

# SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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I Found Joy

PART

12

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I Found Joy In Stress

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Philippians 4:4-9



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Well, it is great to see all of you. If you're new with us, welcome. We are thrilled that you have joined us. If you're new or not, I would love for you in your Bible right now to actually look with me at the fourth chapter of the Nook of Philippians. We're in a series on a book that is really marked by the idea of joy and where to find joy. Joy can be found in the most amazing places. Here this morning in our text, chapter four starting in verse four, Paul, who wrote it, is going to show us how to find joy in stress. Now, next week, as you just heard, we're going to pause in this book and just look one week on God's enormous heart, his enormous compassion for people around the world, all around the globe who have never heard of Jesus Christ.

I hope that you recognize the sheer privilege that you have that not only have most of you heard the gospel, but we've just sung about the gospel. I just said, "Hey, in your Bible, would you turn to," and most of us in the room actually had one already in our hand. If not, there's lots of Bibles in the chairs. You may already be there. But around the world, if I said that to half the people on the globe, they would have no Bible to turn to. It's not translated in their language. Even if it is, half of the people in the world do not have access to it. God loves them and he cares for them just like he cares for you and just like he cares for me. It's important for us to recognize that God throughout the scriptures tells us that he is on a mission that will succeed.

That is for the name of his son Jesus Christ to be known from shore to shore. For those of us who have already been rescued by Jesus because we believe in him, he's called us to be a part and to take our part in the mission. Next week we're going to ask of you very specifically to play a part. Some of you will sign up and say, "You know what? My part God is putting on my heart for me to pray." Next week if you say, "God's calling me to pray about missions," and what happened all around the world through providence in missions, what you're going to receive is actually various requests throughout the year of needs on the field, all of our missionaries, our mission partners, as well as all of our teams. That may be an opportunity for you.

Pray about that. For some of you, it may be to give. Missions costs money. You, if you sign up for that, what you're going to receive is knowledge of various opportunities around the world where there's financial need, where there's resource needed to do the work there. You may be able to say, "You know what? That's the place that God is calling me to actually pour some of what he has given to me. I believe in what he's doing right there." That's the second way for you to think about and to pray this week about how you're going to really participate. For some of us, it'll be to serve. There's so many different ways that you can serve while you're right here in Raleigh of what he's doing around the world.

We have over a hundred mission partners and we like to keep up with them. For some of you, it may simply be to say, "You know what? I want to be able to write an email every week just to be able to encourage somebody who is so far away from their family and their friends." There's all kinds of ways to serve. Then the last is to go. God is going to call many of us in the room to actually get on an airplane next year and go and tell somebody about Jesus Christ.

You don't have to be anybody other than a Christian, someone who is trusted in Jesus Christ to be qualified to do that. I want to ask you this week, I'm going to pray right now, but I want to ask you this week, would you pray to God each day and ask for clarity what he would say to you how you will participate in the mission that will not fail.

Let me pray for us. Father in heaven, we thank you for your kindness, a kindness that has allowed each one of us to be able to hear the gospel. If for whatever reason we've not heard the gospel, I thank you then in the next half hour we will. We have access and we're thankful for that. For many of us, you've already given us the gift of faith and we believe in Jesus Christ. You've even given many of us the opportunity to tell other people about Jesus Christ. For these things that are before us, we ask that you would give us clarity knowing how we, what our part is this next year.

I pray now that as we open up your word, you know that we live in a culture and in a world that is so stressful, and so I pray that you would speak through weakness in myself that you would help us to see within the scriptures such a picture, such a pathway that would lead us to peace, that it would compel us to move and to change and to pursue what's available. Would you help us now, I pray in Jesus' name, amen. Well, this last Wednesday, I don't know if you knew it, but it was National Stress Awareness Day. Okay? It happened to also be National Nacho Day, but Philippians 4 doesn't talk about nachos. It talks about stress and so we're going to focus on stress.

But even in the humor, all of us recognize that the days is there to highlight the stress that each one of us face and the anxiety as a result that each one of us feel. In fact, the last World Mental Health Survey that was done in 2018 concluded that Americans are the most anxious people in the entire world and the factors are many. One of them is the pace of life in which we choose to live, which we feel like we need to live. Where each and every one of us are more tempted to do more things, either half-heartedly or even incompletely, than to do one or two things really well. There's so many things in front of us. Just like what it says in the Old Testament, it says that God made life to be simple and we have run after many schemes.

