

Fellowship of Joy in Peace (Part 2B)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 October 2012

Preacher: Don Coleman

[0:00] Well, let's take our Bibles this morning, get right into it, Matthew chapter, Matthew, no, Philippians.

Philippians chapter 4, and I'm going to read our text once again, and we're looking at verses 2 through 9. Philippians chapter 4, verses 2 through 9. Let me read that text to you.

I implore Iodia 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.

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 and 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. 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.

[1:32] The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do. And the God of peace will be with you. Alright?

Now, our subject, of course, if you've been following along, been here the last couple of weeks, we've been in this text for now two weeks and now third.

Our theme is what? Peace. Peace. Let me just go ahead and tell you. I know you were getting there because I heard, at least I could read some lips, and I know that many of you were saying, the fellowship of joy and peace.

And so keeping in with, keeping with the scheme that I've been using as we've been preaching, I've been preaching through this book. In keeping with that scheme, here's our theme.

The fellowship of joy, this time in peace. In peace. Because contained in this passage is a promise. There's a promise here.

[2:32] And it is, of course, the promise of peace. And this promise of peace is given to all born-again believers, all true followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, again, as I pointed out last time, Paul's full statement of this promise comes quite a bit later in the text. It doesn't appear until we get to verse 7.

And the reason, again, is because Paul's focus, his emphasis, is not so much on the promise of peace, though that's the part we like.

But his emphasis, his focus is primarily on what it takes to have that promise, to enjoy that promise, to experience it, this promise of peace.

Now, let me point you to where the promise is stated. Verse 7, again, and the peace of God, here's the promise, the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

[3:34] That's a promise. And then, of course, again, at the end of that particular text, in verse 9, he makes another reference to the promise. He says, and the God of peace will be with you.

This is the promise. Now, remember, don't lose sight of this truth, this fact, reality concerning the text, concerning what Paul is trying to tell us.

Don't forget that there is the promise of peace, yes. But there is also, or are also, the precepts for peace.

There is the promise of peace, also the precepts for peace. And again, the word precept means a rule of behavior, a law, if you will, a law of how we're to conduct our lives on some specific matters.

And so there are these precepts. And most of the text, these verses, verses 2 through 9, this entire text is primarily populated with verses that deal with the precepts.

[4:42] Because you can't just have the promise without first obeying the precepts. Now, that's not a popular message.

That's not necessarily what we want to hear. We want the promise without the precepts. We want that to just be simply grace, you know, without having to do anything to receive it.

But listen, there is no such thing as grace that is without some condition. Now, I'm not talking about grace unto salvation.

That is absolutely unconditional. And anything you can do to deserve God's grace and salvation.

But having once received that gracious salvation, there are things outlined for us, detailed in God's Word, that God wants us to do.

And with our obedience to His precepts comes blessing. Comes blessing. That is a principle that you'll find throughout Scripture. And that's the case here.

[5:44] You can't just have the promise without first obeying the precepts. The promise of peace that is made very clear here in verse 7. That promise of peace is a consequence of, or we might even say a reward of, obedience or coming from our obedience to the precepts for peace.

Alright, so now we've looked at the promise. We did that a couple of Sundays ago. And last Sunday we started to look at these precepts. And we're going to continue with that. These precepts for peace.

And Paul gives us six of them. There are six precepts given to us. Precepts for peace. Now, to give you a little bit of a review.

Precept number one. Be reconciled. There's the first precept he mentions. Be reconciled. This is an exhortation. Now, albeit given to a specific, to people in the church, but by way of inspiration and through the power of God's Word, it's extended to all of us.

And here is the exhortation to us. Be reconciled. So look again there at verses 2 and 3, where Paul says, I implore or urge, we might use the word urge, plead with Iodia and Syneche.

[7:02] And these, again, are a couple of women in the church who were at odds with one another over some point of disagreement. We don't know what it was, but they were at odds with one another.

And Paul is saying to them, Be reconciled. This is the way he put it. To be of the same mind in the Lord. That is, to be reconciled. And Paul even goes a little bit further and urges.

