
The Fruit of Peace

SCOTT HOEZEE

Go to almost any country in the Middle East, or places like Pakistan and Afghanistan, and you will frequently hear a most common form of greeting: Salaam alaikum, one person will say, to which the other replies: Wa alaikum salaam—peace be with you, and peace be also with you. Now, some might find that greeting a bit ironic in that, at least in some places where such greetings are common, there is often so much war...conflict...violence. Can we really wish for peace in the midst of all that? But is it really different for anybody no matter where you live? Can we have true peace when so much else in our lives is unsettling or sad? Well, today on *Groundwork*, we continue to look at the fruit of the Spirit, and today the fruit of peace. Stay tuned.

DAVE BAST

From Words of Hope and ReFrame Media, this is *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Dave Bast.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Dave, this is now the third program in what is a large series for us on *Groundwork*; a nine-part series on the fruit of the Spirit. We have looked at love and joy, and now today we are up to peace; and just as a quick reminder, here is that list from Galatians 5:22, 23, where Paul wrote: ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control.

DAVE BAST

Yes; and we are also very pleased to welcome back to this program the Reverend Shiao Chong, who is the editor of the magazine of the Christian Reformed Church, *The Banner*. Chong was with us for our very first program in this series, the program on love; so, Chong welcome again.

SHIAO CHONG

Thank you; glad to be here again.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, one of the things...if we go back to that program, Chong, that we were talking about...gifts of the Spirit and fruit of the Spirit, and we talked about that. Sometimes we get these things confused, but I think it is important to emphasize that the *gifts* of the Spirit are different person to person. We are not all good at the same thing. We should not expect it; and sometimes maybe we are tempted to think that the fruit of the Spirit are like that: Well, I am not very good at gentleness and goodness, but at least I've got peace and joy; but that is not true, right? The fruit of the Spirit are supposed to come to everybody.

SHIAO CHONG

Yes; I mean, when you look at how Paul writes and talks about the fruit of the Spirit, he always uses the singular for the Spirit. Sometimes we tend to think of this as different fruits. We talk about fruits of the Spirit...love, joy, peace...but, the fruit of the Spirit *is*, is how it goes in Galatians 5. It is a singular fruit with different dimensions; so, these are all different dimensions of the one fruit. So, you either have the fruit of the

Spirit with these different dimensions or you do not have it. It is not like I can pick and choose, you know, I have this fruit of love and this fruit of peace, or this fruit of joy, but I do not have the fruit of kindness or gentleness or self-control.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is not a cafeteria.

SHIAO CHONG

No; you cannot have it that way.

DAVE BAST

Right; so as we think more specifically about this wonderful fruit, or aspect of the fruit...part of the fruit that we call peace, Scott mentioned in the intro to the program the Arabic greeting: Salaam alaikum; and it reminds us of the Hebrew greeting: Shalom. They are very similar...also the word for peace; and we talked in the first program about love...about the importance of the vocabulary here. So, love is *agape*, and it is related to the Old Testament Hebrew word *chesed* for covenant love. Well, it is the same way with peace. The Greek word...the word in the New Testament is *eiréné*, from which, actually, we get the name Irene. So, if you happen to be an Irene, your name means peace; but, *eiréné* is built on that foundation of the rich, rich Hebrew word shalom or peace.

SHIAO CHONG

That is right, yes; and shalom sometimes is one of the Hebrew words where you cannot always translate accurately with just one English word. It means so many things; it has such a wide depth of meaning—nuances. It could mean flourishing, it could mean health, it could mean wholeness, wellbeing. You know, I like to explain to people who have not understood shalom before...I kind of talk about it like think about it in terms of a three-dimensional peace. We often think of peace as just a lack of conflict, right? Just an absence of fighting, argument, or...

DAVE BAST

You feel kind of quiet in your spirit...

