

Live as if the Lord is Coming
Philippians 4:4-7
Sunday, March 30th, 2025
By Ryan Perry

Scripture

Philippians 4:4-7

[4] 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.

Let's Pray

Introduction

Imagine the following scenario: *You are working for a company where most of the workers work in an open room that is partitioned off by cubicles. Now, on an average day, if you were to go from cubicle to cubicle you might find someone talking with a friend of their spouse on the phone, you might witness others playing computer games, or you might find empty cubicles because they have congregated in the staff lounge to relax, drink coffee, and talk about the latest office gossip.*

*But then everyone receives an inter-office email: “**The owner and CEO is coming tomorrow.**” All at once, this office that was full of inactivity jumps into action. Everyone is now doing whatever they can to look productive because they want the boss to know or at least believe that they are hard workers.*

For most of us, if we have been in the American workforce for any amount of time, we have experienced something similar.

A work culture where people slack off while the boss is absent, and yet, spring into action when they know he's coming. Because they want to be seen as good workers so they can get a raise, a promotion, or simply, not get fired.

The reason I am sharing this illustration is because Paul tells the Philippians at the end of verse 5, “**the Lord is at hand.**”

Now, some take this sentence to mean that God is simply near to us. He is with us, for us, and is working in us. **Which is true.**

However, we have spent the last two weeks talking about our heavenly citizenship. **That we are awaiting a Savior who will transform our lowly bodies and that he has written our names in the eternal book of life.**

Not only that, but we have seen throughout Philippians an emphasis on Christ's return in Phil. 1:6, 1:10, 2:16, attaining the prize of the resurrection in 3:11, 14 and a focus on his ruling and reigning over all creation in Phil. 2:9-11.

So it actually makes the most sense that Paul is using this phrase "the Lord is at hand (near)" to point to the truth that **"Christ is coming soon."**

It is similar to what James writes in James 5:8:

[8] You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

And if Paul is telling this church that **"Christ is coming soon,"** there is, in one sense, like the opening illustration, an inherent call to work because the boss is coming.

We will all stand before God one day, and as 2 Corinthians 5:10 tells us, ***"so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil."***

This doesn't mean that God will be judging whether or not we have done enough to be saved. **That work was fully and wholly done by Christ.**

No. This judgment is for believers, and he will judge how we have lived as his people. This is also seen by the fact that Jesus tells us to store up eternal treasures and rewards in Matthew 6:20.

But I don't think that's the main reason Paul telling them that **"Jesus is coming."** Instead, he tells them that Jesus is coming so that they will live with a hopeful expectation of their forever home, even amid very hard circumstances.

And the reason Paul is pointing to this again in verse 5 is that he is giving them what I am calling **"short shotgun-like commands"** on how they are supposed to live in light of his coming.

Because he wants them to be able to endure hardship, and he wants them to present a unified witness, while they wait, to the all-surpassing worth of Jesus.

So this morning, we are going to look at these commands with that same hopeful expectation. That we may also endure hardship, and in so doing, point others to Christ until he comes.

Now, I will say upfront that in many ways, these are already things that Paul has said in this letter, but he is now bringing them back as final summary commands. They are as follows:

- 1. We need to rejoice in the Lord always.**
- 2. We need to live with a gentle spirit.**
- 3. We need to cast our cares on Christ.**

So, let's begin by looking at Paul's command to rejoice in the Lord always.

Rejoice in the Lord always.

Philippians 4:4

[4] Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.

Now, I have to admit, I felt a little lost when I was thinking about this verse. The theme of joy and rejoicing has been so prominent in this letter that I wasn't sure if I had anything else to say. Think about it:

- We talked about Paul rejoicing even while people were trying to harm him (Phil. 1:18-19).
- We walked through how our unity in the Lord promotes joy (Phil. 2:2).
- That our life together should produce mutual joy (Phil. 2:17-18).
- And we have already seen this specific command to **“rejoice in the Lord”** (Phil. 3:1).

