

Let's Make Peace God's Way

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[0 : 00] Okay. Well, let's continue our time together. We want to first come to the Lord in prayer, asking for his help, asking for his wisdom and guidance as we receive his word to us this morning.

Our Father, we thank you that you are a God who is faithful, a God who is good, a God who is true. We struggle to believe that. We have a tendency to believe that you are more like us, that your goodness has limits, that your kindness goes only up to a certain point, that fundamentally you are a God who is ready to show us the door.

Lord God, open our eyes to see that you are a God who is not only great, but a God who is good and a God who is with us. And I pray today, Lord, open our hearts to receive your word. Give us eyes to see, ears to hear, hearts to understand who our God is and how the way that you have called us to be your family is a way of peace. Lord God, make us, turn us into peacemakers.

Turn us into a church that is known for people who know how to handle conflict, know how to resolve it, know how to make peace, who know how to come alongside one another and to help one another make peace. I'm asking that you may do that for us. Amen. Well, we are here to learn about making peace this morning, and so there is going to be a strong practical element to the sermon.

So, just want to ask anybody here, show of hands, anybody here been in any personal conflicts over the last few months? Anyone? Wow, no, none of you. Oh, no, you know. Yeah, personal conflicts are, you know, maybe you're like, well, I don't know, is that the right word? Well, been in any arguments?

You know, any arguments? Any fights? Quirrels? Tiffs? Squabbles? Kerfuffles? We have all these funny words for conflict, maybe because conflict itself doesn't feel that funny when you're in it, does it?

[2 : 18] It's, it feels ugly. It feels hard. It's quite, it can often be quite painful, and it feels like, it just, I've just got the sense that with each passing year, it seems that there's just more of these triggering moments, more of these opportunities for conflict among us, and so I don't just mean in our families, but also in our church family as well, because we are, I don't know if you noticed, but we're in a bit of a pressure cooker of a world right now, a world that is rapidly changing, some ways that are maybe good, some ways that are not good, and I think for most of us, our anxiety levels are just a little bit higher than they were at this time two years ago, or this time four years ago, or this time six years ago.

Maybe your anxiety levels, just kind of that background radiation of your life is just a little bit more than it used to be, and when you're like that, you're a little bit more prone to getting into conflict. It's a little bit easier for us to get into conflict over even minor issues, and I know we felt that way, right? Haven't you felt that day after a long day with work or a long day with the kids, and it's not been a good day, you reconnect with your spouse, and somehow you end up in a fight over something that wasn't that big a deal, but that background radiation just affected you and got into you, and after that, after you come together in the end, you're like, what were we thinking?

Don't you find yourself thinking, man, I would love to live in a world at peace. I would love to live in a world at peace. Well, a world at peace, a sort of peace, that was the first century world that the Apostle Paul traveled around in, the world that he wrote in. He was a world at peace. I put those quotes around that word peace because he was traveling through the Mediterranean world, and he's going from one city to another throughout the Roman Empire, and he was doing something that actually would not have been possible. Not like that. Wouldn't have been possible at any point in human history up until that time.

This is the first time in human history that Paul would have been able to travel freely all over the Mediterranean world, a world that had been brought together and was at peace. It was at peace under a condition known as the Pax Romana. Pax Romana is a Latin phrase that means the

Roman peace.

It was a peace under the boot of the Roman Empire. It was a peace that meant you could travel freely.

[5 : 15] It was a peace that meant you could do trade freely. You had few restrictions. You were much safer than you had been in the past, but it was a peace that came by means of fear and control and subjugation.

In your hearts, you were not at peace with everybody else in the Roman Empire. On the outside, you were, but in your hearts, you were not. On the outside, every knee bowed before Caesar. Every tongue confessed that Caesar is Lord. That was the Pax Romana. And in the middle of that supposed peace, that counterfeit peace, that false external peace, Paul writes to a Roman colony city, a city that had a Roman garrison in it.

They knew all about the Pax Romana. They experienced it every day. And this city called Philippi, he wrote to. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul tells them about a better sort of peace, and he calls it the peace of God. So this is not the peace of Rome. This is the peace of God.

And the peace of God, it is a peace that flows out of the heart. It is a peace that is not imposed like a boot from a conquering Lord. It is a peace that comes out of the heart of a people who have a Lord, a people who have embraced and enjoyed their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It is a peace among the people of God, a peace in God's royal family. This is the peace of God. And so let's make peace God's way. And that's what we're learning about this morning. And this is, think about this like the ABCs of making peace God's way. There is so much more to it than just what we're talking about today.

But I just want to give you some of the basics that Paul lays out in the book of Philippians. Because without what I'm going to say today, without this, you're not going to get very far in making peace in the family of God.

[7 : 19] Paul talks about what this peace looks like to an outside observer, to somebody who is outside of the family of God and looks in at the relationships in God's family, in God's church. And here's how Paul describes this perspective in Philippians chapter 1, verses 27 through 28. So this is going to be kind of the starting point of our sermon, and then we're going to go towards the end of the book to flesh it out. And here's what Paul says this peace looks like. He says, only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or I'm absent, I may have hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents.

