

# Whatever

## Philippians 4:4-9

### Introduction

What is the greatest promise that you have ever heard?

One of my favorite musicals is Gilbert and Sullivan's "The Pirates of Penzance." In it young Frederick is apprenticed to a pirate. He believes that this obligation is only until he turns 21, but in a twist of fate he instead learns that his term of service lasts until his 21st birthday. He was born on February 29 (leap year) which means he has only had five birthdays.

Sadly he is in love with beautiful Mabel, but she promises to wait for him through 16 more leap years. She will be 90 when he is finally free.

Now that is quite a promise!

In today's text, there is another very significant promise. We read it in verse 7:

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7)

Think about that! My heart (feelings) and mind (thoughts) will be guarded by the peace of God. That sounds pretty good to me!

- We live in world of heart ache and heart break.
- A world that messes with our minds, that tries to confuse us and mislead us
- But there is one whose peace puts up a walled fortress around us to guard us from all of that.

So how do we get there?

### #1: PRACTICE THE ART OF REJOICING

Look at verse 4:

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! (Philippians 4:4)

There are three keys:

#### FIRST ... REPEAT

If you are an effective public speaker, you know you should always repeat the things you believe to be important.

- Sort of like the words of your mother: "If I've said it once, I've said it a thousand times."

#### SECOND ... CONTINUE

Our rejoicing is to be always.

- It's hard to rejoice always. Many things make me smile, but very few things make me rejoice all the time. Funny things stop being funny after a while, so there has to be something more.

### **THIRD ... IN THE LORD**

When we add the phrase "in the Lord," the perspective changes dramatically.

- That phrase moves everything away from the circumstances into a personal relationship.
- Don't miss this truth:

It's the relationship, not the circumstances

Let me illustrate it this way:

Karen and I have been married for 45 years. We dated for four years prior to that, so we have been cultivating a relationship for nearly half a century.

In the course of those 49 years, there have been many circumstances that were not joyful. Like any couple we have had our ups and downs. We have buried both of my parents, all four of her grandparents and a son-in-law. We have moved and lived in four different communities, and left behind friendships with every move.

There is still joy in the relationship. Not so much 100% of the circumstances.

So the first step to having the promise of 4:7 fulfilled is to "find your joy in a relationship with the Lord always."

### **#2: FOCUS ON THE NEARNESS OF GOD**

Look at verse 5:

The Lord is near. (Philippians 4:5)

We can understand that statement in a couple of ways.

- First, like we did this past Sunday (Christ the King), as in "the return of the Lord is near."
- Second, to focus on the presence of God in every facet of your life," as in "the Lord is nearby." That's a theme echoed throughout the Bible.

Psalm 46 is a great testimony about the nearness of God's presence. Listen to this rendition of that Psalm:

Our great God is still our Refuge and Strength;  
 He is ever aware of our problems and fears.  
 Thus we have no business doubting Him,  
 Even though the earth is convulsed in tragedy  
 Or its human masses are threatened by nuclear annihilation.

God continues to reign as all-wise and as almighty as ever.  
His eternal plan is not canceled out by the whims of people  
Or the freakish acts of nature.  
Nations will destroy each other;  
Civilizations will perish;  
The earth itself may one day become a smoking cinder,  
But God will not leave us  
He is forever our sure Refuge and Strength.  
Just look about you; read the pages of history.  
Refresh your flagging spirits with the reminder  
Of His great feats throughout the ages.  
And you will again hear Him speaking:  
"Relax, stop fretting, and remember that I am still your God;  
I still hold the rein on this world of yours.  
God is here among us. He continues to be our Refuge and Strength.

### **#3: TALK TO GOD ABOUT EVERYTHING**

Look at verse 6:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:6)

Nothing robs us of the peace of God like worrying or being anxious – whichever word you prefer.

You might say "Paul, that's easier said than done!" But please keep in mind that when Paul wrote these words he was sitting in prison, chained to a Roman soldier.

- And so the statement "Do not be anxious about anything" is not just a pious cliché.
- Paul is not just a preacher ... he is a practitioner!

But the key is "every situation." Talk to God about everything.

I had to change the headlight on my van the day we were leaving for vacation, and I was having trouble getting the old bulb out. So I started talking out loud to God. "Lord, I clearly can't do this by myself. I need help."

Karen heard me, and she comes outside and asks "Are you talking to me?"  
I responded "Are you God?"

I love my wife, but talking to her about a headlight wasn't going to help. I need to talk to God. And it worked.

### **APPLICATION**

Here's the promise again:

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7)

Whatever you are experiencing these days ... whatever it is ...

- Find joy in your relationship with the Father who loves you
- Find reassurance that He is always near – never leaving you for even an instant
- Find Him ready to listen as you talk to Him about everything.

And as you do, you will experience His peace.

Amen.