

## The Hope of Peace In a New Year

Written by Ben Cordes

Tuesday, 06 January 2015 07:25 - Last Updated Tuesday, 06 January 2015 07:32

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“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:7

A new year means new unknowns. This can be very concerning to us “control enthusiasts”. Yes, we’d all do well to admit we have control issues. I’m not saying that it’s justified, I’m simply admitting that as sinners we are egotistical. We feel we know what is best for our lives. However, I’m admonishing you to give it up. Give up the idea that you know what’s best for you and delight yourself in the truth. That is, that God knows best; and He really does.

Sounds simple, right? Well, it is seldom done as easily as it is said. What we want is security. But what the Lord commands us to do is trust, even when we *feel* that things aren’t secure. Notice, I said **feel**. Often Satan deceives us through our feelings. However, our feelings aren’t that great at forecasting the truth in matters. I’ve observed wonderful people become injured by the feelings of others. I’ve witnessed churches fall to pieces because the members don’t want to “hurt the feelings” of the minister who isn’t feeding the flock anymore. Feelings can become a stumbling block.

What we need is substance. What we need is **faith**. Yes, faith is quite substantial. Faith is much

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more reliable than mere feelings and it can be used in amazing ways. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Heb. 11:1) "Through faith we understand..." (Heb. 11:3a). Did you read that? Through FAITH we understand. We have understanding of our God and His commandments and His purpose

*through*

faith. When we believe in an unseen God and trust that His ways are better than ours, we are actually exercising faith. Even though we can't foresee the outcomes in life, we are still instructed that "the just shall live by faith" (Heb. 10:38). Faith should be our way of life.

So how can we utilize faith for a better new year? If you are looking for a problem-free way of life, it's not here. What I'm advocating isn't a life devoid of troubles. Rather, I am giving you encouragement to take God's word and be happier in Him when troubles, trials and problems do arise. We can be sure of two things: 1. Tribulations will come: this was guaranteed by Jesus. He lived here and He knows the nature of this fallen creation, so take His word for it. 2. In Jesus, the conqueror of the world of tribulation, we may have peace: peace from the Prince of Peace--of all the places!

What do we do, then? How do we get this peace? The answer lies in a series of verses in Philippians. Paul wrote to a church that was troubled over his incarceration. In his Spirit-filled exhortation he tells them to do a few things:

Philippians 4:2-6 "I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they **be of the same mind in the Lord** . And I intreat

thee also, true yokefellow,

**help**

those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my **fellowlabourers**

,  
**whose names are in the book of life**

.  
**Rejoice in the Lord always**

: and again I say,

**Rejoice**

.  
**Let your moderation be known unto all men**

. The Lord is at hand.

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### **Be careful for nothing**

;  
**but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God**  
.”  
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(words were emboldened for emphasis. -BC)

Simply put we see that Paul exhorts the church to do six things:

1. Be of one mind with the rest of the church
2. Help the saints of God who are our fellow laborers.
3. Rejoice and rejoice again in the Lord at all times.
4. Be kind and gentle to all people.
5. Stop worrying and being full of worldly cares.
6. Pray to the Lord and make your requests known to Him with a thankful heart.

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Talk about efficiency!

Here is Paul's common-sense, six step program for having the peace of God to keep our hearts and minds. To be of the same mind as the rest of the church is to be in agreement with them. This means practically and doctrinally speaking. Discord is something the Lord does not approve of and we have been told that "he who soweth discord among the brethren" is an abomination unto God (Proverbs 6:19). The first step to having peace within our hearts is to have peace within our minds concerning the brethren and sisters of the church. We ought to be goal-oriented with the rest of the church to do what it takes to serve Jesus Christ and worship Him in Spirit and in truth.

Help those who labor and whose names are in the book of life. This should be a no-brainer. However, too often we view church as a meeting place instead of the community that it is. We show up late and leave early to and from worship and never fellowship with folks long enough to find out how they are doing. Perhaps we are afraid that if we actually do take time to fellowship then we may find out that people actually need our help. Someone may be hurting and in need. This is more common than we often realize, after all, the church is made of people just like you.

