

How Can We Have Inner Peace?

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As was mentioned in the sermonette, this country has fought a few wars, as has the world, and it's obvious that the world is not a place of peace. I did a little research, and The New York Times had an article, not long ago, in which they raised the question: In the past 3,400 years of human history (roughly since the time of the Exodus), how many years have human beings been entirely at peace? Just think about that for a minute. In 3,400 years, how many years without war? This is obviously going back through history; the editors documented 268 years out of 3,400 years where there was not some kind of major conflict. You do the math—that's 8 percent of recorded history, since that time. As was pointed out in the sermonette, we have fought our share of wars in the United States. The U.S. has existed for 243 years. How many years have we been entirely at peace? Realize that in 243 years, only nineteen years have we existed without a war—only 7 percent of our time. Can you imagine?

Ambrose Bierce (1842-1914), the American writer and journalist, had a unique definition of peace, a little sarcastic but true: "Peace; noun; in international affairs, a period of cheating between two periods of fighting." ((laughs)) Exactly true. A period of cheating between two periods of fighting. An example would be after the end of World War I and the Versailles Treaty; the Nazis came to power in the early 1930s and secretly began to rearm during that decade. It was prohibited by the treaty, but they did so anyway. Then in September of 1938, the prime minister of Britain, Neville Chamberlain, in trying to avoid war—eighty-one years ago, by the way—went to Hitler in Munich seeking peace. Seeing Germany rearm itself, Winston Churchill said, it is a fool's errand, don't even bother—but he did. As prime minister, he went to Hitler in Munich, Hitler made demands, and in the name of peace, Neville Chamberlain agreed to each and every one of them. He came back to Britain—you've probably seen old newsreels of this—landed in the rain in this two-engine plane, from Munich back to London, and waved a sheet of paper. He declared that it was "Peace in our time." Less than a year later, Hitler invaded Poland and World War II started, with six more years of worldwide war.

Today we have Iran and North Korea secretly planning to annihilate their enemies by nuclear means. Only God knows where that's going to go. The problem is, once mankind separates themselves from God, there can be no peace; there will be no peace. Let's go to Isaiah 59, a very familiar section of scripture, beginning in verse 1. Once mankind said, I'm going to set up my own rules and regulations, I'm going to obey my own laws, and we don't need You, God, we don't want You, this is what happens. It happened with Adam and Eve, and it's been continuing since that time.

Isaiah 59:1 *Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:*

2) But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. (KJV)

The principle is that sin separates us from God Almighty. Jumping to verse 8,

8) The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace. (KJV)

Paul quotes this and confirms it in Romans 3:17. God says that man does not know the way of peace. God is showing that apart from Him, knowing Him, submitting ourselves to Him, there can be absolutely no peace. Satan is the provocateur, of course, separating man from God, resulting in man not having peace. Then in addition to all of that—we're talking about external wars, fights between nations or clans—there is little peace within people. Look at the situation we have today; look at the mass shootings. There have been more mass shootings this year than there have been days of this year. You look into the background of those who perpetrate these mass shootings—they are filled with anger, they are filled with rage, they are filled with hate, and they want to go out and just kill as many people as they can because they know nothing of God, nothing of love, but rather are filled with the attitude of Satan. You have to believe that demons are right there in the minds of people who do such things. Let's go to Ezekiel 7:1 and see a condemnation of Ancient Israel, but also a condemnation for us today.

Ezekiel 7:1 *Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
2) Also, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD [the Lord Yehovah] unto the land of Israel; an end, the end is come upon the four corners of the land. [Skip to verse 23.]
23) Make a chain: for the land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence. (KJV)*

If that is not true this day in the United States, I don't know what is. There was a situation in Chicago—they've had several hundred killings already this year—and a little girl, trick or treating, seven years old, got shot in the neck and was killed by getting in the crossfire between some gang members. The city is full of violence, the land is full of bloody crimes. Verse 24.

*24) Wherefore I will bring the worst of the heathen, and they shall possess their houses: I will also make the pomp of the strong to cease [the arrogance of the strong to cease]; and their holy places shall be defiled.
25) Destruction cometh; [notice the last part of the verse] and they shall seek peace, and there shall be none. (KJV)*

It's in every city, every town, country, metropolis—it does not make any difference. There is no peace because man doesn't know the way to peace.

