

How To Have The God Of Peace

Philippians 4:8-9

Pastor John Miller

I want to back up to Philippians 4:4. It's been a few weeks since we looked at that. We'll read verses 4-7 and all the way down to verse 9. Follow with me in your Bibles. Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. 5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. 6 Be careful for nothing," which is actually, 'Don't worry or be anxious about anything,' "but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God," and the result will be, notice this, "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Now, we come to our text for tonight, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. 9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do:" notice now, "and the God of peace shall be with you."

We move in our study of Philippians 4 from how to have "the peace of God," verses 4-7, to how to have "the God of peace," verses 8-9. As I pointed out, notice "the peace of God," in verse 7, and at the end of verse 9, "and the God of peace shall be with you." How do we have "the peace of God"? First, as a reminder, when you're born again, you have peace with God. That's salvation. As you walk with the Lord and grow in sanctification, you have the peace of God in your hearts and in your minds, and it's ruling and reigning or protecting against worries and anxieties.

How do you have that "peace of God" in our hearts? Notice these five things. First, rejoicing in the Lord, verse 4, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." You're not rejoicing in your circumstances, you're rejoicing in the Lord. The second way to have "the peace of God," is by being gentle to all men, verse 5, "Let your moderation be known unto all men." Thirdly, by remembering the Lord is coming soon. Notice the end of verse 5, "The Lord is at hand." I believe that's a reference to the coming again of the Lord. Fourthly, by not worrying about anything, verse 6, "Be careful for nothing," that's actually an imperative or a command, 'Don't worry about anything,' and the fifth is by praying about everything, verse 6. He says, "...but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests," your prayer requests, "be made known unto God." The result is in verse 7, "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep," it's a military term which means to guard, to garrison, or to protect. God's peace forms a garrison around two things, "your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Remember, worry is wrong thinking and wrong feeling, so we need our hearts, our feelings, and our minds, our thoughts, to be protected by the peace of God which passes all understanding.

Paul then comes to verse 8, there's really no break in the text, talking in all of this section here about having "the peace of God" and having "the God of peace" with us. He says in verse 8,

“Finally, brethren,” this is the second “finally” in the book of Philippians, so it’s almost like Paul wants to wrap it up, but he’s not ready to, but is finally ready to. He comes to this last “finally” and it’s probably more than a wrap up—more of a transition into just this section and how he wants to wrap that thought up—because he’s going to go on and talk about some very important things. Actually, as we get to the end of verse 9, you end the teaching section of the book and from there out to the end of the chapter. It’s a marvelous section of Philippians where he shares personal issues between him and the Philippians as they supported him and his need when he was in Rome and so forth, so it becomes very personal as Paul deals with them from the end of the chapter.

There are two more commands for us to keep, and if we do, “the peace of God” will guard us, and “the God of peace” will guide us. What are they? Verse 8, thinking right; verse 9, living right. This is very, very simple. I have two verses and the two main points. If we’re going to experience “the peace of God” and we’re going to have the sense of the presence of “the God of peace” in our lives with us and guiding us, then we need to think right, guard our minds, verse 8, and we also need to live right, verse 9. Notice the phrase there at the end of verse 8, “think on these things,” is the command or the imperative; and in verse 9, he says, “...do.” Just that one command, “...do: and the God of peace shall be with you.” We have what we should do to have “the peace of God;” then we have what we should do to have “the God of peace,” and we’ll break it down for you in just a moment.

Both right thinking and right living come by right relationship not only to God but also to God’s Word—you can’t be properly related to God if you’re not properly related to His Word. All that we read tonight in verses 8-9 involves our relationship to the Scriptures. If our minds are going to think properly, they must think biblically. We use the term “a Christian world view,” and I don’t think it’s overstated that it’s so very important for us as believers that we look at all of life through the lens of Scripture—everything we think, everything we look at, we must be filtering through the lens of the Word of God. To do that, you’re going to have to marinate your mind in the Scriptures.

One of my favorite authors is John R.W. Stott, and I mention it because if you want to read some great books, get any book written by John R.W. Stott. He wrote a little book called *Your Mind Matters*. For too many years in Christianity we’ve got this concept that our minds are not important, that it’s all about the heart, and we shouldn’t have an issue of the mind and the intellect; but God wants a sanctified biblical mind. The Bible says, “For as he,” a man, “thinketh in his heart, so is he,” and if we think wrong, we can’t live right; and if we think wrong, we can’t be right with God, so we need to have our minds renewed in the Word of God. Romans 12:2, “And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

When you read the Bible and surrender in obedience to the Bible, your mind, your heart, your life, your whole inner being is being transformed, and you think in terms of all your relationships, even human relationships. If you’re married, you better think biblical about marriage. If you’re a parent, you better think biblical about parenting. In your job, in your occupation, you better think

biblical. In all of life as a citizen of a nation in America, you should be thinking biblical as you deal with all the issues that surround us. James 1:22 says, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves," so we need to have our minds transformed that we may know the will of God found in the Word of God, and then we need to be doers of the Word, not hearers only.

