

# DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

*Verses & Notes November 22, 2006*

*Philippians 4:4-7*

- 4: Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.
- 5: Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand.
- 6: Have no anxiety 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 passes all understanding,  
will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

## Discussion Notes:

### Introduction:

- Tomorrow is the center of a season of festivals, each one calling us to rejoice, to be thankful, and to hope for peace, or as the angels proclaimed in the Christmas story, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased."
- but our modern relativistic culture has robbed all of these festivals of the one ingredient that can restore and preserve their true meanings, and bring by grace the peace God's promises;
- Instead we are too often left with festivals of rejoicing of a different color...

### Context:

- A Season of thanksgiving:
  - All Saints' Day & All Soul's Day
  - Thanksgiving
  - Advent
  - Christmas
  - New Years
  - Epiphany
- Too often celebrated without reference to their true meanings...
  - Halloween
  - Feasting and football
  - Shopping spree!
  - Gift exchange and holiday break
  - Excuse to indulge and start over!
  - Skip entirely!
- Many Christians refuse to celebrate any of these bec. Pagan origins...
- But from the beginning Christians have recognized that grace builds on nature:
  - All people were created in the Image of God, with a "God-shaped void" (Pascal)
  - Evangelization starts with discovering how God has already been working in people's lives, (Romans 1:18f) even though they do not know him adequately, and then look for ways to build on, clarify, correct, and then convince them of these evidences of God love in their lives.

- All of these festivals / holidays = holy-days are God-given opportunities for us to reach out to those whom God has placed in our lives (our mission field), to allow grace to build on nature, to help them progress from inadequate views of God and themselves—from inadequate views of these holy-days—to experience conversion and the peace that only God can give.
- And the government sanctioned festival we celebrate tomorrow, is a God-given opportunity for us to start prepping our “mission field” for the great day of salvation ahead: Christmas.
- For this reason, we chose as our text for this day before Thanksgiving, Philippians 4:4-7.
  - This is the perfect text to help us examine our attitudes as we face this festival, for there is one phrase in the center of this text which is crucial to the full understanding of the rest.
  - The Apostle Paul added this phrase on purpose; without it, the other exhortations all, of course, have great meaning and importance; but with the addition of this phrase we gain the key to making the rest of his exhortations work.

## BREAK

Context: Paul’s letter to joyful Christians who yet are facing trial and tribulation...

- Though this text may seem to be a break from our weekly study through the Sermon on the Mount, in fact we find here the apostle Paul applying to these faithful Christians under trial the very teaching of Christ given in his sermon.
  - Too often Christians interpret Paul apart from Jesus, or Jesus thru Paul.
    - If they have an understanding of Paul’s letters that differs from the teachings of Christ, especially in the Sermon, then they delegate the teachings of Jesus to a pre-resurrection age...
    - I did this as a Presbyterian, Calvinist preacher...
  - The flaw here is reading into Paul inaccurate traditions, which is inevitable with the doctrine of sola scriptura:
    - Sola scriptura is not scriptural, historically true, not theologically sound;
    - No one ever lives by the Bible alone; they read it through their own traditions.
  - There is no scriptural evidence / reason to denigrate or qualify the teachings of Jesus beneath those of Paul or the other NT writers.
  - Both are a part of the inspired Word of God:
    - We must make sure any interpretation of Paul does not contradict the teaching of Jesus or the Church He established by the Holy Spirit in His Apostles.
- In this brief section of Philippians, we hear direct echoes of Jesus’ sermon on the mount.

Here the Apostle Paul gives challenging words of encouragement in the face of trial / anxiety;

- **Essentially FIVE STEPS for helping believers to re-experience the joy Jesus’ promised.**
- John 15:11, “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy [chara] may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”
- John 20:19f, “Peace be with you.”
- Sometimes we lose the joy & peace we received; or sometimes we never *felt* it...
- From today’s intercessions in the *Magnificat*:
  - *“For those who have lost the gift of joy in the daily round of life: grant them gladness of heart.”*
- This is what this passage from Philippians is all about.

