

## The Fruit of Peace

***“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee. Trust ye in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength”*** (Isaiah 26:3,4).

Everyone wants peace, but where to find it? The whole world is obsessed with peace, peace at any price. Principles, morals, freedom, money have all been exchanged for peace of mind. “Just leave us in peace,” is the common cry.

Jesus offered peace to the world—“peace on earth, good will to men.” So where is the peace? Not only does the world want to know, but even the Christians want to know. Life seems always a struggle. The world is in conflict; the church is in conflict; families are in conflict; individuals are in conflict within themselves. How can Paul state so positively and assertively—“the fruit of the Spirit is peace.” Does that mean that if we have no peace, we have no Spirit? Have we not been filled with the Holy Spirit? Many would have us believe that and not the least of which are leaders, who ought to know better. Again, the text says that the fruit of the Spirit is—not ought to be. So how do we know we have the Spirit? We know if we care about Christ. If we did not have the Spirit, Christ would mean nothing to us, except possibly as a shadowy figure of ancient history. If you want Christ in your life, you do have His Spirit.

And once again, we must examine the words. The Greek word *eirene* means “harmony.” It is the name of the ancient Greek goddess, daughter of Zeus, who was the opposite of *Eris*—the goddess of discord. In this respect it does not refer to mere feelings of tranquility, but to “integration”—the harmonizing of the disparate elements of life into a unified whole.

And again, we must distinguish between the realm of the Spirit and the realm of the flesh. Peace in the realm of the flesh is a transient thing, dependent on circumstances, and the responses to those circumstances by the human psyche. The human psyche which is known popularly as the “soul” is made up of a grid pattern on the cortex of the brain which determines the responses that one makes, by impulses that collect data from the grid and translate them into emotional reactions known as feelings. Thus, circumstances trigger anxiety based upon the nature of the personality as reflected by the grid pattern. Invariably humans will respond to circumstances in terms of established personality patterns. Both Christians and non-Christians are affected this way. Many times non-Christians will react more calmly to situations than Christians. Reason doesn’t necessarily change this. In other words, when a Christian is confronted with a crisis, reason would dictate that faith in the power of God should dispel the anxieties and we should be at peace about the matter. But the psyche doesn’t always behave in such neat patterns. No matter how much we may try to convince ourselves that everything will be all right, we still feel anxiety. Any Christian who is honest will have to confess that this does occur. Then, of course, the real trouble begins. Satan loves to take advantage of our weakness and try to convince us that if we had more faith we would have more peace. You must remember that he is the “accuser of the brethren, who accuses us before God day and night.”

The understanding of the difference between flesh and spirit will help to dispel

this anxiety. When Christ comes into our spirits, He brings with Him all His attributes. We have His peace within us as He is within us. Paul says, "*He is our peace.*" It is not a matter of having peace because we think about Christ, or feel good about Him, or try to muster up feelings of confidence. The peace is there in our spirits because He is there in our spirits. Paul says to the Romans, "*being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (5:1). Remember, now, we are justified by faith, not by fleshly feelings of confidence. Faith (which we shall deal with in another article) in the true sense of the word is really the very energy of God, projected to our spirits and not feelings of confidence based upon our human reason (as, e.g.—I ought to have confidence because Christ is in me). The flesh is simply not strong enough to sustain rational concepts incessantly and evolve faith from them. Faith is a "gift of God," not a product of a supposedly rational mind. If we were able to accomplish this in our fleshly minds, then faith would not be a gift of God, but a work of the flesh or mind. The faith that is from God functions in our spirits and is constant in spite of the inability of the mind to produce confidence. Many situations are such that anxiety prevails in spite of all.

At this point, many Christians feel defeated and even wonder if they are saved. The problem is the failure to understand the difference between the peace that is in the spirit and the peace that is in the flesh. The peace we have in the spirit is there because Christ is there. There may be turbulence in the flesh, but the spirit is at peace. Peace in the spirit is the bedrock of harmony between ourselves and God. If we are at peace with God, then we can face our circumstances with much greater peace of mind. The peace we have in the spirit is the ceaseless flow of divine energy securing for us the certainty of our salvation and personal identification with Christ. It is not dependent on our ideas or feelings in the mind.

Whether or not we have peace in our flesh will depend upon a great many factors. Sometimes genetics has a lot to do with it. There are people who come from a long line of "worriers." They are anxiety-prone. It is an hereditary matter. Sometimes the anxiety is the result of physical factors—chemical imbalance in the endocrine glands. Sometimes it is a miscalculation of the circumstances. If one knew more about it one would be less apt to worry. Sometimes the turbulence comes from circumstances beyond our control and we must leave things with God. And yet we can't seem to control our emotional reactions, at which point we have to trust that God will work things out, in spite of our fleshly feelings. We may have to accept the uneasiness we feel which would be a natural thing, as for example, in money problems where we are concerned about mounting bills. It is even important for us to worry a bit because it helps us to be careful about our budgeting.

The important thing is that we do not use these feelings as a test of our spirituality, or of God's presence. In reality God has the whole situation in hand, but we do not always feel confident about it. We are sometimes like the baby who is screaming for its bottle, and mother is ten feet away warming it on the stove.

Sometimes lack of peace in the mind comes from uncertainty about our relationship to God. The feelings of anxiety are often assumed to be a result of some problem with our faith or spirituality. But how do we know we are all

right with God? For one thing, He has promised “never to leave us nor forsake us.” For another thing, the very fact that you pray at all is an indication that He is with you. If His Spirit were not with you, you would not want to pray about the situation. If you think there is something wrong in your life, ask Him to show you, but don’t go on fishing trips. That is, don’t keep “poking around.” If God has something He wants to deal with you about, you’ll know—believe me, you’ll know. Again, the very fact that you want to be right with God shows that His Spirit is with you.

So peace in the spirit and peace in the flesh are two different things. Peace in the spirit is there because Christ is there. Peace in the flesh depends upon a great many factors, none of them really having to do with the reality of the presence or peace of Christ in the spirit. Lack of peace in the flesh or emotions may be the result of heredity, chemical imbalance, inadequate knowledge of the situation, problems beyond our control that are a very natural cause of concern. And then of course, there is the work of Satan, who likes to stir us up and rob us of our peace by giving us a false conception about our circumstances. He is the great deceiver. We may be frightened by the roar of the lion, but fail to realize that he is chained.

**The fruit of the Spirit is peace; the fruit of the flesh is anxiety.**

David Morsey

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