

Peace of God through the God of Peace

Philippians 4:1-9

Introduction

There was a farmer who owned land along the Atlantic seacoast. He continuously searched for new hires, but many applicants rejected due to the storms that raged across the Atlantic. Finally, a man, well past middle age, approached the farmer. "Are you a good farmhand?" the farmer asked him. "Well, I can sleep when the wind blows," answered the man. Although puzzled by this answer, the farmer, desperate for help, hired him. The man worked well around the farm, busy from dawn to dusk, and the farmer felt satisfied with the man's work. Then one night the wind howled loudly in from offshore. Jumping out of bed, the farmer grabbed a lantern and rushed next door to the hired hand's sleeping quarters. He shook the man and yelled, "Get up! A storm is coming! Tie things down before they blow away!" The man rolled over in bed and said firmly, "No sir. I told you, I can sleep when the wind blows." Enraged by the response, the farmer was tempted to fire him on the spot. Instead, he hurried outside to prepare for the storm. To his amazement, he discovered that all of the haystacks had been covered with tarp. The cows were in the barn, the chickens were in the coops, and the doors were barred. The shutters were tightly secured. Everything was tied down. Nothing could blow away. The farmer then understood what his hired hand

meant, so he returned to his bed to also sleep while the wind blew. MORAL: When you're prepared spiritually, mentally, and physically, you have nothing to fear and can have peace.

The hired hand in the story was able to sleep and have peace because he had secured the farm against the storm. We, as believers in Christ, secure ourselves by grounding ourselves in the Word of God, by meditating on it, living by it and through prayer. We don't need to understand, we just need to hold on to Christ to have peace.

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The church at Philippi was established by the Apostle Paul on his second missionary journey between A.D. 49 and 52. The story of the church's origin is found in Acts 16. The first convert was a woman named Lydia. Later we read about the Philippian jailer and his household were converted after Paul and Silas were thrown into jail after being beaten publicly. This Pauline epistle is often known as the epistle of joy. Paul writes to the church in Philippi approximately A.D 60-62 while he was in prison in Rome for many purposes. A few of the purposes include to explain his situation at Rome (1:12-26), exhort the church to unity (1:27-2:18), and thank them for their financial support (4:10-20)

In the preceding verses, Paul mentions our citizenship being in heaven, and the promise of glorification – where our bodies will be transformed and conformed to the image of Christ. On that basis, he then appeals to the believers at Philippi to stand fast in the Lord, then urges two believers to resolve their conflict with each other. He then gives commands to always rejoice in the Lord, let their gentleness be known to all men, to not be anxious for anything, but instead, take everything to God in prayer, and to meditate on eight godly virtues. As a result, the peace of God given by the God of peace will guard their hearts. The peace of God does not mean nothing bad is happening, but rather it is a confidence in who God is and that He will accomplish what He says He will accomplish. Peace is not the absence of trials; it is the presence of Christ. It is a peace that only comes through the mind of Christ.

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(Reading of the text)

(Slide switch) 6

Unifying idea of the text: The peace of God only comes through the mind of Christ.

Question: How can we have the peace of God?

Incomplete sentence: We can have the peace of God by:

Outline/Body

(Slide switch) 7

I. Resolving conflicts with our brothers, and sisters in Christ, vv. 1-3.

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A. Paul expresses his love for the church in three ways.

(Click)

1. He calls them his beloved.
2. He says he longs for them.
3. He calls them his joy, and crown.

B. Paul commands them to stand fast in the Lord.

(Click)

1. Standing fast is a military term referring to a soldier remaining at his post no matter what happens around him.
2. This command is necessary because we struggle standing fast/firm.
If left to our own devices we will retreat or surrender.

C. Paul gives instructions to specific members.

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1. He urges two women who labored with him in the Gospel to resolve their conflict with each other.
2. He urges the “true companion” to help the two women, Clement and other fellow workers, (whose names are in the Book of Life.)

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II. Remaining joyful, and living gently among everyone v. 4-5.

(Slide switch) 10

A. Paul once again commands them to “rejoice in the Lord.”

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1. This command is to be fulfilled “always.”
2. This means to choose to make your boast in the Lord in all circumstances.
3. The verb “rejoice” being an imperative implies that rejoicing in the Lord is not a natural thing to do.
4. Spurgeon wrote “joy in the Lord is the cure for all discord.” Paul is challenging them in the midst of their conflict to rejoice in the Lord.

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B. Paul exhorts them to let their gentleness be known to all men.

1. In this text, gentleness means “yielded rights; ready to forgive.”
2. This is to be evident before all men.
3. They are to do this because the “Lord is near.”
4. When we live with the awareness of Jesus’ soon return, it motivates us to rejoice in the Lord and show gentleness to all people.

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III. Refusing to worry, but taking everything to God in prayer, 6-7.

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A. Paul commands them to be anxious for nothing.

