

Philippians 4:6-7

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[0:00] Lord, as we come before you, and really come before the scriptures and come before you, Lord, I just pray that we will be people that aren't just hearers of the word, but be doers of the word.

Help us all to come under the authority of your scriptures. Lord, we thank you that you are not a dead God, you are an alive God. And when we crack this book, your scriptures, we come face to face with you.

Lord, I pray that you will be at work with the Holy Spirit in our lives this morning. And if anybody's suffering any attacks from the enemy, Lord, we just ask that you will stay the enemy's hand this morning.

We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. So, Christine and I, we have begun this process of church planting.

It's been talked about at Messiah for a few months now about what it would look like to discern a couple more congregations that would be associated with church and Messiah, East End and West End.

[1:10] So, we began this process. It's kind of in the infancy stages, and it's a long process. There's a lot of stuff that we need to do and go through.

There are a lot of questionnaires, homework to do, interviews. Like, they put us through the rigor. And I think a big part of that is because oftentimes, like businesses, not to equate church and business, maybe it's not the greatest example, but startups fail.

And I think it's for a lack of training and just the reality of it. All that to say is this whole process is making me anxious. It is causing me to have anxiety.

And it's really bringing up a bunch of junk in my life. I am not at peace very much of the time. Christine is more kind of resolute, and she's a bit more excited.

[2:08] But I'm just like, well, what about this? And what about that? And it's like the weight of the world sometimes is on my shoulders. Not all the time. Like, I am excited, believe me. But I find that my anxiety has crept up and up and up and up, and my peace has went down and down and down and down.

And I think a big part of this is because I am ceding control of my life to others that I'm not quite in control of my life.

And that there are also unknowns. We're not sure where this thing's going to be. I mean, we're like a month or two into potentially a year and a half type of process. So I don't know what's going to go down.

And a lot of those unknowns are causing me to fret. And the times, it's interesting, if you've had situations where you've felt anxious, you get a bit of a reprieve, you get a bit of a break, and you feel like a bit of peace comes in.

But that peace, it seems, at least for me, it's marbled with a bit of anxiety. And I'm not sure how it works for you guys. But for me, if there's peace marbled with anxiety, it's not really peace, is it?

[3:21] You have something going on in the back of your head. You can't really be at rest. And all of a sudden, anxiety, again, starts to dominate. Whatever the situation is, whatever the person is, whatever the issue is, anxiety seems to follow to some degree or another.

It seems almost unavoidable. So this summer, we're going through these one-verse sermons. Well, really, it's kind of this two verses today. But it's really just one thought, one kind of big, heavy, like, oomph of truth.

And today is Philippians 4, verses 6 and 7. And I've read it before, but I'm going to read it again. It says this, Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, or prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. I grew up, I still remember getting Nintendo for the first time.

And not long after, I got Nintendo. And I'm talking, like, regular Nintendo, not Super Nintendo, not Nintendo 64, not PlayStation 4 for you folks that might have that. I'm talking original Nintendo, gray box with gray controller.

[4 : 47] And I remember not long after getting that, I got a Game Genie. I don't know if anybody here could possibly remember, if they're like a late 80s, early 90s person, they remember what a Game Genie is.

A Game Genie was something that you'd put into your Nintendo, and it would give you almost all the cheat codes for almost all the games. So, for instance, I was not very good at Super Mario Bros. 3.

Could only get a few levels in, and then I'd die. And I don't remember if there were continues or not. But either way, I could never beat that game. I put that Game Genie in. I hit some codes, whatever. I flew through Super Mario Bros. 3, one shot, like, in an hour.

I beat that game so easily. This verse, to me, is like a Game Genie. What do I mean by this? With all of the difficulties and anxieties of life, you're telling me all I need to do is pray, and I will have peace that passes all understanding.

It seems like snake oil to me. I'm saying this as somebody who's trained to become a pastor, that the Bible is pretty central in my life.

[5 : 56] And I'm just like, on face value, this is snake oil. This is like a life hack. This is a trick. And I say that because life is full of all sorts of things that cause tons of anxiety.

And not just, oh, man, you know, like, I'm kind of worried about what we're going to have for dinner tonight. No, no, I'm talking deep-down anxieties, like pain anxieties, confusion, frustration, anger. And on face value, just say, just pray. It'll be okay, right? Like, no, it won't be okay on face value. This verse is not telling us to be anxious, not to be anxious, but if you become anxious here and there, that's okay. Or it doesn't say, you know, life is kind of, it's full of anxieties, but, you know, try your best to avoid them.