This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. So here's what this peace looks like. It looks like a church. It looks like a whole Christian community that's functioning, that's learning to, for maybe for the first time, learning to function like a family, like God's family. It's a church made up of wildly different people.

From the outsider's perspective, it looks like they just don't have anything in common. They don't have interests in common. They don't have hobbies in common. They don't have cultural backgrounds in common. There's all sorts of different personalities thrown into the mix.

Looks like they have no business being together. And yet they are standing firm in one spirit together. They are striving side by side, with one mind, to pass on the good news that Jesus Christ is Lord.

In a world that proclaims Caesar is Lord, and that's why you're at peace, this community says, no, Jesus Christ is Lord. That's why we're at peace. And they are not frightened in anything, Paul says. They can't be intimidated by even the fiercest opposition from the outside. So what they are is they are like an army that stands together, that doesn't break rank, that doesn't flee, even under the fiercest opposition. They are side by side with one another, standing together, working together.

And when the pressure cooker of our world presses in on them, the world expects that they will crack and they will fragment.

[9 : 57] They will fall apart. They will start fighting with each other. But under the peace of God, when we have that peace in our hearts, the pressure cooker presses in and they only come closer together. It only pushes them closer together.

And so Paul tells the Philippians that peace among them, he says, it is actually a gospel issue. It is the gospel issue, he says. They're standing side by side, and the gospel is made clear by the way that they are at peace with one another. The peace of God caused them to stand together, to strive together, not be intimidated. And the outside world, Paul says in these verses, is baffled. In a world

that's torn apart by political conflicts, by personal conflicts, the world is baffled that they would actually stand together. It is a clear sign to them, Paul says, that Jesus Christ is Lord. It is a clear sign to them that his peace is greater than the counterfeit Roman peace. It is a clear sign to them that anyone who resists Jesus Christ is one day going to stand before him and be accountable to him. There is a day of judgment coming.

It is a clear sign, Paul says, of destruction, that those who belong to Jesus Christ will be saved from that destruction. They will live under his peace. You will be saved by the God who makes peace. And so if we want to show our friends, if we want to show our family, if we want to show our town, our province, our country, that Jesus Christ is Lord, do you want that? Do you want to show them that? Amen? Then we'd better learn the peace of God. We had better learn the peace of God. We had better learn how to live together in unity and in harmony. And so let's learn to make peace God's way. How do we do this? Because the differences are real. We are really different from one another.

Have you noticed? And our church isn't even, there are churches that are far more diverse in background than our own. But man, we're really different from one another. I look around at the room and I see people from all over the world who were born all over the world. I see people from all sorts of different cultural backgrounds, family backgrounds, different personalities, different, you know, different clothing styles. We're not all dressed as classy as Carl is, you know, and different political views, different vaccination statuses, you name it, right? How do we make peace God's way?

[12 : 39] How do we make peace God's way? Paul tells us how to do it in Philippians chapter 3, and we're going to read Philippians chapter 3 verse 20 all the way through chapter 4 verse 9. This is where the nitty gritty of making peace God's way comes into play. And if you're using one of the blue Bibles or ushers handed out, you're looking for it, it's on page 982. So page 982, and I'm going to read for us chapter, Philippians chapter 3 verse 20 all the way through chapter 4 verse 9. Here's how we make peace God's way. And Paul begins by telling us, where does peace begin? And here's the truth. Here's the truth that we hold on to about Jesus Christ our Lord. Our citizenship is in heaven.

Our citizenship is in heaven. And from it, we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. I entreat you, Odeia, and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women who have labored side by side with me in the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand. Do not be anxious about anything, 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 your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

[15 : 34] Here toward the end of his letter, Paul is writing to this people, this church that he founded, he knows them, they're on his heart. He loves them. You can just feel the affection for them just jumping off the page. And he says the same things that he said all the way back in chapter one.

In 4 verse 1, he tells them, stand firm. Stand firm in the Lord. Stand firm in the Lord. And he reminds them, the Lord Jesus Christ is going to subject all things to himself.

Caesar is going to come and go. But there is a Lord who will one day return to earth in a day of judgment, and he will subject all things to himself, and he is coming back soon.

This present order, the Pax Romana, or whatever our modern day equivalent of it is, it's here now. It will not be here for long. But the peace of God will endure forever.

And so, Paul tells the church here in Philippians chapter 4 verse 5 to remember, the Lord is at hand. The Lord is at hand. Stand firm in the Lord.

[16 : 54] The Lord is at hand. Stand firm in the Lord. The Lord is at hand. On this foundation, we begin to make peace God's way.

That is the foundation. We begin to make peace God's way. And so, based on what Paul tells us, I have four invitations for you today. Four invitations for you. First, let's come together in peace. Let's come together in peace. To make peace, you have to be willing to move toward one another. You have to be willing to move toward one another. And that includes people that you are not truly at peace with. And I know that's hard. I know it's hard to have differences and say, okay, I'm actually going to move toward someone and try to resolve those differences.

Try to make peace. My instinct, when I'm at odds with someone, I don't like, I personally, some of you, maybe you enjoy a good scrap, you enjoy a good fight, not me.

