

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7

THIS IS THE DAY THE LORD HAS MADE! LET US REJOICE AND BE GLAD IN IT! (Psalm 118:24)

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.

Be anxious for nothing, 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 minds through Christ Jesus.

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When was the last time you got out of bed in the morning and were immediately excited about the new day? Was it a big day like your wedding, or your trip to the mountains? Usually, it takes people a while to clear the mind, to get the cobwebs out, to remember the details for the new day, and to get going. I remember the year between college and the seminary. I was working for the year. My clock-radio would come on just a little before 5:00. At 5:00 as the station came on the air, the first announcer read, "This is the day the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it! (Psalm 118:24). At 22 years old, I wasn't very eager to get up so early and head off to work. The announcer almost annoyed me, but I knew he read from Scripture. The verses from Philippians for today are very similar: *Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!*

Paul wrote this letter to the congregation in Philippi, which he had founded on his second missionary journey. This letter/epistle is sometimes called the Epistle of Joy. It contains only four chapters, but the word "joy" comes up a half a dozen times. Paul, in his joy, wants the Philippians to be happy and content in the Lord. When Paul wrote this letter, he was a prisoner in Rome! He was awaiting trial before Caesar, because the Jews in Jerusalem had arrested him for preaching Christ. It's surprising that he should be so positive and joyful, and that he should encourage the Philippians to be positive and joyful also! Listen to some of the memorable verses from chapters 1, 2, 3:

1:12-14 *"But I want you to know, brothers, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furthering of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ. And most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the Word without fear!"*

1:21 *"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain!"*

2:5-8 *"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."*

3:7 *"But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ."*

3:20-21 *"Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself."*

Paul had learned to know that Christ "went through hell" for him on the cross (My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me!); that in Christ his sins were atoned for and forgiven, he was reconciled to God, he would be raised from the grave, and taken to the glories of heaven! How could each day not be a good day! *Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!* Not just on days you're "hitting the ball well,"

not just on Christmas, but even on a Christmas when you're "alone," when the family is not home, when you're in the nursing home. Rejoice! the Savior has come for you! You are loved and are safe! Always.

Let your gentleness be known to all men. Your "gentleness"—your moderate-ness, your yielding-ness, your moderation—which is the opposite of "I'm in charge here; get out of the way; it's my way!" Who is happier, the hard-driving "always my way" individual, or the peaceable, gentle soul? The Bible says, "*There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked*" (Isaiah 57:21). In Christ's forgiveness and guidance, you live in peace. Do you ask, "But how can I? I never know what 'bomb' in life is going to go off next? I mean, look at the past year!" Dear Christian, do you think those things are bigger than God? Do you think your own doing had nothing to with starting or accelerating them? Even if not directly, nonetheless, you are a sinner. OR, on the opposite extreme, do you wonder, "How can I be at peace, when every day is the same old thing? Dull. Pointless. Doesn't God care?" Can you really expect more? You are a sinner, aren't you? Calm down, "buck-up" (as my Dad would say when I was disappointed), cheer up. Why? *The Lord is at hand!* Jesus is right at the door in each moment of life. His Return at the End is imminent. How can you be sad and discouraged, or unruly and domineering? Take a breath of fresh air in Jesus. Trust Him. The Lord is at hand! Imagine you are a child and it's Christmas Day. How can you get up in the morning and "crab-around"? It's a great day. It's Christmas! It's the day to celebrate the first arrival of Christ! Every day is like that. *The Lord is at hand!* "This is the day the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it!" The risen Jesus, who forgives your sins, gives relief to you each day. Rejoice!

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. Do you get anxious? About the weather, about your aches and pains, about your children? Do you wake up at night trying to deal with events of the day? Do you fear? Do you believe that it's all just up to chance? and your "luck" is never any good anyway? Bah humbug! No such thing as luck. Your pride and reliance on self is what isn't very good. Take all your cares and concerns to the Lord. "*Cast all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you*" (1 Peter 5:7). Pray to Him with confidence. Pray with thanksgiving. Consider all that He has already done for you. Do not just pray, "Lord, I need, I want." But, "Lord, Thank You for yesterday's help, for last summer's rain, for last winter's health, for my successful surgery. Thank You for forgiveness in Jesus and the sure hope of heaven. Father, continue to care for me. Help me with x, y, and z, which seem like problems to me. I trust your power, wisdom, love, mercy and the glory-to-come in Jesus." A thankful heart is a joyous heart.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. The peace God which God gives in Jesus' victory over sin's condemnation, over Satan's lies, even over death which is sin's wages, is a peace that passes and supersedes the "mind!" It's not something that can be logically deduced by sin-corrupted thought. It is beyond the brain. It is a peace of heart. I once heard of a painting entitled "Peace." It showed a powerful waterfall; one could sense the roaring. Near the waterfall, was a bird perched on her nest, without a concern—at peace. Or maybe I should tell you about Mrs. Baxter. She was from west central Minnesota. She was hospitalized in Fargo—my first congregation was in Moorhead. Her pastor asked if I would visit her. I did, and she was very attentive. On my third visit or so, the family took me aside and relayed that the nurses were questioning whether Mrs. Baxter really understood her status; she didn't seem concerned that she was dying. My response, based on my previous visits, was that she understood perfectly. She knew she was safe in Jesus. Peace, indeed.

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, 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 minds through Christ Jesus.

May that peace and joy be yours at 5:00 in the morning, at this year's Christmas, at the day of your death, and at the time of Christ's Return to take you to heaven!

Amen! So be it!

---Pastor Kanzenbach