

Philippians 4.2-9. Encouragements for Life
“Peace.”
Philippians 4:2-9

Introduction: Pg. 982 *Introduction:* Pg. 982. Connect Card. Preview of December & January (1 Peter – 19weeks...)

Let me take you back to my first semester of doctoral studies. To call it “trying” would be an understatement.

Rather than easing into the program by taking the two seminar route, I chose the more ambitious three. Between research papers and assignments, I produced over 250 typed pages on top of the thousands I read. It was insane!

This was on top of working full-time, serving in my church, and trying to be a good husband to my new wife of about 3.5 weeks. She stuck with me FAM!

I can still remember being riddled by anxiety the night before my first presentation in front of world renowned NT scholar, Dr. Andreas Kostenberger! My task was to critique a 700 page book that was very difficult to digest. In fact, I’m pretty sure that book digested me.

I think I had an anxiety dream the night before. Anxiety dreams reveal situations where you find yourself unprepared or underperform.

Now, why was I so anxious? (One, four letter word: F E A R). I feared being humiliated in front of Dr. K & my peers. I feared all the hard work would be in vain.

Have you been there? Anxiety is a fact of life.

Anxiety is an emotion produced by future fear. Any uncertainty can expose anxiety in our hearts.

Consider this: In general psychiatric outpatient practice, anxiety disorders comprise up to 40% of new referrals, AND among mental disorders, anxiety disorders are the most prevalent in any age category.” (Research from Dr. Atturpurath)

Whether anxiety is an occasional challenge or dreadful nemesis in your life, we are going to be encouraged from Philippians 4:2-9 that God wants to give you his peace!

Read 4:2-9

Through Paul’s flurry of rapid-fire and seemingly disconnected encouragements, this theme emerges.

The Point: Without the peace of God, there is no peace within.

T: Two simple truths will help us wave goodbye to anxiety and say hello to God’s peace. Here’s the first:

I. God desires our peace (4:2-6).

Verses 2-3 teach us that God desires for us to experience...

Peace w people (2-3)

- Unity is a dominant theme in this letter.
 - Have “one spirit, one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.” (Philippians 1:27)

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- Now Paul calls for two women, Euodia & Synthche, to strive for unity. Clearly, they were not in sync. They lacked a common mind.
 - This was so serious to Paul that he “entreated” them to AGREE. To “entreat” means to “urge” or “plead.”
 - The word “agree” is the same word Paul uses when he tells us to “have the mind/attitude” of Jesus.
- Paul understands relational disharmony can be destructive not just for two individuals, but the church as a whole.
 - Can you imagine sitting there and hearing your name called out by Paul? What started as a personal spat has become internationally known! :)
 - By the way, your conflict with someone else is probably known to others. Just trying to be helpful. :)
 - Their conflict called for the help of a mediator. Paul call them “true companion.”
 - Why? We all get clouded by self-centered perspectives. We naturally feel justified in our position, BUT there is a 99% chance we are not 100% right! :)
 - There’s always room for growth!
 - Listen! It’s not about being right. It’s about being right. It’s not about people taking sides. It’s about everyone getting on God’s side.

App:

- Don’t leave conflict unresolved! Work through it. If you can’t work through it, seek help.
- And through it all... remember *verse 5*.
 - Some translations substitute the word “reasonableness” with “considerate” or “gentle spirit.”
 - And there’s motivation for relating to each other in this way: 1) Others will see it. And, 2) Jesus is coming back. The implication? You don’t want to stand before him when you’re not in good standing with others!
- Let me ask you: “Do you see yourself as a threat to the unity of [this] church?” (Merida/Chan) You should! And so should I!
 - No one is immune to this. Look at v. 3. These women were leaders in the church.
 - They served side by side with Paul. Their names are recorded in God’s book, “the book of life.”

T: God wants all relationships to thrive, especially those in HIS church, but it’s not just peace with people. God desires...

Peace within (6) — Read 6a

- Anxiety happens when we fear the consequences of unmet desires.
- Anxiety is future oriented. This is why Ed Welch says, [in his very good book *Running Scared: Fear, Worry and the God of Rest*:] **“Worriers are visionaries minus the optimism.”**
- Anxiety will show up in any circumstance.
 - The Wealthy: anxious about how to keep money. Not Wealthy? anxious about making more money.
 - The Oppressed: anxious about gaining freedom. The Free: anxious about all their choices. Why? Freedom brings “more opportunities to get it wrong.” (Welch, *Running Scared*, 20-21).
 - This is one of the reasons Kierkegaard said “Anxiety is the dizziness of freedom.”
- Anxiety feels like a war in our souls.
- God said it’s like a weight in **Proverbs 12:25**. **“Anxiety weighs down the heart.”**
- A fleeting anxious thought can trip us up, but ongoing anxiety can paralyze us.

