

So we come again to the book of Galatians, the fifth chapter, as we look together at this final sermon on the series, *The Holy Spirit and the Life of the Christian*. We began the series by looking specifically at the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of prayer from Romans 8. We are grateful to find that though prayer is so very hard--and yet such a gift--that God, in his wisdom and grace, has given us the Spirit that prays for us on our behalf, even when we don't know what to pray. So God meets us in our weakness. We looked as well at the Holy Spirit in the role of the Spirit as it works in worship. That worship really is about what do we worship from our hearts. The question is, you remember, not whether we worship. The question is what do we worship. The role of the Holy Spirit is to direct worship not towards himself, but to direct worship of our hearts and our minds and our souls to the majesty and glory and grace of God in Jesus Christ. Then last week we looked at the role of the Holy Spirit and patience, and how difficult it is to deal with one another when a lot of times we just really are annoyed with each other. But how does the Holy Spirit help us and give us patience? The Holy Spirit reminds us and convicts us that oftentimes we become the center of our own worlds. We grow very impatient and unloving towards those around us, and we grow very frustrated. But thanks be to God that the Spirit directs us again to God's grace, whose patience and forbearance is always being poured out on us. This is a day of grace. Even our breathing is reminding us that he is a God of patience.

So we come to this fourth sermon in this series, "The Spirit of Peace." Look again at Galatians 5:16-26. I will reach a portion of this section, in verse 20, where you will hear how the lack of peace and when we do not live by the Spirit of peace--what erupts from it.

So hear now God's word. Galatians 5:16-26.

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. 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. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

This is the word of God. Thanks be to God. Again, I would ask that you would pray with me. Heavenly and compassionate Father, we would ask that you would open our eyes and enable us to see wondrous things in your word. And by your Spirit bring about the formation of Christ-like character that we would be known by a bond of peace through Christ. One Lord, one faith, one baptism.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

So this morning you will see that on your outline I've given you three points: The Gospel of Peace, Living Peaceably, and The Spirit in Peacemaking. I'd been working through different sub-point structures and had not decided on one by the time this was needing to go to print, so I will give you the sub-point structure as we go along, so have your pens handy if that's how you like to roll. We will work together through this outline.

What Paul is giving to us here, what he believes and teaches throughout most of his letters where he gives this list--sometimes partially, in other places in whole—is the same fruit of the Spirit. Paul is

very much teaching, throughout his letters to the churches, that they need to be bound together by the Spirit of peace. He talks about this most often in places where the lack of peace is being experienced. He talks about it all over Corinthians. He talked about it in Ephesians. He talks about it to the church at Colossae. He talks about it in various other places. His desire is for us to know the peace of God. And by this peace and this fruit of peace he's not talking merely about having an individual experience of *shalom*, well-being. While it certainly encompasses that in the place where the bond of peace in Jesus Christ is being demonstrated and lived out, it most likely happens in that place that individuals are experiencing personal and individual well-being. But Paul's first audience is not the individual. It is the body of Christ. And so it would be in this case, as he's responding to the Galatians and their divisions along ethnic lines between Gentile and Jew. He talks about how in Christ there is no longer slave nor free, Jew nor Gentile. He's talking about the nature of the gospel of peace. So as he lays out the fruit of the Spirit, he is pointing us to this deeper theme, that throughout his letters and arguably throughout the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation, God has given us an announcement of the gospel of peace.

Let's talk about that together: The Gospel of Peace. Now 'gospel' means an announcement of good news. The gospel is itself the good news: principally, that he has sent his son, Jesus--whose name literally means 'he will save his people from their sins'--he has sent his son, Jesus, as an offering, as the one who stands in our place to receive our sin--though he was sinless--that we might know forgiveness and reconciliation between human beings and their Creator God. That is the gospel. Within it is this thread of peace, because it is contingent on the reality that Paul worships-- and calls us to worship and acknowledge that God is a God of peace.

