

Intro: Every command of God has a promise attached to it. Not a promise that if you follow the command then you will be accepted by God, but rather a promise rooted in the real grace of God. Paul gives four commands to these Philippian believers who are caught up in contention over their own rights. And he places these four commands around one central statement of reality: The Lord is near. Because of this truth, we are to respond with obey these four commands with the promise given last: the peace of God will guard your feelings and your thinking in Christ. You may not understand how it works, but His peace will overflow abundantly your joyless anxiety and unyielding self-trust. That’s a promise!

1. IMPERATIVE: Rejoice in the Lord!

- a. The Lord is our joy!
  - i. Joy because He is near
  - ii. Usually our joy fades because we feel distant from the Lord
    1. We doubt His desire to be near to us
    2. We believe that we need something else to be joyful, so we pursue that thing and leave Him “behind”
    3. In both cases, we forget the promise “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8)
- b. Because the Lord never changes and His love and sovereignty never wavers, we always have reason to rejoice in Him
  - i. His promises are firm
  - ii. His willingness and power are revealed at the Cross of Christ, so that we can have confidence to draw near to His sovereign throne of grace to find mercy and help (Heb 4:16)
- c. Paul is reflecting one particular reason that Jesus gave to rejoice: Luke 10:20-24
  - i. Rejoice that your names are recorded in Heaven – reflect on that for a morning!
  - ii. Christ has fulfilled the great promises of God for humanity: “I will be your God and you will be My people.” We belong, are deeply loved, and brought into the great Triune God’s eternal worship, truth, and love.

2. IMPERATIVE: Let Your Gentleness be Known

- a. Gentleness – to “over-yield”
  - i. courteous, kind, yielding to others
    1. Actively serving others
    2. Compassion Intl.?
  - ii. not taking our stand upon our rights, but laying them down to “become nothing” for the sake of others
- b. Why don’t we yield?
  - i. We forget the ugliness of our personal sin – we believe that God is *supposed* to accept us
  - ii. We forget that the sacrifice of Christ is enough – we have to defend our “righteousness”
- c. Because the Lord is near to us and the greatness of His grace is sufficient for us, we don’t have to “stand on our rights” but rather can yield those rights for the sake of others
  - i. yielding to others in service and love
  - ii. like unto God Himself
- d. Yield because He is near
  - i. We don’t *need* to be “right” in the eyes and perception of others
  - ii. Because we have been given the righteousness of God through the blood of Christ by His grace
  - iii. He is our joy, our hope, our righteousness, our redemption, our healing, and our significance, so we don’t need to compare and defend ourselves or our own righteousness

3. REALITY: The LORD is near

- a. This is the central reality that lies at the root and is the source of the 4 listed commands of 4-6.
  - i. Paul has even centered it grammatically between two sets of two commands on each side

- b. The Lord
  - i. The King who rules us
  - ii. The Master who loves us
  - iii. The Almighty who leads us
- c. He is near
  - i. He is not only near in time (coming soon)
  - ii. He is also near in presence (Spirit among us)
- d. His nearness to us both in presence and promise is what gives us the desire and power to rejoice, yield, rest, and request (the 4 commands)
  - i. What is it that robs us of our joy?
  - ii. What is it that we feel that we have to defend and not yield?
  - iii. What is it that we think we may lose that leads us to anxiety?
  - iv. Where do we look to find these things?
- e. How does the Lord's nearness change these things? - Meditate on this in His presence

#### 4. IMPERATIVE: Do Not be Anxious

- a. about ANYTHING
- b. anxiety comes from the fear of not having control, or of losing control that we think we have
  - i. This desire for control is a sign of two things:
    - 1. Arrogance: we think that we can control things better than God
    - 2. Unbelief: we don't think that God either can or will handle the issue
      - a. we wonder about His power – is He able to handle it?
      - b. we wonder about His willingness – is He willing to do it?
      - c. we wonder about His wisdom – will He actually do it?
        - i. this last one is probably the most common
        - ii. the problem with it lies in the fact that we believe that what we think should happen is the best thing
          - 1. and if God might not give me the outcome, I become worried
          - 2. Rather than believing that even if God does not give me the outcome that I think I need I know that He sees something better
          - 3. Ultimately, we believe that we need the “positive outcome” to our situation *more than we need God Himself*
- c. The nearness of the Lord is our cure for anxiety because He is the fountain of our deepest joy
  - i. It is the nearness of the Lord that has enabled believers to sit in dungeons, suffer in flames, endure starvation, and to do it all with rejoicing
  - ii. The incarnation and the cross of Christ compels us to see the nearness of the God who not merely loves us from a distance, but bears our shame, carries our burdens, pays our sins so that we would be near to Him