[18 : 08] I think most of us aren't like that. I certainly am not. I prefer to withdraw. Conflict stresses me out. Maybe that's you.

And maybe some of you grew up in a family which, how do you handle conflict? You didn't. You avoided it. Nobody confronted anyone else about anything.

And you just kind of pretended everything was okay. Pretended everything was okay. That was the rule in your family. Just make sure you pretend everything is okay. It all looks good. That's a sort of a Pax Romana kind of family, right?

Pretend everything is okay. We're at peace here. Don't anybody bring any trouble into this house. Don't bring whatever's at pain, whatever's stressing you out.

No, no, no, no, no, no, no. We're at peace. Pax Romana. Or maybe you are the opposite. You grew up in a family, big, explosive conflicts, yelling, shouting, fighting, arguments.

[19 : 09] And typically, you would blow up, have big arguments. And then afterwards, everyone would act like nothing happened. No, nothing happened. The next day, it was like nothing happened.

You just moved on. You didn't resolve anything. And so, maybe you are used to either avoiding conflict, or you're used to avoiding the hard work of making peace after conflict.

You either avoid conflict altogether, or you do conflict, and then you avoid the hard work of making peace. It's welcome to life under the Pax Romana. It is not God's peace.

If that's you, if that's the family you grew up, and if that's still the way you're relating to other people, then I just want to let you know, maybe you think you do love peace, but it isn't God's peace that you love. You love the Pax Romana.

You love the counterfeit peace, the fake peace. And I want to invite you to something better. This fake peace is where things were at between two women in the Philippian church.

[20 : 23] And unfortunately for these two women, their names are remembered 2,000 years later for their conflict with one another. Paul writes in chapter 4, verse 2, I entreat Euodia, and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord.

There's a reason not too many of us name our daughters Euodia and Syntyche. Imagine your life being used as a sermon illustration in a foreign land 2,000 years later.

Right? Those of you who know me really well know that sometimes a little bit of a trollish street comes out in me, and that little troll in me is looking forward to the day that I get to heaven, and I'm going to go, and I'm going to find either Euodia or Syntyche, and I'm going to come alongside and say, hey, so, what was that all about?

And I'm sure that both of these women have spent the last 2,000 years learning patience for all the people who have come up to them and asked them that exact question. Paul is relentless, isn't he? Paul wants them to make peace. He won't let them stay at odds with one another. He loves them too much for them to just be at loggerheads with each other.

[21 : 42] Paul remembers, he says, when they labored side by side with him. And Paul wants them to stand firm together once again. And so Paul insists that they agree in the Lord, literally, that they be like-minded again.

They be like-minded and share that same spirit of, we're in the Lord together. Paul wants these two women to remember two things, and he says, first, they're both in the Lord. They're both united to Jesus Christ by faith.

And when you believe in Jesus Christ, when you say Jesus Christ died and rose again, he is truly the Son of God, but he didn't just die and rose again.

He died and rose again for us and for me, in our place, for our sins. And now we're stuck to him by faith. We believe in him, and we have entrusted ourselves fully to him, and we're like this. We're like two peas in a pod. We belong together. Euodia belongs with Jesus Christ. And guess what? So does Syntyche. And because Euodia is connected with Jesus and Syntyche is connected with Jesus, they're connected to each other.

[22 : 54] They're stuck together. Welcome to the family of God. The second thing Paul says in verse three is he reminds them that their names are in the book of life.

Their names are in the book of life. That means that they have actually been named, chosen by God from eternity past, and he has written down their names as his own.

And they belong with him forever and ever. They will live forever and ever, and guess what? They will live forever and ever together. That means that right now, Euodia and Syntyche are with the Lord.

They really are, and they are together. It's a happy ending. Okay? And that means that they cannot avoid each other. They can't keep avoiding each other because they will be together forever.

So now is the time. Now is the time to start making peace with one another. Paul is urging them, let's come together in peace.

[23 : 58] Let's come together in peace. And then Paul says, hey, maybe that's hard. Right? You know, sometimes we're in conflict, and it's just so intense, so overwhelming, and it's really hard.

You know, it's not enough to say, hey, come together. Come together in peace. Paul says, okay, you need help. And so he invites some people to step in and help. And he says in verse 3, yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women.

And so that's instructive for us. Don't feel ashamed if you want to make peace with someone, and you don't know how.

Don't feel ashamed if you want to make peace, but it just feels way too overwhelming. Why do you think you're here? Why do you think God has surrounded you with a church family?

Why do you think that God has put elders of the church to help shepherd you? You need help. You need the help of wise, mature peacemakers to help you make peace.

[25 : 04] Because making peace God's way, it is probably going to be very different from the fake peacemaking that you've always done before. And when we're starting new things, when we're learning the way of life in God's family, a whole new way of life, we just don't know what to do.

It's hard. It feels unnatural. It feels counterintuitive. And we need help. And the peace of God will cut against all our ungodly instincts. It's going to cut against our desire to win.

