



Lessons By: Rev. Dr. Johnny R. Freeman

**8 Week Bible Study Series**

**Wednesdays | 6:50pm**

**United Institutional Baptist Church**

**802 E. Market Street, Greensboro, N.C. 27401**

# Dwelling in the Peace of God!

## -Introduction-

Pastor and author Joyce Meyer once said, 'you cannot have a positive life and a negative mind.' The bible says it like this 'a double minded man is unstable in all his ways.' (James 1:8) Either your mind is filled with positivity or negativity; there is no halfway. Ultimately your thoughts become your words and your words will determine your life! This is the basis of this bible teaching series: it is to help us understand that the direction that your life will take starts with what you think. We want to make sure that we develop the spiritual discipline of the right thinking and that we learn to speak the words that reflect what God's word says and we learn to live according to what we believe and not how we feel. No wonder the book of Proverbs says 'as a man thinketh in his heart so is he.' (Proverbs 23:7)

The next several lessons focus on getting our thinking right. Unless you learn to control what you think you cannot get the words that come out of your mouth right and your actions end up leading you away from God's will for your life. So let's start off by addressing the topic of tonight's lesson. That is what we want to lift up tonight what it means to DWELL IN THE PEACE OF GOD? Let's start with defining the word 'dwell.' To dwell means to 'live in,' or 'to stay.' The idea of dwelling in a particular place, or with someone

means that your time there is not a one-time thing, or an every once in a while visit like family members or friends that come through every once in a blue moon. To dwell with someone means that you're moving in and have a definite plan to make your home there. When you dwell somewhere or with someone it means that you ain't goin nowhere and whoever else lives there they may as well get used to seeing your face because you're coming to stay.

When it comes to the peace of God our believing faith in the finished works of Jesus Christ on the cross gives us 'peace with God!' We have peace with God because our faith in the finished works of Jesus on the cross has broken down the wall of sin and alienation from God. According to the Epistle of Romans we find the words of scripture 'therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ!' (Romans 5:1) This means that we no longer have to worry about the guilt, shame and alienation of separation from God. Our believing faith in the finished works of Christ on the cross has made right our standing before God and now we have the peace of knowing that we are made right with God because of the work Jesus has done for us. Again, the Apostle Paul reminds believers in Jesus Christ that 'we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and

strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world; but now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, Who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.' (Ephesians 2:10-14)

Having peace with God is all about our **POSITION**. Our faith in the finished works of Jesus Christ has given us access to **PEACE WITH US**. No longer are we cut off from having the benefits and blessings of a personal relationship with God. Through Jesus Christ we are His and He is ours. **DWELLING IN THE PEACE OF GOD** is about our **ATTITUDE**. We said before that the idea of dwelling is about 'living in,' or 'staying with' somewhere or with someone. In order to 'dwell' you have to make a decision and take action. The point is that peace with God is automatic while the dwelling in the peace of God is a spiritual discipline you have decide to do and act on.

## **CONTEXT OF PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9**

Let's talk about what the peace of God is. Looking at the situation that the Apostle Paul addresses in his letter to the Philippian church you have to understand the situation that Paul was dealing with and what was taking place in the church at Philippi and. First of all, the Apostle Paul finds himself in prison awaiting trial before Caesar in Rome. The nature of Paul's imprisonment is particularly brutal and inhumane even. Paul isn't just in prison; he is chained

between two soldiers that are chained to him. The soldiers rotate in shifts of 2-4 hours at a time. So you can understand the level of irritability the soldiers feel in their hearts toward Paul. I know I wouldn't like it and they probably did little things to show they're annoyance toward Paul. On the other hand, Paul can't even move without alerting the soldiers that were chained to him. Which meant if he had to go to the bathroom the soldiers had to move with him because the command was to make sure Paul didn't escape. During this period in his life and ministry Paul was also an old man. I'm sure that the aches and pains of old age, and having to endure leg irons on his ankles and wrists left Paul scarred, sore and bruised.

