

# A PIECE OF GOD'S PEACE

## PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7

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, 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.

In July 1969, when Neal Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, and the Apollo 11 lunar module lifted off from the Sea of Tranquility, they left behind a plaque on the surface of the moon. Engraved on the piece of medal was the mission's motto: "We come in peace for all mankind."

Yet ironically, *mankind had to go to the moon to find any peace*. On earth there's no such thing as a "Sea of Tranquility." Our world is full of friction and fighting.

The history of humanity has been a long tale of turmoil. One historian has calculated that throughout the recorded past for every *two minutes of peace* there's been *an hour of war*. Today, the world is racked with unrest. From the villages of Syria, to the shores of North Korea, to the barrios of Venezuela, to the public housing in Chicago - our planet is not a peaceful place.

As somebody observed, "When a man gets arrested for disturbing the peace I'm amazed that he found any."

There's no peace on our streets - *and there's no peace in our homes*. Spouses are at each other's throat. There's tension between parents and children. Siblings can't get along. Most homes are not a peaceful place. *And this is all just the tip of the iceberg.*

The real conflict rages internally, in people's hearts.

We can't get along with each other because we don't get along with ourselves. We wrestle with our own emptiness, and the superficiality of our lives.

There's no peace *on earth* because there's no peace *of mind*. Constant stress takes its toll. Pressures percolate. The results are heartbreaks, heart attacks, and hard hearts. It's been said, "**People are going to pieces today because they don't know peace.**"

And there's only one hope! *We need God's peace!*

You've seen the bumper sticker that reads, "**No (n-o) God, no peace. Know, (k-n-o-w God), know peace.**"

God promises *His people* a deep, abiding, consoling peace! Psalm 29:11 declares, "**The LORD will give strength to His people; the LORD will bless His people with peace...**" This is the reason God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world. Remember what the angels told the shepherds at Jesus' birth, "**Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men.**"

In John 14:27 Jesus said, "**Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.**" Jesus promised a unique peace that only He can manufacture. *His is not a man-made peace.*

Everyone of us has “made peace” at some point in our lives! You might've “made peace” in the car on your way to church this morning, when you stopped your kids from arguing... Nations “make peace” when their representatives sit down at the negotiating table...

It's been said, “*This kind of peace is the brief glorious moment in history when everybody stands around reloading.*” The world's peace is just ceasefire.

There's more to making peace than agreeing to leave each other alone. *The peace of Jesus is more!*

True peace is not *the absence of conflict*, but *peace in the midst of that conflict*... This is Jesus' peace.

It's the calm to fall asleep in a storm-tossed boat... It's the confidence to chase a pack of demons out of a madman... It's the composure to pray for forgiveness on behalf of your torturers, even while you're nailed to a cross, even in the throes of death. This is real peace.

The peace that Jesus manufactures is **an artesian peace** - it bubbles up from deep within our spirit.

And in moments of crisis it pushes to the surface and provides a *supernatural cool*. God's peace is an *unruffled rest* neither hell nor high-water can disturb.

Two artists painted gorgeous landscapes. They were different, but both were given the same title, “**Peace.**”

The first painting was of an undisturbed lake nestled in the mountains... While the second painting was of a tall, thundering waterfall. Its waters were tumbling into a tiny pool

- spraying the surrounding rocks. And tucked away in the crevasse of one of the cliffs was a tiny white dove sitting snugly, calmly in her nest.

God's peace isn't an escape to the mountains, it's a nest in the middle of the turbulence. God's peace isn't isolation from churning waters, but calm in their midst.

The Bible promises us both **peace with God** and the **peace of God**. Sin has ruptured our relationship with God. It's an affront to God. We think of sin as breaking God's *laws*, but far worse, sin is breaking God's *heart*.

Yet the sacrifice of Jesus makes amends for our sin.

When I recognize my sin, and trust in the work of Jesus, He repairs the breech. God buries the hatchet. The friction is over. The believer is at *peace with God!*

But just because I'm **at peace with God** doesn't mean I'm enjoying **the peace of God**. The peace of God is just that - *His peace!* As one author put it, "**It's the serenity in which God lives.**" It's God's confidence.

God's peace is His unshakeable-ness and unbreakable-ness - It's His unhurried-ness and unworried-ness. *In receiving the peace of God, it's as if God breaks off a piece of His own peace, and then gives it to you.* This is truly an incredible experience!

