

THE WAY OUT

From Flesh to Fruit

PEACE

εἰρήνη (eirēnē)

A Biblical Guide to Walking in the Spirit

Galatians 5:16-25

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

— **Galatians 5:22-23 (KJV)**

Introduction

We live in an age of anxiety. Despite unprecedented comfort, safety, and access to information, we are more anxious than any generation in recorded history. We have apps to manage our stress, medications to calm our nerves, and endless advice on 'self-care'—yet the anxiety only deepens. We scroll for distraction, control for security, and worry as if it were a spiritual discipline.

This is because we have confused peace with control.

The world tells us peace is the absence of problems—so we try to eliminate problems. Or peace is having everything under control—so we grip tighter. Or peace is avoiding conflict—so we withdraw and placate. But biblical peace—*eirēnē*—is something categorically different: not the absence of storms but the presence of God in the storm. Not control over circumstances but rest under sovereignty.

The way out is not better control. It is deeper surrender.

What follows is a comprehensive guide to understanding what biblical peace actually means (not the fragile calm we manufacture), recognizing how the flesh counterfeits and corrupts our longing for security, and practically walking in the Spirit so that divine *eirēnē* guards you—not as achievement or control, but as fruit.

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

— **Philippians 4:7 (KJV)**

Part One: The Longing

SECURITY

To be at rest in wholeness and harmony

Before we can understand how the flesh corrupts peace or how the Spirit produces it, we must first acknowledge the ache that drives us: the longing for security.

This is not cowardice. This is design.

We were created for a world without threat—Eden, where God walked with humanity in unbroken fellowship, where provision was certain, where no enemy prowled. The fall shattered that security, introducing fear, scarcity, and the constant threat of harm. Every human being since has carried a longing for what was lost: a place of safety, rest, wholeness.

This longing is legitimate. It is holy.

The Hebrew concept of *shalom*—which underlies Paul's use of *eirēnē*—is not merely 'absence of war.' It is comprehensive flourishing: health, prosperity, wholeness, right relationships, harmony with God and creation. When a Jew wished someone 'shalom,' they were invoking total well-being. This is what we ache for.

C.S. Lewis, in *Mere Christianity*, writes: 'God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing.' The longing for security is ultimately a longing for God—the only unshakable foundation. We try to build security on circumstances, relationships, achievements, or control—and they all eventually fail. Only God remains.

This longing is legitimate. And it is precisely because it runs so deep that the flesh can corrupt it so devastatingly—either by grasping for control or by collapsing into anxious paralysis.

Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee.

— Augustine, Confessions

Part Two: The Word

EIRĒNĒ (εἰρήνη)

What Peace Actually Means

The Greek word *eirēnē* carries far more weight than the English 'peace' typically conveys. Understanding its full meaning is essential for grasping what Paul intends when he lists it as the third fruit of the Spirit.

The Greek and Hebrew Background

εἰρήνη (*eirēnē*) — Wholeness, completeness, harmony, well-being. Not merely absence of conflict but presence of flourishing.

שָׁלוֹם (*shalom*) — The Hebrew concept underlying *eirēnē*. Comprehensive welfare: health, prosperity, security, soundness, completeness.

φρουρέω (*phroureō*) — To guard, garrison, protect militarily. Used in Philippians 4:7 for how peace 'guards' our hearts.

καταλλαγῆ (*katallagē*) — Reconciliation—the restoration of right relationship that produces peace.

When Paul writes that 'the peace of God... shall guard (φρουρήσει / *phroureōsei*) your hearts and minds' (Philippians 4:7), he uses a military term. The image is of a Roman garrison protecting a city. Peace is not passive; it is an active defense. God's peace doesn't just calm you—it *protects* you.

The Three Dimensions of Peace

Scripture speaks of peace in three interconnected dimensions. True *eirēnē* touches all three:

1. Peace with God (Vertical)

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

— Romans 5:1 (KJV)

This is foundational. Before Christ, we were enemies of God (Romans 5:10)—alienated, hostile, under wrath. Through the cross, reconciliation (*katallagē*) occurred. The war is over. We are no longer enemies but children. This peace is objective—it exists whether we feel it or not, secured by Christ's finished work.

