

[peacework]

:: philippians 4.6-7 ::

Many times in the epistles of the New Testament we see the phrase grace and peace. Grace and peace extended to us by the authors, from heaven.

Of course, it is by grace that we are saved, through faith and *then* we're able to receive God's peace. That is the Lord's intention for every believer. We get to see a little of what that peace is all about and how we receive it in our text this morning, which is Philippians chapter 4, verses 6 and 7.

They read:

Philippians 4.6-7 - Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Like we've seen before in this book, Paul is giving us not only specific commands, but he's giving them in incredibly pointed and dramatic language. Be anxious for *NOTHING*. Be in prayer in *EVERYTHING*. It's plain language, but it is **absolute** language as well. And again and again we're seeing that it is up to us whether we're going to live the Christian life in the way that God intends or whether we're going to settle for something less where we hold back parts of our lives to be self-governed and therefore miss out on what the Lord wants for us.

This morning, our attention will be focused on the believer's thought life and communion with God. How exactly are we supposed to deal with the situations we find ourselves in, and what place does God have in the midst of them?

Because, we know that this world is a mess. We just spent 15 minutes reading about a tiny cross-section of the unending problems faced by mankind because of sin. Truth be told, the world is a very scary place to live. And *WE* are the ones that made it this way. Our sin has brought the world into the state we read about. The good news is that God wants to do something about it. He hasn't forsaken us or let go of our lives for us to stumble around on our own. Instead, His intention is to save us from the sin around and within us.

Because of that, our lives should be changed. So the text opens up and says:

Philippians 4.6a - Be anxious for nothing.

'Anxious' can mean a few different things to us. Certainly the most common emotions we tie to it are things like worry. Fear. Stress. We look within our own lives and see difficulty or discouragement, or perhaps we look at the state of the world around us and start feeling overwhelmed. We feel this terrible pressure and anxiety about a particular struggle or decision or opposition facing us.

Now, there's a very practical problem caused by worry and stress: **DEATH!** We worry and it actually takes a physical toll on our bodies. It takes a toll on our relationships as well. Worry eats away at our marriages and our parenting and friendships. It's one of the destructive byproducts of sin.

For good reason, we're commanded by God in the Bible to not worry. Jesus commanded it very clearly and here we receive that command again. We are to be anxious for *nothing*. Not little things, not big things. Not anything. That is what God is calling us to.

But anxious doesn't just mean stress or fear. It also can mean a lack of patience. Maybe we're not full of fear about a particular issue or concern. But maybe we're a little anxious about the plan of God. Maybe we are a little worried that He's forgotten to move us forward to where we think we need to be.

We have some examples of this in the Bible. Of course, the most famous is Abraham and Sarah. They had this relationship with God who had revealed Himself to them. God made them promises about a son and children. But, things didn't seem to be falling into place all that fast. They became anxious about the plan and the will of God and so, in a fit of impatience, they tried to jumpstart the Lord and they went about it their own way.

The result was Ishmael. And the consequences for that anxious act continue today.

So, we have this world around us, and we have individual difficulties and discouragements in our lives, and we're commanded to not worry. We're also given a calling and a plan from God who instructs us to wait on His timing. We're to be anxious in *nothing*. However, we do encounter difficult situations in life, things that are frightening or perplexing. So, there must be an alternative to our natural response of anxiousness.

The alternative is given by Paul in the very next phrase, where he says:

Philippians 4.6b - ...but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

The alternative to worry is to pray and communicate with God. In every situation, in every decision, in every discouragement, we're called to intimate, Biblical prayer.

The idea isn't that every time we read an email or open a cabinet or think a new thought we're supposed to stop and do some sort of formal, ritualistic prayer - heads bowed, eyes closed. The idea God is getting at is just **"TALK TO ME!"** Open up your life and in *everything* communicate with Christ.

I think sometimes we get into a mindset where prayer is almost like a tech support request. You know? We have some sort of situation occurring, some sort of unusual error that we need some help with, and so we put in a trouble ticket to the heavenly call center and hope to get the right answer to solve the issue. Then, once it's done, we go about our regular lives.

But prayer isn't like that, because God isn't a vending machine and He's not distant from us. In fact, He has gone to incredible lengths to dwell *within* us. The Third *PERSON* of the Trinity is within His people. Paul said in the book of Acts that:

Acts 17.28a - In Him we live and move and have our being.

And so we understand that right now, God Almighty is holding together the very atoms of our bodies by His grace and power. He is with us, indwelling us and empowering us, not just through some vague force, but as a Person. How could we *NOT* continually communicate with Him throughout our day, sharing our thoughts and our concerns with our Savior and Creator?

Yet, this is a struggle we each face in life.

