

## The Peace of God and the God of Peace

Another bible study during the COVID-19 crisis in which we learn how the peace of God comes into our lives.

### Philippians 4:1-9

**Intro-** Again, let us focus our attention on a passage of scripture that will help guide our attitude and actions during these unstable and uncertain times.

In **Philippians chapter four**, the Apostle Paul is bringing his letter to the Philippian church to a close, in closing he offers them some:

**1. Pastoral Exhortations** – He exhorts them to:

**A. Stand fast (Vs. 1)**

Like an army standing unmovable against the enemy, the church is not to flinch in the face of worldly adversity.

**B. Be unified (Vs. 2, 3)**

The referred to conflict between these two women could be resolved if they both possessed the same humble mindset as Christ Jesus. **(Philippians 2:1-8)**

**C. Continually rejoice (Vs. 4)**

Their joy was to be in the Lord and it was to be unchanging. They were to be always joyful, at all times and in all things.

**D. Be gentle (Vs. 5) \*The word moderation (KJV) can also be translated gentleness or selflessness.**

They were not to be concerned with or insistent on their rights but ready and willing to submit/defer to others. Why? Because the Lord is at hand. We should treat everyone as if the Lord was present with us. He is.

**E. Be free of care/anxiety (Vs. 6)**

Do not be anxious about anything. Don't worry. Jesus spoke about those things which commonly bring us anxiety in the Sermon on the Mount. **(Matthew 6:25-34)** They are physical attributes (Vs.27), clothing (Vs.28), food and drink (Vs.31), and the future (Vs.34). The exhortation is clear; the Christian should not let these things bring him anxiety.

**F. Think on righteous things (Vs. 8)**

By changing our thoughts, we can change our world. This verse speaks of disciplining our thought life.

**G. Follow Paul's example (Vs. 9)**

However, thoughts alone accomplish nothing. Disciplined thoughts should lead to measured behaviors. In this, Paul himself, was their example.

**\*Consider-** All of these exhortations can be categorized together in that their fulfillment is hindered by the same obstacle and that their obtainment is accomplished by the same victory.

The universal hindrance to every. single. one. of these exhortations is **conflict**.

Likewise, the obtainment (or the fulfillment of these exhortations...or the necessary victory over the conflict...or the overcoming of the obstacle to their fulfillment) of these exhortations is universal and it is **peace**, specifically the **peace of God**.

So, in obeying/fulfilling these exhortations, we find that **conflict** is the **obstacle**, and **peace** is the **victory**.

### **We would ask:**

#### **\*What should I do in the midst of worldly conflict?**

Conflict that comes externally from the world in which I live. A world that is fallen and cursed. A world wrecked by sin and the effects of sin. A world filled with evil, temptation, persecution, pressure, heartache, sickness, grief and pain.

We can easily apply this to our current crisis. We live in a fallen creation groaning for the day of its redemption. (Romans 8:22)

What am I to do in the midst of this conflict? The answer is **stand fast** (Vs.1); **Continually rejoice** (Vs.4) at all times and in all things; **Be careful for nothing** (Vs.6); Don't be anxious; **Think on righteous things** (vs.8); and **Follow Paul's example**. (Vs.9)

#### **\*What should I do in the midst of relational conflict?**

Conflict that comes externally from the relationship that I have as fallen sinner with other fallen sinners. Conflict that comes both within the church community and without. Conflict that stems from carnal, self-centered emotions. Life is but a series of relationships, and conflict within those relationships can sour life real fast.

So what am I to do in the midst of this conflict? The answer is **be of the same mind** (Vs.2); **Help others come together** (Vs.3); **Let your moderation/gentleness be known to all** (Vs.5); **Think on righteous things** (Vs.8); and **Follow Paul's example**. (Vs.9)

#### **\*What should I do in the midst of internal conflict?**

Conflict that flows from my fallen heart and expresses itself in my carnal emotions. Internal conflict such as anxiety, stress, depression, insecurity and anger. Conflict that manifest itself as worry, fear or self-pity.

What am I to do? Again, the answer is found here in Philippians 4: **Stand fast** (Vs.1); **Continually rejoice** at all times and in all things (Vs.4); **Be careful for nothing**; Don't let stress, worry or anxiety take over your life (Vs.6); and **Think on righteous things**. (Vs.8)

Ok...but how do these exhortations bring me peace in the midst of conflict? This falls under, "easy preaching, tough living." Paul answers us by speaking of;

## **2. Divine Enablement**

Where do I find peace in the midst of conflict or contrary circumstances? The answer is not from within my fallen heart or from without in this fallen world but from above in the Divine.

- A. **The Peace of God. (Vs.7)** This is a divine supernatural endowment from the God of heaven; whereby, His very peace which defies human understanding, comes to my troubled world. This is God bringing peace to those things which are outside of my control.

The promise here is that our lives may be touched with the supernatural...something that defies human comprehension. This is a divine peace that men can neither explain nor explain away. This is the peace we need now! We need a divine peace flowing from the finger of God, possessed by His people, confounding the world.

- B. **The God of Peace. (Vs.9)** This is the very divine presence of God beside me, aiding me as I seek to bring peace to my troubled world. This is me bringing peace to my world through those things I can control as God supports me.

