

**The Fruit of a God-Filled Life: Perfect Peace**  
**April 13, 2008**

[VIDEO – PEACE]

**John 14:25-27**

I want to start out this morning with a pop quiz. The good news is, you all get to take it together. Just shout out the answer, if you know it:

...I am ready to throw in the... (towel).  
...I am at the end of my... (rope).  
...I am just a bundle of... (nerves).  
...I am at my wits... (end).  
...I feel like resigning from the human... (race).  
...I am in over my... (head).

How did you do? If you answered “towel,” “rope,” “nerves,” “end,” “race” and “head,” give yourself an “A.” And take a vacation. And, perhaps you need an extra serving of today’s fruit of a God-filled life: Peace.

As we continue in our study on the Fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22-23, let’s read this passage together: Once again, I’ve put in a few blanks as we work to memorize this together: *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”*

Who here could use a little bit more peace in your life? Me too!

Jesus said, *“I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.”* John 14:27 (NLT)

The New Testament describes at least three spheres, or planes, of peace:

- Peace with God – that’s the vertical dimension
- Peace of God – this takes place internally
- Peace with others – when we have peace with God and we experience the peace of God, we can then extend peace horizontally

**PEACE WITH GOD**

Before we can understand this first dimension of peace we must first come to grips with the state of our relationship with God apart from Christ.

Last week we spent some time establishing the fact that God breaks out into joy when He thinks about us. Zephaniah 3:17: “...*He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.*”

In order for us to move forward in our journey to joy, we must first recognize that **God rejoices over us** with singing.

While this is certainly true, and we need to let it soak into our spirits, there’s a **corollary** to this biblical truth.

*Because all people have sinned, they have fallen short of God's glory.* Romans 3:23 (GW)

**Our daily choices** to do what we know God doesn’t want us to do, and to pass up opportunities to do good, **put us in conflict** with our creator.

If you really want to understand this, **imagine this scene.** Mom says, “**Billy, please pick up your toys** and put them in the toy box.” Now, if Billy is in an obedient frame of mind, he says, “Yes, Mom, **right away Mom,**” then picks up the toys and puts them in the box. But what if Billy says, “**Just a minute Mom,**” and goes on doing what he wants. The first shot in the battle has been fired. “No, sweetheart, we need to go to church. Put it away now.” As it turns out, Billy doesn’t want to go to church. “**No.**” “**Now – or else!**” So, what does Billy do? He picks up the toy, but **puts it ON the box** instead of in it! We could go on and on.

Every parent has lived through it. You might think, “Well, it’s just a toy!” But parents know that **it’s not just a toy – it’s an attitude,** and it’s the challenge to the parent/child relationship. And **until that toy is put away, and an apology is made, and even sometimes a consequence is paid, there will be no peace in that house.**

And that pretty much **describes the human relationship with God.** Many folks think, “But I’ve never done anything REALLY bad.” But every day we make choices – **choices to delay, defy, or ignore** what we know God wants us to do. We choose to **cheat – just a little.** We pass by an **opportunity to do good** – it’s really not my problem. Through thousands of little choices every day, we show that **we are at war with God,** and until that sinfulness is dealt with, and an apology made, and the consequence paid – in your life there will be no peace with God.

That’s the bad news. Please turn to **Romans 5:1** for the good news: “*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

Because of what Jesus Christ did on the Cross, you and I can now be at peace with God. What does it mean to be justified? It’s **just-as-if-I’d** never done anything wrong!

God’s joy and His justice converge on the cross of Calvary. Romans 8:1 is a great reminder: “*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*”

## **PEACE OF GOD**

**Those at peace with God can experience the peace of God.**

Listen again to John 14:27. Jesus said, *“I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.”* John 14:27 (NLT)

This **inner peace is a gift** from Jesus and comes to us as a key element of the fruit of the Spirit. We will experience this **peace in proportion to the room we give the Holy Spirit** in our lives.

This week I found an article from the **May 13, 1955** (that’s right, 1955) issue of **Housekeeping Monthly** entitled The Good Wife’s Guide that feature tips on how to please their husbands when they come home from work. Here are some excerpts. You might want to take notes ladies!

- Have dinner ready. Plan ahead, even the night before, to have a delicious meal ready, on time for his return. This is a way of letting him know that you have been thinking about him and are concerned about his needs.
- Clear away the clutter. Make one last trip through the main part of the house just before your husband arrives.
- Prepare the children. Take a few moments to wash the children’s hands and face (if they are small), comb their hair, and, if necessary, change their clothes. They are little treasures and he would like to see them playing the part. Minimize all noise. At the time of his arrival, eliminate all noise of the washer, dryer, or vacuum. Try to encourage the children to be quiet.
- Make the evening his. Never complain if he comes home late or goes out to dinner, or other places of entertainment without you. Instead, try to understand his world of strain and pressure and his very real need to be at home and relax.
- Your goal: Try to make sure your home is a place of peace, order, and tranquility where your husband can renew himself in body and spirit.

