

## CLOSING EXHORTATIONS, PT. 1; PHIL. 4:4 (Ed O'Leary)

### INTRODUCTION.

AS PAUL BEGINS TO DRAW HIS LETTER TO A CLOSE, ~ HE ISSUES A SERIES OF succinct exhortations, ~ specifically, ~ six of them.

▶▶Near the end of a few of his letters, ~ Paul includes a section of concise exhortations similar to what we find here in [Phil. 4](#).

▷▷E.g., ~ he draws 1 Thess. to a close with a series of brief appeals (1 Thess. 5:12-22).

▶▶And that is what Paul does here in [Phil. 4:4-9](#). ~ He gives us a series of six concise exhortations.

▷▷And in these six appeals, ~ there is no one unifying theme for the section, ~ like we've seen so far in each of the various sections of Philippians.

▶▶And today we will begin to look at these six brief closing exhortations in [Phil. 4:4-9](#).

▷▷This morning we'll focus exclusively on the first exhortation.

### VERSE 4. ~ "REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS; AGAIN I WILL SAY, REJOICE."

OVERALL, ~ WE CAN NOTE HERE THAT THIS IS A COMMAND, ~ IT'S CONTINUAL, ~ AND it's comprehensive.

▶▶Let's first unpack these three things. ~ Then we'll expand on the exhortation, ~ and spend the bulk of our time on that.

1<sup>st</sup>, ~ OVERALL WE CAN NOTE THAT THIS IS A COMMAND.

▶▶This is not something optional for the Christian life. ~ Not something we do only if we feel like it. ~ It's not a suggestion or a recommendation. ~ No, ~ it's a command.

▶▶And it's not just for church leaders or believers other than ourselves. ~ It's for each one of us.

▶▶And observe that the command is restated. ~ ["Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.](#)

▷▷This points out the utmost importance of rejoicing. **⇓ 1/9**

▷▷ Repetition in Scripture does not mean the authors couldn't think of anything else to say or were just filling up a page. ~ Repetition in Scripture is always purposeful.

▷▷ The Holy Spirit is emphasizing whatever it is that he's repeating.

▷▷ Because rejoicing is so important and the Lord wants us to be sure to do it, ~ Paul emphatically repeats the injunction.

↪↪ "I have said it once, ~ and I will say it again, ~ rejoice!"

2<sup>nd</sup>, ~ OVERALL WE CAN NOTE THAT THIS IS TO BE CONTINUAL.

▶▶ Rejoicing is not to be a sporadic thing.

▷▷ We are not to have the type of thinking that says something like, ~ ¶¶

↪↪ "Well, ~ I really don't feel like rejoicing, ~ and anyway, ~ I rejoiced yesterday, ~ so I'll leave it at that, ~ and complain today."

↪↪ Or, something like this: ~ "I'll rejoice on Mondays, ~ Wednesdays, ~ and Fridays. ~ But Tuesdays, ~ Thursdays, ~ and Saturdays are my days to gripe. ~ ¶¶

→→ And of course I'll watch myself in church on Sundays, ~ but once I leave church, ~ all bets are off."

▶▶ No, ~ the Lord wants us to rejoice continually.

AND 3<sup>rd</sup>, ~ OVERALL WE CAN NOTE THAT THIS COMMAND IS COMPREHENSIVE.

▶▶ Paul calls on us to rejoice in all situations and at all times.

▶▶ Now, ~ it's quite easy for us to rejoice when times and situations are good.

▷▷ But Paul doesn't say rejoice only in the good times and when circumstances are favorable.

▶▶ He says rejoice in the good times and the bad times, ~ when circumstances are favorable, ~ and when circumstances are unfavorable.

▶▶ Even when we go through the darkest of valleys. ~ Even when we're hurting or suffering.

▷▷ Even when life is at its hardest. ~ Even when the enemy is pressing in hard. ¶¶ 2/9

▷▷ Even those times when we feel, ~ as David did at the beginning of [Ps. 13](#), ~ forgotten and abandoned by God. ~~ Even those times when our minds are in turmoil.