## I) REJOICE IN THE LORD

*4: Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.*

- A term often used by the NT writers & often in connection with suffering:
  - Rom 5:2-3** "Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we **rejoice** in our hope of sharing the glory of God. More than that, we **rejoice** in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,"
  - Rom. 12:12** "Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer."
  - Col. 1:24** "Now I **rejoice** in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church,"
  - 1 Ptr 1:6** "In this you **rejoice**, though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials,"
  - 1 Ptr. 4:13** "But **rejoice** in so far as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also **rejoice** and be glad when his glory is revealed."
- Jesus told this to his disciples in the Sermon:
  - Mt 5:12**, "Rejoice [*chairete*] and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you."
  - The context?
    - 5:11: "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.*
- In English, the prefix "re-" means to do again, to turn back.
  - I.e., re-locate; re-turn; re-do.
  - So, "rejoice" means to rejoice all over again?
  - "Rejoice" is from Old French, "rejoir" where "joir" means to be glad, so re-joir = to be glad again.
- Paul calls us to choose to return to our original joy;
  - In the Lord;
  - Always;
  - Again and again and again ... the peace of Christ will never come without this!

## II) LET ALL MEN KNOW YOUR FORBEARANCE

*5: Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand.*

- How we live our lives, especially in times of trial, is a witness to our faith.
- In the Sermon Jesus said:
  - Mt. 5:16: Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*
- "The Lord is at Hand:" At least two ways to understand this:
  1. Constant expectation of His Second Coming: exhortation to be ready;
  2. Recognition of Christ's constant presence:
    - Mt 25:40: And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'*

## III) HAVE NO ANXIETY

*6: Have no anxiety about anything...*

- Here is a direct reference to the clear teaching of Christ in the Sermon on detachment:
  - Mt 6:25-34: "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ... But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day."*
- Does not mean that we should ignore the present or future needs of our families...
- Rather our trust in God the Father through Christ & the guiding power of the Holy Spirit should

keep us from worrying about tomorrow; we can rejoice because we know He is in control; He loves us and knows us & our situations better than we do.

- This is why Paul immediately turns our attention away from anxiety to God in prayer...

#### IV) INSTEAD, PRAY

*but in everything by prayer and supplication ... let your requests be made known to God.*

- Again we are drawn back to the Sermon...  
*Mt 6: 6f, "But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this: Our Father who art in heaven..."*
- Paul adds the word "supplication" to encourage us to ask God for our needs, as Jesus does in the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer...
- But as I read this verse from Philippians, I left out a key phrase...
- It makes sense without it, but without this phrase, prayer & all of Paul's instructions lose their power, and the phrase...?

#### V) WITH THANKSGIVING!

*...with thanksgiving*

- Why is thanksgiving so important to all aspects of our faith? To receiving joy & peace?
- Because our faith begins with recognizing that all we have comes from God.
- This is where Jesus began his Sermon: Mt 5:3f  
*3: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
- Without this attitude, all of the festivals / holy-days lose their meaning;
- Without this attitude of thanksgiving,
  - Joy is lost and it's hard to rejoice = to get it back;
  - It's hard to have forbearance in the face of the trials of life;
  - It's hard to avoid worry & anxiety;
  - It's difficult to pray;
- But with thanksgiving, coupled with choosing to rejoice, to be strong in the Lord, trusting in God rather than worrying, and turning to Him in prayer, we can receive the peace He promises:

#### VI) EXPECT PEACE

*7: And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

- Two promises here:
  1. We'll experience the peace of God, which is different than the world gives or can understand...
  2. This peace will **keep** our hearts & minds in Christ Jesus.
    - Being in Christ Jesus = abiding, remaining in Him.
    - Which returns us to the promise of Jesus in John 15

#### **How can we reclaim the meaning, the joy, & peace of the season, for ourselves & our families?**

- Begin by being prayerfully thankful to God for all he has done for us in Christ Jesus!