The pace of our life is overwhelming. We're chasing our kids around. We're chasing our parents around. We're chasing ourselves around trying to try to have some sense of identity and purpose in life and some sense of pleasure. We keep running and it makes us anxious. There's also a factor and that's just the amount of information that's available to us. There was at one time that you just didn't know about all the wars that were taking place around the world. You didn't know about every conversation that was happening in our capital city. You didn't know all of the things that you now know. There's just so much information to be able to process and a lot of the information creates stress. It's stressful. It creates anxiety.

We look at it. It makes us nervous about what's happening around the world. In addition to that, there's the factor of security and that is that we see the risk that's taking place all over the world and so we know that our life is not as safe as we want it to be and that creates stress, the pace of life, information, security. Another cause is actually isolation and loneliness. This is a fascinating thing. You see all these people in here and yet some of us in the room we feel incredibly lonely right now. We have friend networks that break apart because our culture is so independent and so self-centered and it's so transient that our friends move away. They leave. They change.

We're constantly building new friend networks and that makes us anxious. Then the fifth factor that they cite, which is why we're so anxious and this is a really interesting one, is because of our demand to be connected. There's actually a fear that's now diagnosable. It's called FOMO, the fear of missing out. It causes people in their workspace to have books open, a computer open, they're doing their work, and yet they have a phone that notifies them of everything their friends are eating, every single thing that they post, everything that's happening in the world, if their teen is going to play, what time. Their phone is constantly moving, constantly letting them know information. If we were to silence it and turn it off, it's interesting.

In particular in the younger generations, there's actually a growing anxiety within their heart the longer they go without turning it on to see if they're missing out on something. It causes anxiety, which is why the... I actually read this week that the average high school student in America measures the same level of ongoing distress emotionally and mentally as a psychiatric patient in the 1950s, which also explains why there's 40 million American adults who suffer a diagnosable chronic anxiety. The apostle Paul all of these years ago knew that few things in life have the power to cut a channel in our heart and drain out our joy like stress and anxiety. This is what he said.

Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellent, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."

C.S. Lewis, he says there is a kind of joy that makes one serious. It's my favorite thing that he wrote and I know he wrote a lot of things. What he's saying is that when we actually see in front of us a treasure that's worth having, we become very serious and diligent in the way that we live our life in order to pursue that. I want to show you some things that joy does. If joy was personified, meaning joy actually left our heart and took on flesh and blood and was a friend standing next to us, urging us, encouraging us, directing us, helping us, what would joy do in our life in order to help us through the minefield of all of our anxiety and stress? First thing we look here is that joy directs our attention to the peace of God, to the peace of God.

Now think about this, if joy was an actual friend who could physically move our chin around and could direct our eyes and point in the text that says, “This is what I want you to see right here. Do you see this right here,” in order to give us hope, he would point to two very specific promises in the text. One is found in verse seven when it says, “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,” and the second is in verse nine when it says, “Practice these things and the God of peace will be with you.” Now around those two promises, there’s all kinds of applications, there’s all kinds of things that he’s going to tell us to do to pursue these things, but here’s the deal.

If you don’t believe these things are in the soil, you will not dig expectantly. You will not dig with joy. You will not dig looking underneath the surface. These promises are the gold in the soil that makes digging worthwhile. The first he says is the peace of God will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. I mean, does that not even sound appealing to you? I mean, it does to me. He’s going to guard me and the word guard can also be translated keep or surround. We’ve seen movies where there’s a king and he’s on a horse and he’s going through the woods, and all of a sudden there’s the bad guys on other horses and they come. All the king’s men, they circle around. They surround the king.

They put up a barrier around him. Sometimes you’ve seen a movie where there’s a city and all of a sudden there’s a threat. All the soldiers, all the centaurs, they line up with shields all around the city in order to protect. This is precisely what he means when he says the God of peace. But here’s the cool thing, the garrison here is God. It’s God himself with all of his power and all of his sovereignty. He says that the peace of God will guard you. You look at this picture, right? If you see this picture and you see there’s this army, if you’re a king and you’re standing behind this, and this is what separates you from another army, you may feel a sense of poise and peace, equilibrium.

You may feel like, you know what, I’m in a good place. I’m in a safe place. But if the only thing that separates you from another army is air, well, now all of a sudden you don’t feel such peace. The amazing thing here he says is this peace. When we are surrounded by God’s peace, it creates a poise within our heart that he says it’s like a peace that surpasses understanding. Now, he’s used this word before, surpass. We saw two weeks ago in chapter three verse eight where Paul was saying, “You know what? Compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus Christ, my Lord, everything else in life means nothing. It’s like rubbish.”

