

Living at Peace

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 September 2024

Preacher: Roy Davidson

[0 : 00] Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. I entreat you, Odea, and I entreat Syntyche, to agree in the Lord.

Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women who have laboured side by side with me in the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God, and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

St. Augustine famously stated, You have made us, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in you.

[1 : 18] Actually he says, You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in you. Unfortunately, there are countless restless and anxious people in our world.

And so, just a bit of a recap of what happens in the world, the way things are. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and the rest of Genesis 1 is about God separating and filling the heavens and the earth and all that we see today.

In the beginning, things were ordered, set up in a way which was good and right, and we knew our place under God, and the animals knew their place under us, and the plants knew their place as well.

God was in his rightful place, ruling and providing everything good for us. There was no stress. There was no problem, really. We weren't worried about meeting God.

We weren't worried about what we'd eat. We weren't worried about what clothes we'd wear. We didn't need them. That's pretty good. We weren't worried about dying. We weren't worried about the bank account.

[2 : 26] We weren't worried about being late. We weren't worried about anything. It was all good. It was great. But until, until we believed the lie of the evil one, and we shattered all that was good, we created a right mess of the world, thinking we could do better than God, thinking we could get life and better by dethroning the God who made us, rebelling against the God who rules the universe, and we made things worse.

By rebelling against God's good rule, that's led to the chaos and the war and every crazy ideology that's around today.

It's absolutely insane. The things that people believe today, that a generation ago would have thought insane, is what's going on.

And even the generation before was probably insane as well. As Mr. G.K. Chesterton's most famous quotation goes, when a man stops believing in God, he doesn't believe in nothing, he believes in anything.

Anything. Give up on God, sets us drift on the sea of ideas. Giving up on God's word, leaves the world to a folly of its own imagination, and godless ideas to our own parable.

[3 : 49] I mean, we want to work out how governments work ourselves. We want to work out how morality works ourselves. We want to work out how gender works itself. We seek to create a utopia without God, and that's never worked, and will never work.

Countless millions have died, and will die, as a result of man's attempt to dethrone God. In a world without God, nothing is fixed, nothing is stable, and it produces a world of anxiousness.

It was perfectly secure and stable in the beginning, and the good news is, it will be perfectly stable again in the end. And the Christian worldview recognises that God is doing something about the mess.

The all-loving, all-wise, all-powerful, all-good creator God still rules, and one day will restore all things to be rightly good again and perfect. And the flow of the Bible is from the garden to the city via the cross.

Nothing like Brisbane City, as nice as it is, but a perfect city, a fantastic city, where all God's people live with God again, under his living rule, and we live at peace with God, and peace with each other, forever.

[5 : 07] That's where we're heading. Now, it's that biblical worldview that should shape our minds, right? And in doing so, give the peace that we so desperately long for, which then brings us to this passage this morning, living at peace with God, there in verse 1.

Philippians chapter 4, verse 1, So verse 1 links us back into what's gone on before.

Paul has a deep affection for the Philippians, and rightly so, the Philippians are his crown and his joy. The Philippians are the ones that are the trophies of God's grace, having come to save through the faith in Christ Jesus, the gospel that Paul brought to them.

And now they live at peace with God. They are right with God. And he wants them to stand firm.

And so stand firm from what you're asking. He wants them to stand firm in that position of blessing. Not led astray by the influences of those who live as enemies of the cross, who boast in anything other than Jesus for their salvation.

[6 : 26] Stand firm in imitating Paul and those who are friends of the cross, not enemies, we saw last week. Stand firm as citizens of heaven, chapter 3, verse 20. Stand firm in one mind, chapter 1, verse 27 to 30, contending for the faith of the gospel of Jesus.

And now that they live at peace with God and understand firm in this, they live at peace with each other. Let's have a look at this in chapter 4, verses 2 to 3. They live at peace with each other.

This may be one of the hardest things in any gathering of people. The hardest thing in any church.

Evidently, there has been news of two women who are not getting on in the church. It's quite startling to believe that they would be named publicly for everyone there and everyone since to read about them.

And so he entreats them, he exhorts them, he begs them to literally think the same in the Lord.