Now looking inwardly at the churches of God, the fact is the church hasn't had much peace either. Shortly after the death of the apostles, gnosticism threatened the church, false teaching threatened it, and people were leaving. The church endured persecution from the Roman Empire and then later from the Catholic Church—people burned alive, chased out of their homes, fleeing for their lives, and of course Satan was behind it all to destroy the core of God's church. Even in the modern-day church of God, there has not been much peace, with turmoil and splitting apart and all of that; we're all very familiar with it, so we don't need to itemize it. The fact is, when the Pacific Church of God was formed over ten years ago, one of the things that we wanted to do was reflected in the choice of the name "Pacific". It reflected a goal, and for us the name is not about geographical nomenclature at all; the definition of pacific means peaceful in character or intent. The elders and brethren who were here at the start of Pacific were tired of conflicts, politics, and in-fighting, and just wanted to be in a place where one could worship God in peace. What a concept—worship God in peace.

We continue to this very day to have that goal, where God's people can meet in peace, in safety, where we have the truth being taught and where the ministry sets an example to serve, rather than to be served, setting a Christ-like example for the brethren. That's the goal. Over the past several years, as everyone knows, God began to open minds. It started very small with one person and began to grow and grow, and God was opening our minds to the truth about Him and His Son; that's always been there in scripture but as we've all said, you just read right over it and didn't pick it up. The surprising thing is, you would think people would be overjoyed, would be happy about what God was doing. For many—certainly for me—it was really like a second calling. Remember in your first calling, you got so excited and you tried to convert everybody? Parents, brothers and sisters, friends at work, because you were so excited? We were excited over a new understanding. We naively thought—I thought—my parents would grasp it, I thought other people would grasp it, and of course we know in hindsight that that just did not happen. We naively thought that others would be as overjoyed as we were and would accept this new revelation, like we had back when we were first called, with eagerness, and it just did not happen. In this second calling, at least for me it was a second calling, I naively thought that people would be likewise overjoyed, and many were, but many were not.

I was totally unprepared for the opposition and I think all of you were as well. So when you speak to the subject of the new understanding of God and Christ, you would hope that you could discuss scripture calmly together and either agree or disagree, or have a discourse back and forth, but that did not happen in many cases. What happened was angry, hateful, personal attacks. When you couldn't talk about scripture, then it turned ugly and personal, and we have—all of us, I think—experienced that. Why? One simple reason: The new revelation challenged church tradition and there were people who just couldn't handle that and didn't want to deal with it. It reminds me of what Paul said; let's go back to Acts 24. When you think about it, the gospel first went to the Jews, and when you consider what the apostles were preaching to the Jews, think about how the average Jew would receive this. Paul is speaking to the Roman governor, Felix. He is defending what he had done. He says to Felix, and to all of us,

Acts 24:14 *But this I confess unto thee [Felix], that after the way which they [meaning the Jews] call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: (KJV)*

He says, I'm preaching to the Jews out of the Old Testament, which is what they had, but I'm preaching the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the fact that He was the Messiah. How did the Jews react to that? He was before Felix, then he was being judged for that. In fact, the Jews reacted in such a way that Paul said of the Jews (we won't turn there, in 2 Corinthians 11), five times I received thirty-nine lashes, three times beaten with rods, and once I was stoned. That was the Jews' reaction to what He was preaching and teaching. So we shouldn't be surprised. In times past, certainly during the Middle Ages and the opposition from what became the Catholic Church, if people preached anything contradictory to church tradition, many were burned alive. Others had their homes confiscated, they were driven out, and many of them were killed because their beliefs contradicted what was in God's word.

Today, the punishment is of a different type but it is no different in severity. Slander and character assassination are a different kind of murder. When you slander somebody or demean or attack their character—what's in their heart—that's like murdering somebody's reputation or image with other people. A different kind of murder, not burning at the stake, but a murder nonetheless. Mental, emotional, and spiritual pressures are brought to bear today, different in type from 500 or 1,000 years ago, but still very severe. The result is, for many of us, we've lost friends we've known for decades, lost friends whose children I baptized, whose parents I buried, known for twenty, thirty years, and they won't even talk to us now. When it first started, it resulted in many sleepless nights; I think many of us have been through that. It results in loss of friends and knots in the stomach. That's what happened with me and my wife when this first started, several years ago. Daniel 7 comes to mind—we won't turn there—where it talks about the wearing out of the saints. All of us have been through turmoil, have been through upset, within the church of God. What has been in the world, has been in the church—no difference, sadly. Anything but peace.

