



Peace In the Home (Galatians 5:22, 23)

The third attribute of the fruit of the Holy Spirit is peace. We understand the need for peace because we know the reality of war: war in the Middle East, civil and tribal wars in Eastern Europe and Africa, past wars in Vietnam and Korea, the World Wars. In fact, human history probably includes more years of war than years of peace. The usual condition of mankind is to hear of "wars and rumors of wars" (Matthew 24:6). Around the world, we pray and hope for peace.

Perhaps more meaningful for our individual lives is the fact that life is often not very peaceful around us. Political battles—wars of words and ideas—are being fought on international and local levels. We may experience strife in the workplace. The community may be divided on some issue. Sometimes division occurs in the church. Even in the home, strife may prevail.

We experience so much strife that we may wonder, "How can we ever have peace?" *Peace is the product of the power of God.* Since we are especially interested in how we can have successful homes, we need to recognize that God is the source of peace in the home.

Peace is a pervasive theme of the New Testament:

- God is the giver of peace, as the apostles recognized when they prayed that God might give their hearers and readers peace, or greeted them by saying, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father" (Romans 1:7).¹

¹See also 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians

- God is the "God of peace" (Romans 15:33; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:20; see 2 Thessalonians 3:16).
- When Jesus came, He was heralded with a message of peace (Luke 2:14).
- Jesus gives peace (John 14:27; 16:33).
- Jesus is our peace (Ephesians 2:14).
- Peace is part of what the Holy Spirit produces in the life of a Christian (Galatians 5:22).

If this array of Bible facts teaches any one truth about peace, it is this: Peace comes from God. We might express this in several ways: "Peace comes from Christ"; "Peace comes from the Holy Spirit"; "Peace comes by being saved." However we phrase this truth, we cannot have peace from our own power or by our own wisdom. *God is the only source of true peace—anywhere, anytime—in our world, in our lives, and in our home!*

A question then arises: How does God give peace to the home? He does this in three ways.

PEACE BETWEEN A MAN AND GOD²

First, God gives peace between a man and God. Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore, having been justi-

1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:2; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4; Philemon 3.

²While "man" is used generically here, referring to a male or a female, it may be preferable in some situations to use these alternate subtitles: "Peace Between a Person and God," "Peace Within a Person," and "Peace Between People."

fied by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." This verse presupposes that we have alienated ourselves from God. When we sin, we become God's enemies, subject to His wrath. However, He has provided for peace between Himself and us through the sacrifice of Christ and through our response to Christ. When we respond in faith and obedience, we are no longer at war with God, but are at peace with Him.

How does being at peace with God affect the home? If we want to have happy homes, we should first become Christians—and behave as Christians! Then peace with others will follow. In 1 John 1:7 we read, "But if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." This verse, which speaks to Christians, contains a requirement and two results. The requirement is walking in the light, or doing our best to do the will of God. The first result is forgiveness; the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sins. The other result is fellowship with one another. Our greatest need is to be properly related to God. When we are—that is, when we are cleansed from our sins—we will also be properly related to man. We will have fellowship with one another in our families as well as in our other relationships.

PEACE WITHIN A MAN

God also provides peace within each person. We might say that *God gives peace between a man and himself*. We all fight a kind of civil war within; one part of us wants one thing; another part wants something else. God is able to give us peace from this civil war, to resolve the inner conflicts that threaten to tear us apart.

We have the promise of peace within. Jesus promised to give His disciples peace. He said, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful" (John 14:27; see also 16:33). Paul wrote,

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 comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6, 7).

Peace with God is the first requisite for a happy home; peace within is the second. Frequently, the problem in a home that is torn by strife is not a relationship problem but a personal problem. One or more of the family members may be torn by inner conflicts, by feelings of inferiority or guilt or inadequacy, by self-doubt or self-hatred, by disappointments and repeated failures. They take out their frustrations on everyone else in the family, in much the same way that a person might get mad at his employer and then vent his anger by kicking his dog.

How can the "peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (KJV) help resolve such personal problems? The peace within that Christians know does not eliminate all conflicts or guarantee that we will never be upset or sorrowful. However, it does provide an anchor which enables us to weather the storms of life without capsizing. This peace helps us to bear the many frustrations we face in life without making others suffer because of our problems.

How can the "peace of God" help us resolve our inner conflicts? *God has an answer to every personal problem!* Here are a few examples.

Guilt. Why do we sometimes feel agitated, frustrated, upset? Often it is because of *guilt*. *God has an answer for the problem of guilt: forgiveness!* If we turn to the Lord as He directs, He will forgive us. Then we need no longer bear the burden of guilt.

Feeling unloved. For some, a problem is *feeling unloved*. *God has the answer for the problem of feeling unloved—namely, He loves us (John 3:16)!* He loves us more than we can imagine. Whether or not anyone else loves us, God does!

Inferiority. Another common problem is the *feeling of inferiority or worthlessness*. *God has an answer for an inferiority complex.* Actually, He has two answers. First, He wants us to know that we are not worthless in His eyes; we are valuable enough that He gave His only Son to die for us (Romans 5:8). Second, He tells us that we can do everything we need to do with His help (Philippians 4:13; Ephesians 3:20, 21).

Failure. Some of us are plagued by the problem of *repeated failures*. We have been frustrated in what we have tried to accomplish. Perhaps we have experienced recurring disappointments

in every area of life. *God has an answer for life's disappointments.* He provides a proper perspective—a perspective that shows, from the standpoint of eternity, that most of our disappointments here make little difference. What really makes a difference is being saved and going to heaven. We can have assurance of salvation even if we experience failures in this life.

