

## Philippians 4:4-9 | The Peace that Surpasses all Understanding | 9/18/16

- Christians are not immune to hardship
  - It is no secret that everyone would prefer to be happy all the time. For there never to be a time of trial or hardship. For there to never be a time of pain or misery.
  - But this is not the world we live in and Christ has told us that we should expect to have hard times and suffering by simply being an obedient Christian.
    - Matthew 16:33
      - “I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. You will have suffering in the world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world.”
    - While Christ told us we will have suffering, He also gave us truth about Him and what He has and will do which **will give us peace.**
    - **So we might wonder what does this peace look like?**
      - Does it mean that Jesus will fix all of our external problems and make our lives smooth sailing?
      - Or perhaps is this “peace” something deeper that effects our hearts and minds.
  - **Read Philippians 4:4-9**
  - Paul himself was no stranger to “sufferings in the world”, even though we might think that out of anyone in the New Testament that surely everything went right for him.
    - He was God’s chosen instrument to bring the Gospel to the gentiles and to be His conduit to give the world many of the books we find in Scripture.
    - But that wasn’t the case, in fact Jesus said from the very beginning that Paul would suffer in the name of Christ.
      - Acts 9:15-16
        - “But the Lord said to him “Go! For this man is My chosen instrument to take My name to Gentiles, kings, and the Israelites. I will show him how much he must suffer for My name!”
    - And Paul did suffer on many occasions, and he likely fell on hard times more than most.
      - He was imprisoned on numerous occasions, had death threats, lost human hope, was near death.
        - 2 Corinthians 1:8
          - “For we don’t want you to be unaware, brothers, of our affliction that took place in Asia: we were completely overwhelmed—beyond our strength—so that we even despaired of life.”
    - But we find that even though Paul did suffer, that he found something that gave him peace.
- **Paul had inner joy even when his external circumstances were overwhelming. | Philippians 4:4**
  - Even though Paul went through these hard times there was something that always kept him going.
  - He had a perspective that never changed regardless if times were good, or if times were bad.
  - **Paul always rejoiced in the Lord.**

- Even though Paul had been at the brink of death and spent time in prison, he always rejoiced in the Lord.
  - Paul didn't rejoice only in the good times when his interaction with others was favorable, and then shun God when times were bad. He always rejoiced in the Lord.
  - God recorded his circumstances in Scripture to be an encouragement to Christians.
    - So we would understand how important it is that we put our complete faith, trust and confidence in Christ.
    - That regardless of external circumstances we should always rejoice in the Lord.
  - Paul rejoiced even knowing that he may be going to his death.
    - Philippians 2:17
      - “But even if I poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.”
  - **We may ask how is it possible that he maintained this perspective?**
    - **We will address this in the upcoming section.**
  - **Do you find this command to “always rejoice in the Lord” (regardless of circumstances) on the surface to be difficult? Is it possible to do this on our own with our own strength?**
  - **What is the human response to difficult circumstances?**
- Don't worry about your circumstances, instead turn it over to God through prayer, the conduit for peace.
    - All Christians have human weaknesses fall into during a time of difficult circumstances.
      - This could be to worry (anxiety), fear, hopelessness, pain or depression.
      - Scripture tells us that there is an antidote, or a cure for these weaknesses.
    - So not only did Paul rejoice in the Lord at all time regardless of his circumstances, he now gives the Christians the conduit that will provide the antidote for our worries and anxiety that we naturally have when we are in these situations.
      - Because when we are in a difficult time of life there are feelings that we all have and they vary depending on the situation.
        - Fear, worry, hopelessness, pain or depression.
      - We may say well I know I need to always rejoice in the Lord, but these feelings that I have are overwhelming and it can become very hard to keep my eyes and thoughts where they need to be.
      - **So for this Paul gives us the solution.**
    - For Paul to say “don't worry or be anxious” was significant because he at many times through his service to Christ would have met worry and anxiety head on.
      - In all his times of imprisonment and near death experiences, it would certainly bring one to be concerned for their own welfare and these nature human emotions would have surfaced even in Paul.
        - 2 Corinthians 1:8b
          - “we were completely overwhelmed—beyond our strength—so that we even despaired of life.”
        - 2 Corinthians 11:28
          - “And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.”
    - The antidote of peace comes through the conduit of prayer.

