



## ***“Living in Peace” Pt 1***

Paul specified some specific joy related actions throughout chapter four.

- **Stand firm in the Lord 4:1**
- **Harmonize in the Lord 4:2-3**
- **Rejoice in the Lord always 4:4**
- **Calmly pray to the Lord about everything 4:5-7**

*Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is near. 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 comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. Phil 4:5-9*

This is an oft quoted passage that sums up Paul’s desire for them. Joy often gets swallowed up by contention, anxiety and negative thinking. Although the realization of God’s presence appears in closer proximity to the command to demonstrate gentleness, I think it stands foundational to this whole passage. His nearness causes us to rejoice; his nearness generates gentleness; his nearness alleviates anxiety; His nearness keeps our thinking healthy and positive.

There are three basic instructions in this passage leading toward a life of peace.

- Cultivate a life of engaging gentleness over unsettled contention.
- Cultivate a life of consistent prayer over persistent worry.
- Cultivate a life of positive thinking over negative thinking.

Specifically, Paul called the Philippian believers to...

- Cultivate gentleness by recognizing the Lord’s presence.
- Eliminate worry and anxiety by requesting God’s help (prayer).
- Avoid negative thinking by concentrating on the positive.

The result of following his instructions is God’s supernatural peace guarding our hearts and minds and enabling us to recognize the presence of the God of peace. The goal is a life of peace and joy amid a tumultuous world.

*(Pray always) And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:7*

*(Think and live godly) and the God of peace will be with you. Philippians 4:9*

### **Cultivate a life of engaging gentleness over unsettling contention.**

*Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is near*

Let us first explore the mandate and then the motivation.

### **Mandate for observable gentleness**

This is a command to live in such way that your gentleness is obvious (known) to those around you. It should be obvious not just to a few but “to ALL men.” This instruction assumes you have it to display it.

The first place to go to understand a term is observe its usage in the Bible.

Jesus Himself demonstrated this character trait.

*Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and **gentleness** of Christ... 2 Corinthians 10:1*

*"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am **gentle** and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. Mat 11:29*

Paul listed this as a required trait for church leaders.

*not addicted to wine, not a bully but **gentle**, not quarrelsome, not greedy— 1 Timothy 3:3*

Paul instructed a young pastor Titus to remind everyone...

*...to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to slander no one, to avoid fighting, and to be kind, always **showing gentleness to all people**. Titus 3:1-3*

James included this trait as a byproduct of Divine wisdom.

*But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, **gentle**, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without favoritism and hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who cultivate peace. James 3:17-18*

A different Greek term but the same sentiment provides further understanding.

It is listed as evidence of the Holy Spirit's control in our life.

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, **gentleness**, self-control. Against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23*

It is a key component when dealing with difficult people.

*But reject foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they breed quarrels. The Lord's slave must not quarrel, but must be **gentle** to everyone, able to teach, and longsuffering, instructing his opponents with **gentleness**. Perhaps God will grant them repentance leading them to the knowledge of the truth. Then they may come to their senses and escape the Devil's trap, having been captured by him to do his will. 2 Timothy 2:23-26*

It is a key component in restoring fallen fellow Christians.

*Brethren, even if anyone is trapped in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of **gentleness**; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. Galatians 6:1*

It is an essential element in living worthy of our calling.

*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all **humility and gentleness**, with long suffering, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:1-3*

It is an essential piece in the Christian's wardrobe ensemble.

*So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, **gentleness** and long suffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Colossians 3:12-14*

Peter prescribed it as indispensable in responding to persecution.

