

# Part 3 - Peace - Acceptance

Sermon Title: **Part 3 - Peace - Acceptance**

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Nathaniel: There are some things you have to have the serenity to accept on the things that you cannot change.

Female: You are listening to brothersoftheword.com. This is Part 3 of the series titled, "Peace." Subtitled, "Acceptance", by Nathaniel Bronner. This message is number 5822. That's 5822. Listen to over a thousand free messages on brothersoftheword.com.

(Music Playing: 00:00:24 - 00:00:53)

And now, for 5822, Peace Part 3, Acceptance.

Nathaniel: Welcome to Brothers of the Word, because brother, you need the word. And right now, we're in the middle of a series simply called, "Peace." In a world of so much turmoil, of so much strife, of so much aggravation and anxiety, we need peace.

Jesus was the Prince of Peace, yet so many Christians are lacking in peace and we have to try to find our peace and appeal, and it's just not common appeals. (00:01:32) just won't do it. We need a different way to get our peace. So, God has me speaking on the subject of peace and I'm taking each letter of the word peace and giving you a key from that.

The first was the letter P, Prosperity. Now, I'm not just talking about a whole lot of money, but what I am talking about is enough and it's not just money. Whenever you have a lack of anything, it has a tendency to disrupt your peace. When you have a lack of money, when you have a lack of health, when you have a lack of love, when you have a lack of anything, it has a tendency to disrupt your peace.

The second thing was Expectation. It makes a difference when you are expecting something good to happen to you. God is good and something good is going to happen to me today. I hope you all have been saying that it changes the way you begin your day. God is good and something good is going to happen to me today.

The letter A is Acceptance. Acceptance. I'm just going to be honest with you. It's some stuff you're just going to have to deal with. Now, I wish I could just tell you all of the negative stuff and all the good troubles in your world are just going to disappear, all of the folk around, you're going to straighten up, be right from here or now. I wish I could tell you that. But I'm going to be

honest with you and you all know I'm pretty honest and straight about some of the stuff that you are all stuck with. That's just the bottom line you're just stuck with somebody and some of this stuff is not going away.

Second Corinthians 12:7, the NIV version begins with this, "To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me. Three times, I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me, but He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulty. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

Paul pray to God three times. Take this thorn. And no one still knows what the thorn in his flesh was. Nobody knows. They don't know whether it was an illness or a human, or what. They don't know what it was, but three times, Paul pray to God to take this thing away. God told him, "You have to live with that. I put it there for purpose to keep you from getting too blown up in pride. You're going to have to live with that."

So, I'm here today to tell you that I'm not going to get any shouts on this one. There are some stuffs you got you're going to have to live with that. You're going to have to get to a point of acceptance because if you don't get to a point of acceptance, you are forever be worried about it, frustrated over it, fighting with it, and you would not have peace because you have not learned to accept the things you cannot change.

Of all of the great prayers, the Lord's prayer is the most well-known, but I do not believe it is the most preneed in modern times. The most preneed prayer, and if you go and you do a search on the internet for prayer posters, you're going to find two prayer posters that are going to be the most common that are going to dominate 80% of the results.

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Number one with the Lord's prayer, but I don't believe that's the most ordered or purchased prayer because I've not seen the Lord's prayer posted up in too many places. But this other prayer I have

seen, I've seen it all over the places. As a matter of fact, even when I was in college, I had a wooden plaque with that prayer written on the plaque hanging on my wall. I didn't have the Lord's prayer up there. I had that prayer hanging there though.

That prayer is called, "The Serenity Prayer." It was written by Reinhold Niebuhr in 1934. You're all familiar with it. Put it up on the screen. This is the Serenity Prayer that we have seen in so many places and it simply reads, "God, grant me the serenity or the peace to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

Some folks think there are some things they can change and they can't change their stuff. This is the most widely sold prayer, I believe, in the world, and it has some great wisdom to it. It is even used by Alcoholics Anonymous, who really made it really popular and used by other 12-step programs because that first line, that's the main thing that when you go into Alcoholics Anonymous, they make you understand there are some things you cannot change.

Some other stuff that cause you to drink, you can't change it because sometimes the stuff that drove you to drinking is outside of you and you can't change that. Some of you got a boss, you can't change that boss. That boss is your boss. You can change jobs, but you can't change their boss. And when you do change jobs, it's a good possibility it may be equally or worse boss on that job.

So, there are some things that you have to learn, but you said, "Well, I just don't want to have any more issues at work. I'm going to start my own business." Well, let me give you some news about that. Some stuff, you are just going to have to learn to deal with. You just got to accept some stuff and deal with some stuff and learn how to smile through it. Your peace does not come for making everything around you just smooth and easy. Your peace comes when even you're in the middle of a storm, even in the middle of a pain, you still got happiness and joy. That's where your peace comes.

