

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: PEACE

Galatians 5:22-23

Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:4-13

Intro: We who know the Lord speak often of peace, but I wonder how many of us have thought about what peace is, or just exactly what the word peace means. Joseph Henry Thayer in his *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (which is just another way of saying that it is a dictionary of Greek words explained in English) has given what I think is one of the best definitions of the Biblical word for peace that I have ever read.

In the first place, in defining peace he said peace in the NT has a distinct meaning that is peculiar to our faith as Christians. And I am sure that this definition would apply to peace in the OT as well. This is his definition. He said that it is “the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot, of whatsoever sort it is” (p. 182). (Repeat the definition.)

If you think about his definition for a moment I think that you will see that peace for us is composed of three things:

- 1) A right relationship with God in salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2) A proper knowledge of God as He is revealed in Scripture. And when I say “God,” I mean all three Persons of the Godhead: God, the Father, God, the Son; and God, the Holy Spirit.
- 3) A contentment with God in the circumstances of our daily lives regardless of what they may be.

I. Peace with God.

There can be no true peace apart from a right relationship with God in salvation. We can speak of this as Jerry Bridges does in his book, *The Fruitful Life*, “it is peace with God. There can be no better expression of this than what the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 5:1. After explaining what salvation is in the latter part of Romans 3 and all of Romans 4, he wrote at the beginning of chapter 5,

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1).

In the third chapter of Romans Paul had stated what it means to be justified. Let me read to you what he wrote in Romans 3:24-26:

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24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Paul was speaking of this wonderful salvation also in his second letter to the church at Corinth where in the fifth chapter of that epistle he wrote two statements which I want to read to you. First, verse 17:

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (2 Cor. 5:17).

And then in verse 21 of the same chapter.

21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him (2 Cor. 5:21).

You see, salvation is not something that we deserve. That is why the Bible speaks of salvation by grace. Nor is it something that we earn for ourselves. It is by faith in Christ Who died on the Cross, charged with our sins, which He fully atoned for by His death that we might be reconciled to God.

Seven hundred years before Jesus Christ was born, the prophet Isaiah was writing of Him when he wrote in Isaiah 53, beginning with verse 4:

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isa. 53:4-6).

And then on down in the same fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, you will find this statement in verse 11, speaking of the coming Christ, "By His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many." That is, by knowing Him, by faith in Him, guilty sinners are declared righteous before God.

This is a most glorious truth, but unfortunately a truth of which many are ignorant. There can be no true and lasting peace among individuals or nations except by first having peace with God. This means that the Gospel of Christ, the good news concerning what Christ, the Son of God,

was doing when He died on the Cross, is the most important message that people will ever hear. Peace with God is impossible except through faith in Jesus Christ. And so let me repeat Romans 5:1:

Therefore being justified by faith, we have [not will have, but have] peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

But now let me go on to speak of:

II. Peace through knowing God.

The main reason that you sometimes find Christians who do not have the peace of God in their hearts day by day, is because they have not taken the time to get acquainted with God. Let me give you a couple of verses from Isaiah to prove this. The verses are Isaiah 26:3-4:

3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

4 Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:

In verse 3 the prophet Isaiah was speaking to God. And in verse 4 the prophet Isaiah was speaking to the people of Judah. But what was written for the people of God in those days about their relationship to God, applies equally to us today.

Now let me ask you a question. How can you keep your mind, your thoughts, stayed upon the Lord, if you haven't taken the time as a Christian to get acquainted with Him? Let me tell you that this is the place where we have all failed, and maybe some of you are failing right at this point today.

Years ago I heard a story about a man who was having trouble with faith, and he expressed his difficulty to a man of God who had met others like him before. The man said to this servant of the Lord, "I just have trouble believing." And the man of God responded by saying. "Who do you have trouble believing?" We get so tied up about faith when we need to be focused upon the One Whom we need to believe.

When the Apostle Paul wrote his first letter to the church at Corinth, he said this to them in his letter.

God is faithful, by Whom ye were called into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Cor. 1:9).

