

‘Peace, the fruit of the Spirit.’

A young man came rushing into his house one day and shouted, ‘dad! dad! Is it true that an apple a day keeps the doctor away?’ His dad, said, ‘well, that’s what they say, son’. The young man said, ‘good, can you give me an apple as quick as you can?’ His dad said, ‘sure, but what’s the rush?’ The young boy said, ‘I’ve just broken the doctor’s window with my football!’

I’ve been asked to be speak about one of the characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit today. But before we get into the text of **Galatians 5:22+23**, I think it’s important to put this text in its proper context. The letter written by Paul to the Galatians is probably one of the fieriest letters he ever wrote to any church. And the reason for that was because the churches in Galatia were under attack from legalistic false teachers. They were teaching that Jesus didn’t do enough on the cross, so Christians still need observe the Law of Moses, especially circumcision.

And so, after defending the Gospel in the first four chapters, he begins **Galatians 5** by encouraging the faithful Christians, not to allow their freedom in Christ to turn into a yoke of bondage. Paul says, **Galatians 5:13** “Do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh”. In other words, don’t turn God’s grace into a license to sin and one way to stop that from happening is by ‘walking in the Spirit,’ **Galatians 5:16**. And by allowing ourselves to be ‘led by the Spirit,’ **Galatians 5:18**

You see loved ones, there’s a war going on within us, the Spirit wants us to live one way, but our flesh wants us to live another way. That’s why Paul contrasts the ‘the acts of the flesh,’ in **Galatians 5:19-21** with ‘the fruit of the Spirit,’ in **Galatians 5:22+23**.

And so, the question we need to try and answer as we go through this sermon is, **who’s winning the battle for your soul?** You and your own fleshly desires or the Holy Spirit’s desire for you to look more like Jesus. Paul says in **Galatians 5:22+23** “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

Notice that he says, ‘fruit’ not ‘fruits’, in other words, we’re dealing with a singular fruit with many characteristics. Now the characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit, I’ll be consecrating on is this morning is ‘peace’. When Jesus begun His earthly ministry, one the first things He spoke about was peace. Jesus said in **Matthew 5:9** “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God”.

Now loved ones don’t underestimate this statement, if you were a Jew hearing these words, you would be shocked by them. **Why?** Because the Jews were yearning for a physical kingdom. They thought the Messiah would gather a great army, drive out these Roman dictators and get rid of these filthy Gentiles. They would have been shocked by Jesus’ words, because they, like the Premillennialists of our day, misunderstood the very nature of the Messiah and His kingdom.

Isaiah prophesied in **Isaiah 9:6+7** and he said, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end”.

In an earlier prophecy, Isaiah described the peaceable nature of this kingdom in that the citizens of that kingdom will turn instruments of war into instruments of peace. **Isaiah 2:4** “They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.”

A little later Isaiah went on to say in **Isaiah 11:6-8** “The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the cobra’s den, the young child will put its hand into the viper’s nest.”

It’s very easy to read these passages and conclude that when the Messiah comes there will be peace on earth. The Prince of Peace, no end to His peace, no more nation fighting against nation, no more wars. The animals mentioned are natural enemies, and yet, they live in harmony with each other, there are no signs of hostility nor hatred. You see the problem comes, when we start to look at these verses with our minds set on thinking their speaking about a physical kingdom.

When Jesus was being interrogated by Pilate, He says to Pilate in **John 18:36** “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.”

Pilate and the Jewish leaders were confused by their own assumptions and expectations. Jesus didn't come to raise a literal army to drive the Romans out of Palestine, establish Himself in a fortified palace and secure a few decades of reign. His kingdom is far more powerful, glorious and enduring than some earthly kingdom. Isaiah was speaking about the spiritual kingdom of God, and it's in this spiritual kingdom where we find the kind of peace Jesus is speaking about.

Now let me ask, **is there any evidence that, that type of peace was happening when Jesus came? Matthew 10:2-4** “These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.”

Loved ones, don't miss what Jesus is doing here when He chooses these men. Because within this group, there were men who would normally be enemies of each other, if they hadn't decided to follow Christ. Matthew was a ‘**tax collector**’, his job was to go around and collect people's taxes for the Roman Empire. And make no mistake, people hated the tax collectors, just like some people still do today.

Now notice that Simon was a Zealot, a Zealot was someone who opposed paying taxes to the pagan emperor of Rome. Under normal circumstances, Matthew and Simon would have hated one another but despite their political differences, they were united soldiers and disciples of ‘**the Prince of Peace.**’ This is a wonderful example of the peaceable nature of the citizens of the kingdom as prophesied by Isaiah.

