

Our Part In The Sanctification Process (Part Four): Cultivating Peace

Cultivating the Fruit of Peace

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Greetings brothers and sisters from Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. For the past seven days we have been joyfully rehearsing what it will be like living in peace for an entire Millennium in which Satan will be bound and mankind will be ruled with equity by the Prince of Peace, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We will turn to several related scriptures upon which I intend to weave a theme for this message. Most scriptural references will be taken either from the Lockman Foundation's *Amplified Bible* or the Lockman Foundation's *New American Standard Bible*, or the *New American Standard Bible E-Prime*. All three of these versions are available in electronic format on the Church of the Great God website.

John 14:27 (AMP) Peace I leave with you; My [own] peace I now give and bequeath to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. [Stop allowing yourselves to be agitated and disturbed; and do not permit yourselves to be fearful and intimidated and cowardly and unsettled.]

We have a command from our Trailblazer, our Forerunner, and our loving Elder Brother to forcefully wrest control of our thoughts away from the pulls and dictates of our carnal mind, the pulls of the world, and Satan's influence, which, if left unchecked, will swallow us up into the vortex of anxiety, fear, and abject depression.

Proverbs 15:15 (AMP) All the days of the desponding and afflicted are made evil [by anxious thoughts and forebodings], but he who has a glad heart has a continual feast [regardless of circumstances].

God has clearly left the tending and keeping of our thought garden as our own individual responsibility. In the covenant relationship we have made with Him, God does not look upon us as automatons or robots, but we have been highly encouraged by Almighty God to choose life or death, and the fruits of the Spirit (including peace) over the works of the flesh (which includes strife and wrangling).

Philippians 4:6-7 (AMP) Do not fret or have any anxiety about anything, but in every circumstance and in everything, by prayer and petition (definite requests), with thanksgiving, continue to make your wants known to God. And God's peace [shall be yours, that tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and being 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.

Clearly, the apostle Paul underscores and amplifies our Lord Jesus Christ's admonition to the disciples (and by extension, God's called-out ones living today) on the eve of the Passover not to worry about circumstances or trials because He had already conquered the world as well as our adversary Satan the Devil, and has provided a way for us to do the same by following His example.

Isaiah 25:6 (AMP) And on this Mount [Zion] shall the Lord of hosts make for all peoples a feast of rich things [symbolic of His coronation festival inaugurating the reign of the Lord on earth, in the wake of a background of gloom, judgment, and terror], a feast of wines on the lees—of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

This pivotal prophecy of Isaiah depicts what we have been joyfully rehearsing this past week in Myrtle Beach.

Isaiah 26:3-4 (AMP) You will guard him and keep him in perfect and constant peace whose mind [both its inclination and its character] is stayed on You, because he commits himself to You,

leans on You, and hopes confidently in You. So trust in the Lord (commit yourself to Him, lean on Him, hope confidently in Him) forever; for the Lord God is an everlasting Rock [the Rock of Ages] a better place of Safety than either Petra or Palo Duro Canyon.

We understand that the peace of God that passes all understanding is conditional, requiring that we choose to walk in the Spirit rather than the flesh (Romans 8:6). God does not do this for us nor will He force us to do this.

In James 4, Jesus' half-brother James identifies the causes of war-the absolute antithesis of peace.

James 4:1-4 (AMP) What leads to strife (discord and feuds) and how do conflicts (quarrels and fightings) originate among you? Do they not arise from your sensual desires that are ever warring in your bodily members? You are jealous and covet [what others have] and your desires go unfulfilled; [so] you become murderers. [To hate is to murder as far as your hearts are concerned.] You burn with envy and anger and are not able to obtain [the gratification, the contentment, and the happiness that you seek], so you fight and war. You do not have, because you do not ask. [Or] you do ask [God for them] and yet fail to receive, because you ask with wrong purpose and evil, selfish motives. Your intention is [when you get what you desire] to spend it in sensual pleasures. You [are like] unfaithful wives [having illicit love affairs with the world and breaking your marriage vow to God]! Do you not know that being the world's friend is being God's enemy? So whoever chooses to be a friend of the world takes his stand as an enemy of God.

