

The Peace of God

Philippians 4:4-7

Sunday, December 15, 2024 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

Philippians 4:7 (NKJV)

⁷and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

- Introduction

Jesus is called the Prince of Peace, and so peace is an appropriate theme for Advent and Christmas. The idea of peace is powerful and broad. There is the peace with God that comes only through Jesus, and there is the peace that comes from God. The very idea of peace in the Bible has more breadth than the modern concept. It is not simply the absence of war, but prosperity and health in every way possible. And the peace is not just something the true Christian feels, but peace is what the true Christian produces. Listen to this story about someone in the midst of a busy day.

- PEACE IN THE FRAY

*Columnist Deborah Mathis wrote about the time when she was at Union Station in Washington D.C. on a particularly busy day. The first thing she remembers about that experience was the noisy hubbub of sounds. The public address announcer calling out arrivals and departures. Scores of pagers, walkie-talkies, and cell phones cried out for someone's attention. You could hear horns honking, machines clinking out change, and babies crying. A security guard yelled at a man who was about to enter a forbidden area. Three women stood up from their bench in order to argue with each other more loudly. And a man in front of her was nervously pacing in a tight circle. But then she heard someone singing: "What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear; What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer." Slowly a change came over the noisy crowd. The voice continued: "O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry Everything to God in prayer." The quarreling women stopped their talking and quietly took their seats. People who'd been tense and hurried; seemed to slow and relax - and they strained to hear the voice singing the remaining verses that old hymn. And Ms. Mathis realized she was singing along. So were the three women who had been bickering. And few others as well. The man in front of her, who had been behaving nervously quietly said: "Nice, huh? I don't even believe in Jesus, but that's nice."** This person did not just feel peace, she produced peace.

*(From an article by Rubel Shelly. From a sermon by Jeff Strite, "i-Serve" 1/11/2009)

<https://sermoncentral.com/sermon-illustrations/70884/peace-in-the-by-sermon-central>

- Set the Stage

The phrase, "the peace of God will guard your hearts and minds" is set in challenging circumstances. We already know that the Book of Philippians, the "epistle of joy," came to be in a miserable jail cell with Paul facing an uncertain future. In the immediate context Paul writes about our citizenship is in heaven, implying that this earth is not our true home. right after that he urges his friend Clement to help Euodia & Syntyche, both true Christians, to get along better. Later, in verse fourteen, but commends the Philippians for "sharing in my distress." So clearly, the peace of God does not mean a blithe ignorance of what is going on around you, it is the promise of what the Holy Spirit does when we respond to anxiety with prayer.

- Main Point: The peace of God will guard your hearts and minds

The peace that the Holy Spirit produces settles in your souls (your hearts) and clears your thinking (minds). This peace guards you, and that is our main point for today. The word for "guard" is a military term meaning to protect, or to protect by forming a garrison. The same word is found in 1 Peter 1:5, which says: "...who are **kept** by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." The operative word here is "kept," which is the same word translated as "guard" in today's text. Everything can fall apart, and does in this temporary fallen world, but God reserves the true Christian for Himself, guards his soul and gives him a wisdom that goes beyond his normal ability. The source of such comfort is in the wonderful promise in verse five, *"the Lord is at hand."* You may not be able to sort out problems, but someone is with you who can.

- Application: Pray with thanksgiving, etc.

The application is simple. Pray. We come to this conclusion so many times when we consider Scripture, but in this passage Paul presents several different words for prayer all at once. They are "prayer," "petition," "thanksgiving," and "requests." One of the commentaries (The Bible Knowledge Commentary) presents it well: ***Prayer** describes a believer's approach to God. **Petition** emphasizes requesting an answer to a specific need. **Thanksgiving** is an attitude of heart which should always accompany one's prayers. **Requests** speak of definite and specific things asked for.*

- Conclusion

I want to be a peaceful person, someone whose soul is filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit that brings me an inner peace that recognizes trouble but responds quickly with prayer in all its forms as soon as anxiety begins its troubling work. Even more though, I want to be the sort of person who helps others around him walk in that same peace in troubled times. That is part of what, I think, entails the peace of God.