



**The Fruit of the Spirit is Peace,
A Calm that Only Comes from God**
Romans 5:1-2, Romans 12:18, Philippians 4:9

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All of us have problems. Problems that interrupt life, problems that annoy us, and problems that scare us. All of us have problems that rob us of peace.

Stress robs us of peace. We live in a constant state of busyness, and stress is a way of life. We have too much to do and too little time to do. Our lives are overloaded and we're constantly overwhelmed. It may be deadlines at work, demands of family, or a tough class at school. Stress robs us of peace.

Worry robs us of peace.¹ Where sadness is about the past, about what has happened, worry and anxiety is about the future, about what might happen. We worry about things that are out of our control. Some of us are worried about money. Some of us are worried about health. Worry robs us of peace.

Anger robs us of peace. Unfortunately, conflict is a way of life. Perhaps you're carrying bitterness or resentment toward someone. And every time you think of that person or see that person, you bristle and all that emotion stirs up inside. Anger robs us of peace.

Grief robs us of peace. Perhaps a loved one passed away this year. And a birthday or anniversary is coming up, only to remind you that they are no longer here. Grief robs us of peace.

So, where can we go to relieve the stress, to calm the anxiety, to release the anger, and to comfort the grief? Where can we go to find peace? To the one who is peace.

Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you ... Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27, NIV). And He later said, "(Everything I have told you is) so that in Me you may have peace" (John 16:33).

This summer, we're talking about the fruit of the Spirit, and peace is one of those fruits. Jesus also said, "A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit." And then He said, "You shall know them by their fruits."² In other words, *the way you live proves what lives in you*. The fruit of the Spirit is proof that *Christ* lives in us. The fruit of the Spirit includes the character traits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. But there's more to it than being a nice person. The fruit of the Spirit is proof that *Christ* lives in us. God's desire is that we would be "conformed to the image of His Son." He is constantly at work in us; molding us to look like Jesus, to love like Jesus, and to live like Jesus in every way. What we see in Jesus is what others should see in us.

Again, *the way you live proves what lives in you. Therefore, when you look in the mirror, do you see the fruit of the Spirit? When others look at you, do they see the fruit of the Spirit? Do others see peace in you?*

PEACE WITH GOD

There are three ways we can experience the peace Jesus promised. The first is *peace with God*. Jesus did not come to give us advice on how to handle stress. Jesus came so that we experience ultimate peace.

Romans 5 says, “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, *we have peace with God* through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1-2, NIV).

Jesus came so that we might experience peace with God. What does that imply? Exactly what the Bible says. That we were “enemies of God.” Sin made us enemies with God. But the good news is that “while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son” (Romans 5:10, NAS). When Jesus died on the cross, He absorbed all that we deserved for everything we’ve ever done wrong. And by dying in our place, by being our substitute, we are “justified,” acquitted, declared not guilty, cleansed, forgiven. Through Jesus, we are reconciled to God and forgiven of everything we’ve ever done wrong. We have “peace with God.”

We also have “access” to God. In Greek literature, this word described being ushered into the presence of royalty. One author describes it this way. “Jesus ushers us into the very presence of God. He opens the door for us to the presence of the King of Kings; and when that door is opened what we find is *grace*; not condemnation, not judgment, not vengeance, but the sheer, undeserved, incredible kindness of God.”³

Through faith in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven by God, we are reconciled to God, we have peace with God, we have access to God, and we can know without a doubt that we are loved by God. “How great is the love the Father has lavished upon us, that we should be called the children of God, and that is who we are!” (1 John 3:1).

Jesus Christ is called the “Prince of Peace,” and He wants every person to experience peace with God. If you’re not a Christian at this point in your life, Jesus wants you to experience that peace. And the moment you believe in Him, and surrender your life to Him, you will.

- Peace means never again wondering or worrying about where you stand with God. To know Jesus is to have peace with God.
- Peace means never again feeling isolated or alone. It means having access to God and having an intimate, personal, day-by-day, moment-by-moment relationship with Him, and being able to call on Him anytime you want.
- Peace means never being defeated by life’s problems. It means leaning on God to help you overcome all the stress and worry and every other problem you may have.
- Peace means never doubting your worth or your value. It’s knowing that you are accepted by God. It’s knowing that you are loved by God. It’s knowing that you are a child of God.

