

There are Bibles in front of you and the usual outline in the bulletin for you to take down notes if that helps you concentrate

Let me pray first - for God's help and understanding. Let's pray...

Intro/What is peace

Today we're looking at finding peace

So - what is *peace*?

Dictionary definition:

[PowerPoint 1-Peace definition]

Freedom from disturbance; tranquility

Mental or emotional calm.

A state or period in which there is no war or a war has ended.

In the last 3530 years of recorded history - there has been only 286 years of peace with no wars.

In that time 8000 peace-treaties have been broken

Is that what God's peace is like?

The Jews have a word for peace

[PowerPoint 2-Shalom]

It's *shalom*

The word shalom is used to say hello and good-bye

But it means much more than that

It means - complete peace, wholeness, well-being, harmony, safety, prosperity, tranquility, perfectness, fullness, rest and contentment

In fact to find true shalom - true peace - it is only by being in a relationship with YHWH God - who fills the 'hole in our soul" that only God Himself can fill

How do we get this peace from God - this shalom from God?

In our Philippians passage today

The apostle Paul gives us 3 steps:

1. By standing firm in the Lord and being in unity with one another (vv1-3)
2. By being joyful in the Lord and being prayerful (vv4-7)
3. By cognitive behavioural therapy (vv8-9)

By Standing Firm in the Lord and Being in Unity (vv1-3)

So let's look at the first step - *by standing firm in the Lord and being in unity with one another...*

[PowerPoint 3-Stand firm]

V1 of chapter 4 - Begins with *therefore* - therefore, because of all that Paul has just said in chapter 3 - that there were people trying to teach that we need to add our own work to be saved - adding to what Jesus has already done - and also because people were focusing on earthly things - instead of seeing that life is not about us - but all about Jesus

Paul says in v1 - therefore - **stand firm** - just like a soldier in a battle being attacked by an enemy - Paul wants us to stand firm against Jesus' enemies!

But it is stand firm - **IN the Lord** -

Paul wants us to remember to say to ourselves:

Be still my soul the Lord is on my side - bear patiently your cross of grief or pain (hymn)

Paul wants us to remember: If God is for us who can be against us (Rom 8:31)

That's how we can stand firm in the Lord - He is on and by our side

One way this standing firm can be wrecked, though, is by **disunity** - quarrels

See V2 - two ladies - Euodia (Yodea) and Syntyche (*Sintiki*) - they have been quarrelling

Quarrelling in church can escalate - and cause factions and groups - and lead to people leaving the church family if it remains unresolved

Paul's solution is that people must be of the **same mind**

That same mind is - **the mind of Christ Jesus** - which gives unity

Another hymn springs to mind:

May the mind of Christ my saviour live in me from day to day

By His love and power controlling all I do and say

So if we think like Jesus - and ask WWJD - we will solve the quarrels we have -

if we remember it's not about us - it's about Jesus - we then ask would Jesus want us fighting? Would He want us to be selfish and wanting our own way?

Paul is so concerned about this quarrel he asks one of his true companions to help the women make peace in v3

As Paul says these ladies contended (literally labored with him in the Gospel work) - and that work can't continue whilst there is disunity -

So Paul's way of finding peace in our lives and in our church is firstly
To stand firm, persevere and keep unity with one another

Challenge for us: Are we standing firm in our Christian walk - knowing that God is on our side - and is that giving us peace?

(pause)

Challenge for us: Are we doing everything we possibly can to resolve quarrels so that we can live in peace and harmony with one another

(pause)

By Being Joyful in the Lord and Being Prayerful (vv4-7)

The second step to finding peace

Is by *being joyful in the Lord and being prayerful*

[PowerPoint 4-Joyful]

Paul tells us to Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again, Rejoice!

Another hymn!

Paul has said to rejoice twice already in 2:18 and 3:1

Why can Paul say rejoice in the Lord always?

Because in the first three chapters he's given us so much to be joyful about!

- Joy - because the Philippians and Paul have a common bond of Jesus
- Joy - because they belong to Jesus' family and share in this as a Church family

- Joy - because the meaning of life is Jesus - & we should model His life
- Joy - because as Christians, we have a guaranteed place in Heaven - and our citizenship is in Heaven
- Joy - because we are partners in the Gospel together
- Joy - because our life is not about us - but about bringing the glorious message of Jesus that He saves people from the punishment of sin and saves people's lives for eternity - and that's a joyful job we have to see people come to believe and know Jesus

So no matter what is going on - we can rejoice in all of that

And that - Paul says - should bring us peace

Paul also says in v5- part of bringing peace to a situation is for us to let our gentleness be evident (obvious) to all

The word - gentleness - literally means moderate well

Someone who moderates a meeting well - is peaceful, fair, just, balanced - never overreacting - listening to both sides - and bringing down a peaceful fair decision - Paul says that's what we should be like - and it should be obvious to people - it's like people will know - we are peacemakers - always on the side of peace and harmony

Jesus was very gentle and compassionate to the weak and vulnerable

But he was also firm and fair when it came to people like the Pharisees - who were hypocritical and arrogant

Modelling Jesus - will show others our gentleness - and it will be obvious to all

We can also find peace in v5 still because the Lord is near

He's near in three ways

He's near in the sense we have His presence (in His Spirit and in His Word)

He's near in the sense that for those who haven't believed in Jesus yet - He is knocking on the door - and all those people have to do is let Jesus into their lives

And He's near in the sense that He will return one day
Jesus being near - should give us great peace

Yet Paul recognizes that we all get anxious (worry, troubled)

Paul says in v6 don't be anxious about anything

Paul's argument is that worry is the opposite of peace and joy

As Jesus Himself says can anyone add a single hour to their lives by worrying
(Matt 6:27?)