He says here, His trusted servant of the Lord. His true companion. I believe a reference to Epaphroditus. And he references some of these other co-workers in the gospel with him.

And he's urging them to help these women to reconcile with one another. Because it's so important in the church. And why is it so important? Because we cannot minister the gospel of peace as we are commanded to do.

While at the same time we're at war with one another. And so it's very important that we be reconciled to one another. And here in this text, Paul's attaching that to peace.

[8:03] And so the consequence of being reconciled to one another is peace. It's peace. Verse 7, And the peace of God that surpasses all understanding.

Will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. So precept number one, Be reconciled.

Precept number two, Be rejoicing.

Be rejoicing. Paul said in verse 4, Rejoice in the Lord. How often? Always. Always. Again, I will say rejoice.

And again, rejoicing is really simply the expression of an inner reality. And that inner reality is joy.

And the expression may include emotion. But that which produces that rejoicing is not an emotion.

[9:00] Joy is not an emotion. It is an abiding confidence in something. And that something is primarily God. The joy, true Christian joy, The joy is a confidence in God.

First of all, a confidence in His saving grace. Something that we should never ever lose sight of.

Something we should never ever get over. And that is His saving grace toward us.

And so it's a confidence in that. But going further than that, It is also a confidence that no matter

what, God is always in control. That no matter what may happen, What may come, It's a confidence that all things are, According to God's purpose, All things are for the believer's ultimate good.

And our circumstances, No matter what they may be, No matter how hard they may be, Cannot violate that purpose that God has for us. Cannot stop it.

Also be rejoicing. Paul says, Rejoice in the Lord always, And the peace of God, Which surpasses all understanding, Will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

[10:05] The promise of peace is the consequence, Or the reward, Of obedience to God's precepts, His rules of behavior. So precept number one, Be reconciled.

Precept number two, Be rejoicing. And we saw this also last week. Precept number three, Be reasonable. Be reasonable. Be reasonable, people. Have you ever heard anybody say that to you? Be reasonable. And that's what Paul is saying. Verse five, He says, Let your gentleness, Or your reasonableness, We might even use the word graciousness, Be known to all men.

And why? Because the Lord is at hand. He may come at any moment. And the idea here is that we are not always, We're not to always be claiming our personal rights in everything.

You know, We just have to have our way. We have to have our rights. We need to be gracious. We need to be reasonable. And this is Paul's exhortation to us. To stop being self-centered, Self-serving, Self-seeking.

[11:09] And instead, Be reasonable with one another. And let that reasonableness be known to everyone around you. And then what will happen? And the peace of God will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Alright, so there are three of the precepts. Three of the six. And now we're ready for number four. Number four is, Be reassured. Be reassured. Be reassured.

Verse six. And by the way, You know, This is one of those famous verses in the letter to the Philippians. Verse six. And it begins this way.

Be anxious for nothing. Some of you have the King James. And you have the word careful. Be careful for nothing. That might be a little confusing. But when you think about it, It makes perfect sense.

It means to be full of cares. Careful. And we don't always use that word careful in that sense today. But in the old King's English, When a person was careful, It meant that they were full of cares.

[12:12] That is, They were anxious. And so that's why it's translated that way here in our text. Now we could use another word. And that would be the word worry. Maybe that would connect with us more clearly.

Worry. Or anxious. But regardless of which word you use. Worry. Anxious. Anxious. Anxious. Here's what we need to understand. There is nothing. In the believer's life. That epitomizes more accurately. The opposite of peace.

Than anxiety. It is the absolute opposite of peace. Anxiety. Or again, if you want to use the word worry.

In fact, let's just use the word worry. Some of you might have, by the way, one of our more contemporary translations. And some of those choose to use the word worry here. And that's perfectly fine, perfectly right.

[13:11] For example, don't worry about anything. That does capture the meaning that Paul is conveying here. Now, here's the dictionary definition of worry.

