

# **THE PEACE OF GOD**

## **A MAINTENANCE PLAN**



**Overview:** The peace of God is a major emphasis in our text but we must not miss the immediate context—a lack of peace in the fellowship because of a contention between two women. To best understand this instruction we need to look backward to the previous teaching on righteousness and forward to the principles of peace with God in regard to standing firm as a church amid conflicts within the church.

**1. Maintenance Principle:** Maintain a life of peace with God by being aware of and confronting the problem of righteousness versus self-righteousness when attempting to resolve conflicts between believers, 4:1, 3:1-21.

- (Philippians 4:1 ESV) Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.
- A. As those who have been made righteous by faith we are in a position of peace with God and we stand in the grace of God.
- Romans 5:1-2a ESV) Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand.
- B. Our position of peace and grace with God enables us to bring grace and peace into our relationships.
- C. We stand firm in our peace/grace relationship with God when we stand firm in the righteousness of Christ and not our own.
- (Philippians 3:9 ESV) And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.
- D. We experience our peace with God and the peace of God when we relate to others based on Christ's righteousness as opposed to proving ourselves right.
- E. The person whose primary purpose in resolving conflict is to prove himself right exposes himself as one who stands in his own righteousness.
- F. We now effectively, biblically resolve conflicts when by the grace of God we bring the peace of God experientially into our lives and the lives of all those concerned
- G. We do this by obeying the biblical principles for restoration as taught in the Scriptures.

**2. Maintenance Principle:** Identify areas of self-righteousness in our lives that diminish our ability to live in God's peace so that we may turn from self-righteous patterns of behavior and honor Christ by bringing peace and grace into the lives of the people in our church fellowship, 3:1-21.

A. Self-righteousness is a fruit of human pride and there is an inherent conflict between a person's pride and his ability to experience the peace of God.

- (Proverbs 3:34 LSB) Though He scoffs at the scoffers, Yet He gives grace to the humble.
- (1 Peter 5:5b ESV) Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

B. The pride of a self-righteous person blinds him or her to the need to take the following precautions.

- i. Remaining vigilant to the influence of false teaching in regard to our patterns of behavior in relationships.
  - (Philippians 3:2 ESV) Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh.
- ii. Continuous monitoring to detect, and avoid if necessary, trusting in ourselves (our human earthly ways and thinking) as we relate to people.
  - (Philippians 3:3 ESV) ... glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.
- iii. Continuous monitoring for overconfidence in regard to accomplishments of previous service and works.
  - (Philippians 3:4 ESV) Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more.

(In other words, we are not to judge our current patterns of behavior on previous, religious good works but must be ready and willing to count everything as loss in view of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ.)

- iv. Continuous monitoring as to whether our actions and patterns of behavior are based on self-righteousness or the righteousness of Christ.
  - (Philippians 3:9 ESV) And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.

(If one or both parties involved in the conflict are most

interested in proving themselves right, then they have revealed that they are motivated by self-righteousness and not the cause of Christ.)

- v. Continuous calibration of our vision of service so that we do not forget and lose sight of the prize–.
  - (Philippians 3:13–14 ESV) Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. **But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,** 14 **I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God** in Christ Jesus.
- vi. Continuous inspection of our coordinates to make sure our thinking is directed in the right way so that we avoid the spiritually immature pitfall of proving ourselves right as our priority in conflicts.
  - (Philippians 3:15 ESV) **Let those of us who are mature think this way,** and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.

**3. Maintenance Principle: Even as faithful, side-by-side laborers in the gospel we must not exempt ourselves from the need to discipline our minds to think in agreement with the Lord, 4:2-3.**

- (Philippians 4:2 ESV) I **entreat** Euodia and I **entreat** Syntyche to **agree** in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, **who have labored side by side with me in the gospel** together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

A. Paul earnestly requests that both women come to an agreement in the Lord in their dispute.

Entreat ... παρακαλέω [parakaleo] – to ask for or request earnestly; to call to one's side, call for, summon; to admonish, exhort; to beg, entreat, beseech; to encourage, strengthen.

B. The passion of his request signifies the importance of the women resolving their contention.

C. Calling them to agree in the Lord should bring their attention to an awareness of the fact that they are contending in the presence of the Lord.

D. In order to resolve the conflict in a way that honors the Lord it is necessary that they discipline their minds to think things through as would please God.