When we, as Christians, feel miserable about ourselves and are tempted to make life miserable for others, it is not because Christ cannot help us. Rather, it is because we have neglected the resources which Christ provides for us. If we will truly believe what the Bible teaches and internalize those teachings, we will experience peace within—the “peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension.”

The good news, therefore, is that we do not have to be at war with ourselves. We can have peace if we will behave as Christians, turning to the Lord and fixing our affections wholly on Him. He can compensate for our inadequacies, and our conflicts can be resolved. With undivided hearts, we can truly be at peace—not only with God, but also with ourselves. Among the greatest benefactors of our inner peace will be our families.

PEACE BETWEEN MAN AND MAN

Further, God provides peace between man and man. In this way, God gives peace between family members in the home. How does He do it?

Breaking Down Barriers

First, God produces peace between people by breaking down the walls which separate them. The Old Testament prophets predicted that the messianic kingdom would be a kingdom of peace, in which “the wolf will dwell with the lamb” (Isaiah 11:6)—in other words, a place where former enemies would become friends. This prophecy was fulfilled in the New Testament era, when Jesus brought diverse

peoples together into His church. He made peace, for example, between Jew and Gentile. According to Ephesians 2:14, He made “both . . . one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall.” In the church, therefore, people of all kinds can find peace and brotherhood, regardless of their former relationships or status. Likewise, in the home, Christians who were brought up differently can experience peace with one another because they are one in Christ.

Making People Peaceable

Second, God produces peace among people by making individuals peaceable. Nothing is more natural to humankind than to be warlike—to be contentious, always ready to fight. However, when we give our lives to Christ, we lose the desire to make war against others and

choose, rather, to be, as much as possible, at peace with our neighbors. Jesus blessed the “peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9), and Paul wrote, “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men” (Romans 12:18). Figuratively, Jesus says to His disciples as they go

about their everyday lives: “Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword” (Matthew 26:52). Christians are wise people with the wisdom from above, which “is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy” (James 3:17). Consequently, as a rule, Christians get along well with one another and with their neighbors because, by the power of God, they are peaceable people; “the peace of Christ” rules in their hearts (Colossians 3:15).

Similarly, in the home, those who have the Holy Spirit are not pugnacious but peaceable. They are not inclined to fight; they are always working toward solutions. They are fair and honest and reasonable. They are peaceable people. As a result, the home is a place where peace prevails.

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Providing Structure

Third, God brings peace to the home by providing a structure for the home and requiring family members to accept that structure. God gives peace to human societies by requiring submission to authority. He does not endorse revolution, but rather teaches Christians to submit to governmental authorities (Romans 13:1–7; 1 Peter 2:13–17). As God’s people, therefore, by our willing submission to the government,³ we contribute to an orderly, peaceful society.

In the home as well, Christians, by choosing to follow God’s instructions, contribute to a peaceful family. God’s plan for the home calls for the husband to be the head of the wife and for the wife to submit to her husband’s leadership. Paul wrote,

For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything (Ephesians 5:23, 24).

Further, he said that children are to obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1–3).

The husband’s headship, or authority, is not to be exercised arbitrarily or harshly. The Scriptures also require him to love his wife “as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25). When a husband loves his wife to the extent that Christ loved the church, his primary concern is for her good.

Likewise, the parents’ authority over their children is not to be exercised unfairly or harshly. The Bible says that fathers are not to “provoke [their] children to anger” (Ephesians 6:4). Fathers are told, “Do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart” (Colossians 3:21).

Authority in the home is real: The husband is the leader of the home, the wife is to submit to her husband, and children must obey their parents. God-given authority, however, is balanced with responsibility and love. Those who have authority are to exercise their leadership

³Of course, if the government requires citizens to do something that would break God’s law, then Christians must refuse to obey. “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

responsibly and lovingly, thinking only of the good of those whom they lead. When this pattern is followed in the home—when those in authority lead lovingly and responsibly and others follow submissively—peace will reign in the home.

Security is found in having a place and knowing that place. If, in the home, everyone has a place and everyone feels loved, peace will abound. The wife’s role is not the same as her husband’s, but it is just as important. She has a place where she belongs; she is important, and she is loved. Security and peace should come from such an arrangement. Similarly, the children have a place in the home. Their role is not the same as their parents’ role, but they are important. They are loved, they are cared for, and they should find security and peace in that arrangement.

Further, when conflicts arise (as will happen from time to time), there is a structure within which they can be resolved. Suppose the husband and the wife disagree. The husband is the leader of the home. Does he automatically do what he wants? No, because he loves his wife. Does she automatically get her way because he loves her? No, because she also loves him and wants to be submissive. Each member of the family sees himself/herself as the servant of the others. Because of this love, each wants the other to get his or her way. If, in the end, the husband must rule against his wife for the family’s good, he will do so only reluctantly. In that event, she will know that she has been fairly heard and that her will has been considered. Also, there is comfort in knowing that, within this God-ordained system, someone has been placed in charge and has the responsibility to make the final decision.

God produces peace between the people in the home. Not only does He break down barriers between people and make individuals peaceable, but He also provides a structure for the family. If followed, His plan results in peace and security.

CONCLUSION

In a world marred by war and strife, God gives peace: peace with Him, peace within, and peace between people, including the members of a family in the home.

However, God does not give that peace without our cooperation. When we follow His directions, then He gives us peace—not before, and not without our obedience.

That is the key to being saved. God wants to be at peace with us, but He cannot be until we turn to Him and obey His terms.

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