Let's look at these two verses. If you're taking notes, the first is right thinking, verse 8. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise," he tells us to, "think on these things." As I said, remember worry comes from our hearts, wrong feeling, and our minds, wrong thinking, verse 7; but the importance now shifts to verse 8, wrong thinking, that our minds are thinking properly. I again say it's so very important that you filter all of life through the lens of Scripture. Even when people ask you a question or an issue, you're thinking biblically about all of life, especially moral issues when it pertains to God and your relationship to God.

The Bible indicates that before we were born again, before we were saved, that Satan has blinded our minds and eyes to the things of God. The Bible says we had carnal minds or minds that were dominated or controlled by the sinful flesh. In Romans 8:5, it says, "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh," so the flesh, the sinful nature, the Adamic nature, was controlling our minds. In Ephesians 4:17, it refers to "...the vanity of their mind," they have minds that are vain. In Romans 1:28, I allude to it quite often in my preaching, that those who have rejected the truth of God and substituted it with a lie actually end up having what's called "a reprobate mind." The King James Bible uses the word "reprobate," but the Greek word that's translated "reprobate" literally means it doesn't work. A "reprobate mind" is a mind that doesn't work, and it's pretty obvious that as you look at our culture today that there's a lot of people, even in high political positions, whose minds don't work—they have no moral compass. They have no fixed point for reality.

Notice the first thing in verse 8 we're supposed to think about is, "whatsoever things are true," yet we live in a culture that has abandoned truth. Everything is relative; everything's in flux; there's no absolute truth. There's no moral absolute truth—your truth is your truth, my truth is my truth, find your own truth, and truth changes. We are living in a world around us of reprobates whose minds do not work, and they have no moral compass to know right from wrong.

When we got saved or born again or regenerated, we had, as I said, Romans 12:2, "...the renewing of your mind," and in Matthew 22:37 it says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." Love God with all of your heart, all of your soul, and all of your mind. It should be engaged. In 2 Timothy 1:7, it says, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear," which is the word "timidity," "but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." I chuckled a little bit because my dad used to quote that all the time, and he was referring to his own mind how God gives us a clear mind—thinking straight. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind," and He wants our

minds to be biblical.

In 1 Peter 1:13, it says, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind." That picture of girding up your loins is an oriental picture because in those days men wore robes. It wasn't easy to walk fast in a robe; it wasn't easy to work in a robe. What they would do was pull their robe up. Their robe would turn into a little mini skirt, I guess it would be (I'm glad I didn't live back then), and to keep it up they had a little sash around their waist, a belt, and they would tie it up. They would tuck it up under, pull up their skirt, tuck it around their belt, and tie it up. We use the expression today, "Roll up your sleeves and get to work." They used the expression, "Gird up your loins and get to work." It was speaking of the loins of your mind. What he's saying is that we should not allow our minds to go wherever they want to go. We shouldn't allow our minds to think about whatever they want to think about, and we should think about that. We need to think about what we think about, we should guard our mind, and we should bring every thought, the Bible says, into captivity and have it subject to Christ. The great need for Christians today is to think like Christians, which is to think biblically.

Paul gives us six objects for right thought. All of them are introduced by the qualitative adjective "whatsoever things." I've noticed it before, but it never really struck me like it did as I was looking at it today, you find that repetition, "whatsoever things...whatsoever things...whatsoever things...whatsoever things...whatsoever things...whatsoever things," it's almost hard to read the verse over and over and over, which means that each one of these qualities that we are to think about are just a heading under which other things could be included. We don't have to limit to just six, but every thing that is true, every thing that is righteous, every thing that is pure, every thing that is good, that's the heading, and many other thoughts or things could be included underneath those, so all of our thoughts need to be brought into captivity. Paul's focus is not on thinking, it's on what we're to think about. It's the object of our thoughts that matter. Anxiety or anxious thoughts must be replaced by positive thoughts.

