



"A life of peace, purity, and refinement leads to a calm and untroubled old age."

—Cicero

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## **A Peaceful Spirit**

We live in a world that is constantly changing. One day things are chaotic, and the next, things seem peaceful. Sometimes people are cordial and pleasant, but before you know it, they are angry and hostile. Such animosity and contentions arise seemingly out of nowhere. The spirit in [the world](#) inspires chaos and hatred toward everyone. To the Christian, it seems even more so.

How are we as Christians supposed to act or react to these things? As those whom [God](#) is converting from this world's ways, we are to be different. Looking at some scriptures will remind us of the direction God wants us to be traveling.

His standards are high, but He encourages us to make them part of our character. We are to be ethical, humble, gentle, and loving with our family, friends, associates, and strangers—and even toward those who despise God's laws. Meeting this high standard can be a tough thing to do. The apostle Paul admonishes the Romans to live in [peace](#) with all: "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" ([Romans 12:18](#)).

English philosopher William Hazlett writes, "Those who are at war with others are not at peace with themselves." Contention produces the curse of disunity. When Adam and Eve sinned, unity and peace were shattered, and God sentenced them to death. Regardless of the justification, [sin](#) cannot produce either godly peace or harmony. So, Paul implores us to live in peace:

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in [love](#), endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ([Ephesians 4:1-3](#))

In effect, Paul says that, if we consider our calling and relationship with God of small value, our conduct, especially toward our brethren, will show it and produce contention and disunity. The apostle John tells us that our relationships with people are linked to our relationship with God: "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" ([1 John 4:20](#)).

Yet, we often find it difficult to avoid absorbing some of the characteristics of the society around us. We can become frantic, stressed, anxious, and highly irritated people. We understandably desire quick resolutions to the irritations and troubles between us, but we must understand that speedy solutions are not always possible. Some issues are deeply buried within both sides of the conflict. Paul advises us, then, to forbear with each other in love. We must put up with or endure the state of contention for a time, patiently making peace by humbly and righteously interacting with the other party.

Certainly, we must do nothing to belittle the other party in the eyes of others, thereby elevating ourselves. Humility is pride's opposite. If pride produces only contention ([Proverbs 13:10](#)), it follows that humility will work to soothe, calm, heal, and unify. Having a [meek](#) or gentle manner—the opposite of the competitive assertiveness our culture promotes so vigorously—will cultivate peace with others. For instance, we need to put down our selfish desire to "win" every argument. God counsels, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" ([Proverbs 15:1](#)).

A great deal of church discord is prompted by those who do little thinking before becoming bent out of shape. They react without reflecting about the best course to follow and thus tend to blow things out of proportion to their real importance. The result is disturbances and conflicts in the congregation. Such hotheads need to listen to Paul's words in [Romans 14:19](#): "Thereform let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another."

Converted disturbers of the peace need to change their attitude significantly, refocusing their aims toward cultivating and exercising a spirit of peace. As David writes in [Psalm 34:14](#), "Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace and pursue it." Peace must become a fixed goal, and we must make every effort to create peace in ourselves and our environment.

Christians should agree about many more things than they differ over. Their points of agreement should be those of greatest importance—the major doctrines of God that lead to salvation—while the issues they may dispute should be minor matters about which they can goodheartedly "agree to disagree" and still demonstrate love for all who bear God's image. Paul exhorts the church in [Romans 15:5](#) to be longsuffering and encouraging in our interactions, just as God is with us: "Now may the God of [patience](#) and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ [Jesus](#)."

Former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "It isn't enough to talk about peace, one must believe it. And it isn't enough to believe in it, one must work for it." The apostle James provides similar counsel in [James 3:17-18](#):

But the [wisdom](#) that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of those who make peace.

Here he tells us what godly wisdom—righteous and skillful attitude and conduct toward others—is, and then he encourages us to "sow" it or put it into practice so that it will grow into peace.

The true religion—heavenly wisdom—should dispose an individual to live in peace with all others. But it is not enough, he implies, for us just to have and believe the truth. No matter how pure a person's doctrinal understanding might be, if he does not have a peaceful spirit, he is stumbling in His walk with Christ, for He says, "Blessed are the [peacemakers](#), for they shall be called sons of God" ([Matthew 5:9](#)). God does not want contention among His children, and He aims to remove that work of the flesh ([Galatians 5:20](#)) from those He calls during their preparation for the [Kingdom of God](#). In the New Heaven and New Earth, God will have eliminated those kinds of "former things" that disturb or destroy peace ([Revelation 21:4](#)).

The author of Hebrews writes, "Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without [holiness](#) no one will see the Lord" ([Hebrews 12:14](#), *New International Version*). If all of God's people would imitate Christ's peacemaking example and follow His instructions, there would be more peace and fewer disputes among brethren. He came into this world, as Zacharias says, "To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" ([Luke 1:79](#)).

- Gary Montgomery

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## From the Archives: Featured Sermon

### [Peace with God Through Christ](#)

by Martin G. Collins

While people may define peace differently, all seek this elusive, ephemeral goal. The only possibility of attaining peace is a relationship with God—peace with God through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, which must continually be refined. Peace in God is not a euphoric, blissful lack of conflict, too good to be true. When we hear God's truth, we should be uneasy when we come up short. False peace is only interested in forgiveness, but not in righteousness. Christians must pursue righteousness and holiness. A person with false peace takes sin casually rather than as a deadly enemy. Christians must move beyond justification to rigorous sanctification, leading

to ultimate glorification. The peace of God which passes all understanding is a state of mind, given by God's Holy Spirit, to bolster us against fiery trials. Peace with God comes from surrendering our carnality, displacing it with God's Holy Spirit, only possible by a relationship with God, sustained by faith like a needle on a compass, always returning to God even after repeated jarring and pounding. God has made access to Himself possible by the grace of our justification through the blood of Jesus Christ, as well as His mediation as our High Priest, eliminating any need for a human mediator. Jesus destroyed the barriers separating us from access to God. A person with true peace in God is not superficial, but filled with amazement as to what God has done for him, expressing humility and submission, as well as praise and thanksgiving, always circumspect in his/her daily conduct.

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[A Portable Peace](#)**

by David F. Maas

Peace is less of an external situation than an internal state. As such, we can have peace wherever we happen to be. We can help ourselves create this state by occasionally getting away from the hustle and bustle of modern life.

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