

# PHILIPPIANS

## 4:1-9

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### Introduction

#### At the birth of Jesus Christ,

Luke 2:13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

Luke 2:14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests."

Those upon whom God's "favor rests" are all those who by faith receive Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. These "...having been justified by faith... have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup>

Notice the emphasis on *peace* in the verses I quoted from. Mankind was at enmity with God, but God took the initiative to make peace by sending Jesus into the world to die on the cross for your sin. Because of Jesus - because of Who He is and what He did - men, women, and children can have peace with God.

The spirit of Christmas is peace. Jesus was born to die so that you could have peace with God.

Our text this morning is about peace, mentioning the word twice in nine verses. But it's not about having peace *with* God; it's about having the peace *of* God! As you know all too well, even though you are saved and have peace with God, you don't always experience the peace of God in your walk. There are worries... anxieties... cares... which grip your heart and mind. You know that you should be able to conquer them, but so often they hold you captive.

How can you who know the peace of God go on to experience the peace of God in your heart and mind? We'll look at two things this morning:

#1 Guard Your Heart And You Will  
Experience The Peace Of God

#2 Guide Your Mind And You Will  
Experience The Peace Of God

#1 Guard Your Heart And You Will  
Experience The Peace Of God  
(v1-7)

"Don't worry about living - wondering what you are going to eat or drink, or wondering what you are going to wear."<sup>2</sup> Those words of Jesus

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<sup>1</sup>Romans 5:1

bust me more than any other saying of His! Much of my day - much of my life - is occupied doing just the opposite of what my Lord recommended. I **do** worry about living - and so do many of you. We need to stop.

How do you stop worrying? Being anxious? Having cares? In Philippians 4:6-7 you read.

Philippians 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

Philippians 4:7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Prayer defeats worry, anxiety, care, and frustration. Prayer leads to peace. That's what the Holy Spirit says through Paul; that's what you must believe.

Certainly you need to discipline yourself to pray more; but you also need to pray with discipline! Three different words describe prayer in these verses: "prayer," "supplication," and "thanksgiving." They are not a formula, but they do provide a framework.

"Prayer" is the general word for making requests known to the Lord. It carries the idea of adoration, devotion, and worship. Simply put, you must realize both the power and the sovereignty of God in your life. God is powerful - He is big enough to solve all of your problems. God is also sovereign - He is bent on using your problems to conform you into the image of Jesus, for your ultimate good and His glory. You must pray with the discipline of trusting in God's sovereignty to regulate His power to best minister to you in your time of need.

"Supplication" is the earnest sharing of your heart with God. It is a word of intensity. There must be an earnest intensity to your praying. It is a word reminiscent of the woman coming to the unjust judge... or the friend who came at midnight... or of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, sweating great drops of blood. It is part of the mystery of prayer that God has designed for us to come into His presence earnestly.

"Thanksgiving" is appreciation. It is appreciation for being heard, and appreciation that God always answers prayer. You may not recognize the answer if it is "No" or "Wait"; but it is His answer.

Disciplined praying leads to the experience of the peace of God "guarding your heart and mind." Remember that Paul was chained to a Roman soldier, guarded day and night. God's peace guards the two areas that create worry - the "heart" (wrong feeling) and the "mind" (wrong thinking).

*Try it!* I know I would rather worry than pray, and that is why I don't always experience the peace of God.

We've skipped several verses - verses 1 through 5 - and we've done so on purpose, for a reason. They reveal that there was a lack of peace between certain members of the church. Two women had a disagreement which had evidently spilled over into the public life and testimony of the church. Paul's point was that this lack of peace among the brethren was evidence of a lack of peace in their hearts! In other words, before he exhorted them to desire the peace of God, he established that they *didn't have it* by appealing to their actions.

If you experience the peace of God, there will be evidence of it; you will endeavor to be at peace with others in the family of God. In these first few verses you see some things you *do*, and some things you *don't* do, as you endeavor to express the peace you experience.

