

That's All Folks - Part 1

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, good morning. My name is Ray Sweep from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. As always, if you'd like to learn a little more about us, you can go to FCCGreensburg.com or you can check out the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.
- But hey, I am excited today to preach God's Word. But most of all, we want the Word of God to get into these hearts and transform us more and more into the image of Christ.
- Now, we are in the seventh week of our series called Rejoice. We are walking through the book of Philippians. You can turn to chapter 4 today. And the message is called, That's All Folks, Part 1.
- Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again, rejoice. Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God, and the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- You know, this scripture truly has a special place in my heart. During my sabbatical back in May, I felt the Lord telling me to really focus in on the book of Philippians.
- [1 : 2 2] And as I read it several times, this was one passage I memorized because my heart needs this powerful truth. If you know me well, you probably realize that I'm kind of like a duck.
- I may seem calm on the outside, but my feet are going a million mile an hour under the surface, okay? I'm naturally a personality that just kind of carries a lot of responsibility that can easily be weighed down by it all.
- And listen, I know I can't be the only high-strung person that is listening to this. So let's just be honest. Maybe you battled this too, okay? And yet God, in His tender care for His children, He impresses scriptures like these on our hearts so that we can grow and mature, so that we can learn how to trust Him more each day.
- Now, it's hard to believe we're already in week seven of this series called Rejoice. It has flown by as we'll be wrapping it up next week. But today we come to the last chapter in Philippians where Paul seems to summarize or bring home what he's been talking about in the first three chapters.
- And honestly, I would call these some important final words. Or to share a funny story with you, my oldest daughter, who's eight now, when she was probably about six, she was giving a presentation before some other kids in her homeschool co-op.
- [2 : 5 1] And this being my craft that I've studied, I decided to coach her up a little bit. And most know that your intro and your conclusion are very important.
- So as we were talking about how she would end the talk, I had an idea. You know the whole badee, badee, badee, badee, that's all, folks? Well, she pulled it off to perfection, making most of the adults laugh because many of the kids had no idea who Looney Tunes even were.
- And in one sense, this week and next week is our badee, badee, badee, badee, that's all, folks, type of ending to this series. And I apologize for a terrible impression there.

And Paul, as he is sitting in some form of house arrest, awaiting trial, even chained to guards 24-7, Paul is rejoicing in the grace of God that covers his life, not fretting about his fate or bitter towards the world.

He has a joy that doesn't make worldly sense. And it's founded in knowing Jesus Christ intimately as his Lord and Savior.

[4 : 03] And so here he is writing to a church that he had started over a decade earlier, that he cared about deeply. And I guess you could say he's sort of, with modern terminology, sort of coaching them on how to rejoice in the Lord no matter the circumstances you face.

And in the words of Charles Swindoll, I know of no greater need today than the need for joy. Unexplainable, contagious joy.

Outrageous joy. And I don't know about you, but that's what I want in my life. I don't want my responsibilities or the rat race of life or the peer pressure to be involved in a thousand different things.

I don't want what others think or my performance or medical struggles or anything else to steal my joy. And Paul just told us in chapter 3, he said, I want to know Christ.

Yes, to know the power of his resurrection. And from knowing Christ flows an overflowing joy that the world cannot understand. And can I just say something that the Lord is pressing on my heart here?

[5 : 11] There's a good chance that 99.9% of us, okay, 100% of us are not walking in the joy of the Lord as much as we probably could be. Fair statement?

Yeah? And yet most of it is self-inflicted because as much as we love Jesus, as much as we want to follow him, as much as our intentions may be good, we've often bought into worldly expectations with things like our time, our careers, our kids and their involvement, possessions, and the list goes on.

And here Paul is urging us to put first things first. That's knowing Jesus intimately, walking in his will over our lives. Because that's what matters in the end.

That's the main ingredient for joy. And as we open up our passage today, we're here in Philippians chapter 4. Let's go ahead and look at verse 4 where Paul says, Rejoice in the Lord always.

I will say it again, rejoice. See, Paul repeats this because this is the theme of his letter. This is what he's trying to drive home. And he knows that this is hard for you and me.

[6 : 23] And even the verb tense for that word rejoice matters in its meaning. It's what they call the present imperative. And what that means is it calls believers to this continual, habitual practice of rejoicing.

In other words, rejoicing doesn't stop. And what I love about rejoicing is that it's not just an emotion. In fact, the late John MacArthur who passed away recently, just a well-known preacher, he said, But joy is not a feeling.

It is the deep down confidence that God is in control of everything for the believer's good and his own glory. And thus, all is well no matter what the circumstances.