↳↳ Paul calls us to rejoice.

## IS PAUL SOME KIND OF LUNATIC? ~~ ISN'T HIS COMMAND A LITTLE FARFETCHED?

NO! ~~ BECAUSE HE KNEW THE KEY TO REJOICING EVEN IN THE DARKEST OF valleys.

▶▶ And he shares the key with us. ~~ It's not, ~ "rejoice in, ~ or because of, ~ our circumstances." ~~ It's "Rejoice in the Lord." ~ "in the Lord" is the key phrase here.

▶▶ Circumstance-based joy is fleeting and flees at the first sign of trouble.

▷▷ The joy that is rooted in our relationship with Jesus will burn brightly and will withstand anything Satan and this world throws at it.

▷▷ When we love Jesus more than anything and anyone, ~ when we get to know him more and more, ~ when we take delight in him, ~ when we truly grasp what he's done for us, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ when our primary purpose in life is to please Jesus, ~ overwhelming joy will well up within us, ~ a joy that no one ~ and nothing ~ can affect or alter in any way, ~ shape, ~ or form.

▷▷ But we must understand that, ~ even though this joy will be present within us, ~ we must make a conscious choice to tap into it, ~ we must make a conscious choice to rejoice.

▷▷ And please understand this as well: ~~ It is only through a saving relationship with Jesus Christ that we can have lasting joy no matter the circumstances.

▶▶ Take the early church. ~~ Even persecution could not dampen the joy that glowed in these early believers, ~ because their joy was not dependent on external circumstances.

▷▷ As evidenced by the apostles' reaction to the Jewish council. ~~ Acts 5:40-42 ~ "and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus." ~~ Even persecution could not dampen the joy that glowed in these early believers.

▷▷ They were able to maintain their joy no matter how bad the circumstances. ~~ Why?, ~ because their joy was rooted in their relationship with Jesus ~ and not in their circumstances. ¶¶ 3/9

▶▶ If our joy is grounded in favorable circumstances, ~ What happens when our circumstances crash and burn? ~ ~ Our joy will crash and burn along with them.

▷▷ But not so if our joy is grounded in our relationship with Jesus.

NOW, ~ WE SHOULD MENTION HERE AS WELL THAT MATERIAL-POSSESSION-BASED joy is also fleeting and will also flee at the first sign of trouble.

▶▶ Here we can look again to the early church to see that even the loss of material possessions could not dampen the joy that glowed in these early believers.

▷▷ To his original readers the author of Hebrews says, ~ in [Heb. 10:34b](#), ~ [LEB](#) ~ ¶¶

↪↪ "For you both sympathized with the prisoners and put up with the seizure of your belongings with joy because you knew that you yourselves had a better and permanent possession.

▷▷ They were able to maintain their joy because it was not rooted in earthly goods, ~ but in their relationship with Jesus.

▶▶ If your joy comes from the house you live in, ~ what happens to that joy if you go home from church today ~ and find a pile of cinders where your house once stood?

▷▷ Your joy will burst into flames as well, ~ and all that will be left of your joy will be a pile of cinders.

▶▶ But, ~ if your joy is rooted in your relationship with Jesus, ~ what happens to that joy if you go home from church today and find a pile of cinders where your house once stood?

▷▷ Absolutely nothing. ~ ~ Your joy will still be intact.

↪↪ Joy grounded in our relationship with Jesus is fireproof, ~ bombproof, ~ loss-of-possession-proof, ~ circumstance-proof, ~ and everything-else-bad-proof.

▶▶ And, ~ by the way, ~ we can apply what we've just said here to any material possession or earthly goods.

MY . . . , ~ PERHAPS WE SHOULD ASK OURSELVES THIS QUESTION TODAY.

▶▶ "Is my joy grounded in my external circumstances, ~ material possessions, ~ any other earthly things, ~ or in my relationship with Jesus?"

▷▷ Only the latter-based joy will withstand whatever life or Satan throws at it. ¶¶ 4/9

"REJOICE IN THE LORD." ~ "IN THE LORD," ~ AS SAID, ~ IS THE KEY PHRASE here.

