

# Rejoicing, Reasonableness, and Requests

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Welcome to you all this evening. We're pleased to see you. Let me welcome those who are joining us online as well. It's always good to see folks joining online. We trust that God will bless to us this time of worship as we meet in His name.

The Youth Fellowship meets tonight. That's at 7.45. That'll be in the MA Hall. And you can see the details for the services throughout the week on the page there as well, on that first page.

On the other page, the Slavic Gospel Association prayer meeting. Please take note of that. There is login details available for those who wish to join by Zoom.

And they're hoping that in-person meetings can resume soon. There's an intermission for Hope Bridge, Coat Bridge. The Free Church and Coat Bridge are looking for help to increase the amount they have for raising a sum to increase the accommodation in the church.

And if you're interested in that, you can actually leave an envelope in the plate. Just mark it Hope Church. If you can help with that, any donations will be welcome. Thank you.

[ 1 : 3 6 ] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thanks to all who helped and all those who came to buy materials as well.

Providence Christian School, as you can see, are holding a prayer meeting tomorrow evening at the Providence Christian School in the Cairns Community. That's on Zoom, so you can get details of the Zoom connection on that phone number or else by emailing providenceschool at icloud.com.

I should have had on the intimations today, and that's my fault for not having given it through to Lizzie. As you know, on Wednesday night, there was a congregational meeting, and the congregational meeting was to elect a name to go forward for filling the vacancy in the assistant minister's post in the congregation.

The outcome of the meeting was that Reverend Callum Murdoch Smith was elected as prospective assistant minister. He is in Uist at the moment, North Uist.

And the next part of the process will be that we will send a request to the presbytery, which meets next Tuesday. And the presbytery will be asked to arrange a meeting of the congregation or with the congregation to sign a call to Mr. Smith to become the assistant minister here.

[ 2 : 5 6 ] So that's as far as we can take it at the moment, but we're hoping that the presbytery will agree to arrange a meeting, which would probably be in April at some point, we hope, in order to have that call signed by yourselves as a congregation.

And then things will just proceed from that, we hope, towards the final settlement, whenever that will be. Now, just also just to indicate there is a health and social care bill at the moment going through Parliament in Westminster.

And at short notice, that's actually being dealt with, I understand, this coming Wednesday. And on the back of that bill, there is going to be an attempt by an amendment to seek to legalise home abortions permanently.

And that's obviously of concern to us as Christians. And we're asked to contact our MP. You can find details of this online, many places, to contact your MP in order to ask that he vote, request that he vote against that amendment, which is seeking to introduce permanent acceptance of home abortions, pills that will be given to people at home to do this for themselves.

There are many, many dangers associated with that, quite apart from the moral issue of abortion itself, and places potential mothers pregnant women in considerable risk.

[ 4 : 24 ] And especially if that's made permanent, you can see how that's going to lead to problems in the future. Incidentally, when we're thinking of those who are escaping from, having to flee from Ukraine, perhaps we don't always remember that amongst those, not just carrying children in their arms, and there are many of those, but there are also pregnant women who are actually having to flee their homes.

And you can imagine the trauma, especially heavily pregnant, having to leave the country and go to another country, to a strange place, with a very uncertain future ahead of them.

And unfortunately, there is also, in addition to that, I just learned this yesterday, there are gangs actually preying on young women who have to leave Ukraine and enter into these other countries beside Ukraine.

But the gangs that are seeking young women for the sex trade, as it's called, are already trying to entice young women, giving them the offer of accommodation and what seems like a bright future.

But actually, underneath that, it's actually for this horrible sex trade that they're trying to present through these means. So again, please pray about that too, that women will be given discernment to see the evil of such practices, and how especially that after, you can imagine just, well, we can't imagine really, we can only just try to imagine, what it's like having to leave your own country, your home destroyed, all of the things that you look to build on for the future, and the trauma of having to live your own country, and the trauma of having to leave that to go to a very strange land, and then being met there with what's effectively an evil practice masquerading as help and the offer of a better life.

[ 6 : 23 ] What a terrible world we live in, when such evil can ride upon the back of other evil, and make use of it for its own ends.

Such is our fallen, sinful world. Well, these are all the intimations then for the moment. Let's turn to worship God. Worshipping Him first, singing His praise in Psalm 34, Psalm 34 in the Scottish Psalter.

We're singing to the tune, Jackson, page 246, and that's verses 1 to 9. God will I bless all times, His praise my mouth shall still express.

My soul shall boast in God, the meek shall hear with joyfulness. Extol the Lord with me, let us exalt His name together. I sought the Lord, He heard, and did me from all fears deliver.

Verses 1 to 9 to God's praise. What will I bless all times, His praise my mouth shall still express.

[ 7 : 36 ] My soul shall boast in God, the meek shall hear with joyfulness.

Exalt the Lord with me, let us exalt His name together.

I sought the Lord, He heard, and did me from all fears deliver.