Another example is found in **Romans 14**, in the context, Paul is dealing with eating meat, the kind of meat which were classed as clean or unclean according to Old Testament law. Now we know that the church in Rome was composed of both Jews and Gentiles which within itself was showing the kind of peace Isaiah was speaking about.

But according to the law, the Jews could only eat meats which were clean. However, the Gentiles could eat any meat, clean or unclean, it made no difference to them but because of conscience sake, many Jews couldn't eat unclean meat. Apparently, some Gentiles insisted on eating such meat even though it violated their brothers' consciences.

And so, to solve the problem, in **Romans 14:19** Paul charges them to “**make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification**”. **Why? Romans 14:17** “**For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.**” Rather than offending a fellow Christian, Christians ought to seek for peace in matters of conscience.

And so, the peace which Isaiah prophesied was beginning to be fulfilled in the spiritual kingdom of God. It was being fulfilled within the citizens of God's spiritual kingdom. Which means that this peace is only promised to those who are in this spiritual kingdom, which we know is the church.

Now before we move on, let me deal with what some people believe is a contradiction. Jesus said in **John 16:33**, “**I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.**” But Jesus also said in **Matthew 10:34** “**Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.**”

Well, which one is it Jesus, did you come to bring peace or not? The answer is quite simple, in **John 16:33** Jesus says that ‘**in Him**’, you, personally will have peace. Yes, you're going to have trouble in this world, but that trouble can't take away the peace you have from being in Him. Now notice the contrast in **Matthew 10:34**, Jesus says, He didn't come to bring peace to ‘**the earth**’. **Do you see the difference?** Jesus says He came to give us peace, not to bring peace to the Earth.

So, **what does Jesus mean?** When we go through the Scriptures, you'll discover that there are three types of peace mentioned. The first type of peace is when there is ‘**the absence of hostility, no wars and no hatred**’. The second type of peace is ‘**tranquillity**’ which is freedom from disturbance or a calm feeling.

The final type of peace is **'reconciliation'** when two people who have been at odds with one another are brought together, they have peace or reconciliation. Now look at what Jesus said in **John 14:27** **"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."**

Notice that Jesus refers to two types of peace here, the peace the world gives and the peace that He gives. And notice that Jesus is contrasting between the world's peace and His peace. When the world seeks peace, they mean the absence of war or hostility. But the peace that Jesus promises to the Christian, isn't necessarily the absence of hostility.

It's the kind of peace that Paul describes in **Philippians 4:6+7** **"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."**

The Christians in Philippi very much understood this peace because they saw it demonstrated in Paul and Silas when the Gospel was first preached in the city of Philippi. You remember the story, this young slave girl, who could tell people's fortunes was bothering Paul and so Paul drove the evil spirit from her. The owners of the slave girl went nuts at Paul for doing this because that young girl was their main source of income. The next thing you know, the town magistrates are involved and so Paul and Silas were flogged and thrown into prison.

Did they enjoy the world's peace, the absence of hostility? Of course not, they had been flogged. **Did they enjoy the peace of Christ?** Yes, and **how do we know?** **Acts 16:22-25** **"The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them."**

Now I don't know about you but if I were in prison after being flogged, I would want to get out of there first, then I could enjoy some peace. But the peace they had in Christ was demonstrated in their praying and singing praises to God.

You see loved ones, prison can take away your material possessions, your family, your job but it can't take away anything which is spiritual, like peace. Christ's peace gave Paul and Silas tranquillity of mind and no-one could take that away from them.

And there's another peace that people can't take away and that's having peace with God. This is the kind of peace where we're in harmony with God, we're reconciled to God. In fact, when we think about it, the second type of peace, tranquillity of mind, stems from the third type of peace, which is being reconciled to God. It's only when a person becomes reconciled to God can they experience the peace that transcends all understanding.

Have you ever experienced that peace? Have you ever had times in your life when one trial after another just comes upon you? Now don't ask me to explain how this happens because like Paul says it's beyond our understanding. But I have had times in my life when the trials begin to weigh me down and those are the times I pray to God for peace and God sends a peace into my life that just calms me right down. I can't explain it but it's a supernatural visitation from God to help you when your heart and mind are troubled.

