

Philippians 4:4-7

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Paul repeats the call for the Philippians to rejoice. Rejoicing in the face of all circumstances is part of having the mindset of Jesus, who showed radical obedience to God no matter what. This mindset brings us the peace of God and keeps us from anxiety.

Now Paul returns to another theme of the letter, saying *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!* These two instances of “rejoice” mark the seventh and eighth time Paul has used “rejoice.” Paul is in prison. He expects more hardship. He is urging the Philippian believers to choose the same path as he has, one that could lead them to severe persecution as well. What is there to rejoice about?

Paul’s urging to *rejoice* is directly connected to the primary theme, which is to choose a “mindset” that is true and real. Paul has made clear that if we see reality for what it is, we will follow the same path Jesus followed, which is a path of radical obedience. Jesus set aside momentary comfort to pursue a path of radical obedience, leaving heaven as God to come to earth as a human. Because of His obedience, His name was exalted above every name. He gained the greatest possible reward. (Philippians 2:5-10). We are given this same opportunity. So we ought to *rejoice* continually.

It is clear that when Paul is urging them to *rejoice*, Paul is asking them to make a decision, to decide that “These circumstances are for my good, therefore I am going to choose to be grateful.” When we choose a mindset that is true and real, a mindset anchored in eternity, it sets us up to also choose a mindset of gratitude. We can be grateful we have been given this once-in-an-existence opportunity to walk in radical obedience. We can be grateful for the experience of a walk of faith to know “the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.” (Philippians 3:10).

In doing this, we can come to “know Him” by faith, (Philippians 3:10). It seems clear that this is the way to win the “prize of the upward call” and gain the same sort of immense rewards that Jesus received for His faithful service. It is the path that allows us to enter into the joy of our Master in serving together to reign in harmony and service in the New Earth (Philippians 3:14, Matthew 25:23).

The great prize of the upward call is to reign with Christ. The example of Christ shows us that the way to prove readiness to reign is through willingness to serve others. Paul now elevates this principle, exhorting the Philippian believers to *Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.* The word translated *gentle* can also be translated “moderate,” “equitable,” “patient,” or “fair.” It is a spirit that is assertively collaborative. It is not a self-seeking spirit that avoids confrontation, in order to gain personal comfort. Neither is it a self-seeking spirit that uses the threat of confrontation to bully or gain advantage. It is a spirit like that which Paul urged the Philippian body to have toward the feuding women, Euodia and Synteché (v. 2). It is a spirit that seeks a common mindset of mutual service. He reminds them that the *Lord is near* because Paul

lived with the expectation that Christ could return at any moment, and that believers should live with readiness for that day (1 Thessalonians 5:6).

So far, in his winding up of this letter, Paul has asked us to take on responsibility to help others, without demanding anything in return (including particular results). He has asked us to choose a mindset of gratitude that we have the privilege to serve Christ by serving others. He has asked us to be patient with others, recognizing that we cannot choose for them. He has asked us to do all this while embracing the suffering of Christ, who suffered rejection from the world for refusing to bow to its ways. This sounds like a lifestyle that might come with a lot of worry. So Paul now says *Be anxious for nothing*. Does Paul expect us to just be able to choose not to worry? The answer is yes. Again, Paul is asking us to choose a mindset.

Worry is, at its root, an attempt to control the world around us. We have the illusions that we can control things that are, in truth, outside our control. Paul invites us to choose a mentality that is true, and recognize that God is the one that is in control. Accordingly, instead of trying to control things by worrying, Paul tells us *but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God*. God is actually in control. And God knows what is best. God has promised that He will cause all things to work for the good (Romans 8:28-29). So Paul says “Let God know what you want, then be grateful for whatever occurs, knowing that He will do what is best.” It is fine to let God know your desires. So do that. Then trust that God will do what is actually best, since He knows all, and we know very little.

If we will follow this advice, then *the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus*. When we choose the mindset that God knows what is best, and will do what is best, then we are promised *the peace of God*. When we trust beyond our comprehension, that God is good, and has our best interest at heart, even when we cannot conceive how goodness can come from a terrible circumstance, then we get a *peace* that also *surpasses all comprehension*. This all comes from choosing a mindset that is true. One that is rooted in the character and nature of Christ. One that is rooted in the eternal realities of creation. This *peace of God* will *guard your hearts and your minds* from anxiety and worry. This is because it will focus the heart and mind on *Christ Jesus*, who made the world, sustains the world, and will bring all things to justice in the world. It is this same *Christ Jesus* who has promised that if we will follow Him in radical obedience, He will reward us in a manner that surpasses anything that could possibly be imagined (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Biblical Text

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near. 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 comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.