

Philippians 4 (6-9) – God’s Prescription for Peace

Lots of things can disturb our peace – a busy, hectic schedule / planning for a big event / an unexpected expense / a sudden, intense crisis / problems with relationships / being married and children / medical emergencies / when you’re haunted by your past / you lose your source of income / when all you feel is lonely / the loss of someone you love / when people don’t come to church / annoying irritations / the chaos of daily life. How can we expect to have any real peace in the midst of all this? We all need peace, peace solves problems, but the question is what are we doing to develop and maintain peace in our lives? People have different ways to cope. Many medicate with sin, be it drunkenness, drugs, or other sinful things. Many fall into anxiety, anger, and apathy. But God promises that we can do more than cope, we can have peace. Peace is not just a state of mind, but a state of prayer, and of life.

Vs.6-7 – PRAY – It can be quite easy to let things steal our peace. If you dwell on a thought the thought dwells in you, it takes on a life of its own. Sometimes it is only a bit of news about something that has nothing to do with you, but you import it into your own feelings about things. We think about our own circumstances and we imagine “what if”. Our empathy turns into our enemy. We mix the imaginary with the real, and think of worst case scenarios, we dwell on them and they become a reality in our feelings, and then anxiety, apathy, anguish, anger, depression, fear are the results. We invent a terrible future result and the result is terrible for our feelings, we feel defeated. You dwell on things you can do nothing about right now, they may not even exist, yet we fret over them as if they are happening at this very moment, and in those moments it does seem all too real. We suffer from the fear of circumstances, both real and/or imagined. Our limited understanding (how can I have peace?) and our active imaginations can attack, rob, destroy our peace, but this is the peace of God, it surpasses all understanding, it is supernatural, and it can overcome our limited mind and guard us from unnecessary trouble (cf. 1 Peter 5:6).

Vs.8 – PONDER – peace is not the lack of conflict but in the face of conflict. This is not a denial of reality; it is a matter of focus. *Whatever is* ...is not a percentage evaluation. This is not just “having a peace about it”: Jonah had peace as he slept in disobedient rebellion. Peace is not tranquility, peace is triumphant, not that you immediately triumph over your circumstances but God triumphs over you. We try and reason our way out of peace: we think that’s just Paul he was much greater than I could ever be. No, he says we can have these same things. He is teaching us that this peace, this presence is ours if we will follow the path. The devil tries to convince us that if we are at peace that we are just being lazy, or we don’t care at all, that we have a peace without concern. But that isn’t true, because this is not just passively praying and mediating, and having a “peace out, man”; vs.9 teaches us that staying active is part of the process.

Vs.9 – PRACTICE – Paul says “I’m living it”, and he was in jail. What were the things that they had learned and received and heard and seen in Paul? What were these things that they were supposed to practice? It’s what he was talking about in vs.8 – the things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and praiseworthy. In 1:6-11 mentions several of these things, and in 1:12-18 Paul exemplifies his own teaching. We can trace Paul’s practice (1:6, 2:12-13, 3:14, 4:13). This prescription isn’t automatic magic. It is practical. We all have concerns, but we can have a supernatural peace, and His supernatural presence. Bring it to God, think about God, and live for God. Give Him your heart, you mind, and your will and He will fix your emotions. Pray, ponder, practice. 2 Thessalonians 3:16 – *Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all. Amen.*