So the big question we're going to ask today is, how can we have internal peace when we live in a world that has no peace? How can we have internal peace when we face opposition within the greater church of God? How can we have peace deep down inside of us? That is a critical question. If we can't have peace, lack of peace will drive people crazy over time. We, of all people, having God's Spirit, knowing God and His Son, should have peace. I'm not talking about the kind of peace you have when you recline in a soft chair and take a deep breath—that's just a kind of physical relaxation. I'm talking about the peace inside of us, between the ears, inside our very being. To have inner peace, when everything around us is turmoil, is a gift from God, and something we need to really work on. So the title of the sermon is:

How Can We Have Inner Peace?

As usual, I'm going to give you a few points; there are five of them today. The first one:

1. Peace comes from God the Father and His Son.

That is the source of peace and if we don't realize that we miss the whole foundational understanding. 1 Corinthians 14:33; we know that one by heart. It tells us God is not the author of confusion. The Greek word for *confusion* means "tumult". God is not the author of tumult. But notice what God is the author of, in the last part of the verse.

1 Corinthians 14:33 ... *but [God is the author] of peace, as in all churches of the saints.* (KJV)

You see the true ecclesia—I'm not talking about corporations at all—the ecclesia, the true ecclesia, if they are close to God and Christ, will have peace inside themselves because God is the source of peace. Let's go to Luke 1:78. Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, is speaking here. Notice what he says about the Messiah who is going to be born.

Luke 1:78 *Through the tender mercy of our God [talking about God the Father]; whereby the dayspring [in the King James, "dayspring" means the rising of light, referring to Jesus Christ] from on high hath visited us, 79) To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, [notice this] to guide our feet into the way of peace.* (KJV)

Christ did that through His personal example, in how He lived His life. Now let's go to John 14:27; we read this on the night of Passover. Look at what Christ said, this dayspring, this source of light, to His disciples the night He was betrayed.

John 14:27 *Peace I leave with you, [what is the source of the peace?] my peace I give unto you [the peace that He had when He walked the earth]: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.* (KJV)

Christ could have inner peace, despite the continual opposition, the abuse, the slander, He also knew, after He began preaching, a little over three years down the road, that He was going to face the most brutal of deaths, the most brutal of tortures possible. Yet at the same time, during all of that, in spite of that knowledge, He was able to have internal peace. The point is, we can have the same peace that Christ had, because it's a gift from His Father and it's a gift from Him. It's a gift. That leads us to the next point.

2. Because peace comes from God, we have to continually ask for it.

It is a gift. Shame on us if we don't ask for peace, to have the kind of peace Christ had, to overflow us, to come into us and remove the anxiety, remove any fear, remove any upset, especially when we're going through trials, no matter what kind of trials. Let's go to Jeremiah 29 and we're going to read just one verse, verse 7. Jeremiah here is

speaking to those who were carried away captive to Babylon. He's asking them to pray for certain things. He says, I want you to seek something, to ask for something.

Jeremiah 29:7 *And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives [God caused them, because of their sins, to be carried away and Jeremiah says to seek the peace of the city], and pray unto [Yehovah] the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace. (KJV)*

So what he's saying is that the Jews could have peace, even in captivity, if they prayed for the leaders—for their captives—so they could have favor in their captivity. Similarly, we are commanded to pray for government leaders in our day and time, for peace, for quietness, for protection. Let's go to 1 Timothy 2:1. Paul is instructing Timothy to instruct the brethren that peace doesn't just come by accident. Certainly Satan will do everything in his power to keep that from happening, therefore we have to ask for it, we have to pray about it. What I'm talking about here in Jeremiah and in 1 Timothy 2 is an external peace—it's outside of us.

1 Timothy 2:1 *I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;
2) For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.
3) For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; (KJV)*

Paul is saying, we have to do our part. If we want peace in our communities, peace in our neighborhoods, we must ask God for it. That's peace outside of us, but what about inside? What is the great remover of peace? It's fear. If somebody is afraid, it's very difficult to have peace. Fear takes away peace, but fear, as we all know, doesn't come from God—we know who it comes from. Let's go to 2 Timothy 1:7. We know the scripture by heart but since we're right here, let's read it.