Loved ones, if you were to go to the kitchen cupboard in your house, you'll maybe find some tins of beans, a bottle of brown sauce and a whole host of different foods and sauces. But if you look closely at them, you'll see that all of them have an expiry date written on them. Well, when we think of all the trials and suffering we go through, we need to remind ourselves that they too have an expiry date.

From an earthly standpoint, what Paul and Silas did while they were in the Philippian jail is almost beyond our understanding. It doesn't make any earthly sense to rejoice in suffering, but this is what Paul and Silas did. This is exactly what Peter encourages us to do in **1 Peter 4:13** **"But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed."**

You see the key to understanding pain and suffering is realising that they too have an expiry date, they will come to an end. And to help us through our trials, we need to look to the future, not at the present. Paul says in **Romans 8:18** **"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."**

In 1555, Nicholas Ridley was burned at the stake because of his witness for Christ. On the night before Ridley's execution, his brother offered to remain with him in the prison chamber to be of some assistance and comfort. Nicholas declined the offer and replied that he meant to go to bed and sleep as quietly as ever he did in his life. Because he knew the peace of God, he could rest in the strength of the everlasting arms of his Lord to meet his need. This all stems from being at peace with God, by being reconciled to God.

Now I mentioned earlier in the context of Galatians 5, Paul is speaking about a battle within us. But how do we know whose winning this battle within us? Well, ask yourself if your struggling with any of these. Galatians 5:19-21 "The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God."

You see loved, ones, this battle within us, is battle for our soul, because Paul says, "Those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God." He goes onto to say in Galatians 5:24+25 "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit." Is there sin in your life that you haven't yet crucified? Are you living and keeping in step with the Spirit?

When we contrast the Spirit produced fruit with, 'the acts of the flesh' we actually find that they are 'the fruitless deeds of darkness.' Ephesians 5:9-11 "For the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them."

In other words, 'the acts of the flesh' don't yield any valuable or desirable fruit, 'have nothing to do with them', Paul says. The acts or the works of the flesh are the evil fruit of the evil tree, they don't produce any blessings and have no real benefits.

Remember what Jesus said to the Pharisees in Matthew 12? Matthew 12:33 "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognised by its fruit." We usually go to that verse to point out, that we can spot a false teacher by their fruit. But loved ones, Jesus is also saying that you can spot a true Christian by their fruit.

And so, we can tell if we're winning this inner battle simply by asking ourselves, whose fruit am I displaying in my life? Whose fruit is influencing my life most? What do people see and hear when they look at me and listen to what I say? Do they see and hear the works of the flesh or the fruit of the Spirit? Paul says it's obvious, but the problem is that, it may not be so obvious to ourselves.

God didn't give us the gift of the Holy Spirit at our baptism just for the fun of it loved ones. Romans 8:29 "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters."

2 Corinthians 3:18 "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

Do we understand what Paul is saying? God gave us a piece of Himself, to help us live a life that pleases Him, He gave us His Spirit to help us look and sound more and more like His Son Jesus. And the only way to know whose winning this battle, is to examine our own lives and ask ourselves, do I look, sound, think, and live more like Jesus today than I did yesterday?

Now I mentioned earlier, that the peace which goes beyond all understanding can only be experienced by Christians. And so, if you're not a Christian this morning, the only way to experience God's peace is by being reconciled to God, to be at one with God.

Paul says in Colossians 1:19-22 "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation."

Ephesians 2:13-16 “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.”

We’re reconciled to God, when we come into contact with the cleansing blood of Christ. And the word for that in the New Testament is the word, ‘**atonement**’. You see in the Old Testament the Hebrew word for ‘**atonement**’ which is ‘**kaphar**’ meant to cover. But in the New Testament the Greek word for ‘**atonement**’ is ‘**katallage**’ and it means to reconcile, to be at one.

In other words, Christ shed His blood and died in order for us to be at one with God. When we’re obedient to the Gospel plan of salvation by believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, confessing that faith, repenting of our sins, and being baptised into His death. It’s then that we are reconciled to God, it’s then, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit who then goes on to work in our lives to produce His fruit.

Yes, people who aren’t Christians can show, **love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control**, in their lives. The difference is found in the source, real, meaningful, life transforming, eternal, **love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control** only comes from the Spirit. And Paul says, **you know what?** There’s no law against such things. In other words when the Holy Spirit is in control of your life, you don’t need any law to tell you how to live your life for Christ.

Will you be reconciled to God today? Do you want to experience the peace that goes beyond all understanding?
Please ask someone about how you can achieve that goal before you leave and we’ll gladly help you do just that.