

20220601 Philippians 4:1-7 – The Perfect Path to Peace

Peace is something that we're all wanting. The world needs more peace. Many songs have been written about peace. I remember one specifically. It was written by the Beatles in "All we are saying is give peace a chance." – John Lennon and the Plastic Ono Band. Paul gives us the secret formula for peace in our lives in Philippians chapter 4.

4 Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

Paul is calling the church his "joy and crown". They were the fruit of his ministry, and that fruit made the redemptive work of Christ visible in the world around them. God is invisible, but love makes God visible. When we love one another as we should in the Body of Christ, His Church, the world is able to see something other worldly; something supernatural, something inexplicable. That means it is human conduct that is above and beyond the normal capacity of broken human beings. John explains what this looks like, ¹² No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. (1 John 4:12)

Be United, Joyful, and in Prayer

² *I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to **be of the same mind in the Lord.***

Paul implores (urgently begs) two old friends individually to be of the "same mind" in the Lord. They had worked with Paul personally. They had been in unity, but now something was wrong; they were sideways with one another. This was derailing the work. They were probably right there at the river when Lydia came to know the Lord. Remember he had gone down to the river where those Jewish women had been in a prayer meeting and Lydia heard the gospel and she responded. This reminds us that sometimes even the most faithful mature servants of the Lord get sideways with one another in the church. He loves this group and he so desires them to be one in Christ so the work won't be derailed.

Some wonder what was going on between the two women. It probably wasn't a doctrinal issue or some overt sin, or Paul would have addressed the issue like he does in all of his other writings. It's good to remember what Solomon tells us, "*It's the little foxes that destroy the grapes*". (Song of Solomon 2:15). It is often the small dumb stuff that bothers people and destroys the peace of Christians and the church in general. It is hard for us to lay aside our thoughts on what is best and to yield to others. But that's what we do as a church. Paul continues,

³ And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.

It helps us to realize that we are all believers. We often are striving with other believers. If we know Him, then our names are “written in the Book of Life”. We will spend eternity with one another. When we have conflicts, we need to ask ourselves if this is something of eternal import, or are we just trying to have it our own way. Is this a heaven and hell issue? Paul then exhorts them,

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. 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 understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Last week Pastor Larry pointed out that Paul repeats this saying REJOICE..... AND IF YOU DIDN'T UNDERSTAND IT THE FIRST TIME REJOICE! Our joy fades when worry takes over in our hearts. And as we talked about last week, we usually worry about things that never happen. A mind eaten up by fear leaves a person wrecked and totally lacking in peace and joy. I've been there.

Jesus didn't promise us a life full of worry. He tells us that He means for us to live a life in Him that is a life of perfect peace regardless of what is going on around us or in us. That's a shalom kind of peace.

Let's look again very closely at the beginning of the chapter.

So, how can we build a peace into our lives?

- 1 **Resolve controversy** – “As much as possible make peace with all men.”
“Therefore my BELOVED AND LONGED-FOR BRETHREN. You are my crown...
STAND FAST IN THE LORD. He loved the Philippian church. Resolving
controversy/conflict helps us have peace in our lives.
- 2 **Rejoice frequently** – this is the second important point. Paul is in prison and he doesn't know if he'll live or die. Paul is telling us that rejoicing is an important path to peace.

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. 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 understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Rejoicing is the verbal form of JOY. To rejoice is to have joy. I think of my mom and I think of Scott T Armstrong. We love to be around rejoicing people. Complaining grumpy people will WEAR YOU OUT! People who rejoice and who are filled with joy are like water in the desert. It refreshes you to be in their presence.

Paul isn't telling them to be optimists. He is telling them to REJOICE IN THE LORD. He is telling the two women to BE OF ONE MIND IN THE LORD AND TO REJOICE IN THE LORD. This can only be accomplished IN THE LORD.

