

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT 3

Peace: The Divine Legacy

When a man or woman comes to the end of his or her life, typically a will is written in which the most precious possessions are delegated to those most dear. In John, chapter 14, our Lord Jesus follows this tradition. Just before the night of his betrayal, he speaks to his disciples and promises to leave two things for them when he is no longer on earth: the Holy Spirit and peace. "Peace I leave you; my peace I give you."¹

What a wonderful legacy he left! On a daily basis our world faces death, disease, natural disasters, crime, hate, and so many other things that cause fear and drive away peace. How beautiful of our Savior to give us the Holy Spirit and His peace to be victorious in this life.

"The New Testament Greek word most often translated as "peace" is eirene. It has the sense of "joining what had previously been separated or disturbed." Thus, it is frequently used to signify "setting at one; quietness; and rest." The New Testament's writers, however, also familiar with the Hebrew shalom, used eirene as its synonym. Thus, eirene also came to indicate inner satisfaction, the contentment and serenity that derive from living a full life."² Unfortunately, many Christians never allow this eirene to go beyond their pardon for sins, and we often walk around fretting and anxious. Having such little peace is not God's intent and should not be acceptable. We are often attacked with fear in our minds and hearts. It should not surprise us that we lose the peace of God and its growth seems to be stunted when our minds are filled with worldly things that have captured our affections.

As a community of believers, we are called to demonstrate God's peace to the world so that the world might glorify Him and come to know Him. "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace."³ Nobody wants to know Christ when they see His followers anxiety-ridden, fearful, fighting with each other, gossiping, and lacking in compassion for the world. The world wants something they haven't seen or tasted, something supernatural. True peace is something the world cannot offer. It is supernatural, brought into our hearts and lives only as a fruit of His indwelling Spirit. Many people walk around every day craving, but lacking, peace. What an opportunity as a believer in Jesus Christ to share the "gospel of peace"⁴ in which we stand firm.

We have all we need in Christ for this fruit to grow in our lives, yet, we must be yielded to the farming of the Spirit to get the perfect results. Isaiah 26:3 states, "You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you." One way for the fruit of peace to grow in our lives is to have our minds enlightened to who God really is. Setting our minds on the things above, not on the things of this world helps us gain perspective and frees us from anxiety. Even still, peace grows in our lives through prayer, thanksgiving, and a love for God's Word.

Pre-Article Questions:

1. How would you define peace?
2. Can you name a few things in our world today that are completely out of our control? How do you generally react when something happens that is outside your sphere of control, whether good or bad, that affects you personally?
3. How do you think the Bible defines peace?

1. John 14:26-27 TNIV

2. Ritenbaugh, John W. The Fruit of the Spirit, Peace. Forerunner, "Personal," May 1998.

3. Colossians 3:15

4. Ephesians 6:15

Prayer and gratitude guard our heart and, therefore, our peace. In Philippians 4:6-7 Paul reminds the church: Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Loving God's law, respecting it, and knowing He has our best interest at heart also tills the ground for peace to spring up in our hearts and lives. Psalm 119:165 says, "Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble."

We must allow this fruit of the spirit to grow both in our individual lives and in our corporate lives as followers of Christ so the gospel may spread. We are called to peace; it is part of our inheritance. We must diligently set our minds on the things of God, pray, be grateful, and trust our mighty and loving Father. Let us walk in the peace that is ours through the power of His Holy Spirit.

Luke 8:22-25

22 One day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat and set out. 23 As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger. 24 The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. 25 "Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples. In fear and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."

Matthew 8:23-27

23 Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. 24 Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. 25 The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" 26 He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. 27 The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

John 18:33-40

33 Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" 34 "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?" 35 "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?" 36 Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place." 37 "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." 38 "What is truth?" retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him. 39 But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release 'the king of the Jews?'" 40 They shouted back, "No, not him! Give us Barabbas!" Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising.

Study Questions:

1. In what ways does Jesus display “eirene” in Matthew and Luke 8?
2. Discuss the rebuke Jesus gives the disciples and their reaction. How are faith and peace linked? How did Jesus’ response of peace and authority glorify God?
3. Read Romans 5:1 and Colossians 1:20, what do these scriptures reveal to us about peace? What is the difference between Godly peace through the cross and the feeling of peace anyone can have?
4. Re-read John 18:33-40, Jesus was accused, beaten, tired, hungry, and all-knowing about what was about to take place in the next few hours. In what ways does Jesus push through these challenges and display the fruit of peace throughout this conversation with Pilate?
5. Can you share a time in your life where you had supernatural peace in a difficult circumstance?
6. How would you describe the current amount of “eirene” that is in your life today? How have your relationships with friends, family, and classmates been affected positively or negatively by your peace (or lack thereof)?
7. How do we grow in the fruit of peace daily and why is it absolutely necessary that this fruit grow in our lives?
8. Read Romans 16:20 and Isaiah 9:6. Our God and Savior are characterized and titled by peace. How does this incredible fact impact our witness and testimony to nonbelievers and brothers and sisters in Christ?
9. Which of these scriptures on peace (Colossians 3:15, Philippians 4:6-7, Isaiah 26:3) speaks to you and how can you apply it in your life?

Prayer Partner Assignment:

This week you will be meeting with a brother or sister from your small group to memorize scripture, re-read the text for this week, answer a question, and pray for one another. Please use this time to pursue the Lord together and deepen your relationship as brothers or sisters in Christ.

1. Memorize Psalm 119:165
2. Read Luke 8:22-25 and discuss a time in your life when you struggled with peace during a “storm” like the disciples in this boat. What brought you peace in that time?
3. Discuss current areas in your lives where you need more peace to grow and pray for one another to close out your time.