

Russell Kelfer

**Peace
I Leave
With You**

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Series: The Fruit of the Spirit

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230 • (210) 226-0000 / 1-800-375-7778 • www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org

Peace I Leave with You

A WORLD THAT LONGS FOR PEACE

Pick up the newspapers. Turn on the television. What do you see? Everywhere you turn, you are confronted with hostility. Internationally, it is nation against nation; kingdom against kingdom. In every corner of the globe, there are skirmishes with the potential to break out into another world conflict. The Mideast is a veritable hot-bed. Not a day goes by that someone doesn't shoot, bomb, assassinate, or threaten. All the while, men are clamoring for peace.

On the streets of London and Paris and Rome, students and adults alike are picketing for peace. Headlines herald the coming of a new era as China builds McDonald's Restaurants, and Russia signs new disarmament pacts. Everyone is hoping that these are signs of peace. But they are followed by stories of uprisings in Nicaragua, and Honduras, and Panama. The players who are championing peace at the bargaining table are furnishing the weapons and the manpower half-way across the world to foster war.

So there really is no peace. At home, the courts are filled with men and women suing one another, corporations absorbing one other, politicians accusing one another. Crime rates are rising at such an astronomical rate, and jails are so full that rapists and murderers are being released prematurely to make room for more. There is no peace in the suburbs. There is no peace in the courtroom. There is no peace in the nation. There is no peace in the world.

*And there won't be peace until Jesus comes again. Until the Prince of Peace is given His rightful place as Lord, there can be nothing but hostility and conflict and warfare and destruction on planet earth. The closer we get to that day when the trumpet of God will sound, the deeper the quagmire of hostility will become. Men will cry, "Peace, Peace," but there will be no peace. Instead, nation will rise up against nation; there will be wars and rumors of wars. Men will connive and deceive and steal what belongs to others. Satan will foster conflict of every kind, and *he will be successful... for a season.**

But one day there will be peace. The lion will lie down with the

Peace I Leave with You

lamb. The prisons will be empty; the courtrooms will be clothed in silence; and men's hearts will be filled with love and understanding. One day *there will be peace...when King Jesus reigns at last*. In the meantime, you and I as Christians are called to live an unusual kind of existence; we are to become men and women who demonstrate an incredible kind of internal peace, while living in a world where warfare and destruction are the norm. We are to be men and women whose hearts beat to a different drummer, actually living without fear and hostility and anxiety in a world where everyone is angry and afraid and worried. That kind of life cannot go unnoticed by a searching world, for that is what they are looking for; they are longing for...peace. They may define it differently; they may think that what they long for can be won at the bargaining table; they just don't understand the principle of the two kingdoms. But still what they long for is peace.

That is exactly what Jesus prophesied, and that is why He implanted within the heart of every born-again Christian that incredible part of His Father's nature known as the peace of God. It is virtually indescribable. In fact, Paul describes it as indescribable. And yet, though it is indescribable, it is inescapable as well. The world has absolutely no explanation for it. Psychologists cannot duplicate it. Educators cannot create it. Philosophers cannot define it. It literally defies description.

It is the peace of God that lets a soldier face the battlefield without fear. It is the peace of God that lets a mother see her child rolled into the operating room without anxiety. It is the peace of God that lets a broken heart stand at the grave of one they loved without bitterness or hostility. It is the peace of God that rests amidst a storm so fierce there appears to be no way of escape. It is the peace of God that crawls up into the Father's arms when there is no explanation, no promises, *even no hope*. It is the peace of God that calms the anxious heart, soothes the fevered brow, and takes away the knot that lodges in the pit of the stomach on a dreary night when you are all alone.

It is the peace of God that says, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28). It is the peace of God that says, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not afraid, for I Am your God." (Isaiah 41:10). It is the peace of God that says, there is therefore a rest for the children of God. It is the peace of God that spreads a net of love beneath you when you are falling, when you know not what lies beneath or beyond. It is the

Peace I Leave with You

peace of God that whispers, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5), when it appears to the natural mind that He has. It is the peace of God that we will be looking at for the next lesson or so as we continue to search the heart of God for what He means when He tells us: “The fruit of the Spirit is...”

