

"THREE STEPS TO PEACE"

Philippians 4:4-7

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1. **[COMBINED WORSHIP]** Read Text Philippians 4:4-7 and Pray.
2. **[Watch SermonSpice.com Video "Peace"** (Time: originally 5:05, edited down to 4:01, from Visual Reality -- <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/5955/peace>)]

A--Where is it that *you* find peace? How you come to experience it in *your* life? ¹

B--Today's scripture from Philippians 4 shares not only about the ultimate *source* of peace, but also at least three steps to how we can go about *experiencing* it.

--II--

3. **First**, whatever our struggle is, we need to **LIFT IT UP** to God.

A--Verse 6 tells us to "*bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers & petitions...*"

B--How can God ever help us with a problem if we never bother to let Him know that we have one in the first place?

1--Now, you might say, "*Well, if God is really all-knowing, then I shouldn't have to tell Him, because He'll already know what my problem is!.*"

2--And while that sounds like a good point, it misses the fact that our prayers, petitions, & supplications to God are *not* so much for *HIM* as they are for *US*.

C--When we pray for something or someone and lift them to the Lord, what we're really doing is acknowledging *His* jurisdiction in that matter.

1--In other words, just because God knows *what* our need is before we ever mention it *doesn't* mean that we've yielded that need to His control.

2--No. When we lift our need to the Lord, in effect, we're saying, ..."*God, I know that you know what my need is, but I also know that YOU know that I can't handle this by myself. I need YOUR help & strength to get through this, so right now I surrender my need to you.*"

3--There've been plenty of times in my *own* life where I've tried to handle stress or struggles by myself -- in my own strength -- and fallen flat on my face, which is why the *first* step to experiencing inner peace is to "lift it up" to God ²

4. But not only should we lift it up... the **second step** found in today's scripture tells us that we should, essentially, also **LET IT GO** -- that is: after we've lifted it up *to* the Lord, we need to **let the Lord handle it!**

A--Remember that Verse 6 starts with the words "*Don't be anxious about anything...*", and if we've really let our problems go, then we can let *God* worry about them for us.

1--Now, this doesn't mean that we need to be *unconcerned* about our troubles or problems, but the Bible says that we don't need to be "anxious" (some translations say "worry") about them -- to remember that the situation is now under *God's* control, not *ours*.

2--So, instead of continuing to try & control it, instead "let it go" -- instead of *you* telling *God* how He needs to take care of *your* problem, let *Him* tell *you* what to do about it.

3--Or better still,... let *Him* take care of it *for* you.

(a) After I was having a particularly bad and challenging week at one of my former churches, I ran across a saying that I printed out & hung in my office.

(b) It said: "*Good morning, this is God. I will be handling all of your problems today, so I will not need your help. Have a good day. Love, God.*"

B--The story is told of workers at an inner city homeless shelter who once found an unconscious man at their doorstep. When the paramedics arrived, they pronounced him dead, later concluding that he had died of starvation/lack of food. Yet, guess what (of all things) they found clutched tightly in his balled up hand as he died?
...A crusty piece of moldy bread!

C--Let me ask: what are YOU holding on to when you lift things up to the Lord?

1--Maybe you wonder why God hasn't answered your prayer for peace.

2--Well, maybe it's *not* because He *hasn't* answered, but that He *can't* answer because you're still clutching your need tightly in your hand & *haven't* let it go.

D--You see, for the peace of God to reign in our lives, not only do we have to lift up our problem to the Lord, but we also need to learn to let it go.

5. A **third and final step** to experiencing the "peace of God" is one that we (that I) so often fail to follow. Not only do we have to lift our need to the Lord and let it go. But then we also have to **LEAVE IT THERE** -- that is: **don't try and take it back!**

A--Remember that Verse 6 says that we should "*bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks.*"

1--The phrase "*giving thanks*" here is very important, because it implies that as we lift up and let our needs go to God, we're trusting *God* to take of that need.

2--And since we're trusting *God* to do it, we don't need to concern ourselves with taking it back and trying to do it ourselves.

B--I don't know about you, but too often when I lift a need to the Lord, I get impatient if I don't get a response or see results as soon as *I* might want.

