

PURSUIT OF PEACE

"Seek Peace and Pursue it" - Psalm 34:14

by Dorothy H. Pentecost

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CHAPTER FIVE -

ARTIFICIAL OR REAL?

MY BROTHER IS SO FOND of fresh fruit that he nibbles on it between every meal. When he plans a visit, I always see that there is a variety on hand for him to eat. Recently I put an arrangement of artificial fruit on my dining room table and on the cupboard in the den. The real fruit now stays in a bowl on top of my refrigerator. Last time my brother was here, he came into the kitchen with a piece of artificial fruit in each hand. "Isn't there anything around here but this stuff? I want the real thing." I pointed to the fruit on the refrigerator.

The making of artificial fruit has become such an art now that often it is impossible to tell the difference between the real and the imitation. In fact, at times, the manufactured fruit is more beautiful and perfect than that grown. It looks real, the size and colors are true to character, and until one actually picks it up, it may be believed to be real fruit. Looking at this kind of fruit gives promise of something that isn't there. It looks attractive and tempting, but all of its color and charm is only a covering for nothing. It is nice to look at but not to use.

There is a pseudopeace that is as false as the artificial fruit. It looks attractive and desirable and promises serenity. It promises what it cannot give. There is no satisfaction or joy in this type of peace. Its glamour and appealing appearance is only a cover-up for emptiness inside; It can only fool a person into believing that it is true peace when life is easy and pleasing. It can only bring disillusionment and despair under difficult pressures when peace is most needed. This imitation fails completely because it depends entirely on human effort. Like the soap bubbles the children blow, it bursts when a breath of air hits it.

Trying to produce the fruit of peace in your life is like tying fresh fruit on a tree and expecting it to grow. Even under ideal weather conditions, it can only last for a little while, and then will wither and rot away.

There are many organizations and many churches that have well-planned character-building programs. They teach those who are looking for peace, joy and love, that these are only achieved through our own efforts. The harder they try and struggle, the more they will have of this wonderful character in their lives. They can't understand why just when they begin to feel that they are finding their goals, utter defeat often follows. They can't explain why sometimes in spite of all they do, there is no fruit for their labors. Some others think that what they have through their own activities is all that GOD has promised and that we can hope to have on this earth. That

is the only way in which they can pretend to be satisfied with the results.

It is often hard for some to believe that Christian character is not the result of human effort. We all know people who are not Christian who do many seemingly wonderful things. They give to charity; they assist in religious and civic organizations that help to promote better citizens; and some are even active in church work. There are others whose lives seem so gentle and kindly and who possess outwardly everything that the Word of GOD tells us the Christian can only have through divine power. We also see another group who act as though they have peace and calmness because of their "happy-go-lucky" attitude to life. But this still is not a God-given peace and these things are not lasting or trustworthy.

Most important of all, they are not acceptable in GOD's sight because they are not produced by the HOLY SPIRIT. It hurts our pride to be told that the flesh can't do anything that is pleasing to GOD. It is humiliating to a person to feel that his works are not all that GOD requires.

The Bible shows us very plainly what GOD thinks of the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21. This list is so degrading that I hate to print it here. But this is GOD's estimate of human effort even on the part of the Christian. Read the list for yourself if you have been deluded into believing that you are able to please GOD with what you can offer Him.

The flesh will always produce the things of the flesh. There is no possibility of it doing otherwise.

When I was a little girl, my father had an orchard. It never occurred to us to guess each summer what kind of fruit would grow on those trees. We always knew that the apple tree would have apples; the pear tree would have pears; and the peach tree would have peaches. It was the nature of those trees to produce the same kind of fruit each time.

No amount of work on our part of pruning, spraying and feeding those trees would make them grow another kind of fruit. No amount of struggling on the part of the trees themselves would change their natural production. Just so, GOD's Word says that no amount of working and effort on our part will produce godly fruit in our lives. It may look good to us and we may be able to fool others into believing that this is fruit that is acceptable to GOD, but we can never fool Him. We have the list before us of what GOD says the nature of man will produce and these things will never be acknowledged by Him.

GOD has promised us peace and has told us that it can not come through our achievements.

Then how is this accomplished? CHRIST has given us the answer in John 15:4, 5. **"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."**

There must be a union with CHRIST. This means that fruit which is pleasing to GOD will never come from an unbeliever. We must put our faith in the finished work of CHRIST on the Cross and take Him as our Saviour. This is a free gift to all who will believe and receive Him as their own. Then life will be flowing through us from CHRIST as there is life from the root to the

branches of a natural tree. We must then have communion or fellowship with CHRIST. This character-building program is only done effectively through us by divine power.

