

Keeping The Peace Within

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[0 : 00] The following sermon is made available by Lakeside Bible Church in Cornelius, North Carolina.

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Now to be helpful for us here as we consider inner peace and how to be at peace within, to remind ourselves of the context in which the Philippian believers lived.

What exactly is it that prompted Paul to address this congregation on the topic of peace? And the simple answer to that is life in Philippi as a Christian was not necessarily an easy life.

[1 : 07] In some cases, it was actually a very, very difficult life. Now, the empire of Rome in some ways might have been tolerant of various religious perspectives, at least to an extent.

As long as an individual gave what they considered to be proper respect and even worship to Caesar and to Rome itself, they didn't mind exactly what your religious persuasion was other than that.

What they did care about was that their cities and that their empire would remain in peace. They hated rioting. They hated civil unrest.

And because Christianity was so radically different than other religions, even as it is today, so radically different than the state of Rome and the mindset of the Romans, the adversaries of Christianity were often inciting violence and unrest in these various cities.

And it would be easily blamed on the Christians, easily blamed on the Christian way of life. And the quickest thing for us to point our fingers at in the Bible as far as seeing this context is the actual start of the church in Philippi.

[2 : 19] Acts chapter 16, you remember we addressed it even last week briefly. Paul and Silas and Timothy and Luke make their way to Philippi, and God begins to use them to establish this church.

One day they, through God's power, cast a demon out of a young slave girl and continued to preach the gospel of Jesus. And because of that, people in the city were upset, and they created a riot of sorts.

They drew them into the city square where everyone was gathering. They condemned them publicly. They beat them, imprisoned them. And all for preaching the gospel. And for casting out a demon out of this young slave girl.

And that's really the context of the Roman Empire. It was okay so long as Paul and Silas were keeping to themselves and just going about their business believing what they wanted to believe. But at the moment that the Christian faith began to interfere with the wickedness of their society, and it began to interfere with things going around, violence was incited, unrest came into the picture, and ultimately got blamed on Christians.

[3 : 24] That's the context in which these Philippian believers were living. Just a few years after this letter was written to this church was the great fire of Rome that we read about in our history books.

And some ancient historians credit Emperor Nero for starting that fire himself. And one of the things that he did in response to that is he blamed the Christians for it because they were already so disliked in the empire, especially in Rome, their beliefs and their radical behavior as far as Rome was concerned made them easy to blame.

And so he put the blame on the Christians, and they took the brunt of the blame for that. And many of them lost their lives and entered into this season of martyrdom for their faith. That's the period of time that these Philippian believers are living.

And so when we ask the question, why is Paul dealing with anxiousness, anxiety so much with this church? Why is he so concerned about their peace and them standing strong and standing firm? It's because they had every reason legitimately on earth to quit. They had every reason legitimately to be full of anxiety and worried about literally their life.

[4 : 36] Think about those things that we've already learned even in our study of this letter that would have been on the heart and mind of these people. Number one, they were under constant threat of persecution. That's why at the end of chapter 1 and verse 28, Paul encourages them that in nothing they are terrified by their adversaries, which is to them a sign of destruction, but to you of salvation and that of God.

And then he says, They were under the constant threat of persecution.

Some of them struggled with poverty and the implications that come along with poverty. And that weighed on their minds and weighed on their hearts. We read about that in 2 Corinthians 8, that they gave out of their great poverty.

Paul was their founder, the founder of their church. He was their spiritual father. And he was now on his fourth year of imprisonment in Rome. And they're concerned about that.

So they've got their own lives that they're worried about. Some of them don't have a penny to their name and they're just trying to survive day by day. And then this man that they love so much is now his fourth year in prison.

[5 : 49] His fourth year he's not been able to freely go around and preach the gospel and plant other churches. And they're concerned about Paul. Their consciences were burdened because they had sent one of their own, Epaphroditus, to go check on Paul.

And they found out that on the way, he got very sick. Sick even unto death. And now they're dealing in their conscience with, Is this our fault? Should we not have sent Epaphroditus?

It's our fault that he got sick and almost died. And that's weighing on their minds and on their hearts.

They're being infiltrated by false teachers that were leading people away from the gospel.

We learned that in chapter three. And then to top it all off, as we learned last week, Two of their most faithful women are at odds. And everybody knows it. And it's a distraction in the church.

