

Thesis: Paul thrived in the face of many troubles. If we would also like to do so, Paul gives us three commands and their result. We must rejoice in the Lord always, show sweet reasonableness to everyone, and request of God for all things. If we do these things, the peace of God will guard our hearts and minds, allowing us to thrive in any situation.

Support: Philippians 4:4-7

I. Greeting

- a. Good morning!
- b.

2. Introduction

- a. It's been said that there are three types of people:
 1. Those who have trouble,
 2. Those who have had trouble, and
 3. Those who are going to have trouble (Bob Lyons).
- ii. Let's face it, troubles are inevitable; they will affect every single person within this room.
 1. We are going to have health problems.
 2. We are going to lose loved ones.
 3. We are going to have conflicts with others.
 4. We are going to lose money in the markets.
- iii. Just because we're Christians, God does exempt us from worldly troubles.
 1. In fact, the opposite is probably the case – our Christianity often invites problems.
 2. Jesus says in **John 15:18**, "¹⁸ If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you."
 - a. The world hated Jesus, and the world also hates us, because we our his followers.
- b. The world also hated Paul, and he suffered profusely as a follower of Jesus.

- i. Listen to this:

But whatever anyone else dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. ²² Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I. ²³ Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. ²⁴ Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; ²⁶ on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; ²⁷ in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. ²⁸ And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches (**2 Corinthians 11:21-28**).

- ii. Troubles abounded for the apostle Paul.



1. Before he wrote these words, he had trouble.
 2. While he wrote these words, he was experiencing trouble.
 3. We know from history that after he wrote these words, he experienced more trouble.
 - a. He was arrested, put in chains, and imprisoned (**Acts 21**).
 - b. Paul was kept in custody (**Acts 21–26**).
 - c. On the way to Rome, he experienced another shipwreck at Malta (**Acts 27-28**).
 - d. Once he arrived in Rome, he was kept under house arrest for another two years as he proclaimed the gospel to all who visited him (**Acts 28:30-31**).
 4. Paul knew a little something about trouble; he endured things that you and I could never even imagine.
 - a. Yet, he not only endured these problems, he exulted in them; he thrived because of them, not despite them (**Romans 5:3-5**).
 - b. What was his secret? How did he actually do it?
 - c. How can we not only endure the trials of this life, but actually flourish during them?
3. **Paul lets us in on his secret within the pages of his letter to the church at Philippi, a letter one commentator calls “a hymn of joy.” Please notice what he says in Philippians 4:4-7. From prison, Paul writes:**
- a. ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
4. **There it is. That is Paul’s secret to overcoming adversity. If you’d like to thrive in the midst of your problems, do these things and you will. Paul gives three commands and their result. The first command: Rejoice in the Lord.**
- a. **4:4**, “⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.”
 - i. Paul commands us to “Rejoice in the Lord always.”
 1. The verb he uses here for rejoice is in the present tense, so this sentence is literally rendered “Keep on rejoicing in the Lord – always.”
 2. Then, lest we miss his point, he repeats himself.
 3. We are commanded to rejoice in the Lord at all times.
 - a. One commentator correctly notes:
Since joy is commanded, it is not a feeling like happiness. It is a mental attitude, a life stance. Whereas happiness depends on what happens, joy does not. Joy derives from a conviction that, despite present circumstances, God is in control and will save those who belong to Christ (Garland, Expositor’s Bible Commentary).



- b. Those of us who are New Testament Christians; those of us who have put on Christ in baptism; those of us who have a relationship with Jesus Christ ought to always rejoice.
 - i. B/c no one or no situation can take him away from us; our salvation in him is secure.
 - ii. The joy we are commanded to have in him is supposed to transcend every conceivable earthly circumstance.
 - iii. It ought to endure every single thing life throws at you.
 - 1. If your troubles are past, rejoice in the Lord.
 - 2. If your troubles are present, rejoice in the Lord.
 - 3. If your troubles are future, rejoice in the Lord.
 - 4. Rejoice in the Lord no matter what happens!
- c. I recently read a story about a nine-year-old girl. This little girl had “leukemia was given six months to live. When the doctor broke the news to her parents outside her hospital room, the youngster overheard the doctor's words. But it did not become obvious until later that she knew about her condition. To everyone's surprise, her faith in Christ gave her an attitude of victory. She talked freely about her death with anticipation in her voice. As she grew weaker, it seemed that her joy became more radiant. One day before she sank into a final coma, she said to her family, "I am going to be the first to see Jesus! What would you like me to tell Him for you?" (Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited).
 - i. This little girl had faith. And her faith welled up in her so much so that she was joyful even in the face of death.
 - ii. We can learn something from this little girl's example.
- ii. Like her and like Paul, we ought to rejoice in the Lord at all times, regardless of circumstances.

5. Second: Show Reasonableness.

- a. 4:5, “⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand;”
 - i. The word translated as reasonableness in the ESV is the Greek word *epieikēs* [ep-ee-i-kace’]. This word is extremely difficult to translate into a single English word.
 - 1. BDAG defines it this way: “not insisting on every right of letter of law or custom, *yielding, gentle, kind, courteous, tolerant.*”
 - a. Because *epieikēs* encapsulates so many ideas, it is a big word, it is tough to translate, so our English Bibles use a variety of words.
 - i. ESV – reasonableness
 - ii. KJV – moderation
 - iii. ASV; RSV – forbearance
 - iv. NASB – gentle *spirit*
 - v. NIV; NKJV – gentleness