SHIAO CHONG

That is right; but think of it in terms of relationships. That is maybe when you can talk about at peace with yourself, but also at peace with your neighbor; but then there is a peace with God and there is peace with creation. So, those are the three dimensions that I talk about. You know, we have the dimension of our relationship with God, relationship with our neighbors...the second dimension...the third dimension is having relationship with all creation—everything else—a cosmic thing. And so, peace—shalom—is this three-dimensional peace. It is not just one thing.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and it is interesting that that also might contrast with certain Eastern forms of religion where, through meditation, you get at peace with yourself; you get an inner quiet: Now I have peace; but what you are saying, Chong, with that 3-D idea...the three dimensional idea...is that it is not just about *you* having no turmoil in your soul; it is that you are spreading peace to everybody and to all creatures around you. Shalom, as Neal Plantinga sometimes describes it, is sort of that everybody exists in mutually edifying relationships with everybody else...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Everybody is taking care of everybody else to make sure they are clothed, fed, sheltered, able to flourish in God's creation.

DAVE BAST

So, to flesh out, Chong, your analogy of the three dimensions, we could speak about theological peace—peace with God; and in fact, that is maybe the most important starting point...

SHIAO CHONG

Right.

DAVE BAST

Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, Paul says in Romans. Relational peace, or social peace...

SHIAO CHONG

Yes.

DAVE BAST

Peace with our neighbor and peace even extending among nations; and even ecological peace...a healed creation...a healed cosmos.

SHIAO CHONG

That is right; and the word...the metaphor of reconciliation, which is also a very strong New Testament passage word, brings that out, because we are now, as you said, we are justified and therefore at peace with God, but also it says there is true...Jesus' death on the cross...he has broken down the barrier...the dividing wall...this is in Ephesians, I believe, that divides gentiles and Jews; and then reconciled them to one humanity. Then in Colossians 1 we read about how God, in Jesus Christ, is reconciling *all* things...

DAVE BAST

All things, yes.

SHIAO CHONG

To himself, right?

DAVE BAST

That popped into mind, yes, as you were saying...

SHIAO CHONG

So, that is right; there is that cosmic thing going on. So, the whole reconciliation implies discord, and therefore needs to be made peace again.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; and it kind of all comes back to one of the most famous uses of shalom in the Old Testament, which is from that great benediction that Aaron spoke first in Numbers Chapter 6, and that many of us have heard at the end of worship services: The Lord bless you and keep you; and make his face to shine upon you...be gracious to you...and the Lord...at the end of it...the Lord grant you his shalom. When they translated the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek in something called the Septuagint, that was *eiréné*: The Lord grant you his *eiréné*. So, we have peace with God...God grants us his peace...and then it is our job to spread it all around; kind of make it contagious in the whole creation.

DAVE BAST

Right; and so I think a big takeaway here is that peace is larger than simply our own interior life—our own feelings; and peace will not ultimately be experienced or be found until everything, the whole creation even, is webbed back together, by God in Christ, and we are a part of that wonderful thing; but, there is also a very personal and practical dimension to this; and there are things that we can do to help further peace with others

and in ourselves, and we are going to look at that in just a moment in a familiar passage from the book of Philippians.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DAVE BAST

And I am Dave Bast.

SHIAO CHONG

And I am Shiao Chong.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we are talking about the spiritual fruit of peace, the third of a nine-part series on the fruit of the Spirit; and let's go right to a passage that has two very interesting uses of the word peace, and it is from Philippians Chapter 4, where Paul writes:

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer with petition and thanksgiving, present your requests to God; ⁷and the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

DAVE BAST

⁸Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things. ⁹Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me, put it into practice, and the God of peace will be with you.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, there are a couple of angles on the meaning of bearing the fruit of peace in our lives, some things we can pick up there; but Chong, one thing that is interesting, and we do not want to forget this, is that we started that reading at verse 4, but if we had read the first *three* verses of Philippians 4, we were led right into the middle of what looked to be a conflict in the Philippian church.

SHIAO CHONG

Yes; Paul mentioned about two women, in particular Euodia and Syntyche, if I have pronounced them correctly...

