

The Lord Is Near

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Philippians 4:5-7 says, “Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” This passage has often been used to speak of the importance of prayer and letting our requests be made known to God when we are anxious about things in this life. We talk about supplications meaning we ask God to supply us with our needs. We also speak of praying with thanksgiving for in times of anxiety, when we can be thankful and recognize what God has already done for us, it will keep our minds balanced and not overcome with grief. These ideas are usually what lead us to the end result mentioned in verse 7 about the peace of God guarding our hearts and minds.

What is often overlooked is verse 5. There is a sentence about letting our “reasonableness” (or gentleness) being known to everyone. That is followed by “The Lord is at hand;” and most try to attach the latter phrase with somehow being reasonable. However, if you follow the punctuation as rendered above from the ESV, clearly the idea of the Lord being at hand (or near) goes with being anxious. Christians don’t need to be anxious about this life because the Lord is close by them. He is so close that they can talk to Him in prayer at a moment’s notice. The Lord walks with them and when saints need Him at any moment, The Lord is walking right beside them and within “earshot.” But how often do we view the Lord as right beside us or close by?

Many of the Psalms speak of the nearness of God. Psalm 16:8 says, “I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.” Or we can read in Psalms 119:151, “But you are near, O Lord, and all your commandments are true.” Isaiah records, “He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me.” (Isaiah 50:8.) And Jeremiah records the words of God Himself, “Am I a God at hand, declares the Lord, and not a God far away?” (Jer. 23:23.) These and many other Old Testament verses speak of God being near. Get a concordance and check for yourself.

However, it would be a mistake to base our notions of God solely on Old Testament teaching. You see, while God was said to be close by in those times, there was still this matter of a veil that separated God from man. We can learn a lot of things about God in the Old Testament but His holiness is set forth in no clearer terms than that miserable veil. And if there is anything Christians need to do, they need to quit treating God like He is still behind the veil.

Oh no! He is out in the open now. When Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God came, it was Immanuel—God with us (Matt. 1:23.) God came and walked among us as close as any human beings walking together. And His death on the cross tore the veil down so it is there no more (Matt. 27:51.) As a result, the Hebrew writer reminds us that we can enter into God’s presence because there is no veil (10:19-21.) Paul said that those baptized by faith in to Christ have “put on Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27.) That’s how close He is, like a piece of clothing you “put on.”

So, when you're sitting at the kitchen table making out those monthly bills, talk to the Lord for He is sitting there with you. When dealing with troublesome co-workers, talk to God instead of them. He is standing right there. When driving down the road enjoying a beautiful day, thank the Lord for He is enjoying the same thing you are. The point is, when Christians treat the Lord as though He is right beside them, their prayers are more meaningful and lead to greater peace than they have ever known. And remember that Paul said, "He is not far from any of us" (Acts 17:27.) So treat Him that way.