They had every reason in the world to be anxious. And they were anxious. Just like we would be.

Just like we often are. Have you ever been filled with worry and anxiety like this?

[6 : 53] Of course you have. Maybe you are today. We've just talked about what life was like in Philippi. Let's consider for just a moment what life may be like for you in Cornelius today.

Years of prosperity as a nation has come to a grinding halt in a matter of months. That weighs on our minds. We worry about unknowingly catching or spreading a virus that has the potential to be deadly to people that we love.

That weighs on our minds and on our hearts. Some of us have lost income in this season. Our jobs are threatened right now.

And we worry about being able to make ends meet, support our families. We question how severely our children's education is suffering right now.

They haven't been able to go to school for months. And we're still not sure if they're going to be able to go to school next month. And we worry. We're anxious. We're concerned about the future of our nation.

[8 : 04] It seems to continue in its descent into chaos, even anarchy. And then on top of all of that, as Christians, we're concerned about the effects that all of this will have on the church, on our church.

Will Lakeside be able to continue to exist? Will God still be able to use it here despite these circumstances? Estimates are that hundreds of churches will close their doors this year, specifically as a result of the effects of COVID-19.

Hundreds of pastors leave the ministry every year. In a season like this, when for some it's particularly discouraging, maybe those numbers will be even multiplied.

And that weighs on us. Will the extremists in our culture set their destructive gaze on our church next?

Will we be the next church that, as we come into church on Sunday morning for worship, have mobs of people outside to ridicule us and berate us as we come in, as has happened to other churches in our nation?

When will that happen? Those things weigh on our hearts. They weigh on our minds. We're, what voices can we trust right now? And it's easy for us to fall out of a state of peace and to actually give

in to a lot of worry.

[9 : 18] Well, God gives us the answer to our anxiety in these verses that we just read. If and when you are struggling with obtaining peace in your heart and mind, I want to encourage you to continue to come back to this passage.

To come back to these words as given by God through Paul in this letter. And Paul helps us here by vacillating between exhortation and encouragement.

And as we go through this study today, I want to point out three specific exhortations that he has. And then I want to wrap it all up with one gloriously awesome encouragement that he gives us in verse number seven.

Let's first look at the exhortations. In these verses, Paul writes a series of imperatives for us, instructions that are crucial for experiencing true and lasting peace.

They are not suggestions. They're not ideas for us to consider on the pathway to peace. They are explicit instructions. They are calls to resolute action.

[10 : 26] And in that, we understand that peace is not an arbitrary emotion. It is the result of definitive action. And in these three exhortations, he tells us what we should be doing on our part to work towards this peace that God provides.

The first thing he says is that we are to rejoice in the Lord. Look with me at verse number four. Very clearly, he says, rejoice in the Lord always. And again, I say, rejoice.

I heard somebody say last week on a podcast that when you've said something a hundred times, and you're just getting to the point where you're tired of hearing it, your audience typically is hearing it for the first time.

And those of us with kids understand that, right? No matter how many times we give them an instruction or explain something, whenever we're tired of saying it, they're really beginning to hear it for the first time. Well, joy is this continual theme in the book of Philippians.

And you would think at this point, Paul is getting really tired of writing about joy and instructing rejoicing. Maybe he feels like he's being redundant and repetitive in a way that is unhelpful at this point.

[11 : 33] But in this case, rejoicing is so significant to the issue of inner peace that he emphatically restates the instruction. Look again at verse four.

Rejoice in the Lord always, he says. And then he stops and pauses for just a moment, and he says, and again, listen to me, church, he says. Listen, Philippian believers, what I'm saying to you. Listen, rejoice.

Rejoice on this pathway to peace. You're going to have to choose joy. But what could this possibly mean? It would make more sense for joy to be the product of peace.

But Paul seems to indicate that peace is actually the product of joy. But an understanding of biblical joy helps us to make all the difference in understanding this command.

To rejoice means to be exceedingly glad or to take pleasure in something. And it's directly related to your passions. Whether or not you're able to rejoice is contingent upon the circumstances surrounding the things in which you take pleasure.

[12 : 41] We understand that, right? Our ability to rejoice is tied directly to the circumstances surrounding the things that we take pleasure in, the things that we care about, our specific passions.

For instance, if your passion is sports and you have a particular team that you love, you are passionately involved in rejoicing over a win or rejoicing over a championship.