That's why Paul says, "When I am dealing with persecutions and all of these afflictions and all of this thing, I can rejoice, because in my weakness, I am strong." Paul understood it. God says, "I'm not taking this thing from you. You're going to have to deal with

it.” And who is any more spiritual than Paul? How many of us have done more than Paul for Jesus?

So, if Paul had to go through this stuff, if God wouldn't pluck that thorn out of Paul, doesn't that mean that we might have just a little stuff that we might have to go through and keep going through. And see, even though the thing that we're going through right now may change, it's going to be something else.

Turn to the person next to you and tell them, “It's going to be something else.” It's going to be something else. Some of you right now are in a relationship when you think about, “If I can just get rid of this person.” If I can just get rid of this person. If I can get rid of him! If I could just get rid of him! Yeah, that's what you're thinking. If I can just get rid of him! But then, you get somebody else and sometimes they have just as many or maybe even more problems because now you got a double problem, you know what you got, you didn't expect anything from him.

You've gotten used to it, that rustling(ph). You've gotten used to it. So, you know what you have. Now, you've gotten to the point where you've just not even expected anything more, but you get through somebody new and you got these high expectations and then you're, “Shoot! What I have was better than this.” Now, you got more problem.

So, you've got to learn the A of Acceptance in life. It makes a difference. Now, I want to read to you the rest of that prayer because normally, we exist in sound bites. We never the get the full meal, we just get an appetizer.

That's the first part of that prayer, but Reinhold, he wrote more than that. This is the rest of the prayer. “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time, accepting hardship as a pathway to peace, taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it, trusting that You will make all things right, if I surrender to Your will, so that I may be reasonably happy in this life, and supremely happy with You forever in the next. Amen.” That's the rest of the prayer.

So, when we understand the Serenity Prayer, it says understanding that sometimes hardship is the path to peace. And I know you said, "Pastor, how can hardship be a path to peace?"

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Because sometimes, you don't know what peace is until you've been through a storm. You can't appreciate some stuff until you've been through some pain. You don't know what it is or have a sumptuous meal until you've been hungry. Sometimes, you don't appreciate really having something until you have gone without the thing. Until you have gone in the valley, then you can appreciate the mountaintop. If you've never gone without, you don't really appreciate what you have. So, hardship sometimes brings within us a greater and a keener awareness of what blessings we truly, truly have. And there are some things that you just cannot change with this acceptance.

Let me just outline some of these things for you. You're getting old. You can't change that. There's not a doggone thing you can do about that. You are getting old. Now, I wish I could change that. I wish I could find the Fountain of Youth, but I'm going to tell you at 63, my body is not the same as 23. That's just all that is to it. You are getting older and I got bad news for you that you may think is bad news, you're going to keep getting older. If your left knee had been hurting, give it another few years and your right knee is going to start to hurt.

So, the problem is, the stuff is not going to get better unless you do something actively to make it better. This is what the prayers says, the Serenity Prayer. Give me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change. If you've got a hurting left knee, you can start doing something about that because number one, it's mostly hurting because of two primary reasons. You go too much weight on the knee and you're not moving the knee. So, you got power to change both of those. But if you don't do anything, stuff is going to get worse. You cannot change that you are getting old.

I feel stuff in my body now, just didn't happen at 23. Forty years later, stuff is just different. Now, I can still outperform most 23-year-old men, but I got to do a whole lot more to try to stay even with that. I used to not work out from three or four months, it made no difference. I missed three or four days, now I'm feeling them. So, the body changes. I'm getting older. I accept that. I

have no choice for accepting that and my peace is with me because I recognize it and I accept it and I cannot change it. I can slow it up, I have to do more, but I can't change the fact that I am getting older and neither can you.

Some of you are talking about, "I'm not old enough." You hear some kids talking about, "Oh, I wish I was old enough so I could drive. Oh, I wish I was old enough so I could do this and I could do that. Oh, I wish I was old enough so nobody would tell me what to do." You're not going to ever be old enough for that. See, a lot of these stuff is just misconception.

I remember when I was in college and college was the most idyllic time in the --. I was trying to tell the people that you don't understand, this is paradise. "No! We got all of these professors, all of this." I said, "What work? All you've got to do is go to class. You got to go to two classes a day. You spend two hours a day standing, you can make an A in all your --, what are you talking about?" "Oh, no, man! I don't know. I'll be glad when I get out of here, get me a job, be on my own and make my own decision. I won't have to be under anybody." I said, "You don't understand. You don't understand." So, we are not at peace because we're getting older and some people are not at peace because they're not old enough, because they've not gotten out in the world and gotten all the responsibilities.