The last seven words in this reference are very significant. **"For without me ye can do nothing."** They show the utter impossibility of developing any Christian virtues by our own strength and means. No amount of straining and trying or even praying will give us the power to do what GOD alone can do for us if we let Him work through us. The first important step in having peace is to fully realize that we are incapable of making peace for ourselves.

GOD has met our inadequacies by giving us a special divine Agent to produce the Christian character. A part of that work is to give us the peace we so much desire. Paul gives us this truth in Galatians 5:22, 23. **"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."**

Now we see that peace is the fruit or the work of the HOLY SPIRIT, not of ourselves.

Who is the HOLY SPIRIT? The HOLY SPIRIT is a member of the Godhead. He is not an influence, but a Person. A divine Person. CHRIST told us of His ministry and presence (John 14:16, 17). **"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever: Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye [Christians] know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."** Later, in verse 26 of this same chapter, we are told that this One is the HOLY SPIRIT.

GOD divides all mankind according to their relationship to the HOLY SPIRIT (I Corinthians 2:14-3:3).

They are put into three categories.

The first is called the **"natural man"** because he cannot understand the things of GOD. Spiritual things are just foolishness to him.

This condition is true because he is not saved and does not have the HOLY SPIRIT in his heart. There is no reason for scolding the unsaved for not understanding or liking the Bible; they cannot. Reading the Word means little to them. It is just another book which they can take or leave alone. The teachings of the Word are ridiculous because they are only made real to those who have the HOLY SPIRIT, Author of the Word, to teach them.

They can't understand the true meaning of the words they read no matter how well educated they are.

GOD calls the second group of people **"spiritual."** This is the man who has been saved by the Lord JESUS CHRIST and has the HOLY SPIRIT in his heart, becoming increasingly more dead to self and under the control of the HOLY SPIRIT.

He has given up his own desires and ambitions and yielded himself completely to another. He understands the deep things of GOD as revealed in the Word because the Holy Spirit is the

Author and Teacher. Everything that He does is pleasing to GOD so long as it is empowered and motivated by the HOLY SPIRIT.

I never cease to be amazed to find many Christians who have been in church for years who have never heard or known of the work of the third person of the Godhead in the life of the believer. This is serious, because the truly normal Christian life can only be lived in the power of the Spirit.

This brings us to the third classification of men in GOD's sight. This is the "**carnal man**." This one is saved but either does not know of the work of the Spirit or refuses to walk in the ways that He dictates. This man can live a spiritually starved life, full of struggle, without ever attaining his goals.

He is characterized by the way he lives. Here in this verse (I Corinthians 3:3) we are told that he walks "**as men**," that is, he is acting like the unsaved man.

Envy, strife, divisions, as well as many things mentioned in other verses show that this one is carnal or worldly. It is hard for outsiders to know whether or not he is saved by the way he lives. This condition is true because he is trying by human effort to live a Christian life and accomplish what GOD says is impossible. We have already learned that what is done in the flesh is not according to GOD's will and will not be accepted by Him. This man cannot have godly peace, which is only given by the HOLY SPIRIT.

The HOLY SPIRIT has a wide and varied ministry in our lives as we let Him have His way. Naturally, all of His work cannot be discussed. We are primarily concerned only with what the HOLY SPIRIT does in giving us peace.

Let's study Galatians 5:22, 23. The Spirit is the only one who can put this fruit in our hearts - and that means peace, too. This is not a fruit that we can create or can bring into existence ourselves. You and I may try to copy or imitate these things. We may even find at times that what we produce ourselves satisfies others and ourselves but it can never satisfy GOD and falls far short of what the HOLY SPIRIT has prepared for us and wants us to enjoy.

These truths bring us to a real problem. Since we can't produce this kind of Christian character (peace in particular) in our lives; since the HOLY SPIRIT is the only One who can, how can we get this operating in our lives? When you think it through carefully, there is only one answer. Stop straining and struggling to produce something that is impossible for you. Take self out of the picture entirely. Yield yourself completely to the Spirit. Give up, relax, resign. Quit! Then and there the HOLY SPIRIT, takes over and starts His work for you.

I will never forget the first time this truth was taught to me by Dr. Chafer, first president of the Dallas Theological Seminary. It seemed fantastic to me! For years I had been trying to keep the Ten Commandments, trying hard to produce Christian character and, most of all, to manufacture a satisfying peace in my heart. The result was a discouraging, pseudo-peace and constant failure in my Christian walk.

I was flabbergasted by the thought that there was a divine Agent that would do these things

through me. It was too new a truth for me to accept immediately. However, I decided in all fairness it must be tried before I rejected it. Judging from years of my own failure, I had serious doubts that it would work. It would be foolish, however, to miss this blessed, peaceful life just because the idea was so foreign to me.

