Fruit of the Spirit

Lesson 3: Wednesday March 30, 2022

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**TEACHING NOTES**

**Fruit of the Spirit: Peace**

Galatians 5:22-23a But the *fruit* of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self- control;

Tonight we are looking at the fruit of peace. As we’ve seen in the first two lessons and you will likely be reminded by way of review each week, the way the world (and of course by world I mean those outside of the church) understands and enjoys the things listed here in Galatians is not actually the fruit of the Spirit. In its most basic way, the fruit of the Spirit is us becoming more Christ-like. The Fruit of the Spirit growing in us is us taking on and displaying more of God’s communicable attributes. I say communicable to distinguish from God’s incommunicable attributes such as His omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence. These are examples of attributes of God that belong to Him alone and we will never have ourselves. Even His communicable attributes such as love and faithfulness, are not experienced in us the same exact and full way they are in God.

It’s incorrect to have an understanding of God’s attributes as things that are qualities that exist apart from God, and that humans have these qualities in the exact same way that God does. We know by what God has revealed to us in His word, that His attributes are not qualities of character that He possesses in the same way that we as humans do.

James Dolezal in his book “All That is in God” states it this way. “God’s essence is not simply a bundle of contiguous properties or attributes, each existing alongside the others as an integrated whole. His divinity is not a sublime set of great-making properties all splendidly arranged together in Him. In His essence, it is not one thing to be good, another to be wise, another to be powerful, and so on. Rather, the reality in virtue of which all these things are truly said of God is nothing but His own simple divinity. Properly speaking, God is good by virtue of God, not goodness. He is wise by virtue of God, not wisdom. He is powerful by virtue of God, not power. He is love by virtue of God, not love.”

God is dependent on no one and nothing outside of Himself for all that He is, but we as creatures are entirely dependent upon Him for everything. We cannot know or do anything good without Him. The fruit of the Spirit is simply the result of us looking more like God because we are filled with His Spirit. It’s not because He has given us a bit of love and a bit of joy, and a bit of patience. No, it’s because we have Him! It’s because we are one with Him in Christ by the indwelling of His Holy Spirit.

When we start to think that the way for us to be more like Christ is by working hard to be more loving, more joyful, more peaceful, etc…, we are prone to adopting our own ideas of love, joy, and peace. The only way for us to be more like Christ is for His Spirit to bear more of His fruit. Our effort must be towards abiding in Him, trusting in Him, knowing and obeying His word. We don’t focus on the fruit as much as we focus on the source of the fruit.

**Isaiah 26:3** You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.

To trust in God is to be in perfect peace. Our currency has the words “in God we trust” printed on it. It is a great reminder of the fact that money does not provide the peace we all need and long for. The person who trusts in money is never at peace because there are so many things that money can’t buy. And when money is worshipped, no matter how much a person has, it’s never enough. When asked how much money was enough, billionaire John D Rockefeller famously replied “just a little bit more.” That is the testimony of a man who was not at peace.

**What is Peace?**

We tend to think of peace in a variety of different ways and it will not always mean the same thing for everyone at the same time. What we usually think of is a peace that can be obtained by a change of circumstances. It might mean finding a quiet place away from the screaming children, bringing an end to a war, having the means to pay our bills, being healed of our disease or infirmity, or discovering the answers to the questions that are confounding us. These are all temporal kinds of peace that are dependent on things outside of us.

Both the Hebrew and the Greek words that we translate into English as the word peace have a much deeper meaning than just tranquility or a lack of conflict. The Greek word eirḗnē conveys the same meaning as the Hebrew word Shalom, which **meant wholeness, completeness, soundness, health, safety and prosperity**. It also had a sense of permanence rather than being something temporary that came and went.

Shalom: wholeness, completeness, soundness, health, safety and prosperity

True peace is something that is wrought within us by the Holy Spirit. It has nothing to do with the circumstances around us, or at least it is not determined by the circumstances around us. This peace has to do with our relationship to the One who is peace. True peace is found only in God. All understandings of peace that are not rooted and founded in God alone are just cheap counterfeits that actually produce conflict and strife. Why is that? Because when we are not grounding our understanding of peace in the fact the God alone IS peace, the source of peace, and the One who defines peace, we are left to define it for ourselves, and the inherent selfishness of fallen man is not interested in what is peaceful for his neighbor, only for himself. Worldly peace is self centered. It is not a peace that comes from a mutual desire to sacrifice or serve for the sake of another, it’s a satisfaction of personal desires that is achieved by changing the circumstances or people around me. Or by having everyone around me conform to my will.