Some of us, we're not at peace because of other people. You cannot control other people. Now, if you have children, it is your responsibility to mold and to shape them, but you can't control how they turn out. Sometimes in the same household, you're going to have multiple children, you do the same thing in the same environment, you give all of them the same knowledge, the same wisdom, the same structure, and they turn out radically different. Because everyone has their own power of decision. You can only do what you're supposed to do, but you cannot control other folks.

Now, there are some situations particularly in business, what I have to deal when I can't control all the folks and a neighbor, I can't get rid of them, which I do. I can't control them, but I can get rid of them. So, that gives you an advantage, but sometimes, some of you are attached to these folks by blood and that's your Aney(ph) and then you knew that's your Aney. That's going to forever be your Aney and there's nothing you can do about, they're

going to always be your Aney. So, you need to have to learn to accept them or you're going to be in continual conflict with them, so you learn that's just the way they are and I would not let the way they are mess up my world.

Some people are just cantankerous. They're just not going to do right. I don't care what you do. You can't please them, you can't trust them, you can't give them your stuff and expect to get it back.

00:15:00

You all know what I'm talking about. You're not going to change them. They've been that way since you've known them. So, you have to accept that and don't let other people mess up your peace because they will.

Now, some of you just had a lightbulb and said, "Oh, that's me." Yeah, because that's you. So, you cannot control other people. See, when people get married, one other thing that mess up folks, women marry men thinking that they will change. Men marry women thinking that they won't and both of them will be dead wrong. And you cannot control other folks. You have to learn how to accept people as they are. It will greatly enhance your peace.

Keith Hernandez is one of baseball's top players. He's a lifetime 300 hitter who has won numerous Golden Glove Awards for excellence in fielding. He won a batting championship for having the highest average, the Most Valuable Player Awards in his league and even the World Series, yet with all of his accomplishment, he had one issue that was critically important to him. His father's acceptance and recognition that what he has accomplished is valuable.

This is what Keith Hernandez said in an interview about his relationship with his daddy. One day, Keith asked his father, "Dad, I have a lifetime 300 batting average. What more do you want?" His father replied, "But someday, you're going to look back and say, 'I could've done more.'"

Keith, he should realize, "I'm not going to change my daddy." Some of you are not going to change your daddy. Some of you your daddy was never there and you're not going to change that.

You're not going to change the government. I don't spend one minute of time worrying about what the government is doing because I can't change the government. That's a structure that was put in place with some deep stuff way beyond anything we can do. I cannot change what the government is doing. Now, what I can do is vote, which I do.

A lot of people talk about the government. They won't even vote. So, the power that you do have to change it, you realized that, "I make sure I never miss an election, but I can't change the government no matter who the president is, that stuff is systemic." And the bottom line is this, it's going to favor the rich, bottom line. Always has been, always will be. That's biblical days. (00:17:27) you'll be added into, they will have not even that which I have will be taken away. It's always going to favor the rich.

So, your chance that you want to be beneficial with the government, you need to be on rich side. That's just bottom line. That's something you are not going to change. It is a natural and a biblical principle. That's not going to change. No need of you wasting your time fussing about the principle. It's not going change.

So, there are some things that you just have to learn to accept. You can't change the price of gas. It goes up and down. And if you allow your emotions to go up and down based on the price of gas, you will always be in a continual flux. God had spoken to me on that. He just told me I was fussing --

Let me tell you this. I was just fussing to price of gas. The gas had gone up to 99 cents. Now, it sounds crazy right now, but the gas had gone up to 99 cents and I was at the pump and God just said, "Shut up! You earn multiples what the average person earns and you have to pay the same amount and they have to pay the same amount that you do, and you had just fussing about this gas. You need to be praising me for giving you the resources so you don't have to worry about how are you going to pay for it." And it changed my whole view. Every time I go to pump gas now, I don't care what the gas goes up to. I'm pumping in because I know for a man over making minimum wage, he has to pay the same amount per gallon as I do.

And not only that, more than that, I (00:18:54) his car burning more gas because I drive this little bit of gas-efficient car. He over down(ph) on hoop-d and that hoop-d burns some gas. So, not only does he have to pay the same amount of gallon, per gallon, he's getting less miles per gallon than I am. So, every time I pump my gas, I said, "Thank you, Lord, for giving me the provisions to fill my tank up." I've never had since he told me to shut up, the price of gas to take my peace.

