

Choosing Peace over Worry
"Making a Choice to Rejoice"
Philippians 4:1-9

Introduction:

1. Worry is a universal problem. It is not confined to a segmented group of people.
2. Paul deals with the subject of worry in the text before us. Verse 6 says, "*Be careful for nothing.*"
 - The word "careful" means "anxious, full of anxiety." So, Paul is saying "Don't be worried, afraid, or anxious."
 - The word "anxious" means "to be distracted, to have a divided mind."
 - The dictionary defines "worry" as "mental distress or agitation resulting from concern usually for something impending or anticipated."
3. Worry will so consume your thought life that you cannot stay focused on anything because you are being distracted by what you are worried about.
4. Worry adversely affects our lives. Worry can damage our health, consume our thoughts, disrupt our productivity, negatively affect the way we treat people, and weaken our faith.
 - The word "worry" comes from an old Anglo-Saxon word meaning "to choke, to strangle." This is exactly what worry will do to you in your life.
5. But what is the alternative to worry? Look again at verse six, but let's read on this time to verse seven. The alternative is **peace**.
6. Here in Philippians 4, God is going to show us very clearly how we can choose peace over worry. Notice I use the word "**choose**." Peace in our lives doesn't just happen.
7. Peace doesn't seek **us** out. We must **seek** peace and **choose** peace as we implement into our lives the Bible principles that we will be discovering in this passage.
8. How can we choose peace over worry?

First, by becoming a peacemaker. vs. 1-3

Second, by daily rejoicing in the Lord. vs. 4

1. I have found it very difficult to worry when I am rejoicing. The word "rejoice" in verse four means "to be cheerful, calmly happy."
 - This is the direct opposite of worry, anxiety, stress, and fear.
2. The book of Philippians is often referred to as the epistle of joy. Many times Paul mentions the concept of rejoicing. This is a key principle in winning the battle with worry. It is a missing ingredient in so many lives today.
3. From this little book of Philippians, I want to derive four simple principles concerning this matter of rejoicing. Allow God's Word to speak to your heart today.

Rejoicing has absolutely nothing to do with our circumstances.

- Let me remind you that Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter (1:13). He had been falsely accused and unjustly imprisoned. To add insult to injury, some of his fellow brethren were kicking him while he was down.

- Paul's outward circumstances couldn't have been worse, yet notice what he says in 1:18.
- Paul refused to allow outward circumstances to control him. Too many believers live under the circumstances of life rather than above them.
- When circumstances are good, they rejoice in the Lord, but when they are bad, they complain, gripe, get bitter and angry, and question God.
- We can rejoice in the Lord in spite of our ever-changing circumstances because the Lord does not change. He stays the same. We choose to either focus on Him and His faithfulness or our roller coaster circumstances of life.

Rejoicing in the Lord is a choice of our will.

- If we are anxious and worried, or if we are full of rejoicing, it is because we have chosen to take on that spirit. People may say, "The devil has kind of got me down." The devil can't make a child of God do anything.
- Let's look at 2:17. We don't think of the words "sacrifice" and "serving" and "joy" and "rejoice" as existing together, but Paul did. Paul's attitude was, "If I have to be confined in prison or maybe even sacrifice my life to help you in your faith, I joy and rejoice in it."
- Paul was sitting there in prison and made a choice to rejoice. It is all about the attitude that we choose to take on.
- In 4:4 the word "rejoice" is not passive, but it is an action verb - it is something that we consciously decide to do.
- Satan loves to tell us lies - "You are destined to live a life of stress and anxiety, you are a victim of your past and there's nothing you can do about it. You will never be happy."
- The truth is that you are a child of the living God and you do have a choice. You can exercise your free will and make a choice to rejoice.

Rejoicing in the Lord comes from maintaining proper priorities.

- In 3:3 Paul speaks of rejoicing in Christ, but it comes between two other statements.
 - A positive one - "I will worship God in the spirit."
 - A negative one - "I won't put confidence in my flesh."
- Worshipping God was Paul's number one priority. It came above any fleshly recognition, fleshly possessions, fleshly pleasures, or fleshly accomplishments.
- This is why Paul could rejoice even in prison. Yet many believers today live in beautiful homes, drive luxury cars, own state-of-the-art electronic devices, make thousands of dollars a year, and they are still plagued with fear, worry, and anxiety. Why is this?
- It is a matter of priorities. When we are driven by a preoccupation for the world's money, power, prestige, possessions, and pleasures, and we give little time to worship God, we are going to have a difficult time rejoicing when difficult circumstances come.
- Your worship of God should be the bedrock foundation of your life. If it is, then you can rejoice no matter where you are or what situation you find yourself in.

Rejoicing in the Lord is a command, not a suggestion.

- In verse 4, God doesn't say, "Rejoice in the Lord when you feel like it or when things are going good." He said, "Rejoice in the Lord always." To not rejoice in the Lord is to be disobedient to God's Word.
- When I allow myself to take on a negative, critical, spirit it is a sin against God. To allow worry, fear, and anxiety to rule my heart is a sin against God. **James 4:17**
- If God has commanded us to rejoice, then certainly a rejoicing spirit can be a reality for any person who knows Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.
- Do you know Christ as your Savior? If so, you can make a choice to rejoice!