



Mon 1 Mar Philippians 4:4-7 The blessing of peace

**Philippians 4:4-7 (NRSV)
The blessing of peace**

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry 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.

Are you a worrier? I sometimes worry that I might be... According to sociologists, we worry a great deal nowadays and young people are a particularly anxious group. They would happily tell us that there is plenty to worry about - global ecological issues, the financial woes of recent years, crime, social or racial cohesion. Serious as these issues are, I think it is true to say that some people are not happy unless they have something to worry about! At the root of most anxiety is a sense of powerlessness - the inability to control and change circumstances that pose some kind of threat to life as we know it.

The injunction in the passage from Paul to the church at Philippi represents an all-encompassing blessing. It really would be a blessing to have nothing to worry about at all, but there is a subtle difference between having nothing to worry about and being released from worrying about those things that do bother us. Paul's blessing of peace works internally, not externally. The causes of concern are not removed, but, rather, by God's grace, we can be freed from the shackles of anxiety, if and when we cast our cares on Christ in a spirit of gratitude. No problem is solved, no fear allayed, no illness cured without the grace of God, so Paul's blessing amounts to the bestowing of a gift: the gift of the ability to trust God.

All blessings, if they are to have any effect or value, involve and require what liturgists call 'fruitful reception' - that is, trust and faith in the One from whom the blessing comes. Without trust, anxieties become destructive and blessings fruitless. With God, however, there is true release, enabling us to live in hope and rejoice in his freedom.

Prayer

God, from you all blessings flow. Give us grace to trust in your power to free us from anxiety and fear. Amen

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