

## Crossing to the Joy of Christ

- ✦ from anxiety to peace (vv.4-7)
- ✦ from worry to trust (vv.8-9)
- ✦ from weakness to strength (vv.10-13)

In the Name of **Christ** our **Joy**, dear believers, “*crossed over from death to life*” (John 5:24):

Most of us have very little personal experience with bridges anymore. Freeways blend them in so well you barely know you’re crossing an overpass or a river or some railroad tracks. That all changed during evening rush hour August 1, 2007. The third busiest bridge in Minnesota, across the Mississippi River right into Minneapolis, suddenly collapsed, killing 13, injuring 145.<sup>2</sup> Pictures of old Bridge 9340 tell part of the story. The only support was underneath – no redundancy of towers and cables above. Investigators traced the failure to metal gussets that had been bowing until the ½” steel tore through. Lawsuits can never bring back loved ones lost or give a “do-over” on a bridge for 140,000 vehicles a day.

Check out the new bridge at St. Croix Crossing just south of Stillwater.<sup>3</sup> Years of planning provide redundancy of deck support, plus cables and piers above. The Extradosed Bridge is designed to complement the treasured river valley. You can find fascinating explanations online.

What you cannot find is safety for the soul. Some try to build bridges of the heart on the shifting sands of their feelings, but relationships keep tearing apart. No human design will ever get you across the deep valley of sin and failure to God. “*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and [all] are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*” (Romans 3:23f EHV) You can look, you can touch, you can trust your whole weight **Crossing to the Joy of Christ**.

### ✦ from anxiety to peace (vv.4-7)

As kids growing up at our Lutheran Bible Camp we all had to cross a little river on foot. If I told you that the girls’ cabins were on one side and the boys’ cabins on the other, you’d probably jump to some conclusions – the way we jumped from rock to rock. But the swimming hole was across the creek too. It was always tricky to keep your feet dry. Kids always want to stay out of the water, right? These happy memories help illustrate **Crossing to the Joy of Christ**.

Life wasn’t so happy for Paul. He was worried about some relationships back in Philippi among his dear Christian friends. Being imprisoned far away in Rome didn’t help. Hear his pain in the verses before our text: “*I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord.*” Paul asks his “*loyal yokefellow*” *Syzygus* to “*help those women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel.*” (4:2ff NIV84) Worried about loved ones far away, how could Paul say what follows?

“*Rejoice...always! I will say it again: Rejoice!*”<sup>4</sup> If you’re paying close attention, you know I just left out the most important words. It’s like forgetting the bolts in your bridge. Like building the towers without the cables. Like a creek without stepping stones. You can only have this constant rejoicing if it is “*in the Lord.*” Most people are just trying to be happy. But that only works when the happenings of your life are as smooth as the water on the St. Croix River. Never choppy? Never cold?

<sup>1</sup> See more about Growth Groups on our website: [www.wels.us/newlife](http://www.wels.us/newlife) .

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I-35W\\_Mississippi\\_River\\_bridge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I-35W_Mississippi_River_bridge)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/stcroixcrossing/design.html#deck>

<sup>4</sup> Unless noted otherwise, Bible quotes *Evangelical Heritage Version (EHV): NT, Psalms*. NPH 800-662-6022. Kindle Edition.

**“Rejoice in the Lord”** is especially for the dark days **Crossing To the Joy of Christ**. It means trusting the great things God has done for you, starting with the Rock which is Christ. The eternal bridge of His cross lights up with **Joy** and **peace**. The St. Croix Crossing bridge has lights for cars and walkers and boats below. But only the light of God’s Word shows the stepping stones **from anxiety to peace**.

Think of **anxiety** as a feeling so deep it’s subconscious. Dreams you can’t remember when they wake you up. A feeling of unease or as one man said, “The fear that the other shoe is going to drop.” Sunday School stories are a great help here because they teach us as children what God has done for His people in the past. They illustrate God’s help in promises for every day on the way home to heaven.

When **anxiety** gives way to God’s **peace** inside, folks can feel it outside. **“Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, 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.”** Do you hear the finish for many of our sermons? God’s Word gives us **peace** that guards this bridge and holds it together, lighting the way across. You get wet as God builds in Baptism, but it’s as cool and refreshing as your feet in a creek on a hot summer day. Knowing that **“the Lord is near”** puts the fear of God in you to be prepared when Jesus keeps His last promise to come back on Judgment Day. It’s a peaceful, respectful anticipation loving God and trusting Him – always **“near.” Crossing to the Joy of Christ...**

#### ✠ from worry to trust (vv.8-9)

**Worry** is more conscious than **anxiety**, fearful surface thoughts about what might happen. But the bridge God builds for our hearts and minds rests deep on the bedrock of God’s promises. And again, crossing that creek at camp helps to illustrate. If you were so afraid you couldn’t stop worrying about the water between the rocks, you’d most likely slip in. When the sun went down, it got really hard to tell if that dark patch was a rock or liquid pool. Outrunning counselors or chasing campers meant focusing on the hard surfaces to stay dry on the way over. No time for **worry**. All ahead **trust**.

God’s Word supplies the clear outline of those rocks for our souls. This spotlight illuminates right where to put your feet: **“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if anything is excellent, and if anything is praiseworthy, think about these things. <sup>9</sup>The things that you learned, received, heard, and saw in me: Keep doing these things. And the God of peace will be with you.”** Before God’s **peace** was guarding. Now **the God of peace** takes you by the hand and says, “I’m right here! Focus on **‘true...honorable...right...pure...lovely...commendable...excellent, and...praiseworthy...things.’** Then **worry** can’t find room.” **Trust** in God is cabled to the towers of God’s truth in Paul’s letters – **Crossing...**

#### ✠ from weakness to strength (vv.10-13)

Some things are easier to preach like conquering **anxiety** and **worry** with **peace** and **trust**. But things like pastoral support can sound self-serving. So a preacher is tempted to sin by silence. Yet, God calls us to preach all God’s Word, the Bible. The Holy Spirit’s skill is amazing in Paul’s last few verses.

Paul admits he’s still in school, but he learned his early lessons well. Contentment lights up his Roman prison where food and clothing, all life’s necessities had to be supplied by friends. That’s why Paul’s gratitude for the Philippians’ generous support is so heartfelt and why he gives them the benefit of the doubt. After a lull, the Christians in Philippi saw an opportunity and flourished. Their generosity popped up like a flower in the springtime. Paul’s prison cold melted away in the garden of God’s grace.

Want to test your own **Crossing to the Joy of Christ**? Find someone to help. Check whether your offerings to God are planned carefully and given joyfully – firstfruits, not leftovers. Test: Can you say this with Paul? **“I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me.”** There’s **Joy** over here with Jesus. Come on across and live! Amen.

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