Our title and outline for this study is: Peace I Leave With You.

I- A World that Longs for Peace

II- A Three-fold Plan for Peace

A THREE-FOLD PLAN FOR PEACE

The quest for peace has existed ever since the fall of man. Old Testament kings and prophets searched for answers to the problem of war and hostility. One key principle emerged. Whenever men were operating in harmony with the plan of God, they entered into an era of victory, followed by peace. It didn't mean there wasn't warfare. Sin accounted for that. It did mean that whenever the children of Israel were walking in obedience to God's laws, an enemy's intrusion into their camp meant stunning victory, followed by a season of peace. Such passages as Joshua 14:14,15 were commonplace in the Old Testament. There we read:

Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day, because that he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel.

And the land had rest from war. (Joshua 14:14,15c)

That passage in II Chronicles 20 that we discussed two lessons ago, ends like this:

And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries, when they had heard that the LORD fought against the enemies of Israel.

So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about. (II Chronicles 20:29,30)

Rest and peace followed victory. Victory followed obedience. Always. And this became an external pattern for victorious living in the kingdom which was to be formed in the hearts of men.

As we move into the New Testament, we find that the concept of peace and rest blossomed into a three-fold panoramic photograph of the plan and purpose of God; and the Greek word “eirene” came to mean all three. To fully understand what God means when He says the “Fruit of the Spirit is peace...” I believe we must look at

what that trio of definitions involves.

Just what is *peace*? The dictionary defines peace as:

- 1) an agreement to end hostilities;
- 2) a state of calm and quiet;
- 3) freedom from disturbing thoughts or emotions.

Strangely enough, those three definitions follow almost exactly the three-fold revelation of peace in the Scriptures.

Bible dictionaries define peace this way:

- 1) the cessation of hostilities;
- 2) the absence or end of strife;
- 3) a state of rest.

The meaning of peace, then, refers to three distinct types of warfare. It refers to peace with God, peace with men, and peace within. All three are promised to the men or women who allow God's Spirit to produce His natural fruit in and through their lives.

Peace With God

To confuse the three, however, leads us to conclude that we are living in peace, when indeed we are not. Therefore, it is important for us to clearly see the distinctives. It is also important to see the relationship among the three.

First, what do we mean by "Peace with God"?

I'm sure you have heard about the Good News for the people of Israel—that there is peace with God through Jesus, the Messiah, who is Lord of all creation. (Acts 10:36,37 TLB)

What did the Holy Spirit mean "the good news is peace with God through Jesus, the Messiah"? He meant the war had ended. The battle was over. Hostilities had come to an end for all who were willing to come to God on God's terms. Man, you see, had declared war on God in the garden. Jehovah had created in Eden an atmosphere of perfect peace. There was no enmity between man and God. God, however, being the Creator, exercised His privilege, *for man's benefit*, of defining the parameters of the peace treaty. In love, He did so. The terms of the treaty were simply that *only one of them could be God*. At any time Adam or Eve determined to violate God's right to be in charge, they would be, in essence, declaring war on God. So peace existed in the garden until Eve decided to be God. Now the method God used to define those parameters was simple.

Peace I Leave with You

He simply told them what they could and couldn't do. So long as they considered Him *to be God*, there was no question but that they would not eat of that tree which was forbidden. But Satan, you recall, convinced Eve that God had no right to force His wishes on her. Those were decisions she should make, Satan whispered, and she bought the lie. She decided that she knew as much as God did about what was right and wrong, and nobody needed to tell her what to do. So Eve, on behalf of the human race, declared war on God. She challenged His right to be God, by personally defying His specific orders, thus taking herself out from under His authority. The rest is history. Mankind has been and is to this day still locked in mortal conflict, though it knows not with whom it is fighting. Man thinks that because there is so much animosity and warfare going on, it is between man and man. But the truth is the conflict is between Satan and God. And the conflict is the same as it has always been; it is a conflict over whether or not God has the right to be God.

