

“Fruit of the Spirit” series- STUDY 4

**PEACE**

*PEACE*

*Why must I have two natures to bear?  
I grow weary from the struggle;  
temptation, temptation constantly there.  
Leave me alone, please leave me alone,  
take me away I don't want to go on.  
O Lord forgive me the sins I may have done.  
If only you answer just one prayer today-  
Leave me your peace to comfort my soul*

*What is peace, do we really know?  
Peace always seems so very far away.  
Is it world peace, an end to all fighting?  
Or peace of mind knowing you have a good job?  
May be peace and quiet, the kids have gone to bed.  
Surely with all the praying in the world  
there must be more to this thing called peace.  
Peace at times can seem out of reach,  
especially in days of war and unrest.  
Peace on the self, not uncommon to find,  
disregarding its importance, people move on.  
We must seek peace and pursue it, says God!  
Six things God hates, 7 he detests:  
Haughty eyes, a lying tongue  
Hands that shed innocent blood  
A heart that devises wicked schemes  
Feet that are quick to run into evil  
A false witness who pours out lies  
A man who stirs up dissension among brothers  
All these things oppose God's peace;  
unrest in the mind, unrest in the world.  
We are shown in these verses its importance to God,  
To live lives of peace, so how do we go on?*

*We find peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
conviction in our hearts that Jesus is Lord of all.  
Freedom from worry, freedom from pain  
freedom from sin and freedom from death.  
When you are peaceful the Lord opens your mind.  
Peace is the air God breathes for new life.  
It refreshes our soul and gives us now strength.  
A warm hug from Jesus, assurance enough.  
The day is coming when all else will cease  
but eternal peace with our God and King.*

*Joel Douma 6.4.03*

**Introduction.** It is interesting to note the various ways people in different cultures greet each other. In Australia we tend to say, “Hello, how are you?” (Or owregoingmateorright?) So we are asking about another’s welfare. It is the same with the Afrikaans “Hoe gaan dit?” I read of Christian conference where the speaker told the group that early Christians greeted each other by saying “Maranatha” which means, “The Lord is coming!” The early Christians were awaiting the return of Jesus so eagerly they used “Maranatha” as their greeting and hope. The speaker suggested they do that at the conference, which everyone was keen to do. In the morning two old ladies approached the speaker and said eagerly “Marijuana, brother, marijuana!” In the Middle East folk say “Shalom” (Jewish) or “Salaam”(Arab). Both words mean “peace.” If you think of the tension between Jews and Palestinians it seems an odd greeting, especially also now in the context of war in Iraq. There is very little peace in the region.

**Shalom- peace.** But it needs to be pointed out that the Hebrew word “Shalom”, peace, means something quite different to our idea of peace. We usually define peace in negative terms, such as “an absence of tension” or “cessation of hostilities.” If there are no wars, we say the world is at peace. Which in fact is rare. Research has shown –less than 8 percent of the time, since the beginning of recorded time, has the world been entirely at peace. In a total of 3530 years, 286 have been warless. Eight thousand treaties have been signed – and broken- in that time.

PEACE:

*Absence of war*

*Wellbeing, wholeness, harmony of life*

Tranquillity of order

O.H.P.

But the word Biblical word “shalom” has a more positive meaning and contains the ideas of order and well-being: “wholeness, completeness, harmony of life”. To demonstrate that to you we think of the story of David and Uriah the Hittite. When the king brought the soldier home from the battlefield in an attempt to cover up his affair with Uriah’s wife he pretended to show interest in the well being of the men at the battlefield. A direct translation of the Hebrew has him say “*How is the shalom of Joab? And the shalom of the soldiers and the shalom of the wars?*” Clearly if shalom meant an absence of war, David was asking a nonsense question. What David meant, and that’s how it is translated in our bibles is “*Is all well with Joab, the soldiers and the war?*”

**Tranquillity of order.** Augustine defined peace as “the tranquillity of order”. I’ll explain what that means. When peace is regarded as the absence of war, or tension, we may feel that the way of peace is in the changing of your circumstances so that you eliminate the stress. I.e. you feel more peaceful when the strife in your life is gone. But that is not the emphasis in the bible. In Judges 6 we see Gideon approached by God to make war to remove the Midianites. Gideon asked God for a sign to confirm that God would be with Gideon in the war. Verse 24 tells us that in response to the sign Gideon built an altar and called it Yahweh Shalom. “The Lord is peace.” Now he could say that not because he was heading for a peaceful experience, but because he was going to war with the assurance that the God of order would keep things under control and grant him victory. Therefore Gideon could be at peace. He could enjoy the “tranquillity of order.”

