



“Living in Peace” Pt 2

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**
- **Cultivate the Gentleness of the Lord 4:5**

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

- **Cultivate a life of persistent prayer to the Lord 4:6-8**

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. Philippians 4:6-8

Joy often gets swallowed up by contention, anxiety and negative thinking.

Paul provides a path to peace from all of it. Realization of God's nearness causes us to rejoice; generates gentleness; alleviates anxiety; 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 unsettling contention.

Cultivate a life of consistent prayer over persistent worry.

Cultivate a life of positive thinking over negative thinking.

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.

Cultivate a life of consistent prayer over persistent worry.

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

Mandate to eliminate persistent anxiety

Be anxious for nothing

First off, this command prohibits a present behavior. The implication is that they were struggling with anxiety. Paul also implies that it is possible to stop persistently 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.

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 something both permitted (care) and prohibited (fret); positive and negative. Anxiousness or concern is a very common sometimes involuntary emotional response to thoughts about facing life in a broken world. Anxiety is one of the most common mental health issues in America.

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.

Some see the difference between fear and anxiety.

Worry stems from a **general** uneasiness about a possible future threat.

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.

Our focus will be on worry as addressed in Scripture.

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 due to thoughts concerning some possible threat. 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 that enables us to manage life's difficulties. 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. (Matt 6:25-34). He used the word "worry or fret" **five** times in these verses. He focused on fretting about food and clothes. He reminded them how much the heavenly Father cares about birds and flowers but cares much more about people. He reminded them that there are some things that we can do nothing about. Worry won't make you any taller. In another place, he reminds them that worry won't add any more days to our life.

Someone said, "Who says worry doesn't work. The things I worry about never happen." Jesus called failure to trust His love a lapse in faith. "you of little faith". Your heavenly Father is fully aware of your needs. He urged them to set their priority on pleasing God. He told them not to worry about possible future trouble but concentrate on the actual trouble of today. When we expend emotional energy by worry about what might happen tomorrow we deplete the energy God provided for the issues of today.

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 exposes a lapse in faith.

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 practice 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.

*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 is that having cast all your anxiety on the God who always cares for you, humbly submit to God's work in your life. The foundation of dealing with fret and fear begins with trust in a loving God who is always near. Perfect love casts out all fear. (1 John 4:18). In contrast to being anxious about anything, Paul urged the Philippians to talk to God about everything. The main verb action in this verse is "let your requests be made known to God." The other terms simply enhance the main action. Paul called for a habitual action. Paul

instructed them to talk to God every time anxiety occurs. The core command would look like this. Stop fretting about ANYTHING but always let your requests be made known to God in EVERYTHING.

Before I continue, I have a disclaimer. I will do my best to explain the words and principles written here, but feel woefully inadequate in both my understanding and personal practice concerning prayer. I am challenged by this passage to understand and practice it better. The noun form (αἴτημα) appears only two other times besides this one.

*And Pilate pronounced sentence that their (the Jews) **demand** be granted (to kill Jesus). Luke 23:24*

*And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the **requests** which we have asked from Him. 1 John 5:15*

The verb form of this term (αἰτέω), appears 71 times. It communicates the idea to ask, beg, call for, crave, desire, require. Paul encourages them to let their requests be made known. Obviously, God already knows what we desire but encourages us to express those desires to Him. We generally know what our children need but appreciate a humble request. Some wonder why they should pray since God already knows what we need or desire. The simple answer is, because God told us to. The reasoned answer is because the humble act of asking God for our needs is a necessary element in our relationship and the means for receiving.

Paul applied this “asking” to everything. One could possibly limit the “everything” to everything related to our anxiety. One could also view the “everything” to include everything concerning our life. Some think we shouldn’t bother God with the “small stuff”. Scripture indicates we should include Him in every part of our life.

Let’s take a moment to explore the scope of this practice of asking God.

*And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. So, do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you **ask** Him. Matthew 6:7-8*

Jesus used the general word for prayer but also the term translated “ask”.

***Ask**, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who **asks** receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened... If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who **ask** Him! Matthew 7:7-11*

If you have faith and do not doubt... all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive." Matt 21:21-22

*All things for which you pray and **ask**, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you. Mark 11:24*

John recorded the content of Jesus’ final disciple training session known as the Upper Room Discourse just before His crucifixion. In John 13-16 Jesus tells them seven times that if they ask, God will answer.

John 14:13,14; 15:7, 16; 16:23, 24,26

*Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we **ask** or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. Ephesians 3:20-21*

*But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him **ask** of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must **ask** in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. James 1:5-8*

You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. James 4:1-3

Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. 1John 3:21

This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life... 1 John 5:14-16

The overall application of this term is asking God for His intervention. Paul included some qualifiers surrounding the regular practice of requesting God to act on our behalf in everything. This practice of asking includes prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving.

“by prayer”

The noun “prayer” (προσευχή) appears 37 times in the New Testament and is exclusively translated “prayer”.

The verb “pray” (προσεύχομαι) appears 83 times and overwhelmingly translated “pray”. The writers of Scripture used this term as a general term for interaction with God. It combines a term meaning wish with the proposition “toward”. The marriage of terms results in the idea of an exchange or interaction around wishes. Prayer ought to be where we interact with God and humbly seek to reconcile our wishes with His will or wishes.