The Pax Romana is a Latin phrase referring to a 200 year period of Roman “peace.” It’s actually quite fascinating (if that’s the right word to use) to realize that this period of time is actually 27BC to 180AD. All of the brutality and suffering we read about in the New Testament including the murder of the Holy Son of God occurred during this time of so called Roman “peace”.

Roman peace was a peace that was determined by the will of the Roman rulers. It had to do with the height of Roman power in the world. Rome ruled with an iron fist and in many senses did provide for a kind of peace that had not been known in the world before. For those who abided by Roman law and did not do or say anything that might threaten Rome’s power there was an unprecedented opportunity for prosperity and safety. But it was not a mutual peace that was grounded on a shared desire for the same thing. It was a lack of conflict that was established by the power of one party to thwart the will of the other party by shear force. Again, this was a good thing when the desires that were being suppressed were wicked things like the desire to rape, steal, and murder. But the good and right desire to honor God and worship Him as the only hope for true peace was seen as a threat to the Pax Romana, to Roman peace, so to maintain what they believed was the source of their peace, they imprisoned, tortured, and murdered anyone who refused to worship the false God of Rome. What little peace Rome had during that time didn’t last because the God they rejected turned them over to their sin. Even non-Christian historians have acknowledged that the fall of the Roman empire was closely connected to its increasing sin and abandonment of morality. It’s just another vivid example of the nature of sin and its consequences.

But THE most devastating example of sin and its consequences is the one we see in Genesis 3 when Adam and Eve sinned against God and experienced spiritual death that destroyed the perfect peace they had known with God in the garden of Eden. When Adam sinned, not only did he lose the peace he had once known, but the consequences of his sin put his entire posterity at enmity with God. No one born of Adam’s seed would ever be able to, much less even want to attain peace with God. Fallen man cannot see that his greatest need is deliverance from sin and that the greatest treasure is to know God and be at peace with Him.

The peace that is known and understood by the world, by those who are still dead in their sin, those who do not believe and trust in Jesus as Lord and savior is not the fruit of the spirit. The peace they experience and see is a manifestation of God’s common grace to His creation, a kindness of God that is meant to lead to repentance.

**Romans 2:4** Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

Many of us who are saved have testimony of how God used our desire for His gifts to lead us to Him, the giver of all good things.

The unbeliever SEES the fruit of the Spirit as it is manifested in creation and in the lives of individual believers and the church, but ALL that they see is the fruit, and not the source of the fruit, not what actually makes the fruit lovely.

**To know the peace of God you must first know the God of peace**

It has been said that to know the peace of God you must first know the God of peace. This is so true. You can know ABOUT God, and you can know ABOUT peace or ABOUT the peace of God, but that is much different than actually knowing God and knowing His peace.

The peace that we come to know by the Holy Spirit is impossible to know apart from the Holy Spirit.

**John 6:63** It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all.

**Romans 8:5-9** For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

The fruit of the Spirit is something that begins working in us the moment we are saved. We cannot be saved at all without the work of the Spirit and the fruit that comes from His work in us. Our repentance from sin, our faith in Christ, our love for God that are all present at the moment of our salvation, are all fruit of the Spirit’s work in us. We don’t have to wait for the fruit of the Spirit to arrive sometime after we are saved. If you love and trust Jesus and have begun walking down the road of repentance then you have already begun to manifest the fruit of the Spirit.

**The Gospel of Peace**

In order for an unbeliever to know the God of peace, they must first hear the gospel of peace.

The good news of the gospel is news that announces and brings peace.

It is the good news proclaimed to sinners who are condemned to eternal separation from God that God Himself, the One sinned against, the One to whom the debt is owed, has provided a peace offering on our behalf in the life of His only beloved Son.

**Isaiah 53:5** But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us ***peace***, and with his wounds we are healed.

Jesus has accomplished peace for ALL who put their faith in Him by repenting of their sin, following Him as Lord, and trusting in Him alone as their Savior. The peace that comes through faith in Him is an eternal peace that cannot be taken away or lost. This peace that comes through faith in Christ is the only hope for humanity.

What we are seeing right now in our culture and in many parts of the world with the rise of Woke-ism, critical race theory, and intersectionality is simply the latest thing being lifted up by the world as the answer to how humanity can achieve peace without God. The worst part of it though is the number of people within the church duped by anti-Christ ideologies that have been promoted by false teachers - and let me just say as a quick side note that when I use the term false teacher I am not making a judgment about a person’s motives or even their state of salvation, I mean that they are teaching and endorsing things as biblical that are not. Not everyone endorsing these things buys into the entire ideology, but the reason I am bringing it up is because of how its deception to be an answer to peace, actually works against the answer for peace.

