

*Nine*  
F R U I T S  
*of the*  
S P I R I T

A Bible Study on Developing Christian Character

*Peace*

R o b e r t   S t r a n d



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## *Introduction*

There is an ancient story out of the Middle East which tells of three merchants crossing the desert. They were traveling at night in the darkness to avoid the heat of the day. As they were crossing over a dry creek bed, a loud attention-demanding voice out of the darkness commanded them to stop. They were then ordered to get down off their camels, stoop down and pick up pebbles from the creek bed, and put them into their pockets.

Immediately after doing as they had been commanded, they were then told to leave that place and continue until dawn before they stopped to set up camp. This mysterious voice told them that in the morning they would be both sad and happy. Understandably shaken, they obeyed the voice and traveled on through the rest of the night without stopping. When morning dawned, these three merchants anxiously looked into their pockets. Instead of finding the pebbles as expected, there were precious jewels! And, they were both happy and sad. Happy that they had picked up some of the pebbles, but sad because they hadn't gathered more when they had the opportunity.

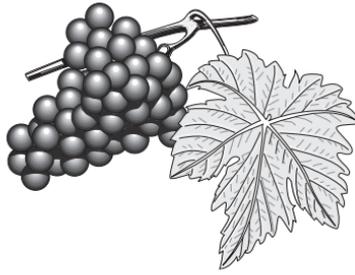
This fable expresses how many of us feel about the treasures of God's Word. There is coming a day when we will be thrilled because we have absorbed as much as we have, but sad because we had not gleaned much more. Jewels are best shown off when held up to a bright light and slowly turned so that each polished facet can catch and reflect the light. Each of these nine jewels of character will

be examined in the light of God's Word and how best to allow them to be developed in the individual life. That is how I feel about the following three verses from Paul's writings which challenge us with what their Christian character or personality should look like. Jesus Christ has boiled down a Christian's responsibility to two succinct commands: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and body, and love your neighbor like yourself. Likewise, Paul the apostle has captured for us the Christian personality in nine traits:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-25).

At the very beginning of this study, I must point out a subtle, yet obvious, distinction. The "fruit" of the Spirit is a composite description of what the Christian lifestyle and character traits are all about — an unbroken whole. We can't pick only the fruit we like.

Unlocked in these nine portraits are the riches of a Christ-centered personality. The thrill of the search is ahead of us!



# Peace

*EIRENE* (Greek), pronounced I-ray-nay,  
meaning: peace, prosperity,  
quietness, rest, or to be set at  
one with yourself again.

*THE FRUIT OF THE  
SPIRIT IS . . . PEACE*



There are all kinds of peace in our world. There is the peace of death, the peace of Tibet where a nation has been conquered by a neighboring country, the peace of the tranquilizer at work, the peace where one partner has withdrawn into a shell out of self-preservation, the outward peace of a nation where a dictator rules with an iron hand, and the peace of an alcohol or drug-induced stupor. We have lots of kinds of peace — induced, artificial, and temporary. The poet Longfellow may have felt the same thing as he penned these words:

And in despair I bowed my head;  
“There is no peace on earth,” I said,

“For hate is strong  
And mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good will to men!”

Maybe we have reason to despair when a historian has pointed out that about 85 percent of all human history concerns itself with war and conflict — personal, national, or worldwide. But into this cynical, weary, war-torn, strife-filled world there is a positive message in regards to peace and the author of peace: “For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, PRINCE OF PEACE” (Isa. 9:6)! This theme of peace marks the life and ministry of the Prince of Peace. And I believe that without doubting, this prophetic verse points only to one person — Jesus Christ! The angels carried this theme when announcing his birth: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth PEACE to men on whom his favor rests” (Luke 2:14).

But when Jesus began his ministry he must have thrown his followers off track with a jarring thought. They had been awaiting the fulfillment of the prophecies of peace and being set free from Roman rule. Jesus said, “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth, I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law — a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household” (Matt. 10:34–36).

To the casual reader it smacks of contradiction. To people with a superficial understanding of what peace is all about it is the opposite of what had been prophesied. However, upon deeper thought and research, there is a key to unlock the concept. Before real, true, deep peace can come into the life of an individual there must first be an uprooting, a pulling down, a throwing out of the old false gods; chang-

ing of attitudes; and the serving of a new Master. And Jesus predicted that this process could cause problems.

Jesus taught a lot about this subject by saying you don't sew a new piece of cloth on an old garment, nor do you place new wine into old wine-skins that have dried up. Before peace can come there must be a complete change of character through the process He called a "new birth." Nobody can serve two masters — a fountain cannot give out both bitter and sweet water, a tree cannot produce good and bad fruit, light and darkness are incompatible, there is no fellowship between righteousness and unrighteousness.

So Christ starts at the point of need — cleans out the past and builds a new future with the proper attitudes in place which then lends itself to a new peaceful future! There will be peace in each and every individual's heart who has had a personal encounter with the Savior. And ultimately there will be no total peace on this earth until the Prince of Peace returns — then

*Peacemakers  
who sow  
in peace raise  
a harvest of  
righteousness*

*(James 3:18).*



this world will experience this peace in a total way. James reminds us that “Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness” (James 3:18). Paul says, “The fruit of the Spirit is peace!”

This peace that Christ gives is not only in good circumstances of life, but it is a deep, abiding, inner tranquility in all kinds of life circumstances. This is a peace that transcends troubles and turmoil — this is the peace of the fruit of the Spirit.

A friend visited an elderly woman badly crippled by arthritis, and asked her, “Do you suffer much?”

She responded, “Yes, but there is no nail here,” and she pointed to her hand. “He had the nails, I have the peace.” She pointed to her head. “There are no thorns here. He had the thorns, I have the peace.” She touched her side, “There is no spear here. He had the spear, I have the peace.” (Ralph Turnbull)

### *JESUS CHRIST IS OUR PEACE*



For our first study on peace, begin by reading Ephesians 2:11–22.

Based on verse 11, why do people seem to need to make differences between the “us” group and the “them” group?

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To whom is this letter addressed? Jews? Gentiles? The Church?

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What do you think is wrong with “labeling” people?

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Was there a problem in the Early Church between the Gentile believers and the Jewish believers? If so, describe it based on this Scripture portion:

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Is there a problem in our world with separate groups?

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