We need to remember that God is in the center of our unity and our rejoicing. A joyful attitude is SO IMPORTANT. If you have no joy there is a disconnect that has come between you and the love of God. You no longer realize it or recognize it, and you no longer have it overflowing through your life. Remember the order of things as Paul lays out the "Fruit of the Spirit" – LOVE – JOY – PEACE. (Galatians 5:22)

Joy is A SUPERNATURAL DELIGHT IN GOD AND IN HIS PLAN. (Romans 8:28). It is an unmistakable sign of the presence of God in our lives. In Him we can relax and rejoice. I remember a song I used to sing when I was little, "Joy is a flag flown high from the castle of my heart when the King is in residence there." Paul not only wrote about this, he lived this. Remember what happened to him back in Philippi?

*²² Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods. ²³ And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. ²⁴ Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. (Acts 16:22). And the text tells us at midnight Paul and Silas sang praises to God! Solomon likened a joyful heart to be like a feast. *But he who is of a merry heart has a continual feast. (Proverbs 15:15).* A JOYFUL HEART is literally like sitting and eating at a banquet table.*

JOY TRULY IS A CHOICE

The fact that Paul is commanding us to be joyful demonstrates that JOY IS A CHOICE. If it couldn't be chosen, Paul wouldn't be commanding it. We are to rejoice in the Lord ALWAYS. While I was thinking about this matter of joy, I remembered that JOY was the word I used to describe my mother's overall attitude in her life. I remember thinking on

mother and I wrote these words in her obituary, describing the joy she had even as she approached death.

As she transitioned through her care at the facility, she was always delighted to show off her "new apartment". Roxanna's life was filled with the joy of the Lord. She was a kind and merciful presence to all with whom she made contact. In her last days, she was filled with excitement as she readied herself for her last great adventure, her trip to heaven. She glowed and her eyes twinkled as she talked of being reunited with her parents, her husband, and a multitude of cousins with whom she had spent her happy childhood. She was loving. She was joyful.

My mother's joy was a flag flown high from the castle of her heart telling all that the King was in residence there! Joy is a personal choice to react to life's circumstances with faith. We are not to be joyful because people are wonderful (often they are not) We are not to be joyful because things are going our way (they often don't go our way).

- 3 **Restore congeniality** – "let your gentleness to be known to all men, the Lord is at hand." Have a spirit of sweet reasonableness. Society is becoming less kind, less civil, less reasonable. We are becoming cruel, hardened, harsh, unreasonable, and filled with drama. Let's not let that be us in the church.
- 4 **Reject anxiety** – Paul is not saying that we need to be unconcerned about things in life. The Greek word translated anxiety is *marimnao* (divided). That means something is dividing up your mind up. When you are anxious your mind is trapped between a parade of horrors and legitimate concerns. The mind is out of control.

Guess what country has the most anxiety? Well China and India are first and the USA is right there in third place. We have no reason to have anxiety and we're more anxious than maybe 135 countries in the world. It makes no sense.¹

We are the wealthiest most promising nation on planet earth. Things are so abundant that we have the luxury of having the time to worry about things that don't even exist. We worry about _____ (you fill in the blank).

¹ <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2016-09-14/the-10-most-depressed-countries>

OVERALL	DEPRESSION	ANXIETY	ALCOHOL & DRUG USE
China	China	China	China
India	India	India	U.S.
U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	India
Brazil	Brazil	Brazil	Russia

Guys, we as believers are supposed to look very different from the world. Joy IS the flag flown high from the castle of our hearts when the King is in residence there.

THE CURE FOR WORRY IS REDIRECTING YOUR ENERGY AND REPLACING YOUR ANXIETY. When we redirect it, we CAST it away from us.

(Casting all your cares on Him for He cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7))

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 understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

When you are worried, start (prayer = worshipping).

When you're worried, start crying out and asking. Heartfelt prayers.

When you are worried, start THANKING HIM.

When you're worried, lay it before Him. Let your requests (not demands) be made known.

IN SUMMARY

BE ANXIOUS FOR NOTHING.

BE PRAYERFUL IN EVERYTHING.

BE THANKFUL FOR ANYTHING.

THE PEACE OF GOD WILL GUARD YOUR HEART AND MIND. Let us pray.