Dave Bast: I do not know what those names mean, by the way. I do not think there is an English equivalent there.

SHIAO CHONG

No; I am not sure...

DAVE BAST

So, never mind, Irene; you are still safe.

SHIAO CHONG

Right, yes; and these women obviously have a conflict; and he kind of called them out and said they needed to make peace with one another; and I think the conflict between these two women probably kind of spread out and has infected the rest of the congregation in Philippi, because I think they may be very influential, or maybe even leaders in the church; because if they were just regular members you would presume that the

Philippian leadership—elders of whatever—could handle it among themselves. They even need to call Paul into this, and I think the fact that Paul actually had to come in and say a few words or write a letter dealing with this, I think it is because that whole congregation had become sort of divisive because of the conflict that started with these two women, and it kind of spread through the whole thing.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, people take sides.

SHIAO CHONG

Yes.

DAVE BAST

And I think it is no accident that immediately preceding this wonderful passage about peace, there is a note on conflict; because the truth of it is, we do not live in a peaceable kingdom yet, or a peaceful world; and whether it is on the level of our own local congregation or in a nation, or nations now, in North America, where there is such division and such conflict, the only way we are going to be able to practice peace is if we are able to do it when we are conflicted—when we are in tension with other people.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; remembering that setting for these words in Philippians 4 just brings it home to our settings in our families and in our congregations today. We do not expect peace to come to us only when there is no conflict; in fact, peace is always going to come right straight into the middle of it all; and the good news is, it can, and it does. We do not have to wait for everything to be in order before we start pursuing and trying to grow the fruit of peace. It needs to come precisely because we have those situations; but, there are a couple of other things, too, Chong and Dave, about the peace that emerges here.

DAVE BAST

Yes; one of them is the close connection between peace and joy; and we looked at joy in our previous program, just the one before this. Paul starts out with a verb—a command—in the imperative: Rejoice. Somehow this great and abiding sense of wellbeing that is represented by joy translates into peace as well. There is a connection between the two.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Paul says that when that comes to you, it passes all understanding. Today we might say it blows our minds. We cannot figure out how this got to us. How did this come? But the peace does come to us when we cast our anxieties on God, right? When we pray, then this peace will settle in on us that the world cannot explain, and maybe we cannot either.

SHIAO CHONG

Yes; and I think one of the reasons why it passes our understanding, or blows our minds is that because so often when we think about how do we get peace we often have two ways of getting peace. One way is we win and the other one loses; we suppress the others.

DAVE BAST

Yes, peace through victory...

SHIAO CHONG

That is right.

DAVE BAST

Peace through superior firepower! I actually saw that on a tee-shirt in Lebanon once.

SHIAO CHONG

Wow!

DAVE BAST

I think that is a pretty strong illustration of what you are saying.

SHIAO CHONG

Exactly, yes.

DAVE BAST

We win and the other guy loses.

SHIAO CHONG

That is right, yes; and so often that is how we think about getting peace; or the other way is that we kind of bargain...we compromise and everybody loses in some sense; but that is usually our default way of trying to do peace; and I think what the Bible says, God's peace is different than that because it transcends that. It is not about one wins and one loses, or somebody suffers or everybody suffers, but it is about getting beyond that and getting to this bigger picture of seeing...understanding how God has brought peace to the world. Peace is coming and we need to be part of that.

DAVE BAST

Absolutely; and I think your second example there of coming to some compromise and achieving peace...again, to use maybe a military analogy, it is like an armistice. It is not a true peace, it is just...you have decided to stop fighting and to kind of stay in place across a DMZ...

SHIAO CHONG

Right.