I then decided to put it into practice the next morning. "Lord, I quit my own struggle to please you. I am turning my life and all my desires over to the HOLY SPIRIT right now and if anything is going to be done for me, the HOLY SPIRIT will have to do it for me and through me. I have miserably failed in my own strength. You - take over my life right now."

I have never had such a wonderful, peaceful day in all my life. It had worked beautifully just as GOD had promised it would. But I had to experience it myself before I could fully believe what the HOLY SPIRIT would and could do for me.

Of course, there have been days since when I didn't let Him live through me, but the days that I have were as wonderful and full of joy as that first day. The HOLY SPIRIT wants to do this for every believer.

He wants to do this for you. You can have peace and joy that "**passeth understanding**" if you will let Him produce that fruit through you by completely yielding yourself to His control. Just as the drunken man is governed by the alcohol in his system, and his actions are altered by the effects of the liquor; just so the Christian should be completely under the power and sway of the HOLY SPIRIT (Ephesians 5:18).

These verses that give us the fruit of the Spirit end with the little phrase: "**Against such there is no law.**" The keeping of rules and laws cannot give us these things. All of the requirements of GOD's laws will be more than fulfilled in our lives when the HOLY SPIRIT is allowed to carry on an active ministry.

Suppose an apple tree could talk. How foolish it would be to say: "Now this morning, I am going to struggle and strain and work as hard as I can to grow apples." And so from day to day, it struggles with this goal in view. It is the nature of the apple tree to produce apples, and it will grow apples without special work or thought on its part.

It is equally as foolish for us to try to help the HOLY SPIRIT put peace in our lives. It is His nature to produce GOD's peace in those who will let Him. When you let Him have control of your life, peace is an automatic result without any effort on your part. Rest in this blessed truth. It can never fail! This is GOD's promise and He cannot lie! If GOD can lie, He is neither holy nor GOD at all. If He can break even one promise, then how can we trust Him to keep others? This promise of peace is as sure as your salvation.

But we cannot close our chapter here, because many of us know by experience that even though we are assured of the presence of the HOLY SPIRIT in our hearts, there are times when He is not producing His fruit for us. Peace often evades us when we know not why. It is then obvious that the HOLY SPIRIT is not doing His work and that we have failed somewhere.

Let's look at three conditions that the Word gives us as necessary to give the HOLY SPIRIT

freedom to carry on His full ministry in us. Anything short of these will hinder His work and keep us from having peace.

The first condition is found in Galatians 5:16. "**Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.**" We are to walk in a moment by moment, conscious dependence on the Spirit. It is not our strength but His power that keeps us from doing the will of the flesh. It is His work that empowers us to live as God wants us to. "**It is not in man... to direct his steps.**" The minute we take over the reins of our lives and live in our own will, we will fall into sin. We cannot trust ourselves at all.

In our first pastorate, one of our men had polio. Because of the crippling effects of the disease, he always has to wear a brace in order to walk. As long as he leans his full weight on the braces and trusts them to hold him, he is able to walk. One day something broke on a brace and he fell, breaking his leg.

This is a picture of the dependence that a Christian must have on the HOLY SPIRIT. We cannot have peace unless we are letting ourselves completely lean on and be controlled by Him. The minute we take our lives back into our own hands, there will be a fall; disaster in our spiritual lives will follow.

I remember our little daughter's wanting to walk on the ice and snow in spite of our warning that she would not be able to walk alone. After the first fall, she said, "Daddy, you hold my hand; I can't walk by myself." This is the attitude the HOLY SPIRIT is looking for from us.

There is a definite relationship between spirituality (control of the Spirit) and peace. Many verses give us this truth but the most outstanding one is found in Romans 8:6, "**But to be spiritually minded is life and peace.**"

There is a guest in my home while I am writing this chapter. I asked her what peace meant to her. She said, "I have found out by experience that peace is really the result of a Spirit-controlled life. When I live close to the Lord, spend time in prayer and Bible reading every day, and let the HOLY SPIRIT have His way in me, everything goes right with me and my family. That is what I call peace.

But when I start living my own way, forget my devotional time, and let the least sin stay in my heart, I feel so badly inside. Everything in me seems to be pulling in different directions and I'm miserable. I am cross with my husband, I take my feelings out on my son, and feel sorry for myself, and resent the demands of housework."

She is really expressing in her own way just what Dr. Laurin has said in his commentary on Romans. "Peace is spiritual life through spiritual birth under the auspices of a spiritual law." My guest says that she maintains peace in her life by living out this verse: "**But to be spiritually minded [controlled by the HOLY SPIRIT] is life and peace.**"

The second condition of letting the Spirit do His full work in us is found in I Thessalonians 5:19. It is in the form of a simple command, "**Quench not the Spirit.**" In our modern dictionaries the word "**quench**" means "*to stop, to put an end to, or to put out.*" This is not the true meaning of

the Greek word that is translated here. CHRIST promised that the HOLY SPIRIT would "**abide with you forever**" (John 14:16). It means "*to suppress*" in the true sense of the language. In other words, "to submit" is the exact opposite of "suppressing."

