

Rejoice in the Lord

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[0 : 0 0] rejoice in the Lord always again I will say rejoice let your reasonableness or let your gentleness be known to everyone the Lord is at hand or the Lord is near do not be anxious about anything 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 your minds in Christ Jesus 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's anything worthy of praise think about these things what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me practice practice these things and the God of peace will be with you and it's really these words that we see from verse 4 down to verse 7 that I want to say something on this morning I really do believe in what we we call a word in season in other words you know when God's truth's made known at particular times and and has a particular resonance a particular importance for such a time as this and certainly one word in season came to me just just last week in relation to all the various struggles that we're facing in this in this current pandemic and you know with all the restrictions and in lockdown these words came to me from a friend who who sent me the words of Philippians 4 verse 6 these words that tell us not to be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to let your requests be made known to God now these words were encouragement to the person who sent me them they certainly were encouragement to myself to me and I pray that they're an encouragement to you all even in these difficult times that we're living in why well because they redirect us these are this is God's word and the word that we we see here that we direct us to the Lord who's who's God and these words these words of scripture these divinely inspired words they they draw us away from feelings and they take us to truth these are divinely inspired words that Paul has given us to speak of well resting not in our feelings but to rest in the truth of God who cares of God who knows of God who who hears and God who answers and God who provides so that you truly can and must rise above whatever feelings you have at this time because feelings just drag you down into hopelessness but the absence of relying on feelings and trusting on God's word that raises you up it raises you to the Lord your Savior it directs you to the God of care and compassion and to know that his compassion and compassion and to know that his compassion never fail as we read elsewhere in God's word of of these compassions they're new every morning so we can say to God great is your faithfulness and so for for our continued encouragement our continued encouragement in the Lord well we're going to turn particularly to this word this morning this word that that brings so much comfort and affliction and God's word here that actually gives us commands in fact four commands

even in these few verses that we see here the first command is the command to rejoice the second command is to make known your reasonableness or your gentleness to all the third command is not to be anxious about anything and the fourth command is to make known your requests and prayer to God and the result of complying with these commands of following these commands as we see in the passage is peace God's peace and Paul tells us God's peace that will watch over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus these are words of great truth and comfort and words that each one of us must apply with all our heart and mind even at this time so let's look at these commands and unless we do so seek to resolve to apply them particularly in this current situation the first command is to rejoice in the Lord and it may seem an impossible command to fulfill if we think of well if we think of rejoicing simply as a feeling it's not a feeling and feelings are deceptive feelings can be so variable so so contrary but the rejoicing that Paul commands us to engage in rejoicing has that secret of true joy that's in the Lord and you know even in circumstances that are so trying and so so perplexing what commands us to rejoice in the Lord in fact Paul was so determined that those whom he was writing to would rejoice that he actually says it twice because he knows he knew he knew that that his sure trust was in God was in God and that God had saved him fully and completely so much so that Paul could and did rejoice in every circumstance of his life that characterized Paul even in his sufferings he could still rejoice in God

God who'd rescued him from from sin and from self even throughout that letter the letter to the Philippians Paul you know Paul you know Paul you know Paul you know Paul he played in his licks of God in his teachings his murdered Paul and his ■ knows Paul's that God the truth has allowed anyone in his life and Eve the truth has allowed God in his world as well as God in his womb Man that he who could take Christ■■minded and dead in his presence whether in the so-called good times or whether in his times of suffering he knew he could rejoice in God because God had saved him for himself Paul he knew that that that that his salvation was was safe, safe with God eternally.

He knew that God makes no mistakes. Even when God's will for Paul was that for Paul to suffer the hostility of others, even when that hostility meant imprisonment and eventual death, Paul could still rejoice in the Lord because Paul was a follower of the Lord Jesus.

When we think of Jesus and his joy, Paul followed Jesus, Jesus who himself knew joy in doing the will of his Father, even when that will meant that Jesus would be the sacrifice, the once for all sacrifice for sin.

[7 : 31] And it's that joy that Jesus prayed for just before his death, when Jesus prayed for his disciples, that they would know the joy of Christ even after Jesus' death and resurrection.

And that's why it's so crucial that we have to realize that true joy can't be separated from God, from the Lord.

Rejoice, Paul tells us, in the Lord. So you rejoice in being in Christ by faith. So Paul's commanding the believers here in Philippi, he's commanding you, he's commanding me to rejoice in the Lord.

See, joy, as we say, is inseparable from being in the Lord in Christ. And Paul tells us, rejoice always, at all times.

Yes, when you're on the mountaintops, as well as in the valleys. Yes, when you're with God's people, or whether you're on your own, you find your true peace and true content.

[8 : 37] And the Lord who does all things well. We're all living in very trying times. Most of us, if not all of us here, certainly I've never been in such times as these, when our freedoms are being curtailed, when old normality has been replaced by new normality.

And the very fact that we're meeting in a format such as this, but God knows all things. God knows the end from the beginning. God is Lord. And he calls you and he calls me to rejoice at all times.

