

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT, PART 3
Galatians 5:22-23

As I do every week, I want to bring you back up to speed on where we are at in Galatians. Paul is writing to a group of churches in Galatia, otherwise known as modern day Turkey. False teachers, known as Judaizers, have crept in and are spreading a false gospel of works in the churches and trying to bring these believers back under the Law. They were teaching that unless a man be circumcised and keep various aspects of the Law, in accordance with faith in Christ (adding to faith in Christ) then you can't be saved. And nothing upsets Paul, or should upset us more than people distorting the grace gospel of Christ and changing the definition of grace from something unearned, to something to be worked for. We're saved by grace through faith in Christ. Just the condition of these Galatian believers proves that. It was a church that was saved but was living in error.

In chapters 1-2 Paul defended his apostleship to defend the gospel message he preaches and teaches. He also explained the gospel and our relationship with the Law in chapters 3 and 4. Paul was very systematic in his approach of teaching us right doctrine because sound doctrine is necessary for sound living. And the sounds living part is what we've entered into in chapter 5. It's the practical portion focusing on how we live out these teachings on grace. And Paul's applications started with casting out the false teaching Judaizers, cutting them off from their midst. Then he says stand firm in your freedom and **don't renounce your freedom**. Do not get sucked down into the bondage and slavery of Law and legalism. Because of the that, the question is asked, "*If we're not under Law, can we then just live how we want?*" So secondly, Paul said, no to that as well. **Don't abuse your freedom**. Do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh. Living according to the flesh and living according to the Law are both slavery and bondage. They even go hand in hand, the Law arousing the law of sin at work in the members of our body, (Romans 7), but sin shall not be master over us for we are not under Law but under grace (Rom. 6:14). So we've discovered that true Christian freedom is not legalism but also is not lawlessness; not living by the Law nor by forfeiting to the law of sin at work in the members of our body. *So what is this freedom?* As we saw in Romans terminology, Paul says live according to the law of the Spirit of life (Romans 8:3). If you want a "law" to live under, live under that law of the Spirit. In our text, Paul says walk by the Spirit. Now let's read our text.

Each and every believer has the Holy Spirit, but they also have the old sin nature there as well. We have a war going on inside of us between the two and will until the day we die or are raptured. But we are now under obligation to live by the Spirit. He commands us to walk by the Spirit because we no longer have to walk according to the flesh. Victory for the believer is consistently **available** and **attainable**. If we walk by the Spirit, we will not fulfill the desires of the flesh. And I am more aware of the need to reaffirm that this week. I read something this week that said, "I don't walk with God; I can't keep up with Him. He walks with me, and waits for me, every time I fall behind." That may sound nice and cute, and God is patient with us, but that's basically the opposite of the command we find in 5:16. Paul commands us to walk by the Spirit and keep in step with Him. It is a trick of Satan that says you can't keep up and can't walk with God, and his trick is to make you want to give up whenever you fail. Paul says don't give up, for victory is available. Whatever you struggle with, it is only common to man and God provides a way of escape. He who is in you is stronger and you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you, especially overcoming works of the flesh.

The fruit of the Spirit is also a **package-deal**. If you get one, you get all. All these virtues are for us. The fruit of the Spirit is **desired** – there's no law against such things and to walk by the Spirit is to fulfill the true intent of the Law. Love, joy and peace are sought after through so many things in this life like

relationships, financial security, the right career, the right house to live in, the right car and on and on... People are always looking for greener grass, trying to find these things but they won't be found outside of Christ. And I believe **God desires** that these virtues **ripen** in our life, becoming sweeter and richer the longer we walk with God. That being said, what we've now begun to do is that we've started to examine each virtue individually and in depth, comparing them with the opposite and also the wax version it is sometimes confused with, like how happiness is sometimes confused with joy, or emotional, lovey dovey feelings love(eros) can be confused with divine, self-sacrificial, unconditional, covenantal love(agape).