- Instead of giving in to our human feelings that bring us despair in our hard times, we must seek God through prayer.
  - **Our prayer to God is the conduit in which He will give us peace.**
- Scripture is quite specific about what this prayer looks like.
- Prayer is not something we make to God with a hardened heart that lacks faith in Christ.
  - Prayer is a direct method to communicate with God, this must not be done with disbelief and lack of trust in God's ability to answer our prayer.
    - Romans 1:21
      - "For though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became nonsense, and their senseless minds were darkened."
    - **If this is our attitude and condition of our hearts in our hard times, our prayers to God will be that of a demanding selfish child, and not one of humility full of gratitude.**
- Prayer is with thanksgiving which is an attitude and condition of the heart.
  - When we go to God (especially under difficult circumstances) we must go before Him with hearts of thanksgiving offering praise to God and truly being thankful regardless of the outcome.
    - To have a heart that is joyful to come before Christ with full faith trust and confidence in Him.
  - To petition is to directly ask God for what it is we request. But petition also means an earnest request that is one of hope.
    - A request of confidence knowing that if it is God's will He can fulfill our prayers.
  - God desires the humble attitude and heart of the Christian. This is how we must approach Him regardless of our external circumstances.
- With prayer we give our troubles to Christ.
  - When we are seeking the antidote for our fears, anxiety, hopelessness or depression we go to God in prayer of thanksgiving and we give our problems to Him.
    - 1 Peter 5:7
      - "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you."
  - God cares for all of His children, He will gladly take these human weaknesses and burdens from us. He will gladly carry them for us.
- Paul fully understood and received the antidote of peace from God through prayer.
  - Acts 16:22-25
- **Why do you think God uses prayer as a conduit to give us His peace?**
- **Have you experienced the effects of "casting your troubles" upon God?**
- The peace of God is the antidote that will give us an inward peace that defies all human understanding.
  - Christians already have a peace that is WITH God.
    - Believers having been justified by God have a peace WITH him, this is our eternal salvation that was received when we were made right before God.
      - Romans 5:1

- “Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
  - Ephesians 2:14
    - “For He is our peace, who made both groups one and tore down the dividing wall of hostility. In His flesh”
  - But the peace spoken of by Paul in these Scriptures is the peace that comes FROM God.
- With our humble prayers of petition, we will have a peace that comes FROM God.
  - When the Christian experiences a difficult time regardless of the circumstances, we can be so easily overwhelmed with our human weakness’s.
  - But when we humbly come before Christ and lay our troubles on Him, He will joyfully give us the antidote of peace.
  - **This peace may not calm the external storm that we are going through, but it will calm the inner storm within our hearts.**
    - **It will calm the storm in our heart so that WE CAN WITHSTAND the external storm.**
    - **This is the peace that allows us to truly and fully rejoice in Christ regardless of our circumstance, regardless of how bad our situation may look.**
    - That we will have a peace that comes over our hearts that allows us to make it through our difficult time, that allows us to keep our heads up and keep our eyes focused on Christ.
    - **This peace reminds us that God is present and living within our hearts and He is near.**
- The peace of God defies all human understanding.
  - This peace that God gives us is not and cannot be fully explained in human terms.
  - It is a divine peace brought through the Holy Spirit in our hearts that can overcome anything that may trouble us.
  - It is beyond the human ability to understand because our human reasoning says that it is impossible to have peace on the inside when on the outside we are facing a great storm.
  - **But that is why it is the peace that surpasses all understanding because it is a divine peace, something that only Christ can give us.**
- The peace of God will guard our hearts and minds
  - This peace is not just a momentary act of relief, but Scripture says He will guard our hearts and minds.
    - The peace of God will guard the believer’s hearts from fear, doubt and anxiety.
    - The peace of God guards the emotions and thoughts of His children.
  - The Greek word for “guard” (phrouresei) translates a military term which means “to protect or garrison by guarding”
    - This is exactly what the peace of God does for us through the Holy Spirit.
    - This same word “guard” is used to describe how our salvation is protected.
      - 1 Peter 1:5
        - “to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are

being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

- God can certainly give us a peace that guards our hearts and minds from external storms of life.
- **How would you describe the “peace of God” that has come over you during a difficult time in your life? Did it change your perspective on your circumstances?**
- Living the obedient Christian life draws the God of peace | Philippians 4:8-9
  - ***Read Philippians 4:8-9***
  - Paul then tells us that by living the obedient Christian life which is what was taught and lived out by Paul, that the God of peace will be with them.
  - There is no better way to have a close relationship with God that will make His presence exceedingly known that to live our lives in obedience to what He has called us.
  - Our lives must be:
    - True – Always speak the truth | Ephesians 4:24-25
    - Honorable – “worthy of respect”
    - Just – Always do what is right that is in-line with God’s divine standard | Titus 1:8
    - Pure – Clean and undefiled | 1 Timothy 5:22
    - Lovely and commendable – Pleasing, kind and respectful to others.