

God's Keeping Peace

Philippians 4:4-7

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Beginning in Philippians 4:4, Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. 6 Be careful for nothing," or don't worry about anything, "but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep," guard or garrison, "your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Years ago someone gave me a printout of what were called "Bulletin Bloopers," and there was a whole two pages of all these funny things that were put in church bulletins that were just worded kind of funny and wasn't the way they really intended it to go. My family and I used to read those together and laugh. One that was my favorite read like this, "Don't let worry kill you, let the church help."

If anyone had trouble and trials and had cause to worry, it was Paul the Apostle. Let me give you some reasons Paul could've been worrying. Remember back in verse 2 of this chapter where he had to say, "I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord," they weren't getting along and there was division and they needed peace in the church. Secondly, false teachers had invaded the fellowship. Back in Philippians 3:2, Paul warned, "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision." He was warning them about false teachers who had entered the church. If there's anything that'll upset a pastor or cause him to worry, it's false doctrine that's coming into the church. Thirdly, Paul himself was in prison and his future was uncertain, yet Paul was not worried in this epistle to the believers in Philippi. He says, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice."

Before we unpack these verses, how is it that Paul could have such joy and rejoicing in the Lord? Let me go back over the book of Philippians. In Philippians 1, Paul had what we call the single mind, and no matter what his circumstances were, he said he could have joy in the Lord. It was joy in spite of circumstances, a single mind, "...so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death," and "...and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." In Philippians 2, Paul had what's called the submissive mind, he had joy in spite of people, and talked about considering others more important than yourself, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others," to have a humble, submissive mind, so Paul had joy. Then, in Philippians 3, Paul had the spiritual mind. When the false teachers came into the church, Paul says that we have a mind of Christ, "For our conversation," or citizenship, "is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Now, in Philippians 4, we see that Paul has a secure mind. In Philippians 1, he had a single mind; Philippians 2, he had a submissive mind; Philippians 3, he had a spiritual mind; and in Philippians 4, he had a secure mind. His mind was secure because Christ was guarding and garrisoning his heart and mind. When you have the secure mind, "the peace of God" guards you and the God of peace guides you, verse 9. How can we have the secure mind? How can

we conquer worry and experience “the peace of God?” I want you to see from this text first of all the prescription for “the peace of God.” Look at verses 4-6. Let’s read them again. Paul says, “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. 5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. 6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” This is what I call the prescription for peace.

When you go to the pharmacy and get a prescription filled for an ailment you have, but if you’re worried and you need peace, these are the steps that you need to take to have peace. Write them down. There are five conditions in verses 4-6 that we must meet to have “the peace of God.” First, be joyful. Look at verse 4. “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.” You hear me say this quite often, and here we go again. This statement is what’s called an imperative. What that means is that it’s a command, and we need to remember that whatever God commands us to do, God enables us to do—God tells us to rejoice, we can rejoice. The joy of the Lord is something that we obey God and step out into no matter what the circumstances that are going on around us.

What does it mean to, “Rejoice in the Lord”? Well, it helps if you see and understand that joy is a fruit of the Spirit and is not determined by circumstances. Even though you’re in a difficult situation, even though circumstances are bad, you can have the joy of the Lord. It’s like an artesian well springing up within your soul that’s not necessary to be propped up by other things. You might not have material things or other things that you need, but the joy of the Lord is your strength because it’s like an artesian well—it’s the fruit of the Spirit. It’s not happiness, which is based on happenings or circumstances, it’s joy. Remember Paul was writing these words in prison. We use the expression “in prison,” but it was actually a house that he rented but he was in chains. He was under house arrest. It’s Paul’s first imprisonment. In Paul’s second imprisonment, he was in a dungeon known as the Mamertine Prison. This is a place where he was still incarcerated—he was in prison, his future was uncertain, he didn’t know what the future held—but he had the joy of the Lord. What a blessing it is to be a believer and even though everything around you is falling away, you have the joy that is found only in the Lord. Christians go through times of sorrow, but we can still have the joy of the Lord.