That's what he's saying. They were well-known members of the church in Philippi, but there's a serious enough dispute for Paul to have heard about it.

[7 : 43] Now where have you heard about this idea of being in one mind before? In Philippians. In chapter 2, we are told to have the same mind as the Lord, one of humility, one of service, one of not seeking my own interests, but rather the interests of others.

Have a listen to Philippians chapter 2, verse 3. I mean, they have heard this letter read publicly now from the beginning.

And here is this bit then, read out in the congregation for everyone to hear. I wonder how you would have felt if you were Syntyche or Euodia.

How would you have felt if you were one of these women? I mean, how would it go if I was to say, Hey, Alex and Jen Fu, I'm calling you out.

You better get along with each other, right? Now I know that they're okay with each other, just alright. Conflict threatens gospel partnership, which shapes this whole letter.

[9 : 17] They have been his fellow workers in the gospel, co-laborers in Christ. And unfortunately, sin and misunderstanding and conflict comes up.

So there are times we need help of other co-laborers to get involved. And if their citizenship's in heaven, then they are of the same family, of the same tribe, of the same belief.

And Paul asks someone who has fought with him as a soldier, as a gladiator, to help them, to help them to agree.

These women had been contenders, struggling together with him in the gospel, just as he calls everybody else in the church in Philippi to do.

Remember chapter 1, verse 27? And let your manner, every Philippian, right, be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or an absent, I may hear of you.

[10 : 23] And it is all of you, Philippians, that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, striving side by side, for the faith of the gospel. These women had been doing that with Paul.

Wouldn't it be, and it is, but it needs to be that this teaching reverberates more and more through every soul of every believer in the world and everyone here at St. Lucia Bible Church, that we will be fellow workers, striving side by side with one mind, and that conflict would never raise its ugly head to divide us as we live for the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

Not only is there citizenship in heaven, but notice also their names are also written in the book of life.

See verse 7? That's the book we hear about a fair bit in the Old Testament and in the New Testament book, Revelation. If you are a follower of Jesus, your name has been written in a book, written down in a book, and it's in heaven and it belongs to Jesus.

And if not, well today is the day to make sure your name is written in that book by becoming a follower of Jesus, and have your name found in it. Okay, so we're living at peace with God, right?

[12:00] We live at peace with others. Now let's have a look at living at peace with yourself in verses 4 to 7.

We are told here, Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice. Notice when we're to rejoice. That's why we sang the song. Always. And this rejoicing is beyond the circumstantial. This rejoicing is grounded in the steadfast foundation of Jesus.

And notice he doubles down on it, right? He doesn't say just once, he says again I say, rejoice. Let me say rejoicing is an emotion. Now some people are more emotional than others.

I'm not that emotional, but if you see me catch a fish, I can be. But we sing when we rejoice, and we sing of our citizenship, our partnership, that our names are written in heaven, in the Lamb's book of life.

[13:06] Remember, Paul was in jail when he wrote this command. And remember what he did when on another occasion, he was in the Philippian jail cell.

I'll read it out to you in Acts chapter 16, verse 25. About midnight, Paul and Silas, they're stuck in jail, right? Were praying and singing hymns to God.

And the prisoners were listening to them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so the foundation of the prisoners was shaken, and immediately all the doors were open, and everyone's bonds were unfastened.

He wasn't expecting to be let out. He wasn't expecting to be a free man. He was probably expecting to die. Rejoice in the Lord, even in the hard times.

That does something. And let me tell you what it does do. It protects the church from the damaging, the unity that we have in Christ. The very fabric of fellowship itself.

[14:13] It means that we rise above petty conflicts. We don't focus on others, right? We don't focus on self.

We don't focus on our own wisdom. We focus on rejoicing in the Lord Jesus, and all he's achieved for us. This is the kind of stuff that we need to have reverberating through the very soul of every one of us here at church.

Let's keep being a rejoicing community, and never be known as a grumbling community. And then notice, let your reasonableness be known to everyone.

The word reasonableness literally means not insisting on every right or letter of law or custom. That's what the lexicon tells us this word means.

