

God's Recipe for Peace
Philippians 4:4-7
Reading: Matthew 6:25-34

Bethany Baptist Church
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...pray...

Based on the *aromas* coming out of the Fellowship Hall this morning, a lot of our ladies have *pulled out* their favorite recipes & *pulled out* all the stops!

The week of **Thanksgiving** is a week for outstanding *recipes!* *Turkey & dressing & salads & casseroles & fancy vegetables...*(forget?)...**desserts!**

But you know, while the holidays can bring *good times*, they can also be occasions for *difficult circumstances, pressure in relationships, & bittersweet memories...* all of which add up to *anxiety* in the place of *celebration*.

In Philippians **ch.4** the Apostle encourages his Christian friends to face *difficulty* with *godly responses* so that they can experience *God's peace*.

Let's turn in your NT to Philippians 4. Read 4:4-7.

Philippians was written as Paul endured *incarceration* in Rome in approx. **61AD** (*Phil* was penned w/*Ephesians & Colossians & Philemon*; that's why these letters are often referred to as the Paul's *Prison Epistles*).

Paul had *planted* the church at Philippi & enjoyed a *warm relationship* w/ its members.

It was customary with Paul to *wind down* his letters with a series of *terse instructions* ("parting shots").

The apostle's *parting admonitions* (**ch 4**) almost seem like a *list of ingredients*, w/ some hints on how *prepare* them. Like a *blueprint* or a *recipe*.

As Paul brings the Philippian epistle to a *close*, he shares a *recipe* I'd like us to *savor together* this morning. A *recipe* for a *life of peace*.

Four ingredients that will guarantee God's peace, all year long:

- 1. Start with a double portion of joy (v.4).**
- 2. Add an extra measure of loving patience (v.5).**
- 3. Separate out all worries (v.6).**
- 4. Season liberally with prayer (vv.6-7).**

God's peace begins with a double portion of joy (read v.4).

- A. *Christian joy* is #1 ingredient in the apostle's recipe.
- a. That shouldn't be *too* surprising, because *joy* is one of the *big themes* of Philippians (in fact, the letter uses **5** different Gr words to communicate the importance of *joy*).
 - b. *But what is joy?* When you & I think of *joy* & *rejoicing*, we tend to associate it with *happiness*, & *happy* circumstances.
 - c. But when Paul writes of "*rejoicing*," he is referring to ***much more*** than simply *feeling good* because *life is going good*.
 - d. Which leads to a great def'n of *joy* that I read: ***Christian joy is the deep-down confidence that God is in control of everything for the believer's good & God's glory, and therefore all is well no matter what the circumstances.***(Mac)
 - e. So God's idea of *rejoicing* is to live your life with the conviction that God is in ***control*** and ***that's good enough!***
 - f. So now that we've got a little taste of *joy*, I want us to look just a little more closely at Paul's initial ingredient, the command to *rejoice*... (again)...*rejoice!*
 - i. Paul is lovingly issuing this *command* in the *present tense*. → You need to be joyful in *real-time*; ***all*** of the time!
 - ii. Then he says ***again*** – "*again I will say, rejoice!*" He's just given you a double-dose of *rejoicing!* Not just *one scoop of joy*, but ***two!***
 - Beloved, what does it mean when you *repeat* a command to your *kids*? "*Get out of the kitchen!* ... "*Go on, get out!*"



iii. It all *boils down* to this: Paul is *emphatic - impassioned!* He wants Christians to live in *complete confidence* in God's *good & power, always* – i.e. *regardless of their immediate circumstances.*

- B. *Is Paul for real?* How can I rejoice *all* the time? I mean – life doesn't *feel good*, all the time!
- i. Paul (in *chains!*) *wasn't* rejoicing because his *situation* was great, he was rejoicing because his *Lord is great* → “***in the Lord.***”
 - a. Beloved, this idea, “*in the Lord,*” is *crucial!*
 - b. Any *blessing* that we enjoy is ours *in the Lord.* This is a huge idea in the *NT*; our: *election, adoption, grace, redemption, insight, eternal inheritance, security...are all given to us in the Lord.*
 - ii. *Rejoicing* won't last long & *peace* won't last long until you train yourself to believe the Bible's defn of true *joy* (can I share it w/ you again?): ***joy is the deep-down confidence that God is in control of everything for the believer's good & His own glory, and so all is well no matter what the circumstances! ...pause...***
- C. Let me share a few *hints* for developing a life that *rejoices in the Lord.*
- a. **Set** – *your mind on Christ.* Think *who* He is & what He's *done* for you (e.g. *all your sins were paid for at His cross*).
 - b. **Sing** – your favorite *songs* that praise Him. *Redeemed, how I*
 - c. **Speak** – to your Christian *friends* regarding your faith. You talk about *everything else that makes you happy!* Talk about *Jesus.*
 - d. **Start** – don't wait to *feel spiritual.* Just *do it!* ***Rejoice!*** 😊
Joy is such an imp't. ingredient: be sure to start w/ a double portion!
... but we aren't finished yet; next ...

