

Introduction: I may be wrong about this. (A friend in high school called me peculiar – see *1 Peter 2:9*, KJV – almost every week.) But, I think everyone is longing for true peace and wholeness. I know I am. *** The problem is that it is humanly impossible to obtain, or bring about peace. We are all just broken enough that we have neither the wisdom nor the courage to make peace by our own efforts. *** Peace is, quite bluntly, a gracious gift from THE One covenant making and keeping God: Yahweh (Jehovah in English). *** And, it is a gift which must be humbly received carefully by faith; and, peace from God is maintained by obedience to God motivated by gratitude. *** As Paul concludes the exhortations in his letter of friendship exhortation to the church that had fully participated with him in the Gospel since he planted it, he puts forth the peace of God as the promise to all who rejoice IN the Lord, allowing His forbearing kindness to flow through them to all people; and, instead of worrying, they always pray – letting their requests be known to God. Then, they will be protected by God’s peace which surpasses the understanding of their finite human minds. All of this is for those who are IN Christ Jesus, surrendered and submitted to Him. ***

Joyful, faithful obedience to God gives His peace

Then, if they will consider all that is virtuous IN God and in people, and put into practice what they have observed in the apostle, then The God of peace will be with them. This is the great covenant promise: people in union with The Creator, through The Savior will enjoy the strong, life-giving, life-changing LOVE of The Almighty God. *** Now, let’s go deeper – praying that NOT only will we be enlightened; but, also, we will be further transformed into the true image of God IN Savior Jesus!

I. Joy IN the Lord and gentleness from His presence overcome anxiety through thankful petitionary prayer resulting in God’s surpassing peace. (Verses 4-7)

A. Always rejoice IN the Lord, and let forbearance be known to all. (Verses 4-5)

1. Rejoice IN the Lord always! (Verse 4a)

Rejoice: ‘Rejoice in the Lord’ occurs nine times in the King James Bible. Six times it is a command. In the rest it is a pledge of the speaker. Paul uses rejoice nine times in this letter. (1:18 – 2x; 2:17,18, 28; 3:1; 4:4 – 2x, 10) Of 45 uses in the Old Testament, the best for this letter is in *Habakkuk*: ‘Though the fig tree does not blossom ... and ... the flock be cut off from the fold ... yet I will rejoice in Yahweh, ... in the God of my salvation’ (*Habakkuk 3:17-18*).

IN Lord: This is one of over 120 times Paul uses IN the Lord/Christ/Jesus. People are IN Him by humbly submitting to Him in dependent obedient faith IN who He IS and His work for them.

2. Again, I will say – rejoice! (Verse 4b)

Repetition: For emphasis, Paul repeats the command to rejoice. Joy is the fruit of The Holy Spirit (*Galatians 5:22-23*).

3. Let your kind forbearance (gentleness) be known to all men. (Verse 5a)

Forbearance: This attribute of God, which He gives to His people, leads them to repentance (turning from self to God, *Romans 2:1-4*) and provides gracious redemption IN Christ Jesus (*Romans 3:24-25*).

All men: God’s people are to let forbearance (gentleness) flow through them to everyone – in and out of Christ.

4. The Lord is near. (Verse 5b)

Near: He is always near His people in the person of The Holy Spirit (*John 14:15-18*). And, He will come again soon (*Hebrews 10:35-39; Revelation 22:7-20*).

Cross: Jesus, who showed His LOVE to all by what He did on The Cross, wants us to carry our cross to gain His life (*Matthew 10:37-39; Mark 8:34-38; Luke 14:27*). And, He wants us to share His LOVE in a hostile world. (2:12-18)

B. Worry about nothing, but in everything let requests be known to God, and His surpassing peace shall guard souls IN Christ Jesus. (Verses 6-7)

1. Worry about nothing. (Verse 6a)

Worry: The word means either anxiety or worry. Jesus commanded His disciples not to worry about the things of this life, but to seek first God’s Kingdom and He would provide (*Matthew 6:25-33*).

2. But in everything, with prayer and petition with thanksgiving. (Verses 6b-c)

Prayer: Prayer involves BOTH petitioning God for our needs and the needs of others, AND thanking Him for who He IS, what He has done, and for all His gifts to us – especially The Cross of His Son.

3. Let your requests be made known to God. (Verse 6d)

The Body prays as one: The verb for letting be made known is singular from all the members of the church body. This reflects the miracle of unity Jesus gives to His church.

4. And the peace of God, surpassing all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds. (Verses 7a-b)

God’s shalom-peace: Shalom means much more than the English word peace. It means entering into a state of wholeness and unity – including restored relationships with God and other people; as well as safety and soundness, health and prosperity, quiet and tranquility. God uses all these aspects of His peace to guard human souls – both hearts and minds.

5. IN Christ Jesus. (Verse 7c)

IN Christ Jesus: This section began with a command to rejoice IN the Lord and ends with the promise of God’s peace IN Christ Jesus!

