

GALATIANS 5:22

Galatians 5

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Philippians 4

Final Exhortations

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Thanks for Their Gifts

10 I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no

opportunity to show it. ¹¹ I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

James 3

Two Kinds of Wisdom

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵ Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

¹⁷ But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

2 Corinthians 11

²⁷ I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. ²⁸ Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for

all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?

Peace is a very complex thing. it has many facets. One thing is clear: God is a God of peace. He is associated in the Bible with the concept of peace.

The Bible often speaks of “the God of peace,” as we can see in Philippians 4.

The word **Shalom** in the Bible speaks of that unique peace that only God can give to his people. God himself is a source of peace for us.

His very **presence** imparts peace to us. This is why Isaiah 26:3 says:

**3You will keep *him* in perfect peace,
He *whose* mind *is* stayed *on* You**

If we are able to **completely focus on God**, and not so much on our problems or the threats around us, then the scriptures tell us that we can have that perfect peace. The problem is that very often we cannot do that.

And as we have seen, one of the fruit of the spirit is peace. That means that if the spirit of the Lord is in an individual or a place, there should be peace there.

It doesn't mean, of course, that they will always be peace. But the normal state of things should be peace. A Christian that is constantly in turmoil and anxiety needs to check their spiritual state.

The closer we are to the spirit of God, and the more focused we stay on the things of God, most probably the greater the peace that we will experience.

Again, let me clarify that there are periods of such stress and difficulty in our lives that no matter how hard we try or how much we pray, we may have difficulty finding that peace that the Bible writes about.

There are sincere Christians who have experienced such trauma, or such long term anxiety that their whole nervous system has gone out of whack, and sometimes it will take a very long time for them to return to a state of stability.

These are very special cases, although the Bible does have a lot to say about how to recover our peace when we have lost it. But generally speaking, it is safe to say that peace of mind should be the default state of the mature believer.

As I have said, the peace of God is **a very complex thing**. I have preached about love and joy as the first two fruit of the spirit.

Love does not depend on **how we feel**. We have said that it's an objective attitude, more like an action that we exercise or demonstrate by being obedient to the principles of the word of God.

Joy, doesn't depend on positive circumstances. We have demonstrated that it is possible to be joyful even in the midst of suffering and great difficulties.

In that same way, peace does not depend on circumstances. We can experience the peace of God even in the midst of trying circumstances.

My **favorite illustration** regarding the peace of God is the image of Jesus, **fast asleep on the boat** with the other disciples, surrounded by a violent storm. All the disciples are in panic, but Jesus is in perfect peace, snoring away because he is centered on the Father, because he knows who he is, and because he knows that God will not allow his son to die an accidental death. So, let me summarize so far.

- 1) Peace is **not the absence of conflict**. It depends on the presence of the Spirit of God within us.
- 2) The peace of God **does not depend on peaceful** circumstances.
- 3) As followers of Jesus, we have **the right to experience peace** as a normative experience. If we are not experiencing that peace, then we should come to the Lord and ask him for it.

We have said that the peace of God is a complex, dynamic thing. Even the apostle Paul, who counsels us to not be anxious about anything, speaks about **his own struggles with worry and anxiety** in 2 Corinthians 11:28.

Even Jesus, facing the prospect of his crucifixion, states, **(Matthew 26)**

37And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. 38Then He said to them, “My soul is **exceedingly sorrowful, even to death**. Stay here and watch with Me.”

Here are several principles that can help us cultivate and maintain our peace:

Having the **right priorities and keeping the right perspective** on what things are important.

There are **needs and there are wants**. We must learn to differentiate between the two.

1) We must learn to be content with simplicity. 1 Timothy 6:6ff

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. **8 But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.** 9 Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

11 But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

As we learn to **put our priorities and to value especially the things of the Spirit** and the development of our spiritual life, we will give less importance to material things and to the concerns of this world, and therefore we will be able to more easily experience the peace of God in the midst of difficult circumstances.

2) Knowing that to those who are in God's will, all things will ultimately work out for good, even those things that at the moment don't seem very positive.

When we are experiencing difficulties, we must **give God time to work out his perfect will in our lives** and through our circumstances.

We must exercise faith as we wait for the complete unfolding of God's mysterious work in our lives.

As we learn these lessons, and having the right perspective, we won't fall into despair or anxiety so easily.

3) Sometimes God will allow difficult situations to come into our lives **in order to prune us**, and to **produce the kind of character** that will later on enable us to live peaceful lives.

Sometimes trials will **disengage from us unnecessary attachments**. They will make us **humbler and more patient**. They will **lead us to seek God more earnestly**. They will show us that **what we thought was absolutely important** was not that important after all.

All of these things will then **make us more mature spiritually**, and will **enable us to live more peaceful and effective lives** for God's kingdom.

Some of the happiest Christians I have known are people who have gone through great suffering.

Having **dealt appropriately** with their suffering, they have learned to be **more content, more grateful and more dependent on God** for their daily needs.