2. Peace of God (Internal)

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

— **Philippians 4:7 (KJV)**

This is the subjective experience of peace—the calm that 'surpasses understanding' (ὑπερέχουσα / hyperechousa—exceeding, superior to). It defies logic. Circumstances may be chaotic, but the soul is at rest. This peace is not produced by understanding our situation; it *transcends* understanding.

3. Peace with Others (Horizontal)

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

— **Matthew 5:9 (KJV)**

The Greek for 'peacemakers' is εἰρηνοποιοί (eirēnopoioi)—those who *make* peace, who actively work for reconciliation. Those who have received vertical peace with God and internal peace of God become agents of horizontal peace with others. Shalom spreads.

What Eirēnē Is Not

- **Eirēnē is not circumstantial calm.** Peace doesn't require pleasant circumstances. Jesus slept in a storm (Mark 4:38). Paul sang in prison (Acts 16:25). Peace exists independent of surroundings.
- **Eirēnē is not conflict avoidance.** Avoiding conflict to maintain superficial harmony is not peace—it's cowardice. Sometimes peace requires confrontation (Matthew 18:15-17).
- **Eirēnē is not control.** This is counterfeit peace—white-knuckling circumstances into submission. True peace releases control.
- **Eirēnē is not denial.** Denial refuses to acknowledge problems. Peace acknowledges problems while remaining anchored in God's sovereignty.

Part Three: The Trap

HOW FLESH CORRUPTS PEACE

Recognizing the Counterfeits Before They Destroy You

The flesh does not simply oppose peace—it counterfeits it. This is Satan's consistent strategy: offer a convincing imitation that promises what only the Spirit can deliver. The works of the flesh that corrupt our longing for security include variance (ἔρις / eris), strife (ἐριθεία / eritheia), and seditions (διχοστασία / dichostasia)—but they rarely announce themselves as 'contention' or 'division.'

They arrive disguised as vigilance, responsibility, leadership, or even 'keeping the peace.'

The Two Flesh Responses

When the longing for security is threatened—through uncertainty, conflict, loss of control, or chaos—the flesh offers two paths. Both promise safety. Both deliver deeper turmoil.

Path One: Controlling and Fighting

This is peace corrupted into domination. The flesh whispers: *'If you can just control this situation—this person, this outcome, this future—you'll finally be safe. Fight harder. Grip tighter. Don't let go.'*

The Lie: Security comes through control. If you can manage all variables, nothing can hurt you.

The Signs: Micromanaging people and situations. Inability to delegate or trust. Constant mental rehearsal of worst-case scenarios. Anger when things don't go as planned. Relationships that feel like hostage negotiations. Exhaustion from vigilance.

The Result: The more you control, the more you need to control. Relationships fracture under the pressure. Anxiety intensifies because control is an illusion—you cannot actually guarantee outcomes. Strife (eritheia) takes root: selfish ambition, factional scheming. Peace recedes further.

Path Two: Avoiding and Withdrawing

This is peace corrupted into escape. The flesh whispers: *'Conflict is dangerous. Engagement is risky. If you just withdraw, stay quiet, keep your head down—you'll be safe. Don't make waves.'*

The Lie: Security comes through avoidance. If you never engage, you can't be hurt.

The Signs: Avoiding difficult conversations. Saying 'yes' when you mean 'no.' Suppressing your own needs to keep others calm. Passive-aggressive behavior. Growing resentment beneath surface compliance. Isolation to avoid potential conflict.

The Result: Problems fester unaddressed. Resentment builds. Relationships lack authenticity. The 'peace' is fragile—maintained only by constant suppression. Eventually it shatters, often explosively. You have not avoided conflict; you have delayed and intensified it.

