only 1-2% ever share a song, a word or a revelation.

The only way those things can be done, and Paul tells us that they are necessary to strengthen the body, is in a small group.

To get more insights on leading small groups go to:
www.dailygodwalk.org

If you have any questions, ideas, or comments, feel free to contact us at any time.

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