There is actually a theological framework in place that has attempted to package these worldly ideologies not only as biblical but as a central component of the gospel itself. It’s a demonic doctrine that openly mocks what they disdainfully refer to as “salvation theology” and promotes what they call “liberation theology”. It teaches that Jesus came to end the hostility between the oppressor and the oppressed, and that the salvation Jesus brings is not salvation from the sins of the individual, but salvation from the sins committed against them by others. It is a false gospel that declares them the victim of sin rather than the perpetrator of it. It makes them the offended party of sin rather than God. It makes the gifts of God the ultimate treasure rather than exalting God Himself as the ultimate treasure. And it proclaims peace through human revolution by overthrowing governmental powers and establishments. Instead of calling the world to repentance, it calls the church to repentance for not accepting the world’s terms for peace.

Church, this is a battle that we are in. There are spiritual forces at work in the world whose main goal is to thwart the mission of the church. We know that we will win, but we are still called to be faithful and endure. It is the promises of God that will sustain us and give us peace in the midst of the battle.

**John 16:33** I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

The gospel of peace is good news that we are to proclaim to all people, but not all people will receive it. It is only for those who are in the Covenant of grace, those whom the Father chose, the Son died for, and the Spirit regenerates.

When the angels announced the birth of Christ in:

**Luke 2:14** "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

It seems that most of the Christmas cards and movies emphasize peace on earth but miss that very important clarity – among those with whom He is pleased. Jesus did NOT come to bring peace to the world, He came to bring peace among those with whom He is pleased. They’re talking about the church! It’s peace among God’s people while we are here on earth. As the church we get to experience this peace now, on this earth, in this sin sick world. But, if we think that the gospel of peace is meant to bring peace to the world we are going to be very discontent and frustrated at what seems like a failure of the church to do its job. This idolatrous desire to have a temporal peace that can be achieved by human effort is one of the most divisive things attacking the church today.

It is true that when Christians are living out their faith in all of the ways that God has called them to, it will have a peaceful result. That is a true principle. We see this in

**Proverbs 16:7** When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

This is a principle but it is not a universal promise. King Solomon, who most likely wrote this was very aware of the fact that his own father, King David’s righteousness was met with evil by many of his enemies.

So many Christians have this idea that as we become more like Christ, we will have more and more peace with the world. Church, that is absolutely and completely 180 degrees off! As we become more like Christ, we will be hated more by the world.

In our flesh this is not something that we want to accept. At the risk of stepping on some toes, I couldn’t help but think of how one popular slogan within Christian circles reveals how much we tend to miss the reality of what it means to be a Christian in this fallen world. If this is something you say or have said, I have too, but I hope the point is helpful and that you will see with fresh eyes how misleading it can be for our own thinking. It’s the saying “even if my Christian beliefs are all wrong, and it turns out that there is no God and that everything I believed in this life was false, I’m still better off for having believed it because of the peace and joy that I gained from it.” Christian! We must see how this kind of mindset is completely at odds with the kind of peace we receive from Christ. The peace we have in Christ is grounded on the truth of His promises. If those things turn out to not be true than we will have been hated and suffered much in this life for a fairy tale. Paul told the Corinthians that if we hope in this life only we are to be pitied above all men.

Being like Christ does not mean peace with the world for us, it means peace with God, even while the world hates us as it hates Him.

**2 Corinthians 2:15-16** For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, 16 to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.

How do you feel about being a fragrance of death? Really, that’s the truth of what it means to be the aroma of Christ to those who reject and hate Him. Sadly there are many who fall away when they realize that the world hates the aroma that comes from their association with Christ.

**John 15:20** Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master. ' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.

And in

**John 16:1** I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away.

Jesus told us all of these things so that we would be ready. He did not want us to have unrealistic expectations that would cause us to despair or abandon our faith.

He couldn’t have been clearer about this reality than in

**Matthew 10:34** "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

Jesus did not come to bring circumstantial peace in the world. The peace that he came to give was going to emphasize a sharp division between those who know His peace and those who don’t.

**Isaiah 57:21** There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."

He also made it clear that we were not at war with the world. The world is at war with Him and all who follow Him, but He did not come to condemn the world and that is not why we are still here.

**John 3:16-19** "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

Even though the world will hate us because it hates God, we also know that God sent His only Son in order to save everyone who would put their trust in Him. Those who reject Him are already condemned but those who repent and believe will be saved. So we are not waging a war against the world as though we must defeat the enemies of God, they are already defeated. The war that we wage is not against flesh and blood.

**Ephesians 6:12** For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Even though the world is at war against us, and even though we know that this world will never be at peace until Jesus returns and finally destroys His enemies once and for all, it doesn’t mean that we are not actively pursuing peace with all men.