The Warning Signs

How do you know if you're in the flesh trap rather than walking in Spirit-produced peace? Here are diagnostic questions:

1. **Does your sense of peace depend on circumstances being 'under control'?** If calm depends on external factors aligning, it's not eirēnē—it's control.
2. **Do you avoid necessary conversations to maintain superficial calm?** Spirit-peace can engage conflict redemptively; flesh-peace flees from it.
3. **Do you feel responsible for outcomes only God can determine?** This reveals the controller's constant burden—playing God.
4. **Do you carry resentment beneath your compliance?** Resentment is the shadow side of avoidance. Spirit-peace is clean.
5. **Is anxiety your constant companion, even when things are 'fine'?** If you're always on edge, always scanning for threats, the flesh is driving.

Part Four: The Hard Questions

WHEN PEACE SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE OR IRRESPONSIBLE

Addressing the Objections That Keep Us Trapped

The flesh is clever. It does not simply tempt us with obvious anxiety but with reasonable-sounding objections that seem responsible, even wise. Until these are addressed, they become the excuses that keep us in bondage to turmoil.

"Isn't Some Anxiety Healthy? Don't I Need to Be Concerned?"

This objection distinguishes between 'good worry' (responsible concern) and 'bad worry' (irrational panic). Shouldn't we be concerned about real threats? Isn't some anxiety just being prudent?

The Biblical Response:

Scripture distinguishes between *legitimate concern* (which leads to prayer and action) and *anxiety* (μεριμνα / merimna—which is divided, distracted care that consumes rather than mobilizes).

When Philippians 4:6 says 'Be anxious for nothing' (μηδὲν μεριμνᾶτε / mēden merimnate), the command is not 'be careless about everything.' It is 'don't let divided, consuming worry rule you.' The very next phrase gives the alternative: 'but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.'

The pattern is: Identify concern → Bring to God in prayer → Trust His response → Take appropriate action. This is not passivity; it is prayer-directed activity. Anxiety, by contrast, spins without praying, worries without trusting, and acts out of fear rather than faith.

The test: Does your concern drive you to prayer and measured action, or does it consume you with mental rehearsal and paralysis?

"If I Stop Controlling, Won't Everything Fall Apart?"

This is the controller's deepest fear. If I let go, who will hold things together? Isn't my vigilance what's keeping disaster at bay?

The Biblical Response:

This question reveals a hidden belief: 'I am the one holding things together.' This is a functional denial of God's sovereignty—not in theory, but in practice. We say God is in control; we live as if we are.

"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

— **1 Peter 5:7 (KJV)**

The word 'casting' is ἐπιρίπαντες (epiripantes)—a decisive, once-for-all throwing. Not 'gradually releasing' but 'hurling upon.' And notice the reason: not 'because it doesn't matter' but 'because He cares for you.' You are not casting care into a void; you are casting it onto a caring Father.

Will things 'fall apart' if you stop controlling? Perhaps some things will change. But the question is: were you ever actually in control? Or were you exhausting yourself maintaining an illusion? The things truly in your stewardship you can tend without anxiety. The things beyond your control were never yours to manage.

Dallas Willard puts it plainly: *'You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life.'* The frantic controller cannot receive peace because they won't stop long enough to let it in.

"Doesn't Being a Peacemaker Mean Avoiding Conflict?"

Jesus said 'Blessed are the peacemakers' (Matthew 5:9). Doesn't that mean keeping things calm? Shouldn't we preserve harmony?

The Biblical Response:

Peacemaking (εἰρηνοποιός / eirēnopoios) is *active*, not passive. It 'makes' peace—which often requires engaging conflict, not avoiding it. Consider Jesus: He brought peace through the cross, but His earthly ministry was marked by constant confrontation—with Pharisees, with money-changers, with false teaching.

"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword."

— **Matthew 10:34 (KJV)**

This seems to contradict 'peace.' But Jesus is distinguishing between true peace (right relationship with God) and false peace (comfortable compromise). Sometimes pursuing true peace creates conflict with those invested in false peace.

True peacemaking involves: speaking truth that disrupts comfortable lies, confronting sin that poisons relationships, pursuing reconciliation that costs something. It is not 'don't make waves.' It is 'pursue right relationship, whatever the cost.'

The question to ask: *Am I preserving true peace or maintaining false calm? Am I avoiding conflict for love's sake or for comfort's sake?*

"How Can I Have Peace When Real Threats Exist?"