Think for a minute how you would feel being in that situation. You're in prison for no good reason and awaiting trial that could result in your being killed. If it wasn't enough to be in prison awaiting trial you also are in the unbearable predicament of being chained between two soldiers 24/7 with no privacy or time to yourself. On top of everything Paul was dealing with personally, he gets this letter from the members of the Philippian Church describing their situation. The church Paul helped organize and had bragged on was now dealing with internal conflict. Two women in the church, who had played an instrumental role in the church's ministry, had some disagreement between them that caused problems in the congregation. You know that everyone in the church has friends that are loyal to them. When there's a disagreement between members of the church people tend to pick sides and according to how

those disagreeing handle the situation it can divide a church. In addition to the disagreement between the two sisters in the church they weren't getting the support from their brothers in the church. I remember a time when women in church leadership weren't embraced as they are today. The reason the members of the Philippian Church wrote to Paul was out of concern that the church was in turmoil and being torn apart by division in the church.

Paul wrote back to teach the saints at Philippi about how to **DWELL IN THE PEACE OF GOD**. I told you earlier that there's a difference in having Peace with God and Dwelling in the Peace of God. **As believers in Jesus Christ our personal relationship with Jesus gives us Peace With God automatically. However, we have to choose to Dwell In The Peace of God ourselves.** The point to get here is that Paul enjoyed the Peace of God, even though he's in prison and is chained between two soldiers 24/7 while the Philippian church doesn't have to deal with imprisonment but are worried about being torn apart by the division there. One person has the peace of God while the others are worried and in turmoil.

## **EXPOSITION OF PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9....**

The Apostle Paul makes it clear to the church at Philippi that changing your situation starts with changing the way you think. While Paul was enjoying and being strengthened and sustained by the Peace of God the members of the Philippian church were being torn apart because they had lost the Right

Focus. Paul outlines in the chapter how to heal the division in the church. He reminds them what it means to DWELL IN THE PEACE OF GOD!

## STEPS TO DWELLING IN THE PEACE OF GOD...

- 1) **Know That You Don't Have To Worry** - Just as Dwelling in the Peace of God is a choice so is giving into worry. In the Garden of Eden the devil interjected doubt about what God had said in the mind of Eve by saying 'did God really say don't eat the fruit from every tree in the garden?' (Genesis 3:1) What Eve didn't know then was the importance of knowing, meditating and resolving to stand on the word of God. In order to resolve something you have to choose to do something. Knowing that you don't have to worry simply means that you recognize you don't have to give into satan's lies to distort the truth or get in your head with anxiety or doubt. Again, the bible says 'a double minded man is unstable in all his ways.' (James 1:8). You cannot dwell in the peace of God and worry at the same time. You have to do one or the other because trying to do both only leads to confusion. Even though you cannot control what comes into your mind you can control what you allow your mind to dwell on. The way Paul was able to Dwell in the Peace of God was knowing that he didn't have to worry about what was going to happen to him because he knew that his life was in God's hands not men. That's peace enough just knowing

that wherever you are, or whatever you may be going through you're always in God's sight and God's hands.

2) **Learn How to Pray Right** - Praying to God isn't just a formality, or a habit, or a ritual that we do; there's power in prayer. However, getting an answer to your prayers, and enjoying the blessings and benefits of praying starts with Learning How To Pray Right. According to the words of Jesus, we are to avoid the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and scribes, who "love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men..." (Matthew 6:5) According to the Epistle of Philippians, right praying starts with **{A} The Right Approach** - according to the teachings of Jesus, we are taught, "when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut the door, pray to your [Heavenly] Father in secret, and your Father which sees in secret shall reward you openly. But when you pray, don't use vain repetition as the heathen do. For they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Don't be like the hypocrites, for your Father know what you need before you ask" (Matthew 6:6-8) Therefore, praying right starts with how you approach God. You are to come before God with the peace of knowing that God cares for you, as His child and God knows just what you need. You come before God with the peace of knowing that God promises to 'support all your need according to His riches in glory through Christ Jesus.' (Philippians 4:19)