Sub-point Number 1: The gospel of peace is from a God of peace. What do I mean by that? Go back to the early chapters of Genesis. God created Adam and Eve, male and female, in his own image. In fact, it says, 'Let us create man in our own image' which tells us something about God. God is a God of relationship, because God is three persons, yet one God: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. According to what our profession of beliefs are, our convictions, and from the teachings of the Scriptures in this church, we believe that it is the Triune God-- three persons in one God who exist equally, eternally, and are equal in power and glory. Each has a different function, but they are equal in that glory. And they have a powerful relationship. God needs nothing outside of himself. He's completely full of *shalom*. His well-being is not contingent on anything else. Yet by his grace he created the world in sevenfold goodness and created man with crown and glory---male and female. In so doing, he created and placed them in a place that was beautiful, radiant with God's glory, to exist in a framework of relationship---relationship between each other, man and woman. Because we know that Adam looked at the creation, the animals, and while it was all well and good, beautiful, he said, 'I'm alone.' So God created Eve in his own image and gave her to Adam, and they were to live together in harmony with one another and with God in a beautiful garden of peace and provision. *Shalom*. God desired that Adam and Eve's relationship with him and with one another were to be a reflection of the relationship that God has with himself---one of well-being and peace.

But this God of peace would become a God who announces the gospel of peace, because...sub-point Number 2: The breaking of *shalom*. The breaking of *shalom*, the breaking of this peace was when, as we might be familiar with---or maybe not---but maybe if you've never set foot in a church, you will have heard about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and of the fruit that Eve took and ate, even though God told her not to. We oftentimes want to think that perhaps the biggest problem was the fact that she took a bite of the fruit, and she did so against God's direct instruction. And Adam was close, by the way, he wasn't just off on the back forty somewhere---he was there. He was aware of her temptation. But the problem isn't first and foremost that the physical eating of the fruit was wrong. The problem of the eating of the fruit was the breaking of relationship. It's what it represented. It's that Adam and Eve, in taking of that fruit, were breaking the *shalom*, the well-being between them and God. Because God had said--though there were no 10 Commandments yet--God had said, 'Do

this and live.' That is, obey me, enjoy the garden I have given you, do not eat of this tree. But if you do, you will die. But they did not desire to stay in that relationship. In fact, the profession and confession of our very church here says that there was an estate, an estate in which Adam and Eve lived with God and with each other, an estate of *shalom* and peace. But in the taking of that fruit they broke the relationship, so therefore they fell from the estate that they were once in and fell into an estate of sheer brokenness. No longer was there *shalom* with them and God. No longer was there *shalom* between Adam and Eve. They were hiding from God when he came, a God who had desired peace and provision. It's about relationship. Sure, there's fruit and commandment, but don't you see behind it all it's about relationship? And it was the brokenness and the breaking of that *shalom* in that relationship.

And don't we learn that what happens between Adam and Eve is.... Ladies and gentlemen, in my relatively short amount of time as a pastor, seventeen years, I've realized if I look at my own marriage and my own relationships, and I look at other marriages, I recognize that really what's happening is just an out-working of the very thing that happens in the early chapters of Genesis. Adam blames Eve; Eve blames Satan; and they all try to hide from God. And so what ends up happening is, well, God does something. He judges that breaking of relationship. He calls it what it is. You've left my *shalom*, you've left my provision, you've wanted to be gods yourselves. So here's what's going to happen. Eve, you're going to want to rule over your husband. Adam, you're going to want to rule over your wife. And guess what...kerbloom! Ladies and gentlemen, we can take every single instance of divorce, we can take every instance of broken human marriage relationships and trace it back to that very moment. And so we have the profound brokenness of *shalom* between each other because it was profoundly and utterly broken between us and God.

And yet God is the God of peace, who's given us the gospel of peace, and it shone through the third sub-point: Reconciliation.

God sees us in our fallenness, in our brokenness, and he has compassion. Now let me give you a very everyday illustration of this that I experienced this past week. It pales in comparison, but here you go. My daughter was riding her bike, and she fell off of her bike. She rolled over a hose that was full of water. She skinned her knee and her elbow. Now as her father, I watched this happen. And every moment that I've ever experienced--and I had many as a kid--with bloodied knees and elbows and everything else, having to run back home for my mother to take care of me---every hair on my legs and the back of my neck stood up on end. And I ran to her and I said, Sweetheart, are you okay? And she said, I'm fine, I'm totally good. But as her father, I'm like...waiting for the cry, but she never cried. But I'm not fine, and here's the reason why I'm not fine: because I don't want her to be hurt. I don't want her to fall. I don't want her to have to bleed.

