

Peace • Galatians 5:22–23

Dr. Robert Oppenheimer was the physicist who supervised the building of the first atomic bomb. He appeared as a witness before a Congressional Committee and was asked if there is any defense against this awesome weapon.

“Certainly,” the famous scientist answered.

“And that is . . . ?”, the congressman asked.

Dr. Oppenheimer looked around the hushed room full of people awaiting his answer. “Peace!”

Peace is more powerful than an atomic weapon. But peace is often in short supply. When Saint Paul wrote out his recipe for the fruit of the Spirit which is to characterize the life of every Christian, he included peace as one of the essential flavors in the recipe: “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, PEACE, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

It seems to me that peace is a subtle flavor in the fruit of the Spirit. Have you ever eaten a dessert and commented to your friend across the table, “This is so good!” There is something in here that makes this taste great, but I’m not quite sure I can identify what the ingredient is.”

The same thing happens to Christians. Listen to a conversation between two employees discussing a Christian co-worker:

There is something about her that is different. I have trouble putting my finger on it or giving it a name. It seems to best show up in the worst of times. She has an inner something that keeps her calm and confident when most people would come apart at the seams. She’s sort of ‘all together’ on the inside. I think it might have something to do with her religion.

What those co-workers are talking about is peace. It is a subtle but significant flavor of the Holy Spirit of God that can be sensed, al-

most tasted, in the lives of Christians. It is more powerful than an atomic bomb!

But to understand this powerful peace we must first understand a very basic human problem. Our human problem is not wars on the outside but turmoil and trouble on the inside that are evidenced on the outside.

Do you remember the famous line from Shakespeare’s MACBETH: “Double, double, toil and trouble, fire burned and cauldron bubble”? It’s a memorable line because life is so much like a boiling cauldron of toil and trouble. We are prone to blame life’s hassles and griefs on the circumstances around us. But that’s only partly true at best. The real problems of life are on the inside.

Many years ago I met a man while visiting in New Jersey. He had a lot of problems. He decided that he needed a fresh start away from where he was, so he packed up and started driving west. At the time, we were living in Longmont, Colorado. One day there was a knock on my office door and there he was! He and his family arrived without invitation or notice. I connected him with some people who rounded up furniture, a place he could rent, some money and a job. He thought everything was great. And it really was pretty good. Except, less than a year later he had all the same problems he left on the East Coast. What he failed to realize was that the prob-

lem was in him much more than it was around him. Something needed to be done on the inside.

Compare it to a rash that covers your skin. It itches and it aggravates you until you have to do something about it. The physician says that the rash on the outside is because of a sickness on the inside. Your choice is to cover the rash with makeup or take pill the doctor prescribes. The smartest thing to do is get a cure

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for the inside rather than a cover-up on the outside.

Sin is like that. It is this miserable malady that we all have caught. It is the root of all our toils and troubles.

It bothers some people when they hear that everyone is a sinner and that the basic problem of humankind is sin. But let me explain. Saying that we are sinners is not saying that we do no good. It is saying that deep inside us we are all afflicted with a really bad disease called sin. It is a disease that rejects God, causes us to think and do wrong and eventually kills us.

Some people think they like sin. They think it's fun; it makes them feel independent, but they really don't know what they are talking about because it is sickening. It is deadly. Sin breaks our relationship with God, contaminates our relationships with one another, churns our insides and messes up our lives inside and out.

Listen well! We will never cure the consequences of sin on the outside. That awaits the promised rule of God in a new earth and a new heaven. Thousands have tried to create utopia and every one has failed. Billions have thought that a change in circumstances will make life trouble-free so they have changed cities, changed jobs, changed marriages, changed cars and tried to change everything else. Only to discover that the troubles either won't go away or that they are replaced with new and different troubles.

Jesus said it well in John 16:33: "In this world you will have trouble." That's not very encouraging, is it? But Jesus said more. He not only said we will have trouble, but he also said, "I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace."

Jesus promised something absolutely astonishing. He promised peace. He promised that Christians could and would live with what the Greeks called "eirene" and the Hebrews called "shalom". This is not the absence of war, but the presence of a wonderful well being that is more powerful than any conflict.

Jesus promised peace on the inside no mat-

ter how lousy the situation on the outside. He promised that in him we could have wholeness like a jigsaw puzzle with every piece in place. He promised that we could have order so that our lives are ordered on the inside even if the world is totally messed up on the outside. He promised harmony with every note in our heads and souls playing together in right relationship.

Jesus' peace begins with our relationship with God. When we become Christians through confession of our sins and personal commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, the Bible says in Romans 5:1 that "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

And what a fantastic peace we have! Philippians 4:7 says, "the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." It is so great that it cannot be understood. It is the peace of God that calms our lives and gives tranquility of heart.

The peace of God is unlike any other peace. Jesus said in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

You may be asking two questions: "How does this peace work?" and "How do I get this peace?"

I can only tell you generally how it works. Have you ever felt really sick and taken some medicine that made you feel fine? Then someone asked you how it worked and you couldn't explain. All you know is that it worked and it is wonderful.

Personally, I have felt the churning of the soul, the upset on the inside amid the storm on the outside. Then, I turned my heart and life over to Jesus Christ and felt the healing, experienced the wonder, received the peace. It transcends understanding!

How do you get this peace? Ask God for it. First, become a Christian through faith and then ask God to give you the peace of Jesus. Tell him you want wholeness, order and harmony from the inside out. Let go of the tur-

moil and accept his peace.

Those who experience this supernatural peace then have peace-flavored lives! It shows. You can taste it. It is the fruit of the Spirit.

On October 8, 1871, the city of Chicago burned. While the 250 deaths were a tragedy, there were tragedies for those who lived, as well. Total losses were estimated at \$196 million . . . a great deal of money in 1871.

There was a businessman in Chicago who lost almost everything. Two years later, while trying to rebuild his business, he sent his wife and daughters on a trip to Europe. They traveled on the French trans-Atlantic steamer Ville du Havre.

On November 23, 1873, the Ville du Havre collided with the British sailing ship Loch Earn and sank in the North Atlantic, taking 226 lives.

When that Chicago businessman received the news of the tragedy it was enough to crush him. His only hope was that his wife and daughters might be among the survivors. He waited days for word. And then he received a cable from his wife with just two words: "SAVED . . . ALONE!"

Can you feel his hurt? Can you imagine what that can do to a man's insides?

He quickly boarded a train for New York City where he boarded another ship to meet his wife in England. When they came to the place where the Ville du Havre sank, the captain called him to the bridge and pointed to the ocean place where his daughters were buried at sea in the sunken ship.

He returned to his cabin and experienced the peace of Jesus Christ that transcends understanding. How do I know? Because I have the words that he wrote in his cabin that day at that sad place on the Atlantic Ocean.

His name was Horatio Gates Spafford. The words that he wrote are the words to the hymn "It Is Well With My Soul".

When peace like a river attendeth my way,

When sorrows like sea billows roll,

Whatever my lot, thou hast taught

me to say,

"It is well, it is well with my soul."

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,

Let this blest assurance control:

That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,

And has shed his own blood for my soul.

My sin, - O, the bliss of this glorious thought,

My sin - not in part but the whole,

Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more:

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

And, Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,

The clouds be rolled back as a scroll,

The trump shall resound and the Lord shall descend:

"Even so" - it is well with my soul.

Faith Matters is the Broadcast Ministry of Leith Anderson and Wooddale Church

6630 Shady Oak Road

Eden Prairie MN 55344

952-944-6300

www.wooddale.org

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