

Philippians 4 • The Secure Mind

Introduction

In this chapter, Paul teaches that the secure mind – that which is guarded by the peace of God – frees us from worry. There's a catch, however – we have to have put into practice those things Paul taught in the previous chapters. If a Believer does not achieve the single mind (chapter 1), the submissive mind (chapter 2), and the spiritual mind (chapter 3), they cannot acquire the secure mind, the mind that is free from worry.

The roots of the English word “worry” actually stems from “to strangle”, and is a fitting description of the effects of worry. Worry is basically wrong thinking and attitudes towards people, circumstances, or things. Because Paul had the single mind of chapter 1, he gained victory over circumstances; because he had the submissive mind of chapter 2, he overcame troublesome people; because he had the spiritual mind of chapter 3, he triumphed over physical circumstances (things). Therefore it's natural for him to have the secure mind described in this final chapter, the result of sanctification being a mind and heart at peace which cannot be disturbed by people, circumstances, or things.

¹Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.

²I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. ³Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! ⁵Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.

[Read v.1-5]

Q: To get the overall context right, let's start by placing the final statement in v.5 in the proper context. What does it mean, “The Lord is near”?

A: This is not a reference to the Second Coming, but a reminder that we are in Christ's presence. In this context it's making a statement about how we should behave towards others the same way we'd behave standing before the very presence of Christ.

Q: What are the GENERAL instructions which Paul gives to everyone?

1. “...stand firm in the Lord...” (v.1)
2. “...live in harmony in the Lord...” (v.2)
3. “...rejoice in the Lord...” (v.4)
4. “...The Lord is near”. (v.4)

Point: What Paul is describing is “practicing the presence of God”, of seeing Him in every situation in life in order to allow Him to work out His will.

Q: What is the purpose of Paul's inclusion of specific instructions to the two women? How does it relate to this teaching?

A: These two women who seemed to be at odds with each other are being encouraged to make things right. Biblically speaking, one cannot properly live and serve in Christ's presence if personal relationships go unreconciled.

“Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.

Matthew 5:23-24

Point: Paul begins by addressing the issue of God's presence.

Application: If we keep in mind that Christ is always with us in every circumstance, then it's easy to obey him and get along with others. Part of being willing to heal personal relationships is fixing our eyes on Him instead of other people by living in His presence, not thinking of Him as absent and out of sight.

⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. ⁹The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

[Read v.6-9]

Q: What is the biblical definition of “peace with God”?

A: It's what results from faith in Christ.

*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
Romans 5:1*

Point: *This might be better understood by the fact the word “faith” can also be translated “faithfulness”. If we're faithful – consistently walking according to His Word and ways, we'll be practicing right thinking, right prayer, and right living, all the right behaviors of someone living in the very presence of God, someone whose heart and mind is guarded by Christ.*

Q: What is Paul's first point in v.6-7 when it comes to achieving God's peace?

A: It's not just praying, but “**right** praying”.

1. The word “*prayer*” actually means “adoration”. It is describing an expression of love, enjoying God's presence, of honoring Him in worship.
2. Next comes “*supplication*” where one expresses the earnest, sincere desire of their heart. It's prayer that comes from the heart, not the lips.
3. Finally, “*thanksgiving*” is the expression of sincere appreciation.

Point: *It takes faith to thank God for uncomfortable circumstances or requests not yet granted. This is exactly how Daniel prayed, someone who experienced peace not only in captivity, but the lion's den.*

Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously.

Daniel 6:10

Q; What is Paul's second point in v.8 when it comes to achieving God's peace?

A: It doesn't simply involve the mind, but requires “right thinking”.

For as he thinks within himself, so he is...

Proverbs 23:7a

Q: How can we be absolutely sure that anything is “right”, “pure”, “lovely” or so forth?

A: When they're so defined by God's Word.

*The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul;
The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.
The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.
The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether.*

Psalms 19:7-9

Point: Meditation on the Word of God meets all the requirements of v.8.

Q: What is Paul's final point in v.9 when it comes to achieving God's peace?

A: Paul is expressing "right living", putting into practice God's Word and ways to the point of being visibly changed by them.

Point: Put them all together and you have the proper application of prayer, the study of God's Word, and obedience.

Application: If there is something in our life we dare not pray about, we will never have peace because it's an indication of "wrong" thinking and "wrong" living allowed to reside side-by-side with our Christianity. It's not enough to use the Bible as a basis for prayer and claiming promises; it must also be the basis for living.

¹⁰But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity. ¹¹Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. ¹²I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. ¹³I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

[Read v.10-13]

Q: What is the third aspect of the secure mind?

A: It's achieved by relying on God's power, not one's own.

Q: What are the characteristics of faith in God's power? How are they evident?

1. "...I have learned to be content..." (v.11)
2. "...I know how to get along with humble means...also...in prosperity..." (v.12)
3. "...I know how to live...in any and every circumstance..." (v.12)
4. "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." (v.13)

Q: What did Paul establish back in Philippians 2:12-13 as to what has to take place first?

A: "...work out your salvation...for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure".

Point: God cannot work **THROUGH** us until He first works **IN** us.

Q: What are the three ways by which God works in us?

1. His Word. 1 Thess. 2:13, "For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe."
2. Prayer by the Spirit. Ephesians 3:14-19, "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father...to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man...filled up to all fullness with God."
3. Suffering (which builds obedience). 1 Peter 5:10, "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you."

Point: We have the same characteristics as in the previous section of the proper application of prayer, the study of God's Word, and obedience.

Application: If we depend on our own strength, we will fail; if we depend on His strength, we can do all things through Him. How is this connected with understanding and being obedient to God's Word, ways, and will and not our own?

¹⁴Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction.

¹⁵You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; ¹⁶for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. ¹⁷Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. ¹⁸But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. ¹⁹And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

²¹Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. ²²All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.

²³The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

[Read v.14-23]

Q: Paul previously explained that the secure mind came from the proper application of God's presence, God's peace, and God's power. How would you describe this final sermon point?

A: God's provision.

Point: *God always meets our needs. It's one of the central points of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount when it comes to the issue of worry "strangling" our life.*

"For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"

Matthew 6:25

Q: What is the greater value of the Philippians' gifts?

A: The spiritual meaning is far more important to Paul than the gifts themselves. Even in God's provision of Paul's needs through others, Paul is more concerned about the proper working of God's will according to **HIS** Word and ways rather than the world's.

Application: *When the child of God is in the will of God, all of the universe works for them; but when the child of God is out of the will of God, everything works against them. This is the true definition of God's "providence".*

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Romans 8:28

Overall Application

God's peace is not a supernatural emotion making one oblivious to their surroundings and callous to all people and conditions, but the result of faith at work in a life committed to prayer, God's Word, and obedience. In the end the mind saturated with God's peace is seeing and trusting everything from God's perspective instead of one's own.