What area of uncertainty is exposing anxiety in your heart? Don’t miss that... It’s saying something about our heart.

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- Anxiety surfaces when our values are threatened: a relationship, a job, possessions, our reputation, our comfort.
- Anxiety often reveals our idols: anything we are trusting in, hoping in, and desiring more than we desire God.

T: But *no matter how many* times we have forfeited peace through interpersonal conflict or our own anxious thoughts, God not only desires our peace...

II. God gives us his peace (4:6-9).

How many of you can testify that peace often seems so elusive. How many of you feel like you travel through life in a state of disequilibrium. We all want rest in our souls, but how do we get it?

Working out? Breathing techniques? Increased willpower? Medication? A glass of wine?

I'm not suggesting those are irrelevant, but they will never be ultimate.

Paul has a different solution.

Prayer - read v. 6

- What's the solution? Prayer. Prayer. And more prayer. He triple-decks three terms: prayer, supplication, requests.
- In prayer, we are saying: God is "greater than the greatest problem." (Hawthorne)
- And in this we learn: **Anxiety is cured by addition not subtraction.** Here's what I mean...
 - We think anxiety is cured by the removal of the circumstances, BUT that's wrong! Why?
 - For starters, there's always going to be something else to worry about! (John 16:33)
 - More importantly, the root of the problem is not our circumstances but our hearts!
 - *That's why* it's not the subtraction of circumstantial pressure but the addition of a trustworthy God.
- Prayer brings God into the equation.
 - "There is an entire worldview implicit in some worry. . . . No one is really looking out for you. You are an orphan in a chaotic universe that operates according to chance." - Ed Welch
 - Juxtapose that view with the first two words Jesus taught us to pray: "Our Father."
 - Those two words - they put anxiety to flight! In prayer, we remember the Father's promises: "I am with you. If I sent my Son to experience your sorrows and take your suffering, will I not take care of you, right now?" (see Isaiah 43:2; Romans 8:32)
- Anxiety is cured by addition not subtraction.

How do we pray...?

- Pray by presenting requests.
 - That's what the word "supplication" means. God, I need some help here.
 - If it matters to you, it matters to God. There is no request too small or too great.
 - What would happen if you prayed at the first hint of anxiety: "Father, help. Father, heal. Father, move. Father, provide. Father, change hearts (including this anxious one)."?
 - The antithesis of anxiety is faith. Faith trusts God will figure it out. Faith says: Even if my circumstances never change, He is enough.
 - But we also should . . .
- Pray with thanksgiving.
 - Gratitude recognizes we've received something at the graciousness of another. Let's make this Thanksgiving WEEK, not just Thanksgiving Thursday. How about starting or ending each day with prayers of thanksgiving? OR BOTH! Journal your gratitude!
 - [Karl Barth said: "To begin by praising God for the fact that in *this* situation, as it is, he is so mightily God—such a beginning is the *end* of anxiety.]

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- One pastor calls thanksgiving “WORRY’S KRYPTONITE” (Chandler).
- Grateful hearts can hardly believe the God of the universe hears us, cares for us and works all things for the good for those who love him.
- That’s why Chesterton said: “Gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder.”
- It’s all about shifting perspective. It’s all about remembering!!

T: When we bring our hearts to God, he brings us his heart of peace.

Verse 7

The phrase “peace of God” is found nowhere else in the NT. (Hawthorne) Look at what it says about “the peace of God.”

- Paul says it “surpasses all understanding.” It’s unexplainable. Literally, the Greek would read, it’s a peace, “which rises above every mind.”
 - How amazing is it when someone sees you walking through a circumstance that should absolutely crush you, but then they realize, something is going on inside of you that causes you to rise above your circumstances!
- God’s peace also “guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”
 - Paul uses a military word. It’s the picture of an army surrounding a city in order to provide complete protection.
 - Nothing gets through.
 - Amazing! God’s peace fortifies us against the coming attack: our doubts, our negative thoughts, the lies of the evil one, the ever-changing troubling circumstances we face.
- The peace of God helps us set our minds to experience the God of Peace. Look at vv. 8-9.

Peace. Peace. Peace. Peace with others. Peace within. The God of Peace.

Augustine once said: **“God alone is the place of peace that cannot be disturbed.”**

Conclusion:

Do you know him? Do you have a real, vibrant, personal relationship with God through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus?

**“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
(Romans 5:1)**

Our peace is possible because Jesus left the peace of heaven, entered our trouble, anxious world, and then sacrificed his life on the cross that we might experience his peace!

My invitation and plea to you today: go to the cross. For the first time, again and again.

And when you do... *Verse 4* becomes the reality! JOY. DEEP, DEEP, ABIDING JOY! I want that for you, but more importantly God wants that for you.. he sent Jesus to accomplish it for you!

Pray.

PRAYER TEAM!