Notice the sphere of this joy in this passage is, “...in the Lord,” right? not in people, not in circumstances, not in things, it’s “...in the Lord.” When your joy is in the Lord, the world can’t give or take it away, and you don’t need the things of the world to find joy, you have your joy in the Lord. This joy in Nehemiah 8:10 is actually our strength. It says, “...for the joy of the LORD is your strength.” Even though you’re going through a difficult time, even though you’re going through trials and tribulation or difficulties, you have the joy of the Lord.

The second thing we need to do to have His peace is not only to, “Rejoice in the Lord,” and when it says “in the Lord,” it means you’re rejoicing because He saved you by His grace, He’s given you His Holy Spirit, you are His child, you’re rejoicing in His love and His mercy and His grace, so all the things the Lord brings into your life is what you’re thankful for. The second thing we need to do, verse 5, is be gentle. Look at the statement. He says, “Let your

moderation be known unto all men.” What does that phrase in my King James Bible, “moderation,” mean? It means gentleness, forbearance, a sweet reasonableness.

I love what Charles Erdman said in his commentary. He said, “Joy is closely related to the gentleness and one whose own heart is ever singing will not usually be harsh or ungracious toward his fellow man.” Someone described this as sweet reasonableness. It has the idea of being generous and sympathetic and being kind toward people who don’t deserve it. I like that concept of being “sweet reasonableness.” Have you ever had interaction with anybody that was very unreasonable? Don’t look at anyone next to you right now. “Yes, I’m sitting next to him right now! He always thinks he’s right.” Sometimes we’ll say, “You are so unreasonable,” of course, we’re not but they are, but it’s the sweet reasonableness. It’s just being reasonable and kind, being patient, being gentle. Again, this was an attribute that was found in the Person of Jesus Christ.

James Boice says, “It’s a warning not to be unduly rigorous about unimportant matters.” I love that. People get so rigorous and so stiff about unimportant matters, and they’re not reasonable. This is a good word for married couples, parents, believers in fellowship of the body of Christ.

Here’s the third. The first, be joyful; second, be gentle; and thirdly, be watchful. Notice it says, “The Lord is at hand.” I find that statement fascinating because we can’t really be sure how it is to be understood or interpreted. There are two concepts behind this phrase. This phrase carries the idea of either the Lord is coming again, which would be apropos and applicable, or the second way to interpret it is that the Lord is close and His presence is nigh. “The Lord is at hand,” meaning keep a watch out for the Lord’s coming or that the Lord is with us, the Lord is at hand. Here, Paul in the midst of these imperatives, gives us a promise of the truth that the Lord is coming again or that the Lord is with us. Both of those points of application help us to have joy when we realize that Jesus Christ is coming soon

Now, it may be that the Lord may tarry and we will get old and die, we use the expression from the Bible, “go the way of all flesh,” but if that happens, we’re going to see the Lord face to face. You know, you can actually really get excited about the approaching death of a believer. The Bible actually says, “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.” I know we mourn and we don’t want people to go home to Heaven, but it’s a blessed thing, “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints,” because “...to be absent from the body,” is “to be present with the Lord.” We weep, but we don’t weep because of them, we weep because we miss them but they’re with the Lord and we rejoice for that.

Jesus said in John 14, “I go to prepare a place for you...I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” When He made that promise, He said, “Let not your heart be troubled,” don’t let it be afraid, “ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house,” which is Heaven, “are many mansions...I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also,” I’m going to take you to Heaven. It’s a place called the “Father’s house.” What a blessed promise that is!