This isn't hypothetical anxiety. What about the person facing cancer? Job loss? A hostile situation? Real threats demand real concern— isn't peace just denial?

The Biblical Response:

Biblical peace does not deny reality. Jesus knew He was heading to the cross and still said, 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you' (John 14:27). He was facing real execution—and offering real peace.

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

— **Isaiah 26:3 (KJV)**

The Hebrew here is remarkable: *שְׁלוֹם שְׁלוֹם* (*shalom shalom*)—'peace peace,' an intensive doubling meaning 'perfect peace' or 'complete peace.' And the condition is clear: 'whose mind is stayed on thee.' Peace is not the absence of threat but the presence of trust.

The threat is real. The peace is also real. They coexist—not because the threat is denied but because the trust is deeper. The person with cancer can acknowledge the diagnosis fully and still have peace, because their anchor is not their health but their God.

The question is not *'Is the threat real?'* but *'Is my God bigger than the threat?'*

Part Five: The Way Out

FROM FLESH TO FRUIT

The Practical Path of Yielding

We come now to the heart of this guide: not understanding peace (though that matters), not recognizing counterfeits (though that's essential), but actually walking in Spirit-produced eirēnē. This is not a technique to master but a posture to assume—not controlling for calm but surrendering to sovereignty.

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

— **John 14:27 (KJV)**

Notice: Jesus says 'my peace' (τὴν εἰρήνην τὴν ἐμήν / tēn eirēnēn tēn emēn)—His own peace, given to us. And it is 'not as the world gives'—different in kind, not just degree.

Step One: Recognize the Trap

What am I actually doing?

Before you can yield the flesh, you must identify it. The flesh disguises control as 'responsibility,' avoidance as 'keeping the peace,' and anxiety as 'concern.' Name what is actually happening.

Examine yourself with these questions:

- What am I trying to control that is actually beyond my control?
- What conversation am I avoiding to maintain false calm?
- What am I telling myself about why I need to manage this?
- Where is anxiety masquerading as responsible concern?
- What outcome am I demanding that only God can guarantee?

Write it down. Name it specifically. 'I am trying to control ____ because I believe if I don't, ____.' 'I am avoiding ____ because I'm afraid of ____.'

This is not condemnation—it is diagnosis. You cannot yield what you haven't identified.

Step Two: Yield the Flesh

Stop feeding what steals your rest

Yielding is not passive. It is the active decision to stop feeding the corruption. For peace, this means releasing control and emerging from avoidance.

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

— **Philippians 4:6 (KJV)**

Confess specifically. Not 'I've been anxious' but 'I have been trying to control ____ instead of trusting You. I have been avoiding ____ because I fear conflict more than I trust Your guidance.'

Cast your cares deliberately. The word in 1 Peter 5:7 is ἐπιρριπντες (epiripantes)—a hurling, not a gentle release. Name each care specifically and consciously transfer it to God: 'Father, I hurl this worry about ____ onto You. It is Yours now, not mine.'

Practical: When anxiety arises, pause. Name it aloud: 'This is flesh promising security through control/avoidance. Lord, I yield this fear to You. You are sovereign; I am not.'

Step Three: Abide in Christ

Rest in His sovereignty

The branch does not produce fruit through effort but through connection. Peace comes from abiding in the One who is never anxious, never threatened, never out of control.

Meditate on God's sovereignty. The God who holds galaxies together holds your situation. 'He is before all things, and in him all things hold together' (Colossians 1:17). Your anxiety says, 'This might fall apart.' His sovereignty says, 'I hold all things together.'

Suggested meditation: Isaiah 26:3-4

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

— **Isaiah 26:3-4 (KJV)**

Pray with thanksgiving. Philippians 4:6 specifies 'with thanksgiving.' This is not denial ('everything is fine') but reorientation ('God is good even when circumstances are not'). Gratitude shifts focus from threat to Provider.

A prayer: 'Father, I confess I have tried to be my own security. I have controlled because I didn't trust You. I have avoided because I feared more than I believed. I release control now. I cast this anxiety onto You—not into emptiness, but onto a caring Father. Guard my heart with Your peace that transcends my understanding. Amen.'

