

Think About These Things

October 28, 2018

Philippians 4:4-9

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 5 Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. 6 Do not worry 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. 8 Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Today the theme is praise. One of the most frequent themes of the Bible is praise. We have more reasons to praise, to express thanks, than we have reasons not to. From time to time we all have difficulties, heartaches, setbacks, worries, and stress. But in spite of all of our problems we have more reasons to express thanks to God than we have reasons to complain.

The Bible is our guide that tells us how to live a life of devotion as a believer. "Rejoice in the Lord always again I say rejoice!" The apostle Paul is the author of Philippians. He repeats for emphasis what is important - to rejoice. Not just rejoice but to rejoice in the Lord always. My advice is to ownership of this particular Bible lesson. We all have worries and stress but when you rejoice in the Lord you express praise, joy, and thanksgiving. You end up replacing the focus from your worries and stress to praise. This gives you spiritual peace and tranquility. Rejoicing is not a cure; your problems are still going to be there. But how much they bother you will be diminished significantly. I am not going to hospital where someone is dying and tell them to rejoice. I am not going to someone who is mourning and say rejoice. Rejoicing does not fix our problems. What it does is gives us peace. With rejoicing you focus on your blessings. You focus on God and Jesus instead of focusing on your worries.

My advice to anyone and everyone is to think of Jesus. If you have relationship problems, think of Jesus. If you have stress, think of Jesus. If you have financial worries, think of Jesus. Thinking of Jesus puts everything in a positive and peaceful light. Jesus was never stressed out. He faced anxiety when he was facing the cross but he was never stressed out. He was never in a hurry and he did more good than anyone else ever on this planet. He changed the world without an army or by using force. So, if Jesus is never stressed and never in a hurry and we are followers of Jesus then we are not to be stressed out, worried, or anxious. So, follow the example of Jesus.

The apostle Paul wants to make sure people understand the significance of thanksgiving. He says "do not worry, do not worry about anything but in prayer and supplication and with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. The apostle Paul's advice to people is instead of worrying, turn to God in prayer. Be in prayer. Be in thankful prayer. With an attitude of thankfulness pray to God. How many times do we forget to pray to God? How many times do we complain and worry and forget to pray to God? Several days ago I found myself worrying. Like you I am human. When it came to the end of the day it occurred to me that I have thought about my problems all day long. I have not thought about God since morning devotions. The reality is that my worries overshadowed my relationship with God. Make a commitment today. Have daily devotions. Read the Bible, pray, and think about God. Also count your blessings. When you count your blessings then you will see that they outnumber your problems 100 to 1. Give thanks to God for your rich blessings and do not worry about anything.

When I was teenager a cousin of mine came up to me and said that she was worried about my brother Harry because he said to her that he does not worry about anything. We talked about it, she expressed her concern and somewhere in the middle of conversation the irony of it occurred to me. I said "let me make sure I get this right. You worry about him because he said that he does not worry. Did I get that right, you worry about him because he said that he does not worry? Think about this. Worry does no good. Worry does not fix things. Worry prevents you from being at peace." To be at peace takes trust and confidence in God.

There is an important concept in the Scripture today. The peace of God surpasses all understanding. This is a vital lesson - the peace of God surpasses all understanding. The peace of God will guard your hearts and your minds. The peace of God is with you. Our Savior brings us peace. Think about these things. The apostle Paul calls for discernment. Not just to hear the word but to take the time to reflect and think about what it means. Think about what is true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, and excellent. Think about everything worthy of praise. Keep following the teachings and God, our God, the God of peace, will be with you.

When you read the Bible you find comfort and hope and you see that God is good. In Israel's past God is good. God is the sustainer and provider and gives the people positive direction. Today God is good. God is good even when we are mourning, struggling, hurting, or hit a string of bad luck. God is good when we are dazed and confused. When we need God, God is still there, and God is still good because God is good all the time.

So, do this. Focus on what is true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, and commendable. Don't lose sight of what is praiseworthy. Commit your burdens to the Lord and you will fill your mind with good thoughts which will lead you to live a life free of worry. What the apostle Paul teaches is to think about these things. Don't just listen but think about these things.