

We come this morning to the third fruit of the Spirit: peace. And just as I've said with regards to the other two (love and joy)—I understand this fruit in the broadest possible way—that is—peace with God, self, and others. Now, I trust it goes without saying, that the subject of peace is central to the Christian religion. God is called "the God of peace," the gospel is called "the gospel of peace," Christ Himself is called "the Prince of peace," and we read in Romans 14:17, "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Peace, as with love and joy, is foundational to true and saving religion. And so, I want to consider it under these three headings: Its Nature, Its Benefits, and Its Promotion.

- I. Its Nature
- II. Its Benefits
- III. Its Promotion

- I. Its Nature

1. I need to begin by giving you a working definition of what this peace entails—simply put, peace of God results from having peace with God, is the inward calming of the soul, which varies in intensity.
2. (1) Peace of God results from having peace with God—most of us are aware of the distinction between peace with God and the peace of God.
3. Peace with God is an object fact that every Christian has, because of the person of work of Jesus Christ.
4. By nature, man is at war with God, at enmity with God, but in the gospel, God and man are reconciled.
5. Rom.5:1—"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."
6. Thus—no person can ever have the peace of God, without first finding peace with God, in Jesus Christ.
7. And here's the reason—peace of God is the subjective result or consequence of having peace with God.
8. Put another way—no person will ever have peace of conscience, without first having peace with God.
9. And brethren, this point can hardly be overstated—there is no peace of God, without peace with God.
10. (2) Peace of God is an inward calming of the spirit—the peace of God is a subjective, calming of the soul.
11. Think of it like this—if peace with God is the removal of hostility between us and God in the courtroom of heaven, then the peace of God is the removal of turmoil in the courtroom of our conscience.
12. Isa.57:19-21—"I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace to *him who is* far off and to *him who is* near, Says the LORD, and I will heal him. But the wicked *are* like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. *There is no peace*, Says my God, for the wicked (Isa.32:16-18; Jn.14:27)."
13. Here we learn what this peace is by its absence—"the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt."
14. If the lack of peace is described as a troubled sea, which cannot rest, then the peace of God brings with it a calm of conscience.
15. It's as if our consciences are troubled seas by nature, and the peace of God stills the storm and calms the sea.

16. Mk.4:39—"Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, Peace, be still! And the wind ceased and there was a great calm."
17. Notice—our Savior joins "peace" with "being still"—He brought peace and calm to the troubled sea.
18. Thus, at its very heart—the peace of God is the calming of a previously troubled soul (or conscience).
19. Why was the soul troubled? Because it was at enmity with God, under His wrath, and enslaved to sin.
20. Thus, foremostly, the reason the soul is troubled is because of sin, which is dealt with in the gospel of peace.
21. Jn.14:27—"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."
22. And so, necessary to true peace are two things: (a) the absence of turmoil or agitation of soul; (b) the presence of calm and quiet—it isn't merely the absence of something, but it's also the presence of something.
23. The soul is no longer agitated with fear and dread, but is calm and still, knowing it's at peace with God.
24. Jean Daille—"The peace of God is that sweet and holy calm produced by the grace of Jesus Christ upon the conscience, delivering it from the burden under which it labored, and showing God reconciled to us."
25. (3) Peace of God varies in intensity and strength—not every Christian has this peace to the same degree.
26. This of course is different from our peace with God—as every Christian has the same amount of peace with God.
27. In fact, there's no possibility of having more or less—every Christian is equally and eternally at peace with God.
28. But not every Christians has an equal amount of the peace of God—this increases and it also decreases.
29. Thus, while nobody goes to heaven without peace with God, it's possible to go to heaven with little peace of God.
30. Wilhelmus a Brakel—"The peace of God varies greatly as far as its sensible enjoyment is concerned. Some enjoy it in a greater measure and others in a lesser measure. Some remain in this peaceful condition for a long period, and so to speak live in it; others experience this peace rarely and it rapidly dissipates."
31. Now before I leave his first heading, I want to suggest a few times when God usually gives this peace.
32. 2Thess.3:16—"Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace always in every circumstance."
33. (a) In times of adversity—it's often when we experience great trouble on the outside, we experience great peace on the inside.
34. Ps.4:8—"I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety."
35. Throughout the Psalm, David complains about his distress (v1), that's caused by "the sons of men (v2)."
36. (b) In the time of death, Ps.116:15—"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints"—the word "precious" means "of utmost importance and value."
37. And because the death of His saints is precious in His sight, He often gives them dying grace and peace.
38. He calms their fears and given them a quiet spirit—He gives them assurance that they are coming home.