I'll say it again. Not insisting on every right or letter of law or custom. Basically, it means don't be pig-headed. It means we'll be gentle, we'll be kind, we'll be courteous, we'll be tolerant.

[15:33] It means we won't be precisely technical, looking down to catch someone out on a phrase they may have slipped up on. It means you won't be like the gotcha journalist, just waiting to catch someone who doesn't know the exact pay rate of the person at the moment.

under the fair work government policies. If we are reasonable, it should make us more easygoing. It will mean that we won't keep a record of wrongs.

It will mean that we have a graciousness towards others, making excuses for perceived faults we find in them. Rather, we'll be thinking the better of people, not worse.

considering walking a mile in their shoes before we even think of judging them. Because the Lord is near.

We can rejoice and be reasonable because the Lord is near. And friends, he's near in, I used to think he was just near in one way, but I'm convinced now he's near in three ways.

[16:40] Proximity, chronology, and in relationally. In proximity, at one time we were far, far distant from God, cut off from him at arm's length, but now we have God's Holy Spirit, we have the mind of Christ.

And because we have the mind of Christ, we need to have the mind of Christ. And God can't be any closer to the believer than he already is in dwelling us by his Holy Spirit.

He can't be any closer. Chronology, the Lord is nearer chronologically. The day of the Lord is one day closer than it was yesterday.

And it's getting nearer. And it's the day when all things will be reconciled and brought back under Christ. And because that is the case, we can rejoice.

We're waiting for him to appear and to right the wrongs and put the things in place that need to be done. And relationally, he is near us relationally.

[17:54] Remember James chapter 4 verse 8? Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

He's near the broken-hearted. Psalm 34 verse 18. The Lord is near to the broken-hearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

If that's you here today, the Lord is near. Do not fear. Here is a word of comfort for us all.

The nearness of the Lord Jesus should encourage us to rejoice all the more. Oh, how I'd love these truths of the Lord's nearness to be reverberating through the very soul of all of us here in our church more and more.

And so here's the rub. Let's think about anxiousness versus anxiety. We're not to be anxious.

[19:08] You see there in verse 6. Have a look at verse 6. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God.

We're not to be anxious. Instead, we are to pray. Being anxious tends to come from us trying to solve things in our own strength rather than resting on the sovereign goodness of God who is powerful to do more than we can ask or imagine.

We're not to be anxious about, notice, anything. Yeah? That's pretty comprehensive. Now, I know we all face all kinds of stresses every day, every week.

Sometimes they're greater than other times. Some people have more. Some people have less. Everyone has different levels of stress when we come to face-to-face with any number of situations in life and crisis in life.

To be concerned, right, is one thing and rightly appropriate, taking responsibility as Timothy was for the Philippians in chapter 2, verse 20.

[20:37] We read, he was genuinely concerned. It's the same word, anxious for their welfare. But to be unduly concerned is another.

If we're not prayerful, then we can be guilty of taking God's role, which we can't fill. He is the one who works to bring about things in his sovereign timing.

To be overly concerned, anxious, is to try and take God's place and to be prayerless and over-functioning doesn't help anyone.

You or the situation we're trying to control. It can breed a godless anxiety which doesn't commend the gospel to anybody.

Now, there's a difference between being anxious and anxiety. Let me try and spell out the two. anxiety, right, is when anxious feelings don't go away and may not have a clear cause.

[21:52] Anxiety, I'll say it again, is when anxious feelings don't go away and may not have a clear cause. So, if you're living with anxiety, the anxious feelings may not be easily managed.

And anxiety is a serious condition that makes it hard for a person to cope with daily life. Now, the Beyond Blue website says that three million Australians are living with anxiety today.

Anxiety, it says, is the most common mental health condition in Australia. And it says that one in four people will experience anxiety at some stage in their life.

So, statistically, that means that there are a number of people struggling with anxiety here this morning. There just is. And if that's you, if you haven't already, then can I strongly encourage you to speak to your GP and find someone who can help you professionally to deal with anxiety.

At the same time, it's important that we carefully think about the language that we use. Given our growing awareness of the reality of anxiety in our community, the language of anxiety needs to be used appropriately.

