

I. Introduction: Our experience

A. World talks a lot about peace, but doesn't see much of it.

1. Sept. 2001... wars in Afghanistan and Iraq
2. Palestinians, Sudan, Somalia, Rwanda, Kosovo, . . . these seem to be synonymous with conflict & violence.
3. It has been calculated that more Christians died for their faith in the twentieth century than in all previous centuries put together.
4. There's no peace today in millions of American homes, as wills and values clash and personalities brush up against one another. There's no peace even for the unborn, no longer secure in their mother's womb but liable to be ripped from that comforting shelter with the sanction of a culture that mandates personal choice at all costs. In this world, peace is at a premium.
5. "How come I don't feel the peace I hear Christians talk about? I'm as uptight, high-strung, freaked out, jacked up as I've ever been and I'm not sure this prayer thing is working. This constant pressure at work is causing me to lose heart!"

B. It was no different in the ancient world. Alexander the Great used ruthless means to subdue the nations of the ancient Near East. The struggle for power within the Roman Empire led to the murder of Julius Caesar, and countless others after him. The Bible, itself, is filled with chronicles of violence between nations and tribes, between rivals for power and influence, between believers in the Lord and the worshipers of false gods. Family violence is there on the Bible's pages as well; one has only to read the story of the family of David to see it. In the time of Jesus' birth, a jealous King Herod had several of his wives and sons murdered, and the Gospels tell of his massacre of innocent children in the effort to stamp out what he perceived as a threat to his authority.

C. Jesus comes with the promise of peace

1. Isaiah 9:2,6,7 - Prince of peace.. of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.

D. Many don't have peace, even Christians

1. "How come I don't feel the peace I hear Christians talk about? I'm as uptight, high-strung, freaked out, jacked up as I've ever been and I'm not sure this prayer thing is working. This constant pressure at work is causing me to lose heart!"
2. Anxiety frequently seems to flood in upon us and quench all sense of peace.

II. Our Promise

A. Romans 5

1. We are justified with faith and have peace **with** God
2. We stand in grace
3. We rejoice in sufferings ... because we know an eternal work is being done in our hearts.
 - a) For peace, we need to have eternal values and goals in our hearts.
 - b) Lu 6:23 "**Rejoice** in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets.
4. Peace and rejoicing are linked together.

III. Php 4:4-8

A. Our experience

1. We do not rejoice, we complain
2. We do not pray, we worry
3. We do not know what true peace is.

B. Background

1. Paul had started this church, not he is imprisoned and writing to these free believers. It would be easy to ask them to pray for you, to help you, perhaps to go to the judge and plead on your behalf. Perhaps you would ask the Christians to march as a public gesture in order to "twist the arms" of the governor or judge. What would you write, knowing these may be your last words: "SOS"; "Help!" "Save me!"

2. Paul wrote for them to Rejoice.
 - a) Instead of worrying, fear, or selfish concern for himself, he rejoiced in his chains, because they had been used to spread the gospel.
 - b) This letter of “rejoicing” and “peace” was written from Paul’s lonely and desolate prison! Yet from a prison came praise, prayer, and the peace of God that passes all understanding
- C. Praise, Rejoice - 4:4
 1. Acts 16:16-40, Paul and Silas were in chains and they were praising God with all their hearts.
 2. We want to rejoice from the heart and allow that to manifest itself in our prayers and communion with our Father. We want our rejoicing to bear fruit and good works, so that even unbelievers will see our good deeds and praise our Father in heaven (cf. Mt. 5).
 3. Try to complain while you rejoice or try to rejoice while you complain - it is like trying to smile while frowning - they are opposed the one to the other.
- D. Let your gentleness be known to all men (5a)
 1. This is forbearance, the ability to bear loads with a balanced, godly ability. This is to be what we are known for.
- E. For the Lord is near (5b)
 1. He is coming soon!
 2. He is with us by His Spirit.
- F. Prayer - don’t be anxious or worry (6a)
 1. Why do Christians worry?
 - a) Part of sinful nature - After man gave into the subtlety of the devil, after the fall, there was anxiety. In fact, Adam tried to hide from God when he was walking in the garden.
 - b) Adam was worried because he had lost communion with God, the close love fellowship had been broken.
 - (1) Romans 5:1,2 - we are brought back to communion with God.
 2. Communion with God has been restored, therefore we are to rejoice in the Lord, that is in his accomplished work and perfect obedience to the Father! We have the ability to overcome our doubts, our fears, our worries, and our anxieties. Instead of anxieties, because we have been united with Jesus Christ, we have communion with the Living God again and we can pray! Prayer, rather than anxiety helps us as God’s needy children to look away from ourselves to his providence and provision that he so lovingly supplies!
 - a) We need to realize who is in control (God) and place our trust in Him, and walk in FAITH.
 - b) When we worry, we are not placing our FAITH in God, we think we are in control, others in control, fate in control, or chance.
 - (1) We start our only little universe of “if only” past, present, future (i need to)
 - (a) if only I had avoided that sin
 - (b) if only I had a different job, spouse, childhood
 - (c) if only I had become a Christian earlier...
 - (d) what if I fail and am embarrassed
 - (e) what if people will not like me
 - (f) i need to or else . . .
 - c) Matthew 6:25-34: don’t worry like the pagans. . . seek first the kingdom. How?
 - (1) Rejoice
 - (2) Pray (6b)
 - G. Guard your hearts and mind (7)
 1. In Paul’s day it would have been understood by the Philippians as the guard or sentry that stands at a fortress. The peace of God is a sentry in the metaphor, or a guard, who guards the Christian’s mind and heart. These are the seat, the fount of all the thoughts and emotions of a person.

IV. Peace

- A. THEN. . . the peace of God (rather than worry)
 1. many try to substitute God’s peace for other things. . . trying to amass riches, trying to avoid strife and controversy at any cost, so they can live without trouble. . . this is not the peace of God.

2. Ironically, it is usually these desires that produce anxiety in man rather than peace! It is this idea of peace which makes us all fall into anxious situations and worries- - this is exactly opposite to God's peace!

B. What is the Peace of God.

1. It is a fruit... that comes after a step of faith... to rejoice, then committing a situation to God (prayer).
2. Peace is our because Christ has provided peace with God for us.
3. **Romans 15:13**, Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.
4. Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy spirit.

1. Read and ponder **Jeremiah 2:12-13** along with **John 6:35** and **7:37-39**.
2. What dry broken cisterns are you digging that turn you away from your joy at work?

Romans 14:16-19:

16 Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; 17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. 19 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

John 14: 26 "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. 27 "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."