When we fail to fellowship with others then we fail to acknowledge that others exist as a part of the church. We have been called to serve Jesus Christ as He served, and that is by serving others. Help is something we all can do and something we will all eventually need. There is much reward in helping others. Perhaps you seek to help people in ways outside of the church. As noble as that may seem, it wasn't the top priority of the early church. After the events of Pentecost the brothers and sisters of the church "sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need" (Acts 2:45). Later, when Peter and John were stopped by a beggar who had no ability to walk the Apostles told the lame man "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength" (Acts 3:6-7).

Why didn't Peter and John have any silver or gold to give the lame man? It's because they had already given it all to the church. They made helping the church their first priority and then went

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outward to help others. The fact that we are to give our help to the church first (in whatever form that may take) does not eradicate our duty to help out others outside of the church. However, a helping hand should first be offered to those in the church and then to those outside of the church.

Next we see that we are to rejoice in the Lord. Notice this isn't stipulated by whether or not you feel like it. Remember, feelings can often get in the way. This is a commandment for us to rejoice in the Lord! This is something I believe we don't see enough of within the church and within our homes. It's one thing to rejoice because you've received a bonus at work, or because your favorite sports team won the championship. It's something completely different and of another realm to rejoice in the Lord. Whatever may be going on in your life, regardless of the situation you may be faced with, we are eternally blessed and for that I encourage you to rejoice. Rejoice before all men. Rejoice at all times. And when you don't feel like it, rejoice some more. Be happy for the Lord's finished work of saving our sorry selves from a horrible lake of fire. Understand that we didn't deserve it and He didn't have to do it. Rejoice in what God has done. Rejoice!

When we remember to rejoice it seems to do something good to our attitude. That can have a positive effect through our interactions with others. That is why Paul admonishes the church to "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." (Phil. 4:5). Moderation means gentleness. Be gentle toward others. Show kindness and compassion when interacting with people. Too often we get so involved with our daily routines and objectives that we fail to keep in mind the main objective, to represent Christ in a dark world. Letting your light shine before men brings glory to God. The best way to let your light shine is to be kind and gentle in our conversations, actions and dealings with others. You don't always have to let people know how you feel about them, but always let people know how you feel about Jesus! "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Eph. 4:32).

To have peace in the heart we need to have peace in the mind. Much of what troubles us is from our lack of action. We sit and worry instead of getting up and taking action. Elder Sonny Pyles has quoted and been re-quoted by many concerning his advice on worrying. He said "I worry very little about the things which I have no control over." This piece of gold should be carved in wood in every living room. So much of what we worry about concerns things which we have no control over. Sometimes we may think we have control over them (e.g. the weather, eternal salvation, life on mars, etc.) but in reality those things are in God's hands. Too often we spend time worrying about things we can't control and fail to take action concerning problems we can control.

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So you must ask yourself this question, “can I do anything about this problem?” If the answer is “yes”, then get up and do something about it. If the answer is “no”, then stop worrying about it. God is big enough to handle all these worldly troubles. First Peter 5:7 says “casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you”. Make room in your mind for peace by getting rid of worry.

This brings us to the last admonishment: Prayer. Not just any prayer, mind you, but prayer of supplication with thanksgiving. Paul has acknowledged that we worry and are full of cares. He says that comes from a failure to recognize who is in control. When we ask the Lord to take care of our needs and to supply us with the grace to face them, we are acknowledging that we trust that He is able to take care of us. He is the Father, after all. He is quite capable of taking care of our needs. But there is one ingredient we shouldn't leave out: Thanksgiving. At the heart of the giving of thanks is gratitude. Appreciation is not only for what you have but for who has given it. Thanksgiving is centered on the fact that you wouldn't be who you are, or have the things you have if it weren't for God. Thanksgiving means that you understand that you wouldn't exist if it were not for the loving-kindness of God. So with the act of thanksgiving and a heart of gratitude, let your requests be made known unto the supplier of all our needs, and then wait on Him.

“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Yes, the peace which God is able to give to keep (guard) our hearts and minds passeth (is superior to) understanding. When trials are upon us, we often claim that we want understanding, but really peace is what will do the best work. When a loved one passes away, we often ask “why?” But it is the peace from God that is able to heal our souls and helps us to carry on. Peace is the guardian of the seat of our emotions. God's peace is able to calm the seas and the winds of our hearts and minds. Do you trust God to do so? Do you hope to have peace in this new year? Then exercise your faith in following these instructions that Paul has outlined. You may not know what lies ahead, but may you find God's peace in your heart and mind through whatever may come.