

Anxious No More! “Rejoice” (24 Year Anniversary) Believers Statesboro 05-04-25

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We all experience what Jesus called “The Anxiety of Life,” but we are not allowing ourselves to be trapped in a state of constant or debilitating anxiety. We are coming through it.

Looking back on times of intense anxiety in our lives, we can rejoice that Jesus **has delivered us.**

If we are battling anxiety, even this morning, we know that **Jesus is delivering us.**

And if we face anxiety in the future, **Jesus will deliver us again!** There will be a day when we say, *“I used to live in a state of anxiety, but now I’m anxious no more!”*

We’ve been exploring what is probably the best text in scripture concerning anxiety.

Philippians 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

But, today, let’s back up a bit and add verses 4 and 5. **Philippians 4:4-5 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.**

Rather than walking in anxiety, we should be walking in joy.

Rejoice in the Lord Always

Just like Paul telling us to be anxious no more, he doesn’t pull any punches with us here either. He is clear and precise, **“Rejoice in the Lord Always.”** You might think that’s a little strange of Paul to say. You might question, *“Paul, you want me to be joyful in every situation? Really?”*

Maybe in anticipation of our skepticism, Paul repeats himself, just to make sure that we get it.

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

What might be stranger than this statement itself is the backdrop in which Paul wrote it.

The book of Philippians is a book about joy, written by the apostle Paul who had been shipwrecked, left for dead several times, bitten by snakes, and now he is in prison and chained to a Roman soldier- a member of the Praetorian Guard, the most elite soldiers of the day.

Paul, while in a Roman prison, is not singing the **“Folsom Prison Blues,”** (Joe sing clip) no, he was writing about joy and encouraging us not to be anxious!

Fourteen times in this little letter to the Philippian Church Paul said, “Be joyful.”

Remember there is a difference in happiness and joy.

- Happiness is situation dependent. *“I’m not happy because I didn’t get paid this week!”*
- Joy is a God given fruit or byproduct of the Spirit. So, you can have Joy, as Paul said, *“In the Lord,”* when even in bad times. *“I didn’t get paid, but I have a deep abounding joy knowing that the Lord will supply all of my needs.”*

Therefore, to combat the feeling of anxiousness, begin to rejoice in the Lord!

Gentleness

Philippians 4:4-5 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

When I’m anxious, I’m not very gentle. I’m a bit nervous, jumpy, pushy, and blunt. Why? Because I’m trying to control a situation. My lack of ability to control it just makes me more anxious and in times like these, I’m not displaying gentleness at all. Maybe that’s true with you too.

What should be evident about us to everyone is our gentleness rather than our anxiousness.

So, let gentleness, or the lack of gentleness, in your life be an indicator of your anxiety level.

Sort of a warning light. It’s hard to be anxious and gentle at the same time.

Next Step: Where do you fall on The Gentleness Meter?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Not Gentle at All Very Gentle

The Lord is Near

Ok, Paul, you want us to rejoice no matter what, and you want us to be gentle. How do we do that? Paul goes on to tell us to *stop* and *think, remember, and realize* that **“The Lord is Near.”**

Now whether Paul is talking about the rapture or the nearness of the Lord in our lives, both work.

- I’m less anxious when I am more eternally minded, seeing the big picture, than when I am earthly minded and focused on the situations around me.
- I’m also less anxious when I remember that Jesus is with me right now and has promised to never leave me or forsake me.

The more I am aware of the Lord’s nearness, the less anxious I become.

Overflowing Joy!

All types of anxiety, stress, worry, fear and even depression have a common thread which is the lack of God’s joy in our lives. Jesus wants our joy to be full!

John 15:9-11 “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that **my joy may be in you and that **your joy may be complete.** (Full!)**

John 15:11 (NLT) I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!

1 Peter 1:8-9 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are **filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.**

Overflowing joy washes away stress and anxiety.

Finding Joy in the Lord

Paul writes from prison to encourage us to be joyful and not anxious. Again, how odd is that? But Paul was actively practicing what he was preaching and this wasn’t his first rodeo!

