

MESSAGE TITLE: Living with Peace, part 3

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 4:4-7

KEY TRUTH

Even though we live in a world that is filled with instability and conflict, God offers His people peace. Today, we will see that prayer with thanksgiving will guard our hearts and minds from fear and anxiety.

GETTING STARTED

It would be easy for us to assume that we cannot defeat anxiety because of the many threats to our peace of mind. However, the Bible teaches that prayers of thanksgiving bring great peace, even when trouble hits home. Today's passage shows us how to maintain a Spirit-wrought peace of mind when dealing in all circumstances.

OBSERVATION

What does Paul tell believers not to do in verse 6? What did he tell them to do instead?

Look up synonyms for the word 'anxious'. What does it mean to be anxious?

How did Paul instruct believers to bring their requests to God?

What promise does God give believers in verse 7 if they bring their requests to God?

How does Paul describe the peace of God and its effect on those who trust Him?

Why do you think Paul mentions both hearts and minds in verse 7? What's the difference between the two in light of the peace of God?

APPLICATION

When you read the admonition to not be anxious about anything, what is your immediate reaction? Is Paul giving us some ideal to shoot for or a command to obey?

Consider the words 'anything' and 'everything' in verse 6. Take a moment to make a list of 2 or 3 things that cause you to worry. The Bible says that in anything and everything, we need to strong arm anxiety with thankful praying. Take a few minutes to share one thing from your list with others in your group and pray together.

How often does Paul say we should 'let your requests be made known to God'? He's not advocating that we pray about every little thing. He's telling us what to do when we begin to feel anxious. Think about it – how often on average each day do you feel anxious? Five, ten, twenty, thirty times a day? The point is not to maintain a worry quotient. The point is this: every time you begin to feel anxious, take your requests to God in the form of thanks-filled prayers.

How do we incorporate thanksgiving into our prayers when we feel anxious? How is thanksgiving an antidote to anxiety?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, your command to not be anxious seems impossible to follow. So, we turn to You for help. Thank you for sending us your Holy Spirit to help us! Your word teaches in Romans 8:26 that the Spirit Himself helps us where we are weak by interceding for us. We confess that we are too weak to cast aside anxiety on our own. So, we will trust You to give us the strength to overcome anxious thoughts with prayers of thanksgiving centered on the person and work of Jesus. Help us by faith cling to the promises of Your Word in stressful times!

SHARE POINT

Read and review the application questions. Share with someone in your life how God's Word is changing you into a growing disciple. Encourage that person to do the same. That person could be a family member, a friend, a co-worker or a neighbor.

COMMENTARY NOTES

4:4 Rejoice! The joy that Paul calls for is not a happiness that depends on circumstances but a deep contentment that is in the Lord based on trust in the sovereign, living God and that therefore is available always even in difficult times.

4:5 Reasonableness is crucial for maintaining community; it is the disposition that seeks what is best for everyone and not just for oneself. The Lord is at hand emphasizes the fact that Jesus will surely return as judge and will hold people responsible for their deeds. Paul does not specify when this will happen.

4:6-7 Paul here echoes Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6:25-34) that believers are not to be anxious but are to entrust themselves into the hands of their loving heavenly Father, whose peace will guard them in Christ Jesus. Paul's use of 'guard' may reflect his own imprisonment or the status of Philippi as a Roman colony with a military garrison. In either case, it is not Roman soldiers who guard believers – it is the peace of God Almighty. The kind of peace Paul has in mind surpasses human understanding or reason. God's peace brings a supernatural calm to the minds of those who trust Him during troublesome circumstances. Because God is sovereign and in control, believers can entrust all their difficulties to Him, who rules over all creation and who is wise and loving in all his ways. An attitude of thanksgiving contributes directly to this inward peace of the soul.

SOURCES CONSULTED

ESV Study Bible

Serendipity Group Bible for Leaders

Holman Christian Standard Study Bible