**C. PEACE**

"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" (John 14:27). God is the "God of peace" (Philippians 4:9).

Peace, *eirene*, is translated "one, peace, quietness, rest." Peace is crucial. The one who is at peace can have joy, can be patient, can be self-controlled. The one who has no peace is prone to yield to every kind of impulse from the flesh. The one who is at peace can hear clearly from God; the one who has no peace is confused by every kind of problem. We need to look at several aspects of peace.

**1. Peace as the result of right authority in force.** Jesus is the Prince of Peace. But in Revelation chapter 19 we see him coming as a warrior, leading the hosts of heaven. Even when he came to earth in Nazareth 2,000 years ago, his coming was a frontal attack on the enemy's kingdom (Luke 11:20). It was the mission of Jesus to "destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:8).

In the world today, there are two kingdoms: the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of God (Colossians 1:13). There can be no genuine peace between them. "What fellowship can light have with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14). This is why Jesus made the startling statement, "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). True peace can come only when Satan is completely overthrown and the Kingdom of God is triumphant.

A state of warfare between the sinful or fleshly nature and the Holy Spirit is going on in every believer. It is only as the Holy Spirit gains control over our spirit, soul, and body that we can find true inner peace. The enemy would tempt us to think that all is well and that there is no need to do battle, and that temptation is powerful and attractive. But we need to remember Jeremiah's warning against those who "Dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. ‘Peace, peace’ they say when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 8:11).

In this sense, real peace in a person's life is evidence that the Holy Spirit is in control of his life, and that the influences of the sinful nature have been overcome and cast out. This is the fruit of a life that is led by the Spirit. "Great peace have they who love your law" (Psalm 119:165). "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee" (Isaiah 26:3 KJV).

**2. Peace as unity and harmony among believers.** "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity" (Psalm 133:1). Jesus' final prayer before he died was, "I pray also for those who will believe in me... that all of them may be one... May they be brought to complete unity" (John 17:20-23). A number of Scriptures speak of this aspect of peace. "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one [Jews and Gentiles] and has destroyed the

12

Paul included the words *meekness* and *lowly* in conjunction with gentleness. These words help show that gentleness requires humility, because pride and feelings of superiority usually result in arrogance and vanity.

What is gentleness? It is the humble and meek attitude of wanting to help other people instead of wanting to be superior to them. This attitude flows from a spirit of real love for people—having true, outgoing concern for their well-being. Such an attitude is shown in *how* we think about and treat others and what we say to them.

Why does God want us to demonstrate gentleness?

Philippians 4:5 tells us to “let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.” Why does God want those He is working with to be concerned with how gently they think, act or talk? God has all the power in the universe, yet He is gentle with us, and He wants us to learn to be like Him. Then, when He gives us power, He will know that we will not use it cruelly or rashly.

As we have seen, humility is closely connected with gentleness, so we need to also consider how God views humility. James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5 both say, “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (quoting Proverbs 3:34). God resists pride, including our prideful justifications for not being gentle to those who have offended us, who have been harsh to us or who we don’t feel deserve gentleness. These attitudes are prideful and lead to rationalizing away the need to be gentle.

God wants us to show the same gentleness that Christ showed to the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11). Instead of being full of pride and self-righteously casting the first stone at a sinner, we are to follow the example of Christ, gently telling someone to go and sin no more. This is an example of gentleness God wants us to imitate.

There are several reasons for this kind of instruction. God is overwhelmingly gentle with us when we sin and need correction, and He expects us to be the same way with others. Also, gentleness shows the world that the way of violent encounters and situations ruled by emotion is not the better way. And God wants us to demonstrate gentleness because human beings require a gentle touch in order to truly change their lives and come to Him.

**I. SELF-CONTROL.**

The Greek word *Egkrateia* comes from a root that means "strength, dominion". This suggests that self-control implies exercising dominion over, or power against, those impulses which come from the flesh. When we fail to control our flesh, we "give the devil a foothold" (Ephesians 4:27). We allow Satan to tempt us because of our lack of self-control (1 Corinthians 7:5). When we live by the Spirit and put to death the things of the flesh, then

21