Right in the middle of this breaking of *shalom*, God announces in Genesis 3:15 that he will send a son through the seed of the woman, who will defeat Satan. He will crush his head even though his heel will be bruised, meaning the cross of Jesus Christ. So God does two things simultaneously. He judges us in Adam and Eve, he judges us in our sin, he calls it what it is---the breaking of *shalom*---tells us of the consequences of the breaking of that peace, but he also says, guess what, I'm going to bring about reconciliation and victory.

This is what Paul is talking about in 2 Corinthians 5:20-21, one of my favorite passages of all of Scripture, where Paul says these words: "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." And he says such beautiful words, and he says "that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them." What a glorious picture of reconciliation. Paul now says in explicit detail what God was prophesying in Genesis 3:15. That Jesus coming to the cross to spill out his blood would be the bruising of his heel, but the crushing of Satan's head would be the

resurrection of Jesus Christ. That God in Jesus is saying, I've judged you in your sin, but I've allowed the consequences to fall on my son, so that you can be reconciled to me. This last week, as I was sharing with my neighbor, I was profoundly blown away. If I can feel my daughter's pain and not want her to experience skinned knees, and I desire for her to be healed, how much more, then, does a divine God, who created us for himself to live in perfect relationship with him---how much more does he not ache because of our sin? Because it was a breaking of relationship. How much did the Father's heart ache at the giving up of his son? Where I had had skinned knees because I lived foolishly as a child, skateboarding down giant hills and bailing before I should--and then I was complaining about it--God came, not guilty of anything, and by choice poured out his blood. That he might experience death for us in our place. Where my hairs and nerves can feel my daughter's pain, our Savior took it. And only by his wounds are we healed. We are more than forgiven, we are offered reconciliation with our Father through Jesus Christ.

This is the gospel of *shalom*. This is the gospel of peace. This is what Paul is pointing to when he says to the Galatians, 'These things you used to live—you used to be full of fits of rage and anger and dissension and factions, being conceited and provoking and envying each other. But now I'm giving you my Spirit. And you're to live by the Spirit, because God has done all the work of reconciliation. And he gives us his divine presence, the third person—not "it"—the third person of the Trinity to be his empowering presence in the Christian. And so when Paul says in verse 25, "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit," do you know what he's saying? (And I mean this pastorally, humbly, and to my own heart first.) Paul is saying in his own way, if you are a professing believer in Jesus Christ, and you have been reconciled through the cross of Christ, and you've received the Spirit of Christ, then you have everything you need to get on with it.

Then we must be about the business of living peaceably with one another. To live peaceably with one another. When he talks about the fruit of the Spirit being peace, he means, again, not individual well-being. He means the well-being and peace between each other, in marriage and friendships in the body of Christ, as a demonstration to the world. But living peaceably is the crux of the problem, isn't it? It's so hard. It goes back to last week. Because when we're honest we just get all over each other's nerves. Sometimes intentionally, right? You do that intentionally, right, sometimes? Do you ever provoke each other? *No, not us.* But we do, right? Because we think that the other person deserves it! It's so easy.

But there are a couple of things as we work through this, two sub-points in terms of living peaceably. First, two observations in terms of the fruit of the Spirit as it breaks out in relationships. Two observations that I would give. First, that living peaceably is oh, so very hard, because one, we have to discern the difference between perceived versus real hurt. A lot of the time--and I know I'm not alone, I know Pastor Flora and I have talked about this in our own counseling with couples and with families and individuals---how often so much of the brokenness in relationship between people is not based on real hurt, but on perceived hurt. Where we feel like someone meant to hurt us, or we begin to put onto them intentions and motivations that we have no idea, but we're certain of it. And what we begin to do is, we pull back in our own little space, and we're like, how dare you. We become judge, jury, and jailer, and it's so easy. But so often times it's based on this notion... How many of you have ever heard the phrase, 'Perception is reality.' Perhaps we've used it. Perhaps we believe it. I would counsel you against what I believe to be a very wrong understanding: perception is not reality. If perception is reality, then we're all postmodernists. Postmodernists say, there is no one truth. So therefore, if my perception is reality, then we have, I don't know, 200+ realities in here right now. Is that the place where we want to be?

