

## CLOSING EXHORTATIONS, PT. 3; PHIL. 4:5b-6a (Ed O'Leary)

### INTRODUCTION.

TODAY, ~ WE RETURN TO PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT PHILIPPI.

▶▶ And in Philipians, ~ we are currently ~ making our way through Paul's closing exhortations ~ in [chapter 4](#), ~ [verses 4-9](#).

SO FAR ~ WE HAVE COVERED ~ THE FIRST TWO APPEALS FROM PAUL.

▶▶ In [verse 4](#), ~ Paul called us ~ to "[Rejoice in the Lord always](#)."

▷▷ In the good times ~ and ~ in the bad times. ~~ When circumstances ~ are favorable ~ or unfavorable. ~~ When we're on a mountain top ~ or down in a dark valley.

▷▷ And of course ~ the key, ~ as we made clear, ~ is the phrase ~ "[in the Lord](#)."

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

▷▷ When we love Jesus more than anything and every one, ~ 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, ~ as we noted, ~ 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 as we also noted, ~ it is only through ~ a saving relationship with Jesus Christ ~ that we can have lasting joy ~ no matter the circumstances.

▶▶ Then in [verse 5a](#), ~ Paul called believers to be gentle toward all people, ~ toward believers ~ and unbelievers ~ alike. ↴↴ 1/13

▷▷ Here we noted the NT concept of gentleness.

↳↳ I.e., ~ we ~ are to exercise self-control in our dealings with others.

↳↳ We ~ are to display a gentleness in attitude and behavior toward others. ~ We ~ are not ~ to be resentful ~ or seek retaliation at injustices.

↳↳ We ~ are not to be arrogant ~ or self-assertive.

↳↳ And ~ we ~ are to be courteous, ~ considerate, ~ selfless, ~ generous, ~ merciful, ~ and ~ willing to waive our own rights ~ in our dealings with people.

▷▷ All of this, ~ we observed, ~ is wrapped up ~ in being gentle.

↳↳ And ~ gentleness ~ is to be ~ a guiding principle ~ for our lives.

→→ IOW, ~ this ~ is to be an ongoing thing. ~ Not once-in-awhile.

TODAY~ WE'LL FOCUS ~ ON THE THIRD EXHORTATION, ~ "BE ANXIOUS ~ FOR nothing."

BUT ~ BEFORE HE GIVES US THE THIRD EXHORTATION, ~ AND WITHOUT ANY obvious link ~ to the exhortation that precedes ~ or follows, ~ Paul inserts ~ a brief statement of assurance.

VS. 5b, ~ "THE LORD IS NEAR."

▶▶ Note verses 5a-6a. ~ LEB.

▷▷ Verse 5a, ~ "Let your gentleness be made known to all people." ~ Verse 5b, ~ "The Lord is near." ~ Verse 6a, ~ "Be anxious for nothing."

▶▶ No obvious connection, ~ no linking conjunction. ~ Paul actually wants us to think.

▶▶ As I worked my way through this, ~ I came to the tentative, ~ *emph.* on tentative, ~ ↯↯

▷▷ I came to the tentative conclusion that, ~ the phrase ~ "The Lord is near" ~ might be linked ~ to the exhortation that follows. ⇨⇨⇨ "Be anxious for nothing." ↯↯ 2/13

▷▷ To me ~ the phrase ~ "The Lord is near" ~ flows more naturally ~ and is easier to fit ~ into the third exhortation, ⇒⇒⇒ "Be anxious for nothing."

▶▶ Now, ~ some ~ might link "The Lord is near" ~ to the previous exhortation. ~ Some might link it ~ to all of the exhortations.

▷▷ And that's ok. ~ As long as the person thinks it through, ~ weighs the options, ~ and then ~ comes to a tentative conclusion ~ and is not dogmatic.

▶▶ It is extremely important ~ for us to understand ~ that the text here is vague.

▷▷ And I caution you ~ to avoid like the plague ~ dogmatic interpretations ~ when the biblical authors ~ have not made something crystal clear.

▷▷ Also, ~ steer clear ~ of any preacher or teacher ~ who asserts a dogmatic interpretation ~ when the biblical authors have not made something ~ crystal clear.

▶▶ Again, ~ my tentative conclusion is that ~ "The Lord is near" ~ goes with ~ "Be anxious for nothing."

▶▶ But how is it linked?

▷▷ Well, ~ I suggest ~ that the phrase ~ "The Lord is near" ~ forms a reason ~ why ~ we don't need to worry about anything.