Isaiah 48:17-18 says:

*“I am the Lord your God,  
who teaches what is best for you,  
who directs you in the way you should go.  
If only you paid attention to my commands,  
your peace would be like a river,  
your righteousness like the waves of the seas.”*

“Peace like a river” as we sing in that hymn, enables us to know “it is well with my soul”. This sense of wellbeing comes from knowing everything is under control. Everything is under God who “teaches you what is best,” and “directs you in the way you should go.” Now, of course, God’s teaching and directing require a glad submission. It is made very clear in verse 22 that “*there is no peace... for the wicked.*” Those who reject God and what he says as being best, will know nothing of the peace and sense of tranquillity God promises. The “tranquillity of order” is only for those who carefully order their lives according to the principles of God, the God of order, Yahweh Shalom.

**Inner calm.** The Greek word for peace, “*eirene*”, means “inner wellbeing”. It literally means to bind or weave together. It means that one person is joined together with another or more importantly with God. Peace can be defined as “inner calm, even in the midst of turmoil.” We see this sort of thing in John 14 as we see Jesus telling his disciples he must soon leave, as he prepares for the cross. He tells them quite bluntly that they would have all kinds of trouble in the world, but that “in him” they would have peace. “*Peace I leave you; my peace I give you. I do not give you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*” So on the one hand the disciples were presented with the disturbing reality that they would face trouble. But on the other hand there are Jesus’ calm and assuring words of peace. Their challenge was to discover how to balance living in the world and living with Jesus. That is till our biggest issue. We live in a society that has in many ways rejected Jesus. If we go along with society we will find ourselves tainted by its wrong ideas and ways. If we stick with Christ’s ways, we will find trouble with the world, we will find ourselves out of step with our culture. But if we want peace, we will observe the teachings of Jesus. We will follow the leading of the Spirit he has left us. As God said in Isaiah “*I am the Lord your God, who teaches what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go.*”

**Experiencing peace.** Now, having understood something of what peace is, we will look a little further into how we experience peace as a “*fruit of the Spirit.*” There are three different applications of the experience of peace as believers: “peace with God”, “peace of God”, and “peace with one another”.

*Peace with God*

*Peace of God*

*Peace with one another.*

O.H.P.

**Peace with God.** To think through “peace with God”, we begin with that sense of “order, or harmony”. When we look at the creation we see there is order. Sunrise and sunset are entirely predictable. So are the tides etc. The more we look into the intricacies of ecology and the

complexities of biology, the more we become aware of the amazing sense of design and order in God's creation. But we are also very aware of the tragedy that is occurring ecologically. The reason for it, at bottom, is our human interference of the natural order. There is terrible disorder, and a destruction of the harmony in creation because of human disobedience. All of creation is cursed because of our sin. The result is that we all know things are not right. Even those who have no concept of God are aware that there is something terribly wrong. The world has lost its sense of harmony and well being, it's shalom, because we have not followed Him who *"teaches what is best, and directs you in the way you should go."* We have broken our relationship with God and we are in disobedience and tension with Him. But there is a way out of the human tragedy, the terrible disaster on the whole creation. The way is found in Jesus Christ. This is the gospel we as church teach and are to make known to everyone we meet. Paul writes in Ephesians 2:13-14 *"But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility."* Paul makes clear, that our sin took us far away from God. He was at war with us. His justice demanded that we, and our sin, be dealt with. We had no promise for a future, No hope. But now in Jesus there is hope, He himself is our peace. Jesus paid the price for our disobedience. On the cross he suffered for our wrong. And now God says there is forgiveness for those who repent and come in trust and obedience. Paul writes in Romans 5: 1 *"Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* Have you seen the sticker that reads "No Jesus, No peace" Underneath it are the words "Know Jesus, Know peace." I love the play on words. It's not only clear it's biblically accurate. Jesus is our peace. Through Him everything is good between God and us. He is our Father and we are his loved children. We can be at peace about that. The sense of foreboding and hopeless gloom is gone. Nothing can change that, for our peace is not in us and in what we do, but in Jesus. He is our peace. With the Spirit of God there is the start of obedience again, doing things as God knows best.