In **Acts 16**, Paul and Silas were in a **prison cell in Philippi** because Paul cast a demon out of a fortune teller slave girl. Her master didn’t like it because she lost the ability to predict the future and make a lot of money for him, so he had Paul and Silas arrested. But before the arrest, a mob formed against them, and they were stripped and **severely beaten** with wood rods.

Then they were thrown into prison. That’s a stressful day!

For most of us that would **not be a day of rejoicing**, but a day of fear and off the chart anxiety.

Acts 16:23-24 After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. 24 When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

- Paul and Silas are **emotionally and physically and spiritually spent**. They are drained to the last drop with nothing left to give.
- Their **backs are bleeding** from their beating. They are **black and blue** all over.
- I’m sure they felt **betrayed** by the mob and, to top it off, they landed in the **maximum-security** cell in **stocks!** It just doesn’t get much worse than that.

That’s why this next verse is so amazing to me.

Acts 16:25 says, **“Around midnight, Paul and Silas were complaining about their circumstances.”** No... **Acts 16:25 About midnight Paul and Silas were **praying and singing hymns to God,** and the other prisoners were listening to them.**

Paul and Silas refused to let anxiety win. They began to express their inner joy in worship. Nothing was going to rob them of joy and their praise and worship of God.

- Not even a bad day, not prison, stocks, and beatings.

- Not over situations at work, bad business deals, or friends and family.
- Not stress and pressure of the things that demand full attention.
- Not even bad times from the past, not all the things that normally worry one's heart!

Paul and Silas refused to be denied their meeting with Jesus.

They remembered that **“The Lord is near.”** In a church? Not this time. In a prison?

Yes, two coming together on official Jesus business and Jesus showed up! (Matthew 18:20)

You might not be in a physical prison today, but **some of you are in a prison of anxiety**, stress, worry, fear, depression, or a prison of whatever has control over your life.

You need to break free but can't- not in your own power. You are tired and emotionally beaten.

Joyful Worship Breaks the Prison of Anxiety

Worship takes our eyes off our external circumstances and focuses us on God.

- We stop focusing on what's wrong with us or with our circumstances.
- We start focusing on what's right with God.

Worship is zooming out and seeing the big picture.

- Anxiety limits our perspective.
- Worshipers find a reason to praise God. They are always looking for a reason.

Worship is refocusing our faith in God and He restores the joy of our salvation.

It's not easy! Nothing is more difficult when everything seems to be going wrong.

- Worshiping God when we feel like anxiety has us by the throat.
- Choosing to rejoice in the Lord when stress is squeezing us in a vice.

But one of the purest forms of worship is praising God even when you don't feel like it because it shows God that your worship isn't based on circumstances.

Worship is based on the fact that **GOD IS WORTH IT!** Worship is Worthship.

Paul and Silas knew that joyful worship sets the stage for deliverance!

Acts 16:25-31

- 25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.** (Others are watching and listening to you under stress.)
- 26 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose.**
- 27 The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped.**
- 28 But Paul shouted, “Don't harm yourself! We are all here!”**
- 29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas.**
- 30 He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”**
- 31 They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”**

Now let's stop for a minute and think about what Paul told us in **Philippians 4:5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.**

Gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit; joy is a fruit of the Spirit. So, is it ok to say, “That the fruit of the Spirit in our lives should be evident to all”?

Something was evident to this jailer. He saw something he didn't expect to see. Two men worship and praising God in a horrible situation rather than being anxious, worried, and distressed.

That got his attention and opened his heart to receive the gospel message of Christ Jesus.

Both he and his household were saved and baptized.

People around us are watching. Do they see anxiousness, or do they see joy in the Lord?

Does your anxiety make them ask you, “What must I do to be saved?” Please... But your joy will.

Next Step: When anxiety comes, I will choose to focus on what’s right about God, instead of what’s wrong with my circumstances, and begin to worship with joy.

God’s Will for You

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

16 Rejoice always,

17 pray continually,

18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.