This is one of the reasons that many commentators label Philippians the book of Joy.

And yet, if Paul has already given us all these calls to joy, then why does he need to write it again?

I believe that he did this for two reasons. The first goes all the way back to Philippians 3:1 where he says:

[1] Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.

Paul believes that it is for their good and protection to repeat, two more times, the command to **“rejoice in the Lord.”**

When we experience the fullness of joy that God provides, it grows our hope and trust in the future that he has secured for us in Christ. This means that it will protect us from wavering in our faith and from putting our hope in something other than Christ.

Secondly, rejoicing and finding our gladness “in the Lord” is absolutely foundational to living with a gentle spirit and to our ability to cast our cares upon Christ.

Because what fills you with the greatest joy and happiness is where you will put your hope and your trust. Jesus says, ***“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”***

Now, with all of that said, I still think there is one aspect of this call to “rejoice in the Lord” that we haven't touched on.

It's the fact that it is a command, and not just simply a one-time command. But a command that is supposed to be **“always or continuously”** lived out in the life of a believer.

But how do we do that? How do we rejoice or be glad in the Lord?

If you were here last week, you know that Paul told Euodia and Syntyche to “**agree in the Lord.**” And the phrase “in the Lord” means that they are to seek a unity with one another that is based upon their **union with Christ.**

So when we think about what it looks like to “rejoice in the Lord,” it’s a rejoicing or a gladness that is based upon our union with Jesus.

This means that if we want to cultivate an attitude of rejoicing in our lives, then we need to continually remember and meditate on the truths of who Christ is and what he has done to unite us to himself.

Look with me at the following verses:

John 1:1-3

[1] In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [2] He was in the beginning with God. [3] All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

We need to cultivate a mindset of awe that continually sees Jesus as God and the mighty creator and sustainer of all things.

1 Peter 2:24

[24] He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

Jesus left heaven so that he could take all of our sins upon himself and replace them with his righteousness. So now we are healed and have a new and forever relationship with the Father.

Philippians 1:6

[6] And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Jesus died for you, gave you a new and forever life with him, and will continue to work in your life for your good until he returns.

Deuteronomy 31:6

[6] Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.”

The powerful God, because of Christ, has promised that he will never abandon us as his people. **We are never left to live this life on our own.**

Now, there are, of course, many more verses that talk about Jesus and his work on our behalf. But the point is, if we want to have confidence and joy in the Lord, then we need to remember and apply the truths of Christ to our lives. This is why Paul says in Colossians 3:16:

[16] Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,

We need to read, pray about, think about, and meditate on the truths of Christ every single day of our lives. In fact, there should never be a day that goes by where we aren't preaching the good news of the gospel to our own hearts.

Because the honest truth is that we are so prone to forgetfulness.

Application

I will freely admit that I have a bad memory. My wife will ask me, **"hey do you remember when the kids did this or when we did this together..."**

And very often, I will have a blank stare on my face and will say "nope, can't say that I do..." as I wait for the disappointment that comes because I have forgotten an important moment in our marriage or in the lives of our kids.

Now, unfortunately, I seem to have a knack for remembering obscure sports facts, but in general, I am not good at remembering things.

So you can only imagine the daily fight that has to happen to remember and apply the truths of Christ and what he's done for me.

Because once I stop fighting to remember, I stop trusting. And once I stop trusting Christ, I am given to anxiety and worry because I end up trusting in things that can't save me.

But I also know I'm not the only one. If we are honest, we all do this. Because we are all confronted with pleasures, stressors, or hard circumstances that will pull our hearts away from Christ if we let them.

This is why Paul commands us to **"Rejoice in the Lord, always and he says it again rejoice."**

Because he knows that the only way we will stay close to Jesus is if we are consistently working and fighting to find our fulfillment in him.

This means that we need to day by day, moment by moment, make conscious choices to turn our gaze to him and to his word.