If you're taking notes, Paul gives us the description of right thoughts, verse 8. The first is, "... whatsoever things are true," or it can be translated truthful. You're not to be thinking about false things but true things, which again is so sad that we have a society today that has actually abandoned the concept of truth. I have a friend that would go on college campuses and interview college students. He would ask, "Do you believe that there's such a thing as truth?" Almost every time, inevitably, the student would say, "No." Then he would ask, "Is that a true statement?" They would look at him like, "Wow! I never thought about that." The fact that when you say there's no absolute truth, is that a true statement? It's self-defeating. (By the way, Frank Turek is going to do that very eloquently, a lot better than I can deal with it.) It's a self-defeating statement. I know that there's no truth, and then sometimes they would say, "Well, there's only one truth and that one truth is that there's no truth." Well, isn't that convenient. It's a self-defeating statement, "No, there's no truth," and certainly no absolute truth, and without God there is no fixed point to reference what is right or what is wrong.

You hear unbelievers talking about, "Well, that's not fair," or "That's not right," or "That's evil." Well, if you have evil, you have good. If you have that, you have to judge; and who's deciding?

Who's the judge? If you don't have God as the final arbitrator in the fixed point, then you're left on a moral sea of no absolutes. That's where we're at today in America.

What is true or truthful? Truth is that which corresponds to reality. Again, I shouldn't go there, and I don't want to go there, but I'm going to mention it. The gender dysphoria, so called, that we have going on in our culture today is utterly insane. It doesn't correspond with reality. We have people whose minds just don't work anymore. They don't even know reality. It's so tragic, it's so sad. Whatever corresponds to reality, and God is the ultimate reality, so God is truthful and righteous as to His very nature.

I love what Charles Erdman said. He said, "The moral standards of Christianity are true because they all correspond to the divine ideal revealed in Christ. They trace back to the very nature of God, that fixed point, and they're revealed in Scriptures." I love this! We have an anchor for our soul, we have an anchor for truth, we have minds that can think correctly because they're sanctified by the God of truth. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Jesus is personified, "the way, the truth, and the life," of God. Without Him, there's no knowing; without Him, there's no going; without Him, there's no living. Without God, we're abandoning absolute truth, and we live in a society that is in sad shape.

Truth is the opposite of falsehood and lies, and the Bible says Satan is a liar and the father of all lies. When it says that Satan is the father of lies, it means that he's the originator of them, the source of them—he fathers all the lies. Satan attacks our own minds with his lies. It began in the Garden of Eden, and he hasn't stopped. He came to Eve and said, "Did God really say that the day you eat thereof you shall surely die?" He starts with questioning God's Word and then lies about God's Word. The Bible says that we're to take on the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God and put on the belt of truth so we can, "...stand against the wiles of the devil." In 2 Corinthians 10:5, the passage I've been quoting, "Casting down imaginations...and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

What are some of the lies that Satan comes to us with? The list could go on and on and on forever. He's the father of lies. He'll say, "God does not exist." He'll lie and say, "God doesn't love you." He'll say, "God has not forgiven you. God has forsaken you. God won't answer your prayers." He'll lie, lie, lie, lie, lie, so you want to be sure that you don't listen to his lies. The best way to combat the devil's lies is with God's truth. Amen? When Satan comes and says, "You know what? God doesn't love you." The Bible says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." "God will not save you." He says, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "God's not going to answer your prayers." God always answers prayers—maybe not the way we want Him to answer our prayers—but God always hears and answers our prayers.

Maybe tonight Satan's been lying to you, and you've been listening to his lies. You need to guard yourself against those lies of the enemy. Remember that God loves you. In Philippians 1:6, Paul says that God is able to complete or finish that which concerns you. In Jeremiah He

said, "I know the plans I have for you, plans to bless you and to prosper you." God loves you and cares for you and watches over you. God created you in His image and likeness, don't listen to the word of the devil, the lies of Satan.

Secondly, what we do is think about, "...whatsoever things are honest," verse 8. That signifies worthy of reverence and respect. The origin of this word is actually tied in with worship—something that's worthy, worth-ship, of worship of dignity of the holiness of God. It means that a Christian is not to think about what is flippant, cheap, or trivial but rather what is serious, dignified, noble, and praise worthy, or worship, so what is worthy of worship and worthy of God. Again, it's consistent with whatever is found in His Word. When you're meditating on God's Word, your mind is thinking about things that are honest as well as true. Think about that.

