

THE BLESSING OF THE PEACE OF GOD

For the past several weeks, Psalm 19:11 has been the overarching theme as to why we should want to **know** what the Bible says—and **do** what the Bible says! **Reason #1**—found in the first half of the verse—is because of the **warnings** God gives us! **Psalm 19:11a** “Moreover by **them** [God’s Words] is thy servant warned...” **Why** does God warn us? Because **He loves us** & wants to **keep us** from that which will harm us!

Reason #2 is found in the second half of the verse: **Psalm 19:11b** “...and in keeping of them [God’s Words] there is great reward.” Stated another way, there is **blessing in obedience**! God promises **great reward** to those that keep—meaning **obey**—His Word!

Last week we looked at the blessing **of rest** for those that accept Jesus’ invitation as found in **Mt 11:28** — “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” What **kind** of rest does Jesus give when we come to Him? I believe in Mt 11:28, Jesus is referring to **salvation rest**—the rest that we experience when we **stop trying to work** our way to heaven and **simply trust that what Jesus did** on the cross was the satisfactory payment for our sins!

In a nutshell, we **cease** from our works—and **trust in Jesus’ work**! This is often referred to as having peace **with God**. **Romans 5:1** “Therefore being justified **by faith**, we have **peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ:”

We also looked at a **second** invitation Jesus gave found in **Mt 11:29** “**Take my yoke** upon you, and **learn of me**; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” Is this the **same** invitation as the one in vs 28; an invitation **to stop trying to work** your way to heaven? I don’t think so!

I believe it is an invitation for those who **have salvation rest**—God’s children—to willingly take the **yoke of Jesus**—meaning to **submit to His leadership and Lordship** in our lives. **What happens** when we submit to Jesus **as Lord** in our lives? We **find rest** for our souls—a rest that comes **after** salvation rest.

What is “rest after rest?” Forgiveness...and grace...and mercy... and peace...that we **still need** after we are saved because we **still have a sin nature**—and live in a **sin-cursed world** with **sinful people**! This “rest after rest” is often called having the peace **of God**—which is different than peace **with God**.

This morning, we are going to dig a little deeper into what it **means** to have the peace **of God**. We don’t just want to **know what it means**, though—we also want to know **how we can have it!** Please take your Bibles and turn to Philippians 4 and follow along as I read verses 1-9. As you already know from your outline, we will be focusing on verses 6-7.

As we’ve already seen, the **blessing of obedience**—the great reward that is ours when we keep God’s Word—is found in vs 7 “And the **peace of God**, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” The peace of God **doesn’t come automatically**, though, does it? It comes when **we obey** what God through Paul tells us to do. **What** does God tell us to do?

We see the **first thing** God wants us to do is found in the beginning of vs 6 “Be careful for nothing...”

Interesting verse—and one that can be **easily misunderstood**! Imagine Christopher about a year from now, closing in on the ripe old age of 15-1/2! He passes his written driver’s test and now has his permit. The first time he gets behind the wheel, he goes squealing out of the driveway, takes a hard right at the end of his driveway onto 23rd, comes to the stop sign on 18th and **goes right through it** without even putting his foot on the brake! Rodger—if he hasn’t had a heart attack by then—says, “Christopher, **what** are you doing?”

To which Christopher replies, “I’m **being careful for nothing!**”

Is that what Paul means? Does “be careful for nothing” mean to be “**careless** about everything?” **Obviously not!** So, what does it mean? This is one of those words where the “old English” can get us into trouble!

But this is also a good verse to remind you of an **important goal** to keep in mind when interpreting Scripture. What goal am I referring to? **Before** we can see how a verse **applies to us**, we need to determine **what it meant** to the original hearers and/or readers. Does that mean you all need to **learn Greek** in order to understand the NT? No; that's not what I mean at all!

But it **does** mean that sometimes a word—like the word “careful” in this verse—meant **something different** “back in the day.” And if you were to look up “careful” using an on-line dictionary—or an old Webster's—you would find out that it also means “anxious; full of care, concern, or fears; apprehensive.”

“Be careful for nothing,” then, is best understood as “**be anxious** for nothing;” or “**don't worry** about anything!”

So, to have the blessing of the peace of God, we need to first...**1. Put off worry**

The Greek word that “be careful” comes from is quite descriptive. It is a verb that means to “go to pieces” ...and “to be drawn in opposite directions” ...and “to be pulled apart.” It is the same word Jesus uses 6 times in Matthew 6 where it is translated “take no thought.” It is also the same word Jesus uses when speaking to Martha in Lk 10:41 “...Martha, Martha, thou art careful—**anxious**—about many things.” In essence, Jesus is saying to Martha, ‘Don't be pulled apart by worry!’

A. The command not to worry

We know from the Greek that this is a **command**—it is something that God **expects us** to do. It is in the **present** tense—and **active** voice—so the idea is this: You need to be **continuously putting off** worry!

