

The Fruit of the Spirit Is Peace



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Lesson: *Matt. 8:23–27; 11:28, 29; Rom. 5:1–11; 12:9–21; Heb. 12:14; Col. 3:13–15.*

Memory Text: “ ‘Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid’ ” (*John 14:27, NKJV*).

As a champion of peace, Paul wrote, “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (*Eph. 4:3, NKJV*). The Greek word translated “endeavoring” is an imperative, excluding any passivity, any “wait and see” attitude. We must be proactive. If we fight and bicker in our homes, if we fall into factions at church, if we refuse to love and honor others, then we are denying the peace of God in Jesus Christ, which He established on the cross.

How ironic that you have to fight for peace. Eleanor Roosevelt, in a *Voice of America* radio broadcast, said, “It isn’t enough to talk about peace; one must believe in it. And it isn’t enough to believe in it; one must work at it.” The peace that Christ won for us also requires effort, hard work, and constant self-examination.

As we study this week, we should ask ourselves: Have I availed myself of the peace that Jesus won for me on the cross? How can I cooperate with the Holy Spirit as He engrafts that peace into my daily life?

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 23.*

Peace With God *(Rom. 5:1)*

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” *(Rom. 5:1, NKJV)*.

To have peace with God is more than to feel comfortable in His presence. It means that we, who once were “alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds” (*Col. 1:21, ESV*), have been reconciled and restored to fellowship with God. Once we were at war with God, but by His death on the cross, Jesus has made it possible for the hostilities to cease and for us to be God’s friends and not His enemies.

In one sense, this peace is not something we grow in, as in starting out with just a little bit of peace. Rather, we are reconciled to God, once and for all, by the cross of Christ. It is an accomplished fact. There is another sense, though, in which we do grow in peace with God. The more clearly we see God’s ways and walk in them, the more we appropriate His power to live as His sons and daughters. In this sense, peace with God is indeed a fruit of the Spirit. As we grow to maturity as children of God, we experience more and more the blessings and benefits of living in His kingdom until we can say, “Great peace have those who love Your law, And nothing causes them to stumble” (*Ps. 119:165, NKJV*).

Colossians 1:20–22 reveals that sin did not cause God to be merciful and pardoning; rather, it revealed that He has been that way from eternity. The plan of salvation demonstrated that God loved us and was willing to forgive even from the beginning.

Read Romans 5:1–11 and summarize what you believe the crucial points are here.

Dwell on this idea that only because of what Jesus has done, because of His perfect life credited to you by faith, can you stand pardoned, forgiven, and accepted before God, regardless of your past. Why is this teaching so important to us if we are truly to know peace?

Finding Peace: Part 1 (Matt. 11:28, 29)

On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 is very peaceful, 10 is very anxious), how would you rate your life? People are increasingly frustrated in their search for personal peace. In Matthew 11:28, 29, Jesus makes an invitation. Though He doesn't use the word *peace*, He does use a word that means "to give rest, to refresh, to give one's self rest, to take a rest."

Read the following verses: “ ‘Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls’ ” (Matt. 11:28, 29, NKJV). **What is Jesus saying to us here? How can we experience for ourselves the reality of this wonderful promise?**

From what Jesus is saying in these verses, is He proposing to give us peace as a gift, or does He mean to show us how to obtain it? Is not Jesus teaching that personal peace is a result of some cause and inviting us to learn that cause from Him?

“It is the love of self that brings unrest. . . . Those who take Christ at His word, and surrender their souls to His keeping, their lives to His ordering, will find peace and quietude. Nothing of the world can make them sad when Jesus makes them glad by His presence. In perfect acquiescence there is perfect rest. The Lord says, ‘Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee.’ Isa. 26:3.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 330, 331.

How does love of self lead to personal unrest and unhappiness?

How can we learn to die to self and to rest in Jesus? What choices can we make, every day, that can help make the promise of peace in Christ real? That is, what things are we doing, or not doing, that keep us from having the peace that Jesus offers us?

Finding Peace: Part 2 *(John 14:27)*

The story is told of two painters. Each painted a picture to illustrate his concept of rest. The first chose for his scene a still, serene lake among the far-off mountains. The second painted a thundering waterfall with a fragile birch tree bending over the foam; at the fork of a branch, almost wet with the cataract's spray, a robin sat on its nest.

Which best portrayed the essence of rest? It is not often in this world of turmoil that we find the rest of a lone mountain lake. More often we must find our rest amid the turmoil of real life.

Read the story recorded in **Matthew 8:23–27 of Jesus and His disciples on the Sea of Galilee.** *(See also Mark 4:35–41, Luke 8:22–25.)* **However unique the situation, what can we take away from this account for ourselves; that is, what is the message for us, and how can we apply it to our lives, regardless of our situation?**

Why do you think Jesus was concerned that His disciples have peace? Jesus left us with a beautiful promise about peace: “ ‘Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you’ ” *(John 14:27, NKJV)*. How does the peace the world is trying to give differ from the peace Jesus offers?

One thing we mustn't do is equate peace to a life without problems. Rare is the person, even the most faithful Christian, who goes through life without trials, pain, and suffering. Indeed, some folk have, it seems, more than their share of suffering. Peace, though, has more to do with how you handle these situations than with the situations themselves. Peace has to do with the deepest trust in a loving and caring God who knows what you are going through and has promised not to forsake you, no matter what comes your way.

What types of things upset you? Talk to God about your deepest fears. Call them by name. Ask the Lord to help you get in touch with the fear and identify it. Then take time to allow Him to begin to speak peace gently to those fears.

