

Lesson 6

A Peace Not Like the World

Navigating with Faith and Contentment

Read: Philippians 4:1-13; John 14:27.

Pray for God's help in developing a deeper understanding of how the peace of God works in your life.

Set Your Intentions: What do you hope to achieve from this lesson?

Journal Your Thoughts. Journaling can be a valuable tool for spiritual reflection and growth.

Introduction

In his book *Confessions*, Augustine prayed: *You made us for yourself, and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you.* Perhaps it was Paul Augustine had in mind when he penned those words, for it was Paul who lived this out in an authentic way:

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy— dwell on these things. Do what you have learned and received and heard from me, and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you. I rejoiced in the Lord greatly because once again you renewed your care for me. You were, in fact, concerned about me but lacked the opportunity to show it. I don't say this out of need, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I find myself. I know how to make do with little, and I know how to make do with a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content—whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me (Philippians 4:7-13).

This may be one of Paul's greatest works. He captures the heart of spiritual focus, contentment, and peace in it. It is all built on the foundation of Jesus Christ.

As you reread this text, note first how Peace is a guard that protects our hearts and minds. It works most effectively as we choose to dwell on true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and commendable things. God works to provide us with peace. We cooperate and submit to His will. This is how God is the God of peace.

Paul knew from personal experience that God is the *God of peace*. Every need he had was met every time – whether in circumstances of need or abundance. Paul possessed the ultimate confidence that God was with him. In verse 12, he says that he has learned the secret of being content and that he found true peace. True peace comes when we do not allow our circumstances to impede our influence and activity in the kingdom. In other words, it comes when we entirely devote ourselves to God and completely depend on His resources. This is why Paul could write down the words that so many of us have memorized: *I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me.* Paul understood that no matter what came upon him, good or bad, persecution or abundant blessing, he would be given the strength to fulfill God's purposes.

I believe what we have in Philippians 4:7-13 is a description of his literal experience with true peace — a peace that comes to us from outside this world — the kind of peace that will calm troubled hearts.

Where did Paul get this peace?

Paul felt, I believe, the fulfillment or actualization of what Jesus spoke of in John 14:27:

Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Don't let your heart be troubled or fearful.

The peace that Jesus leaves is what enabled Paul *and every Christian*:

- To fight back fear.
- To rejoice amid trial.
- To sing while suffering.
- To stand with the greatest confidence in the face of death.

The peace that Jesus provides is the gift of an attitude that impacts every part of life. It is so much more than the absence of trouble. Which, by the way, is a fabrication. In this life, there are hardly any moments where we do not have some trouble. *There is always something.* This is why Paul's secret in Philippians 4:12 comes from a higher source — one from outside this world. What Jesus brings to us is never impacted by circumstances. It is, however, a peace that can and will affect our circumstances and bring glory to Christ.

John 14:27a – Defining True Peace

In scripture, two types of peace are defined: objective and subjective. The first may be described as a state of peace, while the other is the experience of peace. Both come from a supernatural source. We will only discover the *experience* of peace once we are first brought into a *state* of peace.

Romans 5:1-11 – A State of Peace

Paul writes:

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

“Peace,” as found here, is the removal of hostility between God and us. The Christian is no longer at war with God. Our rebellion ceased at the cross. Our sins have been forgiven. Now, we move from the perspective of hope and assurance, 5:4-5. Think of it. We have gone from enmity and war against God to now having God dwell in us. *If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him,* John 14:23. Perhaps Paul summarized it best at the end of the first section of Romans 5. In verses 10-11, he says that we have received *reconciliation*. The Christian lives in a state of peace with God.

Colossians 1:20-29 – What Brought About Our Peace?

Notice Colossians 1:20. The present state of peace we enjoy was made *through His blood, shed on the cross*. And now, look at 1:22. Because of this reconciliation, Jesus presents you to His Father as *holy*,

faultless, and blameless. These are qualities you presently possess as a Christian. You have, are, and will stand justified in the sight of God. You have been set free from condemnation, Romans 8:1. You have been, *and will be*, delivered from the wrath to come, 1 Thessalonians 1:10.

