

Guarding Our Hearts

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[0 : 00] We're going to look this evening at verse 4 to verse 7. If you read verse 7 with me first, it speaks thereof.

And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding to know that peace.

And that's how we find then in verse 4 to verse 6 where it speaks about three different things. First of all it says, Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say rejoice.

So there's that sense of praise there. Then in verse 5, Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand.

So there's the sense of how we are together. And then in verse 6, Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication. With thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

[1 : 09] So there's that sense of prayer there in verse 6. And all these things then come to verse 7. And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

As Paul writes these words, it can be easy for us to read through the letter of Philippians or indeed any part of the Bible, read through it and say, What does it say to me?

What does it say to me as an individual? And that is right. That is a wise thing to do. We have to come to God's word in that way and ask, What is it saying to me?

But there are also times when we can read God's word, and especially as we are gathered in a service of worship as we are this evening. And it's important to realize that sometimes it's about asking, What is it saying to us?

Not just me individually, but all of us together. And you see that very much in Paul's letter to the Philippians. When you go back to the very beginning of the letter in chapter 1, the very opening verses, it says there, Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus.

[2 : 26] To all the saints who are in Christ Jesus. He's talking to the church. He's not just talking to them individually, but talking to them together. And then in verse 2 it says, Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

So it's this kind of sense of peace that he desires for them all to know. The peace that we've sung of in Psalm 1-2-2, that prayer for peace to dwell.

The peace that we sang of in Psalm 72 in verse 7, Until the moon no longer shines, peace in abundance will remain. That's the peace that it's looking for.

And it's important for us as we come to these verses, verse 4 to verse 7 this evening, because it is talking about that sense of peace that we should long for together.

Not just for me, but for us all together. And that is something that we need just now. That is something that we need together just now.

[3 : 33] Just to know that peace of God. That peace that unites us. That peace that keeps us together. That peace that drives us on in all that we do.

And the question is, how do we have that peace? Over the years I've enjoyed being involved in house renovations. Where mostly probably older houses, but sometimes new houses.

But especially maybe being involved in old houses. There was a sense of excitement in going into a renovation. Because the part that I enjoyed most really was dismantling.

Breaking walls down. Just taking a big hammer and starting to smash the place apart. It was going to be a complete renovation. So everything had to be taken down first.

There's something therapeutic in that. Just having that time. But then you have to ask the question, how is it all going to go back together? Tearing down can be great fun in that sense.

[4 : 40] But how is it all going to go back together? How is it going to be rebuilt? And it's at that point that I knew, well I can't do it. I haven't been trained.

I know a little, but I don't know it all. So it's not me who's going to have to put it back together. It's got to be the experts. Those who are trained in that way. Those who have the expertise and the patience to build things up again.

And it's great to watch people who are good at their job. Just rebuilding something. And making it into something even better than it was before.

And our own lives can have that kind of experience too. We can always go through life and being experts at tearing things down.

At breaking things down. Tearing down walls, as it were. And in many ways we can be like that with our relationships. Tearing things down.

[5 : 42] We can tear down our relationship with the Lord. And we can tear down our relationship with one another. But how do we rebuild? How do we build from what has been torn down?

How do we rebuild ourselves with the Lord? How do we rebuild ourselves as a people? Well it's to look to the Lord as the architect. It's to look to God and to his word.

Because God gives us a blueprint for our lives. The way that we are to live. The way that we are to set aside.

Not just thinking about our own plans. Because that can be a little bit like hiring the cowboy builders. Those who come in and just do it using shortcuts.

Using the cheap way with dangerous results. That's when we try to do things our own way. And if that's what we do there's no peace. You can imagine renovating a house.

[6 : 39] And you know the builders are coming. You know they're not the best. They're cowboy builders. There's no peace then in what they have done. There's no assurance in the work that's going to last.

And so if we don't build on the foundations of Jesus Christ ourselves. Then it's the same as inviting the cowboy builders in to rebuild our house.

It's not going to last. But the word of God takes us to that place where we find that God is the one who is able to build up. And God is the one who gives us instruction in how to build up.

