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Perfect Peace

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Series: The Fruit of the Spirit

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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THEY CALLED HER “DOVE”

She had eyes that were so clear, you thought when you looked into them, you could see forever. She had a smile that reached around a room of gloom and captured it with joy. She had a kind of serenity in her face that seemed unmoved by trauma, and yet so very sensitive to hurt. She was, in fact, the perfect mixture of love and peace. Always smiling, yet always appearing to be at rest.

Her name was Andrea, but her nickname was “Dove”. Her friends called her that, because *even when life seemed to be falling apart*, this woman seemed to be at rest. Whenever she was questioned about it, and *she often was*, she would always answer...“My Captain has said...‘Peace, be still...’.”

Her Captain, you see, was Jesus. He was the One at the helm of her life. Captain Jesus had determined, for reasons only partly known to us, to guide her ship through waters deep and let it move through stormy seas. She had, in the past five years, lost her husband to cancer, a child to a plane crash, and watched her parents injured in a horrible automobile accident. They had lived, but required constant care at her hands. Her finances had dwindled through these unexpected crises until she had no place to turn but welfare. Just as she was starting to recover, she slipped on the ice in front of her home and broke her hip, confining her to a wheelchair for six months.

Her friends thought that, like Naomi of old, she should be renamed “bitter”, because the Lord had visited her with a lifetime of tragedy in only a few short months. But bitter she was not. In fact, with every passing day she seemed to grow yet more serene. “Dove”, as they called her, always seemed to be at rest. Though she did not understand the stormy route her captain had chosen, one thing she knew...*He was in control*. At any time, He could but speak to the storms, *and they would cease*. In the meantime, He in her could speak such peace to her heart that even as life’s winds beat against her life, and even as the lightning flashed around her, and she had to arrange for one more funeral, or one more hospital room, or one more wheelchair, or one less meal...she need not be anxious or fearful. She had what we Christians like to call “Perfect Peace.”

Perfect peace. Is it possible in such an imperfect world? Total serenity. Is it possible in such a hostile age? Quiet rest. Can it be a reality in such a harried, hurried society? God is saying it is not

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only possible, it is essential...if the people God sends to view your life is to see what they were meant to see. They were meant to see... perfect peace.

“Peace I leave with you”, said the Master. “My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled. Neither let it be afraid.” Peace, then, is a gift from God. It is a part of the fruit His Spirit produced in and through the believer when He is letting God be God.

It is that fruit of the spirit, Peace, that we are looking at once again in this study. Our title: Perfect Peace.

Our Outline:

I- They Called Her “Dove”

II- The Three-fold Peace of God

III- Perfect Peace: The Perspective

IV- Perfect Peace: The Process

V- Perfect Peace: The Promise

THE THREE-FOLD PEACE OF GOD

In our last study together, we looked at God’s three-fold plan for peace. We were reminded that He has so arranged life that, by placing His Spirit in fallen man, three miracles take place. The first is that man becomes capable of having peace with God, that is, the warfare that exists between man and God comes to an end on God’s terms at God’s cost. The terms are absolute surrender. When man is willing to do that, God steps in, pays the price, and peace is restored.

The second miracle involves man’s peace with man. As we learned in our last study, God, through the miracle of surrender, once again allows man to bypass the hostilities of the world and effect a peace with his fellow man by a unique process that appears to man as weakness, but which is, in essence, the total release of the power of God. It involves turning the other cheek, going the second mile, and leaving retribution in the hands of a God who alone is capable of vengeance. To man, apart from Christ, it is utter foolishness. To man, in Christ, it is perfect peace.

But the final kind of miracle is the miracle we have reserved for the remainder of this study is the miracle of peace within. It is a quality of life that only a surrendered Christian can enjoy. It is that quality of life that Andrea has that caused the world to call her “Dove”. It is the peace of God. It is a remarkable expression of

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the nature of God that, like love and joy, can only adequately be revealed when, by the world's standards, there is no reason for it to exist. But on those occasions, its very existence is a testimony a thousand sermons could not speak.

PERFECT PEACE: THE PERSPECTIVE

Let's see just what it is that God has prepared for us that is so phenomenal. Let's examine this "perfect peace" as it is described in God's precious Word, for if it is what it claims to be (and it is), then you and I must lay hold of it day by day and minute by minute for the "rest" of our lives...and I do mean the "rest" of our lives.

