

Sermon Series: *The Fruit of the Spirit*

The Fruit of the Spirit: Peace

Galatians 5:22 (ESV)

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

As we continue through our series on the fruit of the Spirit, today we come to peace. Peace. Paul tells us in this verse that peace is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. This means that peace is the natural result of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. When the Holy Spirit is in your heart you will experience peace.

The Importance of Peace

Peace is an immensely important concept. Peace is important to our lives today. We all yearn for the summer when we can get away for a vacation to enjoy “a little peace and quiet.” Every beauty contestant knows that she ought to mention peace at least once in her answers to questions if she hopes to win.

The Universal Quest of Humanity

Peace has been called “the universal quest of humanity.”¹ Peace is mentioned in the newspaper nearly every day. This past [Thursday](#) Israel’s Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, in his quest for peace did something he has never previously done—he turned to Arab TV to convey his desire to continue the peace process. In hope of advancing peace talks he turned to Arabic media and granted an interview with the Al-Arabiya satellite channel. Apparently taking steps toward peace is important to him.

The Purpose of the United Nations

Peace is important to whole world. In 1945 the United Nations was established with the expressed purpose of achieving world peace. Article 1 of the United Nations Charter says,

The Purposes of the United Nations are:

1. To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace.²

Peace is important to our contemporary world. Peace was equally important to the ancient world.

¹ Richard N. Longenecker, vol. 41, *Word Biblical Commentary : Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 261.

² Source <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter1.shtml> accessed 22 July 2011.

The Importance of Peace to the Biblical Authors

Peace is important to us today and it was important to biblical authors of old. Peace was incredibly important to the apostles. Paul prays for the peace of his readers in the opening sentences of each one of the thirteen New Testament letters he wrote³ and he concluded with a prayer for peace in seven of them.⁴ Peace, evidently, is immensely important to Paul. Peter follows a similar pattern. In both of Peter epistles he opens and closes them with a prayer for peace for his readers.⁵ The apostles John and Jude both include prayers for peace in their letters.⁶

What Does Peace Mean?

If peace is so important, then we need to know what it is. When the Bible says that peace is a fruit of the Spirit, what exactly does this 'peace' mean? Is this an external, corporate or national/political peace or is this an internal, personal peace, or is it both to some degree?

Webster's Dictionary defines peace as follows,

Peace

- 1) freedom from disturbance; quiet and tranquility; mental calm; serenity
- 2) freedom from or the cessation of war or violence; freedom from civil disorder; freedom from dispute or dissension between individuals or groups
- 3) a ceremonial handshake or kiss exchanged during a service in some churches symbolizing Christian love and unity

Peace is one of those terms which might be most helpfully defined by understanding what it is not. We may struggle a bit to define peace, but we clearly know when peace is not present.

This past Monday morning I awoke about 6:00 a.m. As I walked out of my bedroom I noticed that my daughter Mikayla's door, which is across the hall, was already open. I thought, "Wow! She's up early." Then as I turned to walk down the steps I heard a muffled conversation from within the boy's room.

When I descended the stairs and walked into the living room Mikayla was not sitting on the couch (which is where she usually sits and reads her Bible in the morning). I then assumed that the muffled conversation I heard was the result of all three of my children who had awakened early and were reading the Bible together in the boy's room. So I made some coffee and sat down in my chair to read my Bible.

A few minutes later Alex came down with the dog in his arms on his way to take her outside for a little relief. I asked him, "Is Mikayla in your room with you?" He said, "No." Surprised at his response, I repeated the question and he, looking at me as though I was strange, repeated the same response.

³ Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; Col 1:2; 1 Thes 1:1; 2 Thes 1:2; 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; Tit 1:4; Phlm 1:3.

⁴ 2 Cor 13:11; Gal 6:16; Eph 6:23; Phil 4:9; Col 3:15; 1 Thes 5:23; 2 Thes 3:16.

⁵ 1 Peter 1:2; 5:14; 2 Peter 1:2; 3:14.

⁶ 2 Jn 1:3; 3 Jn 1:14; Rev 1:4; Jude 1:2.