2 Timothy 1:7 *For God hath not given us the spirit of fear ...*

That is a plain, understandable, absolute statement. God has not given us the spirit of fear,

7 continued) but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. (KJV)

The Greek means "self-control". The ability to fight our carnal nature, the ability to fight what goes on in between our two ears, to bring it under control, to bring it into obedience of God's law. That comes, obviously, through the power of the Holy Spirit. We can have the power to conquer fear by asking for more of God's Spirit, asking for the peace that Jesus Christ experienced when He was on this earth, asking for the peace of God to come over us and wash out, banish, and flush out fear. Thereby, we can have peace. If we ask for peace—and we have to ask—God will give us an inner calmness, an inner quietness, even though our world may be falling apart outside of us. I've experienced it so many times in the last few years where there's turmoil, there's

unknown, there's uncertainty, and you just say, God, I need you to rescue me one more time, please. Rescue us right now; rescue the church, rescue the body. We need this or we need that, to do Your will, and every time God does it. We can have faith and confidence that God will do that and it fosters a sense of peace coming over us. God is going to take care of us. We can't see a way right now but God will do it.

That leads now to the third point.

3. To have inner peace our mind has to be fixed on God.

This is a key to having peace. To have inner peace, our mind must be fixed on God. Let's go to Isaiah 26; we'll read verses 3 and 4. If we want to have peace, the focus has to be on God our Father, the Almighty, the Most High God, the one who has all power. I'm going to read this out of the New Living Translation.

Isaiah 26:3 *You [referring to Yehovah—God Almighty] will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!* (NLT)

That's a promise—perfect peace if our thoughts are fixed on God and we trust Him. Verse 4 I'll read out of the King James.

4) Trust ye in the LORD [Yehovah] for ever: for in the LORD [Yehovah] is everlasting strength: (KJV)

When our mind is fixed on God, who has all power in the universe, we can have inner peace in the midst of turmoil because God is looking after us. He is our Rock, He is the one who comes to rescue us.

With that in mind, let's see an example. Let's go to Daniel 3; I'll read this out of the New King James—it just flows a little better than the King James. This is the well-known story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. I can remember our son, as a little child, taking the Bible storybook we had at that time, and reading these accounts—you can read right over them, but the fact is we often don't think what it must have been like for these three young men—boys, really—because Nebuchadnezzar had all power. He could kill them on a whim. He could just kill to satisfy an urge that he had. He had absolute power.

Daniel 3:16 *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, [this is after he wanted them to bow down to an image that pictured him; can you imagine these boys saying this?] "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.* (NKJV)

We don't even have to talk to you, we just don't even need to do that.

17) If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. (NKJV)

These boys are telling him, God is more powerful than you are—like it or not, believe it or not, God is more powerful.

18) *But if not* [meaning, if God doesn't choose to rescue us right now], *let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.*" (NKJV)

We know what happened. Let's go to verse 28, see Nebuchadnezzar's astonishment, and then his realization after they were saved.

28) *Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him ...* (NKJV)

That is the key. Absolute trust in God. They could have peace in this dire situation, they could talk boldly to this king, who had absolute, human power, and not be wringing their hands, wetting their pants, or be worried in any way.

28 continued) *... and they have frustrated the king's word* [my word, he is saying], *and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God!* (NKJV)

This is a perfect example of three young men having perfect peace—inner peace—in very threatening circumstances. But the point is that having inner peace is a result of total trust in God. God is going to take care of us one way or another. If we die, He'll resurrect us. If He wants us to live, we'll live and He will take care of us. We can have total trust that God is going to do nothing for our harm. He will never allow anything or do anything that hurts us long term. We may have to die—yes. We may have to suffer when we die—yes. But that's nothing compared to the resurrection and eternal life in His presence forever—it's nothing in comparison to that. God will never do anything for our harm. With that in mind, let's go to a New Testament verse, 1 Corinthians 10:13. A very familiar scripture but let's apply it to the subject at hand, of having inner peace.

1 Corinthians 10:13 *There hath no temptation* [no trial] *taken you but such as is common to man:* [whatever we face, somebody has faced it before] *but God is faithful* [faithful to us], *who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.* (KJV)

God will get us through, that is where the trust comes in—He will provide a way. There have been times in the last three years or so that we didn't know the way forward, and you just have to say, God, I don't know what the next step is, just show it to me and we'll take that step, whatever You want. Or, this seems insurmountable, but anything is possible with You—we need to You to come rescue us. Time after time, it happens and as a result of that, I learned that in the middle of these difficulties, you can just relax.

Let God do it; He's going to do it, not us, not human beings. He will do it, and, as the saying in West Texas goes, hide and watch. Let God do it. Watch Him work, then once He shows us the path, we follow along behind Him because He or His Son is leading the way. We can have inner peace in the midst of trial.