*But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with **gentleness** and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. 1 Peter 3:14-16*

*Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person. Colossians 4:5-6*

*Sweet reasonableness, generosity, goodwill, friendliness, magnanimity, charity toward the faults of others, mercy toward the failures of others, indulgence of the failures of others, leniency, bigheartedness, moderation, forbearance, and gentleness are some of the attempts to capture the rich meaning of *epieikēs*. Perhaps the best corresponding English word is *graciousness*—the *graciousness of humility*; the *humble graciousness that produces the patience to endure injustice, disgrace, and mistreatment without retaliation, bitterness, or vengeance*. It is contentment. *MacArthur New Testament Commentary**

In these passages, “gentleness” appears with numerous other like qualities that help to gain a better understanding of its nature. Paul called for a better way of relating all through his letter. Paul called for unity and quality relationships. He prescribed a humble, gentle, kind, peaceful, forbearing, others-centered relational style rather than competition, quarreling, contentiousness, selfishness, unforgiveness, intolerance, harshness, envy, grumbling, disputing, self-interest, pride, disunity.

O how much we need such demeanor in the public arena today. We have lost any sense of civility in the discourse of ideas. Such a relational style only comes by regular surrender to the refining work of the Holy Spirit. This is generally not our natural way of relating to people. Given the space devoted to addressing relational melt down in the early church, it wasn’t theirs either. However, it should be for the follower of Jesus. Even though such gentleness or graciousness may be hard to describe, it is easily recognized when you see it and obvious when absent.

### **Motivation for observable gentleness**

Paul included a motivator for cultivating and demonstrating such warmth and sweetness toward others.

Most translations read “the Lord is near.” In the original text it appeared without out a verb “the Lord near.” There are two ways to interpret the phrase. Both have value for motivating godly behavior. Near = nearness related to time (temporal) or nearness geographically (spatial).

Cultivate gentleness because the coming of the Lord is near.

Cultivate gentleness because the Lord is always present.

I have several reasons for opting for the **spatial** interpretation.

The use of the chronological sense of nearness usual comes with a qualifier. It usually adds the word “coming” or “return” with the word “near” and generally it refers to an event rather than a person.

The current context leans toward acknowledging His present nearness. Stop worrying about anything but talk to Him about everything. His peace will guard your hearts and minds. The God of peace will be “WITH YOU!”

Recognizing God’s presence NOW seems to be a more powerful motivator to relate to others with sweetness than thinking about His return some day. i.e wait till your father gets home.

Recognizing God’s presence and deepening my connection to Him removes much of the cause of contentious responses.

Earlier Paul told them to...

*work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is (presently) at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Philippians 2:12-13*

Paul emphasized through his whole letter that a clear focus on exalting Christ is the antidote for selfishness.

*Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Philippians 2:3-4*

Where does how you relate to people fall on this spectrum.

## **Contented Calmness ----- Contentious Callousness**

### **Cultivate a life of consistent prayer over persistent worry.**

Recognizing the Lord's nearness is not only cause for gentle relating but peaceful trusting.

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. Philippians 4:6*

### **Mandate to eliminate persistent anxiety**

First off, this is a command to persistently stop doing something. The implication is that they were struggling with anxiety for a variety of reasons. The implication is that it is possible to stop worrying. The command was to stop being anxious about **ANYTHING** but instead, to talk to God about **EVERYTHING**. Don't worry about one single thing.

I see a possible motivation to stop being anxious has to do with awareness of the Lord's nearness.

*The LORD upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing.*

*The LORD is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works. The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them.*

*The LORD preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy. Psalm 145:14-20*

*When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all. Psalm 34:17-19*

Here we go again with another massive topic that flows all through the Bible. The Greek term used in this passage appears 25 times in the New Testament in its noun and verb form and is variously translated care, take thought, anxious, worry, be anxious, fret. It is both permitted and prohibited; positive and negative.

Anxiousness or concern is a very common sometimes involuntary emotional response to life in a broken world. Anxiety is one of the most common mental health issues in America. One poll conducted several years ago, indicated that 30-40 percent of all Americans experience some discomfort from anxiety and about 15 million are treated professionally for it. We live in a stressful imperfect world. Although it is common, it is also not always understood or recognized. Ask ten people to define it and you will most likely hear 10 different answers. Every person manifests anxiety differently; sleeplessness, restlessness, distraction, fuzzy thinking, pain, shakiness, feelings of uneasiness, apprehension, dread, concern, tension, numerous physical symptoms from slight to severe.

