

Well good morning, friends. It's great to be here with all of you this morning. As we get started, I want to take a moment and greet 9:30 Classic and Online community.

Announcement for Classic only. Hey real quick, I wanted to let you all know here in Classic that we need a little more help in the tech booth. You don't need to be a tech genius, all you need is the ability to follow along with the songs, or manuscript to click slides or run the video recording. If you are interested in helping once a month, talk to Evan in the sound booth after service.

Today we continue our Everyday Faith series and we are going to look at the Apostle Paul's advice to the church in Philippi as they wrestle with everyday struggles and everyday hardship. Philippi was an important city in Macedonia (North Eastern Greece) and it was a Roman city, meaning that many of its citizens were Roman citizens. Paul, at the time of this letter, was in prison, likely in Rome. The Church in Philippi had sent one of their members, Epaphroditus to bring financial assistance and aid to Paul, and to tell Paul what was going on in the church. The church was struggling. From the outside they were facing increased opposition and pressure from their Roman Pagan neighbors. And from within, they were facing internal unrest between some of the church members. So Paul does his best to encourage the church to stand firm in their faith, even in the face of opposition, and to be united in the church as one body of believers under Christ, their Lord and Savior.

Turn in your Bible to Philippians chapter 4 verses 4-9.

This is near the end of the letter and Paul gives some very practical advice on how to live out our faith in the midst of everyday struggles and hardships.

These six verses we are going to look at this morning contain six imperatives or commands for how to live. And if we live out these things,

Paul gives us two promises that will help us to have a healthy Christ centered life in the midst of a crazy world.

1. Let's take a look at the first command: Verse 4: Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again, Rejoice!

When I read this verse last week I honestly said "Really God? Always?" So, I thought maybe it was a translation problem. Paul couldn't have meant always, and I looked it up in the Greek just to be sure. The word always means "At all times, Always, Ever-more." So that wasn't helpful.

Rejoice in the Lord always. How can this be? Life is hard sometimes. We suffer through hard things. Losses, deaths, grief, heartache for people we love. People hurt us sometimes, emergencies happen, illness, accidents, environmental catastrophes. We work hard and have hard jobs and endure hard things, and Paul says we are supposed to rejoice in the Lord through all of those things?

A few weeks ago, Pastor Phil led us through James Chapter 1.

Remember what James says in 1:2-4 *"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."*

The word James uses for joy is the same word Paul uses for rejoicing. To be full of joy. We are to rejoice no matter the circumstances.

Again this is really hard, it almost seems impossible, So I tried to act like Paul doesn't really know what he is talking about, he must not have faced any hard things in his life to say this to his friends in Philippi. So I read through the letter again. Sure enough, Paul writes about his struggles and imprisonment, and his anxiety over Epaphras being sick and the hard things he is facing. Then I went looking at some of the other letters Paul had written and in 2 Cor 11 Paul recounts how he had been beaten, received 39 lashes from the Jews 5 different times, beaten w/ rods, shipwrecked, and faced many other hardships and threats all for the sake

of the gospel. Paul knew what it was to suffer and yet here he says rejoice in the Lord always.

So how can Paul, who has been through a lot harder things than I've been through, tell us to rejoice always? I think he can say it because His eyes were fixed on Jesus. He trusted that his savior had a plan and would be with him through it all. So even while he was a prisoner he could rejoice and tell us to rejoice in the Lord. Even when he was beaten to within an inch of his life for preaching the gospel, he can say rejoice. Even when he was shipwrecked and floating in the sea, he can say, rejoice always, again I say rejoice. He had that Christ centered perspective in life and he is calling us to have the same.

When we have that same attitude, that same focus on Jesus, even when we have a terrible day, even in the midst of tears, we can say God is still good, Jesus is still with me, the Holy Spirit is strengthening me, I will rejoice in the Lord.

We see this same attitude and focus in the Psalms of David. Many times, as David faced the near certainty of death, he cried out to God for help and he lifted his praise to God in thanksgiving. Psalm 59 is just one example. When Saul had sent men to watch David's house in order to kill him. David begins with vs 1. *"Deliver me from my enemies, O God; protect me from those who rise up against me. Deliver me from evildoers and save me from bloodthirsty men."* Obviously David is having a really bad day. Men are trying to kill him. I've never experienced that, but I imagine it's pretty stressful. Then at the end of psalm this is what he says. Vs 16 *"But I will sing of your strength, in the morning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble. O my strength, I sing praise to you; you O God, are my fortress, my loving God."* David is not rejoicing in the circumstances, he is rejoicing in God's goodness and faithfulness even when the circumstances are terrible.

Yes, Paul can tell us to rejoice in the Lord always, not because everything in life is good. But because God is good no matter what is going on in life. Amen?

