**The Great Examiner: Glorifying God in Exam Season**

* Intro
* The chief end of man is to worship God and enjoy Him forever
  + Exams season can still serve that purpose!
  + Philippians 4:1-9
* Stand firm in the Lord

1 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

2 I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

1. Opportunities for fellowship

* All the following are things we do together
* Stay committed to gathering: church, in the week, sharing, supporting, pointing

1. Opportunities to rejoice

* *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!*
* Lord is the great examiner, judge of the world
* Exams judge us
  + Show what we’ve been doing all year
  + Lord will return to show how we have used our lives
  + But he has swapped papers with us
* Anxiety for exams is picture of anxiety for Jesus return: but we have forgiveness. Rejoice!

1. Opportunities to reach out to others

*Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.*

* The Lord is near
* Serve others

1. Opportunities to work on trust and prayer

*“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.”*

Worry, stress and anxiety are things we all face to one degree or another, and things which are especially evident in the exam season. Around us people are worried about their deadlines, worried about their results. It’s infectious. Maybe we do remember that God in his goodness hasn’t given us responsibility for some of those things, but then we start worrying about the things we do have responsibility for – are we getting enough sleep? Am I honouring God in my work? Am I slipping in my commitment to church?

As we become worried and anxious about things, we don’t do so well. Our heart rates increase, our thoughts fixate on other things and we can’t refocus, we can’t rest. Sometimes we can even get into a mind-set that says if you’re not worried about something, then it’s because you don’t care about it, you don’t have any concern for it. When you think about it that just doesn’t make sense! We respect people with a cool head in tough situations.

Here in Philippians Paul gives a short and precise response, from God, to worried Christians. Our problem is anxiety; God’s response is to say “don’t”. “Do not be anxious about anything”. We can feel so powerless in the face of worry – it rises within us and we can’t control it. God’s response is to say “do not be anxious about anything”. What he’s saying is that even though you feel helpless in the face of adversity, you do have a choice! The one who created and redeemed us says “you have a choice.” This is the glory and power of the gospel in our lives – the gospel that is powerful to save sinners, powerful to redeem the world – and powerful to give peace. What a powerful message!

God says do not be anxious, and gives an alternative. God says “talk to me.” That’s what prayer is. This is an invitation to talk to him, to present specific requests to him. The anxiety that rises up within us, we need to recognise it and turn it to prayer. When you pray, don’t think of getting the words right or doing it for the right length of time – God says “just talk to me.” He’s interested in what you’re anxious about, with the interest of a loving father. What’s more, we pray because we trust God, but as we pray, we find ourselves trusting God more. It directs our thinking, our attitudes, our actions to call on the Lord for everything. The exam season is a wonderful time to put this into practice.

And His offer is a peace that transcends all understanding. Maybe at times that will be a supernatural wave of peace that descends on you, but I think more generally it will be a deep seated peace in the knowledge that you have a loving father who listens. We already spoke about the value of speaking to other people about what’s on our mind, and the value of sharing our burdens. Now imagine that person is the creator, sustainer, and redeemer of the universe, before whom you have been justified, and can unload anxiety as a child to their Father.

1. Opportunities to remember the good things

*“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”*

So now coming on to the final part of the passage. Verse 8 says [Read v8]. This term as you and those around you spend time studying, you’re going to come across things which are true, which are noble, which are lovely, admirable. As you look at the details of a creation which reflects the glory of its creator, as you engage with works of art pointing to the creativity of image bearers, as you yourself are involved in the understanding and ordering of creation – think about these things. See beyond the need to learn things for a test or produce a piece of coursework for an examiner – recognise things as being excellent and praiseworthy. You come across a beautiful piece of literature, allow yourself to be moved by it; you produce a particularly elegant proof, recognise the goodness of it. Christ is the one who is before all things, and in whom all things hold together – see him in the things you encounter this term, and use that to glorify and enjoy God.

* Put it into practice!