Some of you are upset because of a breakup. They're gone. They're gone. Some of you from 30, 40, 50 years ago still upset about a breakup. They're gone! Maybe you didn't understand that because of the contraction. They are gone! And when we understand some basic things that allows us to have some peace. Accept. "But you don't know what he did. But you guys don't know what he did."

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I do understand. I understand they are gone and that's the part you need to understand. No, I'm not saying it doesn't take you some time to get over that, but you've got to accept they are gone. And if you don't ever accept that, men and women go through their grave and they'd never gotten peace because they never accept it, they are gone. And when you don't accept that, you will never have peace. There are some things you have to have, the serenity to accept on the things that you cannot change.

Another thing that you cannot change is the past, the past. You can't do one thing about what happened yesterday or last year, or last decade. You cannot change the past. Get over it. Get over it. I know I think Pastor James brought in that Bob Newhart -- where he was planning a psychiatrist and a lady came in, Jennifer, he just said, "Stop it." And every time, he just stop it. (00:21:07), "Stop it." And that was his whole (00:21:10) he didn't say, "Stop it." Stop worrying about the past, worry about what you do today and that makes the difference on what will happen in the future.

All of us have had some rough stuff in the past, all of us have had mistakes, missteps, all kind of things we wish we had never done. I'm reading the book right now called, "The Road to Stupid." Yeah, it's called, "The Road to Stupid." And it is about how we continually make the same -- and this is a business book. It's not

a personal book, it's a business book and it's talking about how we make the same mistakes over and over and over, and it starts out with this. "Supposed you have the money for your three biggest financial disasters, "The Road to Stupid."

So, it's trying to teach you how not to be stupid. One of the ways you'll not be stupid is don't do the same thing that messed you up in the past. We psychologically have a tendency to do the same things over and over and over and over. You cannot change anything of the past, but you don't need to bring the hurt, the pain, the behavior that caused the problems from the past into the present because that will duplicate the same thing in the future. You got to just get over it. You know it sounds simple, but that's the bottom line. And if we don't get over it, we're going to have the same stuff over and over and over.

And the final thing of what you cannot change, perhaps, the biggest one of all. This is major. You cannot change who's going to win the Super Bowl. Now, I know some of you said, "Pastor, what has that got to do with anything? What has that got to do with peace?" Do you know what happen when the Falcons played in the Super Bowl and the Falcons was winning all way up almost to the last few minutes? Do you know folks almost had to go to psychiatric care because of that? No, I'm serious. folks really had to go to psychiatric care because the Falcons lost the Super Bowl.

Now, for those of you who are listening to me on the internet, I made it louder. I'm talking about the Atlanta Falcons football team when they went to the Super Bowl, got to the last few minutes, had a big lead, the whole while got to the last few minutes and lost the Super Bowl and it sent some folks in Atlanta into a spiraling depression. That was serious.

You cannot change who wins the Super Bowl. And if you want to know who's going to win the Super Bowl, I'll tell you right now so you won't have to worry about it. The Rams are going to win and they will win it by 12 points. You said, "Pastor, how do you know that?" Well, I'm going to tell you how I know this deep. I analyzed all the stuff. You see, the Ram is actually a sheep. It's a male sheep. In slang term it's called a buck. A male goat, the slang term is also called a buck. So, a male ram is a buck, a male goat is a buck. My sign is Capricorn and that's a buck. That's why.

So, I don't care what kind of reason you've got. You cannot -- "Well, pastor, supposed the Patriots win by 50, will ever the Patriots win by 50?" I am a staunch American patriot. So, whatever the case is, I am not going to lose any peace over who wins or loses the Super Bowl. And believe it or not, I really wasn't kidding, psychiatrists have to deal with people who are such heavy sports fanatics when they're team loses a major event.

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Now, I read the story about the councilor and he said, "A man came in. His hockey team had lost and he was just all depressed." And the councilor first thought the man was kidding. Then, he realized the man wasn't kidding and he was going through all of the signs of extreme deep clinical depression and he went in to talk to his colleague about it. The other psychiatrist said, "Yes, I understand because I'm going through the same thing myself."

So, you've got to learn how to accept some things in life, things that you cannot change. Now, this is not saying that you don't try to change the things that you can change. See, there are three areas of the things that you cannot change.

Number one, stuff you just cannot change. No matter what you do, you just can't change it. Number two, stuff you can change, but you're not going to put that kind of effort and diligence into trying to change it. There's a whole lot of stuff wrong with it, where I see saved the whales. It's bad that they're killing all the whales, but to be honest about it, I'm not getting on that Green Peace boat going out, they're trying to block somebody, the harpoon. I don't think I'm going to do it.