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II. All morality is from God: consider it; and, DO what is learned from the apostles of God by observation – and The God of peace will be present. (Verses 8-9)

A. Brothers, whatever is consistent with God’s character or respected as worthy and excellent by men: consider! (Verse 8)

1. Finally brothers ... consider these things. (Verses 8a, j)

Finally: The first time this word was used (3:1), the first of several commands was to ‘rejoice IN the Lord’! It meant ‘in addition’. Now it does mean ‘finally’! These are the last two commands.

Consider-meditate: There are eight virtues to consider and meditate upon between the subject and the verb. Together, they describe God's awesome character in the context of the Greco-Roman culture.

2. Paul gives a Holy Spirit inspired list of six 'whatever' virtues. (*Verses 8b-g*)
 - i. Whatever is true, (*Verse 8b*)

God's Truth: Jesus (The Word) IS full of Truth (*John 1:14*). Yahweh IS Truth (*Psalms 115:1; 146:6; Isaiah 65:16*).
 - ii. whatever (is) honorable (of good character), (*Verse 8c*)

Character: A person's character is the driver of all the motives and actions of that person. Therefore, it is essential to have good character: to be truthful, righteous and pure.
 - iii. whatever (is) righteous, (*Verse 8d*)

God's Righteousness: Yahweh is righteous (*Psalms 11:7; 119:37; Isaiah 45:21; Jeremiah 12:1; Zephaniah 3:5; 2 Timothy 4:7-8*).
 - iv. whatever (is) pure, (*Verse 8e*)

Pure: Jesus said the pure in heart will see God (*Matthew 5:8*).
 - v. whatever is pleasing, (*Verse 8f*)

Pleasing: This is the only time this word occurs in Scripture, but it was often used by Greek philosophers.
 - vi. whatever (is) of good report, (*Verse 8g*)

Good report: This is also a word from Greek philosophers. Paul is using words for virtue that the people of Philippi who lived in northern Greece would be familiar with from their philosophers. God's virtues can flow to, and take hold in, all cultures – even when He is not fully known or followed in that culture.
3. Paul gives two Holy Spirit inspired 'if any' virtues. (*Verses 8h-i*)
 - i. if any good report of excellence (*Verse 8h*)

Excellence-virtue: This too is a virtue from Greek culture, occurring only here in The Bible.
 - ii. and if any (is) praiseworthy, (*Verse 8i*)

Praise: This word is used in The New Testament, most significantly to mark off the glory of God The Father, Jesus Christ and The Holy Spirit in the introductory word of praise (doxology) in *Ephesians (1:6, 12, 14)*. God wants His people who are IN His Son to use the hearts and minds He is guarding to consider all these virtues – and to act in accordance with these virtues!

Guarded minds are free to consider virtue

B. And the things learned from the apostolic church planter, the church must do what it observed in him, and The God of peace will be with it. (*Verse 9*)

1. And the things you have learned and received. (*Verse 9a*)

Instruction: The word for learned is to teach to be a disciple. (*Matthew 28:18-20*). The members of this local church had received good instruction to be disciples of Jesus.
2. And (the things) you have heard and seen in me. (*Verse 9b*)

Observation: The best way to learn is to be with and observe someone who is living in God's will. Paul told the churches in Corinth to imitate his example of living (*1 Corinthians 11:1*).
3. Put these into practice. (*Verse 9c*)

Just DO it: Nothing is truly learned until it is practiced. In the vernacular of an old Nike commercial: All that we have learned about what God desires for us to do once He adopts us as His children and makes us citizens of His Kingdom: let us just DO it all!!!
4. And The God of peace will be with you all. (*Verse 9d*)

Immanuel: This is the second promise of this passage. With us God (*imma-nu-el*) is the greatest promise in all of Scripture. It is the essence of His covenant with His people.
Covenant consummation: John heard the voice of God announce the consummation of His Covenant of peace (*Numbers 25:12; Isaiah 54:10; Ezekiel 34:28-34; 37:21-28*) – after Satan has been cast into the Lake of Fire (*Revelation 20:7-10*) and the final judgment of people (*Revelation 20:8-15*): 'And there came to my ears a great voice out of the high seat, saying: See, the Tent of God is with men, and He will make His living-place with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them, and be their God' (*Revelation 21:3, BBE*).
APPLICATION: Let us draw closer to God IN the renewed covenant IN Jesus, The Savior, as we partake of The Sacrament of The Eucharist (good grace)!

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Conclusion: Peace with The God of peace, that protects people's hearts and minds, comes from continual rejoicing IN the Lord. The ability to rejoice comes by praying rather than worrying, by considering all that is virtuous IN God and in the world He rules; and, by learning and doing all He teaches through godly people. The faith to live this way is motivated by the nearness of the Lord: BOTH in the present time, AND in His soon coming again.

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