So I was then a bit concerned. If Mikayla was not in the boy's room, then where was she? So I went back up the stairs and into her room and walked in and looked around. She was not there. So then I thought about the basement. Perhaps she was downstairs in the basement on the couch. I went downstairs, but she was not on that couch either. I went back upstairs. Where could she be?

Perhaps she was wrapped up in the covers on her top bunk and I just missed her. I returned to her room and moved the covers on the top bunk. She was not there. So I went into the boy's room. I saw a mountainous pile of covers on the couch in their room. I went over and rustled through all the covers. Mikayla was not there. Where could she be?

So I went back downstairs. Sometimes she throws pillows behind the chairs and builds a little fort. Perhaps she was behind a chair and I just missed her. I checked behind both chairs and she was not there. So I went back upstairs and went into my room. Perhaps I had missed her and she was in the our bathroom. No Mikayla.

Then I thought maybe she was up in the attic sitting room with grandma and Pappa. I went upstairs into the attic. All was quiet up there. No sounds from grandma & Pappa's room. No talking. No Mikayla. I was getting very nervous.

Then I remembered that Pappa had spoken of going for an early morning walk around Horn Pond. Ah ha! That's where they were. They had left early for a little walk. So I went back downstairs and looked outside to be sure that the car was gone. But no. There was Pappa's car in the driveway. They had not gone for a walk.

Nervousness then turned into worry and intense concern. I then went back through every room in our house that I had previously been in and this time I even went into the garage and looked inside both cars and then checked outside on the deck. No Mikayla. She was nowhere to be found.

At my wits end, and having done all I knew to do to find my daughter, I sat down in my chair to pray. Thoughts of the abduction of Elizabeth Smart went through my mind. I was **not** at peace. The whole house was sleeping peacefully, but peace was not something that I was experiencing. Worry and anxiety, yes! Peace, absolutely not. Even if you have never experienced what peace is, you most certainly have at one point or another in your life experienced what it is **not**! I was not experiencing an internal disposition of mental serenity and quietness of soul. This was *not* peace.

Peace in Secular Greek Usage

The Greek word translated 'peace' in Galatians 5:22 is *eirēnē* (εἰρήνη). The word is used 96 times in the New Testament appearing in every New Testament book except 1 John. The primary meaning of this word in the secular Greek culture refers not to an internal peace or a relational peace but more toward a external state or condition, as in a "time of peace" or "state of peace."⁷

Originally the word referred to "an interlude in the everlasting state of war." The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* defines εἰρήνη as "the passionately asserted, emotionally felt and

⁷ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964) Strong's Greek #1515.

palpable opposite of πόλεμος”(polemos i.e. war). In a word, the primary meaning is the absence of war.

However, a secondary but rare use of the word refers to a “peaceful attitude,” but this refers more toward “the absence of hostile feelings rather than the presence of kindly feelings toward others.”⁸ In common Greek usage the word referred to “the legal security of the *pax Romana*.”⁹

So the secular Greek notion of peace referred more to an **external rather than an internal condition** and could be defined more in terms of the **absence of strife rather than the presence of blessing**.

Peace in Hebrew Usage

However Paul and the other biblical writers had a different and much more expansive meaning in mind. As they took up the word, they had in mind a God-centered Hebrew understanding of the word ‘peace.’ The Hebrew notion of peace meant “a set of favorable circumstances involving peace and tranquility—a state of quietness and calm.”¹⁰

This had reference both to external as well as internal conditions. It referred to physical, political environments as well as spiritual. Thus included in the meaning is “a state of freedom from anxiety and inner turmoil—‘peace, freedom from worry.’”¹¹

Shalom שְׁלוֹם

This fuller meaning of the word, of course, has its roots in the Old Testament word ‘shalom’ (šālôm). This word is incredibly rich in meaning and is “among the most important theological words in the Old Testament.” The word šālôm occurs over 250 times in 213 separate verses in the Old Testament.¹²

Seldom do we find in the OT a word which to the same degree as שְׁלוֹם can bear a common use and yet can also be filled with a concentrated religious content far above the level of the average conception.¹³

“The general meaning behind the root š-l-m is of completion and fulfillment—of entering into a state of wholeness and unity, or a restored relationship.”¹⁴ The word refers to a state of “completeness, soundness, welfare, peace;”¹⁵ “prosperity, health, well-being, and safety... which result from God’s

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible societies, 1996).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² R. Laird Harris, Robert Laird Harris, Gleason Leonard Archer and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 931.