If your passions are wrapped up primarily in your job, you rejoice at the success of a project or you rejoice at the enjoyment of a promotion.

Something good that comes apart with your job allows you to have the opportunity to rejoice in that thing that you're passionate about. If your passion is politics, you rejoice when your candidate is elected or a bill that you support is passed in to law.

Our rejoicing is tied directly to the circumstances around the things that we care about. But what about when our team loses the game or loses the championship?

[13 : 48] What about instead of getting that promotion that we've been working hard for over years, we actually get laid off in this season and actually lose every bit of our income? All of the passion we've wrapped up in the thing that we do is now gone.

What then happens to our rejoicing? What about when your candidate doesn't get elected? What about when all the energy you've placed into your political passions, all of a sudden, all the hope of that is gone?

In those moments, it's impossible to rejoice. Can't do it. Because our rejoicing is tied specifically to the circumstances around that which grabs our passion.

But the command that Paul gives in verse number four is that we rejoice always. But how is that possible? The key is in recognizing the source of our joy.

This command in verse number four is really just a command to reorder your passions. He's commanding this church to set their focus anew and to set their focus on what?

[14:55] On Jesus Christ. It's a call to take pleasure in Jesus Christ and his glory above everything else in life. Now think about what we just said, the way we just define joy and rejoicing.

Think about it for a moment now. If our rejoicing is contingent upon the circumstances surrounding the things in which we take pleasure in, then it is impossible for us to lose our joy when Jesus is our greatest pleasure.

When your job is your greatest pleasure, your joy will be removed at the loss or the devastation of that job. When politics is your pleasure, your joy will be stripped away when things don't go your way.

When people are your pleasure, when you lose them, that joy is then stripped away. But as long as Jesus is the greatest pleasure of your life, you will never lose your joy.

So Paul can write to these Philippian believers who are in a circumstance that is dire, a circumstance that is way worse than what we've experienced. And he can write to them and say, rejoice, because the object of your rejoicing is to be Jesus Christ.

[16:06] And why does that make a difference? Because Jesus never fails. His divine nature is unchanging. His grace and his mercy and his forgiveness never ends.

It is eternal. The life that he gives is everlasting. And his promises are sure. He will never lose. He will never forsake you.

He will never lie to you. Make him your greatest pleasure. And rejoicing will be a continual experience in your life. This is exactly why Habakkuk could write, as we studied a few weeks ago, at the end of his book, he could wholeheartedly sing this song.

Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail, and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls.

Though everything be taken away from me in this life. Habakkuk says, yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

[17:14] Everything in this life is temporary, but God never changes, and his love never goes away. The wealth that brings you peace of mind can be lost in a day.

The people that bring you peace of heart can be lost in a moment. But nothing can separate you from the love of God.

As Romans 8 reminds us, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

As it is written, for your sake we are being killed all the day long. We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. No, in all these things, Paul says, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, that is those who rule and govern us, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all of creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[18:27] What's the first step to peace? Rejoice. How can you rejoice in everything when the greatest pleasure of your life is Jesus Christ? You will never lose your joy, because he is unchanging.

And nothing can separate you from his love. So this first exhortation for Paul, it's under the umbrella of peace, but he first deals with rejoicing. Rejoice in the Lord. And then he says, remember his presence.

Remember his presence. Look at verse number five. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing.

Now it's common when meditating on Philippians chapter four to dwell on the command to rejoice in verse four and the command to spurn anxiety in verse six.

But if we neglect verse five, we miss a crucial element of obtaining peace. There's three phrases included that give us two exhortations and one objective fact.

[19 : 35] Together they make up this second primary exhortation that really has to do with us remembering the presence of the Lord. Let's look at the instructions first. Look at this first phrase in verse five.

Let your moderation be known unto all men. Now if you're using a King James version this morning, moderation is the word that's used. The Greek word here is the word for gentle or gentleness. In fact, it's only used four other times in the New Testament. And every one of those times, it's translated in English as gentle. Why it's given to us as moderation here, I don't know.

But for whatever reason, they chose to do that. Let me show you what these other passages that use this word say, because it directly relates to what Paul's getting across here. First Timothy three and verse three is the first one.

If you want to write that down, you can look at it later and study it with me. In first Timothy three, Paul is writing to Timothy about the qualifications of a pastor, qualifications of elders in the church.