One billboard displayed this message. “No Christ. No Peace. Know Christ. Know Peace.” Real peace, lasting peace, is found only in Jesus. And the moment you believe Him and trust Him with your life, you will know peace.

PEACE WITH OTHERS

Peace with God makes it possible to have *peace with others*. Romans 12 teaches us, “*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone*” (Romans 12:18, NIV). But we all know that relationships can sour, and that some of the most intense emotions we experience are due to relationships gone bad.

Perhaps it’s your boss who demands too much and never acknowledges your hard work. Perhaps it’s a trusted friend who let you down. Perhaps it’s your spouse, that person lying in bed beside you, with whom you’re angry. Perhaps it’s one of your children, or your mother-in-law, or your brother or sister. Maybe the father who put too much pressure on you and never said, “I’m proud of you,” or the mother who still tries to tell you how to run your life and raise your kids. There are plenty of reasons my relationships sour, but Jesus refuses to let us settle for that.

The topic of the fruit of the Spirit comes from Galatians 5, and these pleasant, Christ-like characteristics are contrasted with not-so-pleasant, selfish characteristics. “Strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions” (Galatians 5:20, NAS). This happens in family, this happens in the workplace, and this happens in the church.

Paul and Barnabas were two of Christianity’s first missionaries. But they had a disagreement. Barnabas wanted to take Mark along on the trip. But Paul insisted that Mark was disqualified, because Mark had deserted them on the last trip. Paul didn’t believe Mark was reliable, but Barnabas wanted to give him a second chance. The Bible says that a “sharp disagreement” caused them to part ways.⁴ Barnabas took Mark and went one direction, and Paul went another. This was not a first-tier theological issue. This was not a Gospel issue. But it was divisive. And it created distrust and conflict between two friends, between two church leaders.

That’s why years later, Paul wrote so often about unity. “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Romans 12:18, NIV). “Make every effort to do what leads to peace” (Romans 14:19, NIV). “Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you” (2 Corinthians 13:11, ESV).

Paul charged the church at Philippi, “Make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:2-4, NIV). This applies to church, to your family, and to every relationship you have.

Paul confronted the church at Ephesus, “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice” (Ephesians 4:31, NIV). We hold on to these emotions because we don’t want to let the other person off the hook. But resentment only hurts us. Get rid of resentment, “get rid of all bitterness.” And “be kind to one another, tenderhearted,

forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:31-32, ESV). Again, this applies to church, to family, and to every relationship you have.

So, what do we do with conflict? We have three options. One, you can resent the person. Stuff your feelings. Take it as long as you can, until at some point, you blow up. Two, you can retreat. You can avoid them, walk away from the friendship, divorce, unfriend them from Facebook. Three, you can work to resolve it. “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Romans 12:18, NIV). You can go through the painful, yet worthwhile, process of reconciliation.

And you have to look in the mirror. And you have to admit that you’re not perfect, that you can be difficult to get along with, and that you’re not always right. When it comes to having healthy relationships, and being at peace with others, ask yourself, “What am I doing to make this relationship worse? What can I do to make it better?”

“The fruit of the Spirit is ... peace.” Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9). Are you a peacemaker? I don’t mean acquiescing and giving in to stubborn people. I mean, are you a peacemaker? Are you an agent of peace? Do you carry the fruit of the Spirit into your relationships?

In our planning meeting this week, we talked about people who make us feel better and calm us down. Do you know someone like that? That you would say, “I always feel better after talking to you.” There are some people that just make you feel better, that calm your worries, that listen deeply, and that really care. A person of peace. And after being with someone like that, you just feel better, less stressed, at peace.

On the other hand, some people tend to be antagonistic, contrarian. People like that have to prove their point, and to have the first word and the last word. These people are the worst in team environments. But the person with poise and composure is always the most influential. Poise and composure is a sign of spiritual maturity. It is a sign of the fruit of the Spirit, of peace.

So, in your relationships, in your family, in the teams you serve, do you bring calm or do you bring tension? Are you an agent of peace or a source of strife?

PEACE WITHIN

Peace with God. Peace with others. And *peace within*. Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you ... Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid ... Everything I have told you is so that in Me you may have peace” (John 14:27, 16:33).