So if you have never given your heart to Christ and relinquished control of your life to His Lordship, your problem is not how to find peace within, or even peace with those around you. Your first problem is to find peace with God. You, Beloved, like it or not, have openly declared war on God's right to be God and until you *accept His terms of peace*, you will have no peace. You can read books, practice meditation, join a thousand different religious groups, do good to mankind, love your fellow man, etc...but *you will have no peace until you make your peace with God*.

My friend, God's terms for peace have never changed. God's terms for peace are simply...surrender! He isn't interested in your coming to the peace table with a list of demands. "Lord, I'll come to you if you heal my uncle." "Lord, I'll follow you if you'll make me successful." "Lord, I'm yours, if you take away this pain." No. The terms are not negotiable. If you want peace, surrender. Surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ by asking Him to forgive your sins, cleanse your heart, and take over your life. He has gone to the bargaining table with the Father, negotiated the terms for your salvation, and then fully paid the price Himself. Your only condition to receiving peace is that you accept His terms completely, without adding to them or taking from them. Colossians says it this way:

For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell;
And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by
him to reconcile all things unto himself; I say, whether they

Peace I Leave with You

be things in earth, or things in heaven. (Colossians 1:19,20)

The peace treaty was signed at Calvary. The terms were complete surrender. The price was fully paid by God Himself. Beloved, pay attention to that formula, for the way to peace with man, and the way to peace within, painfully parallels the way to peace with God. The answer is always the same: surrender.

If you are not a child of God, it is simply because you have not signed the treaty. God signed it in His own blood. It is not negotiable. Stop fighting. The war is over. Accept God's terms and ask Jesus to come into your heart and become in you what God intended to be in the garden...Lord.

Peace With Man

That's the truth about peace with God. In the same manner, God has given specific designs in Scripture about maintaining peace with men. Listen:

Bless those who persecute you—who are cruel in their attitude toward you; bless and do not curse them.

[Share others' joy], rejoicing with those who rejoice; and [share others' grief]. weeping with those who weep.

Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty (snobbish, high-minded, exclusive), but readily adjust yourself to [people, things] and give yourselves to humble tasks. Never over-estimate yourself or be wise in your own conceits.

Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is honest and proper and noble—aiming to be above reproach—in the sight of every one.

If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with every one.

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave the way open for [God's] wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay (requite), says the Lord.

But, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.

Do not let yourself be overcome by evil, but overcome (master) evil with good. (Romans 12:14-21 Amp Bible)

You have just read what may be one of the most disturbing principles recorded in the Bible. It is the "peace-at-almost-any-cost" principle. It makes a series of statements back to back, that when tied together form a pattern for peace in the home, in the

Peace I Leave with You

church, in the community, in the workplace.

It gives us these principles without alternatives.

1- Bless those who persecute you or make fun of you (vs. 14). That takes care of what to do with one group with whom you have no peace...your enemies. Bless them. Never curse them. Never invoke God's wrath upon them, *that's not your job*. Invoke God's best upon them. It will help you become a peacemaker by removing the hostility from one side of the conflict. Remember: that's what God did. He forgave you and died for you, and then left the decision with you whether or not to accept it. But He did His part unconditionally. Peacemaking.

2- Enter into the grief and joy of those about you (vs. 15). In other words, don't focus on how Bobby offended you by what he said. Focus on why Bobby is hurting enough to say what he said. Be happy for Mary, even if she's happy because she got your job. Peacemaking.

3- Never condescend (vs. 16). You don't have the right to pull rank to end conflict. Instead, you are to adjust yourself to others' needs, as though you were the private, and they were the general.

4- Give yourself over to humble tasks (vs. 16). Don't look for jobs that steal the spotlight. Look for jobs where the spotlight never shines. It will make for peace.

5- Don't be impressed with who you are (vs. 16). The only thing you have to be impressed with is that the Living God, *in spite of who you are*, saved you.

6- Never retaliate (vs. 17-19). Never means never. It's not your job. Vengeance is God's job. You try to take it from Him, and you are *trying to be God*. That's the greater sin.

