Fruit of the Spirit – Peace

Gal. 5:22 “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace

DEFINE PEACE:
--calm --truce --cease fire
--free from agitation of mind and spirit
--the state of tranquillity or quiet
--a state of security and order within
--freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions.
--harmony in personal relationships
--an agreement to stop hostilities between those that have been at enmity
--free from tension --serene --placid --lighthearted
--physically, mentally and emotionally undisturbed

In the New Testament, the word "peace" is found at the beginning or end of every epistle except for James and 1st John. The breadth of its meaning is apparent when it is linked with "grace" (Romans 1:7), "life" (Romans 8:6), and "righteousness" (Romans 14:17). What are the different shades of meaning of this wonderful word?

Let’s talk about peace. Peace on the inside. Peace in relationships. Peace with one another. There are two misconceptions that I want to talk about first before we look at the biblical peace that Paul is talking about.

Misconceptions about peacemaking:

1. It is not avoiding a problem.
   Just because you or I have failed to discuss a problem, doesn’t mean that we have peace. Unresolved conflict many times is the very root of marriages disintegrating. And so, just because you and I failed to discuss the issue, doesn’t necessarily mean that we truly have peace.

2. It is not appeasing another person.
   It’s not an appeasement. It’s not me just trying to make you feel good or get along with you. It’s not where one person wins and the other person loses, where one person constantly appeases the other, by trying to do anything possible to make some kind of a false peace within the family structure or within a working relationship.

Shalom means order and well-being.

Many times when we think of peace, we think of the word that the Jewish people use: "Shalom," which we think means peace. But what it really means is "order and well-being." So when they say Shalom, what they’re really saying is in your life may you have order and well-being. May you have a sense of security. May you have a sense of a foundation underneath your feet. (Like Israel, you could always be at war but still have peace)
Peace is a result of obedience to God and assurance that he is in control. Both of those ingredients must be there for us to have a sense of peace. One of my favorite passages of Scripture about peace is the one in Isaiah 48:17-18 (NIV).

17 This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. 

18 If only you had paid attention to my commands your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea.

In this passage of Scripture if you’ll go on down about three or four verses down to verse 22, 23, he talks about the fact that there is no peace for the wicked. So the peace that we want to talk about today, the peace that Paul talks about, which is part of the fruit of the spirit in our life, is a direct result of obeying God and giving him control of our life. It gives us a sense of well-being.

Let me illustrate.

In the Old Testament is the story of Gideon. Judges 6:1-24

How can Gideon make a sacrifice to the God of peace when there’s all kind of tension around him? When he is facing a very dark period in his life, where he’s going to go into battle, where there’s going to be all kind of hostility, how can Gideon make an altar to the God of peace in that situation? Very simple. You see, Gideon understood Jehovah Shalom. He understood peace. What it means is that you have a sense of security, a sense of direction, a sense of the presence of God in the midst of tension, turmoil, hostility, and battle. The peace that God promises you and me is not a peace absent of trouble. What he promises is, to find us in the midst of our trouble, our difficulty, our dark days, and walk into our life and speak peace to our spirit. **Even while everything around us is unraveling and coming undone. That’s the peace that God promises.**

Now, if you look in God’s word, there are three experiences of peace for the believer. I’ll preview all three of them and then I’m going to camp on the third one this morning.

**Three experiences of peace for the believer:**

1. **Peace with God -- a spiritual experience.**

   Jesus said, "I give you peace, the kind of peace that only I can give. It is not like the peace that this world can give. So don’t be worried or afraid."

   When we talk about having peace with God what we’re really saying is that God, through his son Jesus Christ on a cross, has forgiven us of our sins and our heart no longer condemns us. John said, "If our heart condemns us not, then we have confidence toward God." A peace that comes in knowing that our sins are forgiven and that Jesus Christ is our Savior. A peace that comes from knowing that our name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. The peace that comes from knowing that our God will never, never, as the Hebrew writer said, "forsake us or leave us." It’s what John Wesley was describing when he said about the people he led: "My people die well." What did he mean? That when they come to the time of death, they have a peace that only God can give..