This peace is the presence of God in experience and power.

Ok...again we question, How is it that this divine peace comes to us? And so Paul speaks of:

### 3. Spiritual Exercise

#### A. Spiritual exercise for the peace of God. (Vs.6)

To quote John Stott, *"The antidote to anxiety, and the prelude to the enjoyment of peace are to be found in the linked exercise of prayer and thanksgiving."*

1. **Prayer** – Refers to prayer in general. In which we resolve our anxiety by trust in God. That which causes anxiety is brought to the one who possesses all wisdom, power and authority, and the matter is left with Him. Simply put, prayer cures anxiety because prayer casts the anxiety upon the Divine who cares for us. **(1 Peter 5:7)**
2. **Supplication** – Refers to attitude of the prayer. In which we take the humble attitude of a suppliant, recognizing that apart from God we have nothing and all that we have or will have comes from Him. The suppliant humbly accepts the will of His master. He needs nothing more. The suppliant is content with the lot his master has chosen for him.
3. **Thanksgiving** – Refers to the contentment of the prayer. In that which causes anxiety is accepted as the will of a wise and benevolent God, who we trust to work all things for good according to His will. Thanksgiving says, "I accept this as appointed by God, and I accept that God has appointed it for good, and I am grateful."
4. **Result** – The very peace of God keeps/guards like a centurion at the gate, my heart and mind keeping out anything that would bring care and anxiety. For this reason, we can formulate a scriptural law/principle that is **prayerful people are peaceful people.**

#### B. Spiritual exercise for the God of peace. (Vs.9)

To quote the NAC commentary on Philippians (Melick), "Paul turned his thought to providing an environment of peace by unified thought. The church was to make these matters its collective goal and God would rule in them. Individual Christians were also to conduct their lives in this way. This speaks to the need of rearranging life and thought through discipline so that the God of peace can freely work."

1. **“Think on these things” (Vs.8)** Ponder, give proper weight and value to these things, seriously consider them, and reason with yourself about them. In the midst of conflict, whether it be worldly, relational or internal, we must determine to let these thoughts dominate our mind.

- **True** – True as to a fact. The actuality of a thing. Don’t think upon rumor or conjecture or worst case scenarios. Think upon reality.
- **Honest** – Noble, worthy of respect and honor. That which inspires awe. In others look for their better qualities and dwell on them.

III. Mr. Rogers, *“When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, “Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.”*

- **Just** – Right. Acting justly, doing what is right by others. Giving others their due.
- **Pure** – Holy, right in a moral sense. Chaste in word and deed.
- **Lovely** – Attractable. That which calls forth love. IOW, a man that hath friends must show himself friendly. Shedding those qualities that “turn people off”. Doesn’t have an “I’m just that way attitude” but proactively seeks to be pleasant to others.
- **Good Report** – Praise worthy, attractive, doesn’t offend. Well-spoken of. It is thinking of the good qualities of someone, the silver lining in a dark cloud. IOW, you can find negative things or positive things to report on, choose the positive.

**“If there be any”** – Look for it. Be determined to find it. The negative is the easiest to see, search for the good.

- **Virtue** – Moral excellence. Look for the things in which one excels, look for the situations where right prevails. Think on these things, let them dominate your thoughts.
- **Praise** – Is there be anything worthy for which we can give God praise? It is looking for that in individual or a circumstance for which we can praise God. Find the praiseworthy things and think on them....rather than the negative.

A good mental exercise here; yeah, a good scriptural exercise here would be to take this list and formulate a list of questions to ask regarding circumstances, others, and myself then let the answers guide my thoughts.

**\*Example\***

What is true/reality in this situation/about this person?

What honorable things am I seeing in this situation/individual?

What is the just way for me to act/think about this situation/individual?

If I was a judge meting out impartial justice, I would I rule?

What is the righteous thing/the good in all this?

How should I be to make myself agreeable in this situation?

What are the good things happening around me?

What are the good things about this person?

Is there anything good in this situation/person?

Is there anything in this situation/person for which I can praise God?

When you find yourself in the midst of conflict, determine to work through these thoughts. Trust me, it will change your outlook.

- 2. “Do” (Vs.9)** Paul urges them to follow his example in all of this. He had been through much in his ministry, but God’s peace had seen him through. Of this truth his life bore witness. **(2 Corinthians 1:3-7, 11:23-33)**

They were not to discipline their thoughts alone, they were to use this disciplined thought life to influence their behavior so that their behavior would soon align with their thoughts. Perhaps, we have uncovered another law of life, positive people have disciplined thoughts and intentional behaviors. They are not “just that way.”

In short, that which you have thought on, you must now put into practice.

- 3. Result** – “The God of peace shall be with you” **(Vs.9)** The fallen man has no hope in accomplishing this grace on his own; therefore, the God of peace comes beside him as a constant presence aiding him as he seeks to bring peace to his disordered world.

**Conclusion** – We can fulfill these godly exhortations in the midst of conflict and contrary circumstances. We obtain this victory by possessing the very peace of God and by the very God of peace being present with us and aiding us. We unlock the door of peace with the key of these spiritual disciplines.

Through prayer we find peace of God relieving internal anxiety. Through mental and practical discipline, we find the God of peace helping us bring peace to our disordered world.