[20 : 36] And here's what he says should be true of elders. He says they should not be addicted to wine or pugnacious, but in contrast to that, gentle and peaceable.

So rather than somebody that is controlled by substance to the point that it leads them to a demeanor of contention and fighting and brawling with others, the qualification of a pastor and of an elder in the church should be one that is gentle and that is peaceable in general.

Titus chapter three and verse two is the other one. Titus chapter three and verse two. Here, Paul is instructing Titus on how he should instruct the congregants of his church, how he should preach and encourage the Christians in Crete.

Here's what he says that he's to teach them, that they are to malign no one, to speak evil of no one, but instead they are to be peaceable.

And here's that word, gentle, showing courtesy to all men. The next one is James chapter three.

James chapter three and verse 17. Here, James is talking about the products of godly wisdom and he's contrasting worldly wisdom with godly wisdom.

[21 : 53] And he gives this whole description of what godly wisdom is. And in verse 17, he says it's pure, it's peaceable. Again, and then here's the word, it's gentle. And then James adds in reasonable.

It's reasonable and it shows mercy. And then the final time this word is used in the New Testament is 1 Peter chapter two. 1 Peter chapter two and verse 18.

Here, Peter is addressing the relationship between slaves and their masters. And he's telling slaves as believers, Christian slaves, this is how you should regard your masters.

And here's what he says they're to do. They're to submit to them. And then he says, So every time this word is used in the New Testament, it's the word gentle.

And it's always set within the context of a reasonable spirit, a peaceable spirit. And so then we come back to Philippians chapter four and we see, okay, let your gentleness be known unto all men.

[23 : 06] Let your peaceable spirit be known unto all men. Let your reasonable spirit, your reasonable mind be known unto all men. He wasn't speaking about indulgence as moderation would suggest.

He was commanding the Philippians to demonstrate a gentle spirit. I think this is a callback to verses two and three. Remember the issue in verses two and three, Yodius and Syntyche are at odds with one another.

There's a contention there. It's not a moral issue and it's not a doctrinal issue because Paul would have addressed that. There's something that has come in between these two ladies. They're at war with one another in the church.

And Paul was commanding that they reconcile and that the church help them reconcile. I think this passage in verse five is a callback to that. Because what is it that so often causes otherwise faithful people, godly people, to act in contention with others?

A lack of inner peace. You know what I'm talking about. You've had a hard day at work. It's not the customer that you usually take that out on.

[24 : 16] Who is it? Your wife. Having a difficult season where it's time to pay the bills this month and things just aren't adding up just right. And that's weighing heavy on your mind.

It's weighing heavy on your heart. And the kids come up while you're trying to work through all the calculations that you need. And as they keep coming up, you keep getting more and more aggravated. And you end up responding harshly, uncharacteristically harshly. Unreasonably. Or unreasonably. Or unpeaceably. To the people that we love the most. Why? Because peace with others really starts with peace within.

And when we haven't got a hold of this peace within that comes from God, it's going to show itself in contention with others. He's addressing the contention with others here.

It's just from another perspective. Sometimes it's the people we love the most that get the brunt of our anger when they have nothing to do with it. Sometimes it's the cashier at the grocery store that gets our smart aleck attitude because we just can't deal with something else that's going on in our life.

[25 : 18] And we've got to take it out on somebody so we take it out on them. Or we take it out on the person that just accidentally cut us off driving down the road or whatever it is. And we let this inner turmoil explode into hatefulness towards others.

And Paul's addressing it here. He's saying that ought not be the case for you. Let your gentleness be known unto all men. And then he says, the beginning of verse 6, be careful for nothing. That's the other exhortation. Be careful for nothing. Well, we know what this means. We've all studied this verse enough to understand it. He's saying that we ought not be worrisome or anxious over anything.

That's quite a command. Don't worry over anything? What? These are the people that we affectionately refer to as worry warts, right?

Always worked up over something. They're always nervous about something. Always afraid of something. It's not a sin to experience worry. It's sinful to be controlled by worry to the extent that we don't rest in God's purposes and God's promises.

[26 : 29] That's the command here. It's sinful when we allow our anxiety to push us to a place of disobedience to the Lord. How could God command such a thing? Don't worry about anything?

It may seem kind of insensitive, actually, for Paul to write this to a group of people that were facing severe persecution. But this is where that objective fact comes into play.

