

**Philippians 4:1-9**  
**Creekside COB**  
**December 6, 2009**

### **“Just Do It!”**

A wise old gentleman retired and purchased a modest home near a junior high school. He spent the first few weeks of his retirement in peace and contentment. Then a new school year began. The very next afternoon three young boys, full of youthful, after-school enthusiasm, came down his street, beating merrily on every trash can they encountered. The crashing percussion continued day after day, until finally the wise old man decided it was time to take some action.

The next afternoon, he walked out to meet the young percussionists as they banged their way down the street. Stopping them, he said, "You kids are a lot of fun. I like to see you express your exuberance like that.

In fact, I used to do the same thing when I was your age. Will you do me a favor? I'll give you each a dollar if you'll promise to come around every day and do your thing."

The kids were elated and continued to do a bang-up job on the trash cans.

After a few days, the old-timer greeted the kids again, but this time he had a sad smile on his face. "This recession's really putting a big dent in my income," he told them. "From now on, I'll only be able to pay you 50 cents to beat on the cans."

The noisemakers were obviously displeased, but they accepted his offer and continued their afternoon ruckus. A few days later, the wily retiree approached them again as they drummed their way down the street.

"Look," he said, "I haven't received my Social Security check yet, so I'm not going to be able to give you more than 25 cents. Will that be okay?"

"A freakin' quarter?" the drum leader exclaimed. "If you think we're going to waste our time, beating these cans around for a quarter, you're nuts! No way, dude. We quit!"

And the old man enjoyed peace and serenity for the rest of his days.

Is this the peace that Paul refers to?

The Nike brand coined the phrase Just Do It in the 1980s in response to Reebok cornering the market in aerobics. Although the ads were criticized for being cold and impersonal, it worked. It turned Nike around to become the largest athletic shoe company in the world. This is what the business world calls brand marketing. Nike used this slogan to speak for their brand. Their brand were for real athletes. Athletes who would not anything stop them - serious athletes.

We can call Paul a brand marketer. His letters set the standards for the Christian brand. It is this Christian brand that Paul wrote with such passion wanting everyone to become Christian, wanting Christianity for everyone. This is what he wanted for all of us.

Unlike the Nike brand who were interested only in their name recognition, Paul loved His church and wanted all people to have what God intended us to have - a full and rich life in Christ. Christianity is the brand of peace.

In this passage of scripture, Paul wanted all to know how to enjoy the peace of Christ. The peace that Jesus said in John 14 “the peace I leave with you, my peace I leave with you.” A peace in our souls, as verse 7 says, “the peace that is far more wonderful than the human mind to understand.”

What is the peace of God that Paul knows so well. Paul is not talking about world peace here. Philippi was a Roman colony and Paul is imprisoned for most likely disturbing the peace. Pax Romano was Rome’s motto. Roman government wanted peace at all costs. When Paul began stirring up the people, the Roman government saw it as a threat to their peace.

Paul knows that in our quest to promote the Christian brand, chaos will ensue and the Roman government will not be happy. He wants Christ’s followers to understand that we can have peace in our souls as we experience chaos all around us.

The way Paul lays it out it seems simple doesn’t it. He lays out the steps for his brand to succeed. Rejoice, be thankful, let everyone see your consideration. Don’t worry about anything but pray about everything. If you do this, you will experience God’s peace and this peace will guard your heart and mind. Paul then goes on to tell us how exactly we are to do this. We are to fix our thoughts on only good things.

Paul's advice to us seem to be one of "Just Do It" , doesn't it? Paul lays it out so succinctly. It does seem simple.

You know Paul suffered much hardship while he wrote these letters. He was in jail and even when not imprisoned he was shipwrecked and bitten by a snake. He suffered in his ministry but yet he understood peace.

Two New York entrepreneurs decided to see if some money might be made by introducing bungee-jumping to Mexico. They fronted some venture capital to build a platform, where people who like "extreme sports" could dive off and spring up and down as they do in the states. When it came time for the trial run, the two entrepreneurs climbed up the platform and looked down on the gathering crowd. They knew what they had to "do," but decided to shoot fingers to see who got to "do it." The entrepreneur who "won" (or "lost," depending on how you look at it) put on the harness and dove off. When he came up the first time, his partner noticed that his nose was bloody. When he came up the second time, it was obvious that one eye was turning black. When he came up a third time, part of his ear was missing. He yelled out, "Are you okay?" On his way down a fourth time, his partner yelled back, "What's a piñata?"

Have you ever felt like a piñata in life - where everything keeps beating you up? Have you ever had real peace? Paul tells us that it is hard to understand in our human condition. And even Paul has a hard time with it when he says in Romans, *Why do I do the things that I do not want to do and do not do the things that I want to do.* He is hard pressed to find peace, too.

