

Preparing our Heart and Mind (Part 1)

Philippians 4: 4-9

As we walk this Christian journey, we face many challenges that we must overcome in order to obtain spiritual victory. While these challenges are many, coming from a variety of sources, none are greater than the battles we fight within our mind and heart. I have stated many times that I have more trouble with the flesh than I do any outside source of opposition. Along with the struggles of the flesh, come the battles that rage within the mind.

In order to better understand the teaching of Paul in these verses, one really must understand the make-up of the human body. While we only see the outward appearance, the physical flesh, our bodies are actually comprised of three parts – body, soul, and spirit. At the moment of salvation, our spirit is made alive in Christ our Lord. It is sealed unto the day of redemption. However, following salvation we continue to deal with the struggles associated with our body and soul. Most have a proper understanding of the body, and are even aware of the strong desires and lusts of the flesh. Many do not fully understand the soul of man. The soul is actually the seat of one's intellect – the reasoning, will, and emotions of the body. It is through the soul that we feel, process information, and react to what we perceive. The soul is actually the mind of the body.

Whether we like to admit it or not, most of the battles we fight originate within the mind. Paul was well aware of this, and knew our heart and mind must be prepared for battle, as much, if not more than the flesh. [2 Cor.10:3-5 – For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: ^{\[4\]} \(For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;\)](#) ^[5] [Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.](#) Clearly he speaks of a battle that rages within the mind of the believer. Again consider his thoughts in Ephesians – [For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*, Eph.6:12.](#) Paul knew Satan likes to attack the mind; and if we are to overcome these spiritual attacks, we must prepare and guard our mind.

As we will see, Paul deals with the heart and mind of the believer in our text. In order to overcome and enjoy victory, our heart and mind must be settled on the Lord and prepared to engage the enemy. Let's examine the [challenges](#) within the text as we consider: [Preparing our Heart and Mind.](#)

I. An Appeal to Rejoice (4) – [Rejoice in the Lord always: *and* again I say, Rejoice.](#) This appeal deals with the heart and mind. Consider:

A. The Admonition (4) – Paul does not offer a suggestion that might be beneficial for them; he admonished the believer to rejoice in the Lord. He desired the believer to express their joy and cheerfulness in the Lord. Paul admonished them to be glad in the Lord.

- If you remember our introduction, we discovered that many consider this to be Paul's epistle of joy. Time and time again he speaks of joy and rejoicing in the Lord. In order to live productive and victorious lives, we must develop an attitude of joy.

B. The Expectation (4) – We are not Greek scholars, but it is interesting to note that the word rejoice is spoken in such a way to imply continual rejoicing. It literally means to go on rejoicing in the Lord. Paul even repeated the admonition – [again I say, Rejoice](#).

- Many tend to believe it is difficult to maintain an attitude of rejoicing. I fear they confuse joy with happiness. Bear in mind, Paul is bound in prison at this moment. The church in Philippi is facing opposition and great adversity. There is little to generate happiness at that moment, but happiness and rejoicing are not synonymous. Happiness is dependent upon outward circumstances, while joy comes from within. Paul may not have been happy with his current situation, but he found reason to rejoice in the Lord.

- That eternal truth enables us to have the ability to rejoice in the Lord always. Our feelings will change. We often face circumstances in life that are difficult, depressing, and burdensome. We are forced to deal with changes in people. Maybe you have placed confidence in a particular individual, and yet they have betrayed your confidence. Happiness is often affected by change. However, we can always rejoice in the Lord because He never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The difficulties of life that affect happiness do not alter our security in the Lord. Regardless what we face in life, we can rejoice in the Lord, knowing we are promised eternal life in Him! [Rom.8:18 – For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.](#) [2 Cor.4:17 – For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.](#) It may seem difficult at times, but it is possible to rejoice in the Lord always. We must prepare our heart and mind to rejoice in Him!