They are **more heavenly minded** and less earthly minded. Their sufferings of **weaned them from too much attachment** to the

world. They have learned what is important and what is not important.

They are therefore more prepared to **enjoy the simple things** in life. They do not allow the world to affect them as much.

As we come to **understand the role of trials and suffering** in the perfecting of the Christian character, we are able to experience the peace of God more easily, and to retain peace even in the middle of the storms of life.

This all has to do with acquiring the right perspective on the suffering that sometimes we experience. Like Joseph and his brothers. Joseph was able to understand why God had allowed him to be sold into slavery, and this gave him peace about his experience.

4) Another thing. I have learned from lots of personal experience that **prayer** is one of the most powerful resources at my disposal in experiencing and retaining the peace of God.

Philippians 4

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, *by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving*, present your requests to God. 7 *And the peace of God*, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Prayer helps us to **focus on God and to take our mind away from the problem.** Prayer **supernaturally imparts upon us** the supernatural peace of God.

And of course, **prayer changes our circumstances.**

It **moves the power of God on our behalf.** God hears our prayers and **responds with miraculous interventions.**

If we ask God, we receive, including the answer to our problems and the provision to our needs.

Prayer is the supernatural instrument the God uses to bring Heaven down to earth. Through prayer we experience impossible answers to impossible problems.

The apostle **James says that we do not receive** because we do not ask. God invites us to draw near to his throne of grace. We need to use that invitation, and bring our needs and concerns to God, who is more than willing to respond favorably to our petitions.

Finally, **just processing our anxiety and our concerns** and verbalizing them through prayer is **a kind of therapy** that produces the peace of God in us.

We should be **more active in praying** and less active and worrying. We should **channel our anxious energies into prayer**, *“and the peace of God that passes all understanding will keep our minds and hearts in Christ Jesus”.*

Finally, **our state of mind will reflect the things that we occupy our mind with.**

For example, I don't recommend that you watch a horror movie before you go to sleep. If you suffer from anxiety, maybe you

shouldn't spend too much time reading the news or dwelling too much on conspiracy theories.

Philippians 4:8ff

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. *And the God of peace will be with you.*

People who eat too many carrots will often begin to acquire in their skin an orange color (carotene). **Our organisms reflect what we consume.** If you eat a lot of garlic both your skin and your breath will smell like garlic!

That same way, **as we fill our minds with beautiful, lovely things**, our minds will begin to reflect **the excellence of those things**.

The music that we hear can influence our state of mind for good or for evil. And the movies we see and the books we read will affect the state of our spirit.

If we spend our time consuming sensual materials, we will have a difficult time keeping a pure heart.

If we read intellectual literature that fills our minds with resentment, victimhood, anger and the need for retribution, we

will have **a harder time forgiving others and experiencing the peace of God.**

If we allow our intellect to be influenced more by secular writers and people who see the world through a political lens, **or a lens of conflict, we will probably not acquire the kind of peaceful attitude** that leads to reconciliation and forgiveness.

We need to **watch what we read, what we meditate upon**, the newspapers that we read and the news sources that we consult.

We should spend more time thinking about the beautiful things of God and his Word.

It doesn't mean that we hide ourselves of the evils of the world. It just means that our priority will be on filling our minds with the beautiful things of the Spirit.

This will allow us to retain the peace of Christ and **to be agents of peace in the world.**

How much time do you spend **reading God's Word**, worshiping him, reciting biblical verses from memory, or having good conversations with godly believers? How much godly content do you consume when you navigate the **Internet**?

How much time do you spend in **idle conversation, or criticizing others, concentrating on the defects of others**, instead of encouraging, or blessing or praising others?

Your state of mind will reflect the activities of your mind. **Train yourself to orient your energies** toward beautiful, lovely things, and the peace of God, and the beauty of his kingdom, will guard your mind and your feelings in Jesus Christ.

So, **to summarize**: in order to acquire and reflect the peace of God:

- 1) Keep your **mind focused on God** and the things of God.
- 2) Know that the peace of God **does not depend on positive circumstances**.
- 3) Know that **God wants you to experience peace**. It is your rightful inheritance as a child of God. Therefore seek it and ask for it, trusting that God will enable you to have it.
- 4) Keep the **right priorities** and the right perspective on what is important and what is not.
- 5) Be content with **simplicity**. Don't get attached to luxuries or material things.
- 6) Give **priority to the things of the Spirit** instead of the things of this world.
- 7) Know that **God can work through all of your circumstances**, even the most difficult ones. Sometimes he uses suffering to prune you, and that to prepare you for happiness in the future.
- 8) Cultivate a life of **prayer**. See prayer as a foundation for a peaceful outlook.
- 9) Let your mind **dwell on the beautiful things of the Spirit**, on the values of the kingdom of God. Gradually eliminate anything that would corrupt your mind and lead you into negative thoughts that will take away your peace.