1--And so, too often I try to take back the problem that I've already given to God.

2--When I do this, in effect, I'm telling tell Him, "*Lord, you're not taking care of this problem as fast as I would want, or in the way that I think it needs to be done, so if you don't mind, please just give me my problem back so I can do it!"*

3--No, I don't mean to do this *intentionally*, but when I fuss and fume and worry about my problems *after* I've supposedly already given them to Him, that's *exactly* what happens.

4--And do you know what God's response is to that? In effect He says, "*OK, Brian. If you want your problem back, then you can have it!*"

C--And then I (and we) wonder *why* my/our prayers for peace didn't get answered -- it's because we didn't let God *finish* what we *gave* Him to start with.

D--Back in 1957, Laretta P. Burns first penned a now-famous poem:

*"As children bring their broken toys with tears for us to mend
I brought my broken dreams to God because He was my friend.
But then, instead of leaving Him in peace, to work alone,
I hung around and tried to help in ways that were my own.
Finally I took them back and said, 'Dear God, why are you so slow?'
'My child,' He said, 'what could I do? You never did let go.'" ³*

E--If we've lifted our problem up to the Lord, and we've let it go for Him to handle, then we need to also *leave it there* and not try to take it back.

--III--

6. So, as I wrap up, I just want us to notice that in today's scripture from Philippians 4, there are at least three *conditions* ("three steps") for having and experiencing peace of God in our lives.

A--We need to...

1--**Lift it Up** to The Lord.

2--**Let it Go**-- to let *Him* handle it.

3--And **Leave it There** -- don't try to take it back.

B--On December 24, 1814, the "Treaty of Ghent" was signed in Belgium, officially ending what was called the "*War of 1812*" between the United States and England.

1--But in that day and time, news of the treaty took at least a month to cross the Atlantic from Europe back to America by ship, and the result was that on January 8, 1815 (two weeks *after* the treaty had been signed), General Andrew Jackson fought and defeated the British at the Battle of New Orleans.

2--While it was a resounding American victory, nevertheless nearly 2000 men (on both sides) lost their lives in an needless battle that should NOT have even been fought, because peace had already been achieved.

C--Well, there are a lot of people today (including many of us even as Christians) who are fighting needless wars within ourselves because we're either unaware of -- or not practicing -- the "Three Steps to Peace" that Paul shares in today's scripture.

D--So my prayer for each of us today is that *whatever* it is that we're struggling with, as we "*lift it up, let it go, and leave it there,*" we'll find God's peace for our soul.

7. [PRAYER]

ENDNOTES:

¹ Every where we turn today, it seems, we're a world at war. Since the end of World War II, at least 23 million people have been killed in over 250 wars, and the United Nations estimates that even today there are nearly 30 armed conflicts going on in the world around us. Sources tell us that three times more people have been killed in wars in the last 100 years than in all the wars in the previous 500 years combined. Based on all this, it would seem that outward peace is hard difficult to come by. However, there's actually another form of warfare that's also been going on for thousands of years -- one that many people (including many reading this today) are fighting even now. It's a war within ourselves -- a war to make sense out of life and to find inner peace, and it's something that (for many of us) can be just as elusive and hard to come by (or more so) as outward peace. All of us face this kind of inner struggle or warfare -- if not right now, most likely we have in the past, or will be at some point in the future. Yet, since outward peace can only occur when we as individuals have inner peace, our prayer as we worship together today is that each person here will find the inner peace that God so passionately desires for us to have!

² A young girl was once diligently working on her homework assignment and her father asked what it was about. "*Well, Daddy,*" she replied, "*I'm writing a report on the World and how to bring about world peace.*" Then the father asked, "*Isn't that a pretty big order for such a young girl?*" "*Oh, no, not at all!*" she answered, "*Because you see, there are three of us in class working on it!*" Too often we try to gain inner peace for ourselves through our own strength, rather than lifting it up to the Lord and letting our "three classmates" (God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) help us with the task.

³ Poem "*Broken Dreams*" (also sometimes titled "*Let Go and Let God*"), cited at www.circle-of-light.com/Inspirations/let-go.html.