It's going to cut against our desire to keep ourselves safe. There's a lot more to be said about making peace. We don't have time to cover all the million different scenarios today.

And so what I'm saying today is not the sum total of all the different ways you make peace, all the different situations you might encounter. When I sit in a counseling room and help people make peace and learn how to make peace, boy, I'll give very different advice to very different people because they're in very different situations.

We're all a unique blend of circumstances and relationships. I can't address it all in one sermon.

And that's why God gives us wise people in our lives to help walk us through the unique scenarios and unique relationships that we are all in.

[26 : 31] But we want to come together in peace. This church family is meant to come together in peace. And there's something very important about making peace God's way.

The attitude that you bring makes all the difference. The attitude that you bring to that conversation, to that peacemaking effort, to that reconciliation, it makes all the difference.

The manner in which you speak, the manner in which you behave really matters. That's what God says. There is a certain mindset to the peacemaker.

There's something in the heart of the peacemaker. There's a tone in his or her voice. Here's the second invitation that Paul gives. Let's make peace with joyful clemency.

Let's make peace with joyful clemency. Now, that word clemency may be a bit unfamiliar. And then you're like, oh wait, no, yes, I remember. Those are those little fruits of the grocery store. They look like oranges.

[27 : 35] You are thinking of clementines. Clemency, it is a word that simply means showing someone mercy and you're not there to give them their just desserts.

You're sitting with them and you're showing them mercy. You're not going to give them their just desserts. You're with them. You're with them and you're showing kindness to them.

That's probably that clemency, I think it's hard to find a word. That's the best word that I know of to translate what Paul says in verse five when he says, let your reasonableness be known to everyone.

And so, that reasonableness, maybe your translation says gentleness. Here's how a Greek lexicon I consulted describes this word. It means the quality of making allowances despite facts that might suggest reason for a different reaction.

In other words, you come in and you think, oh, I know, I've, you know, you're tempted to react in a certain really negative, hostile way to someone but you're like, hey, I'm going to make allowances. Maybe I'll, you know, I'm going to give you time to explain yourself.

[28 : 42] I'm going to let you assume, I'm going to maybe assume the best at first. I'll give you time to explain yourself. I'll listen. It also says, not insisting on every right of letter of law or custom.

In other words, you're not in there like, I'm here to get my rights from you. I'm here to get what I deserve. I'm here to get what you owe me. You're not in it to claim your rights.

You're not in it to claim what you think the other person ought to be giving you. You're there to make peace. That's the manner in which you approach someone else to make peace.

You don't show up with a list of demands, a list of grievances. You're not approaching them, I'm here to get my justice out of you. You're not entering that conversation so that you can put them in their place, make them understand, get what's coming to them.

You have a heart. That is aching to show clemency, to yield, to grant patience, to show mercy. It means that you show up and you're ready to do a lot of listening.

[29 : 57] Your goal, I want to understand, hey, what's it like to be you? What did the world look like from your perspective? How did you perceive the conversation that we had where things went really bad?

how did that feel for you? What was running through your mind? Like, tell, what, what drove that response?

Paul says that you want to have a reputation. In fact, he says, let your reasonableness, your clemency be known to everyone. You want to have a reputation. That's just the way you relate to people.

And that sort of clemency, you know, maybe we might come and say, okay, yeah, Dave said I was supposed to be like this, so okay. No, no, no, no, no. It's not a begrudging clemency.

Paul says, it's a joyful clemency. Here's what he says in verse four, right before this. Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice.

[31 : 02] Here's another way you could perhaps say it. Enjoy the Lord. Keep on enjoying him.

Boast about him. Be confident that he is with you. Back in chapter three, if you read through it, Paul warned about certain false teachers.

I like to call them joy robbers. Paul starts talking about rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice. Oh, and look out for those joy robbers. Look out for those people who want you to boast in yourself, who want you to boast in your pedigree, your religious background, who want you to boast in your performance, that you've got what it takes, that you are better.

Paul says, the only way that you can find solid joy, the only way that you can be a joyful peacemaker, the only way that you can show a joyful clemency is if you enjoy the Lord and you boast in the Lord.

He is your joy. And guess what? You're coming to somebody else in this church, you're enjoying the Lord, and you're like, you know what? They do too. Let's enjoy the Lord together. Let's talk about Him.

I think one reason we're so often at odds with one another, one reason we find it's so hard to make peace, think through, when was the last time that you were talking to someone in this church and you were sharing with one another?

[32 : 22] Do you know what the Lord has done for me? Do you know what I learned when I was reading the Bible? I was like, can you believe this? Do you know what BK said in the sermon last week about Jesus?

I think that's so amazing. That's our Lord. What if we shared the spirit of Psalm 34?

Psalm 34, where we read in verses 2 and 3, my soul makes its boast in the Lord. Let the humble hear me and be glad. Oh, magnify the Lord with me.

Let us exalt His name together. When we worship, when we have hearts that share the joy of the Lord and that boast in the Lord, you can't help but come together with people that formerly you were at odds with because you have that same love and that same joy.

That reminds you, hey, remember what we're here for. We're here for to tell the good news of Jesus Christ. That's what brings us together. How can we stay separate from one another? How can we stay at odds with one another?