I've mentioned this once a few years ago, I'll mention it again, and that is of a deaconess. When I first came in the church there was a family called Tomich; Nick was the dad and Betty was the mom, and they had three children. She was a deaconess and I was right on the Canadian border in northern Michigan, in Sault Ste. Marie; I was an officer in the air force, and once called, every Sabbath I would jump in my car on Friday as soon as I could get off base, and head due south, 240 miles to Midland, Michigan, and as often as not, the Tomich's would put me up. I would roll into their place, six, seven, eight, nine, sometimes ten o'clock at night, Friday night. We would have dinner and go to services the next morning, come back to their house, go to Spokesman's Club the next morning, on Sunday morning, and then I would head home.

I got to know them very well and I never saw Betty say a bad word about anybody, and she always had a positive attitude—she loved God with all her heart. After I got out of the service and moved, I heard Betty had brain cancer. I happened to be traveling in Michigan where they still lived, and my brother and I, who was living in Michigan at the time, went to visit her. When I walked in the room, I was totally unprepared (in the house) for what I saw and smelled. The cancer had covered the whole side of her head, down to her forehead and had enclosed her eye, and it just looked like a grey cauliflower; you could smell it when you walked in the door. She was in the bed and nothing had changed—she had the same smile, the same demeanor that she had always had. My brother and I walked in the door and asked, how are you? She deflected the question and she said, how are you? Tell me what you've been doing.

All of a sudden she was turning the tables and getting us talking about what was going on in our lives; we tried to bring it back to Betty and she would have none of that. It was back to us, and back and forth we went. Obviously she was in pain, obviously she was near the end of her life, unless a supernatural miracle came from God. We were there a couple of hours and then she started to sag a little bit so we said our goodbyes, knowing that if God didn't intervene this was the last time we would see her. She was so kind and so nice for that year, back and forth, while I was trying to get out of the air force. Yes, she died—God took her. But during that whole process, her mind was on God. She was fixed on God, she had no doubt she would be resurrected, and she had no doubt that God would get her through this no matter what the outcome. What an example—that has been imprinted on my mind for over fifty years.

Let's go to Romans 8:6. Here we are going to see another key to peace. We have to be fixed on God, our mind has to be fixed on God, our focus has to be fixed on God.

Romans 8:6 *For to be carnally minded is death;*

Meaning, if our mind is of the flesh, and our focus is on fleshly things, the end of that is death—separation from God.

6 continued) ... *but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.* (KJV)

Peace in this life, peace in the next life. You see, the key is to have the mind of Christ. We're told that in Philippians. Have the mind of Christ, and where was Christ's mind fixed? Terry gave his first sermon here, in Kennewick, on John 8; I still remember that—he went through all of John, showing that Christ's mind was fixed on His Father. Jesus wasn't self-centered, He wasn't Christ-centered, He was fixed on God. Betty's mind was fixed on God, and you can have life and you can have peace, if your mind is fixed on God.

The fourth point. To have peace:

4. We must love and be obedient to God's law.

We must love God's law, we must be obedient to God's law, that is another key to peace. Let's go to Psalm 119 and let's read verse 165. This is a key to peace and I sometimes think we don't make that connection as strongly as we should.

Psalm 119:165 *Great peace* [not a little bit of peace, not some peace] *have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.* (KJV)

How does loving God's law lead to great peace? How does that happen, what's the connection? The connection is found in verse 172.

172) *My tongue shall speak of thy word* [God's word, God's commandments; why?]: *for all thy commandments* [meaning God's law] *are righteousness.* (KJV)

We see here that God's law is the definition of righteousness and righteous behavior. So with that in mind let's jump to Isaiah 32:17. We've been told that if we love God's law we can have great peace, and God's law is righteousness. Notice what Isaiah says in chapter 32 and verse 17. He tells us the end result of righteousness.

Isaiah 32:17 *And the work of righteousness ...*

What is righteousness? We just read it's commandment keeping, keeping the law.

17 repeated) *And the work of righteousness* [or the work of the law] *shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness* [of commandment keeping, is what?] *quietness and assurance for ever.* (KJV)

Peaceful quietness, absolute assurance and trust. Righteousness, which is commandment keeping, results in assurance, quietness and peace. If we love God's law and keeping God's law is righteousness, the fruit of that—the result of that—is being

at peace; quietness. Why? Because we're pleasing God, we're making God happy with us. We're on His side rather than being at cross purposes with God, fighting against God. Christ told Paul, you're kicking against the pricks—you're going against Me. You don't know it, but you're going against Me. A good analogy would be to remove your sock and shoe and start kicking a rose bush. That's painful and that's what Paul was doing by opposing God. Once we get in harmony with God's law, love God's law, keep God's law, we have peace and assurance, not blood and pain.