When we suppress the leading of the HOLY SPIRIT or refuse to submit to GOD's will for our lives, we are quenching the Spirit, whether it is in a little detail of everyday life or in the matter of our lifework or the choice of a life partner. Whether we will go shopping or stay at home today; whether we will read the Bible or the newspaper should be decided by the leading of the Spirit. No matter how small or how large a decision is being made, we must always follow the promptings of the Spirit. When the HOLY SPIRIT shows us GOD's will and we refuse to do it, we are quenching or suppressing the HOLY SPIRIT. This, of course, is sin and hinders His producing the fruit of peace.

The third condition is found in Ephesians 4:30. "**Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.**" We have a special seal or sign that we are the Lord's. That seal is the presence of the Spirit in our hearts. This shows that we are the property of GOD and we can never be taken away from Him.

The verses preceding, and the verses following are largely composed of a list of sins. The fact that special emphasis is put on the holiness of the third Person of the Godhead, and verse 30 appears between verses of long lists of sins, gives us the answer to what grieves the Spirit. It is a three-letter word-sin. This is spoken to Christians. There are a group of people who believe that the moment we are saved, the old nature is removed and we can't sin again. It would be wonderful if that were true. However, we can't find Scripture that gives us the slightest suggestion that this is true. It will not be that way until we go to be in the presence of the Lord. We know from our experience and the strong teachings of GOD's Word that we can and do often fall into sin.

GOD does not make a requirement without a remedy and to carry it out. He has made a way for us as Christians to be released from the penalty of sin. The answer to the sin problem and broken fellowship with the Lord is confession. David testifies how GOD forgave his sin in Ps. 32:5, "**I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.**"

The story that CHRIST told us of the prodigal son in Luke 15 gives us the perfect way to return to GOD after we have sinned. The son in the story had asked his father for his share of the family wealth. After a short time, he took all that he had and went into a foreign country. The money was quickly spent in all kinds of sinful pleasures. His so-called friends deserted him as soon as his money was gone.

Then a famine came and he was left almost destitute. The only work that he could find was the care of hogs. He was so hungry at times that he longed to fill his stomach with the husks left from the pigs' food. It was while he was thus suffering that "**he came to himself.**" He remembered that even the servants in his father's house had plenty to eat and were treated well. Why not go home and become a servant in his own father's house? That would be far better than what he was enduring in the far country. So, he went home with a well-prepared speech to give his father. Pride was forgotten, and any thoughts such as his deserving something from his father

were put away. He said, "**Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.**"

When the prodigal son arrived home, his father was looking and longing for his return. His father ran to him and fell on his neck and kissed him. The son was never allowed to give his prepared speech. As soon as he admitted that he had sinned, he was forgiven. Instead of being made a servant, he was restored to the full rights and privileges of a son. He was always a son even when he was far from home and living in sin. But he was a son out of fellowship with his father and thus missing the joys and privileges of that relationship. Now he was in the presence of his father again and there was great rejoicing over his return.

Just so, once I have become a child of GOD through the LORD JESUS CHRIST, I will always be a child of GOD. That will never change though I might live in sin and apart from the blessings of fellowship with GOD. When the sin is confessed, we are restored to fellowship with GOD and receive all the blessings that go with being members of GOD's family. "**Likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth** (changes his mind about his sin)." When the sin is gone, then the HOLY SPIRIT is again free to minister in the hearts and produce His promised fruit, one part of which is peace.

To be spiritually minded is life and peace. To be spiritually minded is not a routine of self-improvement nor a long list of dos and don'ts as laid down by many churches and individuals. It is not even the keeping of the commandments and laws in the Bible. To be spiritually minded means to be completely under the control of another Person, not ourselves. That One is the HOLY SPIRIT.

Quenching the Spirit by refusing to do His will or trying to live the Christian life in our own strength are sin and grieves the HOLY SPIRIT as much as any sin you can name. When there is any sin in our lives, the work of the Spirit has to be that of convicting or showing us that sin. He will continue to do that until we recognize and confess it. As long as He is convicting, it is not possible for Him to manifest His fruit in us. As soon as the sin is confessed, the HOLY SPIRIT again produces His fruit, including peace, in us.

If you don't have the peace you desire, check first to see if there is some sin in your heart that is keeping the Spirit from having His way in giving you peace.

~ end of chapter 5 ~
