

9. Learning How to Experience the Peace of God

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to focus on the goal that Christ has for their lives. That goal is to become more and more like Christ as we grow and mature in our spiritual lives. We saw that Paul encouraged the Christians in Philippi to follow his example. In the same way, we want to encourage our children to follow our example. In order for us to provide an effective example, it must be our goal to become more and more like Christ. In our topic today, we are going to see how to help our children learn to experience the peace of God.

In Philippians 4:1-3 we read, “Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved. I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names *are* in the Book of Life.” As we begin this chapter, we are reminded again of the great love that Paul had for the Christians that lived in Philippi. Paul longed to see them again because of this great love that he had for them.

Paul said that the Christians in Philippi were his joy and crown. Here, we see that these Christians brought great joy to the life of Paul. Other Christians also brought great joy to his life. 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 says, “For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Is it* not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.” Paul had great joy because he knew that the Christians in these cities would stand with him in the presence of the Lord. The word that is translated “crown” was used to describe the wreath that was given as a prize and was placed on the heads of those who had won a race. Peter said in 1 Peter 5:4, “And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.” Paul would have that crown of glory given to him because of his faithful leadership to the Christians at Philippi and in other places. As a result, Paul encouraged the Christians at Philippi to stand firm in the Lord just as a soldier stood guard at his post.

Next, Paul spoke to two of the women in the church at Philippi. Paul appealed to these two women to have the same mind or to have peace with one another. It may be possible that these two women had some kind of a personal conflict between themselves that was having a negative effect on the church. By the way, this is the only problem that is mentioned about the church at Philippi. Paul had said earlier in Philippians 2:3-4, “*Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” Paul knew that if these two women would each esteem the other person better than themselves that would solve their conflict and would prevent their conflict from having a negative impact on others.

The word that is translated “true companion” means *one that is yoked together*. It can also be translated as the name “Syzygos”. Whoever this person was, he had worked closely with Paul when he was in Philippi. Now, Paul encouraged him to assist or help those women who had worked with him in the Gospel when he was in Philippi. Acts 16:13 says, “And on the Sabbath

day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met *there*.” Since these women, especially Lydia, are mentioned in Acts, it is possible that these were the women who had worked closely with Paul. Paul also encouraged this companion (Syzygos?) to help Clement and the other fellow workers that helped Paul when he was in Philippi. These fellow workers all had their names written in the Book of Life.

Philippians 4:4-7 goes on to say, “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord *is* at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” The word “rejoice” is used in every chapter in the book of Philippians. After the apostles were beaten in Acts 5, Acts 5:41 says, “So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.” We see that the apostles rejoiced for the privilege of suffering for Christ. Here, in Philippians, we are reminded that it is the Lord who makes it possible to rejoice even in very trying times because He is working in our lives.

In addition to rejoicing, Paul also gave several other instructions. The word that is translated “gentleness” means *gentle and fair*. The inner attitude that produces gentleness is an attitude of humility. In the other four places where this word is used, it is translated “gentle”. James 3:17 says, “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.” Paul, James and Peter all wrote about the importance of a gentle spirit.

The word that is translated “be anxious” means *to be troubled and worry about the things that are happening in our lives*. Matthew 6:34 says, “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day *is* its own trouble.” When we worry about any situation, we are showing a lack of trust in the Lord to work through every situation. As a result, we are told not to worry. However, we are also told what to do instead of worry. We are to have a time of prayer. As we pray, we are to bring our requests to the Lord. We are to include thanksgiving with those requests. When we have an attitude of thanksgiving, it shows our thankfulness to the Lord and recognizes that He will do what is best to accomplish His will regarding those requests.

When we come to the Lord with thanksgiving as we make our requests, we see that the Lord will give us His peace. The word that is translated “surpasses” means that *which is superior or greater*. The peace that the Lord gives us is greater than those who do not trust Christ can even imagine. God says that this peace will guard our hearts and minds. The word that is translated “guard” is a military word. 1 Peter 1:3-5 says, “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” Here, we see that our hearts and minds are kept by the power of God through faith.

Philippians 4:8-9 goes on to say, “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.” In order to have peace, we need to choose to think about the things that will produce that inner peace. We see that we are to think about the things that are true. Christ said in John 14:6 that He is the way, the truth and the life. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth in John 16:13. John 3:33 says, “He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true.” In John 17:17, Christ said as He prayed, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.” As a result, we are reminded that God and His Word are the source of all truth.

We are also to think on the things that are noble. The word that is translated “noble” means *that which is respected and honorable*. The word that is translated “just” means those *things that are righteous and approved of God*. The word that is translated “pure” means those *things that are clean and free from sin*. The word that is translated “lovely” means those things *which are acceptable, pleasing and kind*. The word that is translated “good report” means those *things which are highly respected*. Psalm 19:14 says, “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.” These words help to remind us that what we think determines what we become.

However, Paul did not just tell the Philippians to think about these things. In addition, he also reminded them that he had taught and modeled these things by his example. The word that is translated “learned” means *to learn by use and practice*. Paul illustrated this from his own life when he said in Philippians 4:11, “Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.” Here, we see that Paul had himself learned to be content because he practiced working to become content. We also teach our children by the lessons that we are learning in our own lives.

The word that is translated “received” means *to take to one’s self*. Colossians 2:6-7 says, “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.” The Philippians had applied the teaching of Paul to their own lives. They had been able to take the instruction of Paul and apply it to their lives because they had both heard him teach and seen him apply what he taught in his own life. Paul told the Philippians that if they would practice the things they had learned through him from the Word of God, they would experience the God of peace in their lives. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children also experience the peace that comes from having the God of peace in their lives. That will happen as we show them how to apply the Word of God to their lives by our own example. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to experience the God of peace in their lives.