We read earlier in Isaiah 59:1 that sin separates. That's a principle that we would do well to keep in mind. When sin separates us from God, our sins cause a division between us and God. God doesn't move, we move. We move away from God when we sin. Sin separates us from God and once we move away from God, there can be no peace. We will not have peace. What we will have is guilt, shame, turmoil, and as a result, double-mindedness. We're sinning, which is part of the world, yet we say we're Christians and we know we shouldn't sin, yet we want to be close to God and that's about as double-minded as you can get. We won't turn there but the Apostle James, in chapter 1, says a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. How can you be fixed, how can you be settled, how can you have peace if you are living two different lives? You can't do it, it doesn't work. People can commit suicide over that, trying to live two lives and make it work.

Let's go to Psalm 37:37—I'll read this out of the New King James. This is talking about an individual who is blameless, meaning that individual keeps God's commandments, makes God happy—pleases God.

Psalm 37:37 *Mark the blameless man* [the word "man" is in italics—man or woman, it makes no difference], *and observe the upright* [take note of the upright]; *For the future of that man is peace.* (NKJV)

The future is peace; in this life and in the next life. If we are in harmony with God, if we keep His commandments, which are righteousness—righteousness leads to peace—the fruit of righteousness is peace. Notice Psalm 29:11. God makes a promise to give us peace. We have a part to play, but God makes a promise. Gordon was talking in the sermonette about these soldiers giving God the credit because they knew where their source of strength was—maybe they read this verse.

Psalm 29:11 *The LORD* [Yehovah] *will give strength unto his people; the LORD* [Yehovah] *will bless his people with peace.* (KJV)

So what's our part? We have to prove to God, by our behavior, by our thoughts, that we are His people. God has to know that we are His people. If we are His people, we will keep His commandments, we will love His law, and the fruit of righteousness is peace—they all fit together. Obeying God, coming close to God, is another key to having peace in our life.

The last point. This is the one, as they say, where the rubber meets the road—this is where it counts.

5. If we want to have peace, we must practice peace.

I think we all know that if you are going to get good at something, you have to practice. If you want to be a good seamstress, you have to practice, if you want to be a good athlete, you have to practice; we just do. If you are flying an airplane, it's a good idea to practice emergency procedures before you have an actual emergency—you have to practice. I can remember my initial flight training, in a little, two-seat, Cessna 152. It had a 100-horse-power motor, and my instructor was a big old cowboy who wore boots and a hat. He was an instinctive pilot, so after a few hours of instruction, he said, "Next time we're going to go up and practice emergency procedures, and I want you to read the manual." So I took out the Cessna manual and they had a section that addresses what you do if you have instrument failure—if all the dashboard lights go away, how do you solve the problem? What do you do if you run out of fuel? If your engine quits, what do you do?

So I dutifully went through all of that and memorized it,. We got in the plane, took off—on a beautiful day—flying over Yakima, and he reminded me that we were going to do emergency procedures, so we leveled off at about 3,000 feet above ground, and he says, "You've got traffic off to your left, you'd better watch out." So I swivel in the seat—I'm in the left seat, he's in the right seat—I look around and I don't see anything. I look up, look down, look way behind, then I turn around and face straight forward, and my propeller isn't moving an inch, and we're 3,000 feet above the ground. The FAA says—and has told instructor pilots—when you do emergency procedures, you never get into the actual emergency, you simulate it, because they've had students, in a real emergency, panic and hold onto the yoke, and the instructor wasn't able to break their hold, and they went right into the ground. So the FAA advisory is to not do that.

Well, my cowboy of a flight instructor had other ideas. ((laughs)) So I'm sitting here and I turn around, and the propellor is quiet, and I thought, this isn't supposed to happen. So for a second or two, you process the fact that your propeller isn't turning, therefore your engine has no power, therefore you are coming down, like it or not. So for a second or two, the mind processes that. There's no sound, the motor is not running, and all you hear is just this general wisp of air going past the canopy—total silence. After about two seconds, he leans over very calmly and says, "Fly the airplane."