We cannot ever expect to be peacemakers to anybody else if we have not made peace with Almighty God, unconditionally surrendering our stubborn carnal nature which is enmity to God, by putting to death on a daily basis the same vile nature which destroyed our original parents Adam and Eve, who lusted after the forbidden fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Hebrews 4:4-11 (AMP) For in a certain place He has said this about the seventh day: And God rested on the seventh day from all His works. And [they forfeited their part in it, for] in this [passage] He said, they shall not enter My rest. Seeing then that the promise remains over [from past times] for some to enter that rest, and that those who formerly were given the good news about it and the opportunity, failed to appropriate it and did not enter because of disobedience. Again He sets a definite day, [a new] Today, [and gives another opportunity of securing that rest] saying through David after so long a time in the words already quoted, Today, if you would hear His voice and when you hear it, do not harden your hearts. [This mention of a rest was not a reference to their entering into Canaan.] For if Joshua had given them rest, He [God] would not speak afterward about another day. So then, there is still awaiting a full and complete Sabbath-rest reserved for the [true] people of God; For he who has once entered [God's] rest also has ceased from [the weariness and pain] of human labors, just as God rested from those labors peculiarly His own. Let us therefore be zealous and exert ourselves and strive diligently to enter that rest [of God, to know and experience it for ourselves], that no one may fall or perish by the same kind of unbelief and disobedience [into which those in the wilderness fell].

As one of my mentors, the late Bob Hoops, declared, the weekly Sabbath is a miniature or foretaste of the annual Sabbath—the Feast of Tabernacles, which is itself a miniature or foretaste to the Kingdom of God in the wonderful world tomorrow, ushering in the New Heavens and New Earth. The Millennium, symbolized by the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles depicts a sanctified thousand years when the world will be at peace, resting from the horrible abuse and mis-governance it had endured for 6,000 years on mankind's tyrannical and irresponsible misrule.

Before that Millennium arrives, God's called-out ones, by faithfully honoring God's weekly and annual Sabbaths, are promised much needed tranquil rest and spiritual reinvigoration for our lengthy and arduous spiritual journey.

Let us go back to my second favorite verse in the entire Bible.

Psalm 119:165 (AMP) Great peace have they who love Your law;
nothing shall offend them or make them stumble.

Unlike the fallacious claims of antinomian Protestantism, God's holy and spiritual law is intrinsically intertwined with law keeping. It is utterly impossible for a sinner to ever experience peace and joy.

My specific purpose in this message is to provide biblical strategies to cultivate the fruit of peace, including proactively controlling our thoughts and emotions, ending our personal war with God and submitting unconditionally to His will, making an effort to draw close to God, honoring God's Sabbath, striving to enter His rest, and embracing His holy and spiritual law, which will constitute our spiritual DNA and our first nature as we pass from physical to spiritual life.

Building character is a lifelong process of choosing positive thoughts leading to positive emotions and positive behavior and rejecting negative thoughts which lead to negative emotions and negative behavior. The Scriptures warn us that controlling our thoughts is a responsibility that Jesus Christ lays entirely at our disposal. He absolutely refuses to do that for us. When we choose worldly thoughts, we automatically get unease and tension. When we stubbornly choose to focus on distressing negative thoughts, we alone are responsible for whipping ourselves into an emotional frenzy. Psalm 37:8 cautions us to, "Cease from anger and forsake wrath; fret not yourself—it tends only to evildoing."

Another of my mentors, the late Dr. Sanford Berman, used to tell a story of a hapless fellow who opened his lunch pail and exclaimed, "Peanut butter sandwiches? Not again!" When his co-worker asked him, "Why don't you ask your wife to make you something else?" the man replied, "Wife—I don't have a wife. I make them myself."

