

The Guarding Peace of God

INTRODUCTION.

A Peacemaker was a type of pistol favored by residents of the western US in the 19th century. It was a "single-action .45 calibre pistol" manufactured by Colt in 1873 and was called "the pistol behind a million gunfights, range wars and shootouts."

A. Humanity's peace – Sheriffs and soldiers keep or guard the peace; they are commissioned to keep the peace (peacekeepers); they don't actually make peace (peace makers).

B. Heavenly peace

1. We know from the Old Testament that God used WAR to bring about peace for His chosen people (Israel)

2. Only 2 Bible verses contain **the term "the peace of God"** (Php 4:7; Col 3:15). Our study today considers one of these passages.

"Be careful [anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Php 4:6-7)

Paul first says what to do, and then he tells his readers what the result will be.

Paul instructs the Philippians to do two things – one negative and one positive.

I. What's required (to have peace) – People worldwide are seeking for peace – internal, national, and international.

The world is full of things and events that cause us to be tense, fearful, or even panicky. Small towns are known for their ability to not keep secrets. It could be said that the author of "Nobody knows the troubles I've seen" didn't live in a small town. Let's see what Paul had to say as to what we believers should do about the things that trouble us – and everything else.

A. Negatively – refraining – **anxiety of panic** don't fear or fret

1. The action ("Be careful") – The Greek verb is *merimnao*, which is used 19x in the New Testament and is translated [KJV] "be careful" 2x, "have care" 1x, "care" 5x, and "take thought" 11x).

Humans' cares or concerns can be divided into two categories.

a. **Needful care** (1Co 7:32b,33,34; 12:25; Php 2:20) This kind of care or concern is wise and helpful. I'm reminded of a guy who commented sadly on society in this way: "The two worst things about Americans are ignorance & apathy." His friend replied: "Well, I don't know, and I don't care." We SHOULD care about our marriage, family, church, neighbors, nation, and (especially in these last days of this age) the decline in good Bible teaching and in adherence to sound Bible doctrine.

b. **Needless care** (cf. Mt 6:25,28,31,34; Lk 12:11,22; 1Co 3:2a). There are other things about which it is either useless or even harmful to "worry." Being anxious about such does not help and can hurt.

It seems likely that Paul had both types of care in mind when he penned this verse. In fact, this verse seems to state the same general principle as did Peter when he wrote "casting all your care upon Him" (1Pt 5:7). Peter used a related noun (*merimna*) – all six of whose New Testament uses are translated "care."

2. The absolute ("for nothing") – Paul exhorted the believers to worry about or fear NOTHING.

Is the news media in America trying to help us do that? It seems it's the opposite. Many times a day the news is reported in a way that seems intended to alarm us. We recall the COVID-19 "pandemic," for example. We looked like a masked civilization who didn't want to get close to anyone ("social distancing"). How many millions of Americans were scared out of their wits to go out of their houses – and were scared into getting a vaccine that had not been tested sufficiently (or, at least, in the usual way)? Now millions are suffering the "side effects" of that jab (or those jabs).

16th cent French author Michel de Montaigne wrote "the thing of which I have most fear is fear."

In 1623 Francis Bacon said "Nothing is terrible except fear itself."

On September 7, 1851, Henry David Thoreau's journal entry has this: "Nothing is so much to be feared as fear."

In his inauguration address (March 4, 1933) President Roosevelt said "The only thing we have to fear is ... fear itself."

B. Positively – requesting – activity of praying

1. The all-inclusiveness ("in everything" – *pas*) – the antithesis of "nothing" – Human beings (including true Bible-believers) have made three different types of prayer requests:

- a) Some requests are clearly expressed for believers living in this current dispensation of grace.
- b) Some requests in the Bible but were by and for believers in other dispensations.
- c) Some requests are not in the Bible but seem to not contradict Bible principles. For example, one

could pray for a long life – but God probably will not grant many (maybe any) who want to outlive the most recent oldest living person (Lucille Randon – born 2/11/1904) who died on January 23, 2026, at age 118 (just weeks before turning 119). The person in recent history who actually lived the longest was Jeanne Calment, whose life span was 122 years and 164 days (2/21/1875 – 8/4/1997).

