

Closing Appeal for Steadfastness and Unity

4 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

2 I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. **3** Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Final Exhortations

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! **5** Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. **6** Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. **7** And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. **9** Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 1-9 11th October 2020

Wow, how up lifting is this reading? If we choose to take notice. God will guard our hearts and minds.

It may seem strange to us, that the letter in which Paul writes the most about peace, joy and rejoicing, is Philippians. As when he wrote it, he was in prison.

He had no idea whether he would be released or put to death, but right in the middle of this terrible difficult and uncertain situation, Paul writes about discovering the secret of peace and joy in our Lord Jesus.

If we continued our reading by a few verses, we would have read the Paul said "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being

content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or not. I can do all this through him who gives me strength."

Paul has found a source of happiness that nothing can take away. Many people would not be able to grasp this, even us at times we may think that, it does not make sense we would think that it is a real challenge.

It is a real gift from God. God knows us completely and cares for us personally and deeply.

Now, humanly speaking we may say that our joy, happiness and contentment comes from what is happening in our life from a day to day basis. But if this was so we wouldn't be able to "Rejoice in the Lord always." Because no matter what - in this life we all go through dark valleys and exhilarating mountain top experiences.

God may not have given each one of us an easy life but He has given us a peaceful happy life. It is our choice whether we receive God's peace. We need to choose to put all our faith in him not the things around us.

Everyone, of us have some sort of problem or difficulty, but as the bible tells us there is "peace in God which transcends all understanding," which is available to us no matter what the circumstances of our lives.

We all need to learn to cultivate this sense of peace by bringing everything to God in prayer and thanksgiving.

It really is our very own choice. It sounds so easy doesn't it. Just take the peace and enjoy.

When Paul's "Rejoice in the Lord always." Arrived at the church in Philippi, it wasn't to an untroubled group of people that the scroll was read aloud.

The Philippians were troubled by external threats and internal strife.

I'd imagine that they were happy to receive the letter but after they heard it, I can imagine discussions full of, what? Really, Rejoice always? Does he know what kind of day I have had?

But actually, Paul does know. He often talks about his own hardships in his letters. He offers himself as an example of suffering to the Philippians. Paul is imprisoned and has enemies all over the place.

Paul tells that his response to all of this is, rejoice.

"Rejoice in the Lord," says Paul, because all the prosperity and happy times and other potential reasons for rejoicing can't be counted on, always.

When our concerns have been left in God's loving care, the peace of God that is beyond comprehension will guard and protect our hearts and minds.

We can have security knowing that God is caring for us and we can have sanity when we replace worry with faith and prayer.

Near the end of our reading Paul writes, Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy- think about such things.

Trusting in God, includes giving our troubles and fears to God and then allowing the Holy Spirit to direct our hearts and minds-to guard our hearts and minds-by thinking about good things rather than obsessing about worries.

Paul not only urges the Philippians and us, to think about the good things, he urges us to put these into practise.

Peace is not saying that, "Oh everything will be fine."

Peace isn't saying we ignore the risks or the situation that find ourselves in."

Peace doesn't mean we shouldn't take precautions for our safety and the safety of others.

Peace is acknowledging that our present circumstances may be bad but we have the opportunity to live unafraid. We just need to work on our relationship with Jesus so that our hope rests with the prince of peace.

Peace does not mean that life has to be quiet, trouble free or free from hard work.

Peace means to be in the midst of all those things and still be calm in your heart. This is the real meaning of peace.

In Paul's letter he doesn't just simply tell the Philippians to stop worrying, he gives them the antidote - PRAYER.

We need to listen and take advise from Paul we need to take everything to God in prayer, our anxieties, our needs, our problems and our requests and then leave them there with Him in His capable hands.

Do you trust God with your cares, your troubles, your hardships and your anxieties?

We may all be able to say, yes and lie to ourselves. But really, we all need to give our lives completely to God. He holds all of us in His hands.

I pray that the "peace of God that transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ."

Amen

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