

SPIRITUAL WEARINESS AND THE FORTIFYING POWER OF THE PEACE OF GOD - Philippians 4:4-9 - "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. [5] Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; [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. [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."

In verse 7 Paul says there's something in your being that needs protecting. Your **heart** and your **mind** aren't automatically safe. They need certain provisions. There are enemies outside that must be **kept** on the outside. What are the steps Paul outlines to guard - fortify - our lives with the peace of God?:

- 1) **MAKE GLORIFYING THE LORD THE CENTRAL CONCERN OF EVERY ACTION OF YOUR LIFE** - **Philippians 4:4** - "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"

Paul's emphasis in this verse is that little phrase "*....in the Lord.*" If my joy is founded in the wrong things, it's going to evaporate when trouble comes. "*Rejoice in the Lord*" isn't a glossy religious slogan. It's a heart-searching reminder. Paul is diagnosing much of the source of spiritual weariness with his command to "*rejoice in the Lord.*" This is how spiritual life is fueled and energized in the human heart. You can see this over and over in the Scriptures:

Psalm 1:1-2 - "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; [2] but *his delight is in the law of the Lord*, and on his law he meditates day and night."

Psalm 37:4 - "Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart." Of course! If my delight is truly found in the Lord His ways are what I will desire above all else. If my delight is in the Lord I will **selfishly** want that delight more and more. And if that's the case, what will I be asking God **for**? I will be seeking more and more delight. I will be asking for more and more of His will. So **of course** He will give me those desires of my heart. Because my heart wants more and more of the delight of God's ways!

Psalm 119:14 - "In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. To keep those words from becoming sentimental and hollow, the Psalmist forces himself to quantify and qualify just how real his professed love for God actually is. And he's intensely practical and down to earth - "*Take all the money I will make this week - or this year - put an actual dollar figure on it. All of it together won't satisfy my heart like you do! I would rather lose it all than lose you! That's what I mean when I sing of my love for you!*"

Psalm 119:92 - "If your law had not been *my delight*, I would have perished in my affliction." This is a great verse to have underlined in your Bible. "*If my joy is in anything other than you, I will perish!*"

Let me wrap up this first point by giving you the best definition of the Christian life I know of. It's found in **Romans 5:2** - "Through him we have also obtained *access by faith into this grace* in which we stand, and we *rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*"

When Paul says we "*rejoice in hope of the glory of God,*" he doesn't mean we look forward to heaven. That's **included** but there's much more to it. He means when God's grace reaches a person's heart that person starts to look forward to something he never even considered before in his earthly life. He gets his greatest joy when his life brings glory to someone **other than himself**. He knows he doesn't glorify God perfectly **yet**. But when he gets a chance to put Christ Jesus on display so God is praised and prized, this Christian gets the greatest buzz of his life. And he's filled with the hope that one day his life will glorify God **perfectly**.

- 2) **LIVE LIFE GOVERNED BY DIVINE REASON** - **Philippians 4:5** - "Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand...."

"**Reasonableness.**" The word is "*epiekes*" (ep-ee-i-kace). It's used only once in the New Testament and is difficult to translate. The **King James Version** says "**moderation.**" The **NIV** says "**gentleness.**" The idea behind the word is just that - a patience, a reasonableness. Perhaps the best idea is **an ability to keep things in balance when everything is spinning out of control.**

There's something in me that doesn't want to rush past those simple words. Where are you right now? What has your soul churning? Are you wrestling with disease? Do you wonder why everything is suddenly **out of season** rather than **in season**? The tendency is to feel you have to suddenly **do** something drastic to make God care. And what I want to bring to your heart today is the promise that you don't have to **get** God to come to you. You just have to know He's **at hand - up close to you - right there.**

- 3) **WHATEVER ELSE HAPPENS, STAY SOFT BEFORE THE LORD IN PRAYER** - **Philippians 4:6** - "...do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

Look at that sixth verse again carefully - "...do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." That last phrase just seems strange - "...let your requests be made known to

God." But doesn't God know all about life already? Doesn't he know my days from beginning to end? How can we make anything *known* to an ***all-knowing God?***

It's your ***request*** that He wants raised. He already knows all of your ***circumstances***. He wants you to ***ask***. He wants to hear that ***request***. He wants you to ***pray*** about those circumstances even though He already knows all about them. ***Why?*** The text tells us. Our praying is what ***develops our faith***. When we pray about our fear and worries and problems - and when we pray about them "***with thanksgiving***"(4:6) - our ***hearts*** get changed. We begin to get a bigger picture of our lives.

- 4) **WHEN YOU'RE UNDER ATTACK, KEEP CONTROL OF YOUR MIND** - **Philippians 4:7-8** - "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [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."

The first thing that happens in any trial or any temptation or any unsettling set of circumstances is the ***mind gets knocked off its normal footings***. It gets momentarily fuzzy - blurred. This is such an important principle. It doesn't matter what the situation is. Maybe you're worried about the future. Or perhaps you're panicking because you might be the next one laid off from work. Or you're lured into horrible temptation because you're sure that this other person would be a much better partner for you than your present spouse. Whatever the situation is, if you let your brain just go limp, it's going to go in the wrong direction.

You would not believe how many Christians ***don't know*** that! They come to entertain options and opinions that aren't even in the ball park of Scriptural teaching. Paul is saying that there will come times in all of our lives when we have to get down to brass tacks and find out what the truth really is. "***Whatever is true!***" Your mind won't automatically discern what's true when God isn't front and center.

But if I obey this verse, there's a beautiful power in the truth of God. It liberates. It clears the mind. It brings peace to the soul. Let it light up your mind and it will guard ***all the other parts of your life put together***. Which is exactly what the Psalmist meant when he said, "***I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.***"

- 5) **WHAT YOU KNOW IS RIGHT, DO RIGHT AWAY** - **Philippians 4:9** - "What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—**practice these things**, and the God of peace will be with you."

You can lose control of your own heart. You can get to the place where a part of you wants to be put right, but you realize that it's just the smaller part. Most of your being doesn't care anymore.

What I'm saying needs to be said once in a while. You can get to the place where you don't have peace - where you know you're miserable and you're making life miserable for all of those around you - but you still stubbornly embrace the kind of life that makes you feel the most miserable. You just don't want to change. That's a huge part of what the Bible calls the "***wages of sin.***" It's being miserable and selfishly liking it.

But right now, while God speaks, Paul says you can control your heart. That's what these verses promise. You can usher in the presence of God. You can welcome Him as the ***God of peace*** - "***....and the God of peace will be with you***"(9).

And Paul says he found the secret to doing that: "*I never separated the grand ideas of the Christian life from my daily, routine actions. I never left them only as high sounding ideals and phrases ringing about in people's minds. I translated them into deeds. I made it possible for people to see the teachings of the gospel embedded in the way I lived. And you must do the same!*"