It is a troubled state of mind. You'd agree with that, wouldn't you? Worry is a troubled state of mind. Resulting from concern about current or potential difficulties.

That's kind of a complicated definition. But when you think about it, that pretty much pegs it, doesn't it? Worry. A troubled state of mind resulting from concern.

I would say, add the word inordinate concern. And over-the-top concern about current or potential difficulties. The word itself, by the way, comes from a word that means to strangle.

I don't know that I would have ever associated the word worry or anxiety with the word strangle. But that is its roots. The etymology of the word.

[14:15] It means to strangle. And originally, it came from the kind of the habits of certain wild animals who would bite their prey around the neck and hold on to the neck until eventually they strangled their prey to death.

We've seen that on the animal channel and some of the other things. You see that. It's gruesome. It's gross. That's how they do it. They just strangle the very life out of their victim, their prey.

And how fitting a definition would that be? Or how fitting is the origin of that word in a spiritual sense? Because, you see, worry...

Some of you know this to be true because you've experienced it. Some of us have yet to discover this. But worry, anxiety, will strangle you both physically and spiritually eventually.

Worry will choke the life right out of you. It will. So let's understand that about worry. Someone has put it this way that worry pulls tomorrow's cloud over today's sunshine.

[15 : 31] Interesting way of putting it. Or how about this one? I like this one. Worry gives a small thing a big shadow. Boy, that really pegs it too.

But I need to go much deeper and say something more serious about worry. Worry is sin. It's sin. We kind of joke and laugh about people being worry warts.

And we might even characterize ourselves that way sometimes. Oh, I'm just an old worry wart. And kind of in a flippant way. But really, dear people, worry is sin. Because worry is the evidence of faithlessness.

It is, in one sense, the opposite of faith. Worry is faithlessness. Now, let me ask you something. We've been studying the book of Philippians for a while.

And every once in a while in our study, I've mentioned the people of Philippi, these believers in this church. And I think you probably can assume that all believers in this day were experiencing the same things.

[16 : 37] And so let me ask you something. Did the Philippian believers have anything to worry about? I mean, was there anything in their lives? Anything about their experiences as believers that could potentially cause anxiety?

Well, yes. Did they have any troubles? You bet they did. Poverty for one thing. Persecution for another.

Maybe persecution would lead the list. They were persecuted people as nearly all believers, true believers in that day were. They were extremely persecuted. Did they have anything to trouble them?

Anything that would be a potential worry to them? Absolutely. Do you? Do you?

Of course you do. We all do. We do. Some small things. Maybe even most of them you would characterize as small things, but you worry about them.

[17 : 48] Some of them big things. That is, again, do we all have an occasion to be troubled about things?

To worry. And the answer is yes. Now, if worry is sin, and every one of us have reasons, occasions, things in our lives that would potentially tempt us to worry, then what's the answer to that?

Well, I think we find that in this text, in this, really, this one verse. And so, taking this one verse this morning, this famous verse of Scripture in the Bible, certainly in the book of Philippians, let's understand some things about worry.

Or, really, how to have victory over it. And there are three things I want you to see. We might even call these steps. Steps toward victory over worry.

All right, now get these down. Number one. Discern the real problem. Whatever you're facing, you're having anxiety, you're having problems, you're worrying or unsettled or concerned or whatever word you want to use.

[19 : 16] And the first thing you need to do is discern the real problem. And it's not what you think. You see, you have problems that arise in life, every one of you.

Some of you are dealing with some things right now. Sometimes, by the way, and we might as well address this, we worry about things we don't even remember.

We don't remember what it was about. Or we have the symptoms of anxiety and maybe even what we would call today depression and we don't really know the source of it.

We don't even know the cause of it. But many of us have identifiable things in our lives right now that we're worried about.

And so what do we need to do? We need to discern the real problem. The real problem. Now, folks, when the problems we face cause us to worry.

[20 : 29] And that worry then leading us to fear, to be fearful. When fear and anxiety so strangles us that it begins to render us dysfunctional.

You know what I'm talking about? I mean dysfunctional as a believer. Dysfunctional in our service and worship to the Lord. But not just that.