You know, there are two fruits that Paul is driving home in this passage today that I believe flow out of a life of rejoicing. And here's the first thing.

Joy produces gentleness. Joy brings gentleness. And if I can just be honest, this is a major weakness of mine that I'm very aware of, always working on.

[7 : 33] In fact, my dad, during my whole childhood, even as an adult, has said to me numerous times, Be gentle. Be gentle. You know what?

Even though it drives me nuts, he's right. Because the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to say the same thing in Philippians 4.5. He says, Now, one thing about translating any language, but especially this Koine Greek to any other language, including English, is that there isn't always a perfect word-for-word match in translation.

And this is one of those cases where we have the Greek word epiakis. Let me say that again. Epiakis. And here the NIV translates that as gentleness.

Now, that's a pretty good translation. There is no perfect translation. That's a good one. But you could also consider some other words, like this phrase, sweet reasonableness, or graciousness, or even gracious humility.

So it carries with us this idea that I'm giving others the benefit of the doubt by showing grace. Also, I'm doing so calmly with the spirit of humility or gentleness.

[9 : 01] And that approach is to guide our lives. And it's to be evident to all around us. It doesn't mean that you're weak if you're gentle. It doesn't mean that you have to be a doormat to everyone to step on.

But from the joy of the Lord will flow a gracious and gentle approach. And it really is amazing. When we approach others in that spirit, they usually respond so much better.

How many of us parents are feeling maybe a little bit of conviction right now when it comes to the lack of gentleness that maybe we share with our kids? I get it.

I totally get it. I fail here often. I have three kids right now, 12, 8, and 4. So I'm in the heart of it. And please don't misunderstand. There's a time to discipline.

There's a time to deal with wrong attitudes in a healthy way that requires us to be firm. I do believe that if you spare the rod, you spoil the child. But how easy is it to take that too far?

[10 : 00] To fly off the handle because of my own anger issues instead of that sweet reasonableness or that gracious humility. Because when I'm always screaming, when I'm always yelling, that's not building my kids up.

That's not teaching them how to look more like Jesus. Trust me, I've repented of this more times than I can count. And Proverbs 15, 1 says, a gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

And the reason we can be so quick to get loud is because our hearts may not be where they need to be in having that intimate walk with Christ. And that's where I have to change to put Jesus first in my life, which is always going to make everything else fall into place.

Now, Paul says, let your gentleness, your graciousness be evident to all. You know, most of us can do pretty good with strangers. Maybe those we see, you know, once a week or every once in a while.

Where this really comes into play, just from experience, is with those who were around and those who we love the very most. I think about those of us who are married. They say the things that you love the most about your spouse's personality when you met, those can be the things that drive you nuts when you've been married for 10 or 20 or maybe 50 years.

[11 : 24] And it really is true that we have the tendency to let our guard down more with those we love the most. And they can often bear the brunt of our frustration, sadly.

And yet, like I teach in premarital counseling here, when you have a husband and a wife both seeking after the heart of God first in their life, it will be a tremendous blessing to the marriage because we will have the capacity to love each other in a selfless and in a Christ-like manner.

You will have that sweet reasonableness, that gracious humility towards another. Marriage can be the most intimate, it can be the most rewarding human relationship that we can have when Christ is number one.

I like the story that a preacher shared a few years ago about a group of visitors that were getting a tour at a factory. They were seeing all the intricacies of how everything worked to make an automobile.

And then they made their way to what's called a giant steam hammer. This instrument was powerful enough to crush an entire car. But the tour guide instead put a walnut under the machine and while the machine cracked the shell, it left the actual nut unharmed.

[12 : 47] So I guess you could call that power under control. And I think that's a pretty good definition of this word gentleness. Power under control.

It doesn't mean that you're weak. It doesn't mean that you're incapable. It just means you love God and love people enough to show Christ-like gentleness as much as possible. Now, are there moments to be bolder?

Absolutely. There are moments. You gotta know the difference. There needs to be discernment in Jesus Christ. Are there situations that require me just to get really firm? Yes.

Remember, Jesus turned over tables. Jesus drove people out of the temple with whips. But remember, that's also the perfect sinless Savior doing it with a pure heart, pure motives.

And it wasn't an all-the-time thing. And just like that machine had the capability to crush a car, didn't mean that it had to operate under that force constantly.

[13 : 46] Because what are a couple of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5? Gentleness and self-control. So Church, Paul's very clear here. Let your gentleness be evident to all.

But just like joy, you can't be a gentle and gracious person without Christ being in the center of your life. Because He is the steam that makes us go.

