

Living as Citizens of Heaven – Part 11

Peace that Transcends – Phil. 4:4-7

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – Aug. 11th, 2024

Intro:

- If you are like me, there are times in your life when you struggle with everything Paul tells us to do in our section of Scripture for this morning. At times, I struggle to rejoice in the Lord. I struggle with being gentle. I struggle with anxiety. I struggle with praying with thanksgiving in every situation, and I struggle with resting in the peace that God provides. Surely, we want all these things but struggle to have them, yet this passage remains with both its commands and reward. This morning, I hope that we can receive help to apply this passage and then receive what is promised – the peace of God that transcends all understanding.

Phil 4:4-7 NIV

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Phil 4:4 NIV

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

Rejoice in the Lord always

- In the first four verses of this chapter, Paul uses the phrase “in the Lord” three times. “Stand firm in the Lord” (v.1). “Be of the same mind in the Lord” (v.3). And now “rejoice in the Lord” (v.4). Remember that Paul is writing this from prison while facing opposition from those outside of the church and dealing with conflict from within the church, all the while nursing Epaphroditus, who almost died bringing Paul aid, back to health. These were less than ideal circumstances from which he wrote these things.
- Paul is not instructing us to rejoice in or from our circumstances because, at times, there is nothing to rejoice about them. He is telling us to rejoice in what is beyond and above our circumstances. We are to, instead, “rejoice in the Lord,” rejoicing in what we have in Him – forgiveness of sin, a new nature by the Holy Spirit, and eternal life. We are to rejoice “that our names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20).
- We are to do this always, and over and over again, especially when things are difficult and not going well. It is good to remind ourselves of what is true and what we have in Christ, to see our lives from the perspective of eternity. This will give us the strength to persevere, overcome, and endure. “The joy of the Lord is your strength” (Nem. 8:10).

Phil 4:5a NIV

Let your gentleness be evident to all.

Let your gentleness be evident to all

- In our society, gentleness is not a highly regarded virtue. We value strength and courage, as well as those who can argue the best and “land their punches.” But we are called as Christians to gentleness. This is not being a quarrelsome, argumentative, easily angered, or violent person. In this country, we are losing our civility, and tragically, this is also true in the church. People are also applauded for putting people in their place and “winning the argument.” We love it when people land their verbal “jabs” on the other side. We listen to bombastic broadcasts, emulate the argumentative, and vote for the combative. This type of interaction divides and destroys families, friends, teams, and nations.
- We are called to be peaceful, meek, and courteous people. Gentleness is not weakness. It is winning by your actions and interactions, by the way, that wins the day, your actions guided by your convictions. It is overcoming truth with love. It is loving your enemies and praying for those who persecute you (Matt. 5:44). This is what guided the civil rights movement under Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. We are called to let our gentleness be known to all. Both in the church and outside the church. Both in your family and outside of it. To your friends and your enemies. Choose to put this into practice and pray for others to do the same. You will win more arguments by your gentleness than your anger.
- In this passage, Paul wants people to know your gentleness and God to know your needs and requests. If you give your anxieties to God, then you can be merciful, gentle, and kind to others. God can shoulder the burdens. If you have joy rooted in God meeting your requests, you will be gentle to all.
- Surrounded by commands, Paul makes a statement, and it seems out of place. However, this statement is the theological bedrock upon which the commands and promises are built.

Phil 4:5b NIV

The Lord is near.

Remember the Lord is near

- The “Lord is near” means that He knows all things, and He is soon in His return. Peter and James say the same thing “The end of all things is near” (I Peter 4:7), and “the coming of the Lord is at hand” (James 5:8). When He comes back, He will repay each person for what they have done in the body, whether good or evil (Matt. 16:27, 2 Cor. 5:10, Rev. 22:12).
- So we can “rejoice in the Lord” and “let our gentleness be known to all” because our time of suffering will be short in comparison to eternity, and the Lord will reward and also repay us. He will deal with those who have done evil. We don’t have to defend ourselves or win the day. The truth will be known in the end. God is the one who keeps the score, declares the victor, and settles the score. We don’t need to defend ourselves and fight to prove everyone else is wrong. The Lord knows, and that is enough. Remembering this will help us to rejoice, help us to be gentle, help us to not be anxious, help us to pray with thanksgiving, and help us to live in His peace.
- This truth is fundamental and foundational for us to remember. It is the key that unlocks our ability to do what we are commanded to do in this passage.

Phil 4:6a NIV

Do not be anxious about anything

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- This is super hard because we tend to do the opposite. We are anxious about many things. Anxiety is caused by many things, from trauma from the past to fears both present and in the future. These are fears that come into your life and rob you of the peace of God.
- The solution to this problem is to refocus our minds from our problems to the presence and power of God, allowing His peace to reign in our hearts. This is a “don’t do this” (be anxious) but “do this” (present your requests to God) instead command. What we focus on becomes what we see. And what we see can overwhelm us in fear or enfold us in peace.
- This is why we need to make intentional choices to transform our anxieties through prayer.

Phil 4:6b NIV

But in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Present your requests to God

- We are to take everything and every situation and turn it toward God in prayer. We must train ourselves to do this. The more you do so, the more it becomes second nature, and we turn to prayer as our first response. This is the better and the best way to live.
- Notice that these are requests and not demands. Paul has to make it clear that in our anxious prayers, we are to present our requests “with thanksgiving.” This thanksgiving comes from knowing that God does hear you, and God does love you, and you can trust God regardless of the outcome. This will give you great peace that transcends your understanding. Peace, knowing that God will work it out. I don’t understand how He will do so, but I will trust Him knowing that I have prayed, and I will trust Him.
- And the good news is that He will give us peace that will guard our hearts and minds.

Phil 4:7 NIV

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- So the question is, what are we being guarded from? From anxiety. We are to pray every time our anxious thoughts come knocking on the door of our hearts and minds. God guards our hearts and minds here “in Christ Jesus.” This is the fourth time we have read this phrase in this chapter.
- Now, we are thinking like Christ and being obedient to God and His will. It gives us peace that we are calling out to Him and connecting with God, like Christ in prayer. We are doing so as obedient servants, entrusting ourselves to the will of the Father. This does not mean that we will get everything we want or that things will turn out as we hope. Sometimes it does, and sometimes it does not.
- But we can be at peace with the outcome, knowing that we have prayed and trusted God, trusting that He will give us perspective and make all things right in the end. This is the trust that gives us peace.

Conclusion

- Focus on the truth that the Lord is near. Let this be the place in which you stand. I trust that you know which area from this passage is the biggest challenge for you. Perhaps it is rejoicing in the Lord or being gentle in your responses. Your biggest challenge may be dealing with anxiety and turning to prayer.
- Whatever it is for you, ask the Lord to help you in it, and then put that principle into practice.

Benediction

May the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, whose dominion is forever and ever, restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you (1 Peter 5:10-11). Go in the peace of God.

Questions for Growth Groups

- How do you currently practice rejoicing in the Lord, even during challenging times?
- What are some specific ways you can demonstrate gentleness to those around you?
- How has prayer helped you deal with anxiety in the past? Are there areas in your life where you need to bring your worries to God?
- Can you share a time when you experienced the peace of God in a difficult situation? What did that look like for you?