Freedom – Freedom from Anxiety
11/8/26
Philippians 4:4-9
Sunday AM

Have you ever noticed how difficult it can be to turn off your mind? We can turn off the TV, silence our phones, close our computers, and turn out the lights – yet sometimes, no matter what we do, we can't turn off our minds. Instead, we lie in bed replaying a conversation, worrying about a bill, or wishing we could take a mulligan on something we said.

Just when we think we've settled things, our mind asks – ***what if***? *What if* things don't work out? *What if* my family is impacted? Before long, we're running a mental marathon over things that may never happens!

Ironically, we have more conveniences, connections, and information than ever – yet peace of mind remains elusive. We have security systems protecting our homes and passwords protecting our identities – but what's protecting our peace of mind?

In Philippians 4:4–9, Paul offers (5) truths for finding peace – anchored in Him instead of our circumstances.

I **REJOICE** in the Lord

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice!

rejoice – returning to God as the source of your joy.

Rejoicing might seem easier when the bills are paid, the kids are behaving, and the marriage is thriving. But Paul doesn't say rejoice when everything is going well, He says rejoice *always* and *in all ways* no matter what.

How can Paul say this from prison? B/c he doesn't tell us to rejoice in our circumstances, but in the Lord. Listen – circumstances change. People change. But Jesus remains the same yesterday, today, and forever. So – ***joy isn't pretending everything is good; it's knowing God is good even when life isn't***.

Remember Paul/Silas in Acts 16? They'd been beaten, imprisoned, and chained; yet at midnight, instead of licking their wounds, they were praying/praising God – not b/c circumstances were easy, but b/c God was w/ them in the midst of their circumstances.

Joy isn't the absence of trouble. It's the presence of Christ in the midst of it.

We can get so focused on what's wrong we overlook God's goodness. What if we started each day recalling His promises instead of rehearsing our problems?

Point – we can't always choose your circumstances, but we can choose where we anchor our joy.

II **RELATE** to Others w/ Gentleness

Let your gentleness be known to all – the Lord is near.

At first glance, this might seem unusual in a passage about peace. But Paul recognizes that our ***inner peace*** affects our ***outward responses***. Why? B/c peace of mind affects how we treat people. When we're anxious or frustrated, little things can become big things – and suddenly every disagreement feels like an argument we have to win – or so I've heard!

gentleness is being *gracious*, *reasonable*, and *patient* – refusing to insist on our way at the expense of others.

Paul says this should be evident to *everyone* – even to people who disagree w/ us – b/c our treatment of others testifies to them that the Lord is near!

The Lord is near refers to God's present nearness and promised return reminding us that we don't have to win every argument, defend every offense, or demand our own way but we do need to be Jesus to others.

Sometimes the most spiritual thing we can do is stop arguing, extend grace, and trust God w/ the outcome.

III **RELY** on God in Prayer

Don't worry about anything, but in everything, thru prayer and petition w/ thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Don't worry about ***anything*** – pray about ***everything***.

This is much easier to preach than to practice b/c worry often disguises itself as responsibility. We tell ourselves we're planning ahead when we're actually imagining the worst. Planning asks – *what can I do*? Worry asks – *what if everything goes wrong*?

Anxiety doesn't empty tomorrow of its sorrows – it empties today of its strength. Alexander Maclaren

The word **anxiety** refers to be distracted or mentally divided causing troubles b/w what's happening and what might happen. It keeps us rehearsing problems we can't solve to control outcomes we can't guarantee.

What does Paul say to do? He doesn't say stop worrying but to **replace worry w/ prayer** b/c he knew that *worry only magnifies the problem, while prayer magnifies the One who's greater than the problem.*

We see this in the Lord's Prayer. We begin by honoring God as our Father, then desiring His kingdom/will. Then we bring Him our needs – daily bread, forgiveness, and deliverance from evil b/c prayer turns our attention toward God w/out ignoring our concerns.

Then notice the promise in v. 7 – *the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

The word **guard** is powerful. Paul uses a military term (*phroureō*) to describe soldiers guarding a city.

Imagine a child awakened by a storm. The lightning flashes as the thunder shakes the house – and the child cries for his father. What changes when the dad enters the room? The storm hasn't stopped. But suddenly the child feels safe b/c he knows he's not alone. This is what God's peace does. It doesn't remove the storm, but it does reassure us that He present/faithful w/ us.

What's making you anxious today that you need to give to God? A personal concern? A difficult choice? A financial obligation? Whatever it is, bring it to God in prayer to entrust Him w/ what you can't control b/c He can. B/c peace isn't found in having more control. It's found in trusting the One who already has it.

