

# Peace

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by Wayne Goff

***“Peace” comes from a Greek word which means various things, depending on its context — harmonious relationships between men, nations and God; friendliness; freedom from molestation; rest and contentment. So what is its particular meaning in the list of the “fruit of the Spirit” in Galatians 5:22?***

Numerous writers were consulted to answer that question, but all I got were numerous answers! Some thought it had reference to peace with God which results from a clean conscience. Others thought that mutual peace between men was the thought more than a peace with God. Another said it was a peace which came from our reconciliation with God. And finally, one commentator said that it was tranquility of mind; spiritual well-being.

It would appear that, with minor variations, the answers given revolved around two basic ideas: (1) peace with God; and (2) peace with men. So what is the correct one in this passage? What does the context tell us?

In the early portion of Galatians 5, Paul contrasts righteousness which comes by faith (*“faith working through love,”* v. 6). Paul argues throughout the epistle for righteousness through the Faith of the Gospel and insists that those who attempt to be saved otherwise *“have fallen from grace.”* He furthermore strongly denies having preached the keeping of the Law of Moses as a means of obtaining righteousness, and wishes for the end of the strife caused by those spreading false rumors. Then Paul speaks of salvation in Christ as a *“liberty”* which should not be used to gratify the flesh but to serve one another through love. He reminds his readers that love is the fulfilling of the **law** as opposed to the constant bickering and fighting which characterized some. This is the background which leads into the contrast between walking in the flesh versus walking in the Spirit.

Paul says that those who walk in the Spirit shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh, and in fact cannot since it is so contrary to the Spirit. He then enumerates the works of the flesh which prevent anyone from entering into heaven. Within that list is mentioned the hatred, contentions and jealousies which described those Judaizers who were arguing for justification by the law of Moses. Such was not to be true of Christians in Galatia or anywhere else!

Finally, Paul lists in contrast and for our benefit the *“fruit of the Spirit”* which pictures the true child of God who has been forgiven by God’s grace and who walks in the Spirit. *“Peace”* is listed third, and in view of the **context** I must concur with those who believe that Paul means thereby harmonious relationships between brethren; mutual peace in contrast to the sins of strife and malignity noted in the works of the flesh.

It cannot be denied that our relationship with God *affects* our relationship with others, for this is the **basis** upon which Paul leads for peace. However, the peace which is evident in our lives as *“fruit”* is the peace which we have one with another as we practice the will of God by our lives’ actions.

Brethren, in times of controversy, strained relationships, and differences, let us remember to **practice** the things which make for peace! If we do not, then our personal faith is not worth much, is it? That means we should *“walk in love”* (Eph. 5:2) *“as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth)”* (Eph. 5:8-9).

Now to be even more specific, walking in truth and love means not lying to your neighbor (Eph. 4:25), not allowing anger to become sinful (Eph. 4:26-27), not stealing (Eph. 4:28), not speaking corrupt words (Eph. 4:29), and putting away *“all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking”* (Eph. 4:31). *“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you”* (Eph. 4:32). What a wonderful *“peace”* ensues when we do these things — a peace that surpasses all understanding!

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