Dysfunctional in life in general. When anxiety and worry and fear and all these things really go together. When those things render us dysfunctional.

When these things dominate our thought life. So that we then see everything and everyone. And we see it through a certain lens.

It's cloudy. Or maybe colored in a certain way. When anxiety and fear and all these things that go with it. When they distort.

[21:45] Begin to distort our outlook on life. So that we don't see anything positive about it. Though there are positive things there.

We don't see those things. Or we interpret them in a negative way. When that begins to happen. They dominate our thought life.

This distorts our outlook on life. I could add to that. Dictates to us the activities of life. It begins to rule your activity.

Or maybe it would be better defined as inactivity. Some people are so worried about things that they won't even leave the house. Afraid to drive anywhere.

Afraid to make a decision. Anxiety. Anxiety. And it dictates the activities of your life.

[22:51] When it begins to destroy your joy. The joy of life. Folks, that's the problem.

Not the set of circumstances. Even if you remember them. Or whatever they may be. The problem is the anxiety. The problem is the worry.

The problem is the fear itself. And the underlying faithlessness. That is at the heart of that.

That's the problem. Not the circumstances. But the worry itself. Paul said, be anxious for nothing but in everything.

You see that word everything. And certainly that means everything. But in the context, it's a specific reference to all those things you may face. All those troubles in your life that may cause anxiety in your life.

[23:53] In all those things. In everything. The implication being, you will have troubles. There is not one single promise in the Bible that says to the believer, listen, you'll never have any trouble.

We know that, don't we? And so Paul has admitted that. It's just part. It's implied. That you will have troubles. You will have challenges.

You will have problems. You will have things in your life that potentially will cause you to worry. Or be anxious. Or even fear.

And to slip into kind of an outlook on life that absolutely cripples your life. Those things are going to happen.

But the troubles are not the issue. How you deal with them is the issue. How you respond to them.

That's the problem. The problem Paul's addressing is worry.

[24:59] It's worry. That's what we need to focus on here. And listen to me. It's very important.

When you are being strangled by anxiety.

Whatever its source. That is a sure sign that you have lost your assurance that God is still God. And that He is your God.

You've lost the assurance of that. You have in effect taken on a lower view of God. Of who God is. Personally. You've lost the assurance that God knows all about your struggles. You've lost the assurance that He still loves you.

And that He has promised to care for you. And you've lost the assurance that nothing. Absolutely nothing is beyond His sovereignty. And His power in your life.

[26:01] Again. In essence. You have diminished. Have a diminished view of God. The person of God. That He is God.

And that He is your God. I like what A.W. Tozer once wrote. The church. He said. Has surrendered her once lofty concept of God.

And has submitted. Or substituted for it. One so low. As to be utterly unworthy of thinking.

Worshipping people. A low view of God.

And then he said this. The low view of God. Entertained by almost. Entertained almost universally among Christians. Is the cause of a hundred lesser evils everywhere among us.

And worry is one of those. Anxiety. Whichever word best defines it for you.

[27:01] Believers. And. Believers. In America especially. I think. Are typically. Fragile in their faith.

And yet we have every reason to be strong in our faith. But most Americans.

American believers. Professing believers. Have a very fragile faith. That faith that can be damaged. Or faith that can be thrown out.

At. At almost anything that might happen. Fragile. Anxiety over troubling issues. Depression over life itself.

American believers are more apt. To be depressed. I think. Than most believers. In other parts of the world. Who are by the way. Under intense persecution. Maybe we could.

[27:59] Benefit from a good dose of persecution. You know. Depression. Becoming. I mean.

It's becoming. A very common. Clinical. Malady. Among God's people. Many just cannot cope with life. I'm talking about.

Professing believers. And so what I'm trying to say is. The real problem. Is not. The difficulty. The circumstance. But the worry itself.

The anxiety itself. And let me say this again. Worry. Is a clear sign. That you have lost your assurance. That God is still God.