39. I think some Christians secret fear this day (and there's a sense in which I can totally relate to this), but brethren we must remember our Father loves us.
40. I've been at the death bed of Christians and non-Christians, and my dear friends, they are very different.

II. Its Benefits

1. Here I want to suggest three practical benefits of the fruit of peace (which can also serve as motives to pursue it).
2. (1) It unites—by this I mean, the gospel not only unites us to God, but it also unites us together as people.
3. That person who has peace with God will be a peacemaker—he will seek to promote peace among the brethren.
4. As the enmity in our hearts toward God has been removed, so the enmity that existed toward other people has been removed.
5. We've heard much about race in the news lately, but the only thing that truly reconciles people is the gospel.
6. For what's at the root of all racism but pride—one people think they are superior to every other people.
7. It's for this reason the gospel not only reconciles God with man, but it also reconciles man with man.
8. Eph.2:14-18—"For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that he might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father."
9. This obviously has to do with the enmity that existed between Jews and Gentiles, but it applies to all ethnic enmity.
10. Only the gospel of Christ can bring peace between people from different backgrounds and nationalities.
11. But I would take this a step further—only the gospel of Christ can create peace within local churches.
12. Put another way—only the gospel of peace can create a context where true peace exists between members.
13. How can I fail to pursue peace with my brethren, when God has pursued peace with me in the gospel.
14. Matt.5:9—"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God"—as they shall imitate God.
15. Rom.12:18—"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men." 1Thess.5:13—"And be at peace among yourselves."
16. 2Tim.2:22—"Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." Heb.12:14—"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord."
17. But here's the problem—at times we allow our pride to get in the way—we think—who is this person to treat me this way.
18. And so, peace is lost because two people believe they are right—they believe the other person is wrong.
19. Jas.3:17—"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."

20. True wisdom is willing to yield—it's willing to take the first step—it's willing to lose the argument (if necessary).
21. Brethren, surely, we understand this—especially if we are married—what if we demanded to have our way every time?
22. What if we were never willing to yield—what if we always sought to defend our "rights" with little concern for peace?
23. So you've been offended. So what! Your feelings were hurt. So what! Be at peace among yourselves.
24. (2) It guards, Phil.4:7—"the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."
25. The Greek word rendered "guard" refers to "a guard of soldiers, keeping a city from hostile invaders."
26. The peace of God acts as a guard, who keeps or protects the heart and mind—"through Christ Jesus."
27. That means—this peace of God is found only in Christ—it's the result of His work FOR us and IN us.
28. Now—here I want to ask the question—what exactly does it mean, that peace guards the heart and mind?
29. Well—according to the context it at least means—the peace of God keeps us from all forms of carnal anxiety.
30. Phil.4:6—"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God...and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds."
31. Sinclair Ferguson—"We are in a world full of trouble and anxiety, far from the heavenly city of which we are a citizen. But God sends a garrison of peace to guard us while we are away from our homeland."
32. I think most of us, if we were to be honest, struggle with carnal fear and worry which attack the soul.
33. But the peace of God protects the heart and mind—that is, it protects our feelings and it protects our thinking.
34. (3) It motivates—the soul that possess the peace of God, will do great works for God, regardless of circumstances.
35. Eph.6:15—"and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace"—that is, having prepared your feet with the peace that comes from the gospel.
36. The NIV renders it—"and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace."
37. In other words, the peace of God gives readiness to the feet—it enables us to walk through any situation.
38. We often hear this verse preached as an exhortation to evangelism—as if we are to, prepare our feet to carry the gospel to others.
39. But brethren, this isn't what this means—remember the Christian armor is largely made of defensive weapons.
40. Paul isn't telling us to carry the gospel to others (as good and necessary as this is), but to carry it to ourselves.
41. He's telling us to have our spiritual feet made ready "with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace."
42. In other words, it's to the degree that we have the peace of God, will our feet be made ready for work.
43. We have to walk over hot sand to enter the Promise Land, and thus we need strong and durable shoes.

44. If God be for me, who can be against me—if God is my Father, what can man do to me—if God sent His Son to make peace with me, then I'm willing to do anything for Him.