RECALL FROM A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO THAT THE PHRASE "IN THE LORD" IS THE KEY in providing a solution to interpersonal conflicts & acting as a preventive measure against them.

▶▶ And it's also the key in the context of rejoicing always ~ in all situations ~ and at all times.

IN THE CONTEXT OF REJOICING NO MATTER THE SITUATION, ~ THE PHRASE "IN THE Lord" reminds us of all the blessings that we have because we are saved and belong to Jesus.

▶▶ And thinking about our blessings will lead us to rejoice no matter what's happening in our lives.

▶▶ Recall in Eph. 1:3, ~ Paul says that God has given us "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places." ~ And then he goes on to list many of them in verses 4-14.

▶▶ E.g., ~ Our sins are forgiven. ~ In Eph. 1:7, ~ LEB ~ Paul tells us that in Jesus "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins."

▷▷ The term for "forgiveness" means a permanent cancellation of ~ or release from ~ the punishment of sin.

▷▷ Paul points this out in Rom. 8:1. ~ He writes, ~ "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

↳↳ The point Paul is making here is that condemnation is, ~ in every sense, ~ out of the question "for those who are in Christ Jesus."

▷▷ The psalmist says, ~ NASB ~ "As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us."

▷▷ Other places in the OT talk about how God cast our sins behind his back. ~ He blotted out our transgressions. ~ He remembers our sins no more.

↳↳ He tread our iniquities underfoot. ~ He cast them into the depths of the sea.

▶▶ Loved ones, ~ the key phrase, ~ "in the Lord," ~ will remind us of all of the blessings that we have received through Jesus.

▷▷ And thinking about our blessings will lead us to rejoice no matter what's happening in our lives. **↯↯ 5/9**

ALSO IN THE CONTEXT OF REJOICING NO MATTER THE SITUATION, ~ THE KEY phrase "in the Lord" takes our focus off of ourselves and our circumstances, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ and places it squarely on the One who can and will sustain us in ~ and bring us through ~ even the darkest of valleys.

▷▷ In Is. 41:10, ~ Yahweh, ~ Jesus, ~ says, ~ "fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

▷▷ In Is. 41:13, ~ Yahweh proclaims, ~ 'For I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, 'Fear not, I am the one who helps you.'"

▷▷ And in Ps. 68:35, ~ David declares, ~ "Awesome is God from his sanctuary; the God of Israel—he is the one who gives power and strength to his people. Blessed be God!

▶▶ My . . . , ~ these promises are true even in the darkest valley, ~ even when our world is crumbling all around us, ~ even when our circumstances crash and burn, ~ even when we lose everything.

▷▷ But our tendency is to focus on ourselves and our circumstances. ~ I'm constantly guilty of this.

↪↪ At those times, ~ we need to call to mind the words, ~ "in the Lord," ~ and place our focus squarely on Yahweh, ~ our loving Savior, ~ and stand squarely on his promises.

→→ For he, ~ and only he, ~ can and will sustain us in ~ and bring us through ~ even the darkest of valleys. ~ He has promised to do so. ~ And he does not lie.

NEXT IN THE CONTEXT OF REJOICING NO MATTER THE SITUATION, ~ THE KEY phrase "in the Lord" reminds us that Jesus is on our side and works on our behalf.

▶▶ In Eph. 1:19a Paul indicates God's immeasurably great power is "toward us who believe."

▷▷ One of the things this means is that God's immeasurably great power works on behalf of believers.

▶▶ And Paul writes in Rom. 8:28, ~ "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, ~ for those who are called according to his purpose."

▶▶ Even when it doesn't look like it at times, ~ and let's be honest, ~ many times it doesn't look like it, ~ we can be assured that both ~ Rom. 8:28 ~ and Eph. 1:19a ~ are true. ¶¶ 6/9

▷▷ God's immeasurably great power does work on our behalf. ~ Yahweh is working all things together for good for his people.

▶▶ For assurance of this, ~ we can look to Esther and to Daniel in the OT. ~ At times the circumstances looked bleak and it probably seemed as if God was absent.