[33 : 29] Let's make peace. What if you loved talking together about what you've been learning about Jesus? What if you were able to say and to hear to one another, guess what? The Lord's at hand. The Lord is at hand.

Let's stand firm. What if we could say with Paul in Philippians 3, verse 8, indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

What if we could abandon our own efforts to look good in conflict, to look better, to be the one who's right? What if we were confident? Hey, Jesus Christ, he died on the cross, he rose again.

Everyone who believes in him will share Jesus' righteousness. We're all counted righteous, we're counted in the right because of who Jesus is.

We stand before a God who is the only judge of this world. Only his judgments matter. And my only hope is I belong to Jesus. I'm only righteous because of Jesus and I rejoice in that.

[34 : 37] And so, if I don't look right before you, okay. That hurts. I don't like it. But God is the judge. He is the one that I fear, not you.

What if we could agree with Paul when he says, for his sake, for Jesus' sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.

What if our clemency could look like that? What if our clemency were paired up with joy? I have a question. Think about a conflict you've been in recently.

How would that conflict have been different? If there were that joyful clemency that both of you came together with that spirit and that attitude, how would that have looked different? Do you think that would have made a difference?

That makes a difference. Let's make peace with joyful clemency. That's how you make peace God's way. Now, you hear that, you agree with that, but let's be honest.

[35 : 59] You think, hey, I'm sitting here on a Sunday morning in my nice, comfortable seat and I had my nice cup of coffee and I'm in a fairly safe place away from that difficult relationship and that difficult conversation.

Yes, I know the Lord, the Lord has called me together in peace, but that's scary. And maybe you're not just scared of the conversation and what the other person is going to do. Maybe what scares you is what you will do.

Maybe you say, yeah, I want to show joyful clemency, but Dave, I've kind of got a track record in these conversations. And my track record is I get really, really worked up.

I get really worked up. You know, all those fun little fear chemicals start racing through my brain. And before you know it, I'm in fight, flight, or freeze mode.

Maybe your blood boils, your fists clench as you approach the conflict you're coming in. And every, or maybe every bone in your body, once the conversation starts, every bone in your body is screaming at you, get out of here.

[37 : 20] Maybe when things get a little heated, your brain, and this is my, this is kind of often what happens to me, your brain gets foggy and slow and starts shutting down. Maybe you tell me, yeah, Dave, I want to make a peace, but how?

I get so worked up. It's easy to talk about, but when I'm in that situation, what do I do? Well, we've already mentioned, first of all, you probably need the help of other peacemakers to come alongside of you.

Don't, if it's hard for you, you don't have to do it on your own. That's what we're here for. That can really make a big difference when you're feeling anxious or reactive.

There's more, there's other techniques, there's other methods that can help stabilize you, calm you down in the middle of the chaos, but Paul tells us something that is actually the most important tool

in the belt of every peacemaker.

So what Paul tells us is something that if you don't have this, you're not going to be able to make peace God's way. This is the ABCs of making peace. It's not the sum total of making peace, but you've got to have this.

[38 : 28] You've got to have this in that moment of conflict. And here's what he says. He gives us a third invitation. Let's make peace grounded in prayer. Let's make peace grounded in prayer.

And that's what he's talking about in verses 6 and 7. He says, Do not be anxious about anything, 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 your minds in Christ Jesus. Have you ever, these are verses that many of us are quite familiar with, have read over, maybe you've memorized them.

Have you ever thought about these verses in the context of personal conflict? In the context of personal conflict, anxiety is so often due to personal conflict.

Anxiety can take a lot of forms. We can experience it for many different reasons, but it's really common in our relationships. That clenched jaw, that pit in the feeling of your stomach as you drive to meet up with that person.

[39 : 43] the elevated volume and pitch in your voice as you start talking about that person to others. The thoughts, that obsessive vortex of thoughts that just go around and around and around and keep you up at night and you can't fall asleep.

The heavy weight of expectations this other person puts on you. The heavy weight of expectations you put on yourself in those relationships. And we could go on and on.

Any of that sound familiar? You ever have that experience with a family member? Have that experience with a customer or a boss at work? Have an experience like that with a teacher or another student at school?

In these verses, Paul gently urges a church under pressure from hostile opponents, do not be anxious about anything.

And that's not a scold. That's an encouragement. Hey, instead of being anxious about anything, he's gently urging two women in conflict, don't be anxious about anything.

[40 : 50] He gently urges their brothers and sisters in the church who are trying to help them, don't be anxious because he knows that anxiety is the enemy of peace. Anxiety is the enemy of peace.

It's like static electricity, right? It's not visible, but you can feel it. You can sense it in the room. If I've, you know, built up a static charge and rubbed my feet and I come up to you, guess what's going to happen to you?

Anxiety is contagious. It can pass from one person to the next. And it's contagious in our relationships, especially when conflict is present. So Paul counsels these people whom he loves and he tells them something that will help restore peace to our relationships.

Something that will help restore peace to our relationships. Something that, if only we would do it, would make a big difference. Verse 6, he tells us, let your requests be made known to God.

