

PEACE

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness & self control. Against such things there is no law.
-Galatians 5:22-23

WHAT IS PEACE?

PEACE (εἰρήνη). A pervasive concept in the Bible that most commonly relates to a relationship of love and loyalty with God and one another. Peace comes as a result of Jesus' work and thus is a gift given by God.¹

Numbers 6:24-26 *The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. (NIV)*

“Just as this priestly affirmation [Num 6:24-26] opened with a comprehensive term (bless), so it concludes with another Hebrew word . . . that conveys a wide range of meanings—not only health and prosperity but also well-being and inner tranquility, the serenity that comes from the assurance that God knows and supplies all that is necessary for life's journey.”²

When we have peace, we aren't only living in an internal state of rest or reassurance. But true peace manifests itself in our interactions with God, and our interactions with others.

PEACE IN ACTION

Controlled thoughts: Encouraging each other to set our minds on the Spirit. We get worked up and angry when we constantly dwell on the things of the flesh – and we can't find peace.

Romans 8:6 *For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. (ESV)*

Isaiah 26:3 *You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You. (NKJV)*

Reconciliation: God cares about the relationships between his creation. He teaches against contention and strife. As the people of God, we should be actively seeking relationships restored & forgiveness granted. Imagine the peace you would feel if you could say that all your personal conflicts are resolved, or you have done your part in resolving them. “In three different places in his authentic letters, Paul urges those in the house churches he is addressing to ‘be at peace among [themselves]’ (1 Thess. 5:13) and to find ways to ‘agree with one another’ so that they may ‘live in peace’” (2 Cor. 13:11).³

¹ Lookadoo, Jonathon. 2014. “Peace.” In *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, edited by Douglas Mangum, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, and Rebekah Hurst. Lexham Bible Reference Series. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

² Raymond Brown, *The Message of Numbers, The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), p. 59

³ Crosby, M. (2015). *Fruit of the Spirit : Pauline Mysticism for the Church Today*. ORBIS.

Paul urged his communities not to order their life according to the rule of a reciprocity of revenge, but instead implored them to order their fellowship according to the rule of a reciprocity of forgiveness. Such was one crucial aspect of the ethics of the church. If a group such as this one was to survive, its members needed unconventional “weapons” to create and sustain communal peace in a world where “peace” was normally the byproduct of violence.⁴

Romans 14:19 So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. (ESV)

Matthew 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. (ESV)

Letting God fight your battles: If we feel the need to defend ourselves, to argue our own -even correctness, imagine the strife that brings up within yourself, and additionally, do we really change the minds of others? What if God fights your battles? Do you think God can change the minds of others better than you? And imagine the peace that comes with never having to fight your battle in the first place?

Romans 12:16-19 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” (ESV)

THE RESULT OF PEACE

The approval of humans: When you live in peace, both within yourself and actively cultivating peace with those around, you will be rewarded, not only by God but also with the approval of others.

“Whoever serves Christ by displaying these manifestations of the Spirit at work in them ‘is acceptable to God and has human approval.’”⁵

Romans 14:16-18 Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. (NKJV)

The closeness of God: I wonder if when we refuse peace by overthinking, fighting our own battles, inviting strife and wallowing in our circumstances, maybe we are keeping God at a distance? Maybe he lets us have space to do what we want, but maybe by inviting peace into our circumstances, we are inviting God into our situation.

2 Corinthians 13:11 Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. (NKJV)

⁴ Jeremy Gabrielson, *Paul's Non-Violent Gospel: The Theological Politics of Peace in Paul's Life and Letters* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 116.

⁵ Crosby, M. (2015). *Fruit of the Spirit : Pauline Mysticism for the Church Today*. ORBIS.