Similarly, we manufacture our own negative thoughts by allowing the Internet, social media, and fake news to poison our nervous systems, loading us down with toxic quantities of adrenaline and the brain-fogging hormone cortisol. Satan and his servants in the drive-by media may be the biggest source of hazardous, toxic, mental pollution on earth. In this context,

Proverbs 14:7 warns us to, “Stay away from a fool, for you will not find knowledge on his lips.”

In his informative book, *Live Without Stress: How to Enjoy the Journey*, Marvin Marshal affirms that we now have convincing evidence that thinking (cognition) significantly affects feelings (emotions), which in turn affects our body’s stress. Stress begins deep in the brain, where a structure referred to as the hypothalamus sounds an alert to the adrenal glands located on top of the kidneys. This sends out hormones—the most common of which is adrenaline. There is clear evidence that adrenaline is a stress hormone that prompts fear, panic, or perceived threat.

This ability of the brain can be either a source of positive empowerment or it can be an invitation to illness. As the late Count Alfred Korzybski, the father of General Semantics declared, “Man is the only creature who can talk himself into a nervous breakdown, and the only creature who can talk himself out of it,” profoundly echoing the sentiment of one of the lead-off scriptures, Proverbs 15:15, “All the days of the desponding and afflicted are made evil [by anxious thoughts and forebodings], but he who has a glad heart has a continual feast [regardless of circumstances].”

In a previous message, I referenced an article by Michael Deutsch titled “Meditation 101,” in which he reported that researchers have determined that we produce up to 50,000 thoughts a day, and 70% to 80% of those are negative. This translates into 40,000 negative thoughts a day that need managing and filtering.

Even if we factor in the saints sighing and crying about all the detestable and abominable things that are described in Ezekiel 9:4, most of our waking hours apparently are saturated in negative thinking in which we are literally poisoning our nervous systems, making ourselves physically, mentally—and especially spiritually—sick, reminding us of Christ’s warning in Mark 7:21-22, “For from within [that is], out of the heart of men [the recesses of our minds], come base and malevolent thoughts, acts of sexual immorality, thefts, murders, adulteries, acts of greed, and covetousness wickedness, deceit, unrestrained conduct, envy and jealousy, slander and profanity, arrogance and self-righteousness, foolishness and poor judgment.” Garbage in equals garbage out!!

Dale Carnegie, the author of the classic book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, was asked on a radio program to tell the most important lesson he had learned. He replied,

The most important lesson I have ever learned is the stupendous importance of what we think, for our thoughts make us what we are. By changing our thoughts, we can change our life. If we think happy thoughts, we will be happy. If we think negative thoughts, we will be miserable. If we think fearful thoughts, we will be fearful. If we think sickly thoughts, we probably will be ill. If we think failure, we will fail. If we wallow in self-pity, everyone will want to shun us and avoid us. Am I advocating a Pollyanna attitude toward all our problems? No. Life is not that simple. But I am advocating in the strongest terms that we assume a positive attitude instead of a negative one.

Grantley Morris, in his article, “Find Peace in the Storm: God’s Supernatural Answer on Worry, Panic, Fear, and Doubt,” cautions us that the “divine path to peace usually involved not a miraculous deliverance (the lazy, easy way we hope for) but rather in our battling the temptation to fear or worry.”

In Don Hooser’s sermon and article titled, “Peace the Hunger of Human Hearts,” he challenges us “to experience peace, we must take responsibility for our own thoughts (as we infer from Philippians 4:8). With God’s help, we can quit reacting with anger or self-pity. It’s not our circumstances or other people that determine our mood; it is our attitude about them.” Proverbs 25:28 reads, “He who has no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls.” We often have little control over our daily experiences, but we can control our evaluations of these experiences.