Thirdly, "...whatsoever things are just," or the word means right, or I like the word righteous. All of those words could be used for that concept of what is just, what is right, or what is righteous, that which is perfect harmony with God and God's eternal unchanging standards found in the Scriptures. Write down Psalm 19:8, which is a marvelous psalm on the Word of God where the psalmist says, "The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart." Again, the word "right" means righteous or true, and when you read them, your heart rejoices.

Fourthly, verse 8, "...whatsoever things are pure." It's morally pure. It's unstained by evil of any kind, that which does not contaminate oneself or others. Whenever you're watching a movie, whenever you're watching television, whenever you're listening to music or reading a magazine or viewing your computer screen, you need to ask yourself, "Is it true? Is it honest? Is it just?" and here's the biggie, "Is it pure?" It's going to limit what you watch on tv and what you watch on the computer. Titus 1:15 says, "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." Isn't it funny how the unregenerated man can take anything and pervert, twist, and read some evil innuendo into it. So much of television does that—all the innuendoes and inferences that are there—which gets your mind going where it should not go. I recommend that you can take this verse, make a plaque out of it, and put it on top of your television set. You say, "Well, Pastor John, then we'll never turn it on." Well, maybe that's the case, but it'll certainly curtail what we watch.

Fifthly, verse 8, "...whatsoever things are lovely," and I think that word is lovely. It means ethically beautiful and attractive. God is beautiful and attractive in what is consistent with His nature. The Greek scholar, William Barclay, says that winsome is the best translation, and I like the concept of attractive or beautiful morally. The opposite of lovely is actually responding to people in vengeance, wrath, or bringing forth bitterness or resentment toward them.

Lastly, the sixth, in verse 8, "...whatsoever things are of good report." It's thought that contains no immoral or sexual suggestive innuendoes. Whatever is of good report, no evil. It's described as the things which are fit for God to hear. Our thoughts should be pleasing to the Lord, "...and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD." It's not okay to let your mind think about things that are evil, sinful, wicked, or unpleasing to God. Someone said,

"If we sow a thought, you can reap an act; if you sow an act, you can reap a habit; if you sow a habit, you can reap a character; if you sow a character, you reap a destiny. It all starts with the thought, so we need to guard our minds. Jesus said, "That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart," your thoughts. He said, "If you have anger in your mind in your heart toward somebody, you've murdered them already." God knows our hearts, He knows our thoughts, He knows our minds. What we think about is so important.

Notice the execution of right thinking at the end of verse 8, "...if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise," and then the command, "think on these things." He wraps it up by, "Okay, I'm just going to give you this general concept, 'If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise.'" Virtue means something that will motivate us to do better, and praise is something that's worth commending to others. Virtue is moral excellence, and praise is that which is worthy of commendation or commending or praising and giving a recommendation to others. All this ends in verse 8 with, "...think on these things." The word "think" stresses the idea of constant thought process. The Greek there is a present imperative, so it's a command in the present tense—think, think, think, think, think. Keep on thinking. Guard your minds by meditating on God's Word is the best way to do that. In Psalm 119, which is an entire psalm on the Word of God, the psalmist says, "Great peace have they which love thy law." I love that passage. If you want "the peace of God," and you want "the God of peace" in your life, you need to meditate on God's Word and get your mind thinking biblically. It's so very important.

Write down Psalm 1, "Blessed is the man...his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night," right? "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water...his leaf shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Not only are we to think about God's Word, but here's another aspect of applying this: Every one of these virtuous categories are true of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, virtuous, and praiseworthy; so as we find Christ in the Bible, and we meditate on Jesus, we find ourselves thinking right.

The second category is in verse 9, and this is the neglected verse, but shouldn't be, where Paul says, "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me," Paul lived out what he preached, "do," put it into practice, and the result will be, "the God of peace shall be with you." In verse 7 we have, "the peace of God," within us guarding and protecting us. In verse 9, we have "the God of peace," around us and with us guiding and directing us. The command, though, is in verse 9, "...do." It's a present active imperative. It emphasizes a constant practice, the development of an habitual lifestyle.

When we pray and tell God our problems, we're not to just stop there. We pray—we cast our cares on God, we tell Him our problems—now we start thinking right—what is true, honest, pure, and lovely—and then we say, "Lord, fill me with Your Spirit, and help me to live right." If we don't think right and we don't live right, we're going to lose "the peace of God" protecting our minds and our hearts and we're not going to have a sense of the presence of God, "the God of peace," in our lives. When he says, "...and the God of peace shall be with you," he's actually

saying that you will experience God's presence. Do you know that God is with you even when you don't experience or sense it because He promised never to leave you or forsake you. He's with us, but what we want is to experience His presence. Amen? We want to have a sense of God's presence in our lives. All of these commands in this passage need to be put into practice. It's not enough just to pray, we should be thinking right, and then living right, putting it into practice in our lives. Thinking right should lead to right living.

