

The Bible Speaks

By Jeffrey Frantz

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.

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:4-6,8-9)

Having a thankful spirit. With the spirit of *thanksgiving* beginning to fill the autumn air, it's a time for reflection and a time to think through with freshness (in full knowledge of the manifold blessings that are ours) *how* we choose to live out our daily lives.

Always, there are two things God asks of us in all seasons: a humble spirit and a thankful heart. *Humility* and *gratitude*: always a good plan.

Sometimes having a thankful spirit takes a little effort on our part. Sometimes we have to slow ourselves down enough to look at the *big picture* of our lives. So much of our lives is *attitude* and *perspective*.

How do we choose to understand our lives and then what *attitude* do we choose to have about it all.

In the above writing from Philippians 4, Paul is in prison. He's had time for all kinds of reflections and self-evaluation. On the other side of it all, there's an unmistakable joy in his spirit. No matter what, Paul urges us, *rejoice*. In other words, celebrate the good; lift up the positive.

It's incredible the extent to which we actually *become* the person our attitude and our spirit project onto the world in our daily living. As is so often the case in life, it's our actual behaviors that matter. When we do the *right* thing, adopt the *right* attitude, over time, it makes a difference.

Interesting enough, in prison, Paul has figured out that—no matter what—he's going to *rejoice in the Lord*. He's made a decision to put all his worries aside (He might as well; there's not much he can do about them in prison anyway.).

But again, the tone of his letter is to lift up the positive and to stay with it. *If there is anything worthy of praise*, he says, *think about these things*.

Sorting ourselves out. Don't we all need to *let go* of bogus stuff that clutters our minds and weights down our spirits? Don't we all need to be able to simply ignore some of the silly and sometimes stupid things that people do (even things that we do)?

Taking time to assess the countless things for which we re grateful in life is itself a *sorting out* process. It urges us to put things in perspective, to see things more as they, perhaps, really are and to give ourselves permission (as if we really needed it) to feel good about things (i.e., blessings ... good news) that have been there all the time.

I was just back to visit my alma mater, Grinnell College, and also to share some good times with my ninety year-old father, my older brother (just retired from forty years as a University professor), and my sister and her family. Also, on another note, my younger daughter, Erica, is getting married on November 11th.

Together, all of these happenings and anticipations invite moments of reflection. The key (as Paul suggests in above reading) is to take all the things (including the countless memories and anticipations) that are worthy of praise and to weave *them* into the attitudes and understandings we have of our lives.

While our lives have all, no doubt, had their challenging moments, still, there is so much to be thankful for ... so many things *worthy of praise* to be remembered.

May the God of peace be with us each one!