**Romans 12:18** If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Again, as peacemakers we must have a right understanding that the peace we seek to bring can only be found in Christ. We are not loving our enemy if we are content to have them at peace with us but ok with them remaining unreconciled to God. This is our story church! We have been brought to peace with God even while we were His enemy. We have also been brought to peace with one another through our common bond with Him. We want others to be reconciled to God because that is who we are, we are the children of God whose Spirit dwells in us and causes us to bear fruit that resembles Him.

**Ephesians 2:13-22** But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

The idea that we as Christians are to make peace with the world is far too often prioritized over displaying the peace we have in the church, even at the expense of peace within the church. But how can the church tell the world that we know where to find true and lasting peace if we are not at peace with one another.

We don’t bring peace to the world by joining the world and affirming its strategy for making peace. We increase peace in the world by being the peacemakers Christ has called us to be. As the children of God we stand out in the world because of the peace we have with God and with one another.

The church is called to be a body of peacemakers. We do not reflect the truth of who we are when we allow there to be divisions and strife amongst us. This is why it is so important for us to constantly fight for unity. When we are not living as one in Christ we are telling a lie to the world that we are no different than them.

This is one of the reasons we emphasize peace-making as an agreed upon commitment for church membership, because it is such a high priority of Christ.

**Ephesians 4:1-3** I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

**John 17:22-23** The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

We are commanded to maintain this unity that He died to give us. We experience this unity - we are held together in unity - through the bond of peace. When peace is absent, so is our unity.

When we live together in harmony with one another, that is with our fellow believers, within the church, we give a powerful testimony to the work of Christ. Our greatest impact on the world comes from being the church.

**Matthew 16:18** And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

**Application**

I want to bring things around now to more personal application.

How do we remain in peace? How do we experience peace in a world so full of strife and striving?

We already saw the short answer in

**Isaiah 26:3** You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.

I hope you all have been keeping up with our current sermon series that pastor Josh has been preaching through on Sundays. Anytime you have to miss being here you should always take advantage of the online video or audio, even if it’s a few days later. There has been a recurring theme in the last several weeks passages that have pointed us to our need to be abiding in Christ and what that looks like.

The Bible is filled with the truth we need in order to abide in Christ. Look with me at:

**Phil 4:6-7** do not be anxious about anything, 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 your minds in Christ Jesus.

This seems so simple and yet how often do we allow ourselves to neglect it? God has proven faithful to this promise EVERY time I have practiced it. It’s 100% successful every time it’s done.

But what sometimes happens is that I am allowing my anxiousness to predominate my thinking and I’m not really slowing down to pray and trust it to God. I might say a prayer but either I’m not in a state of genuine thankfulness for all that I have to be thankful for, or I am too focused on the hope that God will change my circumstances rather than trusting Him to sustain me through them.

The peace of God which surpasses ALL understanding is not a peace that is achieved by having my circumstances changed to a peaceful condition. How would that surpass understanding? Everyone could understand that. That is why the prosperity gospel is so successful among unbelievers, because it makes perfect sense! If God will change all of my circumstances to give me my own understanding of peace, then sign me up!

If we are waiting for our circumstances to change in order for us to experience peace, we will NEVER know the peace that surpasses all understanding.

**John 14:27** Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

The peace that Jesus gives us is different and so much better than the world’s notion of peace. The fruit of peace that Jesus gives makes us courageous. It doesn’t mean that all fearful things have been removed from our lives. Just as we cannot know courage apart from the presence of fearful things, neither can we know the unsurpassable peace of Christ apart from suffering.

Besides making us courageous, another thing we get from the fruit of peace is contentment. Paul gives an example of how the words he wrote in Philippians 4:6-7 played out in his own life. He says in verse 11:

**Philippians 4:11b-12** …for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

The Greek word for content here, autarkés, literally means self-sufficient. But what Paul means is not that he is sufficient in and of himself, He means that he is complete and whole in God who alone is truly Ase – self sufficient. Paul is content because he knows that in Christ he already has everything he needs or desires.

This makes no sense to the world. How can a person experience the same peace and joy in the midst of poverty as they do in great prosperity? How can a person have the same peace locked up in a prison as they do in the free space of a beautiful meadow? How can a person have the same peace during chemo treatments as they do in perfect health? Because as children of God we know that nothing in this life compares to the glorious reward that awaits us in eternity. No matter how bad or how good things are in this temporary life, they are just that, temporary and fleeting. Because of Christ our future is perfectly secure.

We are able to be content in any circumstance because of Christ, not because of a change in circumstances. That is what Paul is talking about in verse 13 when he says

**Philippians 4:13** I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Not “I can change my circumstances through the strength of Christ”, but “I can be content and at peace in the midst of ANY circumstance because of Christ in me.”

He is our strength. Let us cling to Him and worship Him and trust in Him.

Closing comments…