



Rejoice  
Always?

## Introduction

Philippians 4:1-9

*Given the setting of the Philippians, I suspect it's no accident that Paul tells them that the peace of Christ will "guard" their hearts and minds. Philippi, after all, was a Roman garrison, and so the presence of Roman guards was commonplace. But rather than the Roman centurions guarding the gold mines or protecting commercial business along this important trade route, it is God, according to Paul, who will keep guard and protect the "hearts and minds" of the Philippians.*

*Knowing that God is guarding our whole being – our thoughts, feelings, decisions, imagination – and trusting that God listens to our requests, not only alleviates worry but also grants peace. That's an important "second" promise. It's not just that we don't have to worry because we trust that God is near, it's that we can experience "peace."*

*The peace Paul talks about is a sense of contentment, a security born of trust in God, a relative calm, a confident and even eager sense of expectation that the future is God's. This is a peace that transcends human understanding.*

*It is also a peace that eludes our grasp. His earlier admonishment to Euodia and Syntyche to be reconciled, for instance, suggests that the Philippians are not currently experiencing that kind of peace, and I suspect that may be true for many of us as well. Because if there is one thing that is missing from many of our lives in this day and age of nonstop email, constant social media, relentless opportunities and obligations, and 24/7 instant-access everything, it is just this: peace.*

*What is Paul's "prescription" to the problem facing the Philippians and us? Seek reconciliation with those with whom we have grievances; bring our thanksgiving, hopes, worries, and concerns to God; try to practice showing fairness to those around us.*

*Sound like a tall order? Absolutely, this is why Paul promises that God is keeping guard over our hearts and minds. On our own, this would be nearly impossible, but trusting that God is keeping watch over us, supporting and protecting us, we can discover the will and energy to live the life Paul describes. Moreover, we may also experience – even amid the hectic hustle and bustle of everyday life – the gift and promise of peace.*

**Prayer:** *Dear God, remind us that you have promised to guard us, to keep us secure, to bring us through all hardship, and to grant us peace. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## Open it

1. It's confession time. Who was an enemy of yours as a kid? What caused you to be at odds with each other? Did you ever reconcile?

## Read it

Philippians 4:1-9

## Explore it

2. What command does Paul give those he loves and longs for?
3. What does Paul ask Euodia and Syntyche to do?
4. What was going to guard the Philippians' anxious hearts and minds?
5. What were the Philippians to do with what they had learned from Paul?

# Apply it

## “Holdin On!!!”

Paul begins this small section with the word “therefore” (Philippians 4:1). This serves as a bridge that connects two units of thought. It reaches back to what he previously wrote and brings it to a bottom-line conclusion. The previous chapter had a strong emphasis upon doctrine. All truth must be followed with a “therefore,” because all truth has implications for daily life. This word, then, introduces to the Philippians the practical application of what Paul has been teaching.<sup>1</sup>

6. Paul used the beginning of chapter four as a way to look back at what has been said and then looking forward to how one should live according to it. Look at the section headings of Philippians in your Bible. What are they in Chapters 1-3? How might they help us to live differently in light of the issues in chapter four?

7. What does it look like to stand firm in these areas? Which one could use some greater grace from God and closer attention by you in the days to come?

## “You’re The Inspiration!!!”

Traditionally, a new papa hands out cigars when his baby is born. But Paul wants to boast about his spiritual children by putting them on display like a winning runner wears the victor’s wreath. Like that runner who knows his training was not in vain, Paul is proud of his “children” because they have stood firm in the Lord. He knows his efforts have not been in vain. There are two Greek words for the word crown: *diadema* and *stephanos*. Paul didn’t choose to use *diadema* because that refers to a kingly crown. He uses *stephanos* because it conveys two meanings:

- Crown of the victorious athlete at Greek games
- Reward at a banquet for public service, military accomplishments, or a time of great joy, like a wedding.

Either of these two definitions would communicate the feeling Paul has for the Philippians.<sup>2</sup>

8. Who might be spiritually proud of you because of the impact they have made in your life? Who are you rooting for spiritually and seeking to help grow at this time?

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<sup>1</sup> Lawson, Steven. *Philippians For You: Shine with joy as you live by faith* (God’s Word For You Book 18) (p. 180). The Good Book Company. Kindle Edition.