Step Four: Cooperate Practically

Take Spirit-prompted action

Abiding is not passive mysticism. The Spirit prompts; we respond. Peace is cultivated through specific practices—not to earn it, but to position ourselves to receive it.

In prayer:

- Bring requests specifically—not vague worry but concrete petitions. 'I'm anxious about ____' becomes 'Father, I ask You to ____.'
- Practice breath prayer. Inhale: 'Lord Jesus Christ.' Exhale: 'Have mercy on me.' Repeat until calm descends.
- Write your anxieties in a journal, then write 'CAST' across them. Physically marking the transfer helps make it concrete.

In relationships:

- Be a peacemaker (Matthew 5:9)—pursue reconciliation, not avoidance.
- Speak truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). True peace requires honesty, not just niceness.
- Forgive as you have been forgiven (Ephesians 4:32). Unforgiveness poisons peace.

In boundaries:

- Discern when to engage and when to withdraw (Matthew 10:14—shake the dust). But withdraw without bitterness.
- 'If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men' (Romans 12:18). Note: 'as much as lies in you'—you can only control your side.
- Some relationships may not be reconcilable in this life. Grieve that reality without letting it steal your peace.

Step Five: Expect God's Glory

Watch for fruit, not performance

Peace is fruit—organic, growing in its own time. Your role is not to manufacture calm but to create conditions for growth and then watch expectantly.

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

— **Philippians 4:7 (KJV)**

What does Spirit-produced peace look like when it matures?

- **Trust** — the ability to trust God's sovereignty without needing to control outcomes.

- **Reconciliation** — working toward right relationship, even when costly.
- **Rest in chaos** — calm that defies circumstances, anchored in something deeper.
- **Freedom from consuming worry** — anxiety held lightly, not ignored but not ruling.
- **Others seeing Christ** — others asking 'how can you be calm in this?'—pointing to the God who guards.

This is not 'trying harder to stay calm.' This is yielding: stop grasping for control, abide in God's sovereignty, cooperate as prompted. The Spirit produces eirēnē; you bear it.

Conclusion

THE TRANQUILITY OF ORDER

Augustine defined peace as *tranquillitas ordinis*—'the tranquility of order.' Peace is not the absence of activity but the presence of right order. When things are as they should be—with God sovereign, us surrendered, and relationships reconciled—peace emerges naturally. The turmoil we experience comes from disorder: playing God, grasping control, avoiding truth.

On the flesh side, we grasp for security through control or avoidance—and the anxiety grows. On the Spirit side, God guards us with His peace: *'My peace I give unto you'* (John 14:27). We do not generate *eirēnē*; we receive it.

This is why the 'way out' is not a stress-management program. It is a return—to proper order, to surrendered trust, to the Father who cares. It is recognizing that you were never meant to carry the weight you've been carrying.

You will fail. The flesh does not die quietly. The anxiety will return. The urge to control will rise again. But each failure is an invitation—not to try harder but to yield deeper, to cast again, to receive again what you cannot produce.

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

— **Matthew 11:28 (KJV)**

The choice is daily, sometimes hourly. Control or trust. Avoid or engage. Flesh or Spirit. But the power to walk in peace is not yours to generate—only to receive.

Abide in Him. And rest will come.

Key Scriptures for Peace (*Eirēnē*)

Philippians 4:6-7 — Peace that guards heart and mind

John 14:27 — Christ's peace given to us

Isaiah 26:3-4 — Perfect peace for mind stayed on God

Romans 5:1 — Peace with God through justification

Matthew 5:9 — Blessed are the peacemakers

1 Peter 5:7 — Cast all your cares on Him

Colossians 3:15 — Let peace rule in your hearts

Romans 12:18 — Live at peace with all, as far as it depends on you

Matthew 11:28-30 — Come to Me for rest

John 16:33 — In Me you have peace; in world, tribulation

Psalms 46:10 — Be still and know that I am God

Galatians 5:22 — Peace as fruit of the Spirit