Perception can be very real, but the part of the gospel, the gospel of peace coming through the fact that God died for me, the fact that God has given his life for me and reminded me of my sin reminds me that I am a man of limited perception, hearing, and eyesight. I don't know what you're feeling and

thinking. When I run to the perception of hurt, then I'm trying to be like God. We must humble ourselves and be willing to give the benefit of the doubt to the other, and oh, so hard that is. But we can't do it unless the gospel of peace is at work, where we become dependent on the Spirit of peace working this in us. That's the first observation, that so oftentimes our brokenness is not based on real hurt, but perceived hurt.

The second observation is this: When there is real hurt---and it also is the case with perceived hurt---so oftentimes we begin to---now here I'm speaking specifically to Christians. We talk all day long about forgiveness and cross and reconciliation, but when the rubber meets the road, so oftentimes, instead of addressing the hurt, we nurse it. We put it off on the other person. Or maybe it's our own history; we're afraid. What begins to happen is that hurt just begins to dwell, and those relationships die a slow death. The love of Christ and the mind of Christ and the Spirit of peace is not at work. We are resisting the very God who wants to bless us with reconciliation and *shalom*. The gospel calls us to give the benefit of the doubt with real hurts at times, and he also calls us to overlook real hurt at times. Because God in his grace has made us new. He has forgiven us of our sins, and that will increasingly---as the gospel of peace works in us---it will give us more and more patience and endurance with one another.

When I was at a diner on Friday, meeting with a friend, I went from the restroom back to our table and I decided to just study the room. As I walked through that room there were people laughing and there were some people praying. But as I looked at the faces of a lot of conversations going on at tables, they were with squinted eyes or on the phone gesticulating. Tones that tell us that we often live in this low grade, yet constant noise of hurts that go unaddressed, and they become compounded over time. We're broken in relationship. And I believe our brokenness in horizontal relationship is in some way a reflection of what's going on with us vertically with the Lord. And so we have the invitation of the Lord to come again to the Spirit of peace. If you do not want hatred, discord, jealousy and fits of rage to be a part of your people, then Lord, what would you call us to?

He calls us---and here I'm thankful for the Peacemakers Ministry that calls us to the "4 G's" of living peaceably with one another. The 4 G's are this: Seek to Glorify God. We see it in Psalms and Mark and John and 1 Corinthians, where it simply is this: instead of focusing on our own desires or dwelling on what others may do, we will rejoice in the Lord and bring him praise by depending on his forgiveness. Instead of dwelling on our desires or on what others may or may not do, we go again dependent on the Lord's forgiveness and seek by God's grace to faithfully obey what he has called us to do. Bound up in that idea is 'as far as it depends on you to live at peace with others.'

Secondly, to Glorify God is one, and two is to Get the log out of your own eye. We hear this from the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7. Instead of blaming others for a conflict or resisting correction we will trust in God's mercy and take responsibility for our own contribution to the conflicts. Where we will out of hand reject the zero sum games that we tend to play with each other. 'I have sinned, but your sin cancels out mine.' And isn't it interesting that when we do that with each other, mine is always the one canceled out and yours is the one that's always remaining? That's a zero-sum game. I will tell you, that is not the gospel of peace. He calls us by God's Spirit to get the log out of our own eye, which means---as we've been praying throughout this service---that if Jesus has done this on our behalf, and we receive forgiveness from him, then I can go before his throne of grace and unpack all my sin and take responsibility for it, because Jesus has paid the price. Then I can be honest and not defensive. I can take responsibility for my actions and own up to it and let God be God and deal with the other person. There is so much freedom in that, but it's a freedom that we're often afraid of taking, aren't we? But he calls us to get the log out of our own eye.

Glorify God, Get the log out of your own eye, and number three, Gently restore. Instead of pretending that conflict doesn't exist or talking about others behind their backs, we will overlook minor offenses, or we will talk personally and graciously with those whose offenses seem too serious to overlook. We

recognize there are hurts and sins perpetrated against us that are too great to overlook. We go, and we seek to deal with it, not pretending that it doesn't exist or it didn't happen, but we go—after we've taken the log out of our own eye---we go and we seek to...what? Not first to confront the person, but to seek to restore the relationship gently. Going with graciousness and not condemnation, seek to restore and not resist. To gently restore.

So Glorify God, Get the log out of our own eye, number three, Gently restore, and finally, Go and be reconciled. Instead of accepting premature compromise or allowing relationships to wither, we will actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation, forgiving others as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us. Reality is that so oftentimes instead of going and being reconciled, we settle for a premature idea of reconciliation. Slowly but surely we allow relationships to die on the vine. We no longer have table fellowship. We no longer laugh with one another.

