

TO LIVE IS CHRIST

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

Don't Worry –Live Rejoicing!

Many of us have a bad habit – that is we dwell on ‘what ifs’. Worry and fear go hand in hand. Some people almost feel justified in worrying or being fearful. How many people worry less when someone tells them to quit worrying? Most respond by worrying over how much they are worrying. Paul suggests two things to do instead: pray and—strangely—rejoice.

G. Kevin Baker says, “Paul isn't putting his head in the sand to avoid harsh realities; he's reminding us to put our heads in the clouds—to have the mind of Christ, count our blessings, give thanks and practice God's presence in the midst of trials and tribulations. If we do that we may also be able to imitate Paul, not just his obedience but also his testimony of contentment and trust in God.”

Paul never took his thoughts off the approaching nearness of the Lord's Coming. This was one of the secrets of his perennial joy. Another was his unceasing prayer with thanksgiving.”

Read Philippians 4:1 (ESV) ¹ *Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.*

Some Bible interpreters believe that verse 1 should be a part of Chapter 3 and I agree since the ‘*therefore*’ links these words to the previous chapter. When the Bible was written, there were no chapters and verses. Chapter titles and notes are added by scholars and publishers of various Bible translations. Be careful when you choose a study Bible. Just because notes and explanations are in your Bible does not necessarily mean they are accurate or inspired. **2 Timothy 2:15 (ESV)** ¹⁵ *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.*

Paul's Philippian friends were his joy and his crown. Yes, the Philippians brought joy to his life on earth but Paul knew when he stands at the Judgment Seat of Christ as His servant, his heart would be filled with even greater joy because the Philippians were in heaven with him. Paul was instrumental in winning many of them to Christ and for that he would receive the Soul Winner's Crown. Oh, that the Lord would burden our hearts to fulfill our part in filling the halls of heaven with souls from our generation.

There was at least one problem in the Philippian church. Paul did not mention it until near the end of his letter. Apparently, two women (Euodia and Syntyche) were not speaking to each other. Earlier in the letter, he cautioned the Philippian believers to be of the same mind in the Lord meaning they should share the mind of Christ. Now, it is as if, he was saying, Hey, Euodia and Syntyche, I mean you. But Paul also names another threat: worry. We don't tend to put worry near the top of our list of things that can destroy faithful discipleship in our faith communities, but maybe we should.

Read Philippians 4:2-3 (ESV) ² *I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord.* ³ *Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.*

Euodia and Syntyche are not mentioned anywhere else in the New Testament. What a sad legacy to leave behind for coming generations – to have labored with Paul in sharing the gospel; and then be remembered for a quarrel with another believer. What is it in our lives that people will remember about us? We should consider that the next time we feel like giving someone a ‘piece of our mind’.

Paul asked a third party to mediate the disagreement. The ESV translates the third party as a *true companion* while other translations such as the KJV use the term *yokefellow*. Since Paul did not identify his companion by name, we can only speculate on the person’s identity. Some suggest Lydia, others Epaphroditus. It really does not matter who Paul asked to intervene. What matters is that we are peacemakers in the midst of trouble. When we recognize trouble brewing, we should be careful of our own responses to not spark the fires of dissension. **Matthew 5:9 (ESV)** ⁹ *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*

Consider how wonderful that even in the midst of problems, Paul mentioned that these two women along with other fellow laborers at Philippi had their names written in the Book of Life.

The Book of Life is the heavenly record of those who are destined because of God’s grace to participate in God’s heavenly kingdom. Jesus said in **Revelation 3:5 (ESV)** ⁵ *The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.*

I always hesitate to sign up to win prizes, etc. because I know my personal information will wind up being on advertisers’ contact lists. However, having our name in the Book of Life is a necessity. **Revelation 20:15 (ESV)** ¹⁵ *And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

These two women had been workers for Christ in the church. Their broken relationship was a ‘big deal’. It is possible to believe in Christ, work hard for his Kingdom, and yet have broken relationships with others who are committed to the same cause. The Life Application Study Bible reminds us that there is no excuse for remaining un-reconciled.

Victory Over Worry

Read Philippians 4:4-5 (ESV) ⁴ *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.* ⁵ *Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand.*

Don’t you just love “joyful people?” They may not be financially well off but they are rich in joy. They may have been through great adversity in their life; however, you would never know it by their attitude. They rejoice in the Lord.