2. The second command is to be gentle and kind to everyone. Read verse 5: *Let your reasonableness(Gentleness) be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand.*" This sounds a lot like what Paul wrote to Titus. Titus 3: 1-2.

Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men. In other words, God expects us to be kind and reasonable. We are the example to the world of God's redeeming grace, so we ought to be gracious.

I am starting to feel like gentleness and kindness are fading from our culture. Do you feel the same way? Even simple things like saying please and thank you seem to be rare. People don't seem to be able to disagree with each other anymore without resorting to name calling and shouting.

And let's be honest, when we are stressed, frightened, anxious or sick, we have a tendency to become a bit grumpy, I know that I am. Paul reminds us to be gentle and kind people. To have reasonable expectations and when things get rough, try to have a reasonable reaction. Sometimes when someone is rude to you or demanding it's easy to be rude back. I'm guilty of this. Paul reminds us to be gentle. It's ok to have a bad day, it's not ok to make others suffer because of your bad day. Amen?

3. The third command might be a bit difficult for us right now. Vs. 6 says "Be anxious for nothing!" The NIV says "Do not be anxious about anything." That is a tall order. Raise your hand if you have felt some degree of anxiety in the last six years! I don't know about you but I feel like 2020 was a turning point in our history, and anxiety has been on the rise ever since. Listen to this article I pulled up last week.:

The statistics are staggering. 73% of American adults report experiencing elevated levels of anxiety related to the U.S. political climate, with many describing their feelings as anxious, exhausted, and even angry (Navigator, 2025). A recent mental health poll indicates that 67% of U.S. adults also report feeling anxious about global events, including concerns about the economy, safety, and climate change (APA, 2025). Additionally, 70% of Americans report experiencing high levels of financial anxiety (Harbor Mental Health, 2025). Across the nation, people

report the same restless nights, racing thoughts, and tight chests. It is as if the air itself is charged with uncertainty, leaving the American people more anxious than ever. (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-mood-lab/202509/america-the-anxious>)

Maybe this article describes you. Or maybe you are just a person who likes to worry. You don't mean to, you don't try to, but somehow you can look at a situation or opportunity and in just a few minutes figure out everything that could possibly go wrong and every reason that it will likely go wrong and all the reasons to not do whatever it is that needs or wants to be done. Not super healthy is it? I'm that kind of person. Sigh! I like to have a back up plan for the back up plan, you know what I mean? And in some ways it is really helpful. I am pretty good at risk assessment, and I'm pretty good at considering the consequences of a decision. But sometimes I just get all twisted up with the what if's and the worry and that is when it gets unhealthy.

Having some anxiety about something serious, a health emergency, a finance emergency, worry about your wayward kid, those are normal responses to stress. Anxiety is not a sin, it's part of being human. Paul is telling us not to allow that kind of anxiety or stress to control us, to own us or distract us from following and pursuing after Jesus.

4. Thankfully Paul doesn't just give the prohibition, he also gives us some tools to deal with anxiety and keep it from owning us or controlling us. Paul's next command. "Present your requests to God." But there is a specific way to do this. He says to ask God specifically by prayer, supplication, & with Thanksgiving.

Let's look at those real quick. First, when we present our request to God we need to come with an attitude of thanksgiving. This means we start by recognizing the blessings God has poured out upon us. Foremost is our relationship with God, our salvation, then the people in our lives, the provision and care God has shown us, the very breath in our lungs we can be thankful for. When we come to God let us be thankful for who he is and all that he has done.

Secondly Paul says to bring our prayers and petitions to the Lord. These are very similar. Prayer is more general, talking to God, listening to God, petition is more of an urgent request to meet a need.

When we face hardship and challenges in life, when we have reason to worry, Paul instructs us to urgently ask God for his help and provision with an attitude of thanksgiving and gratitude. He loves us, he knows us, he knows what we are going through he wants us to trust Him through our trials. God is inviting us to surrender our anxiety and whatever situation is causing that anxiety to him. To trust him with it. To give it to him, and to seek him for a solution instead of getting all tangled up or spun out on the worries and fears. First Peter 5:6-7 says *"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you."*

First Promise: When we do this Paul promises something big will happen. God will solve all our problems... No, look at verse 7. (Read) *"The peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."* What a powerful promise. When we go to God with our worries and seek him with an honest and thankful heart he promises his peace will guard us. Peace that is greater than what we can comprehend.

The world is starving for peace. People are desperate for a sense of calm. Search for personal peace or inner peace on the internet and you will find thousands of articles on self-help, meditation, self-acceptance, hobbies, yoga, crystals, organizing and decorating, you name it... and if those don't help, people often turn to more destructive things to distract them or help them escape the stresses of the world or the mess inside of them.