If you were to put the presence of God and having a relationship with him on one side and every other benefit in the world on the other, he says that the scale would tip so far in one direction that one is laughable in comparison to the benefit of knowing Christ and hear what he says. Sometimes the stress of life, it feels so heavy on this side and you think, “Oh my goodness,” but now just imagine, he says that God’s peace, it surpasses all of our understanding. Now the peace of God, you put it on the other side, and suddenly boom, unusually heavy. The peace of God is heavier than our circumstances, he says. Now this is what is available for us. When I think of Paul, you think about where Paul’s in. He’s in a prison.

He's actually chained to another soldier. I think of this picture, this lighthouse, where this lighthouse is absolutely just being crushed over and over by waves. You know how heavy water is. You know how destructive water is, and yet this lighthouse, it surpasses those waves. It endures all of that crashing. This is Paul. He's in prison. He's lonely. He's uncertain if he's going to ever get out of this prison, and yet he keeps rejoicing. We're going to learn next week that he had to learn this. He's going to come and he'd say, "You know what? I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content." A verse after that, he says, "You know what? I have learned whether I have a whole lot of stuff or no stuff.

I have a lot of people around me or no people around me. I've learned to be content in this situation." This is so critical, this poise that I'm talking about that we find right here in the text. This is not a talent you're born with. It's not a temperament that you have. It is something learned. He says, "I've learned this. Once I didn't know this, but now I know this. Once I didn't experience it, but now I did, and you can too." But the very first thing that must take place before we would ever actually begin to dig in the soil to have this kind of peace, the very first thing that we must do is we must trust that God's promise of peace is not a mirage, and some of us in the room do. There's skeptics all around us.

Even in our culture, there's atheists all around us that would say that any measure of peace is simply some temperament that some people have that other people don't have. I want you to know that that's not true. Some people in this room I know struggle to believe that God's peace is present. As a result of that, you're going to fail to do what he asks you to do next and that is to dig into the soil. But I tell you, it's there. The treasure is there. I personally have felt his poise as surely as I've felt the warmth of the sun. I know the sun is there not because I read it in a book, but because I felt its warmth and I've seen its light, so it is with the peace of God. I know what it's like to give a two year old...

I'm sorry, a two month old to a surgeon and say, "Would you do a surgery in the hope that he'll walk and know the peace of God?" I know what it's like to have a speech impediment for nearly all of my life, and yet Sunday by Sunday I have to drive to this place knowing I'm going to have to stand up and talk in front of you. I know the peace of God. It's there. It is present. It is available. I've seen it and felt it at grave sites, at funerals, in hospital rooms. I know it. It's there. It's there for you. There's a lot of people in there right now, if we strapped a microphone to your face, you would say, "I remember at this point in my life I've felt the peace of God."

As a people, we know that's true, and yet our skeptical heart sometimes wonders, is today going to be the day that I'm going to know the peace of God? I promise you it is available and so believe it. Now we have to dig and what does he tell us to do? Well, if joy was a friend, he would tell us, he would motivate us to resist our anxiety. That's what he says in verse six. He says, "Do not be anxious about anything." Now look, if you love anything, you're going to have some kind of care and concern for that, aren't you? If you love your kids and your kids get sick, if you love your kids and they walk out in the street, you're going to feel a special care and concern, and that's not what he means here when he uses the word do not be anxious.

The word anxious actually means specifically two different words put together into one. It's to tear apart. Now, this is what anxiety is. Okay? When our mind, this card, is torn apart and it's torn between our real world that we're in right now and the imaginary world that's created by our own fear, the gap between those two is anxiety. It's feeling anxious. How I like to sort of think of my own anxiety when I feel it, if I had to describe it, you look at this horse on the screen, anxiety to me feels like 1,000 terrified horses racing around an imaginary threat all happening inside the confines of my heart. As a result of that, if we give ourselves over to being anxious, it's exhausting. It's utterly exhausting, isn't it?

Because you really can't fix anything because it's not real. There's he. You see, there's no help in our imaginary world, even from God. You see, God's grace doesn't work in imaginary worlds. Some of us go, "You know what? My son, he just failed the test," and then all of a sudden our mind starts racing. You know, he's probably going to fail the whole class, and he's going to fail the grade, and he's going to drop out of school, and then this is going to happen, and this is going to happen. I want you to know God's grace doesn't work in your imaginary world of fear.