Believe in a Person, believe in a promise, believe in a place that Jesus called Heaven, but as I said, it could also mean that the Lord is with us, "The Lord is at hand." Did you know that wherever you go, whatever is going on in your life, the Lord is with you? Did you know He'll never leave you and He'll never forsake you? You're never alone, never alone? If you're a child of God, Christ is always with you. David Livingstone, the great missionary to Africa, was back at his school alma mater, and his body was all mangled from being mauled by a lion a couple of different times. One of the students asked him after his lecture, "Dr. Livingstone, what sustained you? What sustained you all those years in Africa with that exploration and your medical work and your missionary outreach? What kept you going?" David Livingstone said, "One promise in the Bible, 'and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.'" How marvelous that is. If you're discouraged tonight, you need peace tonight, remember that Jesus Christ is with you. What a blessing that is!

Fourthly, the fourth ingredient or prescription for peace, "Be careful for nothing." This is the heart of this passage. "Don't worry about anything," that's Kenneth Taylor's Living Bible, and I like it. This is a command, so actually in the Bible you have a direct command from the Lord, "Don't worry." Now, it doesn't say, "Don't worry, be happy," it just says, "Don't worry." Your joy is in the Lord not in happenstances. You don't have to worry or fret. The Greek word translated "careful" means to be pulled in different directions, and our hopes pull us in one direction, our fears pull us in the opposite direction, and we are being pulled apart. That's worry.

Our English word "worry" comes from an old Anglo-Saxon word that means to strangle. So many times our worry just strangles us and can bring health problems. It's just strangling us because we're worried and fretting. Worry is wrong thinking in the mind, which is mentioned in verse 7, and it's wrong feeling in the heart, mentioned again in verse 7, that "the peace of God" will deal with.

Our circumstances need a single mind; when we're dealing with people, we need a submissive mind; when we're dealing with things, we need a spiritual mind; now, we're dealing with worry, we need a secure mind, and that's what "the peace of God" brings. Remember Jesus said in Matthew 6, pretty much the same thing, "Take no thought," don't worry or be anxious, "for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink...what ye shall put on." Maybe tonight when you were getting dressed for church you went into the closet or you looked into the closet and you saw different things that you could put on and had just a little moment of meltdown, maybe like a nervous breakdown of, "I don't know what to wear," trial of all trials, "What should I wear to church?"

This is a great verse when you go shopping, too, by the way, "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" what you're going to wear. He actually said, "For after all these things do the Gentiles," and He used the word "Gentiles" not just to describe people who are non-Jewish but people who were unbelievers, non-Christians, "For after all these things do the Gentiles seek," then He said, "for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things," before you even ask Him. That's when He said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all

these things shall be added unto you.” Instead of worrying and seeking what to eat and drink and what you put on, He said, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these,” other “things shall be added unto you.”

Don't worry about the basic necessities of life. Don't worry about the things that you cannot change. He said, “Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?” or why would you worry about being too small? Why are you worrying? You can't make your hair either gray or black. It doesn't change anything. Why worry about tomorrow, “Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” It shows a lack of faith to worry, and it's a wrong set of values for not seeking God's Kingdom first.

Write down 1 Peter 5:7, another great verse to parallel this where Peter says, “Casting all your care,” same word, “upon him; for he careth for you.” You can roll your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you; you can cast your cares upon the Lord and He will take care of you. I like the story I heard years ago about the guy who worried all the time, and his friends just thought, “Man, you're a mess! All you do is worry, worry, worry,” and he was just being crippled by worry. One day they saw him in town so carefree and happy. It just freaked them out! They couldn't figure out what happened to this guy. He was so carefree that he took off across the street and almost got hit by a car. He wasn't even worried about crossing the street with busy traffic. They said, “Hey! What's the deal? You used to worry about everything! How come you're so carefree?” He said, “Well, I finally got so sick and tired of worrying, I decided to hire someone to worry for me.” They said, “You're going to hire someone to worry for you?” “Yeah! I thought I'd just hire this guy to do all my worrying, and I don't have to worry anymore.” They asked, “Well, how much are you paying him to take care of your worries?” He replied, “A thousand dollars a week.” They said, “Man, that's a lot of money! How are you going to pay him?” He said, “That's his worry.”