It is a byproduct of walking with the King of Kings and knowing Him intimately. Remember what we talked about a few weeks ago? Not just knowing about Him and being churchy, but actually knowing Him.

walking daily with Him. So joy produces that gentleness. And then second, joy produces peace. I know many of you grew up singing a beautiful hymn called It Is Well.

Remember that song, It Is Well With My Soul? Maybe you've heard this story before, but the author of that song was a man named Horatio Spafford. He was a successful businessman.

[14 : 52] He had lost much of his fortune in 1871 when the Chicago fire destroyed a lot of the city. Shortly before that blaze, though, he tragically lost his four-year-old son to scarlet fever.

And with all the chaos of the fire, along with the grief of their son weighing so heavily, especially on his wife, he felt like his family needed a vacation.

They needed to get away from all the reminders, just go to Europe, and just get away for a few months. And back in those days, they didn't go away for a week or two.

They would go away for a few months, often crossing the ocean, England, other parts of Europe, stuff like that. Well, he had some business that ended up delaying him that he had to stay for.

And so he just sent his wife and four daughters on ahead of him, and he was going to catch up with them in England. Well, sadly, the boat that his wife and girls were on in the Atlantic Ocean collided with another vessel on November 22, 1873.

[15 : 55] It sank in just 12 minutes, killing over 200 people. His daughters, Annie, Maggie, Bessie, and Tanetta, were among those who lost their life that day.

His wife, however, was saved. And when she reached Wales, she sent him a telegram that said, saved alone, what shall I do? In his intense grief that I just can't even begin to imagine.

Now having lost all five of his children, he set sail for England immediately to be with his wife. As they crossed the Atlantic, the captain was very aware of his loss and showed him the very location where the accident took place.

That's when Spafford went back to his room and he wrote a beautiful poem describing how he felt. It was put to music shortly after and it was first sang publicly during one of D.L. Moody's evangelistic meetings.

But there are some words that this man wrote in his intense grief while also being comforted by the Lord. I want to read you just one verse of this.

[17 : 01] It says, When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot thou hast taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul.

Church, this kind of peace doesn't make sense in this world. It doesn't even compute to religious people who don't have a daily walk with Jesus. But here's what Paul says as we pick back up here in Philippians 4, 6, and 7.

He says, Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Let's see. What in the world do we have to be anxious about? I don't know. Maybe the chaos and divide in our country. Maybe the things our children get exposed to, grandchildren, our own health struggles, family drama, loved ones who don't know Jesus, financial stresses, job situation, maybe a marriage that's not healthy, circumstances beyond our control, so many across the world that are suffering.

If Jesus will come back soon since the Colts and Bengals are both 2-0 right now. I'm kidding, but you know, it does make you wonder, right? But there's plenty of reasons on all seriousness, there's plenty of reasons that we can be anxious here today.

[18 : 29] And many of us, if we're honest, we are anxious right now. See, that word anxious in the Greek means to be pulled in different directions. And as the well-known theologian Warren Wiersbe put it, our hopes pull us in one direction, our fears pull us in the opposite direction, and we are pulled apart.

In fact, the old English word for worry literally means to strangle. And isn't that what worry does to our peace? It strangles it because worry is the greatest thief of joy.

And Paul's not some guy sitting in an ivory tower with an easy life speaking about things he doesn't understand. Paul knew hardship in a way that none of us have ever experienced. He knew extreme persecution because of his faith.

And I'm sure he had the scars to show it. Every town he entered, every town, he had to wonder, what's going to happen? Is this going to be the end of my life? He was hated because of Jesus.

And yet his response was not fear, not anxiousness, because he knew his God was sovereign. His God was in control of every situation. He also lived the words that he would later write to a young pastor named Timothy.

[19 : 44] And these are also the words the Holy Spirit inspired him to write while awaiting trial shortly before he was executed for his faith in Jesus. See, in 2 Timothy 1.7, Paul said, For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.

Church, we can make all kinds of excuses and we're good at it. We are good at it. We can make excuses for why we don't walk in peace. Most of them are legitimate unless you're a child of God because Paul had a lifeline.

And you know what? So do you. So do I. It's what Weersby called right praying. Right praying. Paul said in verse 6 here, In every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God.

And my first question when I read this verse was this. Why is Paul using three different words to describe prayer? He uses prayer, petition, and thanksgiving. And after looking into this a little bit more, it really helps us to understand what true prayer should look like.

Kind of a little bit of a model. See, the word prayer in this verse carries with it the idea of worship and adoration to God. So, when you and I are tempted to be anxious like the world, we go straight to worship.