- b. All of these words are correct but individually incomplete; by combining them we understand *epieikēs*. *Epieikes* includes:
 - i. Forbearance or yieldingness.
 - ii. Gentleness.
 - iii. Sweet reasonableness.
 - iv. Willingness to forgo your own “rights” for the benefit of others.
 - ii. Paul commands us to act this way towards everyone.
 - I. This includes:
 - a. Our brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - b. Our family, our friends, our neighbors, our loved ones.
 - c. Enemies.
 - d. Democrats if you are a Republican; Republicans if you are a Democrat.
 - e. No one is excepted.
 - 2. The world needs to see this disposition, this demeanor from us.
 - a. In what other way are they going to see our joy in the Lord?
 - iii. Maintaining this positive attitude is not always easy.
 - I. One reason we ought to do it is because we’re in the Lord, and we should be filled with joy because of this fact.
 - 2. Paul gives us another reason. He writes, “The Lord is at hand” (4:5).
 - a. “At hand” can mean a couple of things. It can mean:
 - i. “Near in time”
 - ii. “Near in space.”
 - b. For the Christian, the Lord is both.
 - i. His second coming is always imminent, and we should act appropriately.
 - ii. He is always nearby; this should calm us and encourage us.
 - 1. Jesus said, “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).
 - b. Christians rejoice in the Lord and know the Lord is at hand; therefore, we must show sweet reasonableness to everyone we interact with, regardless of circumstances.
6. **Third: Request of God.**
- a. 4:6, “do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”
 - i. As if the commands to rejoice in the Lord and to show sweet reasonableness at all times weren’t difficult enough, Paul drops a bomb here.
 - I. He commands we not be anxious about anything; we must quit worrying about stuff.
 - a. Jesus says in **Matthew 6:25**, “²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”
 - b. Worry is a sin, because it reveals a lack of faith in our God.



- i. He has promised us that we will us no matter what curveball live may throw at us.
 - I. We ought to trust his word.
 - ii. Rather than worry about things, Paul commands we let our requests be made known to God by prayer and supplication with an attitude of thanksgiving.
 - 1. Talking to God, according the Paul, is the solution to worry.
 - 2. Peter writes that we ought to cast all of our anxieties on him because he cares for us (**I Peter 5:7**).
 - 3. Paul and Peter aren't talking about the simple prayers we offer before a meal. They are referring to something much deeper and more profound.
 - a. One commentator writes:

[Paul] is talking the serious business of bringing our lives before God, examining our dependence upon God, placing our lives in God's hands...[A]nxiety is an attempt to carry the burden of the present and the future oneself; prayer is yielding it to and leaving it in the safe hands of God" (Dunnam, Communicator's Commentary).
 - 4. Instead of worrying about things, "²² Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved" (**Psalms 55:22**).
 - b. When faced with any problem, talk to God about it and let him deal with it; let your request be made known to God.

7. Fourth: The Result is Peace.

- a. **4:7**, "⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."
 - i. If you rejoice in the Lord always, if you always show sweet reasonableness, if you always request of God rather than worry, then you will have the peace of God.
 - 1. Paul refers to our God as the God of peace in **4:9**.
 - a. The God of peace promises his peace to those who obey him.
 - ii. Like many aspects of God, the peace of God surpasses all understanding.
 - 1. God's peace is so awesome that our finite minds cannot fully comprehend it.
 - 2. God's peace is so fantastic that our minds cannot manufacture or produce it; it can only be given by God.
 - 3. Those that possess this peace have difficulty explaining it.
 - 4. Those that do not have it are flabbergasted by it.
 - a. They wonder how Christians can face the exact same problems they do and yet be overwhelmed by peace.
 - iii. This peace of God guards our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus.
 - 1. Thayer defines the Greek word translated as guard this way, "to guard, protect by a military guard."
 - a. This is a military term that is used metaphorically here.

- i. The peace of God stands as a sentinel over the hearts and minds of Christians.
 - 1. Hearts refers to emotions.
 - 2. Minds refers to thoughts and intellect.
 - 3. The peace of God guards the inner being of Christians, allowing us to thrive in any situation.
- ii. You'll quickly notice what the peace of God does not guard.
 - 1. The peace of God does not guard the outer being.
 - a. Paul writes in **2 Corinthians 4:16**, “¹⁶ So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.”
 - i. Our bodies will waste away, but our inner nature is renewed and under guard.
 - ii. Our inner being is guarded, regardless of what happens to our bodies.
 - 2. The peace of God also does not guard those that are not in Christ.
 - a. All spiritual blessings are available in Christ (**Ephesians 1:3**).
- b. The result of rejoicing in the Lord always, always showing sweet reasonableness, requesting of God for all things, is the peace of God. This peace surpasses understanding and stands as a sentinel over the hearts and minds of Christians, empowering us to endure and thrive regardless of what happens.

8. Conclusion

- a. The apostle Paul endured many troubles, troubles that you and I have difficulty comprehending. Yet through it all he exulted and thrived.
- b. By reading and studying **Philippians 4:4-7**, we can start to understand how this was possible. Like Paul, Christians ought to:
 - i. Rejoice in the Lord always.
 - ii. Show sweet reasonableness to everyone.
 - iii. Request of God for everything.
- c. If we do these things, the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.
- d. Paul was under guard, and we can be as well.

9. Invitation

- a. These words of encouragement were written to Christians, those who are in Christ.
- b. If you are not yet a Christian, and you'd like to be put in Christ, you now have an opportunity to do so.
- c. We urge you to obey the gospel this morning:
 - i. Believe in Jesus (**John 3:16**).
 - ii. Repent (**Acts 2:38**).

- iii. Confess Jesus is Lord (**Romans 10:9-10**).
- iv. Be baptized (**Mark 16:16**).
- v. Live righteously (**Revelation 2:10**).
- d. If you'd like to put on Jesus today, we invite you to come forward as we stand and sing.
- e. Let us stand and sing.

