

“The Peace of God”
Philippians 4:6-7
(Preached at Trinity, July 9, 2017)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As Paul began closing out his letter to the Philippians he gave a list of duties consistent with those with their sights on eternity. All are in the imperative. Maintain a life of rejoicing, let your gentleness be displayed before all men, don't worry, pray with thanksgiving, think on good things, practice good deeds.
2. Last time we looked at the timeless issue of anxiety and worry.
Philippians 4:6 NAU - "Be anxious for nothing"
3. Worry is common to our fallen condition. It reflects life without purpose, a world without direction. The uncertainties of life overwhelm our minds with anxiety. A life lived without God provides little comfort. A life left to our own devices can be terrifying.
4. Worry also reflects a heart of unbelief. Is there a God who rules all things? Do things happen by accident? Is God powerless to help us?
Although worry reflects our fallen condition and flows from unbelief, Christians are not immune. In fact, even Christians can be given to anxiety and worry.
5. Worry is a heart problem. It is a mental problem. It invades our mind with endless possibilities, each ending poorly. Our imaginations run wild.
 - a. As I pointed out last time, as our minds are overcome with worry the stress begins to affect our bodies. It's a known fact that stress is a major contributing factor to many of our health issues, both physical and mental.
 - b. The added stress begins to take its toll on relationships. Consumed by our own troubles we lose the ability to focus on the needs of others. Everything is about my problems, my unhappiness.
6. What can calm this raging storm in our minds. Paul gives us the cure. The word "and" serves as a connection to give us the results of our prayers.
Philippians 4:6-7 NAU - "in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."
7. God doesn't promise to shield us from every trial. Paul doesn't say anything in this verse about God removing the adversity.
What we are promised is peace that Paul describes as a surpassing peace that is able to guard our heart and thoughts.
This is God's wonderful gift to us. Paul doesn't say "present your requests to God and God will grant your request" but "present your requests to God and He will bring you peace."
8. This morning I want to take a few minutes to set before you this inexpressible peace.

- I. This first thing we need to understand is this: Before we can enjoy the peace OF God we need to be at peace WITH God.
- A. The lost man is not at peace with God. Instead, there is a terrible enmity between God and man. The lost man is in an open war with God.
- 1 God's anger is kindled upon the lost man. God is against him. **Psalm 1** describes the infinite difference between the righteous and the wicked. The Christian enjoys the pleasure of God. God is with him, working on his behalf. In contrast, God is against the wicked.
Psalm 1:4-6 NAU - ". . . they are like chaff which the wind drives away. ⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. ⁶ For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish."
 - 2 Most people are convinced that God is pleased with them. They expect God's blessings and complain loudly when difficulties come.
 - 3 The truth is they have no knowledge of God's peace. There can be no peace apart from ending hostility with God
- B. Peace can only come through the Gospel.
1. In **Romans 5** Paul describes this peace as being the fruit of justification. **Romans 5:1 NAU** - "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"
 2. The Christian knows this sweet peace of being reconciled with God. We know the comfort of adoption whereby we can call God our Father. This wonderful peace *with* God is essential before we can ever enjoy the peace of God that Paul is describing here in Philippians 4:7.
- II. How do we describe this peace?
- A. God is the source of this peace – “the peace of God”
1. It is a peace that originates with God. It comes from within God's own being.
Romans 15:33 NAU - "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."
 2. The God of peace is pleased to impart this peace to His own children. William Hendriksen: “Peace is the smile of God reflected in the soul of the believer. ¹
 3. This peace flows from the entire Godhead
 - a. It is the peace of God that flows forth from the Father, the God of peace.
 - b. As the fruit of the Spirit it flows forth from the Holy Spirit
“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace . . .”
 - c. And it flows forth from our gracious Savior, the Prince of Peace
Philippians 4:7 NAU - "will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

¹ William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Philippians*, New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 5:196.

4. Jesus has promised to give us His peace
John 14:27 NAU - "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."
 a. Worldly peace is temporary and based upon human reason and human resources.
 b. The peace Jesus gives is a peace He has received and has chosen to impart to us. It is not dependent upon worldly circumstances but upon His sovereign dominion. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. We know His peace because we are united with Him.

B. It surpasses understanding

1. The word for “surpasses” is ὑπερέχω – It refers to something surpassing or something that excels. Paul has already used the word twice in this epistle.
Philippians 2:3 NAU - "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;"
Philippians 3:8 NAU - "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,"
 • It can be understood here in two possible ways:
2. It can refer to peace as being beyond our ability to comprehend—it is unfathomable.
 a. This is similar to Paul’s description of love in Ephesians. (Paul uses a different word in Ephesians, however.)
Ephesians 3:19 - " and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God."
 b. This is certainly true. How can we comprehend and explain the peace that God sheds upon our hearts and minds as we come before Him in prayer casing our anxiety upon Him?
3. The word used here can also refer to a peace that surpasses or rises above the understanding of the mind.
 a. It far exceeds all of the ponderings of our mind. The mind is the source of our anxiety. Our minds can be overwhelmed with the problems of life. Our minds can enlarge our problems to enormous proportion. The peace of God exceeds these stirrings of the mind. It puts to rest the terrors and calms the anxiety
 b. The peace of God far exceeds the terrors of the mind. This is why it is able to guard the mind.