Let your requests be made known to God. Ask God for help. In that moment, you ask God for help. When?

[41 : 54] He says do it in everything. In other words, anxiety is useful. Anytime you feel anxious, any conversation or circumstance or situation where, you know, you just feel anxious, you feel like you're tensing up to fight or to run away or just to shut down, the moment that you feel that, that's your cue.

That is a cue and is your cue to pray. Right there. Pray when you feel anxious in a relationship.

Pray when you feel anxious about a relationship. For some of us, that means that we're probably going to be praying all day long. good.

It's exactly what God is calling you to do. Have you trials or temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged.

Take it to the Lord in prayer. You humble yourself before God. You're asking for his help. Why, oh, why would you try to handle this stuff on your own?

[43 : 09] Why would you refuse God's peace? Oh, what peace we often forfeit. Oh, what needless pain we bear. All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

God, the Holy Spirit, he's given us this letter, these words, these verses because he's inviting us. Hey, let your request be made known to God.

God is asking you, make your request known to me. Tell me. If we're not praying, it's not because he isn't listening.

We're the ones who are holding our hearts back from him. We're the ones who are trying to handle it on our own. The peace of God requires the God of peace to step in.

Why would we not ask for his help? Paul urges prayer and supplication. But man, what do we pray? Maybe you're thinking, Dave, in that moment of need, I'm just overwhelmed.

[44 : 20] I just blow up. I just fly off the handle. I just shut down. And I'm just too worked up. I don't know what to say. Sometimes all you need to do is just hold on to one thing.

One verse. Lately for me, here's my verse that I found helpful in the last week or two. Here's my verse. Here's my anxious prayer. Psalm 119, verse 94.

I am yours. Save me, for I've sought your precepts. I am yours. I'm yours, Lord. Save me, for I've sought your precepts. Maybe there's another verse.

Maybe that's too much. Maybe there's a half verse. Maybe that's too much. Maybe there's a phrase from Scripture that you can memorize and you recite and you practice and you get it ready so that in that moment of need, there it is.

There it is. Right on your mind, right on the tip of your tongue. We pray because we believe that God is good, that God hears our prayers, that his heart for us is that he loves to do us good, that he loves to save.

[45 : 30] And that's why Paul urges us in verse 6, and this is important, he says, you pray with thanksgiving, with thanksgiving. It's good to remember also.

We need to remember, we are so quick to forget in that moment, but it's good to remember the goodness that the Lord has shown to us, to remember all the good things that have come from his hand, to remember he is gracious, he really has been.

These words I read earlier in the service from 1 Peter 5, where Peter writes, God opposes the proud, brings them down, but gives grace to the humble, he brings them up.

God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time he may exalt you.

He may exalt you, not you exalting yourself, not you saving yourself, not you making sure that you win in this conflict and that you fix it and that you get everything right. The proper time, God will exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him.

[46 : 43] Why? Because he cares for you. Because he cares for you. And so you don't just stand aloof and stand proud and try to handle it all yourself.

You bring your anxieties to him, you say, he cares for me. And these words are true, he really does. Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share?

We forget what a friend we have in Jesus. And so when we are overwhelmed, when we forget, we just remember that half verse of scripture, we pray it, we call or text someone, a friend here at church who can help remember for us when we forget, who can remind us how good the Lord is when we can't hold on to that.

We ask them, hey, would you pray for me? In fact, would you pray with me right now? I need help. We need fellow peacemakers to help us pray. And if we do this, Paul tells us, here's how God responds.

Verse seven, the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. The peace of God, there it is.

[48 : 07] The peace of God which surpasses all understanding and it's better than the Roman peace. In fact, we don't even understand how it all works. Somehow, though, it's there and it guards your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

And we think of this, by and large, people read this verse and they think, oh, that's that internal peace, a sense of like calm and stability and non-anxiety. The heart and the mind of the person who's praying is like, ah, you know, that relief.

And I think it does start there with the spirit of peace within ourselves. Our anxious hearts, we come down a bit, we're quieted, we're stilled.

But when the New Testament authors talk about peace, the vast majority of the time it's not some sort of internal sense of tranquility. That word peace, by and large, and even in the book of

Philippians, is usually used to talk about peace in relationships, peace between people. Peace with God, peace with other people. Think of God's peace as this is here to guard you in conflict. God's peace guards you in conflict.

[49 : 26] The peace of God, it goes further. It does something that the Pax Romana never could do. God's peace brings peace to our relationships.

God's peace brings real peace to our relationship. It stabilizes you in circumstances of conflict. And when our peace is grounded in prayer, we're stabilized, we're grounded in the Lord, and then it spreads out from us to those around us.

I said anxiety is contagious, peace is contagious too. when a person who is, knows the peace of God and is living grounded in the peace of God and is praying, walks into an anxious room, it just brings the temperature down.

It brings peace to a world of conflict. It guards our hearts and minds together. It grounds us together in Christ Jesus.

to make peace God's way, let's make peace grounded in prayer. So there's more that could be said beyond just that about how to come together in peace.