Even in these times such as this, when we, the more, are called to trust in him for his grace and for his mercy. Because, as we've said, already we'll say again, it's not feeling.

It's not feeling. That are your strength in times of truth. It's our refuge and our strength. And your joy comes from that faith that you have in him, so that you can declare before a watching world that the joy of the Lord is your strength.

And that rejoicing will show itself in your lives. That's where our second command comes in, the command to make your, well, as it says in the passage, your reasonableness.

[9 : 56] Maybe another word, the same word, really different translation, but let your gentleness be seen by all. We're going to keep to that word for a moment, that gentleness.

Let your gentleness be made known to everyone. The Lord is at hand. You see, the person who rejoices in the Lord has a gentle disposition because that person wants to be like Christ in his gentleness.

I mean, Jesus spoke of himself as the one who's gentle and lowly. Later in another one of Paul's letters, Paul spoke of the gentleness of Christ.

And you see how that grace of gentleness connects with the Lord Jesus. It's got nothing to do with any kind of personality that you have in yourself, any kind of natural personality.

It's all got to do with the joy that's yours in Christ and that joy that's seen in your disposition to others. Paul tells us, let your gentleness, let your reasonable behavior, let your gentleness be evident, be seen to all.

[11 : 05] And that gentleness, that reasonable behavior, that reasonable mind, if you like, it's an attitude of heart that shows itself in your behavior, your conduct.

Because it's a strength of character, God-given character, actually looks to Jesus in all circumstances and responds in grace to others.

And we might even say this in passing, you know, at such a time as this, when there's so much tension around, when there's so much uncertainty, when the strains of the kind of living that we're asked to do make it difficult.

Well, you who are in Christ, show your gentleness to others. Show it by your manner. Show it by your conversation. Show it by the way that you understand the needs of others.

Show it in even the way that you come alongside others and your communication with them. Because remember, this is a command. This is the second of Paul's four commands here to be like Christ.

[12 : 11] A command to show a gentle spirit of love and grace and kindness that stems from a right relationship with the Lord Jesus. And we have an incentive to show gentleness.

Well, as Paul tells us here, the Lord is at hand or we might say the Lord is near. And that incentive to know that the Lord is near, well, we might put it in several ways.

I mean, first of all, to know that God is with us. That you who are in Christ, you have that relationship with him. You walk with him. You talk with him.

You commune with him. And that will impact the way that you conduct yourself with others, knowing that the Lord is with you, that the Lord is near. And so knowing that the Lord is near will give you that incentive to follow him, to show your gentleness of heart to others, to show, if you like, even the truth that the Lord is in you.

And so that others will see the joy of the Lord that's yours. They'll see it in your words. They'll see it in your actions because you know that the Lord is at hand.

[13 : 28] The Lord is near. But we can also say this, you know, when Paul's saying the Lord is at hand, the Lord is near, he's telling us to rejoice in him, to show you a gentleness of spirit.

Well, you know, and you show that because you know that the coming of the Lord, the return of the Lord is near. We know in God's word that we're told that we're living in these last days, these end times.

And so we live with that expectation that the coming of the Lord is near. And even with that knowledge, and I pray that that, you know, creates within you that spirit of joy and gentleness to be conforming to the Lord Jesus in his joy, in his gentleness.

You know, you who are a Christian, you who are in Christ, you know the gentleness of the Lord even directed to you. I deserve, you deserve his wrath and curse.

But the Lord was reasonable. The Lord was gentle with you and brought you into his kingdom. And so we need to show the world the Lord Jesus.

[14 : 43] We need to show the world that aspect of Christ's love, to show the world Christ in his gentleness, in his compassion for the lost.

Even the gentleness of the Lord that desists from bringing judgment and wrath even upon ourselves. in giving, in showing that patience, that patience and giving even now the opportunity for others to repent of their sins.

And you know, even at this time of pandemic, we pray that the Lord's gentle patience will be seen and that you who are his, you'll show others, you'll use this opportunity to tell others of the Savior.

of the Savior. Just the other day, in fact, yesterday, one of the congregations spoke to me of the impact of a particular communication that that member, that person in the congregation had to another using the opportunity to tell others of the Savior even in particularly difficult circumstances.

And so, what about you? What about yourself as a Christian? How does that joy, how does that grace of gentleness show itself in practice? How does it show it in your life?

[16 : 04] Well, look at the third and fourth commands. We're told, do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving.

the fourth command, let your requests be made known to God. You see the connection? The person who knows the joy of the Lord, the person who rejoices always, the person who shows that rejoicing and being gentle to others, showing the gentleness of Christ to others, that person's not going to have a life that's dominated by anxiety because the two are contradictory.

You see, an anxious person can't know the fullness of joy in the Lord and the person who rejoices in the Lord can't be anxious and you might say, well, surely that's impossible but look at what Paul's saying.

Paul is absolutely adamant. Don't be anxious, he's saying. Don't be anxious about anything but notice it's a command that's not an impossible command when you realise what Paul is saying here that to comply with that command we do so by prayer but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

You know, anxiety is just rampant at the moment in this current world crisis. You see, the word fear, it's everywhere at the moment. Now, of course, there has to be that God-given wisdom to exercise restraint and to keep ourselves and others safe from the virus.