“Prayer” is personal interaction with God to exchange our wishes (human intentions) for learning God's will through faith. John reinforces this idea in our conversations with God.

If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 1 John 5:14

This passage uses both terms.

And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.” Matthew 21:22

The New Testament references this intersection of wishes 120 times.

Jesus referred to His Father house as a house of “prayer”.

Jesus went up the mountain to “pray” and spend the whole night in “prayer”.

Jesus “prayed” in Gethsemane.

The early church devoted themselves to this kind of “prayer”.

The disciples delegated duties in order to devote themselves to “prayer” and the ministry of the word.

An angel appeared to Cornelius and said, "Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God. Acts 10:4

“Prayer” was fervently being made for Peter who was in prison.

Paul called the Colossian to “devote themselves to prayer.”

Elijah “prayed” for drought and later for rain. (It was God’s will).

Be of sound judgment and sober for the purpose of “prayer.”

There is an incense bowl in heaven containing such “prayers”

Pray for those who persecute you.

The Disciples prayer is an example of this kind of prayer. “Pray in this way.”

This word is used for Jesus’ regular habit of getting off by Himself to “pray”.

We are to keep watching “praying”.

I believe this is an interaction with God to express my wishes but submit to exchange my wishes for His wishes. “Nevertheless, not My will but Yours.”

“by Supplication” δέησις

The noun appears 19 times translated “prayer” 12 times and “supplication” 6 times and “request” 1 time.

The verb appears 22 times translated “pray” 12 time, “beseech” 9 time and “make request” 1 time.

“Supplication” represents an intense request by the petitioner who is deeply, personally involved. By definition, it is not something taken lightly (or merely “external”). This beseeching (focused petitioning) proceeds out of an “emphatic sense of personal need” (Abbott-Smith). Such “petitionary prayer” springs from deep, personal need (lack) and desire.

Zacharias and Elizabeth’s plea for a baby. Luke 1:3

Anna in the temple serving day and night with fastings and supplications Luke 2:37

Paul’s passionate plea for the salvation of his fellow Jews Rom 10:1

Corinthians earnest pleas for Paul’s deliverance from severe suffering 2 Cor 1:11

The call to pray with supplication for all the saints with perseverance and supplication

Paul used the term four times in this letter.

always offering supplication with joy in my every supplication for you all, Philippians 1:4

for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your supplication and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, Philippians 1:19

The intensity of supplications is noticeable in the description of Jesus’ prayers.

In the days of His flesh, He offered up both supplications and pleadings with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Hebrews 5:7

James referred to the effective supplications of a righteous man.

Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective supplication of a righteous man can accomplish much. James 5:16

the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are open to their supplication. But the face of the Lord is against those who do what is evil. 1 Peter 3:12

When feeling anxious we humbly ask God for help expressing our desires with a sense of deep personal need but submitting to His will.

“with thanksgiving”

Paul specific what kind of attitude should dominate our interaction with God. Let your request be made known to God WITH thanksgiving. The noun appears 15 times translated “thanksgiving” 9 times, “giving of thanks” 3 time, “thanks” 2 times and “thankfulness” 1 time. The verb “give thanks” appears 39 times translated “give thanks” 26 times, “thank” 12 times and “be thankful” 1 time.

Devote yourselves to “prayer”, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; Colossians 4:2

I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, 1 Timothy 2:1 in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Let your request be made know unto God in everything. Give thanks in everything. The practice of praying about everything demonstrates humility. The practice of praying WITH thanksgiving demonstrates submission. By thanking God in everything I acknowledge that whatever I may be encountering in this life passes through the heart of a loving Father who wit at work in both to will and do His good pleasure which is ultimately the desire of my heart.

Joni Erikson Tada

Oh, I'm still paralyzed, still can't walk, still need to be bathed and dressed but I no longer think about suicide. And to be honest I can even say that I'm actually glad for the things which happened to me. I am convinced that the whole ordeal of my paralysis was inspired by God's love. I wasn't a rat in a maze. I

wasn't the brunt of some cruel divine joke. God had reasons behind my suffering, and learning some of them has made all the difference in the world."

Thanksgiving intricately tied to prayer keeps our prayers from focusing merely on escape from the difficulties in life or our personal agenda but God's. Thanking God for hardship is an act of submission and trust. *Let those suffering according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing good. 1 Peter 4:19*

Giving thanks in difficulty or trial seems counter intuitive and even impossible. We need supernatural help.

After calling the Ephesians to continually allow the influence of the Holy Spirit, Paul described the manifestation of such influence as speaking to one another in all kinds of music and a song in your heart to the Lord ending with...

*always giving thanks **for all things** in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; Eph 5:20*

In chapter 6 he urged them to "pray" always in the Spirit.

Paul revealed the Holy Spirit's involvement in prayer to the Roman believers.

The Spirit helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. Romans 8:26-27

There is so much to this subject and we have not even touched the principles revealed in the Old Testament.

While in prison Jeremiah received a word from the Lord.

Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know. Jer 33:3

I don't know how it all works. I do know that God commands it and James was clear that we don't have some things because we failed to ask. Next week we will explore the promised results of letting our requests be made known in everything.