It's right in the middle of these two phrases. Look at it in verse 5. Let your gentleness be known unto all men. Then what does he say? The Lord is at hand. The Lord is near.

Sandwiched between these two seemingly impossible instructions is this awesome, objective fact. What could possibly set these people's minds at ease?

The fact that Jesus is near to them. His presence goes with us through the work of the Holy Spirit. He never sends us down a path on which he doesn't accompany us on our way.

[27 : 35] He never calls us to endure what he was unwilling to endure for our sake. His presence and his power and his providential care is near to us at each and every step of life.

How can we allow this peace to show itself in gentleness to others? How can we be careful for nothing when we remember that Jesus is near to us? His power, his presence, his provision is available to us at every moment of every day throughout our entire lives.

This peace is promised to us all throughout the scriptures. In Exodus chapter 33, God told Moses, My presence will go with you and I will give you rest.

He was about to go into 40 years of isolation with a bunch of grumbling complainers. And God says, I'm going with you. I will give you rest in the midst of this trouble.

Later on in Joshua chapter 1, God tells this to Joshua, Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Don't be frightened and do not be dismayed.

[28 : 43] Not because he's a great warrior, but because the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. Is there anxiety that comes with losing your job?

Absolutely. But remember, the Lord goes with you. His presence is near. Is it difficult with a virus floating around that you can't see and you don't know even how destructive it really can be to your life?

Yeah, but the Lord is near you. Remember his presence and so on and so forth. Matthew 28, Jesus said, Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

In John chapter 16, Jesus said, I have said these things to you that in me you may have peace. In the world, he says, you'll have tribulation.

Set all your focus, all your mind, all your passion on worldly things, you're going to have lots of trouble in your life. But take heart, Jesus says, I have overcome the world. Your peace is found in me and I am near you.

[29 : 43] That's a promise for all of us. Hebrews 13, I will never leave you nor forsake you. The promise of his presence brings peace.

Again, nine or 10 years ago, we had a father-son camp out that our church at Laurel did with my dad's church in Gastonia. We went to this camp in Shelby, actually. And all of these dads brought their sons with them or Jonathan and I were there with our dad.

And this camp was set up with these different dormitories that had bunk beds. And there were obviously different rooms, but you'd probably sleep 10 or 15 people in one particular room in these bunk beds.

And so we got there and we all chose a bunk. And I happened to be in a room with who was my dad's youth pastor at the time. His name was John Dorothy. And he had a couple of young kids with him, a young boy, probably about five years old.

And the first night we were there, we all went to sleep. And in the middle of the night, his little boy woke up and just didn't realize where he was. He was scared. And immediately he began to scream.

[30 : 48] He was screaming loud and crying. He had no idea what was going on. He was scared. He was scared to death. And clearly it woke us all up and we're all trying to figure out what's going on. But I remember distinctly, immediately, John got out of his bed.

He understood who it was. He immediately got out of his bed and he ran over to his son. He said, I can't remember his son's name, but he said his son's name. And he just, he rested his hand on his chest. And immediately the boy stopped crying. He was just completely silent for the moment.

What was it that brought him peace in that moment? He couldn't see his dad. He had no idea who that was as far as his vision was concerned. He couldn't see him. It was dark in the room. But he knew his voice and he had experienced his touch.

And the fact that his dad was near brought him peace in that moment. Still a dark night. Still an unusual place. It's not his regular bed.

But just the fact that his dad was there brought him peace. This is exactly what Paul's talking about with Christians. This is a dark place we're in right now.

[31 : 50] This life, this season is dark. And by God's grace, we experience some joy and some excitement and some blessings in it. But for the most part, it's a dark life. Sin and devastation because of sin comes into the place.

How do we possibly get through with peace? By knowing that Jesus, our father, he's near. He's near to us. We know his voice. We don't see him, but we know his voice. We've experienced his touch. And when we will make him the sole passion of our lives, he will give us that peace that we need.

Remember his presence. Remember his presence. And then the third exhortation that Paul gives quickly is that we request of God with thanksgiving. Look again at verse number six.

Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God.

Three specific times he instructs prayer here. He uses the word prayer. Prayer. Then he uses the word supplication.

[32 : 53] And then the word request. What's the emphasis here in our instruction? Prayer should be a vital part of our daily life, our daily walk.