In 1915, physiologist Walter Bradford Cannon of the Harvard Medical School coined a term called “fight or flight,” describing how humans and animals react to highly stressful situations. Cannon theorized that mammals have a physical ability to react to stress that has served a survival mechanism. When faced with stressful situations, our bodies release hormones—adrenaline and noradrenaline, or epinephrine and norepinephrine—to increase heart rate, breathing rate, blood pressure,

metabolic rate, and blood flow to the muscles, gearing our bodies either to do battle with an opponent or to flee.

In 1975, Dr. Herbert Benson, also of the Harvard Medical School, published a bestselling self-help book, *The Relaxation Response*, which argued that the opposite was also true. Benson wrote,

The body is also imbued with what I termed the Relaxation Response—an inducible, physiologic state of quietude. Indeed, our progenitors [actually Our Creator] handed down to us a second, equally essential survival mechanism—the ability to heal and rejuvenate our bodies. In modern times, the Relaxation Response is undoubtedly even more important to our survival, since anxiety and tension often inappropriately trigger the fight-or-flight response in us. Regular elicitation of the Relaxation Response can prevent, and compensate for, the damage incurred by frequent nervous reactions that pulse through our hearts and bodies.

The Relaxation Response turns out to be a form of generalized meditation, involving: (1) a quiet environment, (2) a mental device such as a word, phrase, or repeated prayer essentially to drown out negative troubling thoughts, (3) a relaxed attitude, not worrying about how well one is performing the technique and simply putting aside distracting thoughts to return to one's focus, and (4) a comfortable position.

Even though Dr. Benson did include some forms of meditation which might make us uncomfortable such as Zen, Yoga, and Transcendental Meditation, he nevertheless demonstrated that, for all practitioners of the relaxation response—spiritual or secular oriented—the body responds with a dramatic decrease in heartrate, breathing rate, blood pressure (if elevated to begin with), and metabolic rate—the exact opposite effects of the fight-or-flight response.

Just as Jesus in Luke 16:8 commended the unjust steward, exclaiming that the children of this world are wiser than the children of light, we dare not cast aside the validity of these scientific experiments as the foolishness of the world, but if we would carefully practice a daily regimen of godly meditation, we could successfully follow the apostle Paul's admonition in II

Corinthians 10:5 “to bring every thought into captivity, making it obedient to Christ.” Control over our thoughts will automatically bring us peace and a sense of well-being. Again, tending our thoughts is an activity that Christ will not do for us.

Gary Petty in his sermon and article “The Fruit of the Spirit Peace” admonishes us that if our minds become saturated with anxiety, fear, and worry, to practice the following: “The first thing we need to do is take a half hour a day and during this time we are going to shut out all distractions—all noise, all television, all radios. We need to go to someplace where we can just. . . find peace, some place where we don’t let our minds be distracted by all the intrusive things in our environment.”

With the intrusiveness of electronic media, we find it increasingly difficult to find a quiet place. For those of us who live in urban areas, we need to be more resourceful, seeking the solitude of a county, state, or national park, nature trail, conservancy, or national wilderness area. In Luke 5:16, we learn that Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray. Even amid turbulence, Jesus was able to find peace, as was seen in the episode in Mark 4:38, when He fell fast asleep during a violent storm.

In his article, “How to Relax During Stressful Situations,” Dr. Marvin Marshall wrote, “During the last days of World War II, someone commented to President Harry Truman that he appeared to bear up under the stress and strain of the presidency better than any previous president, that the job did not appear to have aged him or sap his vitality, and that this was remarkable—especially in view of the many problems which he faced as a wartime president. His response was, “I have a foxhole in my mind.” President Truman mentioned that he was able to go inside his own imagination to escape stress and to relax.

God’s called-out ones have the same capacity by exercising the power of God’s Holy Spirit, giving us an incredible peace that passes all understanding. In Matthew 5:9, our Savior teaches us, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.” But we cannot be peacemakers to anyone or be an ambassador for Christ, carrying out diplomatic responsibilities if we have not first made peace with God.