Every time I read that Scripture, “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you,” I think of that story. You actually have Someone to worry for you. The psalmist actually used the expression, “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee,” how marvelous that is! Don't go to bed tonight without casting your cares upon the Lord, He will sustain you.

There's one last, and fifth, thing you need to do—again, this is the important part of the text—be prayerful. Be joyful, be gentle, be watchful, “The Lord is at hand,” be careful, don't worry, but be prayerful. This is a great text on prayer. He says, “...but in every thing,” and, by the way, that means everything—nothing too big, nothing too small, nothing too unimportant—“by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” We want to tell everybody about our problems, but we don't go to God. We'll go to people with all our cares and all our worries, “Have you prayed about it?” “No, I haven't prayed about it, I'm telling you about it,” and we don't go to God. Again, The Living Bible says, “Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God your needs, and don't forget to thank him for his answers.” I love that!

Notice “every thing,” Paul’s solution for worry is prayer. Sometimes people get a little upset with this concept. They say, “Gee! All you ever do is just say, ‘Pray about it.’” You know, after you’ve prayed, there are things you can do, you can go to work. But, if you haven’t prayed, there’s nothing you can do. Until you pray, this is the first thing you need to do, all your labor is in vain. The first step is always prayer, praying like it all depends upon God, then working like it all depends upon you, trusting in the Lord, giving your cares to the Lord, but learning how to pray.

How should we pray? Let me break it down. We should pray with adoration. The word “prayer” was used for a general act of devotion being worship and praise. It was a general word used for prayer connoting the concept of devotion, praise, and worship. We should pray, “Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.” Then, we pray with supplication. Look at verse 6. It says that we should pray with supplication. This is the cry of conscience felt need. The word “supplication” is used for strong emotional prayers born out of a sense or felt need, a moment of just, “Help me, Lord.” “Have mercy on me, O Lord.” Remember when Peter was sinking on the Sea of Galilee that stormy night that he walked on the water? He prayed one of the most beautiful prayers in all the Bible. It was just, “Lord, save me!” I love that. It was sweet and simple, but it was sincere. It was earnest. When Jesus prayed in agony in the Garden of Gethsemane on His face in the dirt, that was strong prayers and supplication. He was crying and sweating great drops of blood.

Thirdly, not only adoration, supplication, but appreciation. Notice the phrase, “with thanksgiving,” so we need to be thankful unto God. Many times we give God our list of things we want or need, we have our petitions, but we don’t really give thanks to the Lord or thank Him in advance. The Scripture says in our text here that we pray and give the Lord thanks in advance.

Fourthly, we pray with petitions, specific requests, verse 6, “...let your requests be made known unto God.” It’s a wonderful thing to take it to the Lord in prayer, and sometimes not tell others what your need is and watch God answer. Sometimes when people have a problem, they tell everybody but the Lord, and then when the need is met, they’re just praying to the people, not to God. It’s a wonderful thing when you say, “Lord, You know my need. You care about me. I know You can take care of me, and I’m trusting You to meet that need.” Sometimes people don’t even know what it is, then the Lord moves on their heart and they meet that need, and you can give God thanks and praise where He meets that need. In 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18, Paul says, “Pray without ceasing. 18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” Amen?

In verses 4-6, you have the prescription for peace. In conclusion, verse 7, we have the provision of peace. When you do these things—when you’re joyful, you’re gentle, you’re watchful, you’re careful, and prayerful—then you experience verse 7, “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” When a person has joy within, gentleness around, prayer to the Lord above, then he will experience God’s peace.

Notice the description. It is, "...the peace of God." I talked a lot about this on Sunday morning recently, so I won't go into depth, but the moment you're saved, you have peace with God. Remember that. That's justification. Then, as you grow in sanctification, you begin to experience the peace of God in your soul, so you have peace with God, you're saved, you're a child of God, your sins are forgiven; but when you walk by faith and you trust the Lord and you pray and commit your way to the Lord, then you begin to have peace in your soul. It's like the Charles Spurgeon statement again. He says, "A little faith will bring your soul to heaven; a great faith will bring heaven to your soul."