7- If possible, be above reproach (vs. 17). Assume the responsibility for *your behavior* to the degree that you do not excuse away bursts of anger or fits of impatience as "natural". You have been called to live, as far as possible, *above reproach*...that is, with Christ in control.

8- So much as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone (vs. 18). The Christian life is a call to personal peace. If your heart is such that you are always challenging, always confronting, always angry, always lashing out at people or organizations, you are not a peacemaker. You are either confusing taking a stand on the issues with rejecting the people who hold to those issues or you

are refusing to let a Sovereign God be Himself.

9- On the contrary, if your enemy is hungry; feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink (vs. 20). The “coals of fire” portion of that passage has two interpretations, and whichever you choose, either way the result is up to God. The coals are *His problem*; the feeding and caring for your enemies is yours.

In other words, the Spirit-filled Christian who is letting God be God is controlled by a spirit of peace. Now these are not national principles. It is the role of government to defend the rights of its people, and Scripture is clear that *under the authority of those powers appointed by God*, warfare is a natural part of a world under the influence of Satan. The nations that defy God must be dealt with. Laying down your arms as a country in the name of peace; or negotiating with a known enemy in the name of peace is a wrongful interpretation of this principle. Because peace is the result of the Spirit of God being placed in a man or woman, only an individual who has been born again can practice these principles. A nation cannot. But if you have been born again, these are absolute commandments. Bless your enemies. Humble yourself. Don't be impressed with your credentials. Your only credential worth having is Jesus. Never retaliate. Never justify your wrongdoing; live above reproach. Make peace your goal in interpersonal relationships, even at the expense of your reputation. If need be, make your ministry the act of meeting the needs of those who would destroy you, criticize you, or alienate you.

Not natural? Of course not. Supernatural. It is the result of the Spirit of God living in you *producing His fruit through your life*. It means turning the other cheek when you want to strike back. It means humbling yourself when the world thinks you “deserve” recognition. It means giving up your rights when everyone about you is clamoring to justify your position. It means that even if you *must* claim your rights, you do so in a spirit of deep humility, characterized by quiet gentleness. You do not stomp in and begin shouting for what's yours. If you lose the battle, be sure you do not lose the war. If someone takes what is yours, God can give it back; or God can give you the ability to live without it. But if you destroy God's testimony in the process and deny God's letting His spirit of peace be manifested in that situation, you have robbed God once again of a ministry; for that clerk in that store, or that relative, or that employee, or that young person who was watching you was God's audience sent to you so they could witness first

Peace I Leave with You

hand how the peace of God works. But don't take my word for it. Meditate on Romans 12 this week and let God teach you. Then study such passages as Ephesians 2:14-20, Ephesians 4:3, I Peter 3:11-14, James 3:18, and Mark 9:50. This is not an isolated aside in Scripture. It is a primary characteristic of the behavior of the man or woman who is letting God be God. No, you can't do it. But the choice is yours, whether or not to let God do it. In every situation, when the temptation is there to retaliate or remonstrate, and you can either get what you "rightfully deserve" or keep the peace and leave the results to God, it is up to you to quietly stop, praise God for His Sovereignty, ask Him to be responsible for the outcome, and then *in His strength, do what it takes to make peace.*

Peace Within

But of course the third expression of peace is really the crux of how this principle works in a life. These two are so interrelated, it's almost difficult to have one without the other. I am speaking, of course, of *peace within*. If you've never made peace with God, you cannot have peace within. The reason is that peace within is a gift of God's Spirit and is released only through those in whom the Spirit lives. Nor can you "turn the other cheek" and make peace with others, without God's Spirit to enable you, to assure you, and to testify through you Who did it. Otherwise, you are simply parroting reality, and it will be utter hypocrisy. So peace with God is essential to having peace with man and peace within.