▷▷ Idea, ~ then, ~ is this, ~ "The Lord is near, ~ therefore ~ be anxious for nothing."

▶▶ My subsequent research on this verified my conclusion, ~ that this is a valid way of looking at it. ~ Notice "a valid way," ~ not "the valid way."

SO, ~ IT IS MY CONTENTION ~ THAT VERSES 5b-6a ~ FORM A UNIT.

▶▶ And again, ~ the idea being, ~ "The Lord is near, ~ therefore ~ be anxious for nothing."

▶▶ And here ~ is how we're going to proceed ~ this a.m. ~ We'll split this into two parts, ~ And in our look at these two verses ~ we're going to actually ~ reverse the order. ⇓ 3/13

▷▷ We're going to first ~ consider the exhortation ~ and then ~ the reason ~ why ~ we don't need to be anxious about anything.

## OK, ~ PAUL'S THIRD EXHORTATION TO BELIEVERS.

### VERSE 6a; ~~ "NOTHING BE ANXIOUS FOR."

▶▶ Now, ~ this reading ~ is a bit awkward, ~ but this ~ is the literal translation of the Greek text.

English versions smooth it out for us. ~~ E.g., ~ **ESV**, ~ "do not be anxious about anything."

▷▷ This is an excellent translation.

↳↳ But ~~ this is another example ~ of the contrast ~ between watching TV in black and white ~~ and watching TV in color.

▶▶ I've given you the literal translation, ~ or ~ the color TV version, ~ to show Paul's emphasis here.

▷▷ In the Greek text ~ he placed the word translated as "nothing" first, ~ which shows ~ that he was emphasizing the word.

↳↳ He was emphasizing ~ that all of the things ~ that we could ~ or are tempted to be ~ anxious about ~ are covered under the term ~ "nothing."

▶▶ So, ~ Paul's basically saying, ~ "About nothing, ~ About ~ absolutely nothing, ~ be anxious."

▶▶ Notice ~ the comprehensive nature ~ of this. ~~ It excludes ~ all exceptions.

▷▷ There is nothing ~ beyond the scope of this exhortation. ~~ There are no boundaries ~ on this exhortation.

▷▷ We can't say, ~ "Well, ~ these categories ~ in my life over here ~ fall under this exhortation ~ to be anxious about nothing. ~~ 77

↳↳ But ~ the exhortation doesn't apply to these other categories in my life. 11 4/13

▷▷ Absolutely ~ no category in our lives ~ falls outside ~ of the purview ~ of this exhortation.

▶▶ And ~ just as ~ "Rejoice in the Lord always" ~ and ~ "Let your gentleness be made known to all people" ~ are commands, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ so too ~ is ~ "About nothing, ~ about ~ absolutely nothing, ~ be anxious."

▷▷ IOW, ~ this not a simple suggestion ~ or helpful advice ~ that Paul is giving us. ~~ Paul ~ is not making a recommendation.

▷▷ No, ~ it's a command, ~~ not something optional ~ for those who are followers of Jesus.

NOW, ~ LET ME INSERT HERE ~ A RATHER LONG NOTE, ~ BECAUSE IT'S SO important, ~ when it comes to God's commands.

▶▶ God doesn't give us ~ a bunch of commands ~ simply because he wants us to obey ~ a bunch of commands.

▷▷ He's not some ~ cosmic killjoy ~ who wants to restrict our freedom ~ or to prevent us from having fun.

↳↳ This is what Satan, ~ the world, ~ and our sin nature ~ would have us believe.

▷▷ Far from it.

↳↳ Every one ~ of God's commands in Scripture ~ are: ~~ for our good, ~~ help us grow spiritually, ~~ and help us become more and more like Jesus.

↳↳ In the context ~ of the Babylonian captivity, ~ Yahweh ~ told the Israelites through Jer. ~ chapter 29, ~ verse 11, ~ ¶¶

→→ "For I know the plans I have for you, ~ declares the Lord, ~ plans for welfare ~ and not for evil, ~ to give you a future ~ and a hope."

↳↳ The principle here ~ applies to believers today. ~~ God's plans for us are the same. ~~ God is good all the time.

↳↳ Therefore, ~ his plans for us ~ are good. ¶¶ 5/13

▶▶ And ~ when we obey his commands, ~ far from feeling restricted ~ or miserable, ~ we will find ~ incredible freedom and joy.

▷▷ I call your attention ~ to the chorus of the old hymn. ~ "Trust and obey, ~ for there's no other way ~ to be happy in Jesus, ~ but to trust and obey."