¹³ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964) Strong’s Greek #1515.

¹⁴ Ibid., 930.

¹⁵ Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, electronic ed. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2000), 1022.

presence” and “activity in covenant.”¹⁶ The fullest understanding of the word shalom is not possible apart from a relationship with God.

God Is the Source of Peace

This brings us back to our notion of the fruit of the Spirit. The kind of peace that we are talking about this morning is the fruit of the Spirit. This peace comes only from the Holy Spirit. Only the Holy Spirit produces this kind of peace. This kind of peace finds its source in God Himself through the indwelling activity of His Holy Spirit. *The source of this peace is God and God alone.*

The Bible teaches us that God is the “God of peace.” In other words, peace is a constituent part of God’s very essence.

Romans 15:33 (ESV)

May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

Romans 16:20 (ESV)

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

I Corinthians 14:33 (ESV)

For God is not a God of confusion but [a God] of peace.

Philippians 4:9 (ESV)

What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

I Thessalonians 5:23 (ESV)

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 13:20 (ESV)

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant,

The LORD (Yahweh) Is Peace

The Hebrews understood peace to be part of God’s very name. They learned this from Gideon.

Judges 6:22 (ESV)

22 Then Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the LORD. And Gideon said, “Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face.”

23 But the LORD said to him, “Peace be to you. Do not fear; you shall not die.”

24 Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD and called it, *The LORD is Peace*. To this day it still stands at Ophrah, which belongs to the Abiezrites.

¹⁶ *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 931.

After Gideon realized whom he had seen, the angel of the LORD, he clearly expected to die. He knew that no one could see God face to face and live (Ex 33:20) and so he thought he would die. But the LORD spoke to him and said, “Peace (shalom) be to you. You will not die.”

Samson’s parents had a similar expectation after a visit from the angel of the Lord (Jud 13:22). This becomes a common theme throughout Scripture. Whenever an angel appears to a person, the first response is one of terror. Thus, in nearly every encounter with a human, the first word out of an angel’s mouth is “peace” (i.e. shalom).

There Is No Peace for the Wicked

The reason for this is because when one is in the presence of pure and eternal holiness, one becomes acutely aware of one’s own sinfulness. The reality of our own sin becomes so apparent that at the deepest levels of our soul we face the undeniable fact that our sin is completely incompatible with God’s holiness. This results in an utter and complete lack of peace.

Isaiah 48:22 (ESV)

There is no peace, says the LORD, for the wicked.

Isaiah 57:21 (ESV)

There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked.

We are all wicked, so what hope do we have of experiencing peace with God?

How Do We Experience Peace?

If we are sinful and God is righteous then how can we experience His peace. If He is completely righteous and we are completely sinful, then how can we enjoy His peace rather than endure His wrath (i.e. punishment against sin)? The answer is through faith in Jesus. Jesus removed God’s wrath and brings peace.

We are able to enjoy peace with God through the person and work of Jesus. Only a perfect Messiah can bring peace with a holy God. Long ago this aspect of the work of Messiah was prophesied.

Isaiah 9:6-7a (ESV)

*6 For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
7 Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,*

Messiah will bring political, external peace in the world. He will bring about an environment where political strife is absent. However, there is much more to His work. There is a deeper, inward and personal application to His work as it relates to God.

Isaiah 53:5 (ESV)

*5 But he was wounded for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;*

*upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his stripes we are healed.*

Jesus, Messiah, bore **our** sins on the cross. He was wounded for **our** transgressions. He was crushed for **our** iniquities. And the chastisement that was upon Him brought **us** peace... Peace with whom? Peace between governments and nations? No. He brought us peace with God of course. Paul says it this way,

Ephesians 2:14 (ESV)

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both [Jew & Gentile] one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.