By the same token, if you are not living at peace with one another, your ability to live at peace with yourself is severely hindered. In fact, if you as a husband are not yielding yourself to meet your wife's needs as Christ did for us, *even your prayer life will be hindered*, according to I Peter 3:7. But even though there is a close interrelationship among the three, the issue of having God's perfect peace within is a subject that stands on its own; and it is the expression of that peace that most obviously affects your health, your witness, your family, your productivity, and even your ability to discern spiritual truth. The man or woman who is frustrated, angry, vindictive, or worried has no message to give; or the message they give is at best a contradiction in terms. They are saying, "Come to the Prince of Peace and find rest," all the while fuming and being anxious or bitter, thus defying in life what they proclaim with their lips.

Jesus was clear in His proclamation of this principle. It begins

Peace I Leave with You

in John, chapter fourteen, when He told us that He was going to actually place the Holy Spirit in us.

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Peace I leave with you, 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 14:26,27)

Jesus gave you a promise in that verse that, if properly claimed, can change your very countenance, alter your very personality, transform your very nature for the rest of your life. *Jesus has promised you peace.* He has promised you the absence of hostility, the absence of anxiety, and the absence of vindictiveness forever. Many principles surface, even from this one passage.

1- Peace is a gift from God through God's Spirit. It is not something you get from a psychology book, or by meditating on some higher form of life, or by taking some kind of special pill, or drinking some kind of intoxicating drink. You get it only one way: as a gift from God. "My peace I give unto you..." Jesus said. That means He determined, as an act of love, to release His kind of peace through every born-again child of God, freely, without cost to them, if they will but let Him. So if you are a Christian and not living in peace, the problem is not with God. He hasn't given less peace to you than He has to another. You have appropriated less of what you have.

2- Since it is a gift of the Spirit, it is unrelated to your temperament or natural personality. In fact, *the more agitated you are in your natural state, the more demonstrably different your testimony will be when you let the peace of God free in your life.* Therefore, if you are a born worrier, you are a natural for the supernatural peace of God to become your strength. So stop using excuses such as, "I have the gift of mercy, we're supposed to worry." Hogwash. God never gives a gift that is counterproductive to His nature. If His Spirit produces peace, then the gift He has given you will amplify that peace. Don't use as a basis for your fretting that you are choleric, or you are type "A", or your parents were worriers. Those are only backdrops that allow the grace of God to be more evident as He produces through you a life of peace. Peace is a gift of God, and as such, is actually even more evident in those who naturally are prone to the opposite.

Peace I Leave with You

3- This peace will be 180 degrees different from what the world has to offer. “Not as the world giveth, give I unto you” means there are no similarities. Satan can counterfeit peace, but he cannot duplicate it. When held up to the light of Scripture, those counterfeits become painfully obvious.

4- Finally, this peace carries with it an order from God. Because of this gift of peace, we are not to let our hearts be troubled. We are not to let ourselves be afraid. Those are commandments. The power will come from within, but the choice to let it flow will come from the choices we make when confronted with those things that naturally would cause us to be anxious or angry or fearful or bitter. At those times, in an instant, we have a choice. We can react...by letting the flesh do what it has always done, or we can respond...by turning to God and praying, “Dear Lord, I am about to yield to the sin of anger, or the sin of anxiety, or the sin of fear. Please release Your Spirit of Peace within me and give me the grace to rest.” Then begin to sing and to praise. Begin to “let the Word of God dwell in you richly in all wisdom”. Make melody in your heart and rest.

The peace of God. It is a tri-faceted miracle of the nature of God. It allows you to have *peace with God* by surrendering to God and accepting His terms for eternal peace. It allows you to have peace with man by surrendering your rights and letting God be responsible for the outcome. And miracle of miracles, it allows you to live in a world beset by trials and pain and uncertainty and hostility with an inner rest that simply defies description. It allows you to live above the tensions of life by living life under the control of the One who is the Prince of Peace.

In our next study, we will explore the Biblical journey to peace within. In the meantime, why not study John 14:27, John 16:33, Philippians 4:7-9, Colossians 3:15, II Thessalonians 3:16, and Isaiah 26:3? And why not ask God to reveal to you this week every time you fail to let the peace of God reign in your heart...either in your relationship with others, or in your willingness to relinquish control in the details of life.

He will show you. He will comfort you. He will give you peace. It's a promise. He said, “Peace I leave with you...”, and he did.

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210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778

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