A matter of fact, not only am I not going to do it, I ain't sending them any money. It's a thousand causes out there. I do what God has directed me to do and I try to stay focus on it because I've got enough stuff to do. I didn't get involved in a police brutality stuff, good cause, but I didn't get involved in trying to do anything about all of that. You got to make decisions on some of the things. Maybe if you can change it you have to ask yourself, "Am I going to put forth the effort?"

First, you need to ask yourself, "Am I going to even send the groups who are trying to do something about it in any resources or any support, clearly any money?" If the answer to that is no,

you are not going to do about it. So, there are some things that you might be able to do something about if you put the effort, but you're just not going to do it.

Then, there are some things that you can change and you are going to put the effort behind it and say, "I'm not going to focus on anything dealing with police brutality, but we're starting in the Atlanta public schools, it's already began, the Bronner Fund. We are going to do some things very similar of what's done here at the Arch with the GT render good grades fund. We're going to do this for Black African-American males in public schools. So, we're putting a program together because God has not let me into trying to get on the police about when they abuse somebody (00:27:22). I'm trying to work on (00:27:24) never in that position to start with.

And if you have a college education, your -- it's not saying that it can't happen, but if you have a college education, your probability that happen too, it just (00:27:35) to the floor. It's hardly any college-educated folks in jail. There is some, but they are in the good jails. That's the truth. So, I'm working on the other end to where I prevent things from happening in the first place. You got to learn how to accept stuff.

I had a situation this week, Friday, the manager came and said, "Mr. Bronner, we just broke all records in the company of sales for last month. It's the biggest month in the 30 years of the company." And he looked at me and said, "You don't seem to be very excited about that." I said, "I'm not because I remember what happened last time that happened, last time that happened and I got all excited. The very next day, I got a suit from California on a Prop 65 issue that ended up costing me \$130,000." When I'm praying and lamenting over this suit, it was just like Paul's thorn in the flesh. God says, "That was not Satan, I sent that and I sent that so you always remember don't you ever get excited about money because when you get excited about money, your emotions go up and down with your money."

And this might be some news to some of you, but do you know money goes up and down? Have any of you had that experience, money goes up and down some days like you got a plenty of money and the next day, you wouldn't know how you're going to pay your bills. Money goes up and down.

So, if your emotions, if your joy, if your peace is attached to how your money flow, you're just doing the same thing going up and down, up and down, up and down. So, I told myself, "That's why I'm not excited about it because I learned my lesson that time and I'm not going to go down the road to stupid again. God had not going to have to send me another two thorns, Got to be sending one thorn the first time. He will send two thorns the second time. So, He don't have to send me two more thorns on. I got that message."

The very next day after that, he came and said, "Actually, that was an error. There was a huge order that was counted twice." So, what went through. And I just thought that, that didn't affect me either. See, if the high didn't affect me, neither did the low. So, it just makes a difference. When we learn to accept things, it makes a difference in how we handle things. And I don't mean for you to not hope for something better, I don't mean for you to not hope for a situation to change, but I do mean for you not to particularly expect it if it has been that way.

00:30:10

Some of the stuff, you're just going to have to live with. And even if that situation fixes itself, it's always going to be something else. You see, I hope that human nature will change. I really do. But my reality is, I will always lock my car. You understand that? I hope that human nature will change, but I will always lock my car. Because human nature, it was thieves in the days of Jesus, it was thieves in the days of Moses. They stole from God, they stole from men. It's thieves today. They steal from God, they steal from men. Human nature more than likely is not going to change, so I will always lock my car.

As we go through this life and as all of us seek a greater and a higher level of peace, God will bring back to us as we get in obedience with some basic principles. Peace is not easy to obtain in an unpeaceful world, and everything around has so much turmoil and trouble and tribulation. How do you remain at peace when everybody else is all upset? That's how you know you are true Christian, when you stand out from the crowd and you can walk like Jesus walked. And even Jesus had to accept some things, but He said, "Lord, if this is thy will, so be it." And once He accept it, things changed.

Bow your heads. Dear Heavenly Father, right now, we just pray for a spirit of peace. Today in particular, a spirit of acceptance because there had been some things within this congregation that we have been battling with, and we're battling a fight that we cannot win because, often, we're battling against things we cannot change. It's not in our power to change those things. They're dealing with other people and other situations that's outside of our control. Help us to control and to manage the things that we can. And as we do that and as we learn to accept with serenity, the things that we cannot change, Father, our peace shall grow greater and greater the more. In thy son Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

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