#### 5. IMPERATIVE: Let Your Requests be Known to God

- a. Prayer is an imperative
  - i. Speak these things to the Lord, “reveal” them to Him, so to speak
- b. Without the presence and power of the Holy Spirit working within us and through us, then all of our “success” in life and ministry is ultimately empty and fruitless:
  - i. Why do we exist?
    - 1. Not merely to preach, but to preach so that people are supernaturally brought to faith in Jesus and transformed in a way that no human being could accomplish
    - 2. Not merely to serve, but to serve in a way that people are brought to humble transformation of faith in Jesus in a way that no human being could accomplish
    - 3. Not merely to love, but to love in a way that people rejoice in God through faith in Jesus and are transformed to be worshippers and Christ-like lovers in a way that no human being could accomplish

- ii. We are not primarily a community that exists to bless the city, a club that gives people a sense of belonging, or a support group that helps us all feel good about ourselves
  - 1. These things are never the end, they are not the purpose for which we exist, though they may be outcomes of our purpose in some sense
- iii. We are family of redeemed sinners who have been supernaturally born again by the Spirit of God and transferred from the domain of darkness to the Kingdom of God's beloved Son and thus treasure and adore Him as our God, Savior, and King.
  - 1. So, let us pray for the supernatural transformation from unbelief to belief so that people would see and savor Jesus Christ. This is our purpose and we cannot do it...but God can.
- c. We pray because Jesus is near, knowing that He will not cast us out for asking with boldness
  - i. He is near to listen to your heartache and struggles
  - ii. He is near to listen and answer
  - iii. He is near to provide you with all that you need to glorify Him with joy.

#### 6. PROMISE: The Peace of God Will Enfold You

- a. Because God is near to you, O believer, not for judgment but for help in time of need
  - i. Is 26:3 – You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon You, because he trusts in You
  - ii. Is 26:12 – O LORD, You will ordain peace for us; you have done for us all our works
- b. Believe Rom 8:32
- c. "Peace is the smile of God reflected in the soul of the believer" – *William Hendricksen*

#### Conclusion:

Sometimes it's hard to get along. Too often our self-centeredness explodes forth in the most unexpected places, and way too often in the expected ones. Usually we hear sermons and teaching that tell us just to "stop it" and we need to simply be nicer to each other. I mean, that's what God wants, so just forget yourself and be a better person. Follow the principles of a good life and things will go well. Do right and you'll eventually feel right so that you'll be right. How's that working out? 😊

Paul gives us another way in the midst of the difficult dealings of being messy, with each of our ignorant and self-centered kingdoms running across perceived boundaries into each others' areas of pride until we're setting up walls and battle brigades to launch our bitter complaints and words of irritation at each other. He reminds us of the truth: There is only one King, and His Kingdom is the only true Kingdom, and He is near. We forget that Jesus is near and we respond in two primary ways: We take His crown or we cower in anxious fear. Paul confronts four particular reactions that we have to these two responses.

1. When we forget that the Lord is near, we lose our joy (we cower).
2. When we forget that the Lord is near we become unyielding in our perceived kingly rule over our lives (and others' lives, too!), beating others into submission to our way (we take the crown).
3. When we forget that the Lord is near we become anxious, overwhelmed by the perception that we are in danger or will not receive what we need when we need it (we cower).
4. When we forget that the Lord is near, we begin to trust our own provision for what we need, or we turn to other so-called saviors (which aren't really saviors at all) to help us in our moment of our need (we take the crown).

Paul has interestingly structured these four commands around one central truth: the Lord is near. The key to becoming joyful, less anxious, kinder, and trusting is to remember and live in the reality that Jesus is near. And then the promise comes: "peace of God comes...in Christ Jesus". And that's what we were looking for in our anxiety, wasn't it? That's why we took up the crown, right? We want inner peace, the joyful smile of perfect contentment in the presence of God, knowing that He smiles on us in perfect justice and glorious mercy because of the Cross of Christ where His smile upon us was won by our Savior-King. Through His loneliness we were brought near. Through His submission we are included in the royal family having names written in the book of life. Through His sacrificing of His own rights we have the rights of sons to ask God for all that we need, knowing that He is our Father who gives good gifts and has every grace prepared for every moment in our lives. We can ask without fear.