Indeed, we must remember that the work of Jesus entails an inherent responsibility. In Colossians 1:23, Paul speaks of the need for our continuous cooperation with God, whereby we allow Him to ground us and make us steadfast so that we will not be shifted away from the hope of the gospel. We must be committed to spiritual maturity (1:28). As we grow, we work by the strength given to us by Christ (1:29).

We need to come to a better understanding of how the strength of Christ is powerfully at work in us and that the state of peace we enjoy is not precarious. It is not unstable. Because of the righteousness Jesus has brought us and given us through His death and our acceptance of it through faith, we have peace with God.

John 14:27 – The Experience of Peace

The peace Jesus brings is positive. It is so positive that it literally can impact the circumstances in which we live. It goes on offense to keep our hearts from swaying throughout life. This is the peace Paul was speaking of in Philippians 4:7:

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

Here, it is the *peace of God*, not peace with God. And again, see how it is aggressive in that it attacks whatever situation we're in, finding joy through Christ. You can see it in the preceding verses in Philippians 4:

- It fueled the joy Paul expressed in 4:4.
- It was the source of his graciousness in 4:5.
- It was behind the active prayer life referenced in 4:6.
- It is the following through in total confidence in 4:19.

Again, see how Paul's peace does not come from his circumstances—it existed over them, helping Paul to frame his experiences from a spiritual perspective.

Philippians 4:7 – Peace Serves as a Guard

“Guard” in this verse comes from a military word that means to stand at a post and guard or protect against enemy aggression. Peace stands guard at the door of your heart against the corrosive acid of worry. It stands over our minds, fighting against unworthy and inaccurate thoughts that wreak havoc on them.

What kind of self-talk do you engage in? For many, the ongoing narrative they have with themselves is a collection of lies. *I'll never be good enough. I always fail. I just wasn't meant to succeed. No one cares about me. I'm alone. No one cares about me or my problems.* These thoughts can go on with reckless abandon. And we must take these thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ, 1 Corinthians 10:4-5. Until we do, we will never have peace. This may be one of the avenues where Satan is most effective against us. While

he has all sorts of options to attack us from the outside, he renders most of us inactive before we get out the door every morning by all the lies he says through our negative self-talk.

If you want this peace, you must first make peace with God. Once you have that, you experience peace based on faith.

- In your past. You're not guilty — and stand forgiven, Romans 5:1.
- In your present. You *stand by grace*, Romans 5:2.
- In your future, you are no longer dominated by fear—your eternal destination has been determined, and your status as a son or daughter of God is never precarious (Romans 5:5).

John 14:27b – The Source of Peace

Jesus says, *My peace I give to you*. There is no other source of true peace. No earthly source of peace ever lasts. There is always something over the horizon. But the peace that the Bible speaks of is from God.

- Philippians 4:9 – God is the God of peace.
- Hebrews 7:2 – Jesus is the King of peace.
- Galatians 5:22 – by His fruit, the Spirit produces peace.

True peace comes from God—those without God will not find peace without him. Look again at John 14:27. Jesus gives us peace. How? By the work of the Spirit, 14:23, 27. In John 16:14, the Spirit takes the things of Christ and gives them to us. He brings life, instruction, and peace.

Who's Peace Does Christ bring?

Jesus says he brings *my peace*. The same peace that filled him as he was mocked, tortured, and killed is given to us. It works. He used it in the greatest battle in the hours leading up to and on the cross. Here, he promises that when he leaves, he will give the Christian this peace. Think of how this peace has helped you:

- Find peace in times of danger.
- Experience calm in trouble.
- Gain freedom from anxiety.

In this way, the peace he brings is aggressive in that it helps us tackle our troubles or challenges. When dealing with the most significant problems, we are well rooted, have a strong foundation, and are like a rock — because we stand on the rock. The peace Jesus possessed was undistracted fearlessness. It was total trust. It was dependence on God. Read John 19 and see how Pilate stood in amazement at Jesus' disposition during the most extreme circumstances. This is the kind of peace that He supplies you with.

This is not the peace the world gives.

The world does not have peace. It prays for peace .. but searches for it in all the wrong places. The only peace the world offers is an escape from reality. Some try to find it in all the wrong places and wind up wrecking their lives because it never satisfies them. All the trouble comes back — with even more

trouble piled up on top— after one is forced to come back to reality the morning after, coming down from the high or having to pay the bill.