Or, listen, it's okay, you're only human. That's not what it's saying. It's saying be anxious about nothing. Now, there's some verses in the Bible that are not to be taken literally.

[7 : 06] What do I have here? Isaiah 64 says that we are clay and God is the potter. FYI, you don't take that seriously. We're not clay, right?

We're not literally, we take it seriously, but we're not, we don't take it literally. We're not clay. In Mark chapter eight, Jesus says, if you, if your hand or your foot or your eye causes you to sin, lop it off or gouge it out.

Jesus isn't just FYI saying, if you sin, you have to lop off a part of your body. It's hyperbolic. It's hyperbole. It's to get the point across.

This is a literal verse. It is to be taken literally. Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew six, if you have a pen and paper, write it down 24 to 34.

I'm not going to read it, but Jesus here, these are the same words that Jesus says. He says, don't be anxious about where you will go or what you will eat or what you will wear. The cares of this life.

[8 : 07] If God will feed the birds, won't he feed you? If he clothes the grass who's here today and gone tomorrow, won't he clothe you? Don't be anxious about anything.

It's this, this verse is to be taken literally. Don't be anxious about anything. So if then we aren't to be anxious, what are we to be like? How do we deal with this anxiety?

Because the world is full of different things that cause anxiety. Are we to be detached people? Are we to find our inner self? Are we to become one with the universe or have this zen-like state where we are at peace no matter what?

There's an episode of Seinfeld where Kramer, he started saying serenity now. I don't know if you guys remember this episode, but Kramer, he just decided, I'm not going to be anxious anymore. So whenever something came, he just said serenity now, like that. And eventually at the end of the episode, he's a basket case. He just serenity now, serenity now. Like he's freaking out. I don't know if you guys ever seen that.

[9 : 14] That's not what the scriptures are telling us to do. The scriptures are telling us actually to pray. That is what we are supposed to do when we are anxious.

We are to be people who pray. And here there's two different ways of prayer. In verse 6, it says, in everything by prayer and petition or supplication.

The first one is prayer. This is like everyday type of prayers. You wake up in the morning, you thank God for the day, you thank God for your breakfast, you pray for your family, you pray for your work, you pray before you get in the car to drive.

It's kind of these ongoing daily prayers. And these petitions are very specific prayers. It's like if you need a breakthrough in something, or if somebody's sick and you're just praying that they'll get better, or maybe you have a loved one who doesn't know the Lord, and you're just praying that they'll come to faith.

There is just something that you just need a specific answer to prayer. And it's like taking an ax and just doing the same thing, the same motion, the same prayer, until that tree falls over.

[10:22] That's the idea of a petition. So it's these two things, these ongoing and the specific type of prayer.

And this will help us to be anxious about nothing. I'm going to go back to this idea. Can we really be anxious about nothing?

I think it is important to talk about what anxiety is just really briefly, so that we will have a better idea of how to pray in a specific manner. And I'll be honest with you, I feel anxious in talking about anxiety.

And I do because some of you guys have gone through the ringer. Like we've been here for only a year now, and I've got to know some of you guys. And the people that I don't, I just assume you've gone through the ringer, because life is tough.

And what I don't want to do is stand up here and say something really trite. And say, yeah, you just need to pray. Like, prayer solves everything, you know?

[11:21] I remember there used to be little, at the camp I worked at when I was younger, a lot of kids had these little bracelets, and they had an acronym that said P-U-S-H, push.

And it was pray until something happens. And it seems trite. That's what you'd put on a coffee mug. And that, I think, would be a bit insensitive, because there's a real pain that has been experienced here.

Ongoing pain for years. I'm not, by any means, an expert on how the human brain functions, or the, I couldn't provide you with an exhaustive list of the things that cause anxiety.

I'm sure you guys could come up with a better list than I would give. But I just want to put this forward to you guys to consider. It might seem a bit shocking. We'll continue on.

But I want to say to you that I think the real reason that we have anxiety and a lack of peace is because we have an innate, an innate distrust of God.

[12:33] That, when I'm preparing this, I'm just like, if I say that, that's like kicking somebody when they're down. It's like, oh, they're going through anxiety. Yeah, you didn't trust God enough. That's not what I'm saying, by the way.

But I'm actually kind of saying it. But just not in a kick you when you're down type of way. That we have anxiety and a lack of peace because we have an innate distrust in God.

And what do I mean by that? I think a lot of us aren't saying, God, I don't trust you. I think a lot of us are trying to trust God. But when situations arise or when difficulty comes, we don't trust God to solve these issues and to bring us forward through it.

