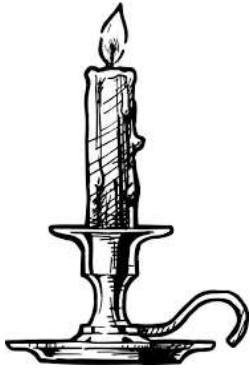


Wednesday, 1st April 2020



THE CANDLESTICK

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God (Phil. 4:6)

The words of Paul to the Philippians are particularly appropriate to Christians today. But, in these times of great uncertainty and fear, how can you possibly apply such instruction? ... “Be careful for nothing” means “don’t be anxious”, “don’t worry” ... but, how can you *not* worry?!

What does Paul mean? Two verses earlier he told the believers in Philippi, ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord *alway*: and again I say, Rejoice. He is teaching them to *cultivate* an attitude of joy. You’re a Christian, and you have eternal life ... life in all its fulness. If you were to leave earth this very moment, you would be present with the Lord ... You are held in the palm of His hand. He has forgiven you your sins. He has your name written in His Book of Life and you are going to Him in Heaven. *What is there not to rejoice about?!* ... “For all the Lord has done for me, I never will cease to praise Him”. ... As a Christian, you possess an inner joy nothing on earth can touch for you know your sins are forgiven and you are Heaven-bound!

And since it is *the Lord’s* command, - ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord *alway*: and again I say, Rejoice, - it is our privilege and honour to obey. What Paul means is that while you cannot always rejoice in your circumstances, you can always rejoice in the Lord because of your precious union and relationship with Him. ... You are saved, and as you contemplate upon Him and what He has done for you and is doing for you and has planned for you, that’s how your joy is real and true and genuine, “O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder consider all the works Thy hand hath made ... Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee, How great Thou art!”

That is the foundation upon which Paul wrote to the Philippian believers ... to rejoice in the Lord *alway*! He was speaking from experience for he knew what it was like to be imprisoned and beaten ‘within a hair’s-breadth’ of death. He knew what it was like to be stoned, shipwrecked, and almost drowned. He knew what it was like to have treacherous ‘friends’, and to be weary and in pain, hungry and thirsty ... and yet, he also knew and was confident in the Lord’s keeping, **II Cor. 12:9** My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

Understandably, he didn’t enjoy what his enemies did to him, but because he belonged to the Lord, he believed everything was under His Heavenly Father’s control and authority. ... And that is how, - even today, - the Christian is to rejoice for Paul went on to say, Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

And that is how Paul could write from his heart, **Phil. 4:6** Be careful for nothing ... for when you are trusting the Lord, your confidence is in Him and you have a foundation and stability the world knows nothing about, as Job testified, **Job 13:15** Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. ... Christ has saved you for all eternity, so how can you *not* trust Him ... even during these present dreadful times which will inevitably pass away! Eternity is forever, whereas “life ... is very brief, like the falling of a leaf”. For the Christian, though, we possess the inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice (I Peter 1:4-6).

Yes, of course, while we are in the world we must contend with its many heartaches and sorrows, and yet, at the same time, we know ...

Through all the changing scenes of life,
In trouble and in joy,
The praises of my God shall still
My heart and tongue employ.

Fear Him, ye saints, and you will then
Have nothing else to fear;
Make you His service your delight,
Your wants shall be His care.

The Christian’s great relief is that there is nothing uncertain about these perilous times for we have the assurance our God “has the whole world in His hands” ... The world has nowhere to look, and the words of Jesus bring them no relief because He spoke about how the famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes would be merely “the *beginning* of sorrows” (Mt. 24:7,8) ... For the believer, though, we are focussed on that great promise He made, ³⁰ ... and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.