

Fruit of the Spirit - Peace

Close your eyes and picture a place that is peaceful. Look at your surroundings, maybe for you, you are at the beach. You can see a beautiful sunset with a beautiful array of colors that you don't recall ever seeing. You can hear the waves crash against the shore. You hear the birds in the air. You feel the breeze blow gently past you. You are eating your favorite snack, can't you almost taste it? The kids are off in the distance playing catch with a football, no fighting or screaming.....This is peaceful. Who would want to leave?

All of the sudden, BAM, you get hit in the head with the football! Your peace is gone! Now you might have a headache and all of that beauty and peace you were experiencing doesn't seem to matter that much. It's still there, but you are distracted by the pain, maybe by the anger.....

Welp, that was temporary.....that's the peace the world has to offer....temporary peace. Like joy, it's often circumstantial....it is based on what is happening right now. But there is a peace that we can have in Jesus that does not flee....it's produced by the Spirit of God.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NKJV)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Peace is godly contentment in spite of our circumstances. In the deepest sense, these graces come from God and lead us back to him.

Before we can truly understand peace we've got to know the weeds that need uprooted that may take over our heart to the degree that peace never has a chance, it gets choked out before it can be fully produced.

Philippians 4:6-7 (NKJV)

Be anxious for nothing, 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 minds through Christ Jesus.

Be anxious for nothing. This is a command. Don't do it. Do not harvest the weed of anxiety. When we operate in a state of anxiety, it's a state of distress and uneasiness in our mind that's caused by fear!

2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV)

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

How much time do we spend fearing what might happen? The root of anxiety and worry is fear. And fear is not from God. Fear is about the “what ifs”

There are so many uncertainties in life that it's useless for us to set our minds on them. They rarely even play out the way we pictured in our minds anyway. The things we are so fearful of rarely even happen.

I'm fearful of snakes. If I see one I freak out. As I stand here today I'm trying to figure out why! How many people here have seen a snake? How many of you have been bit by a snake? How many of you died from a snake bite?

Then why do I fear snakes? Just because they are creepy?

That fear becomes anxiety where when you think you hear something the worst case scenario begins running through your head. Walking through the woods you no longer enjoy God's creation but instead you are looking for your fear, surely a snake is going to pop up and kill me!

I know my God is with me.

- And if He can protect Daniel in the lion's den,
- and He can give David the courage and strength to kill a bear and a lion,
- and He can calm the waves of the storm,
- and he has overcome the world.....then why should I fear? Why should I worry about things that may never even happen?

I don't find my security in bad things not happening....because some of them will happen....I find my security in the presence of Jesus Christ! And this is where I find peace!

Uproot fear and anxiety by making your requests to God! Tell God your worries, His word says that this is where we receive the peace of God that surpasses all understanding. This is where we have peace that doesn't make sense to man.

And God will guard our hearts and minds. This is like the weed killer. God guards your heart and mind from those anxieties and fears taking over the garden of your mind and taking up the center of your life!

Another weed that prevents us from peace are those works of the flesh that we talked about in the intro to this series. You can find those in Galatians 5:20-21

- Contentions, jealousies, selfish ambitions, dissensions, envy

These things grow up and choke out peace because the enemy uses these things for us to compare ourselves to others. They cause us to focus on neither our own life and blessings or on Jesus but instead on others.

You know that you can always find somebody that seems to have it better than you? There will always be someone that appears to have more stuff, a better family, a better job, things always seem to go their way. Why them, why not me?

These thoughts can be incapacitating, they are a cancerous evil that causes full grown men and women to regress to childish attitudes and expressions!

They are an opponent to peace. Because in this mindset, Jesus is not enough for you. Each time Paul was in prison.....he had peace because he knew that peace was not in what he had or in where he was at.....peace is in where Jesus is at.....

- Resurrected from the dead
- Seated in victory on a throne in heaven
- His Spirit is here and wants to dwell IN YOU

The 3rd weed that chokes out peace is peace without God.

1 Thessalonians 5:3 (NKJV)

For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

This is speaking of the Day of the Lord, when Jesus returns, but the people who are not children of God, look for peace and safety without God. They look for it in the men and systems of this world. And when they do this they will not find peace but destruction.

This isn't a new thing though:

Jeremiah 6:14 (NKJV)

They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly,
Saying, 'Peace, peace!'
When there is no peace.

This was superficial healing. They were making people feel better by saying there was peace in things that did not provide peace. False peace is not peace at all....

Isaiah 48:22 (NKJV)

"There is no peace," says the Lord, "for the wicked."

If you want to experience true peace, you must identify the weeds of anxiety and fear, the works of the flesh such as jealousies and envy that lead to childish thinking, and the false peace the world offers. These will all prevent you from bearing the peace that the Holy Spirit is producing in your life.

Then we have the artificial fruit. This is a human characteristic that sure might seem like peace because there is no worry and no looking at others and what they have compared to you. You are free from the weeds! Praise God!

But do you have peace? Or is it an imposter?

This artificial fruit is carelessness or apathy. These are not characteristics of the redeemed people. Paul talks about it in Ephesians 4 speaking on the new man and says to no longer walk like the Gentiles walk who are past feeling.

What can appear outwardly as peaceful can inwardly be a person who does not have passion and simply doesn't really care, nothing alarms them.

We see even believers get here when they are tired and need rest. Do you know that rest and peace are connected?

We say Rest in Peace to people who have died but what about those who live? We find rest in Christ and we find peace in Christ. We don't need a season off or a time of apathy, we need to remain in Jesus.

You can not and will not be tired and careless if you are connected to Jesus the way you should be. It's when we step OUT of Christ and are operating in our own strength and might, AND WILL.....that is when we find ourselves needing a break and possibly no longer caring.

Don't let carelessness of apathy fool you into believing you are operating in peace.....

So what does the peace of God look like? What is the real deal that the Holy Spirit produces in you?

Romans 5:1 (NKJV)

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

When you choose to follow Jesus, when you say Jesus is Lord and you accept Him as Savior, there is a relationship that was once in trouble that becomes restored. The breach of your sin is removed and the peace of friendship with God is restored.

This is peace the is spiritually induced. It's not a feeling.....It's a position.

This is why it is a peace that surpasses all understanding. It's above every way and thought of man. It's a greater satisfaction than just being free of trouble but it's the satisfaction of a heart that was created to be at peace with God, finally being able to rest from the searching and grasping at the things that have the appearance of peace but they don't satisfy the heart with rest.

Isaiah 26:3 (NKJV)

You will keep him in perfect peace,
Whose mind is stayed on You,
Because he trusts in You.

This is peace completed. The burden of sin removed. The heart at rest in Jesus.

This individual peace is necessary for the peace of the body of Christ, the church.

Colossians 3:15 (NKJV)

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body;
and be thankful.

It starts with YOU, let the peace of God rule in YOUR heart, then when there is conflict among believers, the peace of Christ must step in.

This is not a supernatural power that pushes us aside and takes over the conflict. The power is the peace that we already possess. The Spirit has already produced it. It's up to God's people to make the choice to settle differences so that peace is maintained in the body.

But it's the peace of God that is the umpire. We have to be willing to let what's right according to His view, be made known.

We are called to ONE body and we are to be thankful for that. We are joined together whether we like it or not. And we can only be productive when working together as a whole unit under the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Peace is not something to be hoped for in the church. It's something the Spirit produces, that we CHOOSE to operate in.

Where peace is lacking, the Spirit is missing. The working together as the body of Christ is guaranteed by the presence of the Spirit and must be the goal of every believer.