Ok. All in favor! All opposed! All men too smart to say they are in favor, but you really wish your wife would do this? In fact, men, if you want to have peace in your home, do not, repeat **DO NOT** present your wife with this list!

But the truth is that to have the peace of God in our lives there was one suggestion in that list worth heeding – for both men and women. **“Clear away the clutter.”** We need to make room for God in our lives. So many of us have cluttered our lives full of all kinds of things – **often good things – that there’s no room for our relationship with God.**

Probably the most accurate criticism I’ve heard of this church is that **we are a busy church, filled with busy people.** And it’s all too easy to get so busy with “church” that we lose our real purpose of building personal, intimate relationships with God.

The peace of God is part of the **fruit** of the Holy Spirit. **In order for it to grow**, we need to **nurture our relationship** with God through prayer, reading of the Bible, meditation, quiet time with God. And that takes active cooperation on our part – **weeding out the good but distracting, pruning back the busy but taxing, so that we can share the peace that’s everlasting.**

## PEACE WITH OTHERS

Peace with God enables us to have the peace of God. **Another way to say it is that we can’t have the peace of God until we know the God of peace.** That then leads us to our third point. We’re called to live at peace with others.

Jesus put it this way in Matthew 5:9: *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.”* I find it interesting that Jesus didn’t tell us to be “peacekeepers,” but instead “peacemakers.”

Romans 14:19 lays out our responsibility: *“Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.”*

Let’s face it. There’s more conflict between brothers and sisters in Christ than we care to admit. **Satan loves to divide and create conflict.** **Jim Cymbala**, the pastor of the Brooklyn Tabernacle in New York, says that the “Holy Spirit is a dove that soars away when there is division.”

They have instituted a policy for the world famous Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir, which has won four Grammy’s and two Dove awards: “The first time we hear you talk about another choir member in a negative way, there will no warning – you’ll be asked to leave the choir.” During their church membership classes, Cymbala challenges believers with this charge: “The moment you hear someone speak anything bad about someone, you stop them in mid-sentence and say, ‘Have you talked to that person yet? If you haven’t go to him right now.’”

**Gossip is slaying many churches** today. Friends, let’s make the commitment to not speak bad about each other. Let’s give grace and not spread slander. Ephesians 4:29: *“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”*

P.E.A.C.E.

I want to give some “biblical advice” to follow when you experience tension, stress, and friction in your friendships. In order to help us remember we’ll use the acrostic PEACE.

**P – Plan a peace conference.** Jesus said, *“So if you are offering your gift at the altar and remember there that another believer has something against you, leave your gift at the altar. First go away and make peace with that person. Then come back and offer your gift. Matt 5:23-24 (GW)*

**Whether you are the offender, or the offended, the ball is always in your court.** Take the first step and do it right away. The longer you wait the harder it will become.

**E – Empathize with their feelings.** When you sit down with the person, the first thing you should do is **listen to what he or she is feeling.**

Philippians 2:4 says, “*Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*” If we want to make peace with someone we must take the **focus off of our needs and hurts** and consider what the other person is feeling. Often we’ll discover that the person is himself hurting about something.

**A – Attack the problem not the person.** We’re called to **speak the truth in love** in Ephesians 4:15. Talk truth but don’t pound on the person. We’re never persuasive when we’re abrasive. We can’t get our point across by being cross. If you say something offensively it will be received defensively.

**C – Cooperate as much as possible.** Romans 12:18: “*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*” If we want to live at peace we must be willing to compromise, or give a little. If you plant seeds of peace, you’re far more likely to reap a peaceful relationship. If you plant seeds of inflexibility, you’re certainly going to reap conflict.

**E – Emphasize reconciliation not resolution.** There’s a big difference between these two words. Reconciliation means to **reestablish the relationship** and let peace reign. Resolution means to resolve every issue. 2 Corinthians 5:19 reminds us that God has “*committed to us the ministry of reconciliation.*” We can disagree without being disagreeable. **We can walk hand in hand without seeing eye to eye.**

## **[BLANK SLIDE] ACTION STEPS**

Since peace is part of the Fruit of the Spirit, we should see it ripen in our lives. As we’ve been learning through this series, **fruit is both a gift and a task.** Here are some steps we can put into practice so that we’ll partake of peace on a regular basis.

### **1. Make peace with God.**

I’m not talking about a truce. A truce is saying, “God you stay on your side of the line and I’ll stay on my side. You handle all the big problems of the world and I’ll handle my life.” That’s not peace. Peace is what will take place when you acknowledge your sins, believe that Jesus died in your place on the cross, and invite him to be the lord, or director of your life. Are you ready to do that?

**2. Identify one thing that is cluttering** your life and crowding out your relationship with God, and weed it out. It may be a good thing, but remember that good is the enemy of great. God wants to have a great relationship with you, and bring you perfect peace.

**3. Say something good when someone says something bad.** When you hear gossip, give the gift of grace by immediately speaking a kind word about the person being talked about.

**PRAY**