In his July 1999 *Forerunner* Personal, “The Beatitudes, Part 7: Blessed Are the Peacemakers,” John Ritenbaugh explains, “Peace describes the benefits that come when we cease to be an enemy of God, since, until that happens, peace is not a major part of our lives.”

Gary Petty, in his sermon and article, “Fruit of the Spirit: Peace,” echoes this caution: “Peace is a lot more complicated than we thought because part of us doesn’t want peace. And we must come to grips with that. Part of us wants selfishness—as we learn from James 4:1-4. And that’s part of the reason we don’t have peace.” He continues “We’re not talking about just learning how to get along with people. We’re talking about how to deal with the fact that we are constantly—*constantly*—at war within ourselves and constantly in conflict with other people, no matter what we are doing.”

We cannot experience the fruit of the Spirit called peace until we are healed of our deadly carnal human nature which is enmity to God and His holy law. We must ask God to change our warring nature. We begin with the war inside ourselves. That is where peace begins! That is where peace begins. To have real peace means to change human nature. That is why these are the fruits of the Spirit, enabling us to have a peace of mind.

John Ritenbaugh in his article, “The Fruit of the Spirit: Peace,” declares that the sinner is the enemy of God, and the state of a sinner's mind is far from peace. It is at war, and his sinning proves the warfare, the rebellion in his mind. He is often agitated, alarmed, and trembling and feels alienated from God. God is not in all his thoughts (referencing Psalm 10:4).

Please turn over to Isaiah 57 for a colorful simile of the state of a sinner’s mind (one who is at war with Almighty God).

Isaiah 57:20-21 (AMP) But the wicked are like the troubled sea,
for it cannot rest, and its waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no
peace, says my God, for the wicked.

By contrast, the one who turns from his carnal nature and reaches out to God will find peace and tranquility.

James 4:7-10 (AMP) So be subject to God. Resist the devil [stand firm against him], and he will flee from you. Come close to God and He will come close to you. [Recognize that you are] sinners, get your soiled hands clean; [realize that you have been disloyal] wavering individuals with divided interests, and purify your hearts [of your spiritual adultery]. [As you draw near to God] be deeply penitent and grieve, even weep [over your disloyalty]. Let your laughter be turned to grief and your mirth to dejection and heartfelt shame [for your sins]. Humble yourselves [feeling very insignificant] in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you [He will lift you up and make your lives significant].

It is axiomatic that the closer we draw to Almighty God, the closer He will draw to us, giving us protection against the stressing events of this current volatile age.

My May 1998 Forerunner article titled “A Portable Peace” referenced an example of an elementary art teacher who once asked her class to draw pictures that would illustrate or portray the concepts of peace and tranquility. The students, for the most part, predictably latched onto the typical or stereotypical scenes: blue skies, peaceful valleys with babbling brooks, forest meadows, backyard barbecues, or families playing or reclining on the beach.

The picture that caught the teacher's eye depicted a threatening, stormy sky with billowing clouds, ominous lightning strikes, trees bending in the gale-force winds, and frothing white caps out on the water. Nestled in a secure crag, a mother bird placed her wings over her brood of hatchlings. In the teacher's mind, this scene captured the essence of peace, a secure peace in the midst of extreme adversity—a kind of “portable” peace.

We could describe the kind of peace that the baby birds experienced as a singular undivided trust amidst unstable, inclement conditions. Psalm 17:8 says, “Keep and guard me as the pupil of Your eye; hide me in the shadow of Your wings.”

Psalm 91:1-4 (AMP) He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall remain stable and fixed under the shadow of the Almighty [Whose power no foe can withstand]. I will say of the Lord, He is my Refuge and my Fortress, my God; on Him I lean and rely, and in Him I [confidently] trust! For [then] He will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. [Then] He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings shall you trust and find refuge; His truth and His faithfulness are a shield and a buckler.