And so do we want to know the peace of God? You ask yourself that individually. Do you want to know the peace of God?

We ask it collectively. Do we want to know the peace of God? How? How can we? Well these verses show us where we can find that peace of God.

[7 : 43] And it's the basis of verse 7. By guarding our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus. That is where we find the peace of God that surpasses all understanding.

And when you look at that, these words will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. That word guard is about building.

It is about building a wall of defense. It is building a wall of security. It's another word for garrison as well.

In other words, there's a military sense in it as well. It's having a battalion around to guard us, to defend us. But it's got that idea of building a wall.

Building a guard around our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus. And so as we look at this building work, as we look at what the word of God is saying for us here, if we want to know the peace of God which surpasses understanding, that builds a wall to guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus, where does that come from?

[9 : 02] Well, it comes from the previous three verses. That's what leads us to this point. And that is what the building work is. Because we see three walls being built.

We see first a wall of praise. Then we see a wall of patience. And then we see a wall of prayer. These three walls.

And that is what will guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus together. All of us together. So we're going to think of these walls this evening.

The first is building a wall of praise. So as you look at verse 4, that's what we see there. Building a wall of praise.

It says there, Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice. Rejoice. This is an important aspect of our peace with God that passes understanding.

[10:11] Rejoicing in the Lord always. Again, I say rejoice. Isn't it something that we so often need reminded of?

Even the way Paul repeats it there for us. Rejoice in the Lord always. He doesn't just say it once. Again, I say rejoice. And you notice that this is in the midst of difficulty.

Because in verse 2 and 3 there, you see there's a sense of rebuilding being required. And so in order for that rebuilding to take place, it's saying in verse 4, Rejoice in the Lord always.

Again, I say rejoice. Rejoice. And Paul, you just have to look at where he is as he's writing these words. He's not someone who's got his, as we might say, his head in the clouds.

And he's not one who's got his head in the sand, just buried, unaware of what's going on around. He's not remote from the situation. It's not that he doesn't know what's going on.

[11:22] He's in the midst of it. And he's fully aware of everything that's going on. He knows the Philippians are facing all of these threats to their peace from every angle it's coming.

Attack after attack. There's threats all around them. You see it in chapter 1, verse 29 and 30. Look at what it says there. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him, but also suffer for his sake.

Engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have. So he's in the midst of it himself. And he knows others who are in the midst of it themselves as well.

In the midst of this conflict. This war that's going on around them. And so that's why as we come into chapter 4, the word guard is like garrison.

To have the army surround us. To have the army with us. To build this wall, this defense around us. It's because there is a conflict going on.

[12:32] And we are always in a situation like that ourselves. Where there's the danger of conflict all around us. Threats all around us. Threats against the peace of God that passes all understanding.

And so the joy, the sense of rejoicing that Paul is speaking about here. It's not just circumstances are going to be great. There's going to be great joy and celebration and delight.

It's a sense of the joy, the rejoicing that comes from God. That we draw from God. We can speak about drawing from a resource.

It's not so familiar for us now. But in other countries, people go to draw water from the well. You draw from a source. The same as when you go to the money.

You draw money from the bank. You take from that resource that you have. You draw money out. It's about getting help. And that's exactly what these words are pointing at here.

[13:41] Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice. It's about drawing from the Lord. Taking from the great resource that he has for us.

It's made clear for us in the Old Testament. In Isaiah chapter 12, verse 3 and 4. So there's that sense of drawing.

Draw from the wells of salvation. Rejoice in the Lord is that drawing from the wells of salvation. And that is what we are to do.

Like I say, this is a letter not just for us individually. And we can do all of these things individually. But it's for us together. Together as one to draw from the well of salvation.

To rejoice in the Lord always. That is our purpose. To be a people who are praising God. And do you, do I, do we not have reason to praise God?

[15:00] To rejoice in the Lord always. Because of his goodness. Because of his mercy. Because of the way he is working. We are reminded of that so powerfully this morning.