We sometimes fall into a worried or anxious thought life because we stop trusting God. We worry because we start thinking of God as distant. We're not quite sure God knows what's going on in our families or at our jobs or in some particular situation. We're not quite sure God knows what's best for our five year plan. We're not quite sure God is going to respond in time to the service request we've sent in. But when we give into that mindset, we're getting it all wrong. Because God intends a supernatural filling and connection for us every moment of every day. And life isn't meant to be lived with occasional, sporadic contact with Christ. It's meant to be lived in continual unity with Him.

I mean, look at verse 7:

Philippians 4.7 - and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.

God doesn't just exist in heaven, watching our lives unfold. He has decided to condescend to us and send His Holy Spirit to live within us, day in and day out. God isn't far from us and prayer isn't just a radio system. It's not like we're truckin' through life and from time to time we get on the CB and hope that God picks up when we need specific directions.

Instead, God says, "You are one of my children. And my intention is to give you a supernatural filling and a direct connection to heaven in every moment and situation of life." And if we go away from that knowledge and think, "That's Ok. I'll take you up on that the next time I'm in a jam," then there's something very wrong with how we view our relationship with Jesus.

He intends for us this peace that we often talk about in the Church. Remember, grace and peace, grace and peace are always offered to God's people in the epistles. And this peace is incredible. It can't be duplicated by our own invention, meaning we cannot discover it apart from the Lord, and it can't really even be described. In fact, the only way to see this kind of peace in action is to look into the Bible and to see 3 young Hebrew boys, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, calmly, joyfully walking around in a fiery Babylonian death chamber, content as can be with their God. *That's* the kind of peace we're talking about. That's the kind of mind and heart God wants for us each and every moment here on the earth.

The question is how do we get it? The world isn't going to get any rosier and we are imperfect vessels that the Lord is completing a work through. So, how do I grab hold of the kind of life that God is describing here?

It's very simple: Heavenly peace comes through knowing God and trusting Him. Because when we stop trusting God, that's when we start to give in to anxiety. That's when we start worrying. And it's then that we leave the security of God's protection and try to fend off the foes of life on our own. It's like in every battle movie where the enemy force has lined up and one guy breaks rank. He just snaps and runs out of protection. He doesn't think they're going to make it, so he makes a break for it by himself. And 2 seconds later, that guy is always dead.

This is the picture we're given in this text. God offering His protection and His calm and His wisdom to us. The same God who gave up His own Son to die on a cross while we were still sinners. The same God who knew us from before the foundations of the earth and intends good things for us. The same God who has no problem stopping the sun in the sky or sending angels to intervene on our behalf if that's what He desires to do. *THAT* is the God who has revealed Himself to us. But we have to trust Him and submit to Him. We have to accept His will for our lives. And we discover His will for our lives by **communicating** with Him. He's spoken to us a great deal in His word and He is readily waiting to speak with us continually through prayer.

We've seen the world is a dangerous, scary place. We're going to come into situations where we don't know what to do and, quite frankly, we're going to be distressed and afraid. But it's in this place where God says, "I don't want you to *STAY* afraid. I want you to come to Me and give Me that situation and that fear and let me deal with it. I want you to have supernatural confidence in how much I love you and what an incredible plan I have for you." That's God's intention for us. And how we respond to God's revelation is going to determine the kind of fullness we have in Him.

We're not meant to be silent before God. We're not meant to hide all of our thoughts away. The Lord *WANTS* us to make requests to Him. He wants us to share our thoughts and our decisions with Him. But, as we do so, we should remember who God is and what He has done for us. Because that is going to shape the way we communicate with the Lord. If we understand His greatness and our smallness, and if we understand what the Lord gave to save us and how greatly He has pursued your life and my life, if we understand that He has specific values and priorities and that He is returning very soon, then of course we're going to have a completely different mindset and attitude of heart than simply someone in the world who is worried about the economy or some other temporal issue.

This is the calling for all of us. Not a select few. Not Gold Club member Christians. This is God's intention for each one of His people. That we live life with a supernatural filling and an intimate connection to heaven through the Holy Spirit. Not making God a **part** of our life, but instead living and moving and having our being in Him, fully abandoned to His power and plan.

Walking in the Spirit means choosing not to worry about dangers or difficulties or discouragements around us and it means waiting for the Lord to do the good and wonderful things He wants to do in our lives in His timing. It means listening to what the Lord is saying to us today and talking with Him, not holding back or pretending in our relationship with Christ.

It's not always easy, but it's always doable. It's within our reach.

So today, I invite you to spend your thoughts in communion with God. Remembering the connection that you have to heaven moment by moment. God is not far, He is with you. And our lives are not too big for Him to handle. In fact, He already has a master plan to transform our lives into something eternal. God wants to spare us the consequences of anxious living. And He wants you to know more of who He is, what He's done and what He still wants to do through you.

This is our God. Now it's our choice.