

The Joy of Resting - Philippians 4:4-9

In our study of Philippians, “**Joy for the Journey**”. We have looked at several ways in which joy must operate in our Christian journey. Today we consider the “**Joy of Resting**”. What brings you rest and peace? Tranquil lake? Balloon ride? A serene, mountain meadow?



Merely minimizing pain does create a joyful life! However, the Bible offers a robust, realistic way of finding rest in God from life's pain. Our text is Philippians 4:4-9. Here we learn that there is great joy as God provides rest for **heart** and **mind**.

[1] The resting heart – vv. 4-7

The resting heart means “peace of soul” or peace in the emotional realm. This is peace at work in the deepest part of our being. But please consider that in the sermon on the mount, Jesus laid a foundation to Paul's teaching. In Matthew 6:25-33 Jesus instructed, “*Do not worry (5 times)...but seek first the Kingdom of God.*” Yes, uncertainties around our basic needs challenge our peace. Yes, anxiety and worry are natural responses (“O you of little faith” v.30). But with God as our wise, benevolent Heavenly Father, trust in Him becomes transformative. Paul explained that the resting heart involves four factors.



a. Perspective – v. 4

First of all, we need to practice a lifestyle of joy in the Lord. The term “rejoice” is stated twice and is grammatically: “perfect, imperative, active”. All believers must nurture a sustained and intentional God-centered perspective on our experiences. Pierre Bonnard suggests that this is not just an appeal to joy but to faith! (*TNTC Philippians*, Ralph Martin, Eerdmans, 1978, 167)

b. Patience – v. 5

Paul also commanded gentleness to all, which is joy shining out in a lifestyle of patience. The term “gentleness” could also be translated “forbearance” or “moderation” or even “graciousness.” It means showing an enduring patience which bears up under injustice. The additional phrase “*the Lord is near*” reminds us of our accountability to God – which can be understood both in an **experiential** and **eschatological** sense. We know that God will bear us up under present pain. We also know that there is a coming day of judgement when God will settle all accounts.

c. Prayer – v. 6

Paul wrote, “*do not be anxious*” but “*let your requests be made known*” by “prayer”, “petition”, and “requests” with “thanksgiving”. Such prayer is full-orbed and paradoxical – we could describe it as: **restful, grateful, pleading**. When we fully engage with our Heavenly Father in this way, anxiety is pushed from our hearts. Karl Barth said, “*joy in Philippians is a defiant “Nevertheless!” that Paul sets like a full stop against the Philippians' anxiety.*” ([The Epistle to the Philippians](#))

d. Peace – v. 7

As we release anxieties to God through prayer, we receive His peace. God's peace becoming established in our hearts is described by Paul in two ways. It is a peace "*which surpasses all comprehension*" ("double superlative", hyper + rising above). It is also a peace that "*guards*" (lit. "stands sentry") over our hearts.

[2] The resting mind – vv. 8-9



In verse 8 "finally" is the notion of "and so" suggesting that the resting heart is connected to the resting mind. God also will provide "peace of mind" or intellectual and volitional rest. In the sermon on the mount, six times Jesus said, "*You have heard that it was said...You shall not...But I say to you*" (Matthew 5:21-48). This was regarding *murder, adultery, divorce, vows, revenge, and loving our neighbour*. "But I don't do this!" we protest. Yet, James 3:2 is clear: "*We all stumble in many ways.*"

Jesus was not talking about just avoiding an **outward** action. He continually called people to an **inner** transformation. The laws He highlighted have implications for our minds: *hatred, lust, unfaithfulness, selfishness, and resentment*. Remember the rich young man who said, "*all these [laws] I have kept*" (Matthew 19:20). Jesus challenged him to dig deeper into his world view and love for his wealth. This meant he was in need of a resting mind. How does God help us with our thinking and living?

a. Think well – v. 8

Just as Jesus taught, Paul was not inviting the Philippian church into legal compliance or moralism. Rather, he expanded on the Kingdom principles given by Jesus. In short, as Christians, we must think only what pleases God. Our inner life matters! We are commanded to "*think on these things*" ("continually, habitually consider and allow to influence conduct").

The eight qualities include what is *true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, praiseworthy*. We need to think "*more wholesome than a perch of Rhine*" ([Read More](#)). The spiritual battle in our minds is real and requires dependence and discipline. Paul wrote often about this in his epistles.

- *Colossians 3:1-17* *A focus on eternal realities rather than earthly concerns impacts behaviour*
- *Ephesians 5:1-21* *Living in light of Christ's sacrifice is incompatible with an evil lifestyle*
- *II Cor 10:1-6* *Christians live in a spiritual war so they must be discerning and disciplined*
- *Romans 12:1-21* *Renewing of the mind impacts our worship, service, and relationships*

b. Live well – v. 9

From godly thinking flows a godly lifestyle. My experience as a child was a culture of restriction. The Gospel message was clear, but there was also a "moral fence" about outward action. The Christian's challenge is to live **inside – out** (being transformed by the Holy Spirit; rather than **outside – in** (trying to earn favor with God by moral performance)! Paul commanded his friends to put into practice what good they had seen and heard in him. Christianity is not a mere academic pursuit, or a body of knowledge. It is about a God produced transformed lifestyle.



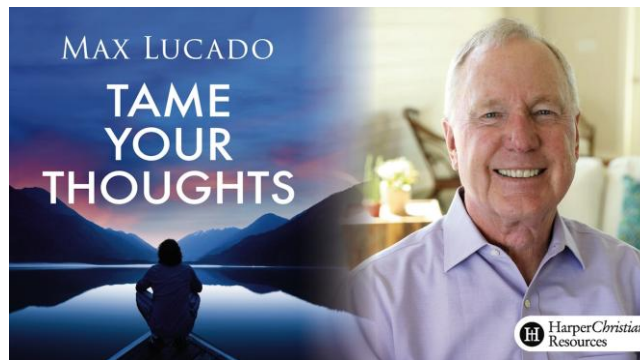
Remember what Paul wrote in Philippians 2:15 – our lives must be a proof of God’s presence within our hearts. The stakes are high – we live in a wicked world to which we must be God’s light. If this is going to be true of our lives then we will have to wrestle with two tensions.

- *Being tempted* *encountering* ⇔ *entertaining* *James 1:12-15*
- *Battling sin* *equipment* ⇔ *empowering* *Ephesians 6:10-20*

Conclusion

If you have hitched your heart or mind rest to something circumstantial you will be rattled. Accept the invitation to release your worries to God and engage with Him in the delight of dependence and discipline. There is freedom and joy in living this way.

Here is a helpful, free resource...check out [Tame Your Thoughts](#) by Max Lucado.



Have you lost the joy of resting in the peace that God provides? Celebrated jazz trumpeter Miles Davis once said, “*It’s not the note you play that’s the wrong note – it’s the note you play afterwards that makes it right or wrong.*” The “next note” must be repentance and forgiveness as we offered in I John 1:9.



On the cross Jesus secured **positional** peace – (Ephesians 2:13-14,17-18). Have you given your life to Him? He gave His life for you! Jesus also provides us **experiential** peace. Will you trust Him today?

Remember to check out worship songs of joy – see “ <u>Paul’s Picks</u> ”
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