If you want to know what life would be like if God's grace was not present, if God wasn't near, if he didn't intervene, if he wasn't generous, if he wasn't gracious, if he wasn't kind, if you want to know what life is like without grace, imagine your sharpest anxiety being all that there is, that that is reality, but there is grace. He does move. He is active in our life, which is why... Now, hold on. Second thing is to give ourselves over to being anxious is also sinful. Let me ask you something. When the Bible says do not commit adultery and if someone does commit adultery, what does the Bible call that? Sin. When the Bible says do not be anxious and we give ourselves over to anxiety, what does the Bible call that?

Sin. We look at that and we go, "Wait a minute, something's not right there because anxiety is something that happens to me." But when we give ourselves over to the fear and feed the fear and feed the anxiety and feed it, we wrestle it, we want to live in it more, and all of a sudden... Actually what I'm going to show you here is it's actually very insulting to the Lord. You see, Jesus said, "Do not be anxious," and then he says this. Look at the birds. The last time you actually just looked out at a bird. They don't bite your nails. They're just totally chill. They're just enjoying life. He says, "Look at them. They neither sow nor reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them."

In other words, what Jesus is saying to humanity is this, would you please trust that I'm going to be God tomorrow just like the birds? They don't fret away their life imagining the day of my demise. I care about you more than I care about them." You see, sometimes it's good for us to personalize these actions. Not just for ourselves, but the other. You see, many of us, we live our life as though God was an idea or he was words in a book, but words in a book, an idea, they don't grieve. They don't feel left out. They don't feel like a jilted lover. They don't feel anger. They don't feel happiness. They don't feel pleasure, and yet the Bible says the God feels all of those things because he's personal.

We think of anxiety and God on the other end of our anxiety as though he's unaffected. Try to personalize it. Think about like this. Let's just say that you're on a baseball team and there's two outs. You're down a run, bases are loaded, and you're up to bat. Then the loudspeaker when they... Now up to bat and say your name, imagine how demoralizing it would be if the entire crowd began to moan, get up, and walk up and out of the stadium. You say, "Well, it was a good season I guess." No pitch has been thrown yet. You've not taken a single swing. This is what God's saying. He's saying, "I'm going to come through. In the real world, I'm going to come through. I promise you." I know for many of you, your anxiety is diagnosable.

To hear me say the word anxiety and sin in the same sentence is deeply hurtful. Let me just say a few things and please hear me very carefully right now. Okay? I struggle with anxiety. As I wrestled with this text and thinking through, okay, what do I feel sometimes and then what am I doing that the Bible would say don't do that because I believe there's actually two different things. Let me explain what I mean by this. Okay? Just a few years ago was the first time that it took place. I was in a car with Tabitha. She was driving, and I just said that, "Something's not right." I thought, am I having a heart attack? I felt like somebody's fist was underneath my sternum. I was just like I'm not sweating.

My arms aren't numb, right? I just went exercising, but I called the doctor who's in our church and I said, "Look, this is what I'm feeling. I'm actually going on a mission trip. I'm actually going over the mountains of Kentucky. There may not be a doctor up there, and so I need to know if this is a problem." He starts to over the phone and asking questions and he goes, "Actually, Brian, I think what you're facing right now is anxiety." I said, "Well, I'm not nervous about anything." He goes, "No, that's not it." He goes, "Anxiety is something that you can give yourself to, but it's also something that when the demands of the world are so intense, the human body simply cannot hold it all up, and so your chest can feel tight."

I thought, seriously? Now some of you know exactly what I'm talking about in the room. You're like, "Hey, you just described me. You understand, and so stop calling it sin," right? Let me help you. It is true that there is a difference and we all struggle with anxiety at some level. The reason we do is for this reason. You see, the Bible tells us that things are broken, but it wasn't always that way. There was a time in life that God created the world where all this anxiety and stress was not there. It was a perfect world. It was his design, and then we sinned against God and brought a tidal wave of brokenness upon the entire earth. We try to fix all that brokenness, and yet every single attempt is a dead end.