And the virtue we're going to look at today is peace. And you need this peace. You know how I know? Because I need it. There's always a fox, day and night, trying to sneak into the hen house of our lives and steal our peace. No matter where you go and what you do, it seems like there's something there to steal it. I'm expecting something not to work during the service this morning like the microphone or powerpoint or something to try to steal my peace. I think of road construction, certain bills in the mail, a late notice in the mail, some upsetting phone call you receive, a misbehaving child, a physical infirmity, a thunderstorm threatening your crops or keeping you from getting the hay put up, lawn mower wouldn't start. Maybe it's not something negative. Maybe it's something positive like some certain friends of mine – entering into a new and exciting frontier with their small business – experiencing some growing pains. There's some big decisions to make and it's exciting, but there are some daunting challenges that lie ahead and it can bring worry, anxiety, fear, frustration. The peace stealing fox is always right around the corner. An unbeliever asked his believing neighbor if you need the Holy Spirit to go to heaven. His reply: "Are you kidding? You need the Holy Spirit to go to Walmart!" So if you want to have a successful trip to Walmart, you need today's virtue. You need peace.

I. THE SPIRIT OF GOD PRODUCES PEACE. (eirene)

I didn't plan on using a whole sermon for peace – it's just such a broad subject, I started writing and it just happened. This is where we get the name Irene – if you know someone named Irene, you now know what her name means and if she doesn't know the Lord, there's you opening to witness to them – let them know they need peace with God and the fruit of the Spirit called peace! But peace is a lot like joy in that it comes with a **deep sense of well-being on the inside** but should definitely overflow and be expressed outwardly – Joy is expressed through worshipful rejoicing. Peace is often expressed through a tranquility despite external conflict – but sometimes it is used to describe as an absence of conflict. It's really quite a difficult subject to tackle. **It is something that is produced but also pursued.** First, we look at that which is supernaturally produced, that inner well-being. Turn back to a familiar passage with me, Romans 5:8-11. This shows us where true peace starts. It says, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation." So true peace starts only when we've been made right with God through faith in Christ. What this passage is saying is that as long as we are unbelievers, we're at WAR with God whether we realize it or not – we don't have peace with Him – because we're either rejecting His provision for our sins in Christ or trusting in ourselves and our own works, treating His sacrificial work as unnecessary. Until we put our faith in Christ, we are under His wrath and have not been reconciled – and that's the big word to think of when it comes to peace: RECONCILIATION.

❖ **Reconciliation means to go from a state of war to a state of peace.**

That's what happens the moment you come to faith in Christ. Romans 5:1 says, "Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

If you don't have peace **with** God, you won't know the peace **of** God produced supernaturally by the Spirit because you don't have the Spirit unless you trust Christ and have peace with God. Reconciliation with God produces a peace from God or of God - an inward tranquility that people often notice the moment they're saved.

As far as **the wax fruit of peace** is concerned, I think a lot of folks also have a false sense of peace based upon their religious works: you ask them if they're saved and they says, well I've been baptized or confirmed or I'm a member of this church or that church, I've read the Bible, I've turned from my sins, I keep the ten commandments, I've never murdered anyone...but they don't say anything about trusting Christ and that's usually evidence of a false peace.

A lot of folks out there always have and always will seek peace through forms of meditation and environmental solitude - getting away to places of seclusion and trying to shut everything out. But this peace is more than some mental relief type of peace and is the peace that God wants you to have, despite the conflicts going on and despite the environment you're in. It's also a peace beyond the feelings of sedation that are felt by substances like drugs or alcohol. Those things can only produce a false peace. They're substitutes. Peace is something deep in the heart and soul and mind of man - like the old song, "It is well with my soul." The guy who wrote that just lost his family in a shipwreck and yet he can sing it is well with my soul. It's peace designed to help us through the conflict and the afflictions of this life. And only when you have God can you experience this peace. Ephesians 2:14 says, Christ "He [Christ] Himself is our peace." He is the Prince of peace and the God of peace (Is. 9:6; Rom. 15:33; 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:11). If you don't have the Prince of peace, you can't know the peace of God.

❖ **Peace with God produces the peace of God.**

The peace with God having to do with our standing and the peace of God with our state or condition. Unbelievers must purse peace with God.

II. **BELIEVERS ARE TO PURSUE THE PEACE *OF* GOD.**

The peace of God is something that requires some cultivation in our lives to continually know and experience. Many are lacking in the peace department, having conflict in their lives because they aren't actively pursuing the peace of God. As long as we refuse to live righteously, and live in sin instead (not walking by the Spirit), we won't be experiencing this peace of God. So first we pursue it...