Add an extra measure of *loving patience*. Read v.5.

- A. Paul's 2nd *command* is to *stir in* a wonderful ingredient. You *can't* leave it out if you want a life of *peace*.
- B. Paul's original *vocab* here is difficult to translate with just **one English word!**
- i. Various Bible translations use *considerate* or *yielding* or *moderate* or *forbearing* or *patient* or *gentle*.
 - ii. *What does it mean to live in gentleness?* Paul is stirring in an *ingredient* that *addresses* a willingness to *yield* our *rights*. To *wait* our turn. To make *allowances* for others' weaknesses. To *hold our tongue* instead of *criticizing*.
 - iii. When this term was used in other *Gr. lit*, it suggested the idea of a king who *refused to exert all his power*, motivated by a *powerful patience*.
 - iv. In other words, a *gentle spirit* is a *patient spirit*. Not because you *have* to be, but because you *want* to be.
- B. Again, Paul's grammar **commands** us to *live in gentleness*.
- i. We live in the midst of a "*me-first*," *entitlement* culture. How many things are *sold* w/ this: "*You deserve!*" (from *fast food* to *luxury sedans!*) And *you deserve* = ***me first!***
 - ii. But *God* says you are to live so *patiently* towards *life & people* so that you develop a ***reputation*** for your *gentleness*.
 - iv. A *reputation* that spreads, **not** just within your *family*, **not** just within your *church*, but ***everywhere*** you go! ☺

C. Can I give you a *powerful motivation* for *living the gentle life*?

- a. Look again at **v.5** with me: ***The Lord is near***. Paul is still tying all of this to your relationship to Jesus!
- b. He is reminding us that our *conduct* is to be *seasoned* by the *conviction* that Christ will *return* for us, and it could be ***right now*** (lit. we are *on the verge*)!
- c. The **NT** writers used constant reminders of *Christ's return*, and our *accountability* to Him, to *fuel* us to *holy fear* & to *faithful living* & to *persevering hope*.
- d. ***The Lord is near!*** Beloved, *when the Son of Man returns*, *what kind of Christian will He find you to be?* Will you be known for your *gentle spirit*?
- e. ***The Lord is near!*** Beloved, some days don't feel much like a *holiday*, but *stand firm*, be *patient* – He is *coming!*

We started with a double portion of rejoicing!

We've just added a rich measure of loving patience!

... but we now we have an important step that requires special attention ...

Now – careful – separate out *all* worries. Read 6.a (2X)

- A. I'm not much of a *cook*, but I **do** know that some *recipes* are very *particular* about what you need to *leave out*!
- i. I mean, *did you remember to pull that plastic bag of "innards" out of the turkey before you put him in the oven?*
 - ii. Have you ever *bit* into a slice of *pie* & found a sharp little piece of *pecan shell*? They should have *left that out*! ☹
- C. Our *recipe* calls for some *separating*, too!
- i. *You be **anxious** for nothing...*
 - ii. Paul stirs in another **imperative**; the Apostle is clearly commanding us to **cut out** worry!
 - iii. If you are *in the Lord* & He is *in control* (remember **v.4**) then you have *no need* for **anxiety**.
- D. Turn with me to **Matt 6:25-34** (Jesus' *Sermon on the Mt.*).
- i. Note **v.25** – We worry when we can't keep *focused* on God's *big picture*. Your *life* is more than your *worries*.
 - ii. **V. 27** – We worry because we can never seem to remember that worry isn't *effective*! Worry is like a *dull knife* – it just won't *help* you!
 - iii. **V.33 (read again)** – What does Jesus say about all our *worries*? A lot of our worries will *clear up* when we live by *God's priorities* – for *God's Kingdom*.
 - iv. **V.34** – Don't worry about things that *aren't* important or are *outside* of your control. *Focus on living for Christ...today!*

Rejoice in Christ's blessings; live *patiently* with all men; *don't worry*...
And don't forget to *pray*! Let's pour in that final *ingredient*.

