

3. The Fruit of Peace

Philippians 4:4-7 & Galatians 5:22-23

Intro

Years before her death, Elizabeth Taylor was once quoted in a popular tabloid saying, “God knows I have tried. I have tried fame, food, men, drugs, and drink, but I have never found peace.” The article continued stating that as Taylor looked at her sleeping mother so very near death, she sadly said, “Maybe death is the only peace.”

Many people are looking for peace, inner peace, a peace that transcends life’s circumstances.

I want to begin with considering the most basic question of all about peace.

How would you define peace? Some say it is the absence of conflict and trouble. We know that Jesus’ description of peace didn’t mean merely the absence of interpersonal conflict, because conflict is a part of life. In fact, in John 16:33 Jesus said, “*I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*”

We can categorize the nine fruits into three groups.

1. Inward: love, joy, peace
2. Outward: patience, kindness, goodness.
3. God-ward: faithfulness, meekness, self control.

Today’s message of peace is our third study, and the last in the inward group with six more to follow.

Peace in the Bible

Peace is a major theme in the Bible. It appears more than 80 times and it occurs at least 1 time in every one of the 39 books of the New Testament.

We need the peace which comes from God because at some point in our lives we all struggle to maintain the peace we really need.

- For some it will be the death of a loved one— a child, parent, or spouse.
- For others it will be a heart attack, cancer, or another life threatening disease.
- Still others face divorce, financial ruin, or the loss of a significant dream.
- Sometimes the tragedies aren’t even personal— who’ll ever forget the senselessness of 9-11.
- Tragedy comes into every life. The details vary, but the experience does not.

So calamity will come. How do you face it? Do you become anxious? Or, do you face it with calm? What is that calmness? In a Christian it is a peace that passes all understanding.

Philippians 4:6-7

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. [NKJV]

Did you know that anxiety is contemplating your future without God!

True peace is not to be found outside of the human heart. It is to be found inside through a relationship with God. Peace is not a state of mind, or a circumstance in nature. It is a condition of

the heart. It is a fruit of the Spirit, a gift from God.

Peace – the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22)

The peace (Greek: *eirene*) spoken here is tranquility of mind based on a right relationship with God. Like joy, peace has nothing to do with circumstances.

The verb form means "*to hold together.*" You experience peace when fear doesn't control you because you know everything is under God's control. No matter what happens, you know that everything between you and God is right and that He is in control.

When you remember that everything God is doing in your life is for your good - that produces peace. Romans 8:28, "*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*"

Spiritual peace doesn't necessarily involve peaceful circumstances. However, if you carry a peaceful heart into turbulent circumstances, you'll still experience peace.

This Fruit of the Spirit, peace, is a freedom from the fear of what might happen in the future and a freedom in the midst of present troubles or difficulties.

Jesus says, "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*" (John 14:27).

A troubled heart is feeling fear over something that may or may not happen. We might name this fear "worry or "anxiety."

Then He goes on to say, "*and do not be afraid.*" Here is a second kind of fear: anxiety felt in the presence of current trouble, evil, or pain that is real.

In other words Jesus is saying, "Trust Me! It's useless to worry about something over which you have no control, don't worry over something that may or may not happen, and don't be anxious and fearful even in the presence of current trouble or difficulty."

How can we have such peace and such courage? What was the very first fruit of the Spirit we explored a few weeks ago? It was the fruit of Love. We saw that love is the governing "Fruit of the Spirit." All the other fruits overflow from love.

Apostle John shares a fantastic promise in 1 John 4:18, "*There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.*"

I can have peace in times of real trouble, evil, or pain; I don't have to be troubled about what may or may not happen tomorrow because God's perfect love drives out the spirit of fear. This is the "*Peace that surpasses understanding,*" the peace the world cannot give because it comes from the Spirit.

Jesus is our Peace

Jesus is the Prince of Peace, both in the sense that he was supremely peaceful Himself and in the sense that he dispenses his peace to those who are his. Even when he confronted Satan in the wilderness, Jesus had perfect peace, knowing his Father was continually with him and would supply his every need.

It is his own peace that he gives to his followers: "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you*" (John 14:27).