You want peace within? Prayer is going to be a huge part of that. Prayer. In contrast to the individual who's controlled by anxiety is the instruction to go to the Lord in prayer.

Prayer demonstrates that we recognize our own insufficiency. Our pride often will resist prayer, but that just leads to greater anxiety and stress.

But humble, wise Christians take their need to God in willful submission. We go through difficulties. First thing we do, if you're like me, we just try to figure it out.

We try to work its way out. Julie and I were talking about something yesterday driving down the road. Just wasn't even a big thing. It was just something little. And we went through all of our plans first. Like five or six different things. This is what we can do.

[33 : 56] And finally, it settled on my heart and conviction for a moment. I said, well, maybe we should pray first and just see if the Lord will help us with this. You know, and all the time, our first thing is we're going to try to figure it out our way.

We got to figure out what we're going to do and how it's going to work and all this kind of stuff. And we bring upon ourselves more stress, more anxiety. When Paul says, pray, supplicate, make your request, bring it to the Lord.

Prayer is vital to our lives. If you're like me, you've gone through seasons where you've wondered how effective is prayer. If God knows everything, if he's sovereign, if he's already got it planned out in my life, why is this necessary?

Why do I have to do this? But we can't escape the clear commands in scripture to pray. George McDonald said this, and I think this is so helpful with understanding the effectiveness of prayer. He said, what if God knows prayer to be the thing we need first and most? The thing that we need, the act of prayer. What if the main object in God's idea of prayer be the supplying of our great and endless need?

[35 : 11] The need of himself. What if the good of all of our smaller and lower needs lies in this, that they help drive us to God? Communion with God is the one need of the soul beyond all other needs.

And prayer is the beginning of that communion. What's the point if God knows everything and he's laid it all out? The point is that prayer drives us to him. It drives us to this great need that we have in God.

Yes, he uses prayer. Yes, that's a part of his plan of use. But first and foremost, what prayer does is it brings us close in communion with God, which is our greatest need.

Pray. Is prayer a part of your life? Is prayer a part of your peace? And then he says that in everything, in verse 6, everything, we're to make the supplication with thanksgiving.

So significant to this command then is the spirit with which we pray and the timing that we pray. We pray with thanksgiving, a grateful heart.

[36 : 21] And we pray with a grateful heart in every circumstance. And again, we reach one of these points in this passage where these commands just seem impossible. How can we be grateful in every circumstance?

Well, God, through Christ, gives us a new nature that's fully capable of expressing thanksgiving to him. And when our focus is set first on him, it's impossible to be overwhelmed with anxiety when we are filled with gratitude in the gospel and in Christ.

You can't be anxious over something you're thankful for. And when you're thankful for Christ, the unchanging, eternal, ever-present one, it's hard to be filled with anxiety.

To further the instruction, he says that we're to do this in everything. This is only possible for those who have experienced and been ravished by the true love of Christ.

For the believer, there's never a time to be unthankful. We know our future, and it's secure. And on our worst day, we can thank God for the blessing that awaits us in heaven.

[37 : 35] Thanksgiving, gratitude, crucial to the experience of peace. Well, those are the three exhortations, and we'll finish with this glorious truth, this glorious encouragement.

Look with me at verse 7. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

We've seen time and again in these verses that God is the only real source of true and lasting peace. But in this verse, it's explicitly stated.

And the best thing about this encouragement is that it comes as a direct promise. This is not a possible solution to our anxiety. It's not that this is a method that we can try, that if we rejoice in the Lord and we remember his presence and we make our request with thanksgiving, that maybe, if we do all that, maybe we'll experience peace.

This is not something that is likely to happen. This is a sure promise from the mouth of God. Rejoice in the Lord. Remember he is near. Request with thanksgiving.

[38 : 46] And the God of peace will surely keep you and be with you. It's the very promise of God. Those who keep their focus on him will without a doubt experience the wonderful grace and peace with God.

Let's think about how this process actually works. We often look for quick fixes in our life, right? A checklist that we can work down the list, especially when it comes to obtaining blessing in a

relationship with God.

In this case, we might see peace as the finish line. And rejoicing and remembering and making our request with thanksgiving are various legs of the race.

And we think, if I can just get to a place where these characteristics are true of me, then God will grant me some kind of peace. But that's not how God works. God doesn't wait for us to finish the list of instructions before he blesses us with peace.

