

Philippians 4:4-7

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Date: 11 June 2025

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[0 : 00] I'll get you to turn this evening to Philippians chapter 4 verses 4 through 7. It's a familiar passage that we've read.

You probably go to from time to time. And it's something that we long for, that we want. We want to rejoice in the Lord always.

We want to let the world see our gentleness. Let that be known to men because the Lord is at hand. We want those things in our lives.

He tells us also be anxious for nothing. Be anxious for nothing. But how many of us worry? How many of us are anxious? How many of us struggle with things through our lives?

But he tells us be anxious for nothing. But in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God.

[1 : 44] How strong is your prayer life? How strong is your prayer life? I was thinking about the War Room movie. And Miss Clara tells, I can't think of her name.

But anyway, tells her, you know, you want your coffee hot or cold, but you don't want it lukewarm. And so is your prayer life hot or is it cold or is it lukewarm?

Of course, in the church, all of our prayer lives should be hot. We should be in tune with the Lord and doing just this. But in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God.

Do you let all of your requests be known to God? Do you know the peace of God?

Do you experience the peace of God every day? Or do the worries and anxieties of life and the pressures and many other things, do they take away that peace that the Lord promises us?

[2 : 58] In John chapter 14, he promises that peace that passes understanding. In Matthew chapter 11, he tells us that if we're in need, he'll give us rest.

He'll give us rest for our souls. So does your soul need rest tonight? And are you experiencing the rest and the peace that the Lord can give you through him?

So I wanted to start off with that, a familiar verse, verses, and something that we all long for. But as I look around the church, I don't always see, and not just here, but anywhere.

You don't always see that peace. You don't always see that rest that the Lord promises us. In 1960, this was after the Supreme Court had decided that public schools should not be, that segregation was unconstitutional.

In 1960, New Orleans was sent, I believe it was six African-American children to different schools because of this.

[4 : 12] They were mandated to quit having the segregation. A six-year-old girl named Ruby Bridges was one of those, and she was sent to one of the elementary schools.

She was escorted by four U.S. Marshals to the school, and every day there were parents and adults lining the sidewalks, cursing her, and giving all kinds of insults and yelling at her and everything.

A psychologist named Robert Coles was watching this, and he wanted to have talked to her about it because he thought she was probably experiencing some trauma from emotional issues with all of this.

And what he found was that she was quite sound in her emotions and her feelings and everything. She wasn't showing any signs of emotional distress. One day her teacher noticed that she stopped on her way in and was talking.

And so she told Robert Cole, who is a psychologist, and he talked to her and asked her who she was talking to. And she said, well, I forgot to say my prayer this morning.

[5 : 24] And he said, well, who were, what was your prayer? Let me get this right. She said she had forgotten to pray, and he asked who she was praying for, and she said the angry people

outside.

And he asked why she was praying for them. She said, well, don't you think they need prayer? Of course they did. And he asked what she was praying, and she said every day she said, Father, please forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.

And she was repeating the Lord in her prayer. 1960, a six-year-old girl had a prayer life that was strong enough that she had no emotional distress from this scene that she saw every day with adults screaming at her and cursing her.

So what did she know? Did she know? Did she know? Philippians chapter 4, verses 4 through 7. She obviously knew the Lord, or she would have had emotional distress back then.

So what did she know 65 years ago that I don't see so much anymore today? Today, with road rage and murders, suicides, mass shootings, just the distress that you see in people every day, and even within the church.

[6 : 54] Church splits typically don't happen, probably almost none of them, over doctrinal issues that the Bible isn't being taught right. It's more over people's wants and desires, something they didn't like the music or something, you know, or the color of the carpet.

So anyway, so what happened through those 65 years from this time with her? Back then, the church had more influence in society than I see that it has today.

So we've lost some of that over time. What I think has happened, and if you've been in any of my classes, you've probably heard me say this, but Jesus said in Matthew 28, 18 through 20, he said, All authority has been given to him in heaven and on earth, and we're to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and teaching them everything that he had taught.

That's what we're supposed to be doing, but from my standpoint, I don't see discipleship so much in many churches. More and more are only open maybe Sunday mornings, but discipleship has sort of moved away.

So I think Matthew 28, 18 through 20, one of Jesus' final commands is something that we need to go back and follow. I think that's why many don't have the strong prayer life, the hot, strong prayer life that we all should have.

[8 : 27] There's a program called Master Life. When I took it, it was about a half of a year course. It was a discipleship program, and not many people completed it because it was such a long course, and it required a lot of memorization and things like that.