What do you do when you're at a restaurant with a baby, and the baby starts to cry? I've seen my wife pull off a piece of food - a *bread crumb, or carrot, or french fry* - and let the little whiner suck on it till dinner is over.

And this is what God does. He sees us coming unglued - or losing our grip - we're whining or crying, so God breaks off a piece of His own strength and composure, and gives it to us in the form of His peace.

The peace of God is just that - **a piece of God's peace**. In the midst of our loss, He gives us His hope. In the midst of our weakness, He gives us His strength. In the midst of our confusion, He gives us His wisdom. In the midst of our fear, He gives us His love.

Paul tells us in verse 7, God's peace "*surpasses all understanding.*" Often, there's no tangible reason to feel the poise, or calm, or strength, or love that fills our hearts. It comes out of nowhere, without explanation.

But that's just it, God's peace is supernatural. It's beyond our understanding. It's a miraculous peace.

To most Christians the idea of **peace with God** is simple and straightforward. We repent of our sin, and believe in God's promise - and as a result, we can trust that our sins are forgiven. God is faithful to His Word.

But **the peace of God** is more elusive. It's like a greased pig. One moment we have it - then a situation changes or a difficulty raises its ugly head - and the peace we had yesterday slips through our grasp today.

Here in Philippians 4 Paul gives us what strikes me as a formula. You'll find very few step-by-step formulas in the Scripture. Life doesn't usually work that way...

But I believe God is so intent on us knowing His peace that here He makes our receiving it as simple and applicational as

possible. Paul seems to lay out five steps we can take to experience God's peace...

Get out a paper and pen, and jot these down. Here are five steps to receiving a piece of God's peace...

**First**, rejoice in one thing. **Second**, be satisfied with few things. **Third**, worry about nothing. **Fourth**, pray about everything. And **fifth**, be thankful for anything.

First, **rejoice in one thing**. Again in verse 4, “**Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!**”

Recall, joy is the theme of Philippians - but not just joy - **joy at half-mast**. Even when the flag of your life is lowered to half-mast - *there's been a loss, or you're experiencing pain, or you're called on to suffer* - if Jesus occupies your heart there's still abounding joy.

Remember, as Paul writes he isn't at the day spa, enjoying a sparkling water, relaxing after a massage. He's in a Roman prison. He eats scraps and sleeps on stone. He urinates in a bucket in the corner of his cell.

Yet he dares to “**Rejoice!**” As one commentator puts it, his rejoicing is “**a defiant nevertheless.**” Paul ignores terrible circumstances, and still finds reason to **rejoice!**

This is why he writes, “**Rejoice in the Lord always.**”

Paul wasn't rejoicing in his circumstances per se. There was nothing about his jail cell that inspired joy.

Everyday people go through exhausting, excruciating situations. Some of you have been through painful trials. God would never tell you to rejoice in the loss of your job, or

rejoice in the death of your spouse. God isn't British. He'd never say, "just keep a stiff upper lip."

It's not "*rejoice in your circumstances*," but "*rejoice in the Lord!*" And Paul adds, "*always.*" In Jesus, there is *always* a reason to rejoice. I like the Phillips translation of verse 4, "*Delight yourselves in the Lord, yes, find your joy in Him at all times.*" *Find your joy in Jesus!*

When I read my Bible and come across the word "*rejoice,*" here's how I read it, "*take joy.*" "*Rejoice*" means "*to take joy.*" Avoid looking to circumstances for joy - you'll often be disappointed - but if you learn to take joy from the Lord you'll become a joyful person.

Most Christians know the Lord, but they depend on this world for their joy. How quickly the bubble bursts.

The pleasures of this world are fickle and fading. They don't satisfy, nor do they last. Depend on this world for your kicks, and expect a kick in the shins.

A young man, weary and haggard, came to see a Paris psychiatrist. The man was suffering a deep, dark depression. As they talked, the psychiatrist thought of another young man, a young Parisian named Girmaldi.

This Girmaldi had developed a reputation for being a shining star. He was the party animal of Paris. Wealth, and wine, and women were Girmaldi's daily diet.

The psychiatrist suggested the young man find Girmaldi and arrange an interview. Perhaps Girmaldi could teach him to enjoy life - pull him out his despair.

But when the doctor made his suggestion the young man snarled, and said, "I am Girmaldi." The world's joy dries up! *Rejoice in the Lord* and you'll always rejoice. If you want to know God's peace **rejoice in one thing!**

Then Paul tells us **be satisfied with few things.**

As he puts in verse 5, "**Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.**" The Greek word rendered "**gentleness**" is a difficult word to translate.