The peace of God. How can it exist in a world so torn by strife and conflict? We learned in our last study that the peace of God is a gift from God given to every believer at his or her new birth. When Christ comes in, peace comes in...and lives forever. We were instructed by Jesus Himself that *because of that peace, we were commanded never to let our hearts be troubled, and never to be afraid*. The word translated "troubled" literally means "to be stirred up; to be agitated". So Jesus is saying to us that since He in us is perfect peace, we simply must not ever, under any circumstances, allow ourselves to fall into a state of agitation or unrest; nor under any conditions are we permitted to fall into a state of fear...the word here meaning a condition of unnecessary timidity or of shrinking back, *unable to proceed because we do not have enough confidence in the sovereignty of God to face what man might be able to do*.

It appears, then, that what John 14:26 and 27 is saying is that any time the believer is either gripped with fear or agitated in his or her heart, he or she is not walking in the Spirit, because the Spirit in us is perfect peace, and perfect peace cannot be troubled (because God's rest will not allow it) and it cannot be afraid (because God's power will not allow it). How can that be when we are so beset by things which cannot help but trouble our souls, living in a world where fear is almost considered a healthy deterrent? The answer is found in John 16:

I have told you these things so that in Me you may have perfect peace and confidence. In the world you have tribulation and trials and distress and frustration; but be of good cheer—take courage, be confident, certain, undaunted—for I have overcome the world. —I have deprived it of power to harm, have conquered it [for you]. (John 16:33 Amplified Bible)

Now listen carefully. Jesus Christ is telling you firsthand that He understands perfectly that you have *every reason*, humanly

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speaking, not to have peace. You live in a world where tribulation, and trials, and distress and frustration are the norm. Young's concordance translates this Greek word "tribulation" as "pressure". In this world you shall have "pressure". The cares of this world will "press in on you" and distress you and frustrate you. I would say that's an accurate assessment of life on planet earth. But here our Lord, while acknowledging the very conditions in which we find ourselves, is *invoking the law of the two kingdoms*, commanding us in the very same breath, not to yield to life's normal emotions when life's normal pressures close in on us.

Of course, as always, He doesn't ask us to do something He hasn't equipped us to do. He has told us that every time we are tempted to yield to fear or frustration or anxiety, we are to stop and be reminded of one basic fact...He has overcome the world. That, of course, in and of itself, does not explain His commandment. But if we tie it in with John 14, we realize that He went away, so that we could inherit His Spirit. Because we inherited His Spirit, we were told that He has given us perfect peace. In other words, the Prince of Peace lives in us, and if He has overcome the world, then that means we have nothing to fear...ever.

The word "overcome" means to "gain total victory". In other words, Jesus Christ has gained total victory over every single fiery dart that Satan has ever thrown or can throw, even his most devastating one, death itself. Having overcome in every situation, Christ in us has robbed Satan of his power to frustrate or put pressure on us to be anxious or fearful. It works like this: Every time something comes into your life that brings about cause for worry or fear, God's Spirit in you says to you, "Relax, Jesus has already faced that, and He came out victorious. Now He lives in you. Don't worry. Don't fret. Just say to Him, 'Lord, I cannot control the circumstances, but Lord, *you can control my responses*. Please give me peace.'" Then you begin to walk by faith as though you have what you ask for, because you do.

The Scripture says, "If you ask anything in accordance with His will, He hears you, and when you know that he hears you, you *already have the petition you have desired of Him*." (I John 5:14,15). It is in accordance with his will that your heart *never be troubled*, and that you *never be afraid*. He just told us that in John 14. Therefore, when or if that temptation comes, all you need do is ask God to flood you with His peace instead. You are praying in harmony with His will, and *He will do what He has promised*.

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An overcomer, then, is someone who lets God be God. When God is being God, He is peace. So the issue is not whether or not you and I *have the capacity to live at rest*; the only issue is whether or not by an act of surrender, we are doing so. In fact, in Colossians we are told that *this is the normal Christian life*. Paul gives this instruction:

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; (Colossians 3:15a)

The Amplified New Testament translates it this way:

And let the peace (soul harmony which comes) from the Christ rule (act as umpire continually) in your hearts—deciding and settling with finality all questions that arise in your minds— [in that peaceful state] to which [as members of Christ’s] one body you were also called [to live].