To remember who Jesus is, to stand in awe of what he has done for us, and to remind ourselves that he is our God, he is with us, he is for us, and no matter what happens, he is coming soon.

And this fight for joy will not only be for our endurance, but it will become attractive to the watching world. **Because it will produce a gentle servant-hearted spirit within us that is uncommon in our society because our hope will be in Christ, and not this world.**

Live with a gentle spirit.

Philippians 4:5

ESV

[5] Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand;

NASB

[5] Let your gentle spirit be known to all people. The Lord is near.

Now, this word “reasonableness” in the ESV and “gentle spirit” in the NASB occurs only 5 times in the NT. But it gets at the idea of being people who **“don’t insist on their own way even when we could.”**

Or, as Aristotle defined it: **“It is a willingness to forgo one’s own rights according to the letter of the law.”**

This definition captures the thrust of Paul’s earlier exhortation when he said in Philippians 2:4:

[4] Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Remember, one of the main reasons that Paul had to write this letter is because some of the Philippians had a prideful self-seeking spirit that was causing divisions and infighting in the church.

So, Paul is trying to combat this by giving them a description of the kind of spirit that should be present within their fellowship together.

And he uses the term reasonableness, gentleness, or gentle spirit because it is antithetical or opposite to a self-serving spirit of pride.

If someone has a spirit of gentleness, they are not concerned with getting their own way, but instead, they’re willing to give up what they could have for the good of others.

This is the kind of spirit that Paul says is embodied in the example of Jesus on our behalf. As he wrote in Philippians 2:6-8:

[6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

But this is also the same spirit that we see in the example of Paul. As he said in 1 Corinthians 9:11-12:

[11] If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? [12] If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.

And Paul's call throughout this letter is to imitate Christ and others who live like him. **To be people who willingly give up our wants, desires, and even at times our rights so that we can gently and lovingly serve one another with the love of Christ that we have been given.**

Because when our hope and rejoicing are in Jesus, then we don't need to be consumed with getting ours in this life.

For our life should no longer be wrapped up in what we get today but instead should be focused on what's coming in eternity.

But this call to gentleness and service isn't just about our lives together as a church. **Instead, Paul says that it is for everyone.**

Which means that it is meant to be a witness to the world around us.

Application

Back in college, one of my friend's uncles used to give out these tracts called **Chic Tracts**. **Maybe you've heard of them.**

The one I remember the most was called **Holy Joe**. It was about an army private named Joe who followed Jesus. But everyone else, including the officers, hated him for it. So they would give him all of the worst chores and duties on base.

But instead of crying about it or growing angry, Joe would do those chores to the best of his ability and with a smile on his face. In the end, because of his joy and servant-hearted spirit, Joe was able to share the gospel with one of his fellow privates, who eventually decided to follow Jesus.

The tract ends with Joe and this private standing with Jesus, while the other officers who mocked him receive an eternity apart from him in hell.

Now, I didn't bring up these tracts so you will rush out to buy them. Frankly, they are not my favorite way to share Christ with others.

But I think "**Holy Joe**" does a good job of highlighting the truth that how we live and respond to our circumstances is saying something to the watching world about Jesus.

So, if we go to the store and throw a fit over someone's cart being in the middle of the aisle (which I've unfortunately done), we are saying that we serve an impatient God.

Or if we have an opportunity to help a neighbor and yet we selfishly refuse to do it, we are giving them a false impression that Jesus is selfish.

Likewise, if our church is stingy with our resources or we are given to seeking our own desires, then the watching world (**which includes our kids, by the way**) won't see Jesus as the God who gives freely and abundantly to those whom he loves.

But if our eyes are fixed on Christ and all that he has done for us, then we are able to humbly and gently put the needs of others before our own. Because our joy and confidence will be in Jesus, and not in getting our own way.

Therefore, our natural responses will not be anger, selfishness, or pride, but instead, they will be love, gentleness, forbearance, and service.

And we will become a living example of Christ to those around us and will shine like lights in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation.

