

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



“The Overflow of Realizing ‘The Lord is Near’”

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): Phil. 4:4-5; 1:27-30; 2:14-15; 3:10-11, 20-21; Heb. 12:1-2; Matt. 5:11-12; Gal. 5:24-26; Ps. 145:17-19

What Comes Out When You Get Squeezed? Most of us do pretty well when things are going the way we expected. It is a lot easier to be joyful when the bills are paid, to be patient when nobody is irritating us, and to be gentle when nobody is challenging us. But then something goes wrong. The drawer won't fit into the piece of furniture. Somebody says the wrong thing. We are tired, hungry, frustrated, misunderstood, or treated unfairly. Suddenly, what seemed like a fairly good day becomes a “pop quiz.” There are tests you know are coming and can prepare for, but pop quizzes catch you when you are not ready. And those moments tend to reveal what is actually living inside of us. When the pressure comes, what gets squeezed out?

That is where Paul's words to the Philippians become so practical. This congregation was experiencing pressure from without and pressure from within. There were people opposing them, and there was also conflict among believers. Yet Paul never treats those pressures as an excuse to walk in the flesh. They were still called to live as citizens of heaven, with the mind of Messiah, in the middle of real-life difficulty. Paul writes, “Rejoice in the Lord ALWAYS—again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all people. The Lord is near.” (Phil. 4:4-5). These are not disconnected inspirational sayings. They describe the overflow of a life that knows something enormously important: the Lord is near. So rejoice. Be gentle. Look at Him.

1. REJOICE IN THE LORD—ALWAYS

Paul writes, “Rejoice in the Lord always—again I will say, rejoice!” (Phil. 4:4). Notice that he does not say, “Rejoice when everything works out.” He does not say, “Rejoice when the bank account is full, when the conflict is resolved, when the pain is gone, or when life finally becomes comfortable.” He says always—*pantote*—at all times, in every circumstance. And Paul is not some “Smiley Joe” offering a shallow pep talk from a painless life. He is writing from imprisonment. The Philippians themselves had seen him beaten, placed in stocks, and locked in their own city's jail, and they knew that Paul and Silas had worshiped ADONAI there. Paul has credibility when he says, “Rejoice,” because they have watched him live it. His joy was never dependent upon things going his way.

Biblical joy is not pretending that suffering does not hurt, and it is not walking around constantly giggling as though pain is not real. Joy is rooted in perspective. Paul has just reminded us that our citizenship is in heaven and that Yeshua “will transform this humble body of ours into the likeness of His glorious body, through the power that enables Him even to put all things in subjection to Himself.” (Phil. 3:21). That reality undergirds everything. Yeshua is Lord. Every circumstance is temporary, but He does not change. Hebrews tells us that Yeshua Himself, “for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, disregarding its shame.” (Heb. 12:2). So when circumstances frighten us and the unknown begins to overwhelm us, we fix our eyes on Him. Our joy is not in the circumstance. Paul says, “Rejoice in the Lord.” Because He is near, we can rejoice even here.

2. LET YOUR GENTLENESS BE EVIDENT TO EVERYONE

Paul continues, “Let your gentleness be known to all people.” (Phil. 4:5). The word translated “gentleness,” *epieikēs*, carries the idea of being yielding, reasonable, considerate, and gracious. It was used to describe an attitude that did not insist that every legal right or personal claim be upheld at all costs. That fits perfectly with everything Paul has already been teaching in Philippians: do not merely look out for your own interests; prefer others above yourself; have the same mind that was in Messiah Yeshua. In other words, the believer’s first question cannot always be, “But what about me? What about my rights? What about how I was treated?” If my primary concern in every disagreement is whether I got what I deserved, I will find it very difficult to live with the mind of Messiah.

That becomes especially difficult when somebody really has treated us unfairly. Our flesh wants to fight back. Our flesh wants to rise up and defend itself. Our flesh wants to win. But Paul reminds us elsewhere, “Now those who belong to Messiah have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the *Ruach*, let us also walk by the *Ruach*.” (Gal. 5:24–25). Yeshua did not love because people loved Him first. He continued loving when that love was not returned. He was misunderstood, lied about, mocked, rejected, and falsely accused, yet He did not allow their mud to become mud in His own heart. That is our pattern. Our job is not to sling mud back because somebody else slung it first. Wipe the mud off. Check your heart. Trust ADONAI. Let the disposition of Messiah become evident—to your spouse, your children, your coworkers, the person who frustrates you, and even the one who has genuinely wronged you.