God **knows us well**, doesn't He? He knows that worry is something we need to **keep fighting** because it keeps coming back! But He expects us to fight it—and to keep on fighting it—and not to **make excuses** for it!

B. The comprehensiveness of the command

The command to put off worry is **comprehensive**, meaning it encompasses **everything!** In other words, God does not give us **any** loopholes. There are no **exception** clauses.

--God **does not say**, “Put off worrying about everything—**except** your bills!”

--God **does not say**, “Put off worrying about everything—**except** what will happen if the State Sup Court flips!”

--And God **does not say**, “Put off worrying about everything—**unless** WWII breaks out!”

Hard to fathom God **wanting us to worry** about anything, isn't it? **Would God ever say**: “**It's okay** for you to worry about your bills...or the balance of the Supreme Court in your State...or a future war with China?”

Let not miss what God is commanding: Do not worry about anything—**no exceptions!**

Why is God so adamant about that? Why does God **insist so strongly** that we can't worry about **anything**—not even **one** thing? To best answer these questions, we need to consider...

C. The cause of worry—confusion over the character of God!

Why do we worry? What **causes us** to worry? We can come up with all **kinds of reasons**, but in my mind, it boils down to this: we have **misgivings**—we have **distrust and doubts**—about the **character of God!**

--We worry **about the past** because we don't believe what God says regarding His willingness to forgive!

Ps 103:12 “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath **He removed our transgressions from us.**”

Heb 10:17 “And their sins and iniquities **will I remember no more.**”

--We worry **about the present**—like financial needs—because we don't believe what God says regarding His ability—or His willingness—to **provide** for our needs!

Mt 6:26 “Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?” The answer, of course, is “Yes!”

Mt 6:30 “Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?” The answer is, Yes—He will clothe you!

--And we worry **about the future** because we don't believe what God says about **His control** of the future! Do **you know** the future? No; **you don't!**

Prov 27:1 “Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”

Can **you control** the future? No; **you can't!**

Mt 26:27 “Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?”

Does **God know** the future? Yes; **He does!**

Is 46:9-10a “Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, ¹⁰ **Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done...**”

Does **God control** the future? Yes; He does!

Ps 115:3 “But our God is in the heavens: **He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased.**”

Ps 135:6 “**Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.**

Is 46:10b “...My counsel shall stand, and **I will do all my pleasure:**”

It is a **sin to worry** because it casts doubt on what **God says**—and what **God can do!** And that’s why God says we need to continuously **put it off**. We need to **choose not to do it!** But that’s only **one of the two** things that God through Paul tells us to do if we are going to have the “peace of God that passes all understanding.”

What is the **second thing** we are supposed to do? **2. Purpose to pray**

Don’t just **put off worry**—make a conscious decision to pray!

A. What to pray for

What are we to pray for? What does it say? “...but in **every** thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving...” Does **every** thing leave **any** thing out? It **doesn’t**, does it? Every thing **means** every thing—and **excludes** nothing! If it is not wrong to want it, it is not wrong to **ask God** for it!

Why don’t we **ask God** for certain things? Is it because we feel our requests are **too big**? I read recently of a story where a woman asked G. Campbell Morgan if it was okay for her to ask God for **big** things. He replied, “Madam, can you think of **anything** in your life that is **big** to God?” (As cited by Steven Cole, Bible.org; Lesson 24: The Answer to Anxiety (Philippians 4:6-7)) **Good answer**, isn’t it?

God encourages us to “pray big.” Psalm 81:10 “I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: **open thy mouth wide**, and I will fill it.” As far as **what to pray for**, Barnes puts it like this: “There is nothing which pertains to body, mind, estate, friends, conflicts, losses, trials, hopes, fears, in reference to which we may not go and spread it all out before the Lord.”

B. How to pray

We have 3 different words for prayer listed in vs 6: prayer, supplication, and requests.

i. Prayer – This is the general word used for prayer and appears 36 times in the NT. It simply means “a prayer addressed to God,” but is a good reminder that when we pray, we are coming into the **presence of God**. We are encouraged in **Hebrews 4:16** to “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need,” but we dare not approach God irreverently.

ii. Supplication is “stronger” than prayer; it carries the idea of **fervency**; of earnestly desiring something. It is a **heart-felt petition** arising out of deep personal need and used 18 times in the NT. Here are a few examples. It is used of **Zacharias’ prayer** for a son (Luke 1:13), **Paul’s desire** that Israel be saved (Rom 10:1), and in **James 5:16** where it says, “The effectual fervent **prayer** of a righteous man availeth much.”

iii. Requests – This particular word is used only two other times—in Luke 23:24 where Pilate allowed Jesus to be crucified as the chief priests **requested** and in I John 5:15 where it says, “that we have the **petitions** that we desired of Him.” It seems, then, to carry the idea of **being specific** in what we pray for. We need to be specific when we pray, don’t we? If we aren’t, how do we know if God answered?

