

October 24, 2004
A.M. Service
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

“I’m Stressed Out, What Should I Do?” (Part 3)
Philippians 4: 1-9 NLT

Dear brothers and sisters, I love you and long to see you, for you are my joy and the reward for my work. So please stay true to the Lord, my dear friends.

2 And now I want to plead with those two women, Eu-o-di-a [you OH dih uh] and Syn-ty-che [SIN tih keh]. Please, because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement. 3 And I ask you, my true teammate, to help these women, for they worked hard with me in telling others the Good News. And they worked with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are written in the Book of Life.

4 Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again--rejoice! 5 Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.

6 Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. 7 If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

8 And now, dear brothers and sisters, let me say one more thing as I close this letter. Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. 9 Keep putting into practice all you learned from me and heard from me and saw me doing, and the God of peace will be with you.

Today I want to return to our discussion on handling the pressures of life in God's way with God's power. (ILLUSTRATION). Pressure is not stress, but the wrong response to pressure leads to stress. When you live in a manner that pleases God (especially in your response to pressure), as a by-product, this will relieve stress.

Last time we spoke about being a ...

1. Peacemaker (unresolved conflict causes stress. God wants you to settle *your* disagreements and always makes confronting your responsibility. We are to confront in love. Eph 4:15 (NIV) “Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.” When we confront our purpose is reconciliation so we speak the truth but do it in love.

Being a peacemaker also means helping others settle *their* disagreements.) Matt 5:9 (NIV) Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.” God blesses those who work for peace. So that was the first thing, be a peacemaker.

2. Praise

(v 4-5) “Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again--rejoice! Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.”

Paul never denies the pressures and difficulties but encourages us to rejoice in the midst of them.

1 Thess 5:16-18 NIV

16 Be joyful always; 17 pray continually; 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Thess 5:18

Notice that Paul did not say "for" everything give thanks, but in everything. Evil will happen to believers, and it does not come from God, so they should not thank him for it. But when evil strikes, they can still be thankful for God's presence and for the good he will accomplish through the distress. (a. We can rejoice –even in times of pressure – because we know that God is in control and will use the situation). Paul had learned that "God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them" (Rom 8:28 NLT). Usually God uses difficult times to build people's character and strengthen their faith. It is easy to give thanks for the blessings; it is more difficult to give thanks for the blessings in disguise. By far the most difficult task is to give thanks in everything -- even the situations that make no sense or are extremely painful. Yet this difficult task has been assigned to all believers for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Learning to give thanks in everything means learning to trust God completely, knowing that he is in charge, and understanding that all that happens is part of a larger picture that believers may not see. When a believer can give thanks so willingly, he or she has trusted that God is completely in control of all situations and is working out his will.

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(b. We can rejoice because we *chose* to be joyful)

Ps 100:1-2 NLT

Shout with joy to the LORD, O earth! Worship the LORD with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy.

A business associate... recently shared with a number of colleagues how these verses and the rest of this familiar Psalm had helped him turn what seemed like a wasted day into a memorable event. He was on a turnaround two-hour flight that provided him with six hours of consulting time at an airport, but because of weather delays, the flight didn't get in until just before time to board the return flight home. Obviously his meeting had to be cancelled and the validity of a whole day was put in question.

You can imagine his frustration and the ensuing frustration of his fellow passengers, all of whom were in similar predicaments. In the midst of his anger and stress, he related that he thought about Psalm 100 and started to meditate on its truth. What he received through this was an entirely different perspective. He was not a victim of his circumstances; he was not trapped, unless he chose to see it that way. He could just as easily see this situation as a divine appointment. It was all up to him. And as soon as he chose joy, things began to change in his little corner of the airplane. Conversations began to take place; people began to open up; a kind of musical chairs was instituted among some of his fellow passengers, and (he) was right in the middle of it, not only able to experience some of the gladness the psalmist, David, was speaking about, but able to share it as well with others. This kind of gladness of heart is infectious.

Neh 8:10 NLT

Don't be dejected and sad, for the joy of the LORD is your strength!"

Choosing to be joyful because you are choosing to continually be dependent on God is a powerful means of strength for the soul.

Prov 17:22a, A cheerful heart is good medicine.

To rejoice in the Lord is deliberate; it is not a matter of the emotions but a matter of the will though it often affects the emotions. Faith makes joy possible, not circumstances. The center of our joy is Jesus. Through obeying Jesus we discover joy.

We get stressed because we have the wrong goals. Word of God does not command us to pursue wealth; The Word of God does not command us to pursue success or position; The Word of God does not command us to pursue power or authority; The Word of God does not command us to pursue recreation or ease as our goals.

The Word of God commands us to pursue godliness and the preeminence of Jesus in our life. First and foremost our goal is to know, enjoy and please God, for this is the source of complete joy. Put Jesus first in your life and find joy in the Lord.

(c. We can rejoice because we know the Lord is near)

Heb 12:2 NLT

We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from start to finish. He was willing to die a shameful death on the cross because of the joy he knew would be his afterward. Now he is seated in the place of highest honor beside God's throne in heaven.

Note the source of Christ's joy is linked to enduring a cross, obeying the Father because of the joy He knew would be His afterward.

Luke 6:22-23 NLT Jesus says, "God blesses you who are hated and excluded and mocked and cursed because you are identified with me, the Son of Man. When that happens, rejoice! Yes, leap for joy! For a great reward awaits you in heaven."

Paul said it this way, (v 4-5) "Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again--rejoice! ... Remember, the Lord is coming soon." Or "The Lord is near." Which can mean The Lord is coming soon or He is always near in His Spirit. Either way is a reason to rejoice. No matter how bad our circumstances are, there is one thing we can always rejoice about: The Lord, His love, mercy, promises, and His presence. If the joy of the Lord is our strength, then nothing can take our joy away. Joy is something we experience when we understand the magnitude and might of God and the love He freely gives us. Learn in all circumstance to find the peace and joy of knowing the Almighty God is always near, He loves you and He is in control. This is a solid anchor for our spiritual lives. And He is coming again and promises "a great reward awaits you in heaven." How does it change things if we believed that Jesus could come back at any moment? Most of what we get stressed out over will mean very little the second Jesus appears. Rom 8:18 (NLT) "Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will give us later." Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again--rejoice! The next time you are feeling pressure chose to be joyful in the fact that God is with you and He is going to use the situation for the good in your life. Chose to believe that, chose to give praise ahead of time to God for what He is going to do and chose joy, I will say it again – rejoice!