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Growing in Peace
Galatians 5:22-23, Phillipians 4:4-9
March 1, 2015, Adrian Moskal

So here we are Mar 1, 2015 and we are talking about Peace. What has happened in the last couple of weeks? We have the war with ISIS. We have the Russian army pushing into the Ukraine. We have 21 Coptic Christians who were recently beheaded and we have a terror threat by a fanatic group against West Edmonton Mall. Plus much much more I can talk about where Peace is threatened in Global terms. This is the back drop that we live in right now.

Who has been following these stories in the news? show of hands

How do you feel when you see the reports flash across your TV or computer screen? Emotions? How about if you have relatives in those countries or if you make \$10/hour working at NY Fries in WEM. What kind of emotions do you have when thinking about going to work?

Afraid, scared, worried, anxiety... All of these emotions are the opposite of peace and in some cases they can be debilitating.

Let's move into our passage that we are talking about:

The chaotic backdrop would be the same environment that Paul lived in. Think about what the disciples went through.

Today we continue to work through the passage in Galatians where Paul is sharing what are the fruit of the Spirit. The FOS are given to those who have put their trust in Jesus and are characteristics that we grow in as we walk with the Spirit. So, when you give your life to Christ and turn from sin and trust in Christ alone, the Holy Spirit dwells within you and the good things that you receive from the Spirit is the fruit.

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Galatians 5:22-23 ESV

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, *peace*, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

First what is Peace. Is it the absence of worry or anxiety?

In the OT, the word that is used is shalom.

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New Bible Dictionary

PEACE. Basically the OT word for peace, shalom, means 'completeness', 'soundness', 'well-being'. It is used when one asks of or prays for the welfare of another, when one is in harmony or concord with another, when one seeks the good of a city or country. It may mean material prosperity or physical safety. But also it may mean spiritual well-being. Such peace is the associate of righteousness and truth, but not of wickedness.

What a great greeting. Wishing someone the ideal human state - the ultimate gift of God. Greeting them with wholeness and well being. It certainly beats "Hello", "How are you doing", and "Goodbye".

But if this is the ultimate gift of God, why don't we feel complete or in harmony or physical safety even? Let's see what the bible says about it.

We have to go back to the very beginning to see where there is tranquility and peacefulness and ultimately where we lost our peace.

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Genesis 1:27-28,31 ESV

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ And God blessed them.

³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

So far so good. This seems complete and harmonious.

Adam and Eve allowed sin to get between them and God. They chose to manage sin for themselves and choose to listen to Satan over God. They ate the apple from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

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Genesis 3:8-11 ESV

⁸ And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." ¹¹ He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"

They had relationship with God, complete and harmonious. They give up a relationship with God where, we can assume, they walked with Him in the Garden. Now they are hiding because they are afraid and shameful. Their sin gets in the way of their peaceful life. Their sin led to fear and shame - not from God but from Satan.

The result:

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Genesis 3:21-24 ESV

²¹ And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. ²² Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" ²³ therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

Yes God is good, merciful, loving but he is also all knowing, all powerful, just and holy. It is because of his holiness he cannot be around sin and because he is just - their had to be consequences to their sin. He cast them out of the garden and they went from eternal to those who will now eventually die.

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You see God will never do anything that is contrary to his nature. His actions flow out of his being. We also see his mercy here. He does not kill them instantly. He spares "man". He kills an innocent animal (the clothes he made for them) as a sacrifice for their sin.

After this, we have the story of Cain and Abel. Cain does not give God his best offering and Abel does. Therefore, God rejects Cain's offering. Out of jealousy, Cain kills Abel. God banishes Cain and yet still spares "man".

Then you have the time of Noah and man is inherently evil. God decides to wipe out man because he cannot take the strife anymore. Their is strife, murder, lust, etc. He sees Noah and spares him and his family and thus spares Man.

We see this pattern in the OT, where man sins and their is punishment because God is holy but man is spared because of God's mercy. Man is thankful but turns back to his own ways and falls into sin, strife, and battles (internal and external).

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I think we see this pattern in our own lives. My sin gets me into trouble (it could be debt), addiction, health scare, etc and then I cry out to God in my temporal mess. As soon as I get relief from the circumstances, I revert back to my old ways. And the cycle repeats.

The prophets talk of a messiah who could reconcile us with God. Bring us back into a right relationship with God.

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Isaiah 9:6 ESV

⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

But the cycle continues for Man. He continues to live in sin, strife and enmity and then when hit bottom - turns to God. When he doesn't need God, he does his own thing.

Until finally God is silent for over 400 years. Then we have the birth of Jesus. The Messiah.

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Luke 2:13-14 ESV

¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

The coming of the Messiah is to usher in a new life, one that will bring peace that will never end.

Paul in his address to the Romans:

Romans 5:1-2 ESV

⁵ Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

We have peace because our faith in who Christ is - justifies us. This leads to hope and the promise we have in Jesus who will never forsake us. We had peace from God in the beginning (Creation) and Jesus offers us peace with God in His finished work on the cross.

Paul explains this process more when writing to the church of Phillipi:

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Phil 4:4-9 ESV

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

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⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹ What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

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Peace in all circumstances does not come easily or naturally, but it can be learned. **(1) It isn't just the absence of fear but also a protection** - in verse 7, Paul says, that the POG will guard your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus. **(2) It isn't just removing negative situations or negative thoughts (try harder) it is the presence of God himself will be with you.** He can give us the ability to feel more protected and more peaceful when the storms of life are crashing down on us. Verse 6 also shows us to be **(3) prayerful** and **(4) thankful**

Modern day therapy will tell you to put your troubles on hold, put them out of your mind and get away for a bit to calm your mind. You will get advice to not worry about the big things in life. But this passage isn't saying that at all.