2. **Peace of God -- an emotional experience.**

   If we find no peace within ourselves, it is useless to seek it elsewhere.
It’s the peace of God which comes to our life as God’s children, especially during dark times. We feel it. It holds us steady when there is a tendency within us to not be steady. And look at Romans 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God …” Would you underline the word "good," please? Paul tells us that if we love God and are walking obediently in his plans, then everything that happens to us is for our good.

There are some things that you and I will never understand as long as we live here on earth. But knowing that God is sovereign and in control, Paul said, "All things work together for good"

Look at Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. This describes it better than I could ever describe it. "And the peace of God," notice this, "which transcends all understanding." You and I can’t even understand the peace of God; in other words, we can feel the peace of God without understanding it. It’s great.

Do you ever think of peace as a guard? What does that look like?

"It is Well With My Soul" is one of my 5 favorite hymns. I don’t know if you know the story behind it, but the man who wrote it lost his whole family at sea. Successful businessman had sent his family ahead to Europe. The ship went down. And when he received the cable of the loss of his family, he went across the sea himself and had the captain of the ship show him just about the place where his family went down to a watery grave. And as he was standing over the burial site of those that he loved the most in life, he got out his pen and his pad, and he wrote those words, "It is well, it is well with my soul." Peace with God that comes through Jesus Christ. Peace of God which is the gift for every believer that knows him.

3. Peace on earth -- a relational experience.

Psalms 133:1, "...Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity!"

I want to talk about that kind of peace because here’s what I believe: for the Christian, this is the toughest kind of peace. It’s hard for us to turn the other cheek, to walk the second mile. And yet I’m also convinced that if we possessed this kind of peace and exhibited it into culture and society, this would bring thousands of people to the kingdom of God, because the world doesn’t understand anything about this peace that gives instead of takes.

Matthew 5:9, "...Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

How to be a Peacemaker (P.E.A.C.E.)

So let me take the word peace and do an acrostic.

Before we do the acrostic I want to mention one more thing. Before you can be a Peacemaker, you need to be a person that is filled with peace first. Your relationship with God ought to be producing peace in your own personal life and if its not then you cannot expect others to respond
to your peace making efforts. You may be able to bring about a temporary truce but not a real peace.

P - Plan a peace conference.

Matthew 5:23-24 23 “Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.

Psalms 34:14 Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it.

If you want to have a good relationship with people, plan a peace conference. Think of the person that you have a problem with and sit down. We know about nations having peace conferences, I want you to plan a peace conference. Look what it says in Matthew, Chapter 5, "If you remember that your brother has something against you, go at once," underline that phrase, "go at once to make peace."

How to plan a peace conference:
The psalmist said, "Seek peace and pursue it."

1. Take initiative.
God’s word says, "Go at once." You see, whether we are the offended or the offender, as believers when we know there’s an offense, we should initiate peace regardless of who started it or whose fault it is.

2. Work hard at peacemaking.
The psalmist was so realistic when he basically said, "Try to live in peace with everyone. Work hard at it." Let me ask you a question. Try to live in peace. How many of you know one person it’s hard to have peace with? Well, the Psalmist said pursue peace and that is work.

E - Empathize with their feelings. (How to be a peacemaker)
1 Peter 3:8 To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit;
Philippians 2:4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.
Look at Romans 15:1 (NIV) We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Circle the words (bear with the failings of the weak)

How to empathize:

1. Listen without lecturing.
If you care, you’ll be aware. Listen without interrupting with your personal thoughts. Many times it is best to not answer until the next day giving yourself time to think through what the other person just shared.
2. Make an effort to understand.
The Scriptures teach us that peacemaking takes a great deal of effort. Again, you remember the verse, "Try to understand your wives."

3. Focus on the needs of others.
If someone is hurting you, it’s because they are hurting. You empathize by focusing on the needs of others. And that’s why I had you circle the three words. Doubts, fears, and interest. I promise you when you begin to take the doubts, the fears, and the interests of others and make them your primary concern, you’ll begin to empathize with them.