II. An Appeal to Remain (5-7) – Understanding the struggles they faced, Paul urged the church to remain steadfast in the Lord. Paul urged them to remain:

A. Resilient (5) – [Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.](#) The church faced much that created concern within their lives. They were often mistreated by those around them

and even persecuted for their faith. In times of desperation, they were tempted to abandon their faith and respond in like manner to the pressures they faced. There was too much at stake for them to conform to these pressures. They must remain committed to the Lord, being resilient in the face of opposition.

- Paul urged them to live in such a way that their moderation would be evident to all who encountered them. This is an interesting word that carries a variety of application. “Sweet reasonableness, generosity, goodwill, friendliness, magnanimity, charity toward the faults of others, mercy toward the failures of others, indulgence of the failures of others, leniency, bigheartedness, moderation, forbearance, and gentleness are some of the attempts to capture the rich meaning of *epieikēs*. Perhaps the best corresponding English word is *graciousness*—the graciousness of humility; the humble graciousness that produces the patience to endure injustice, disgrace, and mistreatment without retaliation, bitterness, or vengeance. It is contentment.”ⁱ
- You will have to agree such an attitude and approach to difficulty runs contrary to human nature. We are admonished to exhibit a spirit of gracious humility toward others, instead of reacting in anger or hostility. We must remain patient and humble in the face of opposition and adversity. Often it is hard to restrain our emotions. The mind immediately seeks to respond in a defensive posture, reacting similarly to what we have encountered. We must remain resilient in the faith and resist the urge to lash out. Rather than being consumed with selfishness that always seeks our own benefit, we must consider others, even at the expense of our feelings and pride. We cannot allow a moment of weakness, through anger or pride, to mar our witness. The Lord is at hand; He is soon coming, and we must do all we can to reach those who remain apart from Him.

B. Confident (6a) – [Be careful for nothing](#). We must understand what Paul is seeking to convey. Some may look at this and discern that Paul is advocating a life of reckless abandon, living carelessly and irresponsibly. That is certainly not the case. The word translated “careful” has the idea of “*anxiety, being troubled with cares*.” Paul urged the church to remain confident in the Lord, resting in His grace and trusting in Him. They were not to be anxious about their lives or their future. There was no reason for worry or unnecessary fear. He doesn’t rebuke genuine concern, but rather senseless worry.

- Now, I will admit that I am weak in this area. I worry more than I should. When faced with situations that cause great concern, I allow those worries to consume my mind. I tend to dwell on them for extended periods of time. In doing so, I have allowed the enemy to occupy my mind rent free! I have swung open the door and welcomed him in for an extended stay. If you are honest, many of you will have to admit the same.

- We need to understand that such anxiety and worry is actually sin. We are in essence declaring that we don't trust the Lord to meet our need. Maybe not consciously, but we think that God is somehow unable or unwilling to do anything about our situation. Rather than giving God our problems and resting in His ability to handle them, we carry them around, and suffer under the heavy load they bring. Jesus warned of such anxiety in the Sermon on the Mount, [Matthew 6:25-34](#). Corrie ten Boom said, "*Worrying is carrying tomorrow's load with today's strength – carrying two days at once. It is moving into tomorrow ahead of time. Worrying doesn't empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength.*"

Conclusion: I had hoped to be able to move through these verses today, but there is too much to consider. This passage is relevant and needful for each of our lives, and I want to take the necessary time to glean the great truth it offers. We will pick up with the latter part of verse six in our next study.

Has the Lord spoken to you today through the study thus far? Are you able to rejoice, even when life is difficult? Do you respond in a spirit of grace when confronted or mistreated by others? Do you tend to worry more than you should? If so, I urge you to seek the Lord for the strength and wisdom you need. Victory is possible, but we must win the battle that often rages in our mind.

If you have yet to come to Christ by faith for salvation, you don't enjoy the benefits of His grace. Respond to Him and be saved today.

ⁱ MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Philippians.