This is a commandment to a Christian, a believer. *Rejoice in the Lord always.* McGee says, “That means regardless of the day, whether it is dark or bright, whether it is difficult or easy, whether it brings problems and

temptations or clear sailing on cloud nine. We are commanded to rejoice. He repeats it, in case we missed it the first time.”

Christians are to be gentlepeople. When we go to the dentist, we want that dentist to be gentle. But, we don't often think of being gentle in our Christian walk, but that is what we are to be. We don't always have to have the “last word.” We don't have to get “**our** way.” We should think before we speak, and consider the long and short-range consequences of our actions. We are to honor God in all that we do. God is not in a far away land living a life separate from us. For the Christian, God dwells within us in the form of the Holy Spirit. God is near. Be sensitive to His Presence.

Read Philippians 4:6-7 (ESV) ⁶ *do not be anxious about anything, 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 your minds in Christ Jesus.*

You don't have to be a Bible scholar to interpret these verses. It is clear that the Word of God tells us not to worry about anything. We are to pray and talk to God about everything. We are to make our requests with a thankful attitude – the mind of Christ. True peace comes from knowing that God is in control and accepting His control over our lives.

The David Jeremiah Study Bible has a chart entitled The Truth About Worry which says these are the facts about worrying.

- 40% of the things people worry about never happen.
- 30% of our worries are related to past matters, which are now beyond our control.
- 12% of worries have to do with our health even when we are not actually ill.
- 10% of our worries are about friends or neighbors and are not based in fact.
- Only 8% of our worries have some basis in reality which means that over 90% of the things we worry about never happen.

The Jeremiah Bible encourages us to picture Christian prayer life as being composed of three circles.



Let's focus on putting our worries and prayers in God's hands and then going off and leaving them there. When we do this, the peace of God will stand guard over our heart and mind. Sometimes when we encounter folks who are upset or worried for whatever reason, any explanation or justification we may offer will not help. They don't always want to hear our justifications even if they know we are right. God's peace, however, always meets the needs of human hearts. To be covered with God's peace is a prayer that we can always pray for

ourselves and others. The KJV translates verse 7 this way: *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

Read *Philippians 4:8-9 (ESV)* ⁸ *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.* ⁹ *What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*

Finally, brothers – remember Paul said the same thing at the beginning of chapter 3, when he was just halfway through! Well, now he is nearly through and he says it again.

The apostle was urging believers then and now to fill our minds with true, honorable, just, pure, and lovely things. Remember Paul had been encouraging Euodia and Syntyche to put their differences aside. They needed to focus on the positive things that the Holy Spirit had accomplished in on another. If they didn't, the trouble between them would grow and fester. They needed to focus on how they both had been redeemed by the same precious blood of Jesus and were indwelt by the same Holy Spirit.

We are responsible for what we think! We don't like to admit it but worry is a sin. ***Romans 14:23 (ESV)*** ²³ ... *For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.* One way to deal with worry and anxiousness is to think of something else.

Are we filling our minds with God honoring thoughts that are a reflection of the mind of Christ? It is not uncommon for our spirit to struggle within us since we are daily torn by some type of conflict whether it is real or imagined. No Christian is exempt from the struggle between good and evil. Paul himself said in ***Romans 7:21 (ESV)*** ²¹ *So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.*

WHAT WE THINK DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE

We should not always be looking for the bad. John and I watch a lot of the cooking contests on the Food Network. And you just know when the judges taste a dish, no matter how good it looks or tastes, at least one judge is going to make a negative comment. There are some people like that – and yes they dwell among the church body. God wants His family to be joyful, and that means that each member must contribute to the joy.

God's children should focus on being positive people. Paul wrote some similar words to the folks in Thessalonica.

Read *1 Thessalonians 5:16-19 (ESV)* ¹⁶ *Rejoice always,* ¹⁷ *pray without ceasing,* ¹⁸ *give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.* ¹⁹ *Do not quench the Spirit.*

Joy takes the burden out of service. The secret of Christian joy is to believe what God says in His Word and act on it. ***Nehemiah 8:10 (ESV)*** ¹⁰ ... *do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.* Faith that isn't based on the Word is not faith; it is presumption or superstition. Joy that isn't the result of faith is not joy; it's only a 'good feeling' that will not last. Faith based on the Word produces joy that will weather the storms of life. Keep on fueling the Spirit. Don't allow worry to put out the fire of your joy.