His ways are much greater than that. According to these verses, his peace comes progressively each step of the way. You don't have to wait to experience it.

[39 : 54] He provides it generously as we go. You get his peace as you rejoice, not after you rejoice. You get his peace as you remember his presence, not after you remember it.

You get his peace as you are thankful, not after. God doesn't wait to see if you truly have what it takes. He already knows you don't. So he provides his power and his peace to keep us going each and every day.

You don't have to look at this like a checklist. You just do it. And as you do it, God provides everything you need. He provides the peace. And the great thing about his peace in this verse is that second phrase, that the nature of his peace is that it passes all understanding.

It's incomprehensible to us, this peace. You have total control over your rejoicing. You have total control over your remembering.

And you have total control over your gratitude. But peace within is not something that's chosen. It's something that is received. And this divine peace comes from the hand of God, which is partly what makes it so incomprehensible.

[41 : 02] God's peace is the kind that exists when everything else in your life says that it shouldn't. God's peace is the kind that exists when everything in your life says that it shouldn't be there.

But it is. You ever been in one of those moments? By God's grace, you're in a time of mourning and of grief and of trouble and of anxiety, yet you have this peace that you can't explain.

You try to explain it to your friends and they don't get it. Everybody around you is talking about how bad things are for you, but you just have this peace. That's the peace from God. It's beyond explanation. It's incomprehensible.

It passes all understanding. You can do your best to feign and enter peace through meditation and positive thinking, but it will always fail. But when you're faithfully focused on your walk with God through Jesus Christ, you'll experience peace that you can't explain.

That's the awesome encouragement of this. It's not something you gain. It's something you receive. And then look at this last phrase. The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

[42 : 16] What's translated as keep here is the Greek word for garrison or guard. It's a military term. It refers to a garrison of soldiers assigned to protect something or to prevent an invasion or to keep someone from escaping.

Now, the heart is the seat of the emotions. And the mind controls our inner thoughts and ability to reason through truth and error. This is the role that God's peace plays in our inner man.

It literally guards our emotions and guards our reasonings. It protects us from the invasion of chaos and error, and it prevents the escaping of God's truth.

But the surety that we find in this encouragement is found in the guardian. Look at the verse again. He shall guard your hearts and minds through what?

Christ Jesus. This isn't a metaphorical guardian of the mere idea of peace. It's a literal guardian with a name, Jesus Christ.

[43 : 31] And this is the great truth of Christianity. All things come through the person and work of God's Son, Jesus Christ. Peace comes through Jesus.

You can't have peace with the Father without forsaking all else and following His Son. And the joy that brings peace is joy in Jesus, His sacrifice for our sin, and His resurrection power over the grave.

The nearness of God that brings us peace is the nearness of Jesus. The thankfulness in our heart is directed toward Jesus and His gospel. There is no peace, no forgiveness, or life without trusting in Jesus Christ alone to provide it.

John 14 is perhaps the greatest chapter in the Bible at expressing this truth. And let me just remind you of one verse in it. Jesus says, I am the way. I am the truth.

I am the life. No man comes to the Father except by me. No man comes to true and lasting peace except through Jesus. No man comes through forgiveness of sins except through Jesus.

[44 : 55] No man comes through joy and rejoicing or any other blessing of life except through Jesus Christ. It is Christ who guards our emotions.

It is Christ who guards our reasonings. It is His gospel that makes all the difference. What is it that makes you anxious today? Is it the thought of death?

Maybe it's the threat of losing your job or material wealth. Maybe the thing that makes you the most anxious has to do with political or social issues.

But for the followers of Jesus, there is no death that doesn't lead to eternal life. And there is no poverty that eclipses the treasure that we have found in Christ.

And there is no political system that can usurp the authority of the King of Kings. So turn your eyes to Jesus today. If you're full of anxiety, turn to Jesus.

[46 : 03] Do you know that? That old hymn, Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus. Do you know that? You sing it with me.

No light in the darkness you see. There's light for a look at the Savior.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus.

Look full in His wonderful face. I love that last verse or that last phrase.

And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace. Thank you for listening to this sermon made available by Lakeside Bible Church.

[47 : 19] Feel free to share it wherever you'd like. Please do not charge for it or alter it in any way without express written consent from Lakeside Bible Church. Don't forget to visit us online at lakesidebible.church or find us on Facebook and Instagram by searching for Lakeside Bible NC.

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