

Life's a Battle:  
The Battle for our Heart  
Philippians 4:1-3

INTRO

Good morning! If you have a Bible, I invite you to turn to Philippians 4. That's where we'll spend most our time in the Bible today. But I'll also put the verses up in the screen if you'd rather follow along that way.

This morning we will continue our series examining the various battles Paul mentions in Philippians 4. And while these battles may just appear to be a normal part of life, they are also spiritual battles for the quality of our life. In John 10:10 ►

<sup>NLT</sup> **John 10:10** The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

If you have believed in Jesus for eternal life, then Satan can't have your soul. Jesus promises eternal life to everyone who simply believes him for it. If you believe in Jesus, you don't have to worry about heaven or hell. And yet, Satan still fights, because even though he can't have your soul, he'll do what he can to steal and destroy the quality of your life. And that's why life is a battle. It isn't a battle against people or society or government or even sin. It's a spiritual battle against forces we can't see trying to disrupt our relationship with God.

And this morning, our study brings us to Philippians 4. Let's read verses 4-7. ►

<sup>NLT</sup> **Philippians 4:4** Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again -- rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. <sup>6</sup> Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. <sup>7</sup> Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

The battle I'd like to consider this morning is the battle for our heart. Not our blood-pumping heart, but the battle for the core of who we are- our intellect and emotions. There is a proverb in the Bible that says, ►

<sup>NLT</sup> **Proverbs 4:23** Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.

So this morning, I'd like us to consider two separate, but related battles regarding our heart, the core of who we are.

The first battle comes in verse 4. Paul says, ►

<sup>NLT</sup> **Philippians 4:4** Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again -- rejoice!

Did you know there is a battle for your joy? And did you know God wants for you to experience his joy? But Satan does not.

And this is a tough battle in our current society and culture. I am sensitive to the reality that some hearing this right now might not be feeling very joyful. Some have recently lost a loved one; many are affected by the current housing crisis; some are begging for a job; some are battling an illness; some are experiencing rejection. You see, we often chalk these up to normal things in life, and yet, these things are the front lines of a spiritual battle for your heart and for your joy.

I mean, it's easier to feel joyful when things are going well. But joyful and happy are not the same thing. Happiness is usually a temporary feeling or emotion we experience when something goes our way. It results from good luck or good fortune. It's an emotion triggered by our circumstances. Last night I went to sleep with a terrible migraine. This morning I woke up and it was gone. I was happy.

Joy, on the other hand, is an emotion that springs up from inside us. It is more dependent on who we are and what we think at our core. It is more a state of being. It is possible to be sad, but joyful. And it is possible to be happy, but have no joy.

And there is nothing wrong with being happy. Laughter and happiness are great human emotions. But it isn't the same as the joy the Bible talks about. God is not telling us to be happy and smile all the time. Those things are good, but sometimes inappropriate.

Generally speaking, the words for *joy* and *rejoice* mean to be glad or cheerful. In the battle for our heart, Paul says to be glad or cheerful. In fact, he repeats himself and says it twice. That's how important this battle is. And I am guessing he says it twice because on the surface, enduring tough times joyfully is counter to the way we think. I mean, don't we marvel at people who endure hardship gracefully. Why do we marvel? Because it is not normal. But notice here, Paul does not tell us we have to be glad or cheerful for our circumstances- good or bad. He doesn't say, "Be glad for your disease. Be cheerful when discussing someone's pain. Be glad you are losing your house or job." He doesn't say that. He says, "Be glad or cheerful in the Lord." The question we should ask is, "Lord, how can I be glad in you?"

But the flip side of that is true too. He doesn't say, "Be cheerful you have a job. Be glad you have a nice car. Be joyful you are healthy." You see, as I say those, you're thinking, "But I am glad for those things." I know I am; but they can be as fleeting for you as they were for someone else. And when we base our joy on our circumstances instead of the Lord, we are setting ourselves up to lose. So the question for us this morning is the same weather we are struggling or content, "Lord, how can I be glad in you? How can I be cheerful in you? Not in my circumstances- good or bad, but in you."

So how do we get our heart to think like that? What are some things we can do to delight in God or be glad in who God is and what he has done?

1. **Remind Yourself.** The war for our soul has already been won. But the battle for the core of our emotions is ongoing. And this particular battleground might be more hostile for some of us than others. But it's important to remind ourselves regularly that joy comes from God from within, not my circumstances. Maybe you print this verse and carry it around or put on your mirror or commit it to memory. Maybe there is a song that helps remind you. Maybe you give a friend permission to ask you or challenge you from time to time. But do something to remind yourself that joy is about God, not my circumstances.
2. **Know God Better.** We will never really experience true joy in the Lord unless we get to know Him. Church, like this, teaches us about the Lord. That's important. But church cannot replace your own time with God. A time you set aside to get to know him. A quiet time to read the Bible and pray and listen.

3. Get outdoors and enjoy God's nature. I never feel closer to God than when I am in nature. Weather it's hiking a valley mountain, sitting by a rushing river or just taking a walk in the desert. The outdoors helps me to connect with God.
4. Maybe you need a better influence. Maybe it would be helpful to hang out with some different people; people who remind you of how good God is. I am so grateful to have a friend who reminds me of God's joy. My personality tends to be melancholy, pessimistic and introverted. It is very easy for me to lose sight of joy "in the Lord." But being around this person reminds me. It is good for me.

