

The Messenger

By Phillip Rutledge

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Is it Possible to Find Peace and Joy in a Prison?

Philippians 4:4-7 (NIV) *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

These are words written by the Apostle Paul while in prison. How could anyone in captivity rejoice? Paul knew that no matter how bad things got in his life, Jesus Christ was always with him. One commentary said it this way; "... our inner attitudes do not have to reflect our outward circumstances."

Do you have days when you feel like you're in prison? Your surroundings will be different but the hopelessness is just as real. Perhaps you're locked in a cell of financial debt, chained in an abusive relationship or shackled to a hospital bed with unceasing pain. How did Paul find "joy" enough to rejoice? Because Christ was near – in his heart.

Scripture says, *"Do not be anxious about anything..."* Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? (Matthew 6:27) In our helplessness we might reply, "Easier said than done", right? How can we not worry?

Well, what does Paul say next? *"... in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."* The answer is prayer – it should be our first line of defence, not our last resort.

You may find it to believe and don't understand how it happens but I have prayed with people in a variety of circumstances and I have seen *"... the peace of God which transcends all understanding..."* I've seen God's peace settle on their minds and in their hearts. The world cannot comprehend God's peace but I have been a witness to it.

I take no credit. What I did in Jesus' name, you can do, too. I only did what God asked me to do. I give all the glory to Him who sent me. Jesus explained it best in the gospel according to St. John.

John 14:26-27 (NIV) *But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

Being Christian doesn't exclude us from hardship. Believer and non-believer alike, we are all susceptible at one time or another to the trials and tribulations of life – some of us more than others; God only knows why. But not to worry; God is never surprised for he is always in control.

If you are in one of life's prisons today and you don't know where to turn, I implore you to seek God's peace through Jesus Christ. His peace can be just a prayer away. He doesn't care where you are or how you say it... just open your heart and tell God how you feel. He's a VERY good listener.

I hope you will consider His offer. In Jesus' name I pray. - S.D.G.

Your thoughts or comments are always welcomed. My email address is TheMessenger@staidansministries.com