And we either don't believe God truly is good or that he doesn't really care or that he isn't capable of helping us. We struggle as people to trust people that we can see.

God, we don't see. And it's hard to trust God when we don't see him. We have trust issues. I have trust issues.

[13:48] Going back to verse 6 after the Apostle Paul tells us to pray, he says we aren't just to pray, but we are to pray with thanksgiving. It says verse 6, the second part of it, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

Thanksgiving. That's kind of a hard thing to do. I can pray a lot, but how can I be thankful to God? And what does it mean to be thankful to God? And I think it means recalling God's goodness and his mercy in our lives.

Remembering that he is loving and kind, recalling his attributes. And this is tough when we are people that distrust and especially distrust God.

But that's what the scriptures tell us. Nevertheless, this is what we are to do. And I'm going to get back to this in a minute, but let's continue on in our passage this morning.

So verse 7 says, The peace of God that passes all understanding will guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus. Almost always, peace comes because of understanding.

[15 : 03] My folks are here and they'll get a kick out of me using this. And I prepared this before I knew they were going to come, but when my brother and I were younger, we'd have a curfew for midnight.

And we live in a small town and we go to house parties or field parties and we wouldn't come home at midnight. We'd come home much later. And I just, you know, I'm a grown man, you know, like as a 15-year-old that eats all my parents' food and doesn't pay any bills and like just is completely irresponsible.

But I'm a man, you know. And my parents would always be up. They would always be awake when we come home. And it would frustrate me. And I remember them saying something you'll understand when you have kids, that we can't rest until you're home, that we know that your home's safe and sound.

My parents' peace and all parents' peace, they couldn't have that peace unless they understood their children were safe. Peace follows understanding.

And that's kind of a funny example, but how about people that have gone through a tragedy and they don't really know why? They've lost somebody. They're in a situation where maybe they get a disease and they don't know what's up or their business fails or their marriage fails or their children, something happens with them and they don't know why.

[16 : 24] That can cause a lot of anxiety and peace is robbed and frustration and anger, all of this stuff kind of wells up. And you can become jaded or you can become just so cynical with life or you can curse God.

You don't know the reason why. This scripture is telling us, hey, there's going to be peace that transcends understanding. So a peace that exists where understanding does not, that does not compute very well with me.

I like to know the reason why and only then I can be at peace with the situation. If you're a student and you bomb a test, well, maybe you want to know the reason why, which answers you didn't have right and then you can go back and relearn.

The whole point is peace comes with understanding. The scripture here says peace will come and it will exist where understanding does not. A peace that surpasses or transcends understanding. And this peace is said to guard our hearts and our minds. So this peace isn't this passive peace, isn't the serenity now Kramer type of peace.

[17 : 48] It's not a peace that is delusional about the ups and downs of life. It's a peace that is active. And Paul talks about this peace and almost personifies it, making it like a guard or a sentry that is watching over a city or that is in an outpost looking for the enemy advance.

And when that enemy comes, the alarm is sounded and that advance, that enemy advance is pushed back. This is what this peace is supposed to look like.

This is what Paul is saying saying to us this morning about what this peace will do. It will guard our hearts and our minds. And this whole peace, it says, it finishes off in verse 7, that it's in Christ Jesus.

So it's not just that this is the peace of God, but it's actually the peace from God that he gives it to us. The key to all of this is what Paul says in verse 6, to be thankful.

And he really, he hammers this idea home a couple verses ahead in verse 4, where he says, rejoice again, I say rejoice. How can we rejoice when we've gone through tragedy?

[19 : 14] How can we rejoice if we've gone through divorce? How can we rejoice if we have suffered? Or people overlook us?

Or we are desperately lonely? How can we rejoice? In all of these things, we are dealing with a small sliver of reality.

And I'm just going to pause really quickly because I don't want to say something trite again. What we see in this life is our small sliver of reality. But it is our sliver of reality.

It matters to us. And for all that we know, this is reality. But it's just a sliver of it. My sliver of reality, apart from the whole church planning stuff, it's my wife and my daughter.

That is my reality. There's not much that really exists outside of that. That is my reality. And you guys have your own sliver of reality and you hold it dear. But we are finite people.

[20 : 18] And God is infinite. So he sees the beginning from the end. Our sliver of reality fits in that, but it is not the beginning and the end.