(Colossians 3:15a Amplified Bible)

“That soul harmony which comes from the Christ rule” let it “continually act like an umpire in your mind”. Then you will live “in that peaceful state to which you were called to live.” When Christ is reigning in your heart, your heart will be at peace. There will be conflict, there will be frustration, there will be tribulation. That is because you live in this world, but those things *must not rule you*. Your responses must not be governed by responding to those things. Your responses must rather be Christ’s responses to life’s storms. He was at rest. It was only when the disciples panicked, that He arose and calmed the storm. Left alone, He would have continued to relax in the midst of the storms, because His Father was in control of the storm.

PERFECT PEACE: THE PROCESS

Well, let’s make it work on a day-to-day basis. We are walking along, minding our own business, and the enemy begins to whisper his same old lies in our ears. “You’ll never make it. Now look what happened. What if...?” And off goes your mind into the sunset. You begin to create in your thoughts a scenario that has you going into a variety of “no-win” situations. You imagine the worst, and the more you imagine it, the worse it gets. Soon, you are thinking of that scenario *as though it had already come to pass*. Depression sets in. Anxiety controls you. “There is no way out,” Satan whispers. “Where’s all this ‘Christian stuff’ when you need it?”

Soon, the pressures (there’s that word) begin to build, and sure enough, the more you worry, the worse things get...or at least the worse they seem to be. Actually, your circumstances haven’t either

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improved or deteriorated; you have simply focused on them so long, they have come to dominate your thinking, until they appear to be insurmountable. You have a problem. God has a solution.

The problem is three-fold:

- 1- You violated God's commandment where worry was concerned.
- 2- You violated God's commandment where prayer was concerned.
- 3- You violated God's commandment where time was concerned.

Therefore, you failed to appropriate the peace of God that was already resident within you.

In Philippians, chapter four, we read about the first two commandments you violated. There it says this:

The Lord is near—He is coming soon.

Do not fret or have any anxiety about anything,

(Philippians 4:5b,6a Amplified Bible)

So the first commandment you violated was God's order not to worry. The reason is clear. You're living *in* this world, but you're not living for this world, and nothing Satan can do to you will have any effect on you, *once Jesus comes*. And *Jesus is coming soon*. You may be saying, "How soon is soon?" It doesn't matter, in the light of eternity, a thousand years is as a day. Once He comes, time will be incidental, for time will be extinguished. So what is there to worry about? Or fret about? You might be killed? You'll just hasten the day when you'll see Him. You might get sick? You'll just appropriate more grace. You might go broke? You'll just appreciate more of Heaven. You might be rejected? You'll just glory more that you are accepted in the Beloved. Nothing Satan can do to you can touch your eternal treasures. Nothing. Neither moth nor rust can corrupt, nor can any of Satan's demonic host break through and steal what God has laid up for you in eternity. You have the perfect "security" system. It is "foolproof", and Satan is a fool. That's the reason you are not to worry.

Now pay close attention to the loopholes in that commandment. There are none. It says, "do not have *any* anxiety about *anything*." Try to work around that one. Try to justify your worry based on the fact that God didn't cover it in that statement. You can't. The Living Bible translates it: "Don't worry about anything." In other words, worry is sin. All kinds of worry. All degrees of worry. All

forms of worry. Sin. S-i-n. That means that *the minute you begin to worry*, God is commanded down from the throne of your heart, and you are no longer in perfect fellowship. Your power diminishes; your perspective decreases; your potential for peace goes out the window. You are living in sin. That is problem number one. Unless and until you reach the stage where you are willing to confess *every act of worry as sin and be willing to forsake it*, you cannot have peace. Worried about making your next house payment? That's sin. Do everything you can to make it possible, and then crawl up into God and rest. The worst thing that can happen is that you lose your house, but you cannot lose your home. Why? Jesus is coming soon. He has gone ahead and prepared, furnished, equipped, readied, a home for you. According to His own words. He wouldn't have done that if He didn't plan to come back and take you there...to live forever. So what's to worry about?

