

Philippians 4:4–7 (NASB 2020)

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all people. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and pleading with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

- 1) Last time we closed our discussion with some things that define a gentle spirit.
 - a) Not boisterous.
 - b) Being able to disagree without quarreling or arguing. (Chap 2:14-15)
 - c) Caring about others and their feelings.
 - d) Contending for the faith without harshness.

Any other things we might add to these?

- 2) The next question that falls in line with these verses is...

Can a person “Rejoice in the Lord” and be complaining and arguing?

How about being anxious (worrying)?

- 3) By the same principle, I don’t think we can have a gentle spirit that can be seen by “all people” if we are complaining, arguing, or worrying.
 - 4) Paul then gives us solutions for both of these problems.
 - 5) First, he addresses the second problem – if you are anxious and worrying then turn to God.
- ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and pleading with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.
- a) Prayer with conditions – first pleading.
 - b) Again, looking at BDAG for the word for pleading, we have an “urgent request to meet a need, exclusively addressed to God”
 - c) Thanksgiving is a part of this. In fact, if we follow the Lord’s teaching in the model prayer, we will praise first, then be thankful, and then make our request known.

Is worrying a subtle (or not so subtle) distrust of God?

- 6) John MacArthur really sums this up well:

People become worried, anxious, and fearful because they do not trust in God’s wisdom, power, or goodness. They fear that God is not wise enough, strong enough, or good enough to prevent disaster. It may be that this sinful doubt is because their knowledge of Him is faulty, or that sin in their lives has crippled their faith. Thankful

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prayer brings release from fear and worry, because it affirms God's sovereign control over every circumstance, and that His purpose is the believer's good (Rom. 8:28).¹¹

Agree/Disagree?

7) One final question here...

How do I know when I have the peace of God “that surpasses all comprehension”?

8) Being in a state of mind and heart where nothing bothers us?

9) Being able to deal with any situation and know that God is in control?

10) Being totally calm at all times?

a) My first management job and my little duck – “Secret to success – remain calm cool and collected on the surface while peddling like Hell underneath.”

b) Obviously whoever stuck this on my wall knew that I was not but absolutely needed to be.

11) Paul is going to give us another way we can have the peace – actually the God of peace in a couple of verses.

1) Paul then addresses the first problem – how do we rejoice always and have a gentle spirit?

Philippians 4:8–9 (NASB 2020)

⁸ Finally, brothers *and sisters*, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹ As for the things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

2) Psychologists and Psychiatrists have a trick they use.

a) When a person is having issues with thoughts they should not have, they sometimes have that person put a rubber band on their wrist.

b) When the contrary thoughts appear, they are to pull the rubber band away and pop themselves with it reminding them not to think that way.

3) What Paul is suggesting here is far better than a rubber band snap.

4) The pain felt from the rubber band is distracting and it is a good reminder however, it does not substitute anything positive for the negative thoughts.

¹¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., [*Philippians*](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 2001), 283.

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- 5) The obvious fact is that what Paul is suggesting is actually overcoming whatever is a problem with positive and good things – not just a distraction.
 - 6) One thing that stands out here is how Paul covers so much in his list of things to think on – true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, commendable, things of excellence, things worthy of praise.
 - 7) It is hard to imagine anyone who could not find at least one thing that fits in one of these categories to think about.
 - 8) And, by the way, the term [*logizomai*] translated “think about” here in the NASB isn’t indicating just a passing thought.
 - a) There is a deeper meaning – it really is indicating that one should think deeply or dwell on these things even to ponder.
 - b) Again, pushing out anything negative and inserting positive.
 - 9) Paul then gives them something that fits at least some of these categories to think about.
- ⁹ As for the things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.
- 10) This harks back to 3:17 where he tells them to follow his example and observe and follow the pattern found in others.
 - 11) As we discussed then, his example and the pattern he speaks of are in this letter:

Bond servant
Being Thankful
Being confident in Christ
All about sharing Christ
Rejoicing in the Lord’s goodness
Not selfish, always looking to the interest of others
Rejoicing in all circumstances
Consider everything a loss in comparison to knowing Christ
Pressing on to be like Christ

- 12) A clue here is to think about things that you are personally involved in for the Lord – that might be our first line of defense so to speak.
- 13) In fact, he closes with the admonition [IMPERATIVE] to “practice these things.”