[50 : 39] There's more that could be said about how to maintain a joyful clemency, but praying in the moment, in that time of need, it is vital, it is necessary. You need to do it.

This is not optional for the Christian life. This is how we live in the family of God. If you need help with that, okay.

We have people I can help you, we have people who can help guide you, here's how we can do that, here's how we can learn how to do that. Let's look at your life and let's start practicing and learning ways to do that.

But outside of that moment of conflict, outside of that Christ's anxiety, what more can we do? What more can we do? Well, Paul gives us the final invitation. He says, let's prepare ourselves to make peace.

So let's prepare ourselves to make peace. A soldier doesn't charge into battle without any training. Yes, I know, the best way to learn is by experiencing.

[51 : 35] I think that's the second best way to learn. The second, the best way to learn is by training and then going into battle. Go through basic training first. Prepare yourself first.

Prepare your heart and your mind first and keep doing it. If you want to be a peacemaker, you have to prepare to be a peacemaker.

So this final invitation that Paul gives us in verses 8 through 9 is so important. He says, finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things and the God of peace will be with you.

Paul gives us two commands here. Do you see what they are? Think about these things. Practice these things. So let's consider that first one, the think about these things because Paul has given us this list of whatever's, right?

[52 : 51] So you've got a whole bunch of whatever's here. Whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, praiseworthy. And he urges us to set our minds on things that maybe you could summarize it by saying things that are good and true and beautiful.

Things that are good and true and beautiful. Think about these things. Oh boy, we have habits, don't we? of setting our minds on other things.

We lie in bed, brooding over lies that we've been told or dishonorable and reproachful behavior that we've seen, injustices that we felt in pure and ugly speech.

We just brood. And then we take out our phones and we scroll endlessly through the gutters of sinful behavior on our social media feeds, just fuming at whatever we see, feeling envious about all those other people living that amazing life on Instagram.

We're choosing to fill our minds. We are catechizing ourselves. We are training ourselves to fill our minds with the wrong sort of whatever's.

[54 : 01] And in so doing, we are fixing our minds on things that are not going to make the peace of God. If you want to train to, if you want to train for the Pax Romana, that's the way you do it.

If you want to train for the peace of God, you go to things that won't rob us of peace. You go to better things. Consider these words from Psalm 1. Same idea here. Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers. That's what we tend to do. That's where we put our mind. But his delight is in the law of the Lord. And on his law, he meditates day and night.

If you want to make peace God's way, you need to prepare yourself to be the kind of person who makes peace. First, like we've said, this isn't just an individual thing.

This is something we do together. First, you need to gather with God's people. We meet together in church every Sunday, not because that's the thing Christians do, and that's what you do when you happen to have free time.

[55 : 16] We meet together in church every Sunday because it is good, and we need to remember together what is good and true and beautiful. I need to sit there, and I need to hear you guys singing about that and praying about that and talking with one another about that and enjoying together what is beautiful to receive what's good, to learn what's true together.

We need that. And to our shame, I think some of us take this gathering lightly. We show up at church when it doesn't inconvenience us, when it doesn't get in the way of our other plans and priorities.

If gathering for worship every week is a low priority for you, then here's the hard truth. If that's a low priority for you, then making peace God's way is also a low priority for you. I say that with every ounce of love that I can muster.

Making peace God's way might not be a high priority in your life. There's a better way to live though. Let's prepare together to make peace.

And the wise man of Psalm 1 has learned to meditate on scriptures day and night. It isn't just a Sunday, he's not just a Sunday morning Christian. Shows up in church, goes through the motions, then goes home and lives his life just like anybody else.

[56 : 46] He has God's word in his heart. He's preoccupied with God's word all the time. He has got God's words and he's memorized them and he's just mulling over them throughout his day.

He has prepared himself and he's constantly preparing himself to make peace God's way. And I would urge you, you need to engage with God's word every single day.

You need to engage with God's word every single way, every single day. Now some people say, oh you're saying do your devotions and do it just this way. I'm saying hey, different people I find engage with God's word find different ways of engaging with God's word helpful.

Once again, if you say, hey I want to engage with God's word every day, I've just not found a way, I just find it so hard, it's, I'm not sure what to do, I just try different things and I just give up.

Alright, let's talk about it. Let's help sort through the obstacles of your life, the way your brain works, let's start building these patterns and habits into our lives.

[57 : 50] There are lots of ways to do that, we're here to help. I want to say though, in particular, memorizing scripture, even a little bit of scripture, it makes all the difference.

And memorizing scripture, here's what I've found in my experience, it is like an investment that earns compound interest. It's like an investment that earns compound interest. And if you invested a small amount of money when you were young, you know what I mean.

That small amount of money has made you a lot of money ever since. Anyone here, so if you're a teenager right now, or if you're in your early 20s right now, this is especially for you.

The best time to invest is now. Now, memorize scripture now. And I say this from personal experience, I cannot even begin to tell you how much it will pay off in the years to come.

And if you're in your 30s, or your 40s, or 50s, or 60s, or 70s, or 80s, you know when the best time to start memorizing scripture is? Now. The scripture that my mom had us memorize as a kid, guess what?