C. This peace comes by faith

1. This peace is our comfort and confidence *through* Christ and a joy *in* Christ based upon a firm hope upon the promises of God. It is the height of assurance upon Christ. It is the inner sense of God’s favor upon us. In this sense it flows forth from our peace *with* God.
 2. This peace comes from an affirmation that the promises of God are sure. We are enabled to rest upon His Word.

3. The peace of God flows from the confidence that God rules all things – that the world is in order. The opening verse of **Psalm 93** describes it well: "The LORD reigns"
 - a. There is great peace in knowing that God governs all things—that nothing ever happens that He has not ordained. There is great peace in knowing that He is working for our good. If the world ends today we have great peace in knowing that God is accomplishing His redemptive purpose.
 - b. God's people are at peace through every trial of life. Since God has ordained all things, no enemy, no hardship shall ever do more than God has ordained – and none is capable of separating us from God. We are indestructible until the time comes in God's sovereign plan for us to die. God's ways are not our ways but we know they can be trusted.
 - c. Listen to Isaiah:
Isaiah 54:17 NAU - "No weapon that is formed against you will prosper; And every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, And their vindication is from Me," declares the LORD."
Isaiah 26:3-4 NAU - "The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, Because he trusts in You. ⁴ "Trust in the LORD forever, For in GOD the LORD, *we have an everlasting Rock.*"
4. This peace is dependent upon us knowing the God of peace. The more we know about Him and His ways the greater peace and confidence we will have during the storms of life.

III. God's peace will guard our heart and mind

"will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

- A. The heart was often used metaphorically in the ancient world
 1. We do the same thing today – "He broke my heart."
 2. In Scripture is often refers to the moral, ethical, emotional dimension of our life
Matthew 15:19 NAU - "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders."
Matthew 5:27-28 NAU - "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; ²⁸ but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."
Acts 16:14 NAU - "A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul."
Acts 11:23 NAU - "Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and *began* to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain *true* to the Lord"

2. Life's problems can grip our heart with fear. It can rob us of our happiness and contentment. Paul is saying that in Christ our inner most being is brought to peace. It is emotional peace and tranquility that all is well. It changes us from the anxiety that creates fear and stress to a calm that all is under control.
- B. Paul also says this peace will also guard our minds.
1. Paul uses a military term that describes a soldier's duty to prevent prisoners from escaping. Paul has in mind a powerful protection.
 2. Our minds are wonderfully creative. We were created in the image of our Creator. With our minds we can imagine every possible scenario of catastrophe. We can make small things seem large and large things seem disastrous. Our minds must be protected from this inclination to worry.
 3. Paul says this peace is greater than the ability of our minds to forecast doom. God's peace watches over our minds like a sentry guarding against invasion. It will govern our thinking.
 4. Our worry is also inflamed by Satan who is always poised to fill our mind and heart with thoughts of doom and despair. God's peace protects us.
 5. As we pray with thanksgiving, pondering the gracious character of Christ, our anxieties are calmed and replaced with the grace of joy. We are able to fulfill the charge of **verse 4** – "rejoice in the Lord always"
Habakkuk 3:17-18 NAU - "Though the fig tree should not blossom
 And there be no fruit on the vines, *Though* the yield of the olive
 should fail And the fields produce no food, *Though* the flock should
 be cut off from the fold And there be no cattle in the stalls, ¹⁸ Yet I
 will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation."
- C. Paul is describing how prayer changes US
1. We don't diminish that our prayers can be used of God in His acts of Divine providence. In other words, prayer can have an effect upon our outward condition.
James 5:17-18 NAU - "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. ¹⁸ Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit."
 2. Most often, however, God uses our prayers by changing us. This is what Paul is saying here. God changes our hearts from being consumed with anxiety to being comforted in peace.
 3. John Eadie says it transforms our hearts from misery to happiness. This peace is but another name for happiness, for it is beyond the reach of disturbance. Come what will, it cannot injure—come when it likes, it is welcome—and come as it may, it is blessing in disguise."²

² Eadie, John, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, (Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books, reprint 2005), Page 249.

Conclusion:

1. Have you found this peace? It can only be known to the righteous.
Isaiah 48:22 – *"There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked."*
2. Where can you find such a peace?
Romans 1:7 – "Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."
This peace can only be found in Christ. Only Christ can bring lasting, eternal peace.
3. Without peace there can be no happiness, no joy. With peace there can be happiness in whatever else the situation might be. Look to Christ. As we pray we are brought to perfect peace.