DAVE BAST

And the thing about God's peace or biblical peace (eiréné or shalom) is that it always starts by God doing something to remove the underlying cause that created the hostility to begin with.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, and then Paul goes on to say that once that happens, peace becomes like a peacekeeper, because it says that the peace that blows our minds...that passes all understanding...it will guard your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus. So, now peace has this active function in our lives to keep us focused on the right things; and maybe that loops back to the first program on love; that we love other people, and one of the ways...that we treat them in ways that generate peace and shalom in a contagious way, as we said in the first segment of this program...one of the ways that we do that is by loving people, and therefore the peace of God guards our hearts and minds to feel and think the right way.

SHIAO CHONG

And after that, not only peacekeeping, but then peacemaking as well. For instance, I am thinking about how in the Beatitudes Jesus says blessed are the peacemakers...

DAVE BAST

Right; not just the peacekeepers.

SHIAO CHONG

That is right; not just the peacekeepers, but also the peacemakers; and that ties back with the love thing, right? We are loved, and therefore we love others, and love spreads. We are also spreading peace to others; and I think one of the ways we do that is with verse 8 onwards, right? We think about what is true, what is

noble; we focus on those things. It is so easy for us, when it comes to conflicts and divisions and differences, to focus on what divides us, focus on what is wrong and negative. We have this kind of negativity bias, I think, to always focus on the bad things...the specks in other peoples' eyes...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right, yes.

SHIAO CHONG

And ignoring all of the good things; so I think, instead if we think about what is true from the others' perspective, or what is true, what is noble, what is right, what is beautiful, excellent, praiseworthy of the person that we disagree with even...

DAVE BAST

Yes, right.

SHIAO CHONG

We might then be able to look at things differently and frame things differently.

DAVE BAST

It would even affect the way we speak to them, right; or about them? Would you say that to your mother, you know, if you are in contention with some person? Just stop for a moment.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, and what is interesting is, I love how Paul flips his language here. If we cast our cares on God through prayer, then the peace of God comes to us; but then, what you were saying Chong, if we think about excellent and praiseworthy things, then Paul says we get the God of peace. So, first we get the peace of God, and now we also get God himself; and what a powerful concept that is; and of course, that also has huge implications for how we live our lives. As we close the program, in just a minute that is what we will think about.

Segment 3

DAVE BAST

I am Dave Bast, along with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*; and joining our conversation today once more is Shiao Chong.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we are finishing up this program on peace, the third in a nine-part series on the fruit of the Spirit; and sometime ago, Dave, on *Groundwork*, we did, I think it was an Advent series from Isaiah 9, where we looked at those well-known titles for the Messiah. One of which, of course, was the Prince of Peace...

DAVE BAST

Yes, right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

That Jesus was the shalom prince; and that, indeed, he came to this world to bring a lasting shalom; and I think that ties back to something you were talking about in another context, Chong, about sort of how this is all three dimensional.

SHIAO CHONG

Yes; I talked about shalom as this three-dimensional concept about peace with God and peace with our fellow human beings and peace with creation as well; and Jesus being the Prince of Peace, whose mission is to bring shalom to the world—bring peace to the world—is also bringing a three dimensional peace. His mission is also three dimensional. It is not just one dimension. He is not just coming to bring...

DAVE BAST

To save souls.

SHIAO CHONG

To save...yes, to save human beings, which is very important, but he is also reconciling people with each other, and also reconciling all of us...all things...all of creation...to God and to all of us together as well in harmony.

DAVE BAST

Really, that second facet of Jesus' ministry, to bring reconciliation, is the reason...one of the reasons he set up the Church; not just to continue his mission, but to demonstrate to the world what people of peace...people of shalom look like, and how they live; which is what makes the conflict in the Church all the worse! I mean, it is just an absolute betrayal of the work of Christ, in us and in the world; and so, we go back to where we started in Philippians 4 with these two church leaders who cannot get along.

SHIAO CHONG

Exactly, yes; and the conflict...the internal conflict among Christians sometimes harms our mission, because we can do so much better together collaboratively; but also, it is a bad witness, because here we are supposed to be ambassadors of God's peace, and yet we are, you know, not peace among, with each other.