But if you've ever looked at Master Life, there's two models. One is the disciple's cross, and the other is the disciple's personality. And those, I think, sort of explain what has happened over these 65 years, from the time Ruby Bridges was walking into school with all this going on, to today when it just doesn't appear to me that many of the members have been disciplined.

The disciple's cross in the middle is a circle, and it's to be Christ-centered. You know the Lord. You're Christ-centered in your life. The vertical bar on the cross is your relationship to God, and the bottom is the Word of God.

That is your foundation as a disciple. And the top is prayer, your communication with God. And that should be our number one most important relationship in all of life.

When Jesus was asked what was the greatest command, it's to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And then the second is like it, love your neighbor as yourself.

[9 : 59] If you don't have your relationship with God right, if it's not strong, your relationship with others is going to struggle. And I think that's what we see, not only around the world today, but even within the church oftentimes, is that we don't have that strong relationship.

If you came for the marriage conference or if you read the book that was given out, it emphasizes that, that our relationship with the Lord is first and foremost.

And that's the one that we will struggle in our marriages. If we're not strong in the Word and strong in prayer, our relationship with the Lord isn't strong.

So that's part of what I think has happened over those 60 years. Okay.

Okay. Back to Philippians 4, 4 through 7, the end of that verse 7 says, And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds through Christ Jesus.

[11 : 21] We cannot experience the peace of God when we're emotionally distressed. Grief, anger, and shame are the three most common emotions that we experience that keep us from experiencing the peace of God day by day.

I've already mentioned Matthew 11, 28 through 31. Jesus says, Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

And John 14, 27, Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled. Neither let it be afraid.

So if we believe Jesus for our salvation, we should also believe him that he'll give us that peace and that rest. The grand privilege of prayer to come before the throne of God directly through Christ is with us.

And so we have to trust him with our emotions, with our cares, and give those to him. I wanted to talk about anger.

[12:41] Jesus was angry at times. He was angry and he cleared the temple. He was also upset with the religious leaders and their lack of faith and their lack of understanding and the way that they were teaching the word that wasn't correct.

So anger is one of our emotions that Jesus had, and they gave it to us for good reason. There are things that happen in our lives that we should be angry about. Jesus also teaches us, Matthew chapter 11, verses 28 through 31.

No, that's not where I am. Matthew chapter 5, the Sermon on the Mount, verses 21 through 26, that not only if you commit murder, but if you're angry in your heart, let's see, let me get it right, angry without a cause is guilty of murder.

So we have to understand about anger. Then the next one, he goes on to talk about adultery, and not only if you actually commit adultery, but if you have lust in your heart, that you're guilty of that. So Jesus is teaching us that it comes from our emotions, from our thought life, is what happens before our actions take place. So how do we resolve anger, and why is it important?

[14:06] Ephesians chapter 4, let me get you to turn there. Verses 26 and 27 say, Be angry and do not sin.

Do not let the sin go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. So Paul is teaching us there that we will be angry at times, but we shouldn't let the sun go down on our anger.

We shouldn't let that anger continue in our lives. And the reason why we shouldn't let it continue in our lives is it gives the devil an opportunity. It gives him an opportunity to control us or to speak to us and have us to do things that we shouldn't.

So it opens a door for Satan. In 1 Peter chapter 5, in verses 6 through 8 says, Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon him, for he cares for you.

Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walks around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. There Peter is teaching us that we need to give our cares to the Lord, that we need to cast those on him.

[15:30] He will take those for us. And if we don't, if we hold them in our hands, that Satan is looking for who he can devour. Of course, we also know in Ephesians chapter 6, starting in verse 10, that our battle is not against flesh and blood.

It's not against each other, but it's against those, the, what's it, the, the darkness.

It's Satan and the demonic, I guess is how we would say that. So it's important for us to not carry our emotions on and on, because it gives the devil an opportunity in our lives.

And I think that's one reason why we, why we see strife within the church, strife within marriage. Isaiah chapter 53, verse 4, speaking of Jesus, says that he will carry our sorrows and our, and he will bear our griefs and carry our sorrows or our burdens.

So how can we succeed, how can we effectively pray about our emotions, is what we wanted to know. When we were in Fort Smith, ended up meeting a man named Jim Gardner.

[16:45] He was a psychologist, did psychology for 25 years, wasn't real pleased with what he saw, the results that he saw, because he didn't see long-lasting results.