Similarly, one could pray that his or her motor vehicle lasts for over 560,000 miles (as did a Georgia resident reported back in 1990).

d) Some requests are not in the Bible and are very questionable at best. For example, someone might pray to ask God to strike dead all atheists, communists, evolutionists, or terrorists – before they are evangelized.

2. The activity (“let your requests be made known unto God”) – Heb 4:16 come boldly > mercy & grace

a. The desires (“requests” – # 155 – 3x = “required” (Lk 23:24), “petitions” (1Jn 5:15), “requests” (here) – **not demands** – Someone said that ½ troubles in world come from wanting our own way – the other ½ from getting it.

b. The disclosure (“be made known”)

c. The Decider (“unto God”) – Our all-wise, almighty, gracious God is the One in charge!

3. The agency (“by prayer and supplication”)

a. General disposition (“prayer” # 4335– 37x – not service but spirit, not act but attitude, not words

but walk

b. Specific declaration (“supplication” = 19x (prayer 12x, supplication 6x, request 1x) – together in

Eph 6:18; 1Ti 2:1; 5:5

4. The accompaniment (“with thanksgiving”) – for 2 major areas:

a. God’s **mercy** (bad things has God prevented)

b. God’s **grace** (good things has God granted) (more thanks > fewer requests?)

It has been said that “when your knees shake, kneel on them.” It has also been said “Why worry when you can pray?”

II. What’s received – What do you expect following verse 6? If you have been reading the Gospels lately, you would most like expect something like “Ye shall have what ye ask” or “It shall be given unto you.” Instead, of Paul saying that you will get what you ask for, he says you’ll get God’s “peace.”

In fact, as we look at Paul’s life we find he certainly did NOT seem “anxious” about things – but, instead, rejoiced in the peace that God gave him (no matter what happened) – e.g., when he was hindered in his plans (Rom 15:22; 1Th 2:18) or God redirected his missionary travels (Ac 16:6-7).

A. The sense (or nature) of this peace – what is meant by “the peace of God”?

1. The medieval political peace of God: The Roman Catholic Church began a movement to limit the violence of feuding in the western half of the former Carolingian Empire – proclaimed by Robert II of France in 1010 & extended by Henry IV in 1085; it said that all who pillaged sacred places or harmed consecrated persons (later, those claiming protection of the church – church property, priests, pilgrims, poor, merchants, women, & other noncombatants from violence (11th – 13th centuries) would be cursed and banned from the sacraments. Though not itself a major success, the “Peace of God” did contribute to sacred militancy, which prepared the way for the Crusades. In 1040 in Aquitaine (southwest France) the **Truce of God** limited when nobles could fight – at first not Friday, Saturday, or Sunday – later it was Wednesday sunset - Monday sunrise, as well as some long seasons (including the start of Lent thru Whitsuntide).

2. The biblical spiritual peace of God = calm in chaos, tranquillity in tumult

B. The source of this peace – author, origin, giver (“God” – & “thru J C”) – in His person & work at Calvary & in our lives – we’re in Christ, C is in us (union w/ Him). Peace w/ God & peace of God = connected w/ (related to) faith.

1. The world’s sources of peace – external experience (listening to some calming music, or getting “away” to a mountain, a lake, or the seashore, or cruising or flying to some distant “paradise”)

2. The Word’s source of peace – internal indwelling Jesus promised His Apostles (Jn 14:27), Paul said it’s the Holy Spirit’s work (Gal 5:22)

C. The supremacy of this peace (“which passeth all understanding”) – It’s beyond our comprehension, reminding me that “Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Eph 3:20).