Worried that your kids won't turn out right? God was concerned about His own children all through Scripture, but never worried. Jesus did in John 17 what we have to do. He said, "Lord, you gave them to me; here, I give them back to You. Use them to glorify your Name." Then He left us in His Father's blessed arms and rested. Worried that you won't get that job? "Which of you by worrying," Jesus asked in Matthew 6:27, "can add "one second to your life, or one inch to your height?" Didn't Your Father tell you that "promotion comes neither from the east or the west or the south? God is the Judge; He sets one down and puts up another." (Psalm 75:6,7). So if you're worrying...STOP IT! You are violating God's commandment about anxiety, and the minute you choose to do that, (and it is a conscious choice), *you choose to sin*.

Secondly, you are violating God's commandment to pray. The passage gives the positive alternative to the negative restriction. It says instead of worrying...

but in every circumstance and in everything by prayer and petition [definite requests] with thanksgiving continue to make your wants known to God.

(Philippians 4:6b Amplified Bible)

There's the flip side of that no-escape commandment. In every circumstance, and *in* everything, instead of worrying...pray. That commandment has a three-fold expression: prayer, petition, and thanksgiving. By prayer, it means worship. It means stepping back from looking at the circumstances long enough to look at God, long enough to break forth into praise for who He is, for what He's

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said, for what He's done, for how He's done it. By petition, it means being specific with God. "Lord, I'm uptight about that job. Now I'm reminded that *that's not my problem*. But I do have a problem. I keep sinning by worrying. Lord, if it be possible, I surely do want that job" (that's specific prayer), but "nevertheless, thy will be done" (that's submissive prayer). Now what do you have to worry about? You've told God what's bugging you, and you've told Him what you want, and then you've acknowledged that if what you want isn't what He wants, you don't want it. What's left to be anxious over? Nothing.

Start praising Him. Start thanking Him *for whatever it is He is going to do*, and thank Him that *it isn't your problem, it's His*. What a relief! It's as though someone just came alongside, and said, "Come to Me if you're weary and worried; cast your load on My back, and rest." And of course, Someone just did.

There is, of course, a third thing you violated by being anxious. It's God's commandment concerning time. It's found in Matthew 6:34 and it's preceded by that glorious passage concerning God's clothing the lilies of the field and caring for the birds of the air (Matthew 6:26), and it concludes:

So do not worry or be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will have worries and anxieties of its own. Sufficient for each day is its own trouble. (Matthew 6:34 Amplified Bible)

God has just instructed us as to the *limits of our ability to grasp problems*. He says we just might be able to handle 24 hours. Beyond that, we're out of our league. Who knows what may happen tomorrow? Jesus may come. But no matter what happens, you are only given the authority to consider today's worries, and then confess them as sin. Worries beyond tomorrow aren't even candidates for sensible concern. They are just plain sin. Now that doesn't mean we don't plan. Jesus was plain at that point. It certainly doesn't mean we don't have priorities and objectives. *But it does mean that we have no right to be anxious over whether or not God will allow them to come to pass*. God has said, "Child, I have built into your computer only so much memory capacity. You have the ability to handle one twenty-four hour period. Try to tackle more than that, and you will automatically be in sin."

So the believer who takes it upon himself to be anxious over things he cannot control, violates the will of God in three areas: he violates God's order not to worry; he violates God's order to turn worry into prayer; and he often violates God's parameters of time

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that limit man to twenty-four hour segments. “His compassions fail not; they are new every morning.” That means that tomorrow morning you have an assignment. Take the worries of *that day* and give them back to God with praise and thanksgiving. Don’t even consider your worries beyond that. They ought not even exist.

PERFECT PEACE: THE PROMISE

Which brings us, of course, to the promise. What will happen if we refuse to worry; refuse to tackle the future; and instead take one 24-hour day and pray over it, giving it back to the God who owns it? Go on: Paul goes on and gives us an ironclad guarantee:

And God’s peace [be yours, that tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot of whatever sort that is, that peace] which transcends all understanding, shall garrison and mount guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.
(Philippians 4:7 Amplified Bible)

God’s peace will be yours. That is an irrevocable guarantee from the only one who can make irrevocable guarantees. Your God has promised you peace. Perfect peace. Peace so perfect, in fact, that it is literally indescribable. It transcends all understanding. It supersedes all of our wildest expectations. You cannot even grasp it, it’s so wonderful. It will be yours...if you handle worry God’s way. You turn it into prayer, petition, and thanksgiving, for one 24-hour segment of time, and rest. And as you begin to rest, the rest is up to God. He will give you a peace that will literally “keep your heart and mind in Christ Jesus” or as the Amplified Bible just reminded us, “it will garrison and mount guard over your hearts and minds”. The word “keep” is a descriptive word that is best visualized by imagining the “keep” of a castle, a place that was virtually impenetrable, untouchable by the approaching enemies. It was a garrison; a protected area, where you were safe.

