

Theme: A Godward life of joy, prayer, and virtue is full of the Presence and peace of God, which expels our anxiety and sin.

## I. Intro - A New Year

- A. This is the first Sunday of a new year
- B. Like every year - a lot will happen in the coming year
- C. But we also are in a time that looks dark for the future
- D. Politics - major elections loom
- E. Culture - growth of “nones”; seems more anti-Christian
- F. Some become combative; negative; pessimistic
- G. How should we respond to these uncertainties?

## II. A Godward Life

- A. Paul is writing to the Philippians in tough circumstances
  - 1. The church was founded under intense persecution
  - 2. Paul himself is in prison
  - 3. There is fighting within the congregation
  - 4. Rome becomingly increasingly unfriendly to the faith
- B. Paul recommends several parts of a Godward life
  - 1. A Godward life is full of rejoicing  
Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again:  
Rejoice! Philippians 4:4
    - a. Rejoice - always - again - 2x!! We are not Stoics!
    - b. We rejoice “in the Lord” - not just positive thinking
    - c. The basis for our rejoicing is in the Gospel

Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in **the cause of the gospel**, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose **names are in the book of life**. Philippians 4:3

- 1. Gospel always gives us cause to rejoice!
  - 2. Our names are in the Book of Life!!!
- d. Christians should be overflowing with joy, not anger or worry, for we live through the Gospel of Christ and have an eternal hope.
- 2. A Godward life is gentle  
Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Philippians 4:5
  - a. Gentleness - ἐπιεικῆς - not insisting on every right of letter of law or custom, yielding, gentle, kind, courteous, tolerant (BDAG)
  - b. Opposite of harsh, judgmental, demeaning, demanding
  - c. This is not just an internal attitude, but must be evident in our actions
  - d. This should be evident to everyone - friend and foe
  - e. We act this way because “the Lord is near”
    - 1. Could be “close by us even in tough times”
    - 2. Main nuance is probably return of Christ in view
    - 3. We live before God’s face, with eternity in view
    - 4. This makes us gentle, kind, forgiving, courteous - for we will stand before a holy God
  - f. Christians should be known as though who are kind, courteous and gentle, no matter how others may act, for we have an eternal hope

3. A Godward life is full of prayer  
**Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.** Philippians 4:6
- Negative - do not be anxious about anything!
  - Positive - pray about everything
  - Instead of thinking about circumstances and becoming anxious - **pray in everything**
  - Notice 3 prayer words - prayer, petition, requests
  - We are to be devoted to a life of prayer - not worry
  - We want to do everything but pray - worry; talk; Facebook; complain; circulate a petition
  - Don't petition others for your rights or about your problems until you have petitioned God!
  - Christians should face the future without anxiety - no matter what it holds - for God is in control
  - Anxiety is a sign we are not sufficiently drawing upon the resource of prayer that is freely given to us by God
4. A Godward life **meditates on** & **practices** godly virtues  
 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—**think about such things.**  
<sup>9</sup> Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—**put it into practice.** And the God of peace will be with you. Philippians 4:8–9
- Set mind on godly virtues**, not the vices around you

- This does not mean our eyes are closed to the moral decay - but our meditation is upon godly virtues
- You become like what you meditate upon - what are you becoming?
- But we do not just think about godly virtues - we **put them into practice** (like Paul did)
- The Christian life must include the pursuit of good works - actions that put godly virtues into regular practice
- A life built upon the meditation and practice of godly virtues is a life filled with the peace of God - no matter the circumstances around us.

### III. The Fruit of A Godward Life

- A. A Godward life built on these practices gives us peace  
 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:7
- A Godward life like this is filled with God's peace
  - This peace that comes is supernatural - transcends all understanding, explanation, or human efforts
  - This peace guards our heart and mind - military term for a garrison (like the one in Philippi)
  - The people felt secure because of a Roman garrison, but they have a far greater security - the peace of God guarding them
  - Hearts and minds - your whole being is guarded by the peace of God as you live a Godward life

- B. A Godward life is filled with God's Presence  
 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. **And the God of peace will be with you.** Philippians 4:9
1. Paul now focuses on the God of peace instead of the peace of God
  2. God's peaceful Presence will be with us as we build a Godward life
  3. Note statements of nearness to God
    - a. In the Lord - v4
    - b. Lord is near - eternal focus - v5
    - c. Pray to God - πρὸς τὸν θεόν - v6
    - d. In Christ Jesus - v7
    - e. God will be with you - v9
  4. Like James - draw near to God and He will draw near to you
- C. A Godward life of joy, prayer, and virtue is full of the Presence and peace of God, which expels our anxiety and sin.

3. We must choose to hear God's word rather than focus on the circumstances around us
4. Do I hear the Gospel and rejoice - or see the culture and moan?
5. Do I live in light of eternity and act with gentleness - or do I live in light of the present and act like this age is my hope?
6. Do I turn to God in prayer - or try to act in my own strength?
7. Do I focus on who God wants me to be - or the things I do not like around me?
8. Do I give myself to others in good works - or simply curse the darkness?
9. Do I live in anxiety or peace?

B. The Table of Peace

1. The Table reminds us of the Gospel of Peace
2. Here is our peace - Christ, not circumstances
3. Come to the Table, eat and drink peace

## IV. Applying the Word

- A. Do I live before God - or my circumstances?
1. We either live before the face of God or our circumstances
  2. A focus on circumstances is an ever present temptation - as Jer said last week

### Peace For the Coming Year

Philippians 4:4-9

January 3, 2016

Communion

2 Thessalonians 3:16

Teaching keywords: anxiety and worry; peace and comfort; joy; character; good works

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you. 2 Thessalonians 3:16

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! <sup>5</sup>  
Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Do  
not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer  
and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to  
God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all  
understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in  
Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble,  
whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely,  
whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or  
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