That kind of broke my stupor, of wondering what was going on, and I said, okay. So, wings level, look at the airspeed, dropping fast, better get the nose down, pick up some speed so we don't fall out of the sky, and then you start looking for a place to set this crate down. I'm looking all around trying to find something, and we're out over the fields and farms, and I saw a green pasture up ahead—grass. So I took a heading for that, nose down, picking up speed, wings level. That took about ten seconds, so now you have to go through your mental checklist. Look at the RPM, of course it's zero, look at the fuel gauge, it's full, look at the voltmeter, it's zero, and then the next thing is the

master switch for the electrical system, and that old cowboy had flipped that off when I had turned around—he had stopped the engine dead in its tracks.

So I feel the switch and it's in the off position, and I look at him and he's got this grin, so I flipped it back on, nothing happened, so I bumped the starter, started the propeller, the engine fired, I gave it a little fuel and off we went. It was a great lesson of *fly the airplane*. What he meant by that is, if you have one problem and you panic, then you can have two or three, so keep it to one—fly the airplane until you can figure out what's going wrong. Great advice. So similarly we say, if we want to have peace, we have to practice peace. So we practiced emergency procedures to the point that, if something happened, it was no big deal—you didn't get in a panic about it, you just followed procedure and got it fixed, and hoped you didn't have a real one. A couple of years later, I had a real one. No big problem—engine out, what are you going to do?—boom, boom, boom—here's the problem, and you solve the problem and keep flying. The same thing: If we practice peace, we can have peace. If we don't practice peace, we're not going to have peace—we can't.

Let's go to 1 Peter 3:11; here's an admonition that it takes work, it takes effort to have peace. Peace doesn't just happen, we have a part to play, we have to practice it. Peter is quoting Psalm 34:14; I'll read this out of the New King James.

1 Peter 3:11 *Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace [meaning go after peace] and pursue it [chase it]. (NKJV)*

The New Living Translation says of this last phrase: Work hard at living in peace with others. Work hard at it. Let's go to James 3:17, close by. James is talking about the wisdom from above or the wisdom that comes from God. We want to have that wisdom.

James 3:17 *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure [it's not polluted], then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. (KJV)*

That's the way the ministry should behave and all of us should behave. Verse 18, I'll read out of the Williams Translation.

18) *The harvest uprightness yields is grown from the seed of peace. (WT)*

The harvest uprightness yields—uprightness is keeping God's commandments, trusting in God. The harvest that uprightness yields is grown from the seed of peace. So we see again a connection between righteousness, commandment keeping, and peace.

It's hard to be a Christian, it's hard to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, if we are not at peace internally. If we are in turmoil internally, how can we walk in Christ's footsteps? Christ was at peace even under the direst of circumstances. Ronald Reagan said something I thought was profound—he was the 40th President of the United States, he died in 2004, and he said something that has always stuck with me,

about peace. He said: *Peace is not the absence of conflict.* Think about that. *It is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means.* I'll read it again. *Peace is not the absence of conflict, it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means.* Practicing peace—that's why Christ said, at the sermon on the mount, *blessed are the peacemakers*, because peacemakers practice peace. They learn to handle conflict in a peaceful way.

When we have a conflict—usually it occurs between individuals in personal relationships—we need to remain calm. We need to remain at peace internally. That's reflected in our tone of voice, it's reflected in our body language, it's reflected in our facial expressions. If we can be at peace internally and remain calm, if there is a conflict, then we can focus on the conflict. It's like me being off in that airplane; if I'm in a panic and frozen, I can't focus on solving the problem. If you're at peace inside and you're free to focus, then you can do in the airplane what you need to do to get the motor started and get going. The same thing here—if we face personal conflict, we have to remain calm, internally at peace, then focus on what is the problem. We're all converted, we're all heading in the same direction; let's figure out what the problem is and as Ronald Reagan said, by peaceful means, let's solve the conflict. One of the big keys to that is Philippians 2:3. This is the key to have peace in a family, peace in a marriage, peace in the church.

Philippians 2:3 *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.* (NKJV)

When we esteem others better than ourselves, we can solve conflicts by peaceful means. If we realize, hey, this other person's point of view is just as valid as mine—I don't have a lock on the truth. No human being has a lock on all the truth. The only human being who ever walked the face of this earth who had a lock on the truth was Jesus Christ. All the rest of us are off, to one degree or another. If we esteem our brother or sister better than ourselves, we will listen to what they have to say in a nonjudgmental way, consider what they have to say, and put as much weight on that as we put on what we believe. Then we can come to a resolution peacefully. It may be that we agree to disagree but we don't come to blows over it. We don't assassinate somebody's character, we don't gossip about somebody. Solve the conflict in a peaceful way. Fly the airplane. Be calm, figure out what the problem is, and solve it together.