III. Its Promotion

1. Here I want to close with five practical helps to assist you in promoting the virtue, grace, or fruit of peace.
2. Remember what I've said before—every Christian has the responsibility to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit.
3. Col.3:15—"And let the peace of God rule (control) in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful."
4. Here we have two commandments—we are to let the peace of God rule in our hearts, and be thankful.
5. (1) Seek peace from God, Ps.122:6-9—"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: may they prosper who love you."
6. By Jerusalem is meant the church or the people of God—we are to pray for the prosperity of the church.
7. But brethren, if we are to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, then surely, it's right for us to pray for its individual stones.
8. And by this I mean, we must pray for each other as well as ourselves, that God would give us all peace.
9. Thomas Watson—"As the wilderness cannot water itself, but remains dry and parched till the clouds drop their moisture, so our hearts cannot have peace till He infuse it, and drop it upon us by His Spirit. Therefore pray, 'Lord, thou who art the God of peace, create peace; thou who art the Prince of peace, command it. Give me that peace which may sweeten trouble, yea, even the bitter cup of death.'"
10. (2) Fix your mind upon God—"that is, ponder the glorious character of God, knowing He's your God in Christ.
11. Isa.26:3-4—"You will keep *him* in perfect peace, *whose* mind *is* stayed *on* *You*, because he trusts in You. Trust in the LORD forever, for in YAH, the LORD, *is* everlasting strength."
12. To "stay" or "fix" your mind upon God, is to focus your mind upon God, as He's revealed in Scripture.
13. That is—it's to trust Him as a loving, heavenly Father, who's faithful, powerful, patient, wise, and good.
14. (3) Attend the meetings of God—by this I mean, Christ usually speaks peace to His people in the gathered assembly.
15. Ps.29:11—"The LORD will give strength to His people; the LORD will bless His people with peace."
16. And where does He give His people strength and peace? Verse 1—"Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."
17. The LORD ordinary gives His people strength and peace in the same place they give Him glory and praise.
18. Jn.20:19—"Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, 'Peace be with you.'"
19. This was the first Lord's Day, and the disciples were assembled together to pray and worship God (and our Savior came into their midst).
20. And guess what He did—He pronounced peace upon them—this likely refers back to the blessing of the High Priest.

21. Numbers 6:24-26—"The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace."
22. Thus, Christ has promised, as our great High Priest, that whenever two or three have gathered in His name, He would be present in their midst (and what does it do, well in no small part, He pronounces the benediction – Peace be with you).
23. (4) Obey the precepts of God, Ps.119:165—"Great peace have those who love Your law"—there's a necessary connection between peace of conscience and a good conscience.
24. I mentioned last week there's a necessary connection between holiness and joy, well, there's a similar relation between holiness and peace.
25. Rom.14:17—"The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."
26. (5) Believe the promises of God—by this I especially mean, we must believe the promises of the gospel.
27. Jn.16:33—"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."
28. This is the conclusion to what's commonly called the Upper Room Discourse (which includes chapters 14-16).
29. And if we were to examine these chapters, we would find such themes as heaven, union with Christ, His crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and gift of the Spirit.
30. I have spoken these things, "that in Me you may have peace." "In the world you will have tribulation."
31. The imagery is that of the Ark—while the world outside the Ark was troubled, Noah and his family had peace.
32. They were safe within the Ark for two reasons—because of God's promise and because of God's provision.
33. His provision was the Ark which was covered all over with pitch—this made the Ark water proof; the promise of God was His word.
34. And this is just like the entire church, which is safely in Christ (God's provision), but we are not covered with pitch but blood; and in addition we have God's promise (that there is now, no condemnation for those who are in Christ).
35. Col.1:20—"and by Him He reconciled all things to Himself...having made peace through the blood of His cross."
36. Rom.15:13—"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing"—we have to believe in God's provision and promise.
37. Horatio Spafford was a lawyer and successful businessman who lived in Chicago with his wife and five children.
38. In 1871 he lost his youngest child (a son) to pneumonia, and then most of his possessions in the Great Chicago Fire—two years later, in 1873, he sent his wife and four daughters ahead of him to England, intending to soon follow.
39. Tragically, the ship ran into another ship mid voyage, and 226 of the 313 passengers went down with the ship—including his four daughters.
40. His wife was rescued and taken to Wales, where she wired a message of only two words—SAVED ALONE.
41. Well, you can imagine Horatio Spafford was devastated, and he boarded a ship to accompany his wife in Wales.
42. As he was traveling across the Atlantic, he was informed of the approximate place the previous ship sunk; and it was there and then, he wrote his famous hymn—"When peace, like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll; whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, It is well, it is well with my soul...My sin, O the bliss of this glorious thought, my sin, not in part, but the whole, is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more; praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!"