However, Jesus, in so many of His passages tells people to go in peace you are well - Jesus came so we could have peace - peace on earth - goodwill toward men. Jesus wants us to have peace both on earth and in our souls.

So what is that peace? Here we are again with that question. What is it when we pass the peace of Christ and when we are passing it do we even understand what the peace of Christ does for us?

Well, I am not sure I can explain it to you but I can give you some testimony that may help you understand.

There is a story about a Salvation Army worker who was serving God by ministering to the homeless people in the city. She was handing out cups of hot coffee to each person and while handing out coffee to one particular gentlemen, the homeless man took the coffee and threw it all over her. Instead of reacting badly or walking away from that ministry, she immediately poured another cup of coffee

and handed it to the homeless gentleman again. Paul would say that she possessed peace in her soul.

I remember two young students from Wheeling Jesuit school just about one hour from Pittsburgh were found murdered somewhere in between Pittsburgh and Wheeling. The murderers were found, tried and convicted. On the day of their sentencing, one of the murdered students' mother was in the courtroom. It was recorded in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette with her photograph proclaiming forgiveness to both of the murderers for the death of her son and his friend. It was said that the courtroom was quiet and there was a peace in the room that was unexplainable considering the tension of the case. Paul would say that she possessed peace in her soul.

## JOHN WESLEY

John Wesley, early in his career, was on a sea voyage with his brother Charles. They were crossing the Atlantic to Georgia where they would do mission work in America. During the passage, a great storm arose, such a great storm that the passengers and crew thought they may not survive. Even Wesley feared for his own life. But below decks he found a group of immigrants who were singing hymns and praying. These were the Moravians, religious refugees from central Europe and Germany. These Moravians were completely calm, and they kept on singing and praying through the whole storm.

After the crisis had passed, Wesley spoke to one of the men in the group about their incredible calm. At one point, Wesley asked "Were not even your women and children afraid of dying?" to which the man replied "No, our women and children are not afraid to die." Paul would say the Moravians possessed a peace in their souls.

So if we can't explain it then what is it? It is a peace that is not governed by our circumstances. These people knew that God was in control. These people had a trust in our Lord to know whatever it is, he would not forsake us but dwells with us. It is calm assurance that He is in control. They know that we can do the things that Paul asks us to do, because we know God's love covers us in the midst of our hardship. They know that by living by what Paul had to say that they would find their peace of God - the peace of Christ.

Shalom is the Hebrew word for peace. It has a richer meaning than the English word for peace that we use. Peace in English means the absence of outward conflict or to a state of inner calm. The concept of shalom includes these ideas but goes beyond them, meaning "wholeness," "completeness," "finished word,"

"perfection," "safety," or "wellness." Shalom comes from living in harmony with God. The fruit of that harmony is harmony with others, prosperity, health, satisfaction, soundness, wholeness, and well-being. When the Hebrew people prayed to the Yahweh of Shalom they were praying to the God of Peace. When we pray, we are praying through Christ our Prince of Peace.

To seek peace means to search for it like you are looking for a lost child. Have you ever had that happen to you? One minute your child is right next to you and the next minute, gone. Oh the feeling of panic that overwhelms you as your heart starts beating faster, a burning sensation moves throughout your body, your eyes become fixed and your voice raises as you firmly and seriously call out your child's name. Nothing is right until you find your child. That state of mind is not very peaceful and yet Paul instructs us to seek peace. <sup>1</sup>

A missing child isn't normal for the parent as much as missing peace isn't normal for the Christian. In John 14, Christ says to us he leaves us with His peace. He is the Peace of the World.

A priest of a large congregation would see a man every day come into his church to pray in front of the altar. The priest would try to speak to him in length but the man said that he did not need anything but to come and sit in the front of the church. This man was a loner and lived in the neighborhood.

The Mother Superior told me that Jim had been admitted, and I said I would be out to see him. She met me at the door and said, "You know, Father Rice, he has been here for two months. He went into the most cantankerous ward we have. Every nun here has tried her best to bring some sense of joy and calm to that ward. We failed. Jim went into that ward and the place is transformed. It is a new place. I went to him two days ago and I asked, 'Jim, how is it that you have been able to bring such joy and such a sense of peace to these men?' And he said, 'Oh, sister, it is because of my visitor.'" And she said, "I know he didn't have any visitors. That chair hadn't been occupied the 60 days he has been here. So I said, 'Jim, what visitors? I've never seen a visitor.' And he said, 'Sister, every day at 12:00, He comes and stands at the foot of my bed and says, 'Jim, it's Jesus!'"

The world is looking for their answers in all things except where Christ is. This peace is what Christ offers us. That is the kind of relationship with God that Jesus is offering you. Only He can offer it because only He died to pay the price for the sin that keeps us from a sinless God. This is the peace we need and thrive on.

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Peace of Christ the peace that is beyond anything we understand. Paul our brand marketer tells us to “Just Do It.”