One person defined anxiety as a negative emotion that a person experiences in the face of a perceived threat or danger. Worry or anxiety and fear are similar. The Bible addresses fear at great lengths in at least 330 verses.

Some see the difference between fear and anxiety like this...

Worry stems from a **general** uneasiness about the future.

Worry about losing my job.

Worry that someone doesn't like me.

Worry that I might get an incurable disease.

It is impossible to prevent all dangers and threats. Unchecked anxiety develops into obsessive compulsive behavior which attempts to decrease the uneasiness. Healthy people learn to live with the uncertain feelings by faith in God's care.

Fear, on the other hand, is a response to a **specific** present real or perceived threat.

Fear surgical procedure.

Fear stemming from a specific diagnosis.

Fear triggered by a specific event.

If anyone had cause for both worry and fear it was Paul. He talked about the **daily** concern for the churches. His list of difficulties and hardships in ministry boggles the imagination. He faced the stress of people and circumstances all the time. He called the Philippians to follow his example in dealing with the fear and anxiety producing events of a fallen world. The root idea in this term is to "divide into pieces". It means to be mentally and emotionally troubled, distracted, divided, conflicted, choked or paralyzed with concern. The feeling of worry is the emotional response to a negative thought process. The opposite of worry and anxiety is peace and contentment or a Biblical thought process. Adjusting one's thinking lies at the core of Paul's prescription for worry. The term translated negatively "worry" here is also translated positively in other passages by the word "care" or "concern".

Paul used it early in his letter describing Timothy's "concern" or interest for them.

Paul included it in a discussion of personal struggles and suffering.

*And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my **anxiety** for all the churches. 2 Cor 11:28*

Paul urged "concern" for one another.

Jesus targeted destructive worry in the sermon on the Mount using the word 5 times.

*"This is why I tell you: Don't **worry** about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the sky: They don't sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth more than they? Can any of you add a single cubit to his height by **worrying**? And why do you **worry** about clothes? Learn how the wildflowers of the field grow: they don't labor or spin thread. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these! If that's how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, won't He do much more for you—you of little faith? So don't **worry**, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. Therefore don't **worry** about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Matthew 6:25-34*

The whole point is that since God cares for you, trust Him to meet your needs and stop worrying. Keep your focus on Him. Trust Him. Fret indicates a lapse in faith.

Martha learned a lesson about anxiety from Jesus.

*While they were traveling, He entered a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet and was listening to what He said. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks, and she came up and asked, "Lord, don't You care that my sister has left me to serve alone? So tell her to give me a hand." The Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are **worried** and upset about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has made the right choice, and it will not be taken away from her." Luke 10:38-42*

Martha lost her focus. She got “distracted” by the environmental concerns. (Her tasks). Jesus zeroed in on the issues. She was “worried” and “upset”. Worried is the idea of being distracted or conflicted. Perhaps her worry cause her agitation.

The parable of the sower mentions being overwhelmed by the “distractions” of this world. Jesus reminded them that worry never added a single hour to your life span so don’t expect it to do any more than that. Luke 12:25-26

Paul used the term in relation to marriage. Married people are limited in their service to God because the dual responsibility of “concern” for each other. 1 Cor 7

As complicated as anxiety seems, the Biblical answer seems simple enough. The antidote for both fear and fret is faith. In this passage the mandate is prayer.

### **Mandate to exercise consistent prayer**

*Be **anxious** for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to (a caring present) God. Philippians 4:6*

The main command is to regularly “let your requests be made known to God”.

Peter urged his readers to do basically the same for the same reason.

*Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your **anxiety** on Him, because He cares for you. 1 Peter 5:6-7*

The implication here is that having cast all your anxiety on the God who always cares for you, humbly put yourself in His hand. The motivation for trusting God in the face of fret and fear is the nearness of God, the care of God and the peace of God. It all begins with trust in a loving God who is near.

Are you going to hold on to your worries or throw them on God?  
Are you going to keep fretting or start praying?