Peace is a fruit of God's Holy Spirit, we know that—Galatians 5:22—the fruit of the Spirit is love and joy and peace. You know what the next one is? Long-suffering; long-suffering means, literally, to put up with. In any successful relationship, if somebody is having a bad day, you put up with it. You don't come to blows over it—how dare you do this or how dare you say that. You say, you know, Joe here is having a bad day. I've had my bad days so let's cut Joe some slack and let's not come to blows over this thing. To be at peace we must forebear. The Greek for long-suffering means to forebear or have patience. Forbearance just means self-control, patient self-control, restraint, tolerance, and realizing none of us is perfect. We have our good days and we have our bad days.

The point is we have to let the peace that comes from God rule us, dominate us. What Satan wants to do is to force peace out of our lives—just force it out. He wants to do that so that then we are left with nothing but turmoil, upset and confusion, knots in our stomach, sleepless nights, and all of that. He wants to force out God's peace. He does that sometimes through personal relationships, provoking somebody else, to get our tail in a knot and all wound up about something. He stirs suspicions, resentments and bitterness. Pacific lost two elders and a deacon over this whole issue but we've now got nine elders and four deacons. God provides—don't worry about it, Rick—He'll take care of it. Satan can stir up suspicions and bitterness and resentment. Let's go to Colossians 3:12, out of the New King James. Here is a principle. Sometimes we just have to get out of God's way. We think we're doing right or we feel like this is God's will, so what we wind up doing is being a stumbling block to what God is doing.

Colossians 3:12 *Therefore, as the elect of God [which we are], holy and beloved, put on tender mercies [what a concept, people being kind to each other—wish our congress and president would do that], kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;*

13) bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

14) But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

Verse 15 is the point I would like to make.

15) And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. (NKJV)

So we have to allow God's peace, which comes from the Father, which the Son had when He walked the earth, to rule us, dominate us, motivate us, and that happens through the Holy Spirit in us. So what we're being told is, you have to get out of the way with your carnal ideas, carnal thoughts, carnal emotions, and let God rule us and give us peace, and let Him show us the way. One of the ways is through His word and His commandments, and if we keep them, it is righteousness and righteousness leads to peace. We are called to peace. The carnal mind won't let it happen but God's Holy Spirit will. Every single day, closing out this last point, we have to practice peace. Put it into practice—little things and big things.

Let's conclude now. As we go forward, as with the disciples, Christ told them the world is going to be nothing but trouble. He told them that night. He said, you're going to suffer tribulation and trouble but I'm going to leave you My peace. As we go forward, there's going to be nothing but trouble because of what we believe. When you put God first, you can guarantee Satan will be there to oppose—that's guaranteed. He will do anything he can to get through to anybody who worships God and puts God first. That is just a fact that we have to accept.

Let's go to John 16, back to the time when Christ was spending His last moments with the disciples, the night He was betrayed, and He is telling them, look, friends, you're going to have nothing but trouble going forward.

John 16:33 *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace [through Him]. In the world ye shall have tribulation: (KJV)*

All of the apostles but John died horrible deaths and were persecuted; look what Paul went through when he catalogued all of the persecutions he went through—the beatings, the stoning, the shipwrecks and everything else.

33 continued) ... *but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. (KJV)*

Meaning, if Christ overcame the world, so can we, through God's Spirit in us—through the Father and the Son living in us. We're going to have turmoil and a lack of peace in the world. There will be turmoil and a lack of peace within the greater church of God, but we, as individuals, as the ecclesia, can have inner peace by realizing that peace comes from God and Christ. By asking for peace and by fixing our minds on God, and by obeying His commandments and then putting peace into practice. We can have internal peace through the Son of God and God the Father.

Let's close with one last scripture, Philippians 4:6. This is a promise; something in the days ahead that we would do well to consider and make a part of our everyday thinking and prayers. I'll read this out of the New King James.

Philippians 4:6 *Be anxious for nothing [don't worry about a thing], but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, [we always have something to be thankful for, every day, every minute] let your requests be made known to God;*

If we do that, we have this promise, in verse 7.

7) *and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding [human understanding], will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (NKJV)*

Once we surrender to God, once we put Him first and then make the commitment to follow in His Son's footsteps, then we are guaranteed to have the peace of God flow over us and give us peace and quietness and tranquility. Despite turmoil in the world around us and turmoil within the greater church around us, we as individuals can have the peace of God and the peace of Christ in us.