And that he is your God. And that he loves you. And that he knows about all things. That are happening in your life. And he is absolutely sovereign over all of those things. You've lost the assurance of that.

[28:57] And we need to be reassured. And so. Here's the exhortation. Be. Re. Assured. And step number one to that is. To discern the real problem.

The second one is this. Deliver the right prayer. Deliver the right prayer. Paul said. Be anxious for nothing.

But in everything. By prayer and supplication. With thanksgiving. Let your requests be made known to God. The answer is prayer. Isn't it? It's prayer.

Prayer. And in this verse. Paul provides. Really a. Great. Description of prayer. Something we. Can. Can. Learn from.

Very instructional. And motivational. And. And first. He gives us some specifics about it. He. He lists some specifics.

[29:52] Of prayer. And there are three of them. Three words that he uses here. That are very. Descriptive. Of prayer. Three. Aspects of prayer. And here are the three words. Prayer. Supplication.

And requests. Now I could add thanksgiving to that. But we'll get to that one. These three are really descriptive of prayer itself. The features of prayer.

Prayer. Supplication. Requests. These are three distinctive words. That we need to understand what they mean. The word prayer. Sounds very general.

Doesn't it? And I guess we could say that. That the word prayer. Prayer. Prosuke. Prosuke. Prosuke. Prosuke is the Greek word. It could be thought of as a general word. It's just kind of general.

About prayer itself. But it's more than that. A lot more than that. Prosuke. Prosuke. Is a word that means literally. To come into the presence of God.

[30:48] Now that's something a little different. Isn't it? Do you consider prayer. As. The act of coming into the very presence of God.

God. I think you would all agree with that definition of prayer. But do we think in those terms when we pray? That we're actually coming in to the very presence of God.

You see. Prayer. Prayer. This word prayer. Prosuke. Is. As someone has described. And I think. Aptly described it.

It is the believer. Leaving. The cares. Of the world. Behind. To get. Lost. In the presence of God. I love that definition.

Of prayer. Regardless of the substance of the prayer. The direction of the prayer. The focus of the prayer. Other elements of the prayer. Prayer in general. Is this. It is the believer.

[31:46] Leaving. The cares. And worries. And anxieties. Of the world. Behind. And. Then. Getting. Lost. In the very presence of God.

Think about that next time you pray. Loving him. That's what prayer is about. Adoring him. Worshipping him.

All of these things. And listen. It is only. In the presence of God. That we can. Get our eyes. Off. Our troubles. And focus.

On the very face. Of God. Our heavenly father. And as he. Grows larger. In our hearts. Our problems. Grow smaller. In our minds.

That's prayer. Because. As I've heard it put. Prayer. Is literally. Stepping into the realm. Where troubles. And sorrows. And worries. Cannot follow.

[32:44] But now. Prayer is not. A place. Where we just. Simply forget. About all of our troubles. We're not. Experiencing them there. But we don't forget.

About them. Because we need. To take them. To the Lord. And that's why. There is this second word. Supplications. Supplication. Some have. The word.

Petition. Petition. And that's. A very important word. This is more. By the way. Than just coming. To God.

With your list. Of needs. And wants. Something. Along the lines. Of a shopping list. You know. We've got them. Written down. And we submit them. To God.

Here's what I need. What I want. Would you fill. My request. Supplication. Much more than that. The idea behind this word. Is. Earnestness.

[33:36] Passion. It is. The earnest. Sharing. Of our burdens. And our needs. With God.

The earnest. Share. We have that. Versus scripture. The fervent. Or earnest. Prayer. Of the righteous. Avails much. This is the.

That's what. Supplication. Is. The earnest. Sharing. Of our burdens. And needs. With God. Those. Burdens. By the way. And needs. That. Move the soul.

That's why. Passion. Is part of it. And then Paul uses. A very specific word. Requests. And it's a specific word. About specific.

Praying. Because. That's the idea here. Clearly. Detailed. Prayer. That's why. I need. What. I'm saying. Said. We've got to.