It can be translated three ways. First, "**patient in the face of affliction.**" Second, it could mean, "**moderation in material possessions and pleasures.**" Finally, it could also be taken as "**a non-retaliatory, merciful spirit.**"

My definition combines all three ideas. It's "**the ability to live without.**" Whether its living without ease and comfort... or living without the convenience of material things... or living without the desire to get even...

I can be satisfied even when life doesn't go my way... satisfied even if I can't obtain everything I want... satisfied even if I don't get treated fairly... *It's the ability to be content in a less than perfect world.*

Paul is saying, in contrast to aggression and ambition, learn to approach life in a more gentle way.

Paul is saying if you want to know the peace of God lower your expectations. **Be satisfied with few things.**

It's time some of us swapped our American Dream for a biblical reality. Life on earth has limits. *If we could have all we wanted here, why would we need heaven?*

This life is long on promises, but short on promises delivered. Health is tenuous, riches are uncertain, justice can be selective... *Try to achieve!* Make your life the best it can be. But if at some point life doesn't measure up to your idealism don't be surprised. It's a fallen world. You set yourself up to know God's peace only when you can be satisfied with few things.

We all need to develop **the ability to live without**. As one philosopher put it, "**Contentment comes not so much from great wealth as from few wants.**"

Once upon a time there was a wealthy King. His money could buy him everything, *but contentment*. He could have all his heart desired, but he wasn't happy.

His counselors told him if he found a contented man and wore his shirt he would be at peace. Immediately a captain was dispatched to locate a contented man.

But after many days the captain returned and told the King he had searched in vain. The King got angry and sent him out again. He had to have the shirt off a contented man. When the captain finally returned he told the King that such a man had been found. He had been living in the wilderness on the outskirts of the Kingdom. The King said, "**At last, give me his shirt.**"

The captain answered, "**He didn't own one.**"

It reminds me of the Puritan who gazed at his meager rations of bread and water, bowed his head, and gave thanks, "**Wow, all this and Jesus Christ, too!**"

The man obviously found his joy not in *what*, but in *WHO!* Paul is saying that we'd be wise to do the same!

I love Paul's reminder at the end of verse 5, "*The Lord is at hand.*" Jesus is coming soon, and He's near right now. Take joy in Jesus, you'll need less and less.

Paul wrote Timothy, "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content."

If you want to know God's peace, **rejoice in one thing. Be satisfied with few things.** Then verse 6, **worry about nothing.** Paul writes, "**Be anxious for nothing...**"

*I'm sure, as a Christian you never, ever worry.* I can't imagine any of the good folks at CC worrying. We just "**carry a concern,**" or "**bear a burden.**" *We don't worry!*

Well, call it what you'd like, but when you become preoccupied with what you can't control it's worrying.

And it's amazing what we worry about!... 40% of our worries are about stuff that **never happens.** 30% of our worries **happened in the past.** 12% revolve around what **other people think.** 10% are **health issues** (which none of us can control). That means only 8% of our worries are over **legitimate concerns.**

Mickey Rivers, was a former Major League outfielder. Mickey once said, "**Ain't no sense worrying about things you got control over, cause if you got control over them, ain't no sense worrying.** And there ain't no sense worrying about things you got NO control over either, cause if you got no

control over them, ain't no sense worrying." A great philosophy!

Of course, this doesn't mean we can't plan. But proper planning is *preparation* without *preoccupation*.

If my planning for the future paralyzes my life today it becomes worry... Worry cuts a gully in my mind that drains off my thoughts and feelings. I waste the energy I need for today on a tomorrow that may never come.

Here's a poem, "The worried cow; would have lived till now, if she had saved her breath. But she feared her hay; wouldn't last all day, so she mooed herself to death." Some of us are mooing ourselves to death.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus tells us that worry is a waste of time because it doesn't work! "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?"

A cubit was about 18 inches.

Let's say you're short. You're tired of going to parties and staring at people's kneecaps. You hug Reid Ingle and catch a belt buckle in the throat... Well, start worrying, go ahead worry long and hard, then measure yourself - all your worrying has produced zero growth!

Jesus said, "Your heavenly Father knows what you need before you even ask." Let's trust Dad, *not worry*.