1. The wording

a. The **greatness** (“passeth” – The Greek verb *huperecho* occurs 5x in the New Testament > 5 different translations in the KJV = “better” (Php 2:3), “excellency” (Php 3:8), “higher” (Rom 13:1), “supreme” (1Pt 2:13), and “passeth” (here).

b. The **grasping** (“all understanding”) – It literally means = “every mind.”

1) “Understanding” (*nous* = 24x in the New Testament = “mind” 17x, “understanding” 7x)

2) “All” (*pas*) – It literally means “each.”

2. The meaning – “each mind” or “each understanding” – Paul’s doesn’t even try to explain this peace.

It's easier to state its opposites & the negatives. – It's NOT stagnation (as pond w/no ripples) – nor insensibility (as rock that doesn't feel a storm's violence)

God's peace surpasses any peace than any human mind/understanding can discover, invent, or experience on its own.

D. The security of this peace (“keep”) “peace ... shall guard” – an ironic truth (peace guarding)

1. The annotation (meaning – from a military word meaning “to guard” or “patrol”) – “guard” (protect), not “hold” (possess)

2. The area – God's peace guards us internally.

(a) Terrestrial peace – In normal human life, guards guard or keep the peace.

(b) Celestial peace – God's peace guards – “keep” = 4x in the New Testament = “kept city” (2Co 11:32), “kept under law” (Gal 3:23), “kept by God's power” (1Pt 1:5)– “KEEP ... in perfect peace” (Isa 26:3) 3. The attackers – What is guarded against? – Paul does not say – opponents, Satan, sin, doubt, anxiety, temptation/tests, all

E. The scope of this peace (“your hearts and minds” = your minds and its thoughts)

1. The concepts

a. “**Hearts**” (*kardia* – “heart” = 862x in B)

In English nowadays the word “heart” is used more of human feelings (emotions) – e.g., “Have a heart.” In Bible usage it referred more to the mind (the brain, the head), NOT to emotions or the body organ 18" below head – e.g., “If thou ... shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom 10:9; cf. Ac 8:37; 16:14; Heb 3:12; 4:12; 10:22).

b. “**Minds**” (*noēma* – only 6x in the New Testament = “minds” 4x, “devices” 1x, “thought” 1x) All 6 places – here & 2Co 2:11; 3:14; 4:4; 10:5; 11:3 – indicate antagonism, attack &/or protection from it.

2. The construction – “Hearts and minds” may be synonymous ways to refer to one's inner personality.

3. The comparison – Sometimes different words are used in Bible passages in referring to almost exactly the same thing (but maybe emphasizing different aspects of it) – for example, heart, soul, and mind (Mt 22:37), heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mk 10:30 ~ Lk 10:27), spirit, soul, and body (1Th 5:23), soul, spirit, and heart (Heb 4:10), and “Their MINDS were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their HEART.” (2Co 3:14f – my emphasis)

4. The connection – There may be a distinction here between “hearts” and “minds,” but there is definitely a connection – one's mind (as the source of its thoughts) and the thoughts themselves.

CONCLUSIONS

A. From this passage – God is on guard duty for us – as we pray about everything!!!

1. Condemnation of undue **care** – about what we think we need to have or need to have happen

2. Commendation of all **prayer** (full faith, full agreement with the Bible). God's peace will come as a natural result of prayer (Php 2:13).

B. From other passages (Rom 10:1 [Paul's prayer for Israel]; 2Co 12:7-12 [repeated request]; Eph 3:20; Heb 4:16 [find mercy & grace]; Eph 3:30 [God's ability exceeds petitions & perceptions]). So we are to take our burdens to the Lord (as the hymn says) and leave the results with Him.

“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.” (Eph 3:20-21)

According to Romans 5:1, God gives peace through His act of declaring us just in His sight – taking care of our eternal destiny. According to Philippians 4:6-7, God will take care of our temporal dilemmas (prayer requests) by His peace.