The world can't find peace because it does not know God. It's not circumstances, family history, or past mistreatment. If a person lacks peace, they have either no or a troubled relationship with God. *There is no peace for the wicked, says the Lord* (Isaiah 48:22). The only way to make peace is to make peace with God.

John 14:27c – The Impact of Peace

Don't let your heart be troubled or fearful. Peace has been given to you, but you must receive it and apply it to your life. How much do you believe in God? How much will you trust Him? Especially as you think about your future—because this is usually what generates most of your anxiety. Some people struggle with their past, but the future often concerns them the most. So, will we choose to remember that everything is under the care of our God?

This is how peace is to impact our life. We constantly remember:

- He has forgiven our past.
- He is with us in the present,
- He has secured our future.

So, as Jesus says, *don't let your heart be troubled or fearful.*

What's in This for Us?

Cultivate a Spiritual Perspective: How concentrated is your focus on things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and commendable? Are you consciously directing your thoughts and actions towards these virtues? This involves recognizing what aligns with these qualities and actively incorporating them into your daily life. When you do this, you guard your heart and mind, allowing God's peace to thrive within you.

Learn Contentment in Every Situation: Paul's example teaches the secret of being content in any circumstance, relying on Christ's strength. Practically, this means shifting your source of satisfaction from external conditions to your relationship with Christ. Whether you face abundance or need, you can experience peace by trusting in God's provision and timing, recognizing that your ultimate fulfillment comes from Him.

Embrace Peace as a Way of Life: Jesus's peace differs from the world's temporary solutions. It requires us to make peace with God through faith, acknowledging the reconciliation made possible by Jesus's sacrifice. In daily life, this peace involves rejecting fear and anxiety, especially about the future, and trusting in God's care. This mindset transforms how you face life's challenges, enabling you to experience true peace that influences your circumstances rather than being overshadowed by them.

Pursue a Relationship with God as the Foundation of Peace: The ultimate source of peace is a relationship with God, facilitated by Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit. To apply this, prioritize your spiritual health through prayer, reading Scripture, and fellowship in the local church. This

deepens your understanding of God's character and promises, helping you be anchored in peace regardless of life's storms. By maintaining a close relationship with God, you ensure that your peace is not just a fleeting emotion but a lasting state of being that reflects your trust in Him.

Concluding Thoughts

The same man who wrote *I can do all things through Him who strengthens me*, also wrote:

We are afflicted in every way but not crushed; we are perplexed but not in despair; we are persecuted but not abandoned; we are struck down but not destroyed, for we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus's sake, so that Jesus' life may also be displayed in our mortal flesh (2 Corinthians 4:8-9, 11).

How did he do it? How did he win? *How can we win?*

Paul elevated his focus:

For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

We must learn to turn our attention away from the problem and look to the eternal. We must turn the focus off ourselves and focus on Jesus. The strength is not in you but in Christ Jesus, who lives in you. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. This is the peace Jesus left for Paul. It's the peace Jesus left for you.

For Reflection

1. How does Augustine's statement that "our hearts find no peace until they rest in you" resonate with your experiences of seeking fulfillment and peace in life?
2. In what ways do you see the peace of God acting as a guard over your heart and mind, as described in Philippians 4:7? Can you share a personal example?
3. Reflecting on Paul's words in Philippians 4:8, how can you focus on true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and commendable things that impact your daily life and thought processes?
4. Paul speaks about learning to be content in all circumstances. What practical steps can you take to cultivate contentment in your life, especially in difficult times?
5. Discuss the difference between the peace of the world and the peace that Jesus offers, as mentioned in John 14:27. How have you experienced this difference in your own life?
6. Paul's ability to be content and at peace regardless of his circumstances is central to his message in Philippians 4:7-13. What role does faith play in achieving such peace and contentment?
7. Making peace with God is the foundation for experiencing true peace. How do you understand this process, and what has been your journey toward making peace with God?
8. Considering the aggressive nature of the peace of God described in Philippians 4:7, how can we actively engage this peace in our struggles with fear, anxiety, and uncertainty?
9. In what ways can we practically "guard" our hearts and minds to maintain peace in a world full of chaos and trouble?
10. Paul's strength and peace came from his focus on the eternal rather than the temporary. How can we shift our focus from our immediate circumstances to God's eternal promises in our daily lives?