↪↪ This is not some religious hogwash, ~ trite saying, ~ legalistic nonsense, ~ or an appeal to guilt-trip Christianity.

→→ This is a theologically rich, ~ biblically sound, ~ and true statement.

▶▶ A genuine believer ~ is never more miserable ~ than when we are not following ~ our Lord's commands.

▷▷ Sin ~ brings only a nanosecond of happiness. ~ But ultimately ~ it brings ~ misery and enslavement, ~ and, ~ if it continues, ~ death.

▷▷ On the other hand, ~ a genuine believer ~ is never more happy ~ than when we are walking by the Spirit, ~ i.e., ~ according to God's word.

↪↪ Ps. 119, ~ verses 1-2, ~ NIV ~ "Blessed ~ [or, ~ Joyful] ~ are those ~ whose ways are blameless, ~ who walk according to the law of the Lord. ~ ~ ¶¶

→→ Blessed ~ [or, ~ Joyful] ~ are those ~ who keep his statutes ~ and seek him with all their heart."

↪↪ And Ps. 119, ~ verse 165, ~ "Great peace have those ~ who love your law; ~ nothing can make them stumble.

OK, ~ LET'S GET BACK ON TRACK. ~ WE'RE DISCUSSING ~ PAUL'S ~ THIRD exhortation to believers.

▶▶ "About nothing, ~ about ~ absolutely nothing, ~ be anxious."

▶▶ The Greek word for ~ "anxious" ~ means ~ "to be apprehensive, ~ have anxiety, ~ be anxious, ~ be unduly concerned."

▶▶ Anxiety ~ is ~ neither helpful ~ nor healthful. ¶¶ 6/13

▷▷It can produce ~ irritability and defensiveness. ~~ It is a soil ~ in which discord ~ could grow within a church.

▷▷Matters ~ that might otherwise be of lesser importance ~ can reach swollen proportions ~ when fed by anxiety.

↪↪IOW, ~ anxiety ~ can cause us ~ to "make a mountain out of a molehill."

▷▷Anxiety ~ can have debilitating effects.

↪↪Prov. 12, ~ verse 25 says, ~ "Anxiety in a man's heart ~ weighs him down."

→→Anxiety ~ weighs heavily on the heart, ~ causing depression.

▷▷This is a perfect illustration ~ of God's commands ~ being given to us for our welfare.

↪↪My . . . , ~~ think it through to its logical conclusion ~ of obeying ~ or disobeying ~ this command.

"ABOUT NOTHING, ~ ABOUT ABSOLUTELY NOTHING, ~ BE ANXIOUS."

OK, ~ NOW LET'S EXPLORE THE REASON ~ WHY WE DON'T NEED ~ TO BE ANXIOUS about anything.

AND I THINK ~ AS WE EXPLORE THIS, ~ IT WILL BECOME CRYSTAL CLEAR ~ THAT WE have absolutely no reason ~ to be anxious about anything.

▶▶"About nothing, ~ about ~ absolutely nothing, ~ be anxious."

▷▷Because: ~~ Verse 5b. ~~ "The Lord is near."

I BELIEVE ~ THAT PAUL HERE ~ IS PRIMARILY TALKING ABOUT ~ THE PROMISE ~ OF the Lord's presence in our lives. ~~ Much of what said last week reviewed and reinforced here.

NOW, ~ BEFORE WE GET INTO THE SPECIFICS OF THE LORD'S PRESENCE WITH US, ~ I want us to zoom out ~ and consider ~ his omnipresence in general. ↴↴ 7/13

▶▶ The Bible teaches ~ that God is personally present ~ everywhere. ⇨⇨ Not in everything.  
~~ And he only indwells believers.

▷▷ David points out Yahweh's omnipresence.

▷▷ Ps. 139, ~ verses 7-10, ~~ "Where shall I go from your Spirit? ~~ Or where shall I flee from your presence? ~~ 77

⇨⇨ If I ascend to heaven, ~~ you are there! ~~ If I make my bed in Sheol, ~~ you are there! ~~ 77

→→ If I take the wings of the morning ~ and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, ~~ even there ~ your hand shall lead me, ~ and your right hand shall hold me."

⇨⇨ There is absolutely ~ no place a person can go ~ where God isn't!

▶▶ And we should point out ~ that God ~ sees ~ and knows ~ everything.

▷▷ Prov. 15, ~ verse 3, ~ "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, ~ keeping watch ~ on the evil ~ and the good."