What does Paul want them to do? Four things. Write them down. He says, "I want you to do what you've learned, I want you to do what you've received, I want you to do what you've heard, and I want you to do what you've seen." Where did they see it? In his life. Paul was an example. Go back to verse 9, "Those things, which ye have both learned," is the idea of Paul's oral teaching of the Scriptures. Paul was teaching them, and they were learning, so what they had learned from the Apostle Paul. Paul was there when the church of Philippi was birthed. He's writing to them now from a Roman prison. He's actually under house arrest, but when the church was started in Philippi, Acts 16, you remember that Paul and Silas were arrested and thrown into prison, right? God sent the earthquake during the midnight praise meeting, and the Philippian jailer was converted, then Lydia was converted, and all that had happened. That's the foundation of the church.

Paul says, "You've learned from me," and then says, "...and received," from me, so it's not just learning, it's being receptive, the truth transmitted to them by way of his epistles. It's received from Paul. It's not enough just to learn, you must also receive God's Word as it comes from Paul. Then, thirdly, he says, "and heard." That probably is a reference to heard from others how Paul was responding to his imprisonment in Rome and what he had heard from them was they had heard that Paul is not worried, Paul's not anxious, Paul's not distraught, Paul's not freaking out, Paul's trusting the Lord. Paul wrote Philippians—all about the joy of the Lord—with chains on his wrists, and he wasn't worried about himself. He said in Romans, "And we know that all things work together for good," he knew that God had a purpose and a plan for even his imprisonment, so he's not freaking out. They heard about Paul. Verse 9, "...and seen," so Paul sums this up by, "My life in action." Again, I think of Acts 16. They knew that Paul and Silas were praising God and singing songs and God sent the earthquake and the Philippian jailer got converted and the church was born. What a witness and what a testimony his life was.

What I'll say at this point is that Paul practiced what he preached. It's so very important that we practice what we preach, especially for a preacher, right? This is why you need to pray for your pastor because knowledge brings responsibility and the challenge is practicing what you preach. It's a challenge, but Paul could actually say, "Not just do what I say," Paul could say, "Do what I do." His practice trumped his preaching, and his preaching and practice were consistent. He was living out what he believed was the Word of God in his life, so there was no hypocrisy in Paul.

Again, James says, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves," so we need to put it into practice. We need to learn, we need to receive, we need to hear, we need to see in others' lives and emulate that. We need people to be able to see in us

what it means to live out the Christian life.

Paul closes with a promise in verse 9. He gives a command, "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do," that's the living; then he gives them a promise, "and the God of peace shall be with you." Do you know that's one of Paul's favorite titles for God? He used it, just as a couple of examples, in Romans 16:20 where he says, "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet." He used it in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 when he referred to, "And the very God of peace," what a beautiful title for God, He's the God of peace. He sent His Son to die so that we could have peace with God; He sends His Spirit into our hearts so we can have "the peace of God;" He sends His presence around us to protect and to guide us so we have "the God of peace" to be with us as we go through life.

You cannot experience "the peace of God," verse 7, if you are living in disobedience to "the God of peace," verse 9. Did you hear what I said? You cannot experience "the peace of God," verse 7, if you're living in disobedience to "the God of peace," verse 9. If you expect to have God's presence sensed in your life, you need to do these things: pray right, verse 6; think right, verse 8, and you need to live right, verse 9. Then, and only then, will you experience "the peace of God" in our lives. Someone said, "The giver of peace will ever be with those who keep His commandments. God's peace is not sentimental but moral."

It's interesting that Philippians 4 is called the peace chapter of the Bible, and James 4 is called the war chapter of the Bible. They are two kind of opposites. You have the peace chapter, and James talks about the war chapter. Let me point out what I'm talking about. James brings the question to us in James 4, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence," this way, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts," you don't pray right. Secondly, it comes from wrong thinking, you don't think right, "...purify your hearts, ye double minded," James says. Thirdly, it comes from wrong living, "...know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?"

If you want to be without "the God of peace," then you don't pray right, you don't think right, you don't live right. If you want to have "the peace of God" in your heart, guarding and protecting your mind, then live right, pray right, think right, and you also get "the God of peace" to be with you. You sense His presence. It's so very, very important. Let's pray.