=You don't exaggerate as you endeavor to express the peace you experience:  
Philippians 4:1 Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

Paul had the deepest love and regard for these people. At the end of verse 3 he would remind himself and them that their names were written in the Book of Life. They were believers, beloved of the Lord, and regardless their squabbles, Paul had confidence they *could* and *would* do what was right to resolve them.

What do I mean, "don't exaggerate?" Even though the problem at Philippi was significant, Paul kept it within its proper context. He didn't blow it out of proportion. He analyzed it and dealt with it appropriately - not too harshly, not too leniently.

=You do exhort as you endeavor to express the peace you experience:  
Philippians 4:2 I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.

Some of you might be having problems with other believers; or, you might be having marriage problems. How would you like it if on Sunday morning the pastor looked at you, called you by name and said, "Hey - quit squabbling and get along!"

There are times that the whole church should be made aware of things. Or a significant group within the church - those most affected. The goal is reconciliation and restoration.

We could talk about church discipline; but I want to make another point, one often overlooked. We don't know exactly how these two women responded, but the indication is that they took their medicine and kept serving the Lord in Philippi. In other words, they weren't ashamed to continue in the fellowship because others heard of their failures...

=You do encourage as you endeavor to express the peace you experience:  
Philippians 4:3 And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.

Paul calls upon someone in particular to encourage these women to reconciliation and restoration with one another and the others. "True companion" can be translated "loyal yokefellow." We don't know this person's name. Some commentators have an interesting suggestion.<sup>3</sup> It was customary for believers at their baptism to discard their pagan name and take for themselves a Christian name. The word here that is translated "companion" or "yokefellow" is Syzygus, and may have been the nickname this person took for himself!

What nickname would best describe you in your service to the Lord?

I should say a word about the Book of Life. Those whose names are written there are admitted into heaven. On the basis of the names which are absent from this book, people will be cast alive into the Lake of Fire at the final Great White Throne Judgment of God. The presence and absence of certain names is the subject of no small controversy in the church!

=Some insist that the Book of Life records the names of saved individuals only, and that their names and only their names were written there before the earth was ever created. They cite Revelation 17:8,

Revelation 17:8 ...And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world...

=Others insist that, although the names of saved individuals are obviously recorded in the Book of Life prior to creation, that doesn't preclude the possibility that the names of all mankind are also written there, only to be removed if they die without receiving Christ as Savior. They cite Jesus' words in Revelation 3:5,

Revelation 3:5 "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels."

My own position is this:

The names of saved individuals are clearly in the Book of Life before creation. The words of Jesus obviously indicate that names *can* be removed from the Book of Life. The Book of Life must, therefore, begin in eternity past, before creation, as a record of all those who would ever have physical life in the ages to come. As individuals come to maturity and face the claims of the gospel, they choose to receive or reject Christ. Those who receive Christ are confirmed in their position in the Book of Life and their names remain there. Those who reject Christ have their names removed. Thus it *is* a Book for all whom Jesus Christ died - all mankind - and those who are saved *have* had their names written there before creation. As you read in First Timothy 4:10,

1 Timothy 4:10 ...[Jesus] is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.

Back to Philippians and to our list of do's and don'ts:

=You do exult as you endeavor to express the peace you experience:

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

Rejoice and keep on rejoicing! Rejoice greatly; be jubilant. We use the word *exult* to describe this kind of continuous rejoicing.

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<sup>3</sup>e.g., Wuest.

Rejoicing expresses peace like nothing else. Distressing thoughts are overcome by thoughts of the Lord and His love, goodness, wisdom, power, and care.

=You do expect the Lord's return as you endeavor to express the peace you experience:

Philippians 4:5 Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.

"Gentleness" means *to yield*. Paul is saying you ought to be willing to yield to others to maintain peace, since you are experiencing peace and are expecting the Lord's return for you any moment.