❖ **By living in obedience.**

Living in sin grieves and quenches the peace of God. It extinguishes it, like a fire extinguisher to a fire. It snuffs it out and smothers it. Or like a father with his disobedient children, is grieved over them and there's conflict there because they aren't walking in fellowship with Him, keeping in step with the Father's desires for His children. Does that mean they're not saved? Not what I'm saying at all. What I'm saying is that God won't allow His children to live comfortably in their self-destructive sinful ways. He makes them squirm a bit and experience His loving chastening. Romans 8:6 says, "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace." So long as we are giving in to the desires of the flesh, we won't experience that peace. Unless there is an earnest longing for and practicing of righteousness, there won't be peace. Righteousness and peace (internal and external) are twins in the Scriptures. Isaiah 32:17, describing the future millennial reign of Christ, describes it as one of righteousness and says "the work [result] of righteousness will be peace." When you're doing things God's way, as moral beings, life is lot smoother and more peaceful. The Old Testament prophets talk about the Millennial Kingdom reign saying that men will beat their swords into plowshares (Is. 2:4). Righteousness will reign and there will be no more war. Farming is a sign of peace. Conversely, when wickedness abounds, war abounds. Joel 3:10 prophesied about a great rebellion before the coming of

the Lord where men will beat their plowshares into swords! Sin brings conflict, righteousness brings about an absence of conflict. When you do what God says, abiding in Him, things are peaceful and we experience His peace. Paul said to practice the things you have learned and received and heard in me, and the God of peace will be with you (Phil. 4:9) So the first condition for believers to experience this peace of God continually is an obedient walk by the Spirit.

But I also want to talk about other, more subtle sins: the foxes of **fear, anxiety and worry**. These are the sins we like to go to try to extend our days, right? If only we worried more, we would live longer! What did Jesus say? Worrying can't even add a single hour to your life (Matt. 6:34)! So much of our anxiety and worries would be done away with *if we just learned how to fish more often*. I don't mean just going fishing for walleye or trout though.

❖ **By casting your cares on Him.**

1 Peter 5:7 says, "Cast all your cares on Him, for He cares for you." Get the fishing pole out and tie whatever it is that has you worked up about to the end of your line, and cast it to Him. Picture whatever it is that needs casted and put it in His hands. And whenever you reel it back in and start to worry again, cast it right back out. That's definitely another condition that must be met for us to know this continual peace. Philippians 4:6-7 says, "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 minds in Christ Jesus." If you want a supernatural garrison around your mind built by God to keep fear, anxiety and worry out, then you have to give your worries over to your sovereign God with thanksgiving.

What a Friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!
Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Are we weak and heavy-laden,
Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge—
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
In His arms He'll take and shield thee,
Thou wilt find a solace there.

We have a responsibility to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts (Col. 3:15) – let peace reign and sit on the throne. I love that balance we keep running into between divine enablement and yet man's responsibility to yield to God. Commands resting on spiritual realities. Imperatives resting on

indicatives. We can walk by the Spirit because we live by the Spirit. It's like that with all of these virtues too. Love is supernaturally produced, but we're also commanded to love. Joy is a supernatural virtue, but we're also commanded to rejoice. Peace is produced by God, but we're also commanded to let it rule in our hearts and minds through obedience and prayer.

Was this peace seen in Christ? Of course it was! He walked by the Spirit and trusted the Father at all times. I couldn't help but think of Him sleeping in a boat in the middle of a raging storm. Let's look at that passage in Mark 4:35-41. "On that day, when evening came, He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side." Leaving the crowd, they *took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. And there *arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they *woke Him and *said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. And He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" They became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" Don't you love that? "Who then is this, that even the wind and sea obey Him?" Now granted, Jesus was clearly exhausted from attending to the crowds that were following Him, but I think He was trying to make a point here, don't you? This has to be one of greatest examples of the peace of Christ. The disciples are fearing for their lives, thinking they're about to go down and drown! This is like being on Lake McConaughey in the middle of our crazy thunderstorm – except it's twice as wide as Big Mac – 8 miles wide. But think of Lake Mac. When those storms come up and that wind gets moving, there isn't a single boat on the water. It gets outright dangerous. And the sea of Galilee is known for bad storm squalls that come up quickly and out of nowhere just like McConaughey. "Don't you care that we are perishing?" said the disciples. "Don't you see what's happening? Are you sleeping?" Do we ever second guess and question God like that in our storms? There won't be any second guessing in Heaven. Jesus however, wasn't worried about it one bit. He says, "Hush, be still." Literally, "Be muzzled."ⁱ Like what you put on a barking dog. Stop barking. Stop threatening.... and it became perfectly calm. Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" They didn't really understand the power and authority of Christ yet. He's the Lord over nature. He's God and can control this storm. Do you see the lesson for us? He's Lord over the storm. I like this quote I found in Gaebelein's commentary: "In all the difficulties and dangers of the Christian life, during the whole journey upon the waves, often agitated by the tempestuous sea of life, we are always in the same boat with Jesus,"ⁱⁱ even if it seems like He's sleeping. I like what Matthew Henry said, "the ship that has Christ in it, though it may be tossed, cannot sink; the bush that has God in it, though it may burn, shall not consume;" And I'll add to it that: the fiery furnace may leave you smelling like smoke, but it will not consume you either. He is with you in the boat.. "Don't you care that we are perishing?" Of course He cares, but He's teaching them a lesson on His sovereignty and he often does that with us in our storms. Jesus had the peace of God but He was also a peacemaker. And...

