

Sermon Reflections

Stand on God's Peace (Philippians 4:1-9)

Summary: Stand firm on the Lord and His promises and you find His heavenly peace in a turbulent world.

1. Work for God's Peace in Your Church (vv. 1-3)

- Peter was able to walk on water in Matthew 14 while his trust was focused on, and resting in, Christ. We believers often talk of “looking to Jesus”; biblically, what does this mean? What are some other passages that talk of, or picture, looking to God or Jesus, and, from these, what can we learn of what trust in (‘focus on’) Jesus will entail?
- Philippians chapter 3 contrasts a focus on outward, earthly things in vv. 1-11 with a hope in heavenly things in vv. 12-21. Noting the “therefore” starting 4:1, how does Paul’s discussion in chapter 3 provide a basis for Paul’s commands in chapter 4:1-11? (Hint: looking through vv. 1-11, identify each command and then state its connection to the contrast in chapter 3.) What kind of general conclusions can you draw from this pattern that can inform and empower your Christian life, both in the church body and in your personal walk with the Lord?
- In 4:2, Paul mentions that the names of Euodia and Syntyche are in the Book of Life. Why does he mention that Book? What does the Bible teach about the Book of Life (and any other books)? Do you see a connection between salvation and a person’s name being recorded in the Book of Life by way of *metonymy* (look it up) and, if so, what implications can be drawn of the relationship between one’s salvation and fruit displayed in body life?

2. Pray for God's Peace in Your Heart (vv. 4-7)

- In 4:4, Paul tells us to always rejoice. 1 Thess 5:16-18 similarly has commands to be implemented in an “ongoing” fashion. What is Scripture teaching us when we would instead expect that, typically, these commands would be most naturally implemented in response to our circumstances?
- Heavenly gentleness doesn’t insist on our rights, but instead is sweet reasonableness to all men. The word “reasonableness,” “gentle spirit,” etc. (translation-dependent) in v. 5 is the same word in James 3:17. Review James 3:13-18 (and indeed 3:1-12 as well). What are specific ways you can let your reasonableness/gentleness “be known to everyone”? Who is included in the “everyone”? How does the Lord being at hand give you comfort and strength to press on in this self-sacrifice?
- In vv. 6-7, we see that being presented with present or future problems, paradoxes, unanswered questions, etc. in life’s circumstances and events do not necessarily either detract from what we are called to do in a given situation or demand a given response from us. If we may not get an answer to our questions, not be shown the future turnout of events, etc., what other purposes might God have for providentially giving us these problems/paradoxes/questions?

3. Practice God's Peace in Your Life (vv. 8-9)

- What is the command in v. 8? How many times have we seen the importance of the mind at the root of Paul’s various discussions in Philippians (go back and count them)? Considering the centrality of the mind to the Christian life and walk, to what extent should we apply each of the eight characteristics of right thinking in v. 8? Review each characteristic and state examples both of what accord with them and what are contrary to them (defining each biblically if you can).
- Verse 9 commands that we must practice what we have learned; simple mind control is not enough to guarantee peace. In fact, it is in having the things of this earth stripped from you that you will experience God’s peace and the fruit of His presence. How does your own spirit respond to this truth? How do you think those in your family will respond? Fellow believers? Your neighbors, coworkers, unbelieving friends, etc.? How does a person of the world (an unbeliever) respond when the things of this earth are stripped from them (first, define for yourself “things of this earth”)? How should we respond?