

The Fruit of the Spirit

Part 2 – Peace

Nicholas Ridley was a follower of Jesus who lived in England from 1500 to 1555. Ridley was condemned to death for his faith and was to be burned at the stake. The night before his execution, Ridley's brother kindly offered to stay with him in prison. Ridley's response was unusual, to say the least. He said that he planned to sleep just as well as usual. The next day he encouraged another Christian who was being executed. He said, "Be of good heart, brother, for God will either assuage the fury of the flame, or else strengthen us to abide it." Then they knelt and prayed next to the stake, talked briefly, then they were burned.

What remarkable peace in the face of torture and death!

Inner peace can be experienced in the most difficult of circumstances.

If you read 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, the apostle Paul recounts the things he had gone through in life.

2 Corinthians 11:23-28

Are they ministers of Christ?--I speak as a fool--I *am* more: in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty *stripes* minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; *in* journeys often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils of *my own* countrymen, *in* perils of the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness – besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

That's a lot to go through.

Yet despite all this, almost a quarter of the references to peace in Bible are found in his writings.

This was a man who knew how to access the peace of God.

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

This is the second message in this series on the Fruit of the Spirit.

1. Peace is the absence of warfare / turmoil

What a world full of warfare and turmoil!

On a national scale, there's conflict in the Mid-East, threats from Nth Korea, China threatening Taiwan (as well as just about everyone else), nations posturing against nations.

Did you know that in over 3000 years of recorded history, the world has been at peace only 8% of that time?

Between 1945 and 1988, about 20 million people died in 91 wars.

On the domestic front, there's drugs, violence, robberies, riots, quarrels, divorce, abortions, hatred, and more.

Where does it all come from?

James 4:1-2

Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.

It starts within; people don't have peace inside.

Now why is that?

2. People are at war with God

In Luke 19, Jesus told a story.

He told this story about Himself and you and me and the whole human race.

A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.

Just to help you out, the nobleman is Jesus, who was going to heaven to receive His kingdom, then He would return to earth.

So he called ten of his servants, gave them some money, and said to them, 'Do business till I come back.'

Then He – the nobleman, who is Jesus – left.

But His citizens hated Him and they sent a delegation after Him saying, "We won't have this guy ruling over us."

So who are these citizens who won't let Jesus rule over them?

They are all the citizens of Planet Earth who live on His land, breathe His air, eat His food, fish in His oceans, grow stuff in His soil.

And yet, despite the fact that they live by His grace, they reject Him and His rulership of love.

Instead, they choose to do things their own way, define for themselves what goodness is and what love is.

This is the condition of the citizens of Planet Earth.

This planet is in rebellion against God.

At war with God.

And if you read to the end of Jesus' story to find out what happened to those rebellious citizens, it ain't pretty.

No wonder Paul says that God commands all men everywhere to repent.

This is why:

Romans 8:7

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. Ultimately sin is rebellion against God and His rulership.

It's people saying, "God, don't try to tell me what to do. I'll run my life how I see fit."

Even nice people are saying, "I'll do it my way. I'll be good, but I'll decide what's good. I'll do as You say God, as long as I agree."

Romans 3:9-12,17

... we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. (10) As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; (11) there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. (12) They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one. (17) And the way of peace they have not known."

If people are at war with God, how can they not be at war with each other?

Inner peace begins with being at peace with God.

3. It all begins with peace with God

This is what the gospel is all about.

That's why the Christian message is called "the gospel of peace"

Romans 5:1

Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Peace with God comes only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In September, 2013, there was a deadly terrorist attack in a mall in Nairobi, Kenya.

Four gunmen from a group associated with Al-Qaeda killed 67 people, and injured more than 200.

But one story got into the media.

A young mother was having coffee at the mall with a friend when the shooting began.

When she dropped to the floor, she heard a mobile phone ringing nearby.

Afraid that it would attract attention, she reached under the man next to her to silence the phone.

She discovered that he was bleeding heavily.

At that point, she made a difficult decision.

She smeared the man's blood on her own body, hoping that the terrorists would think she was dead and they would "pass over" her.

That probably saved her life.

She said later, "I'd love to know who he was, because I think his blood protected me, saved my life."

A story that in a small way illustrates what Jesus has done for us.

It's His sacrifice, the shedding of His blood, that purchased for us eternal life and peace with God.

Through faith in what Jesus did on the cross, and His resurrection from the dead, we have peace with God.

And that's the basis of inner peace.

4. Maintain your peace

a. By walking in the Spirit

Peace is fruit of Spirit.

I want to give you a powerful key to walking in the Spirit.

Colossians 3:15

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts,...

That word 'rule' (Gk brabeuo) is only used here in the New Testament.

Not surprising since it's a technical term from sport.

And the New Testament isn't a sporting manual.

It means to decide like an umpire.

Here's how this works.

When a person makes peace with God, the peace of God enters their heart.

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you;

That peace acts as an umpire to help us walk with God.

Start being disobedient to God, and you will lose that peace.

b. Take your anxieties to God

Colossians 3:15

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

Philippians 4:6-7

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Notice the link in both of these Scriptures, between the peace of God and thankfulness.

Ongoing peace comes from bringing our anxieties to God in prayer, exercising faith that He will take care of the answer, by doing something very practical - giving thanks to Him.

In times of toughest challenges, maintain the peace of God in your heart by giving thanks.

c. Keep your mind on Him

Hebrews 12:2

looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith...

One time, the disciples were in a boat in the middle of a storm.

And Jesus came strolling by – on the water.

The disciples were afraid because they thought it was a ghost.

But Jesus said, “It is I; do not be afraid.”

Sensing an opportunity, Peter said, “If it’s really You, command me to come to You on the water.”

And so Jesus did.

And Peter walked on water.

But then Peter took his eyes off Jesus, got distracted by the wind and the waves, and lost his inner peace, and sank.

Jesus had to rescue him.

Isaiah 26:3

You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.

If you are a follower of Jesus and you’ve lost your peace, here’s a little checklist:

- Are you walking in the Spirit?
- Are you allowing God’s peace to keep you on track?
- Do you give thanks to God, even in tough times?
- Are you keeping your mind on Him?

If you’ve never had that peace, then now is the time to make peace with God.