

SCRIPTURE: PHILIPPIANS 4:4-10

MAIN TAKEAWAY

Joy is ours in Christ, but it requires us to fight anxiety with prayer and constant dependence on the Lord.

Commentary: Yet again Paul returns to the theme of joy so prominent in this letter. The command to rejoice is now accompanied by the adverb always. The Philippians' joy should not depend on their circumstances but on their Lord. In addition to joy, there should be a genuine gentleness (reasonableness) in their interactions with everyone, because the Lord is near. Either Paul means the Lord is near to them or that His return is near, or perhaps both. Because of Christ, they could treat everyone with kindness as they hoped in the Lord's nearness and return. Furthermore, they could avoid being anxious about anything by offering prayer and petitions with thanksgiving to God. Constant prayer is the remedy for anxiety, for it ushers in the peace of God that transcends all understanding.

Teaching Point 1: Rejoice

Read: (v. 4) *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!* (v. 5) *Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.*

Summary: Notice here that joy is commanded, not merely suggested or encouraged. God commands us to rejoice. And out of that joy should come gentle (reasonable) interactions with others. We can do both of these, rejoice and be gentle, because God is near us and in us.

Discussion: Do you tend to see joy as something you do on purpose? Why do you think God commands our joy? What would gentle interactions with others look like, even those with whom we disagree or see as opponents?

Teaching Point 2: Pray

Read: (v. 6) *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.* (v. 7) *And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Summary: Similar to commanding our joy, Paul is now commanding us to fight to avoid anxiety. We do this by prayer and thanksgiving: requests to God, and praises for what God has done and will do. This is a profound approach to dealing with our everyday anxieties, and one worth deeply considering.

Discussion: How have you seen or experienced God bring peace and calm to you during an anxious moment or season? What should be our first response when we feel anxious or worried? What other things might we run to when we are anxious instead of God?

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