Season liberally with *prayer*. Read v.6

- A. Paul immediately follows his *command* to *abandon anxiety* with a *contrasting command*: ***don't worry but ... but...let your requests be made known to God.***
- i. With his *fourth & final command* Paul is calling us to *pray*.
 - ii. Again, his *imperative* is *present tense*; **prayer** must be a *key ingredient* of the *everyday* Christian life.
 - iii. Beloved, do you *pray all* the time? Do you pray about ***everything***? I know your *mind is moving* all the time, but do you *pray*? Pray when you *wake up*? Pray *getting ready* for the day? Pray *on the run*? Pray at *work* or *school* or *home*? Pray when *problems* pop up? Pray when God *rescues* you? Pray when it's *noisy* – pray when it's *quiet*? ... I'm not suggesting *prayer* is an *substitute* for *obedience & duty*, & I know we all ***do stuff***...but prayer should be the *atmosphere* in which you *live & move & breathe*, as you go! Beloved, do you *pray*?
- B. Paul is really *big* on prayer & **v.6** puts prayer on the *front burner*!
- i. In fact, the apostle uses **3 different** prayer terms in just this **one** place: *prayer & supplications & requests*.
 - a. Paul calls us to **prayer** – this is a *broad* term, taking in *all kinds of prayers*.
 - b. Paul calls for **supplication** – a narrower term that refers to *specific* prayers for *specific needs*.
 - c. Paul calls for **requests** - another word for *specific & detailed* prayer. Like the *prayer requests* we *email out during the week* or discuss in our Wednesday evening *prayer service*.

- ii. And please *don't leave out* the *secret sauce* that Paul commands us to *blend in* with all our prayers...
 - a. Do you *see* it there (v.6)? *thanksgiving; gratitude!*
 - b. Beloved, you can begin to be *thankful*, even as you begin to *pray*. It is never *too soon* to *give thanks!*
 - c. You can be *thankful* **now** because God has always been *faithful* in the **past**.

That's what moved *Thomas Chisholm* to pen that wonderful hymn: *Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see; **all I have needed**, Thy hand hath provided; Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto **me!***

- d. You can be *thankful* because you are ***in Christ***. Your sins are all *forgiven*. Heaven is *assured*.
- e. As you can be *thankful*, because the ***Lord is near***.

Is your "Thanksgiving joy" under attack? Pray now...give thanks now!

Got your *apron* on?

- A. If we ...
- i. Start with a *double portion* of **joy**,
 - ii. Add an *extra measure* of **loving patience**,
 - iii. **Sift out all anxiety...**,
 - iii. Then season *liberally* w/*thankful & expectant prayer*...
- B. What will we *stir up*? **Peace!** Read v. 7
- i. The *peace* that only God can give you. *And He will.*
 - a. *Peace* that is the *polar opposite* of the *anxiety* of **v. 6.**
 - b. *Peace* that goes beyond all that you or I can *understand.*
 - iv. God's *peace* is on **7x24** duty to *guard* your *heart & your mind.*
 - a. The *heart* is the very *center* of who we are: our *motives, thoughts, emotions, and will.* In the Bible, your *heart* is essentially *all* that you *are* that *really matters.*
 - b. Paul is using a *military* image in **v. 7.** He says that God has posted a *guard detail* around your *heart* – your *life!* (Philippi was a *Roman colony* w/ a big *military retirement community*; Paul's readers knew exactly what his *armor-clad* promise meant!) That invincible *guard detail* on your *heart* is the *peace* God gives.

- v. Paul *concludes* (v.7) a lot like he *began* (v.4): w/ **Jesus!**
 - a. Christian, when you take your *cares* to God, He will *answer* your prayers & *guard* you w/ *peace*, because you are “*in Christ Jesus.*”
 - b. And here is Jesus’ *promise*: “**Peace** I leave with you; **My peace** I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.” (John 14:27)

Let’s pray!