Now what does this verse tell us about our salvation. Well, it informs us

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that with none of us was our salvation our idea; it was God's idea. And where I get peace out of a statement like this is, that He called me to Christ, and I came. Who called those Corinthians to Christ? God did. Who called you to Christ? God did. What kind of a God is He? Oh, this is the question we need to answer. What is the answer in this verse? He is a faithful God. How are we going to learn what this means? We are going to learn it from the Bible. Remember as I have said many times, the Bible is not just a revelation from God, *but it is a revelation of God*. God has given us the Bible to tell us about Himself. You and I can't really know God except by reading about Him in the Word, or by listening to others tell us what they have learned about the Lord, which is what I am trying to do today. Is there any evidence in the Bible that God has ever been caught in a lie? Can you point out any promise that He has failed to keep, that proved to be more than He could do? There are promises that are yet to be fulfilled, but we can take comfort in the fact that there are hundreds of promises that He has kept, which is assurance to us that He is going to fulfill all of the others.

“God is faithful.” Let those words dwell in your heart and mind. “God is faithful.” You know, if my salvation depended upon my faithfulness to God, I wouldn't have a moment of peace about it. But it doesn't depend on me; it depends upon God. It depends upon my Savior. It depends upon the Holy Spirit, and that is the reason that a part of the fruit that He is producing in our hearts is peace. “God is faithful.”

If your mind is to be stayed on the Lord so you can have peace, how well do you know the Lord? You surely know John 3:16 which tells us that the reason the Lord Jesus came to save us was because God loved us and sent Him to die for us. Do you know that God's love for you never wavers like our love for Him sometimes takes a dive? In reading the Bible aren't you amazed at the wisdom of God? The longer you know God, don't you marvel more and more at His grace, His mercy, His patience, and I could go on and on talking about the absolutely glorious attributes, or unchanging characteristics of our God. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever (see Heb. 13:8). God our heavenly Father also is “the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” And the same is true of the Holy Spirit is “the same yesterday, and today, and forever. You tell the Lord that He has promised to keep us in perfect peace if we are continually turning our thoughts to Him, and dwelling upon the wonderful things that our Bible tell us about Him. And do you know that God has given us the most complete revelation of Himself by

sending Christ into the world. As our Lord said, "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father."

Let me point out one other important point about 1 Cor. 1:9 before I go on to my final point. God has "called us unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." That is a wonderful word, "fellowship." It means that God has called us to participate in our precious Savior. You may not have met many prominent people, but if you know Jesus Christ as your Savior, you can have daily fellowship, moment by moment fellowship with Him. He wants you to know all about Him. Oh, what peace this brings. But the measure of peace that we enjoy will depend upon the way we know Him. Paul in prison expressed the consuming desire of his heart when he said concerning our Lord, "that I may know Him . . ." The Apostle Peter's final word in his last epistle was, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."

Now my final point:

III. Peace Means Contentment.

I could have asked Mike to read Galatians 5:22 and 23 again this morning, but instead, as I think of peace, I think of Philipians. Did you notice that peace is mentioned two times in the short passage that he read to us this morning. Look with me at Philipians 4:6 and 7 where Paul writing to the Philipians believers from his confinement in Rome told them not to worry about anything. This is the kind of a situation I have often run into in visiting some of you in the hospital, or seeing how you are coping with your problems from day to day. I have gone to comfort, and have come away comforted myself by the very people I went to comfort. Follow as I read again Philipians 4:6 and 7:

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

The NASB starts verse 6 with these words, "Be anxious for nothing." The NLT says, "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything."

Do you remember that part of "What a Friend we have in Jesus," which

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tells us,

Oh, what peace we often forfeit,
Oh, what needless pain we bear;
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer.

The second time that Paul mentioned peace in our Scripture reading for this morning is in verse 9 where we read that he wrote to them:

9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you. What an exhortation the Apostle gave to them! The Romans could shut Paul in, and shut others out, but they could not hinder the God of peace from coming in and staying. And one wonderful thing about the Lord is that He can be with all of us at the same time and all of the time.

One of the reasons Paul wrote to the Philippians at this time was that he was thanking them for the support that they had sent to him. But he didn't want to be understood. He wasn't asking them for more. And so he wrote these words:

11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me (Phil. 4:11-13).

THAT IS PEACE. Did you notice the word "learned" in verse 11? "I have learned." This is what we all need. I hope this is why you are here this morning. You are here to learn. The more we learn about the Gospel. And the more we learn about God. And the more we seek to be contented with the will of God. The greater will be our peace.

Concl: I have covered a lot of ground this morning, but I trust you have been thinking along with me. If you don't know the Lord, remember! You will never experience the peace of God until you know peace with God. Peace with God comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His work on the Cross. But peace of God comes as we keep our minds stayed upon the Lord, and what we are learning of Him. And then as we live out what God has taught us about Himself, this leads to contentment which is peace. May the Lord lead and teach us, and may we follow Him and continue to learn of Him until we see Him face to face.