Both psalms were derived from a passage in Deuteronomy in which Moses uses a simile of an eagle to describe God's protection of His people.

Deuteronomy 32:10-11 (AMP) He found him in a desert land, in the howling void of the wilderness; He kept circling around him, He scanned him [penetratingly], He kept him as the pupil of His eye. As an eagle that stirs up her nest, that flutters over her young, He spread abroad His wings and He took them, He bore them on His pinions.

Lest anyone gets tripped up on the figurative imagery of these verses, we should remember that Jesus Christ is not a literal vine and we are not literal branches, just as God is not a literal rock. Remember the four living creatures in Revelation 4:7-8 having the faces of a lion, ox, man, and eagle, all representing distinctive attributes of Jesus Christ? John Ritenbaugh thoroughly explains the metaphorical grounds of comparison in his series "The Four Views of Christ."

Genesis 2:2-3 (AMP) And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. And God blessed (spoke good of) the seventh day, set it apart as His own, and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all His work which He had created and done.

Those people who crashed and burned our previous fellowship have viciously mocked those who choose to honor and keep God's Sabbath holy as worshipping the day. We worship the Creator God who has commanded us to keep His Sabbaths holy.

Isaiah 58:13-14 (AMP) If you turn away your foot from [traveling unduly on] the Sabbath, from doing your own pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a [spiritual] delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and honor Him and it, not going your own way or seeking or finding your own pleasure or speaking with your own [idle] words, then will you delight yourself in the Lord, and I will make you to ride on the high places of the earth, and I will feed you with the heritage [promised for you] of Jacob your father; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

God has given the Sabbath as a gift to mankind to get us out of the rat race of running to and fro like a bunch of ants, receiving both physical rest and spiritual restoration.

Mark 2:27-28 (AMP) And Jesus said to them, The Sabbath was made on account and for the sake of man, not man for the Sabbath; so the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.

Consequently, we see that the Sabbath rest applies universally, not just for Jacob's offspring. Far from being an arbitrary enactment, the Sabbath demonstrates Almighty God's providential blessing for the welfare of the entire human race. Whether one has God's Holy Spirit or not, the Sabbath is a blessing to those who honor it.

Exodus 31:13-17 (AMP) Say to the Israelites, Truly you shall keep My Sabbaths, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you [set you apart for Myself]. You shall keep the Sabbath therefore, for it is holy to you; everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does work on the Sabbath shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done, but the seventh is

the Sabbath of rest, sacred to the Lord; whoever does work on the Sabbath day shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the Israelites shall keep the Sabbath to observe it throughout their generations, a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the Israelites forever; for in six days the Lord made the heavens and earth, and on the seventh day He ceased and was refreshed.

In his sermon on the “Fourth Commandment, Part One,” John Ritenbaugh writes,

An interesting and significant term is used in Exodus 31:13, 17: The Sabbath is a sign, not a mark. Bible usage shows that a sign is something voluntarily accepted, whereas a mark is placed on a person against his will. The Sabbath is a special sign of a special covenant between God and His people. Even those who have not been called or have not accepted the full counsel of God have been blessed by Sabbath keeping. Of all of Jacob’s children, only the offspring of Judah have retained their national identity. The rest of Jacob’s children (save for the called-out Israel of God) have entirely lost their identity. Hebrew essayist Ahad Ha Am, writing more than 100 years ago, stated: “More than the Jews have kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath has kept the Jews.”

Lorie Johnson, in her article “Secrets to Longevity Revealed in Denomination's Lifestyle,” reports, “It's no surprise Seventh Day Adventists live an average of 10 years longer than most Americans. Every week, beginning with sundown on Friday, they rest for an entire day. This allows them to recuperate from the week and recharge for the one ahead. They also use it to spend time with friends, family, and God.