[17 : 45] But, you know, first and foremost and above all, we derive our confidence in God as Lord as we continue to call upon him in prayer. You know, it's no coincidence, just for example, no coincidence that our prayer meeting attendance has actually almost trebled since the very start of this lockdown.

You know, as the Lord's people, we seek to draw near to God and make a request known to him and doing so even in fellowship one with another. And so we come before God even at this present time.

We call upon him and make a request known to him for the sick, for those who tend the sick, for families, for loved ones, for the bereaved, for our political leaders.

For our elderly, for our lonely, for our children, for our nation, for this world, for the church. You know, in many ways, even this pandemic is actually, if you like, re-energized our coming before God in prayer.

And I pray that the lesson that we're learning through all this will actually continue as we realize the urgency of losing our anxiety and coming instead, coming close to God and doing so as we give thanks to him in prayer.

[19 : 10] And so we do thank God. Thank him for the opportunities that this pandemic has brought to further the gospel, to bind believers together, to show the love of Christ to friends and neighbors and family.

to be stirred in your faith and obedience as you rejoice in the Lord, as you show the gentleness of the Lord to others and not be anxious about anything but the more be in prayer before the Lord that he might erase any anxiety that you still might have at this present time because there is a result of obedience to the commands that we've seen here and that result what Paul tells us is the Lord's peace.

Verse 7 And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Here's a sure promise from our promise-keeping God and you can see the divine logic, the logic of grace.

This is glorious logic. You know, the Christian who rejoices, the Christian whose heart and mind are characterized by joy, that Christian, that believer will be protected from the cares of the world as he or she is in constant communion with God and in prayer and thanksgiving.

And that result, the result of that continuing in communion with God, what Paul tells us is the reward of peace, God's peace. that peace of God that Paul tells us will protect the believer's heart with God's peace.

[20 : 58] Just think of that wonderful promise for you. I mean, God's peace, that's a promise to all who wait on him in prayer. And Paul compares that peace, he speaks about the guarding, the guarding of that peace, guarding your heart.

It's like, you know, a military garrison guarding a city from attacked from the outside. And Paul's saying that, you know, outside your heart are all those things that are attacking you, endangering your joy and your peace with God and with one another.

Things that create worry, tension, anxiety. Well, that will happen when we're far from God. That happens when, you know it, I know it, when we neglect to pray, when we neglect to come before God and worship, when we neglect to follow his word.

And the enemy of our soul is there to, he's pouncing, waiting to pounce to cause that wall that God has given us to be breached and to bring that anxiety to your heart.

But Paul's saying, here he's saying, Luke, he's saying, whatever these things are that are causing you to be anxious, turn from them and turn to the God of peace, the God who promises to protect your heart and your mind to be like these guards in the city protecting the walls of the city.

[22 : 24] God will protect your heart and mind from the cares of the world. You know, as you remain in Christ Jesus, as you remain in his love, as you remain there by faith, you'll know that peace that's beyond anything that the world gives.

you know, we hear an echo in the Old Testament in Isaiah 26, verse 3. Listen to these words. You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you because he trusts in you.

For Paul, Paul's life in Christ Jesus, his life was characterized by joy, was characterized by prayer and thanksgiving. Paul's life was seen in his gentleness and his lack of anxiety as he continued to trust in the God of peace.

Paul knew the nearness of the Lord in his heart and his life. Paul knew that the Lord's return, it was near and is near.

Paul could trust in God in all circumstances of his life. What about you? Are you in the Lord and do you rejoice in him?

[23 : 40] Do you have that abiding relationship with Christ that enables you to rejoice in all circumstances, even the very circumstances of the present time? Are you exercising a gentleness of heart that attracts others to the Christ who dwells within you?

Are you resisting the devil who's throwing all these accusations at you, who's hurling all these false words at you that cause you or try to cause you to be anxious? Are you instead, are you wrapping yourself in the arms of Jesus and finding your rest in him as you commune with him in prayer?

You know, these times that we are living in, these times are calling for much holiness, much humility, much self-giving.

Well, I pray that you'll be doing these things that you'll do as the Lord has called you to do as you respond to him in love. Just remember this of Jesus and with these words we close.

He has rejoiced over you in love. He's shown his gentleness to you in his patience. He's dispelled anxiety from your heart because he's spoken to you and given to you that great salvation and given to you that word of promise, the promise of salvation for all who trust in him.

[25 : 09] And so we close, my words anyway, close by saying just this, to him be the praise and glory both now and forevermore.

Amen. Let's join in prayer. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you that you do give us these commands to follow and we pray, Lord, that you will strengthen our hearts so to rejoice in you, so to be gentle with one another, so to have anxiety cast from our hearts and minds and to live that life of thanksgiving before you.

And Lord, may it be that your peace is given and bestowed upon all, even who are gathered here this morning, for your name's sake, for your glory.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.