[23 : 28] So, if you're feeling stressed, that's one thing. But there's no need to say that you have anxiety because you're stressed.

That's what the kind of younger people are doing and saying these days. You probably don't. You're probably just anxious.

anxious. A bit of stress can be good at getting things done. The deadline's coming, you've got to get it done. Or it could save you from a dangerous situation. Fear and flight can get into place if you're concerned about something.

But it may be that we need to realign the way that we think and act. And that will be a circuit breaker to becoming more and more stressed and anxious about the things that we needn't be anxious about.

So instead of being anxious, we're exhorted to pray there in verse 6. Don't be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be known to God.

[24 : 42] Prayer is asking, that's what prayer is, generally petition, which is for others, supplication, again, synonymous with prayer and petition, we're not to pray like the rest of the world though.

They don't give thanks to God, notice, with thanksgiving, the rest of the world doesn't pray with thanksgiving, they deny God, reject his authority and try and make it themselves. The world's ungrateful to God's grace, enjoy the creation but fail to recognise the creator.

Now, we give thanks to God as Paul was continually thankful, as Jesus was continually thankful in his prayers as well. So, instead of being anxious, let our requests, that's another aspect of prayer, be made to God, verse 6.

And there are specific things that we ask for, requesting, and then we leave it to God, and God's care to answer in his good time. He's one who's powerful to do more than we can ask or imagine. And you see the promise. And here's the promise, verse 7, have a look put it with me. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

[26 : 02] God is the God of peace. He sent his son to bring about peace between himself and us at the cross. First and foremost, there is a reality between us and God.

our animosity with God and his animosity with us is over. Peace has been won for us with our creator at the cross.

What was lost at the fall has been regained by the cross. Fellowship, relationship, friendship with God himself.

We have peace with our creator. the restoration of right order and relationships has been established. It's more than a feeling. Yes, it's got to be more than a feeling.

The peace that God brings is peace with himself first and foremost vertically. horizontally. And then a peace between warring parties horizontally.

[27 : 10] It's not a feeling of peace that guards us. It's the fact of God and his peace which guards us. And you've got to ask the question, what's it guarding us from?

Well, I think not standing firm, verse one. It guards us from those who oppose us or threaten us, from being at war with each other, from the evil forces that are opposing us, from thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, from forgetting who we are, who we belong to.

The peace of the gospel of Jesus guards us from ourselves and guards us from others. I mean, the Australian army is largely a peacekeeping force, but God our Father keeps the peace in our hearts. and our heads. We are fellow workers in the gospel, partners in the gospel of the Lord Jesus, citizens of heaven now, and we need to be eager to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of that peace.

A peace which is beyond comprehension notice. It's beyond understanding. Why the God of heaven? God would love someone like me, like you, and reconcile us to himself through the death of his one and only son, the Lord Jesus.

[28 : 35] That depth cannot be plumbed. God. And it's that gospel of peace which will guard our hearts and our minds from going places and leading us where we shouldn't go.

It's got to do that. And so in the end, it's this peace of God which ends anxiousness.

God as we stand firm in the Lord Jesus Christ, the end of anxiousness doesn't come from discarding God. And looking within, that's a false trail.

We will never find ourselves in ourselves. The end of anxiousness comes by living with the end in view, looking upwards and onwards to the return of the Lord Jesus.

The end of anxiousness comes knowing that we are right with God and will receive a warm welcome into glory. The end of anxiousness comes by calmly and confidently bringing all our requests and concerns into the throne room of God in prayer.

[29 : 53] The end of anxiousness comes in knowing the Prince of Peace Jesus and living for him. So why don't we pray as we should right now.

Our Father in heaven, we do pray that these words of yours in the scriptures would be deeply at work in us by your Holy Spirit.

That we would be those who agree in the Lord. That we would be those who rejoice in the Lord. that we would be reasonable.

We thank you that you are near. So help us not to be anxious but to continue to bring all things to you in prayer. And do help us to know your peace which is surpassing all understanding and that your gospel will guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus.

Amen.