

HOW TO LIVE IN ANXIOUS TIMES

Philippians 4:4-7

How is it possible to keep our minds stayed on Christ and to rejoice in the Lord when the world is crumbling around us? Is it possible to rejoice in Christ when you are forced to stay in your house? Let's listen to a man who was under full house arrest...with a Roman soldier chained to him constantly. What does Paul prescribe for us?....(and himself!)

1. INSTEAD OF ANXIETY, LET US REJOICE IN THE LORD

- To continually rejoice in the Lord, we have to be “in” the Lord. All of these promises and encouragements are only found in the Lord Jesus, by being untied to Him by faith, trust, and commitment to Him. Only those who know Christ Jesus can rejoice in HIM! This is again emphasized in verse 7 – “in Christ Jesus.” Are you in Christ Jesus? This is the all-important question of life!
- Rejoicing in the Lord begins with finding our true allegiance to Jesus. All idols will fail and disappoint us. *‘Rejoicing in the Lord does not mean that we never experience sadness or grief over loss.’ – Dennis Johnson.* Paul felt sorrow over Epaphroditus’ almost fatal illness in chapter 2, and wept over those who behaved as enemies of Christ – Philippians 3:18. Rejoicing in the Lord Jesus means treasuring Jesus and seeing God’s glory in the face of Christ – 2 Corinthians 4:4,5.
- We can continually rejoice in the Lord and have patient steadfastness in the Lord because He is near. The word gentleness or reasonableness means a *“humble patient steadfastness, which is able to submit to injustice, disgrace, and maltreatment without hatred and malice. Trusting God in spite of it all.” (Linguistic Key to the Greek N.T).* It is to stop insisting upon our every right in this world – Titus 3:2. The only way we can do this is because the Lord is near. He is right now near to His people and we cry out to Him – Psalm 34:18; 145:18. Jesus often calmed His fearful disciples with “Fear Not. It is I.” He is also near in His coming – 1 Corinthians 16:22; Philippians 1:6,10; 2:16; 3:20. When Jesus returns He will vindicate His people and set everything right once for all – 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10.
- The apostle Paul is not an armchair theologian writing from his office in an ivory tower. He has suffered too, and is suffering house arrest as he is writing. He has every reason to be anxious – not knowing whether he will live or die (Chapter 1). But just as when he was beaten and thrown in the Philippian jail – we can rejoice like Paul and Silas did, singing hymns at midnight in prison while the other prisoners listened. This rejoicing in the Lord is for all of us, not just apostles! It is a rejoicing not based on circumstances, but on the Lord – His presence with us and His promises to us in the gospel. Including Philippians 1:6; 2:9-11; 3:7-9.

2. INSTEAD OF ANXIETY, LET US PRAY

- Instead of being anxious, we can pray to Him because He is near to His people. The command is: “Stop Worrying “ or “Stop being anxious”. Instead of anxiety or worry, we are to pray! We are to pray in every situation. *“The way to be anxious about nothing is to be prayerful about everything.” – Peter O’Brien.*
- We are to pray every kind of prayer, including petitions, praise, and requests.

- We are to pray with thanksgiving or gratitude. Jesus taught us to pray by focusing on God first – Matthew 6:9-13. ACTS or CATS, both include adoration and thanksgiving. Every prayer ought to include praise to God for His past and present grace to us in Jesus. All worship of God should include thanksgiving – Colossians 3:15-17.
- We are to pray consistently. We are commanded to continually make our requests known to God. Not that He does not know, but that He delights in the prayers of His people as a good Father likes to hear the heart of his children.

3. INSTEAD OF ANXIETY, WE CAN HAVE GOD'S PEACE

- The result of rejoicing in the Lord, and especially praying to Him with thanksgiving, is the promise of God's peace. It is God's sure promise, not a wish. God's peace is not based on human reasoning, but surpasses all human ideas to guard our hearts and minds. It is both personal and corporate peace.
- God's peace is not here peace with God, but the special gift of the Holy Spirit to His people – Galatians 5:22. "Guard" is a military term, referring to soldiers guarding prisoners or a city and its gates. Our hearts and minds are under attack and tempted to despair and anxiety. God is guarding us Himself. This peace of God is a garrison to our thoughts, and emotions, and our whole inner being and mindset. Illustration – my seminary professor lying in a field after a car wreck – John 14:27...and a year ago when Colleen had a "spell". God holds us fast and protects us from the despair and defeated thinking of the world and the devil. When all else is crumbling, the believer in Jesus is held safe in Christ and set upon a Rock, Christ Himself – John 16:33.
- God's peace also has a corporate dimension. Strained relationships with others can cause a lot of anxiety! God's peace not only protects us individually, but also affects our relationships with others. This is a big theme in Philippians – 1:15; 2:2-5; 2:14; 4:2. God's peace individually leads to community unity. As each one of us is rejoicing in Jesus, praying to Jesus, and receiving His peace – we have the basis of true community and unity. Nothing else matters more than the gospel – Philippians 1: 18; 20. Nothing else matters more than shining as lights in the darkness – Philippians 2:15. When nothing else matters more than Jesus being exalted in us and through us then we will have true humility. We won't fuss and fight over trivial or petty things in light of eternity. IT IS ALL ABOUT HIM NOT US!!!

Concluding Applications:

- Are you truly in Christ Jesus? Are you trusting and resting in Christ alone for your salvation?
- When you are anxious, do you refocus on Jesus? Do you rejoice in knowing Him and treasure His nearness?
- Are you praying...with thanksgiving?
- How are you experiencing the guarding peace of God in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic or panic?