

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God, Our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

[Introduction: The Attitude Store]

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ.

Rejoice in the Lord always! ***And again I will say rejoice!***

We’ve repeated this to each other for nine months, and now here we are. We have finally come to this very passage where Paul emphatically urges us to rejoice!

Actually Paul is not only urging us to rejoice, but he is also telling us how to develop a Christlike attitude. Because, let’s face it, we don’t always live with the kind of attitude that a Christian should have.

At our house, we have a place where we go when we act grumpy and whiny. We call it the attitude store. The great thing about the attitude store is that it is never too far away, and it always has lots of new attitudes you can buy.

For instance, if you’re feeling cranky, you can go buy a little bit of happy. If you’re having troubling listening, go pick up some obedience, and if you just can’t wait for the things you want, they have a whole isle filled with patience!

When we send our oldest to the attitude store, he goes in, buys a new attitude, and gobbles it down, so that it can fill him up. Although, sometimes when we send him to the store, he tell us that it's closed, which leaves us with only one option. We have to break in.

And, of course, it's not just the kids who have to stop by the store. Sometimes I need to go pick up a new attitude; although, it can be hard for me to remember if someone isn't right there reminding me that I need one.

[A *Christian Attitude*]

That's why Paul reminds the Christians in Philippi and us today to go to the attitude store. He knows that we aren't perfect, and he knows that the world throws all kinds of hardships our way. After all, he was in prison when he wrote this letter.

He knows that sometimes it doesn't feel like there is enough time or money or love coming your way. He knows because he's been through it. He's had it all and he's had next to nothing, but no matter what your situation is, he reminds you to go put on that Christian attitude.

[*Peace*]

In fact, he gives you the recipe for a Christian attitude. There are three ingredients. The first ingredient is peace. But Paul actually starts out the recipe by saying, "Don't be anxious about anything."

Well, I think I just encountered my major obstacle. Don't be anxious about anything? I'm anxious about things daily. Am I raising my boys well? Will I be able to figure out what to say in yet another sermon this week? How long will it take to pay off my loans from seminary?

And then there's things that you have absolutely no control over, like Friday night when I was feeling pretty anxious about tornadoes because we saw a funnel cloud forming outside our window.

What about you? What are some of the things that make you feel anxious and keep you awake at night?

We all have worries. But the difference is in what we do with them. Do we wrap ourselves up in them and let them drive our thoughts and our actions? Or do we listen to what Paul tells us to do: "in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." (*Philippians 4:6*)

When we turn our worries over to God, giving them up in our prayers and trusting in him for all our needs, "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (*Philippians 4:7*)

That peace and the ability to put aside our anxiety comes when we set our gaze on God and the work of Jesus on the cross. That is the beginning of the Christian attitude.

[Contentment]

The second ingredient is contentment. Paul says that he has learned to be content in any situation, whether he is hungry or full, whether he is in need or all his needs are met.

Contentment can be especially challenging for us today, because we are literally being trained to be discontent. The sheer amount of advertising and social media platforms that our society is focused around makes it really hard to be content. That's because the goal of advertising is to convince you that you can't be content unless you buy their product, and social media trains you that contentment comes from having more followers and popularity. We are berated by the message that we can't be content unless we have more things and more status.

That's where Paul's message is so striking, because when you have the peace of God that surpasses all understanding, you can be content in every situation.

Paul examples contentment for us with his own life. Even while he was in prison, he was content. God taught him the secret of having plenty and having nothing, so that he could be content in all things. That contentment comes from the peace he had in Jesus.

It's the same peace we receive when we trust Jesus for all our needs, because he knows what we need better than we ever could. It's just like Paul says, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." (*Philippians 4:13*)

[Joy]

And the third ingredient of a Christian attitude is joy. Rejoice in the Lord always! *And again I will say rejoice!*

The natural result of having peace and contentment is joy. The world often advertises that it can give us joy, but the joy it offers is fleeting. On the other hand, the joy we receive because of what Jesus did for us on the cross is an imperishable joy.

Because Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit and promised to return so that we can have salvation and eternal life, our source of joy never ends. That's why we can always rejoice! In every situation, even in our darkest hours, we should rejoice, because the gift of life we have in Jesus exceeds any suffering we might face.

When we rejoice in the Lord no matter what is happening, Paul says we are letting our reasonableness be known to all people. By rejoicing, we are showing how different it is to be a Christian. Instead of desperately looking to our own needs and interests, demanding this and that, we look to the needs of others, because our peace and contentment is in Jesus. That's what we proclaim to the world when we rejoice in our Lord.

And that's why Paul urges us to rejoice, because if our peace and our contentment isn't in Jesus, we need to go to the attitude store. We need to go trade in our anxious worldly attitudes for a Christian attitude filled with God's peace.

And the best part is that it's already bought and paid for, just waiting on the shelf for you to go and pick it up. Jesus already won it for us with his own blood on the cross. And the Holy Spirit delivers it to us by sealing us in our salvation through the sacraments.

It's already yours. The only thing left to do is use it. Turn to God in prayer for all of your needs, rely on him when you are in distress, and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. That is the source of our joy and the reason why we can rejoice. So, rejoice in the Lord always! ***And again I will say rejoice!*** Amen.

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)