All of us experience anxiety on some level; taking a test, speaking in public, driving through heavy traffic. Social anxiety is more than that. For some people, discomfort, uncertainty, or insecurity can produce muscle tension, light-headedness, and shortness of breath. Sometimes, a person with minimal social anxiety feels like they have to get out of the situation. It can even worse for other people; heart palpitations, blood rushing to their legs, irrational fears or thoughts, and a real panic attack. Even worse is PTSD, common among soldiers, and others, suffering from emotional flashbacks of traumatic situations. If someone is on the severe end of that scale, I

encourage them to seek professional help. If that describes you, don't try to handle it by yourself. I urge you to talk to someone and get the help you need.

Having said that, I believe the best help is found in Philippians 4. Paul said, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7, NAS). Another translation reads, "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7, NLT).

"Be anxious for nothing." But we are anxious. We're anxious a lot. We worry about money. We worry about our jobs. We worry about kids. We worry about everything. What if you just lost your job and don't know how you're going to pay the bills? What if you're sitting in the hospital receiving chemotherapy? That's real. All of us would be worried. Saying don't worry sounds not only simplistic, but insensitive.

Unless ... there really is something powerful about prayer. Unless, God really does respond to our prayers. Philippians 4:6-7 is a huge promise. God promises peace to those who pray. "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything pray ... and the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6).

Prayer is not some psychological exercise where we process our emotions. Prayer is a means of transferring our anxiety over to God. First Peter 5:7 says, "(Cast) all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7). To "cast" means to throw. Take the problem off your back and throw it onto His.

When we pray, when we cry out to Him for help, Philippians 4 promises ... peace, calm, rest. Paul also said, "May the God of peace be with you" (Philippians 4:9). The Hebrew word for peace is *shalom*. It's a rich word depicting a sense of well-being, because our lives are in the hands of God. And that's the reason we have faith, that's the reason we experience peace. All of our worry, our anxiety, our problems, and our frustrations are temporary. We believe our lives are in the hands of God, and that He desires and promises peace.

Another part of peace is *contentment*. Paul also said in Philippians 4, "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want" (Philippians 4:11-12, NIV).

Here's a question for you to think about? ***Are you at peace, are you content, with your life as it is right now?***

Of course, it's great to improve your life. To get more education, to get a better job, to have career ambitions, to have family dreams. But in living your life, are you content with your life as it is right now? Because, if you're obsessed with more, always striving for better, you'll miss the present. You won't enjoy the present. You won't be content with the present. Peace within means being content with your life as it is right now.

PEACE IS ...

“The fruit of the Spirit is ... peace.” This is what came to mind as I studied and meditated on peace.

- Peace is calm. Peace is rest.
- Peace is a sense of security and safety.
- Peace is feeling content, fulfilled, satisfied.
- Peace is confidence in the sovereignty and control of God.
- Peace is trust in the goodness and love of God.
- Peace is shalom; the Hebrew concept of well-being, prosperity, and blessing.
- Peace is being close to God, who is the “God of peace,” Yahweh-Shalom.⁵
- Peace is a refusal to despair. Yes, we are shaken at times, but faith refuses to despair or be intimidated.
- Peace is a clear conscience, being current with confession and repentance.
- Peace is forgiveness, reconciliation, patience, unity.
- Peace is not the absence of worry or problems.
- Peace is the presence of God in the midst of our worry and problems.
- Peace is knowing you are a child of God, accepted by God, and loved by God. “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God, and that is who we are! (1 John 3:1).

CONCLUSION

The way you live proves what lives in you. Therefore, when you look in the mirror, do you see the fruit of the Spirit? When others look at you, do they see the fruit of the Spirit? Do others see peace in you?

One more time, Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you ... Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid ... Everything I have told you is so that in Me you may have peace” (John 14:27, 16:33).

NOTES

¹ As Jesus said to Martha, we are “worried and bothered about so many things” (Luke 10:41).

² See Matthew 7:17-18, 20.

³ William Barclay, *The Letter to the Romans* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1975), page 73.

⁴ See Acts 15:39.

⁵ “Gideon built an altar to the Lord and called it (Yahweh-Shalom) The Lord is Peace” (Judges 6:24, NIV).