Hostility between whom? Answer: between us and God. Verse 16 tells us that it is only through Jesus that we can be reconciled to God. And in verse 18 he tells us that through the Holy Spirit we have access to God the Father. **Peace with God is only possible through faith in Jesus.**

Romans 5:1 (ESV)

1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

God chooses to be at peace with everyone who will put faith and trust in Jesus, His only Son. Jesus purchased our peace with God through the shedding of His blood on the cross. This qualifies Him to give us the peace that He enjoyed with God the Father.

John 14:27 (ESV)

27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

There is a kind of peace that the world has to offer. The world can offer times of political peace. The world can offer *pax Romana* but it cannot offer *pacem cordis* (i.e. peace of heart). The world can offer an external state of peace, but it cannot deliver an internal quietness of soul.

We can, in this country, enjoy freedom from the almost daily bombings that plague the Middle East (and yesterday in Norway), but are our hearts any freer than theirs from worry and anxiety and fear? The peace that Jesus has to offer brings a heart that is free of trouble and fear. Jesus offers us a heart that is free from anxiety and worry.

How is this possible? It is possible only as we know and believe that everything that happens to us, good and bad, is under the sovereign control of Jesus Himself. The problem of evil is no hinderance to (Spirit produced) peace because Jesus said this just before He would experience the greatest evil ever enacted in the history of the world.

John 16:33 (ESV)

33 I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart, I have overcome the world.

Peace is possible even in the presence of tribulation. Jesus has overcome the world. All authority in heaven and on earth has been handed over to Jesus.¹⁷ Jesus possesses power and authority over every worry you have. Every fear that robs you of peace of heart is subject to the command of Jesus. Every sin that robs you of peace of soul is under the authority of Jesus. Every enemy who would stand against us, is ultimately subject to Jesus. There is nothing that is above the authority of Jesus.

This does not mean that our lives will be free from trouble! In the same sentence in which He claimed to have overcome the world He also said, *“In this world you will have tribulation.”* **The peace that Jesus offers is not circumstantial.** It transcends circumstances. It abides through circumstances and it gives us the power to endure circumstances and tribulation and evil.

How? Because all circumstances are temporary. Every trouble in this world is only temporary, even if it lasts your whole life. Yet the peace that Jesus offers is eternal because He offers peace with God and that relationship is eternal!

So why do we worry?

Was Jesus worried when Pilate said, “Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?” (Jn 19:10). Jesus said, *“The only authority you have over Me is what has been given to you by my Father above”* (Jn 19:11, my translation).

How could Jesus talk of peace on the night before His murder? He could because He knew it would not last AND He trusted in God. Jesus “entrusted His soul to a faithful Creator who judges justly” (1 Ptr 2:23; 4:19). Jesus could experience the peace of God in the process of dying because He trusted in the plan of God and the person of God. Jesus completely trusted that His Father was good and that His plan was good even though it involved His death.

Peace is possible even in the middle of dying when one’s trust is wholly in the goodness of God. We can enjoy the same peace that Jesus did when we restfully trust in God’s good plan for our lives also. Peace is absent when trust in God is gone. Peace is present when trust in God is present.

If Jesus has overcome the world (and He has), then why do we fret? Why are we anxious? Why do we wring our hands? Why is peace absent from our lives if the Prince of Peace dwells within our hearts through the presence of His Holy Spirit?

We fret and worry and wring our hands when we realize that we do not have the power to bring about the state of affairs that we desire or when we realize that the person or power in whom we are trusting is not going to deliver what we think we need.

Peace is absent to the degree that our trust is resting in anything else but God. Peace is present to the degree that we are resting our souls in faith-filled confidence upon a mighty Savior who has overcome the world.

¹⁷ Matt 28:18; 11:27; Dan 7:13-14; Jn 3:35; 13:3; 17:2; Acts 2:36; Rom 14:9; 1 Cor 15:27; Eph 1:20-22; Phil 2:9-10; Col 2:10; Heb 2:8; 1 Ptr 3:22; Matt 9:6; Jn 5:27.

