

Fruit of the Spirit – Peace and Patience.

The moment I settled down to think about today's topic, I thought I know what peace is. It's the absence of.

It's the absence of noise.
It's the absence of interruptions.
It's the absence of work.

I just need a bit of peace and quiet.
At the end of the day, just to take a few minutes to relax and enjoy a bit of peace.

That's what came to mind where peace was concerned and the Dictionary bears this out.

Peace is freedom from disturbance; tranquillity.

The Dictionary added "A state or period in which there is no war or a war has ended". At remembrance each year we give thanks for the peace we enjoy at the sacrifice of others.

When I came to look into what is meant by peace being a fruit of the Spirit, I was reminded of Shalom and a far wider and richer meaning of peace.

It's not just absence of all that disturbs and troubles, but the presence of all that makes life full and complete.

The Hebrew root of the word translated peace is *slm* (no, I can't pronounce it) but it's used as *Salom* and we know it as *Shalom*.

There are much wider aspects to Shalom, than our understanding of peace.

2. A right relationship and harmony between neighbours.
3. Prosperity, success and fulfilment – and success in Hebrew terms might include victory over enemies.

It is used as a greeting and a blessing and to offer Shalom is to bless the one to whom you speak with health, prosperity and victory. I have a friend who ends emails with Shalom conveying this sense of blessing.

The bible is clear that God is the source of peace and in the story of Gideon he sets up an altar to Yahweh Shalom – the Lord of peace.

God desires to be in relationship with humankind and His peace would be mediated by the Messiah. Jesus came to make possible the restoration of peace with God through his death and resurrection. Peace brought about by the most costly sacrifice.

But the Old and New testament make it clear that Shalom is dependent upon righteousness or living rightly, which brings us back to the passage we are studying from Galatians chapter 5.

We cannot use our freedom any which way we like, live indulgently with all manner of sins and somehow expect to live at peace and maintain peace with God. Although God completely forgives, he cannot overlook wrongdoing and St. Paul makes clear we have to rid ourselves of the acts of the sinful nature. We have to participate in creating the environment in which the fruit of the Spirit can flourish. We have to repent.

I don't suppose there will be a single one of us who would like less peace. But the way we participate in experiencing more is to consider righteousness, because peace is a fruit of righteousness.

1. Wholeness of life or body – i.e. our health.

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However before you feel that your life will be lived with heavy boots, striving to live righteously in order to experience peace, the answer as always is faith and trust.

The passage we had earlier from Isaiah

26 In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah:

²Open the gates

that the righteous nation may enter,
the nation that keeps faith.

³You will keep in perfect peace

those whose minds are steadfast,
because they trust in you.

Taking the deliberate step each day to place trust in God, to rely on Him will result in a greater experience of peace.

At which point I want to ask a question.

Do you really believe that God loves you, wants to bless you and wants you to experience Shalom?

I think more of us might have a rather Old Testament view of God. Any wrong doing God is angry with us. If we try really really really hard to live God's way, he might allow us to live in peace and escape His wrath.

Jesus came to set that view right. Jesus came to show us that we can live within the love of God, embraced by God.

I'm going to remind you again of the story of the prodigal son. He took his inheritance and lived life to the very full and then life in

utter misery when the cash ran out. He repented and returned to his father who came flying down the road to embrace him and welcome him home. Shalom.

But I think there are far more of us in the church who are like the older brother in the story. We've never really let rip with the list of sins from Galatians and done our best to serve God in and through the church. And what creeps into our soul is bitterness.

The Father pleads with the older son to come into the party...

he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

³¹ "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.

Everything I have is yours.

Are you convinced that God loves you and that everything He is has is yours? Can you bring yourself to ask?

As good evangelicals we shy away from what is known as "the prosperity Gospel". The idea that God wants to bless us financially. There are those who are rather direct at expecting their experience of Shalom to be focussed on prosperity rather than anything else.

Why don't we leave it to God to decide how the fruit of shalom will be experienced and trust him?

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Which brings us to the other fruit of the spirit, patience.

I can't wait for God to help me be more patient.

This fruit also roots back to faith and trust. Patience is not a problem when the present moment is filled with God's presence and you view the future as endless possibility for God to show His love and grace.

The English Standard Version study bible adds this comment.

"Christians are following God's plan and timetable rather than their own and have abandoned their own ideas about how the world should work".

How can we participate in this fruit growing? Abandon our own ideas about how the world should work.

Earlier in this series I said we would consult different translations, and most have patience and the KJV has longsuffering. Eugene Peterson translates this as "a willingness to stick with things" which isn't that stoic resigned dogged patience, but an active participation until God fulfils His purpose.

When was the last time, you experienced a really peaceful situation and hardly noticed the time passing? Perhaps reading a book on a sunny day while sipping a beverage in the shade of a handily placed umbrella. Shalom is that sort of experience in all aspects of life. The same tranquil calm, knowing God holds all things.

So what should we take away and seek to implement this week.

Everything I have is yours!

Let's spend this week asking the Father for that our desire to trust and have faith in him might result in experiencing a greater peace and a peaceful patience.

Shalom!