One other way in which we are to pray and that is... **iv. With thanksgiving**

What does it **mean** to “pray with thanksgiving?” Think about what is being said. If we have to “put off” worry, we are obviously in an “**anxiety-producing**” situation. If we are in an “anxiety-producing” situation, how can we pray **with thanksgiving**? We have to **choose to have faith**—just like we have to do to **put off** worry!

--We obey God and **stop worrying** because **we trust what He says** about **forgiving** us for our past...and **promising to take care of us** in the present...and because He **knows—and controls**—the future!

--We can **pray with thanksgiving** when we again choose to **have faith** in what God promises and says!

--We can pray with thanksgiving because God **knows what we need** even before we ask (Mt 6:8,32)
 --We can pray with thanksgiving because we know **nothing is too hard for God** (Jer 32:17; Lk 1:37)
 --We can pray with thanksgiving because God “**works all things together for good** to them that love God” (Rom 8:28)
 --And we can pray with thanksgiving because God’s way is perfect! Ps 18:30 says that very thing: “As for God, His way is perfect...” Let that sink in...God **perfectly** answers prayer! In other words, the way God answers a prayer is **never wrong** because He **cannot do wrong**—His way is perfect!

Faith in the **character of God**—and the **promises of God**—is what enables us to both put off worry—and pray with thanksgiving!

So **what** is the **blessing** we receive when we put off worry and pray with thanksgiving?

--Answered prayer, right? Nope; it doesn’t say that!
 --Freedom from problems? Nope; it doesn’t say that either!

What is the blessing? **Peace!** We see that in vs 7 “And the **peace of God**, which passeth all understanding...”

3. Peace—the promised provision

A. The gift of peace

The promised provision that God gives is the gift of peace. It is the peace **of God**—meaning **from God**. It is something **God gives**—and is **different** than the peace that we can get from the world. Jesus says as much in **John 14:27** “Peace I leave with you, my peace **I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you**. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

B. The greatness of the peace that God gives

How great is the peace that God gives? “And the peace of God, **which passeth all understanding...**”

It is peace that is **beyond our ability to comprehend**—or to explain. It is a peace that—humanly speaking—does not “make sense.” It is illogical...and ungraspable; we can’t “wrap our minds” around it!

1) It is the peace **God gave Horatio G. Spafford** after losing all 4 of his daughters when the ship they were on sunk after being struck by another ship on November 22, 1873. His wife—who was also on the ship—was rescued and several days later wired him a two-word message: “Saved, alone.”

Spafford immediately set sail from Chicago to join his wife in Wales. Per previous arrangement, the captain informed Spafford as they neared the place where his four daughters were thought to have drowned. And it is there where he is said to have penned the words:

When peace like a river attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows roll,
 Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, It is well, it is well with my soul.

That, my friends, is peace that passes all understanding!

2) It is the peace that God gave Stephen, the first Christian martyr, as he was being pummeled to death with stones as recorded in Acts 7. There was **no anger...or hatred...or hostility** against those that were killing him. Instead—like Jesus—he prayed, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:60).

3) And it is the peace that God can give to any one of us—if we put off worry and pray with thanksgiving!

This peace is a gift of God, and it surpasses human expectation—and explanation. What else does it do? Vs 7 it “shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

I’m calling that... C. The guarding nature of peace that God gives

The word “keep” has a military connotation to it. It means to guard—to keep watch—like a military sentinel keeps guard. What does a military guard do? **Protect** from being invaded by enemies!

Isn’t that great! The peace that God gives will protect us from attacks on our hearts and on our minds.

i. The certainty of being guarded

“**Shall keep**” – not could or might or should; it is a certainty! God’s peace will guard and protect you.

ii. The concentration of the guarding

What is kept? **What** is guarded and protected? Our hearts—and our minds.

Our heart—our emotions and feelings—are kept by God’s peace. We can have a calm heart—we can be free from anxiety—when we choose to put off worry—and trust in who God is and what He has promised to do.

Our minds—our judgment and thoughts and understanding—are also guarded by God’s peace. We don’t think ill of God—we don’t charge Him with wrong-doing—when our minds are guarded by His peace.

What about you? Do you have a God-given peace that passes understanding, that the world doesn’t have and can’t give you? It is a gift from God that is available to all His children—but it doesn’t come automatically. There are some things we **need to do**.

What are those things? Put off worry—and pray with thanksgiving. Are you doing that?

So what does God want you to do with what you heard this morning?

1. First, be honest as you evaluate your life in light of God’s Word.

Do you have the peace that passes understanding? If not, it’s because you are worrying—or not praying with thanksgiving—or both!

Worry is a sin because it is a distrust of who God is and what God says! And when God points out sin, we need to confess it—and forsake it!

2. Second, do you have peace with God? Has there been a point in your life when you realized your sin will keep you out of heaven—and that there is nothing you can do to get rid of your sin?

That’s the starting point. But we then need to come to Christ in repentance and faith. Have you done that?