DAVE BAST

Early in 2018, the great evangelist, Billy Graham, died; one of the great figures, really, of Christian history; and it reminded me of a story that he told on himself. He was in India and he was speaking with a guru one day about the Gospel, and the Indian spiritual leader said to him: Well, I would consider becoming a Christian, but I have never met one. And Billy said: Ouch; you know, he has a point.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, that reminds me of a similar story from Gandhi, where his biographer, Louis Fischer, said that Christian missionaries spent a long time trying to make Gandhi a Christian, and Gandhi, in his own quiet way, did the same for them...trying to get them to live into Christ; but that is just it, right? Jesus had this three-dimensional mission. He is the Shalom Prince. He came to bring shalom, and he succeeded, but we are in the in-between times yet. It is the already and the not yet. The kingdom has not fully come, and so we live in this conflictual context; and so for us today, if we are to be bearers of shalom, and if it is supposed to be contagious from our lives to give other people a right relationship with God and with each other...with creation, how do we do that? I think this particular fruit of peace is a challenge today because in this day of Facebook and Twitter and Snapchat and Instagram and split-screen arguing matches on television and cable news shows, it seems like there is an industry in the direction of *not* being peaceable—that we are explosive; and people like to see it when you lose it; you know, you just lose your temper...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we have to, I think, as Christians, be above all of that; that we should have a very long...we will talk about this when we talk about patience or forbearance...we should have a very, very, very long fuse...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And not be people who just fire off their opinion on Facebook or Twitter, no matter how it makes other people feel; because how it makes other people feel is pretty important.

DAVE BAST

Yes, well, and certainly the major enemy to peace in our culture today is anger; whether it is real anger, whether it is righteous indignation or whether it is fake anger, as we often see in these media situations. So, somehow we have to learn to be peaceable, peaceful, and peacemakers in that context, right?

SHIAO CHONG

Right, yes; and I wonder if some of the anger stems going back to pride—the issue of pride, I think, is that we have a high esteem of ourselves, a high esteem of whether we have all the right tools, all the right truths, and everybody else is wrong; and so we always have a sense of, you know, we are being stepped on if somebody disagrees with us or that we are being somehow disparaged, or whatever; and I think if we have a sense of humility...greater humility...we might have a longer fuse, so to speak. We would be more patient.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, as we said in the first program of this series, on love, that its opposite was the deadly sin of pride; and now we are saying the opposite of peace is the deadly sin of anger or wrath; and indeed, all the deadly sins flow from pride, as you were just saying, Chong. So, we need to be people who are not that way...that are not explosive; and that might also sometimes mean having a sister or brother gently chide us for what we are putting up on Facebook.

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Somebody might have to say to us: You know, you are not spreading peace, you are spreading ill will; don't post stuff like that.

DAVE BAST

A gentle corrective; but we only have a few moments left, and let's shift and talk about the ultimate peace for ourselves personally, the peace at the end: peace when we come to our own last day; peace even in the face of death; and that is a reality, too, for...it can be...for Christians, right?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly, in fact, in February 2018, the Pope, Benedict XVI, who retired in 2013 due to ill health, sent a letter to a newspaper in Rome, and he said: It is a great grace in this last, at times, tiring stage of my journey to be surrounded by a love and a goodness that I could never have imagined; and there is someone, Chong and Dave, in the face of his own death exuding this peace of Christ, which death is not going to separate him from.

SHIAO CHONG

And not only to face your own death, but also facing the death of your loved ones as well.

DAVE BAST

Yes; peace in Christ. What a wonderful gift; what a wonderful fruit of the Spirit. May we all experience it; may the peace of Christ be yours today.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Scott Hoezee, Dave Bast, and our special guest was Shiao Chong. We hope you will join us again next time as we continue studying the fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5 with an in-depth look at the fruit of patience. Connect with us at our website, groundworkonline.com, and let us know what scripture passages or topics you would like to hear discussed on *Groundwork*.

<https://groundworkonline.com/episodes/the-fruit-of-peace>

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