Richard Ritenbaugh, in his April 15, 2000 sermon on “Be Still: Peace and Rest,” reflecting upon the end-time proclivity of "running to and fro" like so many ants, concludes that this life's rushed tempo is not something of God. He did not intend for us to live in such a fast-paced, stress-filled world. We need to cultivate the practice of slowing down, getting out of the "rat race" and being still, stopping our frenetic lifestyles to get in sync with God. Being still (curtailing movement and speech) is to our mental, emotional, and spiritual health as fasting is to our physical health. It helps us to get in the

right attitude, to see righteous reasoning, to receive instruction, to see God at work in and for us, and to know God.

In this sermon, Richard made two illuminating points (a long-ranged point and a short-ranged point) about our striving to enter God's rest, as referenced in Hebrews 4:1-11, one of our lead-off scriptures.

1. The long-ranged point is that we need to be diligent to enter the rest that is the Kingdom of God. That is the rest we are looking for. That is when God will cease from His spiritual labors, when we have come into His rest in the Kingdom.
2. The short-ranged point is in verse 9 of Hebrews 4: "There remains therefore a rest for the people of God." That word "rest" is *sabbatismos*—the Sabbath rest. In fact, there is another translation that says: "We must therefore keep the Sabbath as the people of God."

But the point I am getting at is that the Sabbath is a type of God's rest. Richard continues, "We have a weekly, twenty-four-hour period of time when we can be still. God gives us one day in seven as an opportunity to be still and come to know Him. That is one of the reasons we have the Sabbath day. People of God need this one day—to pull out of the world, to take it easy, to get out of the rat race, and to get into communion with God. We need to use this time, on the Sabbath day: to get into the right attitude, to see godly reasoning, to receive instruction, to see God at work, and to get to know Him."

We have just participated in a week-long annual Sabbath depicting a world at peace which should supercharge us with the will and power to forge ahead on our taxing spiritual journey into our Promised Land—our inheritance—God's Kingdom. Please turn once again to my second favorite scripture in the Bible.

Psalms 119:165 (AMP) Great peace have they who love Your law;
nothing shall offend them or make them stumble.

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has reminded us in John 14:15, “If you [really] love Me, you will keep (obey) My commands.” Brothers and sisters, if we really love God, we will keep His holy and spiritual law.

John Ritenbaugh, in his May 1988 Forerunner Personal titled “The Fruit of the Spirit: Peace,” declared emphatically, “In the “blessings and curses chapter,” Leviticus 26:6 shows that God is the ultimate source of peace and He will give it upon our meeting the condition of obeying His commandments: “I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none will make you afraid; I will rid the land of evil beasts, and the sword will not go through your land.”

Sadly, neither modern Israel nor the rest of the world have learned to trust in the Lord for peace, but have instead trusted in huge military-industrial complexes and unstable political alliances. What we have experienced in type over the last seven days is a glorious time we read about in Isaiah 2:4, “And He [referring to our Lord, Savior, and King] shall judge between the nations and shall decide [disputes] for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.”

To conclude this message, I would like you to turn to my favorite verse in the entire Bible: which describes the miraculous heart transplant operation which all of God’s people must submit to.

Hebrews 8:10 (AMP) For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will imprint My laws upon their minds, even upon their innermost thoughts and understanding, and engrave them upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

As I have mentioned in several previous messages, Herbert W. Armstrong repeatedly referred to God’s Holy Spirit-containing the fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control is “God’s law in action.” Cultivating these fruits will occupy our entire life as we cooperate with our Creator in the arduous sanctification process.

The ultimate fulfillment of this process will culminate when we are completely composed of spirit, and God's law will be our first nature, not just second nature. But, while we are still in an embryonic stage, the process has already begun in us, incrementally, as God gradually displaces our carnality and sin, replacing it with His Holy Spirit, leading to righteous behavior and godliness. During our conversion tenure, no human being is completely converted, but many people are in various stages of converting.

As we continue to cultivate our spiritual orchard or garden, we can anticipate a bumper crop of spiritual fruit.