**NO JESUS  
NO PEACE**

**KNOW JESUS  
KNOW PEACE**  
O.H.P.

**Peace of God.** This leads to the second experience of peace – the "peace of God". When you trust Jesus to have dealt with all your disobedience and sin, you are forgiven. So you stand before God without any blemish, free from accusation, as perfect as God. The reason so many people are not at peace with themselves, eg they struggle with low self-esteem and low self worth, is that they do not know their position in Christ. The story is told of a 24-year-old Canadian who went to jail for robbing a bank. His gun went to a museum. He robbed the bank of \$6000 but the gun he used was an antique which was worth \$100,000. If the man had known what he carried in his hand he wouldn't have robbed the bank. He already had what he needed. So many Christians do a similar thing, searching for peace, not knowing they already have what they need in their hearts. Too many still live with the shame of past sins, theirs and others. They still believe the lies they heard growing up, eg. "Nobody loves you, you are not good enough". But God has forgiven it all completely. He says I love you dearly, as you are. Be at peace. Even if we are content with ourselves, the stresses of life in our modern world are producing all sorts of problems: tension headaches, high blood pressure, ulcers, coronaries, and chronic anxiety etc. All these problems make us realise that all of

us must come to terms with death. Despite our modern science we cannot avoid our demise on this earth. For many this is terribly disturbing. But it does not have to be so. Yahweh Shalom, the God of Peace, is the one who is committed to our good. Romans 8:28 *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”* This surely brings tranquillity and peace to us. If God, who has control of everything, does all things for our good, surely we can trust him in this, even if we don’t see the good, even if terror or death stares us in the face. Paul promised in Philippians 4:7 *“...the peace of God, which transcends our understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”* We can best explain this with an illustration. The great hymn of faith, “When peace like a river”, was written by a successful lawyer in Chicago in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The father of five was very active in the Presbyterian Church. His successful life suddenly turned to disaster. Without warning his only son died. Then he lost all his real estate investments through fire. He decided to take his family to Europe to lift their spirits and to assist the evangelist Dwight L. Moody. He sent his wife and four daughters ahead by ship, but halfway across the Atlantic their ship was struck by an English ship and sank in 12 minutes. The four daughters drowned, while the mother was miraculously saved. When Horatio Spafford went to join his wife in Wales, his ship passed the approximate place where his daughters had drowned. Overwhelmed with grief he took out a legal pad and wrote the words of the hymn:

*“When peace like a river, flows all through my life,  
when sorrows like sea billows roll:  
whatever my lot, you have taught me to say:  
it is well, it is well with my soul.”*

That is a peace within, a peace that passes all reasonable attempts to understand it, a peace that guards and protects our hearts. Only God, only His Spirit, can give that peace to us, to keep us, to have hope and serenity, in the middle of the storm.

**Peace with one another.** The third aspect of this fruit of peace is “peace with one another”. Paul writes in Ephesians 2 that Christ has removed the *“dividing wall of hostility.”* The Jews and Gentiles hated each other with a vengeance. But in Christ, both groups could know the love of God. And as they were drawn to Jesus so they were drawn together. The Old Testament laws that kept them separate were removed. Through Jesus, every one who comes to him, no matter what nation or skin colour or background, they are all one, the one people of God. If there is one thing that can win others to Christ it is our unity, our being at peace with one another. If there is one thing that keeps them away it is if we are bickering and fighting. That’s why Paul writes in Philippians 4:2 *“I plead with Eudia and I plead with Synteché to agree with each other.”* If we have the peace of God within, a calm and serenity that comes about because we know God’s grace, then we will express that peace in how we live with each other. Paul writes in Romans 12: 18 *“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”*

How is peace developed? By depending on the Spirit and being obedient to God’s Word. Phil 4:4-13 tells us we can:

**P-** Praise God for everything :4  
**E-** Everything in prayer:6  
**A-** Always think on the good :8  
**C-** Contentment in all situations :11  
**E-**Expectation of all strength: 13

O.H.P.

The better we get to know Yahweh Shalom (God of Peace), and follow His order for our lives, the more the peace of his presence will fill our lives. As the Spirit fills us with His peace, the more we enjoy peace with others and peace within.

**DISCUSSION.**

**Preparation.** Read the sermon notes.

**Readings.** John 14:15-27; Ephesians 2:11-22; Philippians 4:2-9; Galatians 5:22

**Questions.**

1. Is peace of heart and mind something you long for? Why, do you think, is it hard to find at times?
2. Define the meaning of the word “*shalom*” in terms of well being, wholeness and, especially, tranquility of order.
3. What is the connection between peace and following God who “teaches what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go”?
4. Explain the meaning of the sticker “NO JESUS NO PEACE, KNOW JESUS KNOW PEACE.”
5. How is Jesus the peace, not only for the believer, but for the whole created order?
6. What are some of the reasons we don’t always feel the peace of God? What is the remedy?
7. How can the “peace of God ...guard our hearts and minds”?
8. Why is it important to “...be at peace with everyone”?
9. How is peace developed in our lives?