APPLICATION

So what can we do to experience peace to a greater degree in our lives? Here's three suggestions.

1) Control Your Thoughts While Trusting In God

Experiencing the peace of God in our lives as a result of the fruit of the Spirit has everything to do with where your thoughts are. And where your thoughts are simply reveals where your trust is.

Isaiah 26:3 (ESV)

*3 You keep him in perfect peace
whose mind is stayed on you,
because he trusts in you.*

Peace of mind comes from singularity of focus. Perfect peace comes from a mind concentrated on the power of God and not on the presence of a problem. A mind fixed on trusting in God despite the circumstances will experience peace, while a mind fixed on the present problem will experience the troubled frustration of unmet expectations. A person fixed on the power of God will overcome the present problem because her trust is in God who will always prove to be greater than any problem.

Romans 8:6 (ESV)

6 To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

If your thoughts are constantly fixed upon what can be seen then you will ignore the greater reality of what cannot be seen. The mind set on the flesh thinks God is not near and does not care. If you are a child of God nothing could be farther from the truth. The mind that is set on the Spirit knows that God has not abandoned His children in the middle of the trial. He is present with you through the trial by the indwelling presence of His Spirit within your soul. We have within us the Spirit of the One who overcame the world.

Stay your thoughts on the power and greatness and nearness of God through the trial. Trust in the goodness of His Spirit and He will deliver you (even if you must die).

2) Embrace Righteousness & Pursue It

You cannot cling to sin and expect to experience the peace of God in your life. We need to forsake all sin and pursue righteousness.

Isaiah 32:17 (ESV)

*17 And the effect of righteousness will be peace,
and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.*

One of the roles of the Holy Spirit is to sanctify the believer. He does this by causing us to be uncomfortable with the sin that remains in our lives. He brings sin to mind so that we can turn away from it and forsake it. The effect of turning away from sin and embracing righteousness is peace and quietness of soul. ***There is nothing so peaceful as a clean conscience!***

3) Confess the Sin of Worry and Fight Against It

The Bible commands us not to worry but to trust in God by committing our concerns to Him through prayer. ***Prayer is one of the means through which God brings peace into our lives.*** As we lay our burdens at His feet through prayer, we are then free from the weight of it.

Philippians 4:6-7 (ESV)

6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Oswald Chambers wrote the following meditation on Psalm 37:8. It is the July 4 devotion found in his book *My Utmost For His Highest*.

Worrying always results in sin. We tend to think that a little anxiety and worry are simply an indication of how wise we really are, yet it is actually a much better indication of just how wicked we are. Fretting rises from our determination to have our own way. Our Lord never worried and He was never anxious, because His purpose was never to accomplish His own plans but to fulfill God's plans. Fretting is wickedness for a child of God.

Have you been propping up that foolish soul of yours with the idea that your circumstances are too much for God to handle? Set all your opinions and speculations aside and "abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Ps 91:1). Deliberately tell God that you will not fret about whatever concerns you. All our fretting and worrying is caused by planning without God in mind.¹⁸

Praying For Mikayla

When I sat down in my chair after failing to find Mikayla, my mind first went to worry. The first thought that came into my mind was about the abduction of Elizabeth Smart in 2002. Worry was my default tendency. However, I had to control my thoughts and focus my mind in prayer to my powerful heavenly Father.

As I prayed, the abundant peace washed over me as I remembered that Mikayla had spent the night with a friend. She was safe. She was not missing. All was right in the world.

My definition of peace is, "the quiet state of soul that results when nothing is missing."

Is anything missing in your life? All that is missing in your life can be found in Jesus.

If peace is a universal quest
then where can our souls find rest?

Peace is more than the absence of strife,
It's a Christ-centered, faith-filled, trusting life.

Our Father knows our tendency to fear,
that's why His Spirit is ever near.

Ask Jesus to fill what is missing in your life and He will do it.

¹⁸ Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest* ed. James Reimann (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 1992) July 4.