III. BELIEVERS ARE TO EXTEND PEACE AS PEACEMAKERS

Jesus said blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God (Matt. 5:9). And He was the ultimate peacemaker. But God wants us to be peacemakers like Him, and a couple of ways have been brought to my attention this week. If we walk by the Spirit, we're going to be peacemakers in the church.

A. Within the church community.

Now this point is derived right out of the context. The peace of God is to be pursued intentionally in the church community. There are other virtues listed in Scripture that are more personal and self-

oriented like moral excellence and knowledge found in 2 Peter 1's list, but I think Paul chose these specific, mostly **others-centered virtues** because of what was going on in the Galatian churches with the legalism, creating rivalry and competition among them. That's what legalism does. It causes self-focused and self-driven conflicts instead of selflessness and serving others. Most of the time this portion of Scripture is approached it is applied to the individual, but I think **Paul in the context, definitely also has in mind a transformation within their church community**, and probably, even among other congregations within the greater, authentic Christian community. But both immediately before and after this paragraph, Paul is talking about serving one another and how to live out the grace gospel in our relationships, in our church community. If there's a verse to memorize for this point, it's Ephesians 4:3, "Be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." We are to let the peace of Christ rule **in us and among us** as a body (Col. 3:15).

Peace is definitely something that must be diligently cared for and cultivated among us. You can plant two trees side by side: one you water, one you don't; one you fertilize, one you don't; One you cultivate around and pull weeds, and one you don't – you leave it to itself. Now which is going to grow faster and healthier and stronger? The tree you were diligent with and put hard work into. It's the same with the Christian individual and the Christian community. The individual and community that is diligent to preserve the peace of God in their lives will grow stronger and healthier. Genuine, peace-extending disciples are to be peacemakers who intentionally and diligently pursue peace. They take initiative to resolve issues and heal broken relationships, not running from them or avoiding them. That's the **wax fruit of apathy**, a lack of concern or interest – indifference. Running away from problems and avoiding issues doesn't make you a peacemaker. Peacemakers step in to pursue the things which make for peace and building up one another (Rom. 14:19). But we're also to be peacemakers...

B. In the world with all men.

To be like Christ is to seek to reconcile people to God by sharing with them the gospel of peace. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." And like Jesus, don't expect to be like for being a peacemaker in this sense. To do this, you have to bring up the sin issue and fallen man just doesn't like that. You have to lovingly confront sin like Jesus did and you know what they did to Him, right? They crucified Him. Some will love you for it and some will hate you. But also in another sense with the unbelieving world, Paul said **insofar as it depends on you, be at peace with all men** (Rom. 12:18), *never at the expense of truth*. But be known for being peaceable people. There's no need for unnecessary conflicts. In the next chapter (Romans 13) he would say pay your taxes. Give honor to whom honor is due. Do your part to remain at peace with men. Aim for peace. We should stand out in that way.

This has been a good study for my soul this week and I trust for you too. God wants us to have this real, all-encompassing peace in our lives: a peace with God, supernatural peace from God, and peaceful lives that are peacemaking. Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful... These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace.

ⁱ John D. Grassmick, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook Publishing, 1984), 122.

ⁱⁱ Arno C. Gaebelin, *Gaebelin's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1985), 796.