

THE PEACE PROCESS

Harmony M.B.C., July 01, 2007 (Evening)

Philippians 4:4-7

Verse 7 opens an entire world to a kind of peace that we as believers truly long for and that we often take mostly halting steps to achieve. To have a peace that passes all understanding is the thing of Christian dreams. We all know what it feels like to have a measure of peace that enables us to go to sleep at night after some very difficult problem has been solved. We all know about a measure of peace that visits us when we have been laboring under some stressful situation for days and suddenly a solution to the stress walks right through the door of our lives. Most of us know the kind of peace that comes when fears of some impending peril, horror, or tragedy are suddenly taken away by good news about it, or by discovering that the feared thing was not real.

All these are great to experience, but they are usually fleeting and we know that we will probably face similar things down the road. But here, in our text, the Lord speaks of something more stable, more all encompassing, and deeper than the temporary peace we get from the relief we experience when the great stress, the big problem, or the big threat are taken out of the way. Here He speaks of a peace that passes understanding. In those other experiences of peace we usually understand why they have come to us. The stress that was occurring is relieved by some event, the problem we faced is solved, or the tragedy we were facing does not occur and the hour for its occurrence passes. But to talk about a peace that passes understanding is to talk about another kind of peace. This is the kind of peace that comes and stays, the kind of peace that abides strong and deep even in the face of stress, in the midst of threatened danger or tragedy, and it stays at times when problems seem insurmountable. Now, this is the kind of peace we all long to have. And how different our lives might be if we only have such peace. So, I want us to look at this peace process that God outlines in our text and remind ourselves again how it is gotten. It is a peace process of four steps. Let's look at the steps.

1. Rejoice in the Lord always (v.4)

I preached on this part last week and we noted that we have so much to rejoice over. So, we do not lack for things that ought to promote rejoicing in us. But what we may need to know is that this Greek word for rejoicing implies being cheerful. So the guidance here instructs us to be cheerful...always. This is a great challenge for us in times that are not going well, in times when we are sick, in times when we are being attacked, in times when our security or stability is being threatened. But this is the meaning of the verse.

I won't go further than I went last week, but I will remind us that we are to find a reason to have joy in the Lord, to be cheerful about things, at all times.

Peace that passes understanding is inseparably interlocked with a state of mind in which the believer has gotten to the place to recognize that everything good is intended for him by the Lord who bought him. In that kind of state, the believer can be cheerful despite unexpected or unwanted outcomes.

The lack of cheerfulness on our part is usually linked to disappointment. Disappointment is usually linked to unfulfilled expectancy. Unfulfilled expectancy is usually linked to a kind of thinking that is flawed. We may not know it is flawed, but it is. The proof that it is flawed lies in the fact that we expected it but didn't get it...which tells us that God did not intend to give it to us or else we would

have had it. The real key to getting to the place of peace that passes understanding is to learn to be cheerful and satisfied with God's decisions and their outcomes despite the fact that they do not end in us getting what we expected.

The rejoicing that is part of the peace process finds a reason to be cheerful whether expectancies are met or not.

2. Exercise moderation everywhere (v.5)

This instruction has to do with being mild, gentle and patient in all kinds of situations.

Conflict often creates excessive reactions in us. We try to accomplish something, it is obstructed. We push harder. The resistance gets stronger. Soon we may over react and break something. Too often it is a heart we break, or we disrupt good fellowship in some relationship.

The response ought to be different. And the different response should happen consistently in our lives. In other words we should let our moderation be known to all men. This verse assumes that we have the self control and the spiritual constraint to be mild, to be gentle and patient. It does not assume that we always PRACTICE that self control, that spiritual constraint. But the key to arriving at the peace that passes understanding is to make this kind of behavior a consistent pattern. Be this way in all situations. Don't let frustration and dissatisfaction drive you to excessive behavior or words.

The peace that passes understanding is inseparably interlocked with a life of practiced moderation. Excesses of any kind are evidences that we have not rested ourselves in the Lord. It is realizing that WE don't have to fix things, that WE don't have to solve the problem which threatens to cause over-reaction, that WE don't have to discover a solution; but rather that this is the Lord's job.

READ THE POEM

We have to give more than lip service to this premise (above). We must assume this as an attitude, a state of mind. It will then reveal itself as moderated actions. Then moderation can become a lasting facet of our lives and we have moved to the second part of the peace process.

Paul gives us a reason for practicing moderation in this verse: "the Lord is at hand."
(the Lord is at hand suggests two things: His coming is near; and He is always looking on and monitoring)

3. Don't worry too much about anything (v.6)

Worry comes from anxiety. Anxiety comes from doubts about whether something is going to turn out right. Turn out right, that is, according to our own view of what "right" is. Sometimes we fret over things that we have gotten ourselves into, but even that worry is the result of getting anxious about outcomes.

We are instructed to not be full of care concerning anything. This is a tall order for a human. But it is absolutely necessary if we are to shift into the peace that passes understanding. Worry and peace never walk the same path at the same time. They never sit on the throne of your heart at the same time together. And they will never find themselves compatible with each other.

The trick for the child of God is how to dethrone worry or care. To do it we must always remind ourselves that the **would-be-king called worry comes from the land called anxiety**. Shut off the route leading from the land of anxiety and worry cannot find its way to your peace palace.

We close the door on worry by examining why we are doing it. We soon discover that we do it because we are afraid that a certain outcome will bring bad things. We dread what may be about to happen. We fear the results of it. We want what seems to be about to happen to turn in a different direction. We long for some manipulation strategy to make it do so.

What we really need to do to sidetrack the “carefulness” (or worry) that this verse talks about is to realize that God the King of the kingdom we belong to has power to invite and power to expel or prevent. We only need to understand that if something comes into our lives, it is because the King has allowed it and there is something in it for us. As a result of us resting in that, worry gets the door shut in its face. There can be no worry about something that is intended as the best possible thing for you.

When we have quit worrying about things, we have moved into the third part of the peace process

The last element of the peace process is to:

4. Take problems to God every time (v.6)

The last part of verse 6 plainly implies that problems will come. It obviously presumes that these things will be more than we can handle alone. But it provides a solution that will derail all the other possible wrong outcomes when life-problems appear.

In everything

let your request be made known unto God

do it with prayer and supplication blended with thanksgiving - the Lord wants us to see two parts of praying here: asking in a worshipful way about grand things; and petitioning concerning our misgivings about impending evil. The Holy Spirit has divided these prayer types up here so that we might realize that going to God, with things that have overburdened us, or are threatening to overburden us, demands the use of all kinds of prayer. When we go to Him to talk with Him, we must make it a full communication. We want to worship Him in our prayers and we want to take the opportunity to petition Him for our needs.

Getting to the peace that passes understanding requires getting to God in prayer. Rather than to stew in our anxiety, or worry, we simply take it to Him and seek His intervention and His comfort. The main thing however, is to develop a mindset that runs to God in times of care. When the mindset becomes a habit pattern, we have moved to the fourth and last part of the peace process.

5. Summarize: Rejoice in the Lord always
Exercise moderation everywhere
Don't worry too much about anything
Bring your problems to God always

6. You have completed the peace process. (Read v. 7 again for close)

Phil 4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.