We feel something. Romans 8 I believe it's verse 22 actually says that because of the weight of our collective human sin, the earth itself grumbles and strains under how much pressure it's under. He goes on and he talks about the fact that that pressure visits every single one of us. Some of us in the room, the brokenness of the world because of sin and the curse of death, lead some of us. We get physical cancer. Others, it's a mental cancer. It may be called anxiety. It maybe called depression. Brokenness visits all of us in some way. We're all broken in some way, and God knew that we could not fix ourself. You know what he did? He sent his son and his son came, Jesus Christ, to this earth and he lived without sin and he went to a cross to die for all of our sin.

He was buried in a real grave. Because he's the son of God who has all the authority, he rose from the dead. He became the champion over the grave, that everybody who goes to the grave with Jesus Christ will also be resurrected from the grave to be able to go to heaven with him. This is what's available. For those who believe and trust in Jesus, who repent of their sin of thinking they can save himself, he says, "I'm going to give you the privilege to be able to recover and restore what I first made available, and you can know and measure peace even while you're still here on the earth." Now, if all of this is true, then this application is also true. Let's resist anxiety as seriously as God addressed anxiety.

I'm not just talking about as serious as he calls it as a sin, but also as he addressed it in sending his son to be slain for it. If he did all of that, then we have to understand that there must be a resistance that we give to it and that resistance will look differently for many of us. Some of us, we do not know that medically induced or where someone said, "Oh, this is chronic anxiety," that fist, you've never felt that. You just feel that trickle of anxiety that goes down your arms when you're nervous about something. It doesn't matter where you are on that spectrum of severity. God would say, "Don't commit to make that the rest of your life." See, it's okay to be broken. We just can't be committed to stay broken.

For some of us, what we need to do is to confess it as sin because we're simply feeding it. Others, we need to seek help. Whatever it is, don't beat yourself up. Take hope in the thought that you can grow into knowing more of the peace of God, this side of heaven. The last thing is this, is that joy motivates us to pursue his peace. It motivates us to pursue his peace. You see, if resisting anxiety is like pulling up a weed from the dirt, you see, when you pull up a weed, it leaves a hole and that hole needs to be filled with something of equal or greater density, which is why pulling weeds and planting seeds must be done simultaneously. What he's going to say here is this.

In our text, he gives us three very specific applications of things that we're supposed to be doing proactively at the same time that we're resisting or seeking to resist with his strength the anxiety that we face. What are those things that we're supposed to give ourselves to? The first is let's give ourselves to praying. He says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. Let your request be made known to God." He says, "Look, when you're worried and you feel it, don't feed it, instead turn Godward. Turn Godward. Not as a last resort, but as your first resort." You see, 1 Peter 5:7 says, "Cast all of your anxieties on him, because he cares for you."

Let me urge you to do something that I've had to learn and that is to pray until I pray, to pray until I pray. You see, there's a lot of us in the room right now who pray like I fish. I throw a hook in. I'm like one, two, three, eight, nine, 10. Pull it out. This is useless. I hate fishing. This is how we pray. We're like, "All right, God. I'm going to give it to you. One, two," and then say, "Oh, I forget it. Let me just fix it my own." We walk away from prayer and there's no peace within our heart, which is why I would encourage you to pray until you pray. Now to me, I can't do that sitting down. I don't know why. I'm not grown in my maturity yet to be able to do this sitting down honestly.

Like maybe once out of a hundred I'm sitting down, I'm like, "All right, God," and all of a sudden I feel very close to the Lord. Most of the time I don't, which is why I walk. I have neighbors in the various houses I lived. You just like to walk a lot. No, I really don't. I don't like to walk. I like to pray. I like to know his peace, and it just takes me forever to get there. What I do is I start walking and I just start talking. I'm like, "Lord, this is what's happening." Usually in my walk, usually about a mile or so away, I get angry. I'm like, "God, I'm out here. I got other things to do, but I really need your peace," and then suddenly it's amazing. If you continue to walk and continue to persevere in prayer, you know what happens?

Suddenly you'll run into a wall of his peace. Every week for 30 years, at least once, I do this. You got to pray until you pray. You got to pray until you know you're in his presence and you feel this peace. It takes time. It's commitment. Isaiah 26:3, it says, "You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you." He also says, "With thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God." Now, this is interesting. A lot of us are like, "Okay, this is what I'm going to do. I'm going to pray. Then when I get it, I'm going to say thank you," but that's not what he says. He says, "With thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God." This is faith. You know what he's saying?