These things aren't designed to hide or mask the bad things that will and do happen. They aren't designed for us to put on a happy face. They are designed to help us rejoice- to be glad and cheerful in who God is- in good times and bad. It's learning to be glad in who God is, not because of our circumstances, but in spite of them.

EXAMPLE: joy in the Lord even through suffering

But there is a second battle for our heart. Look at verse 6.▶

<sup>NLT</sup> **Philippians 4:6** Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything.

Paul tells us not to worry about anything. And my first thought is "yea, right. You can't make yourself not worry." And there is a lot to worry about. Some of us worried all week about weather LeBron James would desert Cleveland for Miami or New York or if the Diamondbacks bullpen will ever hold a lead. But really, we worry about money; we worry about our health; we worry about our kids; we worry about our jobs; we worry about politics; we worry about our aging parents; we worry! My daughter is at Cheer Camp right now and I worry someone might fall on her and break her arm or collar bone. My son is camping with some friends and learning to shoot guns and bows and arrows and I worry for his safety with other 9 year old boys. My other daughter leaves for camp tonight and I worry about the 10 hour drive in the middle of the night. I worry my kids might leave home and not follow God. I worry about weather I am a good husband at home or a good employee at work. I tend to worry a lot. I try not to worry. I don't want to worry. I don't like the physical feeling when I worry- the racing heart beat, the stomach ache, the overwhelming feeling to control.

And Paul comes along and says, "Don't." or in my case, "Stop" cuz I'm already worrying.

And the worry Paul is talking about is being anxious. Worry is not recognizing something bad could happen and taking precautions. And conversely, flying by the seat of your pants without planning does not demonstrate a lack of worry.

The word Paul uses for worry is anxious. "Don't be anxious."

Anxiety is a feeling of nervousness, apprehension, fear, or worry. Sometimes it has a cause, but our reaction is disproportionate to the circumstance. We sometimes refer to this as freaking out. But many times, anxiety is caused by what we think may happen. And it's always negative. And worry and anxiety oftentimes has physical effects: an increased heart rate, trouble breathing, upset stomach, gray hair. Some people even feel like they are having a heart attack.

And Paul says, "Hey, don't worry like that. Don't be anxious like that." And he tells us what to do instead. He says,

<sup>NLT</sup> **Philippians 4:6** Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything.

Paul says to replace worry with prayer. In the battle for our heart and our emotions, God wants to provide a certain peace; Satan wants us to worry. He wants us fearful. He wants us wondering weather or not God is on the job. He wants us fretting over things that aren't going to happen. He wants our focus away from God and on some possible pending circumstance. And in this battle for our heart, Paul says to pray. Everytime we start to worry, stop to pray. About everything. It doesn't matter what you are worrying about. Your kids, your job, your health, your marriage, your bills. It doesn't mater how realistic the worry is. If you start to worry, stop to pray.

And Paul even tells us how to pray when we worry. ►

<sup>NLT</sup> **Philippians 4:6** Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.

First, tell God what you need. "Lord, I need to pay these bills or feed these kids or get a job." "Lord, I need to stop thinking about all the bad things that could happen." Tell God what you need. When you start to worry, stop and tell God what you need.

Secondly, thank him for what he has done. When we get caught up in worry, it is so easy to forget what God has already done. The thought of what might happen crowds out the what has already happened. And God has done some good things. If you are a Christian, there are lots of spiritual things God has done. We are going to heaven, we are forgiven, we don't have to live in guilt, our sin is paid for, Jesus said "I will never leave you or forsake you." But there are some practical things we can be thankful for even in the midst of hardship. We are sitting in an air conditioned room worshipping God in relative freedom. Most of us have a place to live; it may not be what we once had or what we someday want, but it is something. Most of us ate breakfast this morning. Most of us will go have lunch after this service. Just consider the things God has done for you so you could get here this morning.

And when we do that- when we tell God what we need and thank Him for what he has done- something happens. Look at verse 7. ►

<sup>NLT</sup> **Philippians 4:6** Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. <sup>7</sup> Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand.

In the battle for our hearts, Satan strives to create worry and anxiety. And when he succeeds he sucks the quality of our Christian life. But we aren't left helpless in this battle. We aren't relegated to living with worry and anxiety. We don't have to accept these things as "just the way life is" or "That's just how I am." Because worry and anxiety are actually a battlefield for your heart. And God promises something better than worry. God promises peace; peace so spectacular and supernatural we can't even understand it or explain it. But that peace isn't just some holy cow, out of the blue experience. It isn't granted to special Christians. Peace comes when we pray; it comes when we tell God what we need and thank him for what he has done.

So, when it comes to worry, don't let Satan win that battle for your heart. When we start to worry, stop to pray.

CONCLUSION:

I'd like to close this morning with a final thought.

Look at the end of verse 7. ►

<sup>NLT</sup> **Philippians 4:7** Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

The peace that comes from God will guard our hearts and minds. The word *guard* is a military term for garrison. God's peace will guard our heart and thoughts and emotions- the core of who we are- the way a group of soldiers guard a post. It doesn't mean Satan won't keep attacking the post of our heart. But with prayer the way Paul describes it, we can experience God's peace which protects us from Satan's attack.

In the battle for the core of who you are, rejoice and pray. And let God's peace guard and protect your heart from the attacks of the enemy.

PRAY

Help us to rejoice, not in our circumstances, but in you Lord.

When we start to worry, help us to stop and pray- tell you what we need and thank you for what you have done.

Lord- show us the freedom and peace that comes from rejoicing and praying.

Keep us from letting the enemy mold and shape our heart.