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Illustration: A professor at a leading American university studied the things people worry about. His research discovered that: 40% never happens; 30% concerns the past; 12% are needless worries about health; 10% are about petty issues; and 8% are legitimate concerns. That means that 92% of our “worry time” is wasted energy. Whether or not this is 100% accurate, Paul is saying that we are not to worry even about the 8%. Why is that? Because when we worry we are saying in our hearts that God cannot take care of us, that our problems are bigger than His promises. Corrie Ten Boom, a Christian imprisoned for helping Jews escape the holocaust quotes “worrying does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength.” What has worrying done for you? Not only is it a wasted energy, it is sin! Worry is a sin all of us grapple with on a daily basis.

B. Paul indicates the cure for anxiety is by prayer.

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1. Prayer simply means communication with God in broad sense.
2. Supplication means directly asking God to do something.

3. They are to do so with thanksgiving – our prayers should be accompanied by a heart of gratitude for all that God has done for us in the past, and what He will do in the future.
4. Requests speak of specific petitions rather than vague and foggy generalities.

Illustration: One of my favorite hymns “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” speaks strongly about prayer. The first verses read “What a friend we have in Jesus. All our sins and griefs to bear. And what a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer. Oh, what peace we often forfeit. Oh, what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.” A question that always convicts me is “have you prayed about it?” I find myself worrying more than praying. However, through the Spirit and disciplining our lives to a life of prayer, we can reject our anxiety, and pray as we are commanded to do.

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C. Paul promises that the peace of God will guard them.

1. This is the promise if we choose to pray instead of worry
2. The peace of God refers to God’s peace that he himself possesses in His nature as Someone unfettered with anxiety in any way. His peace surpasses all understanding because it goes beyond human ability to discover.

3. The word “guard” is a military term which refers to a sentry’s responsibility to protect a camp or castle as he marches around securing that which is valuable and strategic. The peace of God will watch over and warn us against any intruders. If the peace of God is not ruling or standing sentry over our inner man, then an unwanted intruder has already entered.

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Here is a simple three reasons why believers should not worry and can be confident in God.

1. Because God hears our prayers.

It may not always seem like it. You may have to wait days, weeks, months, or even years for a prayer to be answered. Until then though, praise God in the midst, and continue to praise Him more and more.

2. Because God knows what is best.

Have you ever been glad God didn’t say yes to some the prayers we have prayed? We may get something else or a no as the answer.

Because of who God is, we can be confident that He knows what is best.

3. Because God is in control.

This often called the sovereignty of God. He knows all and is in control. Nothing that happens in this life catches Him by surprise. If God is not in control, then you have every reason to worry.

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IV. Reflecting on, and living out godly characteristics, 8-9.

(Slide switch) 15

A. Paul commands them to meditate on eight character qualities.

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1. They are to meditate on things that are true.
2. They are to meditate on things that are noble.
3. They are to meditate on things that are just.
4. They are to meditate on things that are pure.
5. They are to meditate on things that are lovely.
6. They are to meditate on whatever is of good report.
7. They are to meditate on anything virtuous.
8. They are to meditate on anything praise worthy.

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B. Paul commands them to follow after his example.

1. They are to do the things that they learned, received, heard, and saw in him.
2. If they do these things; the God of peace will be with them.
3. Not only would the peace of God be with them, but the God of peace would be near to them.

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Conclusion

Question: How can we have the peace of God?

Incomplete sentence: We can have the peace of God by:

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I. Resolving conflicts with our brothers, and sisters in Christ.

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II. Remaining joyful, and living gently among everyone.

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III. Refusing to worry, but taking everything to God in prayer.

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IV. Reflecting on, and living out godly characteristics.

Application: Paul's admonition to help two women who were having a disagreement should be followed by us as well. Too often we tend to take sides in a dispute between people and the tension becomes even worse. What we should do is

attempt through prayer, support, and encouragement to bring differing sides of a dispute together. Our attitudes should always be an attitude of rejoicing as Christ is our object of rejoicing. Our gentleness should be evident to everyone in the world. My prayer and hope is if people disagree with me that they would still find me to be gentle, and respectful. Our worries should instantly be countered by prayer. If we truly want the peace of God, let us pray and bring all our burdens, requests, and needs to Him. Set up a time for daily prayer. Do it as an expression of your continual desire to know God deeply and experience His own peace. And, when you come to Him in prayer, be thankful. Thankfulness is central to the Christian faith and love for God. When we do this, God promises to guard our hearts with His peace in Christ. Our meditation should only be things of these godly characteristics. The things that we read in Paul should be the things we imitate. Our live style should be an example to others and be able to accurately say “follow me as I follow Christ”. The peace that God gives is only found in the mind of Christ alone. If you are not in Christ, not only will you never have the peace of God, but even more terrifying, you do not have peace with God. Believers have peace with God because of the cross, but you can rob yourself of the peace of God when you choose an attitude of complaint and discontentment over an attitude of prayer, and rejoicement. What will you choose?

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Reflection questions:

1. How can you help others believers with conflicts?

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2. How can you discipline yourself to a life of prayer and thankfulness over a life of worrying?

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3. Are the things you are meditating on the things shown this text or are they self-focused and the opposite of these things?

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4. Are you living a life of good conduct that others can see?