So it's not to downplay any of the things that we've gone through at all or that we are going through, but it's to recognize that God is actually bigger than everything. So I'm not trying to be, again, trite or quaint, but God is actually in control.

the scriptures, when Paul says for us to rejoice, and when he says rejoice, I mean, this is a theme throughout Paul's letters.

They're not just saying, hey guys, sing a tune, be happy. But this rejoicing is a call for the church, for us, to put our faith and trust and hope in God, whether we feel like it or not, whether it comes across easy or not, that when the scriptures talk about God being always good and always merciful and always just, that we need to believe that.

And the reality, I mean, that is the reality. Jesus, God the Father, gave us his son, his very son, to pay the penalties for our death. the most prized thing in the universe, the most prized person of the universe was given to us.

[21 : 55] Everything below that, everything that we need is below that. And if he gave us his son, how won't he give us everything else that we need?

When he'll give it? Not sure. There's no promise here of when that peace will come. And most certainly, there's no promise here of the calamity or the tragedy or whatever it may be that has caused us to have anxiety.

There's no promise that that'll disappear. But if he has given us his son, then what else will he hold back? And that's what it says in Romans 8.31.

I encourage you guys just to, when you are feeling low, just feast on Romans 8.31 and 32. Feast on it. Read it and read it and read it again. In the end, as believers, we can go through all sorts of stuff. But with God, when we're putting our hope and trust in him, we are praying and being thankful when we pray, recognizing who God is and what he has done, we will realize that whatever goes on in the temporal, in the here and now, will be trumped by the eternal.

[23 : 07] That whatever tears we cry, whatever anxiety we have, whatever pain we suffer in the now, will not exist in the eternal.

That Jesus has paid the penalty for that. It doesn't mean, like I mentioned, that we will be free from those things, but that we will have literally, truly, a peace that passes all understanding.

Psalm 73. If you guys want to turn to Psalm 73. This is a psalm by Asaph.

This is one of the psalms that aren't by King David, but this is a psalm by a man named Asaph, and he is pouring out his everything to God. He is rattled.

This is a prayer, there's anxiety in it. If you read verses 1 to 22, there is a lot of anxiety in this, and yet he says this, starting in verse 23.

[24 : 09] Nevertheless, I am continually with you. You hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory.

Whom have I in heaven but you? There is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

That's not saying I am rescued from it. It says everything can crumble, but God, you are the portion of my life. And if you've gone through stuff and you know that God has, he is there for you and he has carried you through it, this is your prayer.

These are your words. And if you haven't gone through that, these can be your words. That your heart and your flesh, they may fail, but God is your portion and your strength forever.

What a wonderful truth. How is all of this stuff achieved? How is this possible? Jesus, the night he was betrayed, he went to the garden of Gethsemane and he was anxious.

[25 : 21] He had anxiety. He was pouring out his soul to the father and he said, God, the son of God had anxiety and said to the father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me.

Meaning, if I can find another way, if you can find another way that I don't have to go to the cross of Calvary to go through all of that, then let it be so. But he said, not my will, but yours be done.

So in the garden, Jesus suffers unbelievable anxiety. He sweats drops as if they were blood. He is going through so much anxiety.

Why? So he could bring us peace. So it's not just peace of God or peace from God, but it's actually peace with God. That we were sinners, we were at odds with the God of the universe because of our sin, but he sent his son to suffer our anxiety so that we could have his peace.

That is the gospel. We could have peace that surpasses all understanding because our faith and our hope is in our Lord and not in ourselves or in our situation.

[26 : 38] And what great hope that is. If you are here this morning and you don't know what this hope is, you're not somebody who considers themselves a Christian, or maybe you are a Christian, and you have let anxiety creep in, and you're in this spiral going down and down and down, and you're anxious about being anxious, and you're sick and tired about being sick and tired, there is great hope for you.

We pray, we bring it to God, and we thank him for who he is, and he will give us incredible, incredible peace that nothing in this world can give.

Lord, as we come to the latter part of our service and as we close your scriptures, Lord, help us to be people that take you at your word.

Let us be people that trust in you even though our heart and our flesh fail us. Even when we are just frustrated and we are full of anxiety, give us that peace.

Help us to pray. Teach us to pray. Help us to know that you are starting, you've started to work in us and that this is a journey we're on where you are teaching us to come under your lordship in greater degrees.

[28 : 01] Come into a trust in you in greater degrees, Lord. And give us hope that that's not a difficult thing, but that your son says that his yoke is easy and that his burden is light.

that that is something for us. That is great hope. So Lord, we just pray that you will help us to be those people that pray and to trust in you.

We pray all these things in Jesus' name.