Of what the Lord is doing. Even in the midst of all the uncertainty. All the different circumstances our world is in. We can still say rejoice in the Lord always.

And so Paul is saying if you are going to experience that peace that passes understanding. Guard your hearts. Build around your hearts this wall of praise.

This wall of rejoicing in God. And it's like a command. It's not just an encouragement.

It's a command. It's a strong word from God. It's a word to you. It's a word to me tonight. To go on being glad.

[16:02] To go on rejoicing in the Lord. Because the reality is when we look at our lives. We often we don't find reasons to rejoice. We don't find reason for that great gladness in this world.

Because there are so many things that leave us feeling down. Leaving us feeling a burden upon us. Paul penned these words as he was bound between two soldiers in a Roman prison.

But he's still able to say rejoice. Rejoice. Paul still knew that regardless of his circumstances in life. God never changes.

He said earlier in this letter for me to live is Christ. There is that sense of rejoicing in the Lord in that. Because he never changes.

So are you drawing on this joy? This praise from God to guard your heart? Are we drawing from this joy?

[17 : 11] Together are we drawing from this praise in God for all that he has to offer us? Because that will guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus.

We can rejoice. We have every reason to rejoice. Because he has been good to us. So the first wall that we are to build around our hearts and minds is that wall of praise.

The second thing we see here is a wall of patience. And you see this in verse 5.

Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand. A wall of patience to guard our hearts and minds.

So as you continue to read through these verses. And indeed as you read through this letter. One commentator puts it like this. It's like the voice of a parent to a child.

[18 : 20] A child who leaves home for the first time to go to university. Many of you have been in that situation. You know what it's like as parents to send your children away to university.

And you can enter into that sense of what Paul is trying to say. What is a parent saying to a child who goes to university? Some of the younger ones. You'll maybe be hearing these words soon when you go away to university.

Maybe later on this year or in a few years time. You'll hear a parent with these kinds of words. Keep in touch. Be careful with your money.

Make sure you eat properly. Phone us. Keep yourself clean and tidy. You'll hear all of these things. And it's that sense coming across here. It's like a parent to a child. Now, how many have gone away to university and just rolled your eyes at what they say?

[19 : 24] I've been there. Now I'm finding myself on the other side when a child's going away to university. And you just think, well, what do they know? I'll go away and I'll do my own thing.

And the first time you think of getting in touch, it's usually that phone call. I don't have any money. Can you send me some? You realize you do need help.

But it's usually that case of if only I'd listened in the first place. And that's exactly what we have with Paul here. As he's saying these things, he's like that concerned parent.

He's got that concern for the people, the congregation that he is writing to. He's got that love for them. And you see that as he's writing in this letter, how he loves the people he's writing to.

And he's got that love, that concern for them. He's saying, rejoice in the Lord. This is what you have to do. And then he goes on to say, let your reasonableness be known to everyone. This is how you are to conduct yourselves.

[20 : 29] This is how you are to live. And so this is the concern that he has. And so what kind of wall of patience is he speaking about here?

He says, let your reasonableness be known to everyone. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. Now, again, we can take this individually and we can take it collectively.

He is writing to us. How can we let our reasonableness be known to everyone? Well, in the midst of our circumstances, how do we deal with one another?

Are we patient? Are we gracious? Are we careful in what we're saying? Are we careful in how we're conducting ourselves? There are so many ways that we have to make sure that we build this wall of patience.

That we guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus through building that wall of patience.

Because we so often let that wall come down.

[21 : 45] You know it and I know it. We know it only too well. There are times when we let that wall come down. And so he's saying, build, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Build that wall of patience. Because if you don't, if we don't, there is a danger of anger taking over. Those scriptures warn us of that again and again.

Ephesians chapter 4. Paul writing again to another congregation. He says in verse 26, So there's a strong warning in these words.

Be angry but do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger. And do not let the devil have an opportunity. That's words for us.

Do not let the devil have opportunity. Build this wall. Guard your hearts, your minds in Christ Jesus with this wall of patience.