Realize, worry isn't just a personality trait, or a character flaw, or an individual idiosyncrasy - **It's a sin!**

Jesus commanded, "Do not worry about your life..."

Our worry is a failure to trust the Lord who loves us! We honor, and love God in return, by trusting Him.

I like 1 Peter 5:7, “Casting all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you.” Yet you say, “Pastor Sandy, it sounds so simple, I start out casting all my cares on God but my problem is I always take them back.” And the reason your throwing down your concerns only to take up again **is your not taking anything in return.**

In WW2 the Allies built orphanages to care for kids whose parents had died in battle. One orphanage was having trouble getting the children to go to sleep.

The beds were comfortable, the conditions were safe *and the officials were puzzled*. They brought in a psychologist who interviewed the kids. His solution was to put them to bed with a slice of bread in their hands.

*It worked!* These children had spent long hours of hunger, and they couldn't relax if their hands were empty... *Neither can we.* Leave your cares with God, but in their place take a piece of His peace. Rejoice in Jesus, keep a firm grip on the Bread of Life, and watch your worries vanish. We should worry about nothing.

And then we should **pray about everything**. Verse 6, “but in everything by prayer and supplication...”

We should take all the energy and effort we waste on worry and re-direct it toward prayer. In other words, “Turn your cares into prayers.” Or as the old saying goes “When your knees knock, kneel on them.”

1 Thessalonians 5:17 gives us similar command, “pray without ceasing.” *How do I pray without ceasing?*

Does this mean I quit my job, and move into a monastery? Of course not! Paul wants us to develop the attitude where all throughout the day we’re involved in an open-ended conversation with God. *In the car, mowing the lawn, chilling by the pool...* we’re praying.

The phrase “without ceasing” comes from a Greek word which means “*to cough*.” You know how you get a tickle in the back of your throat that causes you to cough and clear your throat. This is Paul’s way of illustrating the kind of prayer life we should pursue.

Throughout the day we should be coughing up prayers. When something tickles your heart, or grabs your attention... you see a sunset “*Lord, thanks for the amazing beauty,*” or hear a friend is sick, “*Lord, please heal Sam.*” We’re just constantly coughing up prayers.

When it comes to prayer, the greatest tragedy is not *unanswered prayers*, but *un-offered prayers*. James 4:2 tells us, “*You do not have because you do not ask.*”

A lack of prayer is actually a sign of self-reliance.

Despite what we say, we don’t pray because deep inside we don’t really think we need to. Obviously, we feel like we can do it on our own. *How foolish is that!*

I’m sure you’ve been cautioned not to pick up heavy objects without bending your knees. Stiffen your knees and it’ll break your back. That’s also good spiritual advice... Never pick up a

load without bending your knees in prayer - express your dependance on God.

*Bending your knees sure beats breaking your back!*

Paul finishes out verse 6, “**But in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God...**” Here’s the fifth and last step to knowing *the peace of God that surpasses all understanding... Be thankful for anything.*

One day Charles Spurgeon and an old friend were walking in the park. His friend told a joke, and the preacher roared with laughter. But once he’d calmed down, he turned to his buddy, and said “**Ted, let's get down on our knees and thank God for laughter.**” *Who would think to thank God for the gift of laughter?*

But that’s just one example of the many things we take for granted that should cause us to give thanks!

The US Post Office reports that in the weeks prior to Christmas they process thousands of letters to Santa.

Children are requesting for all kinds of toys and presents. But the Post Office also mentions that after Christmas they process very few thank-you notes for Santa. *Seldom do humans take the time to say thanks.*

But not so with a Christian. We should thank God for everything - for God is sovereign over all our situations.

Paul wrote to the Romans, “**All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.**” As I said earlier, some events in our lives

may be so horrific they give us little reason to rejoice on their own. Just like one key on a piano *does not a melody make*. You need all the keys on a piano to make beautiful music, and all our life experiences go into making us what God desires.

For a Christian, everything in life is converging, its coming together for *God's glory* and for *my good*. God rearranges the broken pieces into a beautiful mosaic.

This is why, "[If you pause to think, you'll have cause to thank.](#)" Even in the gloomiest of circumstances, God always leaves us something for which to be thankful!

If you're having problems this morning thinking of something for which to be thankful, let me give you a few suggestions: "[If you can't pay your bills, then you can be thankful you're not one of your creditors...](#) *You can be thankful that only you and God have all the facts about yourself...* Even though you haven't gotten all you want, you can be thankful you haven't gotten what you deserve... *If you can't be thankful for what you've received be thankful for what you've escaped...*

And you can be thankful for mini-blinds, for if it wasn't for mini-blinds, it would be curtains for all of us!"