Worrying is like riding a rocking horse - it gives us something to do but it gets us nowhere

Worrying is pointless

Statistics show that

40% of the things we worry about - will never happen

30% -- are about the past that can't be changed

12% -- are about criticism by others, mostly untrue

10% -- are about health, which gets worse with stress and worry anyway

8% -- are about real problems that we actually face

Paul's answer to worry is prayer - still in v6

Look at how we pray

In every situation - doesn't matter how big or small -

Take it to the Lord in prayer (another hymn)

In our prayers we petition God - tell Him what our concerns are - hand them to Him

We are always to be thankful in our prayers for what God has done - counting our blessings (another hymn) - counting our blessings takes us away from the worry and focuses on the blessings

And by praying instead of worrying

Look what we get in v7

That **peace (shalom) of God** - that we can't really describe until we have it

Some of our growth groups' tried to...

Here's some of the descriptions they gave...

Peace of mind and spirit

Reconciliation with God

God's inner peace - nothing to do with this world

Everything in God's hands - nothing to worry about

Happiness, bliss and contentment

[My own personal example - cancer 2008]

That same peace of God is the promise of our Psalm this morning

Psalm 85:8

⁸ I will listen to what God the LORD says;
 he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants

And look what that peace gives us at the end of v7

It guards (like a custodian of a jail) - that peace **guards our hearts** - our hearts belong to Jesus - not to Satan - and not to this world - and that peace **guards our minds** - that peace guards what we think - because we've taken those worries and concerns and handed them to God in prayer and left them with Him - and we're no longer thinking about those worries

Challenge for us:

Are we rejoicing in the Lord - having joy in knowing all that He has done for us - in giving us forgiveness and eternal life - having joy in knowing we have citizenship in Heaven - having joy in knowing we have the privilege of sharing the Gospel with others?

(pause)

Is our Christ-like gentleness obvious to others?

(pause)

Are we worrying and anxious all the time? Have we learnt to take those worries to the Lord in prayer - and hand them over - and not take them back?

(pause)

Are we praying about everything?

(pause)

Are we thankful and counting our blessings?

(pause)

By Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (vv8-9)

Notice in v7 when Paul said that the peace of God **guards our minds**

That's Paul's third step to peace

It's therapy for our minds

Cognitive behavioural therapy to be exact

[PowerPoint 5-Cognitive]

Cognitive behavioural therapy looks at how we think - and tries to change the way we think - by not focusing on negative unhelpful thinking but focusing on positive helpful thinking - First used in 1950s by Albert Ellis and Aaron T Beck in 1960s

But the Apostle Paul's using it 2000 years ago

And it's thinking God's way - instead of thinking in a human way

[Illustration]

J. Arthur Rank, an English executive, decided to do all his worrying on one day each week. He chose Wednesdays. When anything happened that gave him anxiety and annoyed his ulcer, he would write it down and put it in his worry box and forget about it until the next Wednesday. The interesting thing was that on the following Wednesday when he opened his worry box, he found that most of the things that had worried him in the past six days were already settled. It would have been useless to have worried about them.

Instead of focusing on the negatives, J Arthur Rank proceeded through the week focusing on the positives.

The Apostle Paul gives some **great things to think about** in verse 8 - He says:

Think about what is **true** - the source of absolute truth is in God's Word not in our own thoughts and wisdom - or in the truth that our world gives in the media - instead focusing on truths like God will never leave us nor forsake us - is far more valuable

Think about what is **noble** - literally things that are honourable - like that we are part of Jesus' family into eternity

Think about what is **right or just** - things that are just and fair - like God's rules for living - just and fair - like Jesus' perfect life

Think about what is **pure** - things that are free from corruption - things that are majestic - like God's beautiful creation - sunsets, sunrises, rivers and waterfalls - and nature - the pureness of His Son

Think about what is **lovely** - things that give us pleasure - our family, our church family - our mothers and grandmothers on Mothers' Day

Think about what is **admirable** - basically something you could give a good report on - a holiday, a special time you had with someone

Think about what is **excellent** - something that you've seen or heard that was excellent and really impressed you

Think about what is **praiseworthy** - something you've witnessed that should be praised - like watching how the Jaffa leaders cared for the children on Friday night - how the children responded to the teaching about Jesus - and how the older kids took care of the younger ones

Paul's saying thinking about all these great things fixes our minds - and is the opposite of being worried, anxious and having negative thoughts - and it will give us that peace of God that surpasses all understanding

Then finally Paul says in v9 - it's not just thinking all those good things of verse 8

We need to also **put them into practice**

It's not just about head knowledge

But heart knowledge and hand knowledge

So Paul says we need to put into practice what we...

- Have learned from the Bible
- What we have heard from the Bible
- And follow the examples we have seen from Godly people like Paul

Challenge for us:

What are we focusing our thinking on? Negative thoughts that lead to spiraling down into more negatives? Or are we thinking on those great things that Paul commands us to think on?

(pause)

Are we putting into practice what we have learnt and heard from the Bible. Is it just head knowledge - or heart and hand knowledge too?

(pause)

Are we following the Christian example of the Godly folk we know?

(pause)

Conclusion

[PowerPoint 6-Conclusion]

So to sum up then we find that peace of God

1. By standing firm in the Lord and in unity (vv1-3)
2. By being joyful in the Lord and prayerful (vv4-7)
3. By cognitive behavioural therapy (vv8-9)

Please note that the key thing is - that we find that peace of God - **in the Lord**
- **not in ourselves**

Paul repeats that phrase "***in the Lord***" three times in our passage today

V1 - stand firm in the Lord

V2 - be of the same mind in the Lord

V4 - Rejoice in the Lord always

By Jesus being in us - and us being in that closest personal relationship with
Jesus - we will find that peace of God that surpasses all understanding

Let's pray...