<sup>2</sup> Miller, Kathy Collard. *Paul and the Prison Epistles (The Smart Guide to the Bible Series)* (Kindle Locations 4006-4012). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

### **“After All That We Have Been Thru!!!”**

*Paul makes a final call for unity in these verses. The obvious problem has to do with a disagreement between two ladies. The most striking thing about Paul’s appeal is its directness. So far his appeals for unity have been general, but here he calls out specific people! Can you imagine these two ladies sitting in the congregation, listening attentively to the letter being read to the church corporately, when all of a sudden—“I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to agree in the Lord.” Talk about an awkward moment!<sup>3</sup>*

- 9. While we aren’t told what caused the conflict between these two ladies, Paul’s mention of it shows that it had risen to affect the entire church assembly. What types of conflicts can believers have with each other today? How can such personal conflict bring larger problems to the entire church body?**

*Why did this mean so much to Paul that he included it in his letter? Because these women were important. They had “shared in the struggle” with Paul, and they belonged to the same spiritual family. Their clash was hurting the fellowship among the Christians at Philippi, so it needed resolution...soon. (Chuck Swindoll, *Laugh Again*, 184.)<sup>4</sup>*

- 10. While there were many sins and struggles represented in the Philippian church, yet Paul calls out two ladies very publicly about their issue? Is this unfair? When is calling out sin a loving response in the church?**

- 11. What does it mean to “agree in the Lord”? How can this approach help us in the conflicts we face?**

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<sup>3</sup>Merida, Tony. *Exalting Jesus in Philippians* (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) (p. 168). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

<sup>4</sup>Miller, Kathy Collard. *Paul and the Prison Epistles* (The Smart Guide to the Bible Series) (Kindle Location 6885). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

### **“Life Saver!!!”**

Paul calls on his “true companion” (“loyal yokefellow,” NIV) to help these women. Commentators make many suggestions as to whom this might have been, but the bottom line is, nobody knows. Some think that the man’s name was Syzygus (the Greek for “comrade”)...Here, “true companion” whose name points to someone who brings two people together, should be true to his name and help these women.<sup>5</sup>

**12. What can an outside party do to help when conflict arises between two sides? What caution must this person take while seeking to help with reconciliation?**

**13. When it comes to conflict, people tend to take two roads: fight or flight. Which one are you most tempted with? Is it ever unwise to seek reconciliation? If so, when?**

*Everyone wants joy in life. On the surface, Paul’s words, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!” are some of the simplest in Scripture to read and understand. But when you scratch beneath the surface, they raise a pile of questions: Is it really possible to rejoice always? What does this mean? Am I supposed to go around with a perpetual smile on my face? Is it a sin to feel depressed or sad? Am I supposed to deny pain or sorrow? How can you command a feeling, anyway? Are these the words of a bubbly, incurable optimist, or what? Just reading the verse might get some people depressed, because they despair of ever being able to do it!<sup>6</sup>*

**14. How can rejoicing (in the Lord) help resolve a stressful situation? How are we to balance this command to rejoice at all times while recognizing there will be moments of disappointment and sadness in life?**

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<sup>5</sup> Cole, Steven J.. *Philippians: Enduring Joy (Riches From the Word Book 1)* (p. 203). Unknown. Kindle Edition.

<sup>6</sup> Cole, Steven J.. *Philippians: Enduring Joy (Riches From the Word Book 1)* (p. 209). Unknown. Kindle Edition.

## **“Hard Habit To Break”**

*This famous passage begins with the phrase “Do not be anxious about anything.” I actually prefer the King James rendering: “Be anxious for nothing.” Don’t be anxious. Don’t worry about anything. To which I respond, You gotta be kidding!*

*But it’s very good advice. Did you know that most of the time you spend worrying is basically wasted emotional energy? Some years ago a professor at a leading American university studied the things people worry about. His research yielded the following results: 40% never happen, 30% concern the past, 12% are needless worries about health, and 10% are about petty issues. Only 8% are legitimate concerns. That means that 92% of your “worry time” is wasted energy.*

*Worry is stewing without doing. Worry is wrong because it assumes that God can’t take care of you. He promised to care for you, but when you worry, you are saying, “Lord, I don’t believe you can take care of me so I’m going to take matters into my own hands.”<sup>7</sup>*

**15. There is an unfortunate breakdown of verses five and six. When we combine them as one thought, this famous passage begins with the declaration that “The Lord is at hand...” This can be speaking to two important elements: the closeness we have with our God and the surety of his impending return. How can each of these truths about our Lord bring comfort to our anxious hearts?**

**16. What things cause you to be anxious and how can this impact your relationship with God and others? How can prayer alleviate these thoughts?**

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<sup>7</sup> Sermon excerpt from Ray Pritchard found @ <https://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/how-to-have-joy-all-year-long/>

*The result is that the “peace of God” guards the heart and the mind. You will remember that Paul was chained to a Roman soldier, guarded day and night. In like manner, the peace of God stands guard over the two areas that create worry—the heart (wrong feeling) and the mind (wrong thinking). When we give our hearts to Christ in salvation, we experience “peace with God” (Rom. 5:1), but the peace of God takes us a step further into His blessings. This does not mean the absence of trials on the outside, but it does mean a quiet confidence within, regardless of circumstances, people, or things.<sup>8</sup>*

**17. Where do you need God to guard your thoughts right now? What tangible steps can you take to position yourself better for this peace?**

**18. God calls us to focus our thoughts on good things. What things keep us from thinking this way? How can a proper mindset combat against anxiety?**

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<sup>8</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W... Be Joyful (Philippians): Even When Things Go Wrong, You Can Have Joy (The BE Series Commentary) (pp. 133-134). David C Cook. Kindle Edition.