He's saying you're telling God what you remember that he's done already in the past and you're also thanking him for what he's going to do in response to what you're praying. There's so many things in my life that I have prayed for that I'm so glad that he didn't answer. As Jesus hung on the cross, his friends probably said, "You know what? God could never bring any good out of this." How many times have I said that? God, you can never bring any good out of this, and yet those same people would have been looking at the one thing where God did more good to all of humanity in that very moment. They simply couldn't see it.

What I found is in 30 years of walking with the Lord, I've learned a very important truth about prayer and it's this, is that God always gives what we would have asked for if we knew all that he knows. Sometimes he says, "I'm not going to answer that. That's just a flat out no." Sometimes it's to wait. Sometimes it's a yes. But you know what he gives me? He gives me what I would have asked for if I knew everything that he knew about life. Thank you. The second thing is let's give ourselves to thinking. He says in verse eight, finally, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, praiseworthy. Well, think about these things.

Every single one of us in the room have probably read something, some websites, something of how do you deal with stress, and they come up with all these very clever and helpful things. Things like take a walk and relax and take a nap and talk to somebody. But you know what no self-help book ever talks about? It's really fascinating. Think. They never say, "Now, think about the most complex questions of the human soul. Where did you come from? Why do you feel guilty? What's going to happen to you when you die?" This is what the Bible says we're supposed to do. We're supposed to think about what matters most. I want you to notice also in Psalm 19:7-8. Look at some of the same words.

In Philippians, he says whatever is true, honorable, just pure, lovely, think about these things. What's he mean by this? He means open up your Bible and think. The law of the Lord is perfect. The testimony of the Lord is sure. The precepts of the Lord will write. The commandment of the Lord is pure. You see, our heart will never be able to rejoice in what our mind does not know, which is why Jesus says not only with our strength and our heart love the Lord, but love the Lord with all of your mind. We have to be a thinking people. Last is let's give ourselves to rejoicing, to rejoicing. He says in verse four, Rejoice in the Lord always." Again, I say rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to all, for the Lord is at hand.

This is beautiful. Reasonableness can also be translated sweet gentleness. In other words, that when you're close to the Lord and feeling his pleasure and rejoicing in him, you'll be famous for being gentle. How many of us because we're so stressed, we treat people poorly? He says, "You calm down a little bit. You feel this pleasure. You're going to treat one another really sweetly, gently." But he says, "Rejoice in the Lord." The very first time that Paul was in this city called Philippi, he was beaten with his buddy Silas and put in prison. There they are with bloody lips. Paul turns to Silas and he says, "You know what? Jesus is still worthy. You got a good song on your heart right now? Let's sing."

They start singing at midnight hymns to the Lord, which reminds me of another man named Horatio Spafford. Two years after losing everything in the Chicago fire, Horatio Spafford sent his wife and their four daughters on a boat to England for a trip. Their ship, it collided with another ship. As it was sinking, Anna, his wife, got his four daughters around and began praying. Anna survived and all four daughters drowned. She's put on a rescue boat, get to England, and she messages Horatio. Wires him and says just two words, the words saved alone. He got on a boat to England in order to go and get her. While he's on the boat, he writes a hymn that we're going to sing in a few minutes.

In that hymn, it says when peace like a river attendeth my way. It says, "My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought! My sin, not in part but the whole, is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more. Praise the Lord, oh my soul." You're going to talk about the day when Jesus is going to come. He says, "Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight." Now this is amazing. In this Roman prison, there's a man named Paul, and on that boat there's a man name Horacio, and both men are praying and thinking and rejoicing themselves into the peace of God. It worked for them. I'm telling you, it can work for you, which is why Paul says, "Whatever you've received from me, whatever you've seen in me, whatever you've heard from me, put it into practice because it can work for you as well."

Before we do anything else, what I want to do right now is just to give you a few quiet minutes to pray, to cast your anxieties on him. Right now, right where you're at, I want you to take a few minutes and just tell the Lord what you're anxious about. Father in heaven, how good it is to know that you make promises that you'll surround us and give us peace. I pray for those in the room right now who are overwhelmed with sorrow or anxiety, wondering how they're going to be able to endure such. I pray that you would comfort them now with the peace. As they've cast their cares upon you, would you be faithful to your promise and give them a peace that passes understanding?

Then would you guard their hearts so that they think about what is true and right and excellent and honorable? I pray, Father, now that you would help us to have enough faith to be able to take you at your word and even seek help from others. For all of these things that you're doing in our life, we say thank you. I pray this in Jesus' name, amen.



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