Right Praying also concerns **{B} The Right Attitude** – According to the Epistle to the Philippians, we are admonished to ‘be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.’ (Philippians 4:6) The key phrase in the verse is ‘prayer and supplication. The word ‘supplication’ means to ‘cry out,’ or ‘sincere, earnest plea.’ We are to come before God and pour out our hearts before God in humility and sincerity. The reference here is that of the attitude of the heart. According to the Epistle to the Hebrews, we are reminded that ‘...for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that {diligently} seek Him.’ (Hebrews 11:6b) Again, the Epistle of James adds, ‘but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.’ (James 1:6-7) The Right Affirmation – when you affirm something, it means that you ‘bear witness that something is true.’ So to give the right affirmation whenever you come before God in prayer is to acknowledge that everything you’ve heard about God is true. The way we know about God is through the word of God, and the word of God tells that God is ‘the Only True and Living God.’ God is ‘Alpha and Omega, the first and the last; the beginning and the ending.’ So to make the Right Affirmation starts with ‘adoration,’ ‘worship and praise.’ No wonder we are taught ‘...but in everything by prayer and supplication,

with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.' (Philippians 4:6)

- 3) Discipline Yourself To Think Right In his commentary on the New Testament, author Warren W. Wiersbe says, 'peace involves the heart and the mind.' (The Wiersbe Bible Commentary, page 653) According to the Book of Isaiah, the bible says, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee.' (Isaiah 26:3) The point is, even though our thoughts are real, and can be powerful we must bring our every thought into obedience with Christ.' (2 Corinthians 10:5) The battlefield of the mind is a matter of spiritual warfare. We cannot win the war for our minds on our own but we who are in Christ are never alone and peace with God is enough to help us enjoy the peace of God. However, it's our job to bring our thoughts in line with the right thinking. What is right thinking? Right thinking is {A} Dwelling on Whatever is True – notice that the bible says, 'whatsoever things are true...think on these things.' (Philippians 4:8a) The Holy Spirit will help us guard our thinking when we develop the discipline to control what we think about. As a believer in Jesus Christ, Disciplining Yourself to Think Right starts with Dwelling on Whatever is True. We believe what God says as the lens that informs what we consider to be true not what the world says. We also discipline ourselves to think right by {B} Dwelling On

**Whatever is Honest and Just** – this means ‘worthy of respect and right.’ There are many things that are not respectable, or respectful, and Christians should not think about these things. We are to Discipline our thoughts by focusing our attention on things that are worthy of respect and right. The litmus we have to ask ourselves is what you’re thinking respectful and worthy of a Christian to think. We Discipline Ourselves to Think Right when we **{C} Dwelling On Whatever is Pure, Lovely, and of Good Report** – ‘pure,’ means ‘moral purity,’ and moral purity is what God’s word defines are ‘moral,’ and ‘pure,’ not what the word determines is pure, beautiful and good. The believer in Jesus Christ must major on the high and noble thoughts, not be base thoughts of the corrupt world. I like what First Lady, Michelle Obama said, ‘when they go low we go high.’ We Discipline Ourselves to Think Right by **{D} Dwelling On Whatever Possesses Virtue and Praise** – The bible says ‘if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.’ (Philippians 4:8) According to Wiersbe, ‘if it has virtue, it will motivate us to want to do better and be better.’ If it is worthy of praise, it is worth commending to others. No Christian can afford to waste ‘mind power’ on thoughts that tear down instead of building up.

4. **CONFORM TO RIGHT LIVING.** The word ‘conform,’ means to ‘adjust,’ ‘adapt,’ and ‘change’ from doing one

thing to do something altogether difference. According to the Epistle of Romans, the bible says 'and be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed, by the renewing of your mind that ye may prove what is that good, and perfect and acceptable will of God.' (Romans 12:2) Peace with God is not a license to do whatever you want to do or live however you choose to. Again, that's why Dwelling in The Peace Of God is a choice. **In order to get our thinking right we have to conform to God's way!** Again, there is no halfway, that is if you really want to Dwell in the Peace of God! You've got to allow the Holy Spirit to do a work of God's grace in your mind and spirit.

**But God Is Able!** When we choose to allow the Holy Spirit to guard and guide our thought life we will find that God will help us in our desire to bring our thoughts in alignment with His thoughts, God's will and God's ways!