A - Attack the problem, not the person. (How to be a peacemaker)

Ephesians 4:25 (NIV) “Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.” Speaking truthfully means it must be done thoughtfully. Many of our responses are so quick that simply is an attack and the person on the receiving end perceives it as a lie, and it often is. How many times have you said “You always do this …” or “You will never change”?

Ephesians 4:15 (NIV) Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.” This is part of spiritual growth, speaking the truth in love. Attacking a person, telling them things like you know their mind or heart or motivation is being judgmental and will harm not help your spiritual growth.

Ephesians 4:29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

Whenever you’re going to sit down and work out conflict, deal with the problem not with the person. Boy, that’s hard sometimes, isn’t it? Look what Paul said to us in Ephesians, "When we lie to each other, we are hurting ourselves." In other words, when we don’t discuss the real issues.

Rules of engagement: From John Maxwell

1. Never compare.
Don’t say Susan’s husband helps with the laundry. Why can’t you be more like Tom’s wife.

2. Never condemn.
Words like "you should," "you must," "you want," "it’s all fault." You know, usually in an argument or any kind of conflict whenever you start with the word "you," it’s bad.

3. Never command.
In other words, never, in an argument, tell somebody by force you demand them to do something. Especially husband, please don’t pull the “wives, obey your husband” card. Treat your wife like an equal … especially since she superior to you anyway … and she knows it.
4. **Never challenge.**
When I say this, I mean don’t threaten if it doesn’t work. You know what the two most common ways we threaten in a marriage? Either by money: "I make the financial decisions in this home, or I’m not going to give you any." Or "Well, if you don’t do this I’m going to leave." Don’t do that. It’s not a good way to argue and to fight.

5. **Never condescend.**
In other words, don’t belittle, ridicule, play psychologist. Don’t try to tell them you know what their problem is.

6. **Never contradict.**
In other words, don’t interrupt. Wait your turn. Very hard to do when they pull the “You always” card.

7. **Never confuse.**
Don’t bring in an unrelated subject or an issue. We bring an unrelated subject when we’re losing. We see we’re losing and we say, "Oh, let me pull some things back out here." It’s like the guy who went to the marriage counselor with his wife and said, "Every time my wife and I argue she becomes historical." The psychologist said, "I think you mean hysterical." "No," he said, "I mean historical. When we argue she tells me everything I’ve ever done wrong."

**C - Cooperate as much as possible.** (How to be a peacemaker)

Romans 12:18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.
James 3:17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.
Psalm 37:37 Mark the blameless man, and behold the upright; For the man of peace will have a posterity.

Cooperate often means compromise. Compromise with your wife, it doesn’t have to always be your way.
If you’re wise, you’ll compromise. All great relationships are built on compromise. They have to be because at least two people are involved in a relationship and there can be no relationship if one individual always gets his/her way.

**E - Emphasize reconciliation, not resolution.** (How to be a peacemaker)
Reconciliation: To re-establish the relationship.
Resolution: To resolve every issue.

2 Corinthians 5:18 (NASB) Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,
Colossians 3:15 (NASB) Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

2 Peter 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our
Lord; Want more peace? Then get more knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord

There’s a difference between the two. Don’t try to resolve every issue. You know, we’re different. We’re individuals. I can promise you, not every issue is going to be resolved. No matter how much I may work at it or want it, the issue is not going to be resolved. But we can always work towards reconciliation. We can always work towards loving one another.

Here is the way Paul puts it in Philippians 2:1-5

1 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. 5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Please understand that you can have the same mindset of Christ because you have the same Holy Spirit dwelling within you that enables you to do so.

Concluding thoughts:

The peace that Jesus offers comes only as the result of God’s calling, by His Spirit through which He works in and through us, to bring us into loving submission to the way of peace. That is the way of daily talking and walking with God, coming to know intimately His faithful, loving use of His wisdom and power to complete His glorious purpose in our lives. It produces a peace that passes all understanding because then we understand that everything is under perfect control Romans 8:28-30

A real understanding of God’s relationship to you will result in peace. Look at the way Paul put it in Romans 8:38 “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” That my friend is a perfect picture of peace in a person’s life. May it be yours and mine.