⇨⇨ Now obviously, ~ this is not to be understood ~ as referring to eyes separate from the Lord, ~ but rather ~ as the watchful presence of God.

→→ The idea here ~ is: ~~ "Yahweh ~ is everywhere ~ and sees everything."

▷▷ As Heb. ~ 4, ~ verse 13 says, ~ "And no creature ~ is hidden from his sight, ~ but all are naked and exposed ~ to the eyes of him ~ to whom we must give account."

▷▷ Regarding the wicked and their evil acts, ~ God says this ~ to them in Ps. 94, ~ verses 8 10a.

⇨⇨ "Understand, ~ O dullest of the people! ~~ Fools, ~ when will you be wise? ~~ He who planted the ear, ~ does he not hear? ~~ 77

→→ He who formed the eye, ~ does he not see? ~~ He who disciplines the nations, ~~ does he not rebuke?"

⇨⇨ Of course he hears. ~~ Of course he sees.

⇨⇨ And definitely ~ he will judge. ~~ Unbelievers ~ will not get away ~ with what they're doing. 77 8/13



▷▷ And through Jeremiah in Jer. ~ 23, ~ verses 23-24, ~ Yahweh says, ~

↳↳ "Am I a God at hand, ~ declares the Lord, ~ and not a God far away? ~ ~ 77

→→ Can a man hide himself ~ in secret places ~ so that I cannot see him? ~ declares the Lord. ~ ~ Do I not fill heaven and earth? ~ declares the Lord.

↳↳ God is not only close at hand. ~ ~ If he were, ~ he could not see what's happening elsewhere.

→→ He is not a God ~ who is only close at hand. ~ ~ He is far away at the same time.

→→ Then Yahweh drives home the point ~ that he's omnipresent. ~ ~ "Am I not everywhere in all the heavens and earth?"

→→ Therefore, ~ there are no secret places ~ that the Lord ~ does not know about ~ or can't see into.

▶▶ In relation to this, ~ we should mention God's omnipotence, ~ which includes sovereignty.

▷▷ In Jer. ~ 32, ~ Jeremiah prays for understanding.

↳↳ Note how he begins his prayer. ~ ~ Jer. ~ 32, ~ verse 17.

→→ "Ah, ~ Lord God! ~ ~ It is you ~ who have made the heavens and the earth ~ by your great power ~ and by your outstretched arm! ~ ~ Nothing is too hard for you."

↳↳ God begins his response to Jeremiah this way. ~ ~ Jer., ~ 32, ~ verse 27.

→→ "Behold, ~ I am the Lord, ~ the God of all flesh. ~ ~ Is anything too hard for me?"

▷▷ And Ps. 93:, ~ verse 1a (NIV) says, ~ "The Lord reigns, ~ he is robed in majesty; ~ ~ the Lord ~ is robed in majesty ~ and armed with strength."

▷▷ IOW, ~ God reigns supreme. ~ ~ He has the power ~ to do something about all of the evil in the world. ~ ~ He can and will defeat all of his enemies.

↳↳ He has no problem ~ protecting his people. ~ ~ He will ~ deliver us safely ~ into his kingdom.

→→ And ~ he can ~ and will ~ burn up this present universe ~ and create new heavens and a new earth, ~ in which ~ righteousness will dwell permanently. 11 9/13

OK, ~ WE ZOOMED OUT. ~~ AND NOW WE WANT TO ZOOM IN ~ AND LOOK AT SOME of the specifics ~ of the promise of the Lord's presence in our lives.

▶▶My . . . , ~~ we have ~ the unchangeable and wonderful promise ~ that the Lord ~ is with us always.

▷▷Is. ~ 43, ~ verse 2a, ~ "When you pass through the waters, ~ I will be with you."

↳↳Again, ~ he doesn't keep us ~ from the dark valleys, ~ but ~ we can rest assured ~ that we are not going through them alone.

→→Yahweh, ~ our Shepherd ~ goes right through ~ with us.

▷▷Heb. ~ 13, ~ verse 5b, ~ drives this promise home as well, ~ "I will never leave you ~ nor forsake you."

▷▷Jesus ~ reinforces the promise in Matt. ~ 28, ~ verse 20b, ~~ "And behold, ~ I am with you always, ~ to the end of the age."

↳↳Not from time to time. ~~ Not only in the good times.

→→No, ~ He is with us ~ at all times, ~ on the sunny mountain tops ~ and even in the deepest, ~ darkest ~ valleys.

▶▶Loved ones, ~ this ~ is an indisputable fact, ~ reinforced over and over in Scripture. ~~ Yahweh, ~ our shepherd, ~ is always ~ with us.