[22 : 56] Leonardo da Vinci once said, Patience serves as protection against trials as clothes does against the cold. For if you put on more clothes as the cold increases, it will have no power to hurt you.

So in like manner you must grow in patience. When you meet with great trials. And they will then be powerless to vex your mind. So just think about it in that way.

Just like the cold will get you. So you put on more clothes. As trials come, put on more patience. That you might endure. That they might not vex your mind.

As he says there. Guard your hearts and your minds with this wall of patience. When you look at this letter as a whole. What is Paul doing?

He's getting them to not just focus on themselves. But to turn away from themselves. He's getting them to focus on Jesus.

[23 : 59] And to continue in that way. And that is what we must continue to do. To wait on him with patience. As he has shown patience to us.

To wait on him with that wall built. That we will not let the cold as it were overcome us. But that we will remain strong in him.

He is patient with us. And you look at 2 Peter 3 verse 9. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise. As some count slowness.

But is patient toward you. Not wishing that any should perish. But that all should reach repentance. So there is this fatherly parent concern behind these words.

Be patient. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. Guard your hearts and your minds. In Christ Jesus.

[25 : 00] With this wall of patience. By looking to Jesus. The hymn. Turn your eyes upon Jesus. The last verse of it.

Reminds us what we are about. As a congregation. As a people. His word shall not fail you. He promised. Believe him. And all will be well.

Then go to a world that is dying. His perfect salvation. To tell. We have a purpose. As a people. As a church.

We have a purpose. To go to a world that is dying. His perfect salvation. To tell. How can we do that.

If we have no peace. With God. So we have to guard. Our hearts. And our minds. To build. That wall of patience. To have. That peace.

[25 : 59] And as the hymn goes on to say. It says. Turn. Your eyes upon Jesus. Look full. In his wonderful face. And the things. Of this. Of earth. Will grow strangely dim.

In the light. Of his glory. And grace. He gives us grace. And that's the grace we find. As we build. That wall.

Of patience. So let your reasonableness. Be known. To everyone. The Lord. Is at hand. The Lord. Is near.

The Lord. Is with us. As we do this. The final thing. We see here. The final wall. Is a wall. Of prayer. Do not be anxious.

About anything. But in everything. By prayer. And supplication. With thanksgiving. Let your requests. Be made known. To God.

[26 : 56] Again. It's this kind of. Parent. Looking after. His child. Here. Do not be anxious. About anything. But keep praying.

And he's saying this. He's warning us. Of this. Because of how easy. It is to lose. This peace. With God. And especially. If we are not. A praying people.

The hymn. What a friend. We have in Jesus. In that hymn. It says. Oh what peace. We often forfeit. Oh what needless. Pain we bear. Why?

All because. We do not carry. Everything. To him. In prayer. Oh what peace. We often forfeit. And that's just.

What he's saying. To us here. Do not. Be anxious. About anything. But in everything. By prayer. And supplication. With thanksgiving. Let your requests. Be made known.

[27 : 54] To God. And so we have to build. This wall of prayer. Because as it goes on. And then. The peace of God. Which surpasses. All understanding. Will guard your hearts.

And your minds. In Christ Jesus. So we seek. The peace. Of God. And we seek that. Through prayer. Prayer individually. But as we say. Prayer collectively. That our prayers. Be focused. With thanksgiving.

To God. Let our requests. Be made known. To him. Because when we do not pray. The walls. Are down. And we are open. To attack. Worry will take over.

Our hearts. And our minds. And all of these things. So we must build. That wall. Of prayer. Around us. There's a lot of reasons.

[28 : 52] Why we could worry. We have many reasons. And so. Paul doesn't say here. Don't worry. Don't worry.

Because circumstances are great. Everything's fine. No. He tells them. Do not worry. Because God. Is in charge. Do not be anxious.

About anything. But everything. By prayer. And supplication. With thanksgiving. Let your requests. Be made known. To God. Bring it. All.

To him. God. But what are we like. Is that. What you do. Is that what I do. Is that what we do. Together. Many of you.