You see, all these 'G's and these two observations of perceived and real hurts and how we can easily nurse them, are really what the gospel of peace and the Spirit of peace seek to bring about: a recognition of these things, and an empowerment to do these things. God does not leave us in our own strength; we cannot do this on our own. We must go again and ask to depend on his strength. Lord, work this in me, because here is the truth: If we are not doing this, if you leave in your wake relationships that are dying on the vine, and we are not regularly practicing these things by God's strength and God's grace, and we leave in our wake broken relationships, then I will tell you, I think it is right and reasonable for me to question or to ask you to question, is our faith real? Has the gospel of grace really been working in us? Or do we just come every Sunday and sing of grace and glory and reconciliation, and then we really don't want to live it out.

You see, it's Jesus who prayed for us when he says, the world will know that I am real because of the love you have for one another. In other words, I say---in the name of Christ, enabled by his grace and his power alone---I say that seeking peace and walking peaceably is not an option for the Christian. It is a command. And it is a command that is dependent, as far as we are concerned, as much as we can do, by God's appointment and God's grace, with prayer. Is a hard thing, but the Lord desires that we do it, because he means to lead us to the Spirit in peacemaking.

We've talked about this month---as Paul talks about the power of the Holy Spirit---the Holy Spirit is about giving us this: He has a function. That function, as I close, I would give you this: He confronts us. Jesus says, I will send my Holy Spirit who will confront the world and will convict the world in its sin. The Holy Spirit comes and he confronts us. And the Holy Spirit will confront some of you this morning, confront me for ways in which I need to go and make peace, where you need to go---he will come and confront us. But secondly, he also will comfort us in that confronting. He will comfort us with the grace that saves, the grace that covers a multitude of sins. But he also means to conform us. He wants to conform us to the mind of Christ. And Jesus Christ came to make peace, and therefore the Spirit of peace means to conform us to be a people of peacemaking, which is why Jesus would say, blessed are the peacemakers. so we are called to find our role in that, because it is what the Spirit is about.

Finally, not only is his function to confront and comfort and conform, his fruit is to give us this peace. Paul tells us in the book of Ephesians that it is a bond of peace when he says these words, "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit---just as you were called to one hope when you were called---one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." That is Paul's way of saying that the Spirit that he has given to his children is the one that then creates a bond, a bond between us and God by faith through power of his Spirit. He then, by the Spirit, gives us a bond with each other. And if you are a child of God, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, then you have brothers and sisters in this body. Therefore the one who died, the one who was raised, the one who was giving his

Spirit is the same one who gives it to you and to you and to you and to you. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. And if that is our profession, then we get to ask the Holy Spirit to enable us to move towards one another through this Spirit and a bond of peace with patience, empowered with grace, fueled by love---that it may be a testimony to the world. Not that we're a community without conflict, but that we're a community by God's grace that the Spirit is bringing reconciliation to, even when we disagree. He can do it. He wants to do it, because he promises to do it. Let us give ourselves to him. Let us ask the Lord to bring this to us and to our relationships.

Let's pray. Heavenly father, compassionate and gracious, full of tender care, You have promised to give your Holy Spirit to your children, to your church---that you would pour out your Spirit on all flesh. Your children are here this morning, and I would pray that you would pour out your Spirit. Not that you haven't, but I am asking you, Lord, to work through your Spirit in us renewal, that you will give us a new approach to prayer, a new approach to worship, a patience that is wrought in us because it is a reflection of you as a God of patience and grace, and that you would make us a people of peace. Father, you have sent your Holy Spirit, not to draw us to worship him, but to draw us to worship you. By your Spirit you are confronting, you are comforting, and you are conforming. Do not leave us the same, but make us a people who are full of the Spirit of peace. Father, we are sinners. We need you. And Father, I pray for those who don't know you this morning. Perhaps much of which I've said today makes no sense to them whatsoever, but your Spirit can work in them because they have the knowledge of God so deep down in them that they cannot erase it. And I pray, that by your Spirit you would awaken a knowledge of you as a God of grace and glory and draw them to yourself and reconcile them. And I pray, Lord, help them to see your love, and may they see your love in our midst. In Jesus' name, Amen.