Philippians 4:10–14 (NASB 2020)

God’s Provisions

¹⁰ But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned *before*, but you lacked an opportunity *to act*. ¹¹ Not that I speak from need, for I have learned to be content in whatever

circumstances I am. ¹² I know how to get along with little, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every *circumstance* I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. ¹³ I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, you have done well to share *with me* in my difficulty.

- 1) I think he begins by talking about the gift that he refers to later in verse 18.
- 2) However, the key idea here in this passage is contentment.
- 3) Contentment is an elusive virtue especially when we try to find it on our own.
- 4) Paul speaks of many outward circumstances in this passage.
- 5) The truth however is that his contentment really comes through being in a right relationship with God.
- 6) One can consider verse 12 as a string of secrets – a string of circumstances in which Paul has learned how to live contentedly despite the hardships that sometimes occur.
- 7) However, he really declares the secret to his contentment in verse 13 when he says he can do ***all things through Him (Christ) who strengthens him.***
- 8) To have such a relationship takes one thing above all – faith.
- 9) Even though he wanted the Philippians to know all that and see where he was coming from he still wanted them to know that their gifts were appreciated and helped with his difficulties.
- 10) The Puritan Jeremiah Burroughs spoke of contentment in this manner:

“Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God’s wise and fatherly disposal in every condition.”¹²

So, having said all that – what do you think? Is contentment something we pursue or is it simply the result of our relationship with God?

Can we bring about any real contentment without God in our lives?

Another question might be contentment is the key to rejoicing or is rejoicing the result of being content?

So, can we truly rejoice if we are not content?

- 11) I could see where Paul might have thought that he could have downplayed their gifts to him by his discussion of contentment.

¹² (*The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment* [Reprint; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1964], 19).

12) That being true or not, he continues by reassuring these folks of his appreciation for their gifts and how truly important they were to him.

Philippians 4:15–19 (NASB 2020)

¹⁵ You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first *preaching* of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you alone; ¹⁶ for even in Thessalonica you sent *a gift* more than once for my needs. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift *itself*, but I seek the profit which increases to your account. ¹⁸ But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

- 1) Not only were those gifts of support important but it turns out that the Philippians were really the only ones who were willing and/or able to help in this manner.
- 2) Then, he hastens to add that he is not in need at this point because he had received the latest gift that they had sent by Epaphroditus.
- 3) Truly, all this was only to let them know of how much he appreciated their support.
- 4) One thing I found interesting here was Paul's turn of phrase in the last of verse 18.

“... what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.”

- 5) This phrase is reminiscent of the phrase regarding most all offerings commanded in Leviticus.
- 6) Most such as a food offering or first fruits offering were described as offerings but all were “... an aroma pleasing to the Lord.”
- 7) We of course are no longer required to make burnt offerings through the priests of the Old Testament.

However, do we seriously consider our offerings, our gifts to help others, our tithes, or any other gifts we may give to the furtherance of God's kingdom as and acceptable sacrifice pleasing to the Lord? If not, why not?

- 8) Along with this, there is the fact that offerings to the Lord in the Old Testament had to be made in certain ways and the sacrifice had to meet standards – usually non-blemished and many times first fruits.

Likewise, do you think that our offerings need to be made in “certain ways” in order to be as Paul describes here “... a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God?”

If yes, what would those certain ways be?

Philippians 4:20–23 (NASB 2020)

²⁰ Now to our God and Father *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.

²¹ Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. ²² All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.

²³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

- 1) Paul concludes this letter with customary benedictions and greetings.
- 2) One final thing that I think must be of note here is in the greetings.
- 3) How wonderful it must have been for Paul to say and for the Philippians to hear the greetings form "those of Caesar's household."
- 4) These folks were very likely not members of the emperor's family but were instead likely to be:
 - a) Imperial slaves and freedmen who served in administrative roles.
 - b) Imperial civil servants.
 - c) Domestic workers in imperial residences.
 - d) Various other employees and officials connected to the imperial administration.
- 5) What is significant is that Paul's message and the spread of the gospel had begun to penetrate even into the circles connected to the imperial court.