Look at verse 8 - it doesn't say do, it first says whatever is true, honourable, just, pure lovely, commendable, excellent, worthy of praise - (5) Meditate (think) on the scriptures especially on the characteristics of God.

Christianity says look to God and his character not first at what you need to do. This is applicable in so many things. As Christians we often say - "what do I need to do?" I think it is the wrong question.

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Remember when I said: **God will never do anything that is contrary to his nature. His actions flow out of his being. It is the same for us.**

Instead of asking what do I need to do - you are already on Step 4. Because what we do flows out of who we are (changed heart). Who we are (follower of Christ) flows out what God has done (Jesus lived sinlessly, died on a cross to pay for my sins, and rose again conquering sin and death) and what God has done flows out of who he is. God is good, perfect, loving, gracious, generous, holy, all powerful, all knowing, etc. This impacts everything he has done and will do (including the saving work of Christ on the cross. **A good "heart understanding" of who God is - impacts how we see everything.**

1. Who God is
2. What he has done/doing
3. Who we are
4. What we do

And when we find our identity in God and not in what I do - it changes everything. When I turn my life over to Christ and I embrace the fact that I, first and foremost am a Christ follower, it impacts everything I do. As a follower of Christ, I want him to change my heart. I want him to change my should of's to want to's. When our heart changes - it changes our outlook on life.

Let me tell you about the best funeral I have ever been a part of. It was a few years ago. The gentleman was Earl Nelson. The father to Cal Nelson who has gone to our church for years. At Earl's funeral, his kids planned the funeral and his grandsons were involved in the service as one or 2 were pastors at the time. During the service, there were a lot of stories of Earl. Before he found Jesus, he was a pretty hard man with a temper. They did not necessarily paint a pretty picture of him during this time. They painted a picture of a man with a lot of strife in his life. There weren't any Christ followers in his family up to this point. Then he met Jesus. His life began to change. Earl loved the salvation story of Christ and the Hope that it represented. His family and his pastor shared stories of his love of Jesus and the salvation message that Jesus brings. They also showed how Jesus changed a family's trajectory with one man coming to Christ. Earl's hope in Jesus led to his kids finding Christ and his grandkids. It truly was a service where it was a celebration of Jesus and what he had done.

This is what Jesus does, when we turn from our ways and turn to him he gives us the Holy Spirit that dwells in us. As we partner with Christ, the Spirit can change our heart. As we rest in our identity as a Christ follower and not in anything else (job, retirement, bank account, health, etc), we begin to want what God wants. We begin to find peace when we are in a storm because we have faith and hope in the one who knows and loves us. When I am afraid or scared, I can trust in the one who is All Knowing and All powerful. When I am worried about money, I can trust in the Great Provider.

Galatians 5:22-23 ESV

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Peace comes when I find my identity in Christ who has paid the price for my sin. Who all authority in heaven and Earth has been given to. I don't have to fear events, relationships, poverty, sickness - because 1) he is in control 2) he has been through everything that I can imagine 3) he is victorious already - peace comes from that hope.

I hope when I die, that those who knew me, can celebrate what Christ has done in my life and family. At my funeral, like at Earl's, I pray that it would be a celebration because of the Hope that they have in Christ and the hope they saw in my life. Let me say that again, because of the hope they SAW in my life. This is what Spirit offers us - peace in all circumstances because of the hope that Jesus brings. Let's pray.

Galatians: Learning to Live in the Freedom of Christ
Growing in Peace
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Objective of this Study: To come to understand the peace of God and how we can receive and live in it.

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Spend five minutes in silent prayer asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
2. After the five minutes of silence have someone interrupt the silence and read **Psalm 85** meditatively to the group. Then pause for about a minute and let it sink in.
3. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.

Welcome (5 – 10 minutes)

Share some stories from this past week as the Spirit showed you ways you could grow in joy despite circumstances.

Word (20 - 30 minutes)

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Read (or recite! :) Galatians 5:22-23.
3. What are some things happening in the world or in your life that causes you anxiety, fear, or worry?
4. Read Genesis 1:27-28,31. Discuss where their peace comes from.
5. Read Gen 3:8-11, 21-24 **Sermon quote: “Adam and Eve allowed sin to get between them and God. They chose to manage sin for themselves and choose to listen to Satan over God.”** Discuss how we let our sin get between us and God and how that affects our relationship. How does sin affect peace? Peace with God? Peace with One another.

Work (30-40 minutes)

1. Sermon Quote: **“God will never do anything that is contrary to his nature. His actions flow out of his being.”** How is this true for God and how is it true for us.
2. **Read Phil 4:4-9.** Why doesn't “putting bad thoughts out of your mind,” bring peace? What is peace? Where does peace come from? What is the process of getting peace?
3. Why is “What do I need to do to get peace?”, the wrong place to start? Where should we start?
4. How does your identity cause you to struggle today? Think about where your worry, anxiety, fears come from. What are you trusting in that is causing this worry? How does a deep understanding (**heart understanding**) of who God is, impact your peace? Take your time here. We can find our identity in a lot of places other than as a Christ follower (job, bank account, relationship, parent, sports, etc).
5. What would you like your perfect funeral to be like? What things will God have to change in your heart for your perfect funeral to occur? Have your growth group family to pray for you.

Homework:

Look for opportunities this week to grow in Peace. Identify in yourself where you are finding your identity in something other than God, and look to give that Jesus this week.