

Sing before the service: Psalm 65:8

Our help is in the Name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Beloved, grace and peace be to you from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, through the mighty working of God the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Psalm of praise 2:6 (p. 7)

Prayer

Psalm 35:12 (p. 175)

Scripture reading: Philippians 4

Scripture text: Philippians 4:7

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 4:7 NIV)

To be able to believe in the Lord Jesus and to live in Him is for every true believer great reason to rejoice because the Lord has assured us that He has forgiven our sins and has provided a dwelling for us in the hereafter.

This joy must always be part of the lives of all believers. Let's look at the following in this sermon

1. The joy of the Philippians

2. What is the result of knowing the peace of God?

1. The joy of the Philippians

The church in Philippi was very exceptional. The people of the town, and therefore the church, comprised people of a variety of nations.

- Philippi was initially established as a place where Roman soldiers could retire.
- All these soldiers were not Romans. They were soldiers from all the nations the Romans had conquered. Other people also resided there.

One can imagine that these people were tough and easily ended up in conflict situations.

- Now the Lord sends word to them: Rejoice in the Lord. Joy – in other words joy of faith and joy of love – is the ground-note of the passage we've read.

Verse 4: **Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!** This means that the church of Philippi should not only speak about joy.

- They must reflect joy. Their entire being, and everything they do, should demonstrate the joy they draw from their relationship with the Lord.

This is why verse 5 adds that their gentleness should be evident to all people.

- The behaviour of the members of the church towards one another and towards other people should be such that everyone would become aware of their goodwill to other people.
- Everybody should be able to see that they are indulgent towards other people and that their way of life does not allow rudeness, slander or any form of malice.

The word *all* bears special emphasis.

- It means that the people of the church should not only show love and cordiality to one another.
- They should literally involve all people in the way they live their gentleness and their enthusiasm to convey their joy in the Lord.

The intention of this text is important.

- The believers are not threatened with the judgement of the Lord when He returns.
- It does not say that we will be punished when the Lord returns and finds that we've been unfriendly and inhospitable.

Its point of departure is the complete opposite:

- You must rejoice in the Lord!
- The idea is that there's not much time left. We must live our joy in full so that we are what we should be when the Lord comes again.

Verse 6 contains a beautiful motivation for being completely joyful.

- Only joy of life in the Lord can make our troubles disappear.
- There simply is no one who does not experience some kind of trouble or anxiety at some time or another.
 - These things are the exact opposite of joy of life.
 - This kind of stress very often leads to depression.

But there is a way out of it – we can take precautions so that it does not hit us too hard.

- We have the means to handle anxiety and fear.
- This is why the Scriptures tell us the following:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:6 NIV)

These words are all about your personal relationship with the Lord. How do you pray? And when do you pray?

- Many people know the Lord only when they are in trouble. This is so wrong.
- The Lord teaches us very clearly that He wants us to worship Him. In other words, we must honour and serve Him, and then also call upon Him for what we need.
- And, importantly, we must also thank him for what we receive!

Hence the Lord wants our prayers to be filled with our joy of life.

In this passage the Lord portrays the believer as a person whose heart is overflowing with joy in God and who will not have his joy disturbed by the malice of people or the evil of the devil.

- If your relationship with the Lord is such that you expect all help and blessings from Him, then you know the peace of God.
- The peace of God is to receive the grace of God and to embrace it.
- The peace of God is the certainty within us that tells us that we belong to the Lord and that He completely controls our body and soul for the good of us.
- The peace of God is to realise that God loves me so much that He grants me all this grace without me deserving any of it, and that his grace is a completely free gift from Him.
- The peace of God is to know without doubt that I have been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.
- The peace of God is worked by God – something completely beyond my understanding. It surpasses:
 - all cleverness,
 - all reasoning, and
 - all human capabilities.

Thus, the peace God gives us is something given to us by grace through Jesus Christ, and it is at such a high level that we cannot grasp it with our cleverness or intelligence. It exceeds everything.

2. What is the result of knowing the peace of God?

You will at once live an honest and good life – because you know the joy of belonging to the Lord and have inner peace for having been saved.

- You will only do what is honourable and pure and clean.
- You will reflect the loveliness of the Lord's presence!

But your life will be distinguished by a particular style.

- You will not be doing good and commendable deeds heavy-heartedly and regarding it as a lot of trouble – dragging your feet through your righteous life.
- You will live joyfully and with a zest for life.
 - Everyone will notice that you approach your work, or whatever you attempt, joyfully, that you live a commendable life, and this will reflect your relationship with God.
 - People who notice this and do not have these gifts will then of course be encouraged to also acquire the peace and joy of life from God.
 - Then we win our neighbour for Christ!

Now you must realise that the Lord calls us all to believe in Him and to confess that He is our only Saviour.

- In this faith God the Holy Spirit reveals to us the greatest conceivable miracle, which is that we must live joyfully because the Lord Jesus Christ bore all grief and troubles on the cross for us.
- He preaches to us that He has forgiven all our sins – also our sins of heavy-heartedness and lack of joy and cheerfulness.

It's not true that there is no joy or happiness we can celebrate.

- It's just that we so often do not want to notice it and to live accordingly! This is sinful.
- The Lord assures us that in this life we can pass everything that's evil and discouraging because we know that we have been freed from it through the Lord Jesus Christ.
- We are also assured that through the Lord Jesus provision is made for us in the hereafter.

Brothers and sisters, carefully think about the meaning of this.

- Then you will realise that we have to change our attitude towards life so that our lives will joyfully reflect the peace of God till He returns.
- Our calling is to await the Lord with peace and joy.
- These things will become visible in our present lives. Do what is true and honourable. Live a righteous and holy life. Do things that are lovely and commendable.

Amen.

Closing prayer

Closing hymn: Psalm 107:3

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Amen.

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