Humanity was made to worship their Creator, and if we are out of sync with God there will never be peace in our hearts.

Real peace consists not in the absence of danger but in the presence of God.

Isaiah 26:3 has a wonderful promise for all true believers: “*You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is steadfast on You, because he trusts in You*” (NKJV).

You can personalize this verse and substitute him for your name. Like the following: “*You will keep Isaac in perfect peace, whose mind is steadfast on You, because Isaac trusts in You.*”

The word “*Perfect*” is not in the Hebrew text! Rather the word for “peace,” shalom, is repeated twice: “shalom – shalom.” It’s like a super-superlative.

Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein suggests that the second use of the word shalom is not so much for emphasis as it is for definition and interpretation. That is why there is a line between the two words in the Hebrew text. “This idiom of duplication distinguishes pseudo-peace from God’s peace, which is total peace, encompassing all dimensions of our nature. It begins with our minds and reaching our emotions, wills, and bodies, relationships, sense of righteousness, and practice of justice.” We can understand why English translators have used the word, “perfect,” even though it is not in the text.

God keeps the believer in a state of peace—through sorrow, sickness, pain, danger, and evil, whatever our lot may be.

The secret to such keeping, sustaining peace is twofold—(1.) a steadfast mind and (2.) trust in Jesus.

The word steadfast is the key. It has two basic meanings: (1.) “to lean upon” and (2.) “to support.” To keep our peace, we must “lean on Jesus for our support.”

Peace & Sin

Finally, unconfessed sin will rob you of your peace. The fruit of the Spirit is the Peace of Jesus and it comes by grace through faith in Him. His peace is incompatible with sin. Unconfessed sin and the Peace of Jesus cannot coexist in the same heart.

J. C. Ryle in *Foundations of Faith* makes this point: “Without justification it is impossible to have real peace. Conscience forbids it. Sin is a mountain between anyone and God, and must be taken away. The sense of guilt lies heavy on the heart and must be removed. Unpardoned sin will murder peace. True Christians know this well. Their peace arises from a consciousness of their sins being forgiven, and their guilt being put away. . . . They have peace with God, because they are justified” (Source: J. C. Ryle in “*Foundations of Faith.*” Christianity Today, Vol. 35, no. 8.)

Has some unconfessed sin robbed you of His peace that surpasses all understanding? When you repent, God forgives, and peace is restored.

The fruit of the Spirit is peace.” The source of that peace is Jesus. True peace is spiritual, inward, and it is “The peace of God which transcends all understanding.”

Conclusion

The Great Chicago Fire occurred in 1871. Over 300 people died & another 100,000 were left homeless. A man by the name of Horatio Gates Spafford, an attorney, lost a lot of real-estate in the fire. To make matters even worse, his son died about the same time. In spite of his great personal loss Spafford unselfishly helped others who were homeless, and grief-stricken because of the fire. Because of his generosity and service he was well known throughout Chicago as a sincere, devout Christian. About two years later, in November 1873, Spafford and his family decided to take a vacation. Spafford was a good friend of the evangelist D. L. Moody, and his family decided to meet

Moody on one of his evangelistic campaigns in England, and then from there the family would travel on to Europe.

However, just before they were to leave Horatio was unexpectedly detained by urgent business concerns in Chicago. The decision was made that his wife Anna and their four daughters would go ahead to England and he would catch up with them as soon as possible. Tragedy was to strike on that trip. Just off Newfoundland, the ship collided with an English sailing vessel and sunk within 20 minutes. Anna Spafford was one of the 47 passengers who survived. Tragically all four of their daughters were part of the 226 who died. Anna Spafford's heartbreaking telegram to her husband simply read: "Saved alone." The grieving father immediately set sail for England to join his grief-stricken wife. As the ship that he was traveling on passed the approximate location where his daughters had drowned, Horatio Spafford wrote the words to the hymn, "It Is Well With My Soul."

Lyrics of the Hymn: *It Is Well*

"When peace like a river attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea-billows roll, Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to know; "It is well, it is well with my soul."

Tho' Satan should buffet, tho' trials should come, Let his blessed assurance control, That Christ has regarded my helpless estate, and hath shed His own blood for my soul.
It is well, with my soul. It is well, it is well with my soul."