▷▷"I will be with you." ~~~ "I will never leave you nor forsake you." ~~~ "I am with you always."

↳↳He's not lying. ~~ "it is impossible for God to lie."

▶▶Related to this ~ is the truth ~ that the Lord ~ is not just present with us ~ to simply observe, ~ like some bystander ~ passively observing our lives.

▷▷He is not only with us, ~ but is on our side ~ and actively works on our behalf.

▷▷Ps. 56, ~ verse 9b, ~ "This I know, ~ that God is for me." ⇨⇨ Ps. 118, ~ verse 6, ~ "The Lord is on my side; ~~ I will not fear. ~~ What can man do to me?" ~~ ↴ ↴ ↴ ↴ 10/13

↪↪ And Rom. ~ 8, ~ verse 31, ~ "What then shall we say to these things? ~ If God is for us, ~ who can be against us?"

▷▷ As Paul tells us in Romans, ~ "for those who love God ~ all things ~ work together for good."

▷▷ And consider Deut. ~ 20, ~ verse 1a.

↪↪ "When you go out to war against your enemies, ~ and see ~ horses and chariots ~ and an army ~ larger than your own, ~ ¶¶

→→ you shall not ~ be afraid of them, ~ for the Lord your God is with you."

↪↪ And the implication is that the Lord will help, ~ He's not just present.

▶▶ Loved ones, ~ when ~ circumstances are unfavorable, ~ when ~ we go through the darkest of valleys, ~ when, ~ we're hurting or suffering, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ when ~ life is at its hardest, ~ when ~ our minds are in turmoil. ~ ¶¶

▷▷ when ~ "the spiritual forces of evil" ~ are pressing in hard, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ when ~ those who oppose the gospel ~ rise up against us ~ and persecute us, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ We don't need to worry, ~ for the Lord our God ~ is not only present with us, ~ ¶¶

↪↪ but ~ is for us ~ and is on our side ~ and is working out a positive outcome for us.

LET'S SUMMARIZE WHAT WE'VE BEEN SAYING SO FAR ~ ABOUT THE REASON WHY ~ we don't need to be anxious ~ about anything.

▶▶ Yahweh, ~ is omnipresent, ~ omnipotent, ~ sovereign, ~ holy, ~ righteous, ~ good ~ and ~ our God.

▷▷ And this means ~ that ~ he is personally present with us, ~ has good plans for us, ~ is on our side, ~ works on our behalf, ~ ¶¶

↪↪ and always works out positive outcomes for us.

→→ So exactly what is there ~ to be anxious about? ~ Absolutely nothing! ¶¶ 11/13

NOW, ~ AS I SAID EARLIER, ~ I BELIEVE HERE ~ THAT PAUL IS PRIMARILY ~ TALKING about the promise ~ of the Lord's presence in our lives, ~ when he says "The Lord is near."

▶▶ But ~ there is another sense of the Greek word translated as "near," ~ which, ~ I would suggest, ~ is a secondary, ~ though important, ~ way of looking at it here.

▶▶ And I'm just going to cover this very, ~ very briefly now, ~ and you can then ponder it ~ for yourselves.

▶▶ Paul's statement, ~ "The Lord is near," ~ can also refer ~ to the imminent return of Jesus.

▷▷ I.e., ~ the promise that Jesus will return ~ and that his return ~ can be ~ at any time.

▶▶ When we also view the statement this way, ~ it helps us to not be at all anxious ~ about our ultimate future.

▶▶ Whether Jesus comes back in our lifetime ~ or we go to him through death ~ our future ~ is set ~ and 100% secure.

▷▷ A glorious future ~ in the presence of our Savior ~ awaits us.

▶▶ And when we are watching for our Savior's return, ~ 77

▷▷ which we should be doing every day, ~ it will cause us to get our eyes off ourselves and our own little world.

↪↪ And that's good thing. ~ Because ~ then our lives ~ will be all about Jesus ~ and not ~ all about us.

▶▶ Furthermore, ~ watching for ~ and expecting ~ Jesus' return at any moment, ~ 77

▷▷ will give us ~ the proper perspective on life ~ and all that happens to us in it.

↪↪ And ~ when we gain ~ that proper perspective, ~ there will not be much, ~ if anything, ~ that will make us anxious. 77 12/13

CONCLUSION.

"The Lord is near. ~ ~ Therefore ~ about nothing, ~ about ~ absolutely nothing, ~ be anxious."

LET'S PRAY . . . . 13/13