You may be a Christian and you're on your way to Heaven, but you're not having Heaven in your soul right now. Do you know that the Lord wants us to have joy on the journey to Heaven? He didn't want us to be all bummed out and look like we've been baptized in lemon juice, "Yeah, I'm a Christian. I'm going to Heaven, but man it sure is miserable following Jesus. I can't wait until I die and go to Heaven so I can be happy," not realizing that we have joy in this world now and glory in the future. Amen?

So, "...the peace of God," that's the source. It's God's peace. In Romans 5:1, "...we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," having been justified, and then the peace of God, as someone said, "The smile of God reflected in the soul of the believer." Write down Isaiah 26:3 where it says, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee," but notice also this is a peace described as, "...which passeth all understanding." If that's an unbeliever, obviously they can't comprehend. They don't know why you're smiling, why you have peace when you're going through all this sorrow and suffering. You're an enigma to them. They don't understand. It's because you have the artesian well of the Holy Spirit in your soul and they don't see it, they don't know it, they don't understand it. It's also something even as believers that we can't explain or fully fathom or understand.

John Bunyan who wrote the book Pilgrim's Progress, and I quote it all the time, when he was in Bedford Prison writing Pilgrim's Progress, he said, "In times of affliction we commonly meet with the sweetest experiences of the love of God." You see, we want to avoid sorrow and suffering, and I understand that; but in times of affliction is when it drives us to the Saviour's feet, upon is His love to feed. It brings us to a place of dependence and reliance. We see our need for God, so we can thank God for even the bitter things of life. They drive us closer to Him in greater dependence. No matter what goes on in our lives, they can work for our good and for God's glory. Remember Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Paul says here, this "peace of God, which passeth all understanding," and I think of Daniel in the lions' den. Can you imagine being thrown into a den of lions? That would be frightening. You talk about freak out! Daniel spent the night, I believe, lying on a lion sleeping all night. The king was in his palace with all the comforts around him, and he paced the floor and worried all night. Then, he had to go and holler down into the pit, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" Daniel's voice came up from the pit, "O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions'

mouths," the angels had all the lions in a headlock holding them, and Daniel spent the night.

Paul was in prison with Silas. At midnight they sang praises unto God. The prisoners heard them, and God sent an earthquake. Peter was in prison waiting to be executed the next day and he was sleeping. Think about that! The angel had to slap him, shake him, wake him up, then the prison doors opened and he was led out of the prison. He thought he was dreaming when he got outside, those are the kind of dreams you have when you're in prison, "Wow! Is this a dream? No, it's real." He pinched himself, but the fact that he had to be awakened when he was in the jail.

Jesus was in the boat on the Sea of Galilee in a storm. I'm sure the water was splashing over the boat onto Him, and He was fast asleep—sleeping in the storm because He knew that His Father watched over Him. He knew no storm could sink the ship where lies the Master of earth and sea and skies. Are you resting in the Lord tonight? Have you cast your cares upon Him tonight? Are you trusting in Him? Have you got His peace in your heart? How marvelous that peace is.

Notice its function, "...shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." You've gotta understand, this word "keep" is an actual military word which means guard or garrison. It means He puts up a fortress. It's a military term that means to guard or garrison. It's like a fortress around two things, "your hearts and minds." "Your hearts" refers to your emotions, and "minds" refer to your thoughts, so our emotions pulling us in different directions and our thoughts tearing our lives apart. How does that happen? Notice it, "...through Christ Jesus." God's peace is to guard and garrison your hearts and minds and it all comes to us through Christ Jesus, not apart from Christ but in Christ.

"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need," and don't forget to thank Him for His answers. If you do that, you will experience, "...the peace of God, which passeth all understanding," that will guard, protect, and keep, garrison, "your hearts and minds," in Christ Jesus. Amen? Let's pray.