Paul gives us a promise. When we seek Jesus. When we turn our hearts and prayers to God, he promises us His peace. Not human peace. His peace. Not a rescue from every difficult circumstance, not an end to stress. Peace. He promises his peace. I don't know about you, but I want some of His peace.

5 . Paul isn't done, he has two more instructions for us. When we encounter a crisis, we start to feel anxious, we start to go down the path of worry and questions and what-ifs, and things start to spin out a bit, so we stop and pray. We take a deep breath and remember that despite appearances, God is in control. The fog begins to clear a little bit. What do we do now? Paul tells us to practice some positive thinking. Think about the good things in life. I'm serious. Look at verses 8. (READ) There is wisdom in practicing positive thinking. 2 Cor 10: 5 says *"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴ The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵ We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."*

So Paul instructs us to stop letting our minds be clouded or mixed up with the fears and worries, the things that the enemy uses to distract us and push us off course, but instead think about the good things in life. Things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, anything that is excellent or praiseworthy. Think about those things instead. When you start to feel your blood boil while you watch the news, turn it off and think about the good things. When you start to play the what-if game, if you are trying to figure out the backup plan to the backup plan, hand that to God and think about something else. Don't let your worries own you but instead take your thoughts captive. Be the boss of your mind.

This does not mean bury your head in the sand. This means willfully choosing to trust God and think about the blessings instead of dwelling on the struggles. This might take some practice. Memorizing a few favorite bible verses and reciting them can be really helpful. When I'm lying awake at night and my brain is spinning, I will often recite Psalm 23. That simple reminder that the Lord is my Shepherd and he is leading me brings me so much peace. Listening to worship music, going for a walk and talking things out with God, these are all tools to help us change what we are thinking about and dwelling on, and to experienced God's peace in our hearts.

6. There is one last thing Paul challenges us to do. Remember there is a lot of doing in this passage. He says, "Practice what you see mature believers doing. You all know the cliché that when raising kids, more is caught than taught. Paul says, don't just listen to what I say, do the things that I do. Well, unfortunately, Paul died a long time ago so it's kind of hard to watch him live life and imitate him. I would bet that each of us here knows someone who is a few years further down the road with Jesus than we are. Paul's encouragement to us is to watch and listen and learn from those saints, and then go out and practice doing what they do.

Think for a moment who that person or people are in your life. Who are the people you look up to and want to be like? Are you paying attention? Are you practicing doing the kinds of things they are doing?

The Final promise that Paul gives us is an echo of his earlier promise. "And the God of Peace will be with you." When we cast our cares upon the Lord he promises to give us his peace. When we practice right thinking and right living he promises to be with us.

So as we conclude let's review and then we are going to do some practicing.

1. Rejoice in the Lord Always.
2. Be kind and reasonable.
3. Don't be anxious. Don't let anxiety rule you.
4. Ask God for help with a thankful heart.
5. Take control of our thoughts and focus on the good things in life.
6. Practice doing what we see mature believers do.

If we practice these things, if we do these things, Paul promises that we will experience God's peace and presence in our lives.

We are going to do an exercise together. We are going practice presenting our worries and anxieties to the Lord and then I am going to pray for all of you. Go ahead and put away your Bibles and notes and phones and stuff. When you are ready, I want you to close your eyes, and to place your hands in your lap, palms up and hands closed.

1. Before you begin to pray, take a moment and sort through all the stuff that is going on in your life and find that one thing that has been bothering you the most. That health issue, that class you are in, that finance issue, that person or relationship that is causing you the most worry. Maybe it's an addiction, maybe it's a sin issue that you need to confess and be free from. Identify that thing. Think about that stress or anxiety that you are holding onto. If you have a lot of stresses in your life it might be difficult to choose, but just focus on one thing right now.

2. Next I want you to think about the blessings in your life. As you begin to pray, give thanks to God for all of those blessings. How has God blessed you this week? How has he shown you his love. His provision. His mercy. Thank him for those things.

3. Now I want you to ask God for help with your specific worry. Ask for a specific answer or solution to this issue. Ask him if there is something you need to do or change. Be specific.

4. Now I want you to imagine yourself releasing that worry and placing it in the hands of Jesus and then letting go. As you pray through this, open your hands, and release it to the Lord. It's not in your hands any more, it's in his hands. You are releasing it to him.

Let me pray for you.

If you are anxious about something, or if there is a struggle in your life that has just been holding on to you and you are having difficulty releasing it to Jesus. I want to encourage you to ask for prayer. Come and talk to me, or one of the other pastors, talk to your small group or your close friends and ask for prayer. Sometimes we need help with this stuff and prayer for us as we release it into God's hands.

Otherwise, go from here and be blessed, and spend the afternoon thinking about the good things in life that God has blessed us with. See you all tonight at 5:30 in the Auditorium for some amazing worship.

God Bless!