3. LIVE LIKE THE LORD IS NEAR

Then Paul gives the reality that changes everything: “The Lord is near.” (Phil. 4:5). He is near, and He is approaching. The One who perfectly embodies this gentleness is not far away. So look at Him. When you are frustrated, look at Yeshua. When you feel misunderstood, look at Yeshua. When you are tempted to fight back, defend yourself, demand your way, or let anxiety control you, look at Yeshua. Ask not merely, “What would Yeshua do?” but, “How would Yeshua be?” What was His disposition under pressure? How did He respond to rejection, suffering, insult, injustice, inconvenience, and pain? The life of the Yeshua-follower is not merely learning how to imitate a list of His outward actions. It is allowing the Spirit to form His very disposition within us.

And this begins in the little moments no one else thinks are spiritual. “Lord, help me put this piece of furniture together. Quiet my heart. Teach me here. Don’t let my frustration control me. Use even this to form Messiah in me.” That may sound small, but those moments matter because eventually the disposition of our heart overflows. The pop quiz comes, and whatever has been forming inside becomes visible. So remember: He is near. You do not have to panic. You do not have to force everything. You do not have to win every argument or defend yourself at every turn. You can rejoice because He is near. You can yield because He is near. You can remain content even when circumstances feel unfair because He is near. “ADONAI is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth.” (Ps. 145:18).

CONCLUSION: What Is the Overflow of His Nearness?

There will always be pressure from somewhere. Sometimes it comes from the outside; sometimes it comes from within our own relationships; and sometimes it is something as simple as an unexpected inconvenience at the end of a long day. The question is not whether

we will face pressure. The question is what that pressure will reveal. Paul calls us to live as citizens of a different kingdom, with a different Spirit and a different way. “Rejoice in the Lord always.” Let the joy of Messiah be deeper than your circumstances. “Let your gentleness be known to all people.” Don't demand that everything work in your favor. And remember the reality underneath both commands: “The Lord is near.” Keep your eyes on the Master.

So perhaps the prayer focus today is not about some enormous outward failure. Perhaps it is about what has been coming out of us during the little pop quizzes. Has frustration been controlling you? Is there somebody you feel you need to defeat, answer, correct, or make understand your side? Have you allowed mistreatment to become an excuse for responding in the flesh? Bring that to Yeshua. Lay down your right to win. Lay down your demand to be vindicated. Lay down the anxiety that says everything depends upon you getting the outcome you want. Look over at the Master. He is right here. Ask the Ruach ha-Kodesh to form His disposition in you until the overflow of His nearness becomes visible in the way you speak, respond, forgive, endure, and love. He is near—so rejoice. He is near—so be gentle. He is near—so trust Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why could Paul genuinely command the Philippians to “rejoice in the Lord always” despite their suffering?
2. How is biblical joy different from simply feeling happy or having pleasant circumstances?
3. What does *epieikēs* teach us about insisting on our own rights or demanding our own way?
4. What recent “pop quiz” exposed something in your heart that Yeshua wants to change?
5. Is there someone with whom you are currently trying to defend yourself, prove your point, or “win”? What might it look like to respond with the gentleness of Messiah instead?

CLOSING PRAYER

ADONAI, thank You that You are near. Forgive us for the times when pressure, frustration, fear, or unfair treatment has become an excuse to walk in the flesh. Teach us to rejoice in You—not because every circumstance is good, but because You are good, You are faithful, and Yeshua is Lord over all. Holy Spirit, form the disposition of Yeshua within us. Teach us to lay down our need to win, to defend ourselves, and to demand our own way. Let our gentleness be evident to everyone—not merely when life is easy, but especially in the pop quizzes when we are tired, frustrated, misunderstood, or mistreated. Keep our eyes fixed on Yeshua. May the overflow of knowing that You are near be joy, gentleness, trust, and the unmistakable fruit of Your Spirit in our lives.

B'Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.