[58 : 59] It's still here. And I'll tell you what, I didn't, I don't know that I really understood it very well at the time. Guess what? I do now. And those of you who know me well know that it's there, it's available at any moment.

And I've come to understand it in the years to come in a way that I never did before. It's made all the difference, it's encouraged other people more times than I can count, and without it, I don't think I could ever make peace God's way.

I just don't think I could. So let's prepare ourselves to make peace by thinking about what is good and true and beautiful. And then second, Paul tells the church in verse 9, what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things.

Practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. So practice these things tells us this, guess what? I know you'd like to think that coming here on Sunday morning and you just listen to this info dump coming from the front and you think, okay, great, I'm changed, I'm fixed.

No. Knowledge alone is not going to change you. In fact, knowledge alone, if all you do is just consume information and then you just walk out and never put into practice, all it does is puff you up.

[60 : 18] All it does is puff you up. It doesn't actually build up the body of Christ. Doctrine alone won't change you. Insight alone won't change you. Self-awareness alone won't change you.

You have to implement what you've learned into your life. There is no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey. And the Apostle Paul, he talked in verse 3 about Euodia and Syntyche and he says that he spent time with them laboring side by side.

And so he asks them and he asks this whole church who know him, who were in relationship with him, who saw his whole way of life for months and months and months.

He tells them, remember what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me.

Remember what I taught you. Remember what you heard.

Remember what you saw when I was with you. Remember the tone with which I spoke. Remember the joyful clemency in my attitude toward you. Remember what was important to me, what my priorities were.

[61 : 31] Remember the way that I thought about things. The way I asked questions. The way that I talked. Remember the way that I prayed. Remember the habits and the patterns of my life.

Practice these things. Walk in my footsteps. Following my example. And this letter is filled with examples. Paul says in chapter 3, verse 17, Brothers, join in imitating me.

Keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. And so, throughout this letter, you can read and you'll find, especially in chapter 2, Paul holds not only himself up as an example, but Timothy and Epaphroditus, these servants of the Lord, as examples to follow.

And he says the ultimate example that he holds up to follow is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ shows us the way to make peace. And I would encourage each one of you, if you want to make peace God's way, if you want to learn how to live a life of peace, if you want to learn how to take what you know and to actually integrate it into your life, look for mature believers in this church, ones who you know, they've been walking consistently in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

Their lives have produced so much fruit, so much good things have come out of them and out of their families. Start, just sit down, get coffee with them, pick their brains, ask, how do you spend time with the Lord?

[63 : 07] Spend time with them, watch the way that they speak with other people. Listen to them, how do they think about things? How do they think through things? Not just what they know, but how do they come to know it?

Listen to them pray. Observe closely their relationship with their spouse and their children. Start patterning, patterning your life on that. You know how a child learns to walk?

Does a child just come up with the idea of walking on its own? Question. Parents, some of you are parents of you. Did your kids just kind of come up one day and thought, you know what, I've never seen anybody walk before, but I might give this a try.

I bet my legs can do more than just crawling around. No, and as you know, especially younger siblings, they watch their older siblings walk, they watch their parents walk and they think, I want to do that too. And they fall a whole bunch.

But they learn. You can learn how to walk too in the way of peace. Let's prepare ourselves to make peace by practicing what is good and true and beautiful.

[64 : 15] And so if we come together in joyful clemency, if we ground ourselves in prayer, if we prepare ourselves to make peace, then Paul assures us, here in verse 9, he says, the God of peace will be with you.

The God of peace will be with you. Dear friends, that's true. He will be with you. You will be doing his will.

What if you could come together with someone you're at odds with, someone you've been in conflict with and you haven't resolved it, but what if you could come together now and start making peace and what if that conversation, you walked away from it, wouldn't it be amazing to walk away from that conversation with a totally clear conscience, no regrets, knowing that you were faithful to the God of peace?

even if the other person weren't willing, even if they weren't in the same place, wouldn't it be great to walk away with no regrets?

The God of peace was with me and I was following the path of peace. Wouldn't it be great to know that he's got your back?

[65 : 36] He is with you. With God's help, this church, this people, can stand in one spirit.

You can strive together and not be intimidated. You can stand firm in the Lord. You can show that the Lord is at hand and show the world that the God of peace is with you.

So let's make peace God's way. Let me pray. Our God and Father, making peace our own way comes naturally to us.

The path of peace we have not known. Making peace your way, that's hard. But I know your spirit's at work.

I know he's with us. And I know you are at work teaching us how to walk in the way of peace. I know we're going to stumble and fall a whole bunch. And even this week as I've considered this, I can just look back and see how many ways I've stumbled and fallen.

[66 : 45] I can think of distant friends from past that I know I need to have another conversation with. Making peace is hard, but I know you're with us.

You are the God of peace. Jesus Christ is our Lord and he makes peace among his people. And so, Lord God, we come to you humbly, we come to you in need.

We need help. We need help to make peace. Would you have mercy on us? We are yours. Save us, for we have sought your precepts.

Lord, I pray that we may be known as people of peace. Amen.