God’s peace is that kind of protection from the enemy. It is both the effect of obedience and the cause of victory. It comes because you specifically did what God told you to do, *instead of worrying*. Once it begins to flood your soul, it amplifies itself, and glorifies God by transforming your very countenance, thus demonstrating to a watching world that you are one of those who is being “kept by the power of God unto salvation, ready to be revealed at the last time.”

Perfect peace. It is a rainbow that glows in the heart of one who has surrendered amidst the storms to the SON. It is that incredible

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calm in the eye of life's hurricanes where swirling winds touch not. It is the inner demonstration of the reality of our peace with God through the shed blood of His Son, Jesus Christ. It is the outer casing that covers the joy of our hearts and allows that joy to be demonstrated at rest. It is the Christian's hope personified, the Christian's testimony magnified, the Christian's character emphasized. It is Christ at rest in man, when man would not be at rest were he not in Christ.

Perfect peace. It is the believer with the focus of his heart transferred from earth to heaven, only to be returned to earth with heaven intact. It is a God's-eye view of raging winds and torrential rains, with blinding lightning illuminating the thunder of the voice of God; but it does not fear the thunder, though it hears the thunder. It is not anxious over the winds, for it sees them as an expression of the breath of God. It does not shrink back in horror as the lightning streaks from sky to sky. It sees the lightning as the power of God brightening life's heavens with a glorious reminder of a coming day when there will be no night. So it is at rest.

Just how at rest are you? Is there peace amidst the storms? Is there a calm within your heart as those ferocious winds of circumstance whirl about your life and beat upon the ship that God has placed you in? Is there a quiet confidence when Satan's fire begins to engulf you, and earth's worst begins to assail you? If not, you are missing the quality of life God designed for you in eternity past and gave to you in the form of His Spirit when Christ came into your life. You are missing the blessing of perfect peace.

Isaiah 26:3 makes this promise: May we never forget it.

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.

There's that word "keep" again. Garrisoned about. Protected from enemy intrusion. Guarded from unwarranted attack. Safe. That's what perfect peace is all about. The key is the mind "stayed" on God. A "fixed-focus" lens would be accurate. It is set on infinity. It is stayed on eternity. It sees all of life slightly blurred compared to what it sees when the everlasting Prince of Peace appears in view. It is possible, because "he trusteth in thee". Because he rests the weight of his future on the only one who knows the future, his Sovereign God. That's why it is so important that we view God as a rock. A mountain. A steadfast, immovable island surrounded by sinking sand and drifting debris.

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The psalmist said it best in Psalm 46. Memorize it, and quote it back to God when Satan begins to penetrate your heart with question marks about the future. It says:

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. (Psalm 46:1-3)

You think you have problems? What's the worst scenario? The worst scenario would be for the whole earth to be blown to smithereens, the mountains dumped into the ocean in ruins, and all the earth that is left the victim of a horrendous earthquake. Compared to that, how serious is your lot? And yet the psalmist is saying, *even then, we have no cause to fear...or worry...or fret*. Why not? Because our God is.

And one thing our God is—is perfect peace. Even amidst the most tragic form of destruction this world could imagine, *He would not cease to be...everything*. And should this world crumble and fall apart it would only mean that God is moving the props on the stage of life to make room for the final act, an act in which the stage will be filled with the glorious splendor of the Presence of God, and the things that detract and deter and destroy will have passed away. The passage goes on,

There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.

God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.

The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. (Psalm 46:4-6)

Oh, Beloved, that kind of God wants to keep you in perfect peace. Let Him. May our prayer, in closing, simply be this:

Now may the Lord of peace Himself grant you His peace [the peace of His Kingdom] at all times and in all ways — under all circumstances and conditions, whatever comes. The Lord [be] with you all. (II Thessalonians 3:16 Amplified Bible)

And may we all, in deep humility, but whisper...“Amen.”

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