Agree ... φρονέω [phroneo] – to think thus; to dispose the mind in a certain way; to have understanding, be wise; to feel, to think; to direct one's mind to a thing, to seek, to strive for.

E. The fact that they are contending with each other is evidence that their minds are not in the right place.

F. They will be in agreement with the Lord by committing themselves to ... having the same mind, same love, in full accord and of one mind .

- (Philippians 2:2 ESV) ... complete my joy by being of the **same mind**, having the **same love**, **being in full accord and of one mind**.

**4. Maintenance Principle: We must be diligent to find and maintain our joy in the Lord, 4:4-5a.**

- (Philippians 4:4–5a ESV) **Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say**, rejoice. 5 Let your reasonableness be known to everyone.

A. We are commanded to do this—rejoice in the Lord.

B. The command is repeated for emphasis and urgency.

C. Our ultimate joy must be in no one or nothing else.

D. The fruit of finding and maintaining our joy in the Lord is a merciful, reasonable attitude toward others.

Reasonableness ... επιεικής [epieikes] – lenience; mercifulness or tolerance of slight deviations from moral or legal rectitude; seemingly, suitable; equitable, fair, mild, gentle.

E. So why have we become merciful and reasonable in our attitude to others?

Because we know the source of our righteousness—the righteousness that comes only by faith in Christ.

**5. Maintenance Principle: It is crucial that we live with a constant awareness that the Lord is at hand, 4:5b-6.**

- (Philippians 4:5b–6 ESV) **The Lord is at hand**; 6 **do not be anxious about anything**, but **in everything** by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

A. This is an officially announced and powerfully true statement by which we need to align our attitudes and behaviors—the Lord is near.

At hand ... ἐγγύς [eggus] – near, close in time, place, relationship or position; those who are near access to God as opposed to those who are alien from God and his blessings.

B. We are to early and often align our attitude to this powerful truth—The Lord is near so we are not to be anxious about anything.

Be anxious ... μεριμνάω [merimnao] –

to be anxious; to be troubled with cares; to worry (be concerned); to be concerned with.

Everything ... πᾶς [pas] –entire, constituting the full quantity or extent; complete; individually; each, every, any, all, the whole, everyone, all things, everything.

C. Very powerful construction in the wording in the Greek—everything to God, nothing to worry.

Everything is so fully encompassing as to leave absolutely no anxiety out that we are not to make known to God.

D. **The specific instructions:** ... In everything by petitions and earnest requests with thanksgiving ... Let your requests (a formal message submitted to an authority which asks for something) be made known to God.

**CONCLUSION: We need to hear what God is telling us about guarding us with his peace ... moving far past our misconceptions and on to his powerful promise ...**

- (Philippians 4:7 ESV) And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- I. This will happen—the peace of God will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.
- II. This work of guarding our hearts and minds by his peace will surpass in quality and value and "knowability" the entirety of the capabilities of our minds to understand.

Surpasses ... to be superior; to be or become of greater quality or value.

All ... entire, constituting the full quantity or extent; complete.

Understanding ... νοῦς [nous] – the mind, that which is responsible for one's thoughts and feelings; especially the seat of the faculty of reason.

- III. This guarding of our hearts and minds will happen through the peace of God in Christ Jesus.

Guard ... φρουρέω [phroureo] – to keep watch over; protect by a military guard, either to prevent hostile invasion, or to keep the inhabitants of a besieged city from flight.

#### IV. What do we make of this?

A. This is a wonderful, powerful promise from God.

B. This is an inexplicable promise from God—impossible to explain, understand, or account for.

C. This promise is conditional on the peace of God being present and active in our lives.

D. This promise is far more extensive and encompassing than we probably realize.

E. This promise invites our participation.

- i. We participate by asking the Lord to control what we say.

- (Psalm 141:3–4 ESV) Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips! 4 Do not let my heart incline to any evil, to busy myself with wicked deeds in company with men who work iniquity, and let me not eat of their delicacies!

- ii. We participate by asking God to lead us in the way of his word.

- (Psalm 119:35–36 ESV) Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it. 36 Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!

- iii. We participate by acknowledging our need for God to guard our hearts because of the inherent evil nature of our hearts.

- (Matthew 15:18–19 ESV) But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

- iv. We participate by acknowledging our desperate need for God to guard our hearts because of our inability to know the extent of evil in our hearts.

- (Jeremiah 17:9 NLT) The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?

Facing a potentially difficult question for some ... If God promises peace, then why do I not have peace?