[21 : 06] We look heavenward to an awesome God who is more than able to come into my situation. And listen, we don't worship a God that's anything like us. We worship the one who sits enthroned above the circle of the earth.

We worship the one who spoke and creation sprang into existence. We worship the one who is creative enough to make stinky gas come out of a skunk to scare off its predators. Or to make a whale's food source produce pink poop.

Okay? A God who's that creative. We worship the great I am. The author and finisher of our faith. And there's a peace that comes when we fall on our face before our awesome God with hearts that are surrendered in reverence and all to Him.

So, it starts with that adoration of knowing that we are in communication with El Shaddai, the all-sufficient one. And then, Paul uses the word petition or supplication.

That simply means a time of laying our prayer request and our needs down before Him knowing that He is Jehovah Jireh. That means the Lord who provides, the Lord who meets those needs according to His perfect will.

[22 : 17] And then, third, he uses the word thanksgiving. It's more than a holiday one day a year. Okay? It's a lifestyle of prayer where we express our gratitude to the one who's got you and me under control.

So, yes, we worship in the splendor of His majesty, but we also take time to be thankful for all His blessings over our lives. You know, one of my favorite stories in Scripture comes from Luke 17.

In this story, you've got ten men who have leprosy, a terrible disease that basically killed you from the inside out, just ate your body apart.

Okay? Terrible thing. Only exists today in more like third world countries and not near as common because it's more of a sanitary thing, but these ten men with leprosy come crying out to Jesus.

Who knows how severe they are, where they're at in the stage of it, and they cry out, Jesus, Master, have pity on us. And in His compassion, He told them to go show themselves to the priests.

[23 : 20] Well, that means I've healed you. And as was the custom, and they would have understood this, let the priests verify you've been healed so that you can then go back to your families and live a normal life again.

See, when you got leprosy, you had to leave everyone you loved and knew, and you had to go live in a depressing leper colony. And it says as they went to the priests that they were cleansed.

But here's the interesting part of this story. All ten of these men were healed. Now, can you imagine the joy they experienced? They all got their lives back. Their death sentence was reversed.

But only one of the ten, ten percent, one of them, comes running back, throwing himself at Jesus' feet, thanking him for restoring his life.

Only one. So Paul gives a pretty good model here to prayer. He says, worship, petition, and make sure in prayer you are thankful. And what does Paul say happens when we know Jesus intimately, when we're walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, all the while seeking his heart through prayer, what happens?

[24 : 31] Say this with me. Verse seven, and the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Why would Paul say hearts and minds?

Because the heart often represents your feelings, and the mind represents your thinking. So our gracious God is making a promise to stand guard over both areas that cause worry, your emotions and your mind.

And when he is in control of our lives, when it's more than just a religion, when it's about a personal relationship with Jesus, a peace that exceeds anything we can understand, that will guard our emotions, that will guard our thinking in Christ Jesus.

And when we are people who walk in the peace of God, we will be a church that truly impacts our world as the Holy Spirit uses us to build the kingdom of God.

So, as we close out this morning, in the words of the great theologian Porky Pig and my daughter Jovi, b'de, b'de, b'de, b'de, that's all folks, because the joy of the Lord produces gentleness and peace.

[25 : 44] Let's pray together. Father, thank you for this message today that you have just spoken right into our hearts. I thank you that it's never about the preacher.

It's always about the word of God being living and active and truly impacting our lives in powerful ways. So, thank you for your word.

Thank you that it is alive and active and that it is truly transforming hearts when we allow it to. So, Father, we just give you permission to have your will done in us.

Let your word permeate our hearts and make us more and more into the image of Christ. Thank you, Jesus. We pray all this in your precious and your holy name.

And God's people said, right where you are, amen and amen. Let me give you just a quick invitation here this morning. We're so thankful that you tuned in.

[26 : 44] Once again, we are First Christian Church of Greensburg, Indiana. My name is Ray. I am the lead pastor here. And just want to give you this invitation. Maybe you have questions about faith, questions about what it means to follow Jesus, questions about our church.

You can reach out to us in a couple different ways. You can call the church office. That's area code 812-663-8488.

That's 663-8488. Or you can email me at ray at FCCgreensburg.com. Hey, we are so grateful you tuned in today.

And we do ask, if you are a regular listener, if you're a person who listens often and God is using this in your life, will you do us a favor?

If you have the capability, will you just email me ray at FCCgreensburg.com. Just let me know how God is using this in your life. We would love to hear from you.

[27 : 44] We would love to connect with you and just be an encouragement to you. So thank you so much for tuning in today. We pray God's richest blessings over you.