Enjoy going out. For a walk. And a walk. Can be a great thing. Especially. This time of year. When there's. The change in the weather. The weather's better. There's. New life.

[29 : 50] All around us. But who goes out. For a walk. With a dog. It's quite different. Going out for a walk. By yourself. And taking a dog. With you. Because if you're just walking yourself.

You've got a sense of. You're going this way. You're going from A to B. But take a dog. And it's very different. Because they want to wander off.

They catch a smell. They hear a noise. And they're going in different directions. They want to investigate. And isn't that what we can be like as well.

Instead of just walking. With our eyes fixed on Jesus. We can be like. We're walking with a dog. When a noise. Or something distracts us. And we go to look at.

And see what that is. So that we can get distracted. And instead of. Building this wall. Of prayer. Of this wall. Of trusting God. We're turning off.

[30 : 47] In our own. Direction. And that's what Paul. Is warning us against here. This idea. Of building a wall.

Of prayer. Keeps our focus. Keeps our attention. On the Lord. And trusting him. And that's the key. Here. Because when you look at these verses. He says. All of these things. Are found when you are. In Christ Jesus.

When you have. This focus. When you are not. Distracted. Are we. Distracted. We so often are. Very easily we are. We can have our minds. Pulled. In different directions. Because of different things. Instead of having. That peace with God.

[31 : 45] And our hearts. And our minds. Guarded. For that peace. With God. When it says. The Lord is at hand. It is not talking about.

The Lord is coming again. As it often does. But it's talking about. God with us now. The Lord. Is at hand. He is near. He is here. For us.

And so. We are to be a people. Who exercise. That tool. Of prayer. And instead of. Being anxious. And worrying. We are to have faith.

Faith. Faith in the power. Of God. The one who is able. To help. And the one. Who is able. To give us.

That peace. That passes. All understanding. Before we can enjoy. That peace. We need the benefit.

[32 : 40] Of peace. With God. Ourselves. And so. We are to come. To Christ. To put our trust. In him.

Because as we look. To him. There we will find. We find that peace. Which passes. Understanding. So may we as a people.

Go forward. As one. Together. That's what Paul. Is speaking about here. It's not just what. I take from this. Or what you take from this.

But what we take from it. Together. To seek this peace. Of God. We seek to build. A wall around our hearts.

And our minds. In Christ Jesus. A wall. Of praise. A wall. Of patience. And a wall.

[33 : 36] Of prayer. And that the Lord. Would then guard. Our hearts and minds. In Christ Jesus. Let us pray. Lord our gracious God.

We do thank you. For your word. That speaks. Not just to us. Individually. But so much of it. To us collectively. And help us Lord. That we would hear.

What you say to us. Help us Lord. To seek that peace. With you. That peace. That passes. Understanding. By guarding our hearts.

And our minds. In Christ Jesus. By having that longing. To be a people. Of praise. By being a people. Who are patient.

And by being a people. Who look to you. Who trust. In you. And that that we do. Through prayer. So Lord be with us.

[34 : 32] Go before us. Keep us. As we ask all. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. We'll conclude.

By singing. To God's praise. In Psalm 16. Sing. Psalm's version. Psalm 16. We'll sing.

From verse 8. Down. To the end. Of the psalm. The tune is. Golden Hill. Again. Just reminds us. To. Fix. Our eyes. On the Lord. Before me.

Constantly. I set. The Lord. Alone. Because he is. At my right hand. I'll not be. Overthrown.

Therefore. My heart. Is glad. My tongue. Will. With joy.

Will sing. My body. Too. Will rest. Secure. In hope. Unwavering. We'll sing. From verse 8. To 11. To God's praise. My heart. Before me constantly I set the Lord alone Because he is not my light I'll not be overthrown Therefore my heart is glad Thy tongue with joy will sing

[36 : 22] Thy body true and fresh and pure In hope and in the name For you will not allow My soul in death to save The way you live your holy one To see the truth decay You have made more to me The path of life divine

There shall I know At your right hand Joy from your face will shine After the benediction I'll go to the main door Now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore. Amen.

Thank you.

My god