+Don't worry about anything! Instead, pray about everything, and you'll experience the peace of God. You'll know if peace is guarding your heart by your peaceful behavior.

Guarding your heart is only part of experiencing the peace of God:

#2 Guide Your Mind And You Will  
Experience The Peace Of God  
(v8-9)

Meditation is a word that has a largely negative connotation among Christians. There is a proper biblical meditation, and that is what Paul instructs you in here in verse 8:

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy; meditate on these things.

A guarded heart must be accompanied by a guided mind. God expects our active cooperation in guiding our thoughts. Whenever you find your thoughts wandering down questionable paths, you must step in and discipline your mind.

These are the things you can guide your mind to think about:

=Whatever is true:

Dr. Walter Cavert reported a survey on worry that indicated only 8% of the things people worried about were legitimate matters of concern.<sup>4</sup> The other 92% were either imaginary, or involved matters over which you had no control.

You need to fill your mind with truth - God's truth - as the absolute foundation of right thinking. So many of our emotional and spiritual problems stem from false thoughts, especially about God and His love for us.

=Guide your thoughts towards whatever is noble:

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<sup>4</sup>cited by Wiersbe, *Be Joyful*, p. 116.

This means "worthy of respect." Today there is a preoccupation with base things; just review the topics on the daily talk shows! You should rather occupy your thoughts with things worthy of respect.

=Guide your thoughts towards whatever things are just:

"Just" comes from the root word for *right*. Many things are not just, they are not right. They tend to lead you towards thoughts of retaliation and revenge, especially if you are the victim of wrongful treatment. But look at Paul: When mistreated in Philippi, he thought about the Lord, and sang hymns at midnight. If he had brooded over all of the wrongs done to him, he would have become bitter - and useless in the service of the Lord.

=Guide your thoughts towards whatever things are pure:

This is a timely word. Society has given free reign to pornography and perversion in all the media. You must endeavor to exclude as much of the impure as possible. If not, these images will be lodged in your mind, lurking there until making their presence known at the weirdest times - during worship or an otherwise innocent conversation. Author John Phillips says,

"If a person once lets his thoughts wander down some impure path, hidden legions joyfully emerge and stampede, pushing the mind into all kinds of sin."<sup>5</sup>

=Guide your thoughts towards whatever things are lovely:

These are things that are gracious and kind. First Corinthians 13 tells you that "love believes all things." That is, love gives the benefit of the doubt and thinks graciously of others.

=Guide your thoughts towards whatever things are of good report:

Have edifying conversations; use words that build-up rather than break down.

=Guide your thoughts towards whatever things are virtuous and praiseworthy:

These words are a kind of general summary of what we've been discussing. In other words, don't waste your time thinking about anything that isn't morally virtuous and worth commending to others in order to build them up in the Lord.

"Meditate on these things." You must make deliberate choices to guide your mind. Your mind will not automatically think on these things. Because of the fall, because of indwelling sin, you have a bias towards the base and degenerate. But the indwelling Spirit can assist you in guiding your thoughts.

Philippians 4:9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

Paul was not asking the impossible. He himself practiced these things. He walked his talk.

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<sup>5</sup>*Exploring Philippians*, p. 168.

You should first "learn" and "receive" his words. It is one thing to *learn* a truth, but another thing to really *receive* it and make it a part of your inner person.

If you learn and receive, you will walk your talk. People will *hear* and *see* in you the effects of a guided thought life.

### Conclusion

Since He is the "God of peace," you can experience the "peace of God."

Are you experiencing the peace of God? If you're not, there are two possibilities:  
=The first is that you are not yet a Christian! You can never experience the peace of God until you are at peace *with* God through Jesus Christ...

=The second possibility is that you are not practicing the truths in this passage of Scripture. God promises that a guarded heart life and a guided thought life will promote experiencing the peace of God.

Guard your heart... guide your mind...