

THE GIFTS OF CHRISTMAS

The Gift of Peace

Romans 15:13; Luke 2:1-7

INTRODUCTION: As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have a multitude of gifts we would not have if Christ had not come. Last week we examined the gift of hope. Today I want us to look at the gift of peace.

When we think of the two words, Christmas and Peace, two familiar passages pop into our minds.

One is what is often called the Christmas Prophecy of Isaiah:

Isaiah 9:6–7 NKJV 6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**. 7 **Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end**, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

The other passage is the announcement of Jesus' birth by the angels to the shepherds.

Luke 2:8–14 NKJV 8 Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. 10 Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. 11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 14 "Glory to God in the highest, And **on earth peace**, goodwill toward men!"

World peace is elusive.

- Russia threatens to invade Ukraine. The U.S. threatens to destabilize the ruble.
- The U.S. announces a diplomatic boycott of China Olympics and China threatens countermeasures.
- Iran and the U.S. sit down to talk about nuclear weapons but get absolutely nowhere.

World peace is elusive.

These days, National peace is also hard to find.

- Democrats verses Republicans
- Conservatives verses Liberals
- Socialists verses Capitalists

But world peace or peace between competing factions is not what I want us to think about today.

I want us to think of personal peace.

- A lack of conflict in our own souls, which the biblical author of the Book of James says is caused by the lusts or improper desires that war against each other in our hearts.

I want us to think of that peace we all long for within ourselves.

- That gives us a security in spite of the circumstances.
- A calm and quiet haven inside ourselves even when the storms are raging around us.
- A certainty within when only doubt can be discovered on the outside.

The peace I want us to understand this morning is the peace Paul described to the Philippians.

Philippians 4:6–7 NKJV 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Is this not something we all want?

And do you see in this text that it is one of the gifts of Christmas?

Philippians 4:6–7 NKJV 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 **and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.**

We can have peace in our hearts while the world around us is raging because of what Jesus did when He came to earth and died on the cross for our sins.

But how? Certainly to receive this gift we must be saved, must trust Jesus personally as the Lord and Master of our lives. But not every born again believer lives with this kind of peace in his or her soul.

So how do we get that personal inward peace? I'm going to show you in two ways.

- **Show you the instruction**
- **Show you an example**

The instruction comes from our text in Philippians.

Philippians 4:6–7 NKJV 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

INSTRUCTION: Be anxious for nothing. – DON'T WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING!

INSTRUCTION: In everything by prayer and supplication, ... let your requests be made known to God. – PRAY ABOUT EVERYTHING!

INSTRUCTION: By prayer ... with thanksgiving. – DON'T FORGET TO THANK GOD FOR HIS ANSWERS!

The example is the man named Daniel. Specifically, we are going to look at Daniel, chapter 6, the time that Daniel was thrown into the lions' den.

Remember with me.

- Daniel brought as a young man with the first captives when Babylon began its siege of Jerusalem in 606 B.C.
- God sent Nebuchadnezzar a dream foretelling the future and then revealed both the dream and its meaning only to Daniel, so that Daniel was made chief of the Magi, the Wise Men of Babylon and the forerunners of the Wise Men who brought their gifts to toddler Jesus in Bethlehem.
- Daniel served in the royal court of Babylon throughout the life of King Nebuchadnezzar and then during the reign of Nabonidus, who replaced Nebuchadnezzar as the King of all Babylonia and his son Belshazzar who was King of the city of Babylon.
- When God took the rule of the world away from the Babylonians and gave it to the Medes and the Persians, the King Darius, the Mede, allowed Daniel to remain in the royal court.
- At this point, Daniel is 91 years old. He has been serving as a government administrator for 66 years!
- And Daniel, a Jew of course, so distinguished himself in the administration of King Darius, that Darius was considering making Daniel the Prime Minister,

second in power only to himself. This is what is happening at the opening of Daniel, chapter 6.

- The thought that the Jew Daniel might be elevated in authority over the other hundreds of people in the royal court, instantly created a lot of jealousy and evil intent. So these wicked men sought to discredit Daniel before Darius so that Daniel could not be promoted to such a place of power.

So we read. **Daniel 6:4–5 NKJV** 4 So the governors and satraps sought to find *some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him. 5 Then these men said, “We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God.”*

Now, remember the instruction.

INSTRUCTION: Be anxious for nothing. – DON’T WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING!

- Daniel does not worry, because he has a clear conscience.
 - Daniel was a sinner as we all are.
 - But Daniel kept himself clean through repentance and confession.
 - There was no hidden, ongoing sin in Daniel’s life that could surface.
 - **We are all sinners, but continuing, hidden, unforsaken sin prevents us from having the peace that passes understanding.**
- All his enemies can use to come against Daniel is his faithful obedience to the Word of God!
 - If I be accused of faithfully practicing the Word of God, may I be found guilty as charged!

These two outstanding statements about Daniel’s character help us understand why he continually had the peace of God in his heart. But also, Daniel practiced the second instruction.

INSTRUCTION: In everything by prayer and supplication, ... let your requests be made known to God. – PRAY ABOUT EVERYTHING!

- So, the fellow civil servants of Daniel, conspired to trick the King into condemning Daniel.

Daniel 6:6–9 NKJV 6 So these governors and satraps thronged before the king, and said thus to him: “King Darius, live forever! 7 All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted

together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. 8 Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter." 9 Therefore King Darius signed the written decree.

Darius should have known better. Friend, when somebody tells you that EVERYBODY is saying something, or EVERYBODY thinks such and such, you need to respond by saying, "name five!" Usually, you will hear something like, "Well I can't remember all their names but ..."

Yeh, right! You just caught them in a lie. They were trying to deceive you like the enemies of Daniel were deceiving Darius.

But Darius WAS deceived and he did what they asked and passed the foolish law that said for a month, he alone was to be in the place of God. Nobody could ask anything of anyone except the king.

- What did Daniel do?

Daniel 6:10–11 NKJV Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.

- This was not just crisis praying. This was Daniel's custom from an early age!

And notice that Daniel obeyed the third instruction as well.

INSTRUCTION: By prayer ... with thanksgiving. – DON'T FORGET TO THANK GOD FOR HIS ANSWERS!

Daniel 6:10–11 NKJV Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.

And watch what happens!

- Everybody is worried except Daniel!
 - The wicked, lying leaders are afraid the king will back down.
 - The king is afraid that his vanity will bring about the death of a man of God.
 - Daniel is not worried about anything.
 - He just keeps on praying.

- He keeps on thanking the Lord for all that God has done in the past, all the answered prayers, all the mighty works of God.
- And here we see a connection with what we learned last week. Faith unwraps the gift of hope.
- Faith, both built and expressed in prayer grows our hope and produces peace that passes understanding in our hearts.

Well you know how it ends.

Daniel 6:18–23 NKJV 18 Now the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no musicians were brought before him. Also his sleep went from him. 19 Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions. 20 And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?”

21 Then Daniel said to the king, “O king, live forever! 22 My God sent His angel and shut the lions’ mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you.”

23 Now the king was exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God.

Folks, we can count on God. Through Christ He offers us not only salvation, but also hope and peace as we live in the abundant life He came to give.

With hope and peace is how He wants us to make preparation for beginning our rebuilding of our worship center.

Let us grow our faith and increase our hope that God will bring this to completion!

Let us worry about nothing, pray about everything, and offer God our abundant thanks for all He has done for us individually and as a church.

Let us prayerfully get ourselves ready to join God in what He is doing as we have opportunity to make our commitments in January toward the rebuilding.