Peace at Home *(Heb. 12:14)*

“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” *(Heb. 12:14)*. **“If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men”** *(Rom. 12:18, NKJV)*. **What can we learn from the life and example of Jesus that can make these admonitions real in our lives? What are we doing (if anything) that makes them difficult, if not impossible, to become real for us?**

Strange as it may seem, the most difficult place to be a Christian is at home. How tragic, when home should be the one place in all the world where we all should have peace.

Two young men were in a battle during the days of the Vietnam War. The bullets were flying, and the bombs were exploding. All of this didn't seem to faze one of the soldiers. When his friend asked how he could be so calm, he replied that it reminded him of home!

Study Romans 12:9–21. Identify verses in the passage that, if implemented, would help to bring peace to the home. Give a practical application for the verses you chose.

As Christians, we are called to follow an incredibly high standard, the standard presented by Jesus Himself. All of us have fallen short of that goal. That being said, it doesn't mean that we can't still reflect the principles revealed in the life of Jesus, principles of love, self-sacrifice, and an uncompromising attitude toward evil and sin.

Imagine what our homes would be like were we to, indeed, reflect these principles! Imagine what it would be like if we would learn to think of others before ourselves; imagine if we showed others unconditional love, even when folk didn't deserve it. Imagine if we forgave those who hurt us. Imagine if we were as concerned about the well-being of others as we were about our own selves. Though implementing these principles wouldn't solve all our family problems, no doubt they would greatly help!

Peace in the Church *(Matt. 5:23, 24)*

“Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” *(Matt. 5:23, 24, NKJV)*. What basic principle is Jesus teaching us with these words? Why do we find it so hard to implement this principle in our lives?

It is evident that Jesus takes more seriously our relationships with one another than we do. It is not uncommon for bitterness and resentment to exist for years between members of a church. Imagine how different things would be if we all followed this teaching.

Identify a characteristic of the children of God as recorded in Matthew 5:9. What does it mean?

According to Colossians 3:13–15, what are three ways we are to relate with one another as fellow members of the church? What does each one mean?

Notice the flow of Christian graces in James 3:17: “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy” *(NKJV)*. What would our churches be like if we would allow the Holy Spirit to nurture these qualities in our fellowship? What things would be noticeably absent?

Think about the last time you had a problem with a fellow church member. Did you follow Christ’s words in Matthew 5? If not, analyze your reasons why you chose the “easy,” worldly route as opposed to the path that would have required humility and self-denial. How can you learn to do what Jesus calls us to in such situations?

Further Study: *Pss. 4:3, 119:165, Isa. 26:3, Rom. 8:6, Phil. 4:7.*

“Shortly before His crucifixion Christ had bequeathed to His disciples a legacy of peace. ‘Peace I leave with you,’ He said, ‘My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.’ John 14:27. This peace is not the peace that comes through conformity to the world. Christ never purchased peace by compromise with evil. The peace that Christ left His disciples is internal rather than external and was ever to remain with His witnesses through strife and contention.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 84.

“Strife for the supremacy makes manifest a spirit that, if cherished, will eventually shut out from the kingdom of God those who cherish it. The peace of Christ cannot dwell in the mind and heart of a workman who criticizes and finds fault with another workman simply because the other does not practice the methods he thinks best, or because he feels that he is not appreciated. The Lord never blesses him who criticizes and accuses his brethren, for this is Satan’s work. Manuscript 21, 1894.”—Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 102.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** What are ways you can work in your local church to help keep peace among members when inevitable tensions and disagreements arise?
- 2** What are the common situations we face in our daily lives that threaten our peace? What Bible promises can we claim when each one arises?
- 3** Of course, it’s always easy to talk about trusting the Lord no matter our circumstances and from that trust deriving peace. And that’s true. At the same time, what concrete and practical steps can we take to change the circumstances that make peace difficult? In other words, how often might our unease and fear be the result of choices that we make?
- 4** What practical things can we do to help others through circumstances that make peace difficult to achieve?
- 5** How much peace should we realistically expect to have in a world filled with such strife, chaos, suffering, and turmoil?

God's Man

by MAYRA CASTANEDA

I grew up in a family that considered itself Christian, but we seldom attended church. When I was 19, I met a young man who was very different from most men I knew.

I had seen him passing my house from time to time, sometimes waving. Then one day he stopped to talk. His name was David, and he said he was a Seventh-day Adventist. I had heard of Adventists, but I knew nothing about their beliefs. David asked me whether I would like to know more about God.

“I don’t believe in God,” I said. “He is an invention of people who needed a crutch in life.” I felt confident in my answer because I had visited a number of churches in the area, and they all seemed phony.

David was polite but persistent, and while still standing outside my house, we began talking about God. I asked many questions about God and science and was impressed that each of his answers was backed up with Bible texts.

David returned often, but my father wouldn’t let him inside the house, so we sat outside. David shared his faith and loved Bible texts, and I asked questions. We became friends, and soon I became convinced that God was real and that David knew Him personally. During one of David’s visits I accepted Jesus as my Savior.

My parents noticed I was changing, that I was reading my Bible and praying. My father warned me about getting serious with a man who had a strange religion.

Whenever we were together, our conversations always turned to God, for God was such an important part of David’s life. He invited me to some evangelistic meetings at his church. I went when I could and realized that the Adventist Church was where I belonged. It was real; the people were real; their faith was real. I told David that I wanted to become an Adventist. We already had studied the doctrines, so one Sabbath I slipped away to church and was baptized.

When my father learned I had been baptized, he told me to leave home. I was stunned. I stayed with my grandmother until my parents gave her trouble and I had to find another place to live.

I don’t regret my decision to follow Christ, even though my parents won’t let me near my sister for fear I’ll contaminate her. And I probably would.

Please pray that my family’s hearts will be softened and that they will accept Jesus into their lives. And thank you for supporting mission, which made it possible for me to meet Christ.

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