I've heard it said "[The man who has forgotten the language of gratitude is not likely to be on speaking terms with God.](#)" We need to thank God for anything.

Did you know that God answers prayer in one of four ways... Sometimes He says **YES**. This is what we like.

It's easy to thank God for His yes answers. We call our friends. We rejoice together. We stand up in church and report the news. God's "**Yes**" is music to our ears.

But there's another way God answers prayer. Sometimes He says **NO**. Just as a good parent says *no* to a child, God sometimes tells His children, *no*.

Of course, when was the last time you called up a friend rejoicing and told her... “**Hey, Jane, a wonderful thing happened, God told me “no.” Yet why not have that attitude?** If we truly want God's will for our lives we should be just as thankful for the No's as for the Yes's.

A third way God answers prayer is **WAIT!** And if you think the No's are tough to swallow, they're nothing like the wait's. We want action and we want it right now!

Yet there's nothing that builds our character more so than having to wait. We want the answer to our prayer, but often God is working the answer in us as we wait.

Finally, God can also answer **SOME OTHER WAY**. God will answer our prayer, but not in the way we were expecting. He spices it up. He adds a wrinkle or two.

Yet regardless of how God answers my prayer I should be **thankful for anything**. For whatever He allows, it comes with His purpose. The world and the devil might have meant it for evil, but God intercept it, wrapped it in His love, and is going to use it in my life for His purposes. *And for that, I can be thankful!*

Well, here are the five steps to receiving a piece of God's peace: **Rejoice in one thing. Be satisfied with few things. Worry about nothing. Pray about everything. And Be thankful**

for anything. Then verse 7, “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

*Here's how this works... You get your heart in the place where you can receive - take your joy in Jesus, live with few wants, stop worrying, turn your cares into prayers, and be thankful for God's purposes even in the difficulties of life... when you develop that kind of faith; then you'll begin to walk in God's miracle peace.*

And that peace, God's peace, will guard your heart and mind in Christ. ***But guard us how, you might say?***

The word “*guard*” was a military term. It referred to the sentinel in the tower who watched the countryside for an invading army - for some approaching danger.

The soldier didn't know what was on the horizon. The future was uncertain, unknown - but the sentinel stood guard. He remained at his post to alert the city.

And this is the function the peace of God serves in our lives. It guards us against unknown dangers.

There is so much in life that is hidden from our view.

A lot surpasses our understanding... *Do you really know the intentions of the people around you - the guy you're dating? the partner in the business project?*

*How can you be sure the decisions you make will yield the desired outcome? Life is full of uncertainties. So many questions lurk beyond our understanding.*

It would be nice to send a spy into the future who could report back to us what he learns. *Well, this is how the peace of God guards our hearts and minds...*

God does surpass our understanding. His presence transcends time and circumstances. God sees and knows all things - even future things - and His peace serves as my lookout. When a person I meet ruffles the peace of God prevailing in my heart, *I back up*. When a potential decision disrupts that peace, *I put it on hold*.

I do nothing that disturbs this beautiful peace and the serenity of God that's guarding my heart and mind.

I might not understand what it is about that person that's making me feel uneasy. I might not see anything wrong with the decision I'm contemplating, but if it's not accompanied by God's peace, I lay it aside. It doesn't mean that particular person is evil, nor the decision is somehow sinful, it just means that for some unknown, unforeseen reason I don't need to go there right now!

The peace of God is guarding my heart and mind.

I can't tell you how many times over the years I've been spared critical mistakes *by the peace of God, or the lack thereof...* At other times I've done crazy stuff, other people questioned, that turned into a blessing because God gave me a strong peace beforehand...

Here, **God promises to guard us with His peace!**

This is why you need to cultivate the peace of God in your life. If you're a Christian you are already at *peace with God*, but *the peace of God* is something different.

Are you stressed and agitated? Do you long for real peace of mind - *an inner peace that doesn't hinge on your surroundings, or fall apart at the first sign of trouble?* Do you want to sail on a Sea of Tranquility?

Well, you don't need a trip to the moon to get there!

You need to **Rejoice in one thing. Be satisfied with few things. Worry about nothing. Pray about everything. Be thankful for anything** and "*the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*" Amen.