[34:32] Deliver the right prayer. This is. Detailed. Prayer. It is. Praying. The specifics. Sometimes. Our prayers. Are so general. Let's just be honest. Sometimes. Our prayers. Are so.

General. That if God. Really answers them. We don't even know it. But we need to pray.

Specifically. And God. Answers. Specifically. Our prayers.

Specifics. The specifics. Of prayer. Second. About this prayer. This right praying. Paul says something about the situations. Calling for prayer. And this is an easy one.

Isn't it? What did he say? In everything. In everything. Let your requests be made known to God. Now what does everything exclude?

I guess we could say selfish prayers. But obviously. But I mean in this sense. Everything.

[35:29] It includes everything. Everything. And in the context. It includes every trouble you face. Even if you think they're insignificant.

Even if you have. Have. Created in them yourself. You know. Sometimes we can. Just imagine things that are not true. Sometimes we can create.

And manufacture troubles. That really are not there. Are we to bring those to God? Yeah. He can show us the error of our way.

And the error of our judgments. We're to. Here are the situations for prayer. That call for prayer. Everything. Everything. I heard about a man who said.

And he said it very proudly. He said. I only pray to God about the big things. And I figure he wants me to take care of everything else. And his friend replied. He said.

[36:26] Can you imagine anything big to God? Huh? What would be big to God? And I would add to that. Can you imagine or name one thing in your life.

That is. Too small for God to care about. Because if it's important to you. It's important to God.

See. Worry is the real problem. Not the trouble itself. And how needless it is for us to worry. Paul said. Be anxious for nothing. That is. Don't worry about anything.

But in everything. By prayer and supplication. Let your requests. Be made known. To God. Deliver the right prayer. The specifics.

The prayer. The situations calling for prayer. And then third. The spirit in prayer. What is the spirit. In prayer.

[37:24] Not the Holy Spirit. This is not a reference to the Holy Spirit. It's not. Spirit with a capital S. Now the Holy Spirit is involved. And engaged in our praying. Absolutely. But that's not the point here.

The point here is the spirit of man. The spirit. Your spirit. The kind of spirit you have in prayer. And what is it? Well Paul says it's with thanksgiving. What does that mean?

Does that mean we're just supposed to thank God. Even before he answers it? Well I think it does that. But that's more than that. What does it mean to pray. With thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving. Well get this down. Praying in the spirit of thanksgiving. Reveals three things about your faith. It reveals number one.

A remembrance. Of God's supply in the past. Do you remember God's supply in the past?

[38:21] His answers to prayer in the past. Do you remember that? And here's the attitude. This is the substance of this kind of faith. This remembrance of God's supply in the past. It is saying to yourself.

God has taken care of me in the past. And I'm so grateful. And I know he's going to now and in the future. That's praying with thanksgiving.

A remembrance of God's supply in the past. But it's a second thing. It is submission to God's sovereignty in the present. That's praying with thanksgiving.

That God you are so sovereign. And so all powerful. That I can submit to you and trust you with this thing right now in the present. And then it's a third thing.

A faith in God's sufficiency for the future. I don't have to worry about the future. God is going to take care of that.

[39:25] And I trust Him. That's praying with thanksgiving. A remembrance of God's supply in the past. A submission to God's sovereignty in the present.

And a faith in God's sufficiency for the future. For the future. Now. Do you want peace?

The kind of peace that Paul describes here. Peace that surpasses all understanding. A peace that is on guard.

Always. Never sleeping. Guarding the citadel of your life. You want that kind of peace? Of mind and heart? Then be reassured.

Be reassured. Discern the real problem you face. Anxiety is the problem. Be anxious for nothing.

Deliver the right prayer. In everything.

[40:24] By prayer and supplication. Make your requests. With thanksgiving. Let your requests be made known to God. And then third. And finally. Discover the resulting promise.

And it's verse 7. What is the promise? And the peace of God.

Which surpasses all understanding. It's sovereign. Will guard your heart and mind. Through Christ Jesus. That's the problem.

Discover that promise. Be reassured.