**Lessons from a Lockdown**

Rommel J. Casis

**Day 13**

**Philippians 4:4-7**

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 every situation, 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.

***Questions for Personal Reflection:***

1. Why is it possible to always rejoice in the Lord? How do I do this?
2. What does it mean to be gentle? What do I need to do to be gentler?
3. What are the things I am anxious about? Why am I anxious about these things?
4. How does God want me to handle my anxiety? What practical things can I do?
5. What is God’s promise if I do this? What does this mean?

*Insight:*

Paul tells them to rejoice in the Lord *always.* This means it is possible to always rejoice. Isn’t this what most people want, to always be happy? But how is this possible if all of us go through disappointments, failures and sufferings? If our joy is only based on our circumstances then we cannot always be happy because our circumstances cannot always give us reasons to be joyful. We need a *constant* source of joy. That is why we need to rejoice *in the Lord.* If we find our joy in God we can always be happy. Circumstances change but God does not. He is the same whether we are at the height of our victories or the depths of our failures. His blessings continue to pour whether we are in the best of health or extremely sick. He continues to give us grace and peace whether we living in plenty or in want. It is easy to be joyful when times are good, when the sun is shining, but not when times are bad and everything seem so dark. But we can’t be “solar-powered” Christians (i.e. Christians only when things are bright and sunny). Our source of joy must be God so our happiness will not fluctuate with the changing seasons of our lives. How do we do this? We should be committed to remembering who God is everyday. We should always remind ourselves of how much God loves us and that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. We should recall his power for us who believe, his grace that he lavishes on us, and his generosity in providing us with every spiritual blessing in Christ. The list of reasons to find joy in God goes on and you find them in the Bible. We should therefore take the time and make the effort to find reasons to rejoice in the Lord everyday. Today, what is your reason to be joyful?

Paul tells them to let their gentleness be evident to all. The Greek word translated as gentleness means “appropriate” or “suitable”. Perhaps that is why in the ESV it is translated as “reasonableness.” The word is also translated as “kind” or “considerate.” The other scriptures that use the word include 1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 3:2; James 3:17 and 1 Peter 2:18. These scriptures suggest that being gentle includes not over reacting. During these days when we are bombarded with negative developments it would be easy to let our emotions get the better of us. But how can we be gentle in the midst of a pandemic? Look at what Paul says next. *The Lord is near.* We may be far away from most people in the church, our usual lifelines, but the Lord is always near. When we remember that Jesus is right there with us, we can respond with gentleness in every situation whether we find ourselves in a burning furnace, a den of lions or in a small ship caught in a storm. There is no need to panic if we are close to God.

Paul tells them not be anxious about *anything*. There are no exceptions. A Christian has no right to be anxious about anything. What a Christian is entitled to is prayer and petition in *every* situation. Let us take advantage of this privilege. Let’s make a list of everything we are anxious about. Do it now. Once you have done that, talk to God about each one. Tell him why you are anxious and ask him, plead with him if you must, to work out every single situation. Surrender all your anxieties to God. What will happen if we do this? The peace of God will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Will every situation change? Not necessarily. But no matter what happens we will have peace guarding our hearts. Do you have peace right now?

Peace never comes without surrender [and] surrender never comes without a decision to trust…How challenging to turn everything over to God [and] yet how foolish not to. – Shiela Jones

The things we are anxious about are normally the things we can’t do anything about. Why carry it on our shoulders then? Why not give it up to God so that he can replace it with peace?

During the lockdown, let our lives be filled with joy, gentleness and peace.