▷▷ And yet God was present and working mightily on behalf of each one of them.

▶▶ I think Esther is especially helpful here.

▷▷ The interesting thing here is that in the account God is not mentioned once, ~ but his fingerprints are all over the place, ~ 77

↳↳ mightily working to bring about a positive outcome for his people. ~ And he delivered.

▷▷ It might be helpful to give a brief summary of the account.

↳↳ As we said, ~ the book of Esther never mentions God's name, ~ yet God was clearly working behind the scenes and orchestrated all of its events.

↳↳ Esther, ~ a Jew living among the exiles in Persia, ~ became queen of the empire in about 480 B.C.

→→ Haman, ~ a Persian official, ~ sought to eradicate the Jewish minority.

→→ But God had prepared Esther "for such a time as this" to save his covenant people.

↳↳ As Mordecai said to her, ~ 4:14b, ~ "And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

▷▷ Throughout the book, ~ we see God's sovereign hand preserving his people, ~ showing that everything is under his control.

▷▷ When circumstances look bleak, ~ or we feel like God is absent when we are in a dark valley, ~ perhaps we should read or reread the book of Esther.

▶▶ And always keep in mind that Yahweh will bring about the ultimate positive outcome for his people, ~ living eternally in his presence! ~ John writes about this in [Rev. 21:1-4](#).

▷▷ "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ~ 77 7/9



↪↪ And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

FURTHERMORE, ~ IN THE CONTEXT OF REJOICING NO MATTER THE SITUATION, ~ the key phrase, ~ "in the Lord," ~ should remind us that we are absolutely secure in our salvation.

▶▶ Peter tells us in 1 Pet. 1:5 that believers "are being protected ~ [i.e., ~ continually being protected] ~ by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

▷▷ Now, ~ the fact that Peter says we are continually "being protected by the power of God" does not suggest that God protects us from pain, ~ difficulty, ~ or suffering.

▷▷ "being protected by the power of God" means that God is protecting our souls, ~ ¶¶

↪↪ ensuring that we will receive our resurrection bodies and inheritance at the Second Coming of Jesus.

▶▶ In Jn. 6:39-40, ~ Jesus said, ~ NIV ~ "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day."

▶▶ And in Jn. 10:27-30, ~ Jesus declares, ~ "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

▷▷ A note here on "they will never perish." ~ You might recall me talking about this before. ~ Double negative . . . .

↪↪ But Greek has a double-negation construction that is very emphatic. ~ And Jesus uses it here when he says we won't perish.

→→ Basically Jesus is saying, ~ believers will certainly not, ~ never, ~ by no means ~ perish.

▶▶ My . . . , ~ we are absolutely ~ and eternally ~ secure "in the Lord," ~ no matter what we go through in this life, ~ no matter how dark and deep the valleys. ¶¶ 8/9



WHEN WE ADD ALL OF THIS UP, ~ IT FORMS A SOLID REASON TO REJOICE IN ALL situations and at all times.

▶▶ On the mountain tops ~ and in the darkest of valleys. ~~ When circumstances are favorable, ~ and when circumstances are unfavorable.

▶▶ A solid motivation to rejoice even when we go through the darkest of valleys. ~~ Even when we're hurting or suffering.

▷▷ Even when life is at its hardest. ~~ Even when the enemy is pressing in hard.

▷▷ Even those times when we feel forgotten and abandoned by God. ~~ Even those times when our minds are in turmoil.

▶▶ I don't know how you feel, ~ but I would say that Paul's command to "Rejoice in the Lord always" is definitely not farfetched. ~~ Paul is definitely of sound mind.

▷▷ Rather, ~ in the light of everything we've talked about and all that the Bible reveals about our relationship with Christ, ~ ¶¶

↪↪ I would strongly suggest that the command to "Rejoice in the Lord always" is perfectly reasonable and attainable.

## CONCLUSION.

"REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS; ~~ AGAIN I WILL SAY, ~ REJOICE."

LET'S PRAY . . . . 9/9