IV **RENEW** Your Mind w/ Truth

If Paul had stopped at v. 7, most of us would've been satisfied. Pray about everything, receive God's peace, and go home. But Paul isn't finished. In v. 8, he addresses one of the most significant battlefields of the Christian life – the **MIND**.

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable... dwell on these things.

Note the connection. In v. 6, Paul tells us what to do w/ our ***worries***. Then in v. 8, he tells us what to do w/ our ***thoughts*** – b/c ***whatever dominates your thinking will eventually influence your living***.

What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. A. W. Tozer

Think – What we believe about God shapes how we respond to life. If we forget His faithfulness, anxiety can begin to shape our responses. But when we remember He's presence and sovereign faithfulness – we can face uncertainty w/ confidence.

This is why Paul begins w/ what's true – that is w/ what we actually know, not w/ fear leads us to assume.

IOW – when a person doesn't respond to your text – don't assume they're upset. If a friend walks past w/out speaking – it doesn't mean you've offended them. If your employer schedules a meeting, don't convince yourself you're in trouble! (Gary Hollingsworth story)

Point. We can't always prevent fearful thoughts from entering our minds, but we can choose either to dwell on them or redirect our thinking toward what we know is true about God.

True – Is it factual or am I assuming the worst?
Honorable – Is it worthy of respect and attention?
Just – Does it reflect what's right and fair?
Pure – Is it morally clean and pleasing to God?
Lovely – Is it worthy of love and appreciation?
Admirable – Is it worthy of respect and approval?
Excellent – Does it reflect godly character?
Praiseworthy - Would dwelling on it honor the Lord?

Now notice the instruction: **dwell on these things**. This involves careful, deliberate consideration from a disciplined pattern of thinking.

Listen – not every thought that enters your mind deserves permission to remain. When a thought produces bitterness, measure it against God's Word.

When it tells you you're hopeless, remember His promises. And when it causes you to assume the worst, ask whether you actually know the truth.

We can't control every thought that enters our mind, but we can learn to choose which thoughts to entertain.

V **RESPOND** by Walking in Obedience

Do what you have learned and received and heard from me, and seen in me, and the God of peace will be w/ you.

Notice Paul says, **do**. Don't just appreciate these truths – *put them into practice*.

Remember Philippians 2:12 from last week? We work **OUT** our salvation b/c God is at work **IN** us – shaping both our desire and our obedience.

We need God's help w/ both. One reminds us to take the next faithful step we can; while the other reminds us to trust Him w/ what we can't control b/c He can.

Let me illustrate. I've got (2) garbage cans here. This one says **I CAN**, and this one says **GOD CAN**. And most of us spend far too much time trying to do what only God can do while neglecting what He's already given us the responsibility to do.

For example, let's say you need a job. You can't make someone hire you – that's beyond your control. But you CAN prepare a résumé, circulate it, make phone calls, apply for positions, and prepare for an interview. You do what you can and trust God w/ what you can't.

Or guys, let's say you're praying for a wife. You can't just sit on your couch hoping God drops a woman in your lap who's desperate enough to say yes! But you CAN take a shower, put on some deodorant, and wear a shirt w/ buttons! And if you really want to impress a girl – GET A JOB! B/c nothing's more attractive to a woman than a man w/ a J-O-B!

SEE – sometimes we're trying to control what we should surrender while failing to obey what He's already commanded. Yet God calls us to take the next faithful step and trust Him w/ the outcome.

Yet most of us are trying to control what we should surrender while failing to obey what He's already commanded. And perhaps that's why some of us are struggling to experience God's peace. We're trying to control outcomes that belong to God while neglecting the responsibilities He's entrusted to us.

But notice Paul's closing promise – *and the God of peace will be w/ you.*

In v. 7, he promises the *peace of God*. In v. 9, he promises the *God of peace*. **One describes what God provides. The other reminds us of Who God is.**

And that's the secret to peace. **It's not found in controlling our circumstances but in trusting and walking w/ the One who holds them.**

In closing – let me ask – what's weighing on your heart today that's causing anxiety and worry in your life? Even more, what do you need to entrust to God that only He can and you can't? And what's the next faithful step He's calling you to take?

Jesus never promised a life w/out challenges. But He did promise His presence, His victory, and His peace when we turn to Him and follow His leading.

Jesus said, *Peace I leave w/ you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.* John 14:27

As we pray, would you bring your anxiety to the Lord and ask Him for strength to take that next step. And if you've never trusted Jesus as your Savior, will you turn to Him in faith today. If you need someone to pray w/ you or help you take that step, come – someone will be here to care for you.