So my question for us this morning is this: **Are we actively seeking to find our daily confidence and joy in Christ? Secondly, If someone were to observe our daily actions and attitudes, what would they learn about Jesus?**

Now, I fully understand that these are weighty and heavy questions. We live in a fallen world and are imperfect people who can't even begin to accomplish these tasks on our own.

And the good news is that God doesn't expect us to. Because he knows that we need help to face the daily temptations and struggles that are trying to make us doubt his goodness, and are seeking to destroy our joy and the gentle spirit that he is cultivating within us.

So instead of saying, "Good luck, figure it out on your own." **Our God is telling us to come to him, to seek his face, and to cast our cares on Christ.**

Cast your cares on Christ.

Philippians 4:6-7

[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.

It would have been pretty irritating and discouraging if Paul had just simply said "do not be anxious about anything" right!?

Because the next logical question would be, "well how do we do that?"

This actually reminds me of a Bob Newhart comedy skit where he plays a therapist by the name of Dr Switzer.

In this skit, a woman comes into his office and tells him all of her problems, hoping that he can give her some great solutions for what she is dealing with. But instead of solutions, his only answer for her is **“stop it.”** That’s it.

And though it’s a really funny skit, it kind of hits close to home because it’s frankly the way that we often try to deal with our own issues or the issues of others in our lives.

But Paul doesn’t just tell us to **“stop being anxious.”** Instead, he also includes an answer for how we can actually do that. **However, I love the fact that it isn’t a solution that’s focused on trying harder or doing more work.**

Rather, it’s a solution that is about coming, communing, resting, and receiving.

We are supposed to come to God with **prayers, supplications or petitions, and requests.** This means that we are supposed to talk to and commune with the living God.

Now, a lot commentators have really gotten into the weeds of what each of these words means, but the bottom line is that Paul is telling us to come to God with all kinds of prayers.

And to hammer home how important this is, he literally tells us to pray about everything, or in every situation and at all times

He wrote the same thing in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 when he said:

[17] pray without ceasing,

Paul’s point is simple: The antidote to the anxiety, worry, doubt, and frustration that can so easily plague us in our lives is to be people who commune with Jesus and bring all of our stuff to him.

This is what Jesus meant when he said in Matthew 11:28:

[28] Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

This implies that we are giving Jesus our burdens and are giving up on trying to do everything on our own. And instead we are receiving from him both a present rest and the hope of an eternal rest to come.

Or as Paul says in Philippians 4:7:

[7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

What Jesus has in store for us when we come to him and commune with him is a peace, rest, and contentment that is beyond this world and our human understanding.

A peace that not only calms our anxious hearts, but protects us from wavering in our faith and from trying to find our hope and joy in the trappings of this world that will fail us.

So, if we are going to be a people who live a gentle and anxiety-free life of joy in Christ, then we need to be a people of prayer.

Because in prayer, we are not simply thanking God, telling God that we need him, or merely proclaiming our trust in him. We are actually communing with the living God who loves us and answers us according to his good and perfect will.

As Jesus said in John 15:7:

[7] If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

Application

Church, I know that life isn't always fun, and it isn't always easy. I know that many in this body are dealing with chronic health issues, that we are living in a time of financial instability in our country, and that our society seems so far from the eutopia of Eden that God first created.

Life under the sun isn't easy.

But I want us to remember, the time is short and "the Lord is at hand," which means that he is coming soon. **So let's live in light of his coming.**

Rejoice in the Lord. Fix your eyes upon him and take joy in the fact that you belong to Jesus and that he will always be for you.

Put your full confidence in him so that no matter what trials come your way, you can shine forth the gentle servant-hearted example of Christ.

And in all things and at all times, come to him in prayer, and experience the peace, rest, and the help that he has in store for you.

So that while we wait, we can not only endure in our faith, but can give our dark world a unified and glorious witness to the surpassing worth of our God and Savior until he returns.

Let's pray.