So he ended up in a prayer conference, and then he wrote some books and made this, made it a little more simple about how to pray about our emotions. I can tell you from my experience, I had an ongoing anger about my brother for years and years.

Well, actually, since the day mom brought me into the house, Jeff ran up and hit mom because he was bringing me in the house. So it was on from the day that she actually brought me in the house.

So there was always strife between us. The anger I had toward Jeff when I would meet somebody that had his personality would flare up in me, and I would sort of come on point, you know, because of their personality.

But when I learned how to pray about my emotions and give them to the Lord, I no longer have that. I saw my grandmother have a stroke, and it took her about three years.

[17:54] She had more strokes, and then she finally died, and I had a fear of dying slow. No longer had that fear because I learned how to pray about that. While we were in Fort Smith, I prayed with a guy named Cody, and he was the older brother.

So we talked for a bit about his life, and I heard him talk about his middle brother and how he hated him because when he was born, then he sort of had to share his dad with his brother, and he had this anger.

So he had been in and out of addictions. He had been in and out of jail. At the halfway house, the other members were pretty much afraid of him because of his anger.

We prayed about his anger and about his brother. When we finished, he wanted to see his brother. He wanted to make restitution with his brother, and by Thanksgiving, his brother came to see him. Their relationship was restored, and as time went on, the other men in the house actually went to him for advice and support, and they were no longer afraid of him because he had given his anger to the Lord.

[19:04] So I know personally that you can give your anger to the Lord, and he'll carry that for you. Five basic steps in doing that. One is to be completely with God about your emotion toward that person.

We make a list of everything that your anger or if you have grief over the loss of a loved one or loss of a job or whatever that loss might be. We make a list, a long list sometimes of that.

You choose to give your anger to God. We pray, and we go through each item individually and pray and give those to the Lord and then ask him to carry that burden for you, and he will carry that for you.

So then we pray. Then we ask the Lord if there's any truth that he wants you to know, and just sit quietly, and we think about that and just see if he tells us anything.

And then I would ask you, if I were talking to you about, to think about the person you were angry about. Is there any anger still there, or do they have peace?

[20:17] Most of the time they have peace. If they don't, we list some more things. We pray and give that to the Lord, and he will take that anger or the grief, whatever that emotion is.

And then if there is any other anger, then just start all over. Grief is the same way. A lot of people, most people with depression, it started with the loss of someone or something.

Could have been a job or different things. I prayed with a young man here in Shelbyville not long after we got here, and he was under court order to not see his family because he had hit his daughter.

His anger came from, started out with grief. He had wrecked and totaled his car that he had always dreamed of when he was in high school, wasn't taking enough classes, so they didn't let him play football his senior year.

He had been sick and had a lot of people several things like that. So he had gotten addicted to alcohol and had this anger issue, and we prayed about that, and he gave that to the Lord and once again had peace and was able to go back to his family much quicker than he had first thought he would be able to.

[21:38] So there is a way through prayer that we can give our burdens to the Lord. I think going back to discipleship and Jesus teaching us that we're to go and make disciples, part of that is understanding God's word, and I think that's from Genesis to Revelation, that we need to have a good understanding of his word.

The other thing is we need to learn how to pray effectively. The book of James teaches us that the effective fervent prayer of the righteous one is who you want to go to for prayer.

God hears our prayers. It's a grand privilege that we have through Christ to be able to go directly to God the Father, God Almighty in prayer.

He hears our prayers and he responds. He wants you to experience his peace. He wants you to experience his rest. And as Miss Clara would say, I hope that your prayer life is hot.

We'll make that coffee especially hot. So anyway, you can't solve a spiritual problem with a worldly solution. And the battle for your mind is fought in prayer by trusting in the Lord to fight the battle for you.

[22 : 57] So I just encourage you in that that there is a way to pray and to give your emotions to the Lord. It will help in your relationship with others, starting with your family and your friends, those close with you.

And you can live with peace, the peace that Christ gives us. I brought some information with me. It has my phone number on it, but it's about grief, anger, and prayer and how to give those to the Lord and experience his peace. And I know it's effective because it's been effective for me.

So, in closing, let me look back to Philippians. Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

[24 : 02] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds through Christ Jesus. Just encourage you in that. You can experience his peace and his joy through prayer and through knowing him and making him your number one, your main, it's the most important relationship in your life, is your relationship with the Lord.

So, if you, when we finish with prayer tonight, if you want any of those, I've got those up here that will help to guide.

And then my phone number's on there, phone number's in the directory. Give me a call if you would like. All right. So, let's look at the prayer list for this week.