They looked to Him, and lightened her. Not she bid where their kisses.

This blue man cried, and saved Him from all his distresses.

[ 9 : 02 ] The angel of the Lord, He heard, and found them compasses.

All those that have learned, that do Him fear, and then deliver her.

O taste and see that God is good, who trust in Him is blessed.

Fear, God is saved, and that in fear shall be with want oppressed.

Let's now call upon the Lord in prayer. Let's join together in prayer. O Lord, most gracious and holy God, we give thanks tonight that we are gathered here to worship You.

[ 10 : 28 ] That we do so on the promise that You will be with Your people in all our circumstances, and that You take a special delight in meeting with them as they gather together in Your name to worship You.

Lord, we give thanks tonight for all that You are to us, for the way in which we know that You are so dependable, and have proved Yourself down through the centuries in the history of Your church, to be a God who is always true to His promises, a God who does not shirk from bringing about all that You have threatened to do, as well as those great promises for Your people in terms of their salvation.

Lord, we give thanks tonight that our delight is in worshiping You, and coming together in this way to extol Your holy name, as we have already been saying in our singing of praise.

We thank You, Lord, for all that makes You glorious and worthy of our praise, and for all that makes You, God, as You have revealed to us of Yourself, and all the things that lie beyond that, that You have chosen not to reveal to us at all.

We acknowledge, Lord, that much of what You have revealed to us lies beyond our full comprehension, our ability to understand it all. But we do give thanks for the clarity with which You have revealed the way of salvation to us.

[ 11 : 55 ] There is no doubt whatsoever in what is revealed as to the way that leads to eternal life. For we give thanks, Lord, that You have specified that it is in Jesus Christ, Your Son, that we find the way and the truth and the life, and that the way to the Father is through Him.

Lord, we thank You tonight for all the blessings that we receive from You, and we acknowledge we receive blessings from You from day to day. We receive blessings in the ordinary course of life.

We receive the blessings of the Gospel. We receive the blessings of companionship and fellowship with Your people and with others in this world that we regard as our friends. We give thanks for the blessings of peace and of the way in which we can enjoy that peace and comfort in our communities that many in other parts of the world are denied.

Lord God, Your graciousness, Your regard for us is at times overwhelming, and we cannot understand why You should choose to be so kind to us with such great benefits and blessings when we don't deserve them.

And yet, O Lord, in Your mercy, You have provided these for us, and You continue to bless us with the Gospel. We pray tonight that You'd bless Your Word to us.

[ 13 : 17 ] We thank You that we have Your Word so central to our lives and so central to our worship too. And we thank You for the way You teach us of how foundationally important Your Word is and for the way that when You come to reveal Yourself to us savingly, one of our first responses to that call of Your Spirit and that work of Your Spirit is that we acknowledge Your Word to be the revealed will of God, the Word to which we yield obedience to Yourself through that Word as You bless it to us by Your Spirit.

Lord, we pray that You would take those things of Your Word that will be before our mind this evening and bless them to us. Bless us, we pray, as we come to it with Your own authority speaking to us in it.

And we pray that it may indeed find a place in our hearts tonight that will move us inwardly, that will stir us up within our souls, that will bring us once again to delight in our God and to live also in that holy fear that we need to have as the beginning of wisdom, the very foundation of a wise life.

We ask Your blessing, Lord, for all whom we love, for all who belong to us as a congregation. We think of those tonight, Lord, who've contracted COVID and who have in their homes to deal with isolation.

We pray that Your blessing will be with them, whether young or middle-aged or old. We give thanks that You, oh Lord, can minister to us to prevent us from undue anxiety.

[ 14 : 58 ] We pray that in all of these things too, we may carry our concerns to You and make our requests known to God. We pray, Lord, for any reaching old age that have anxieties with regard to COVID or with other things too.

We commit to, oh Lord, those of our age group, of that age group, of our congregation. We pray for them, pray for them especially, those of them confined. We pray for those in care homes, those in hospital, those being cared for at home, and those who care for them.

Oh Lord, remember them all, we pray, and help us to make use of the time we have before such times of confinement reach ourselves. Help us especially to close in with You in the gospel when You invite us to place our trust and our confidence in You.

Lord, we ask that You would help us even tonight to do this. If we have not done it yet, help us to do it now. And if we have done it, Lord, before help us again to renew our vows and our faith in Your presence and to come to renew our confidence in You as our God, our covenant God, the God of promises, the God of salvation, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Remember us, Lord, we pray, as we look forward to having the vacancy and the assistantship filled. We pray for Reverend Calumurdo Smith. We pray for him, O Lord, as he has been elected by us as a prospective assistant.

[ 16 : 31 ] We pray for himself, for Johan, and for the family. We pray for the congregation in North Uist who will know of this news by now and who themselves will be thinking prayerfully about the matter.

O Lord, enable us to carry this forward in a way that will be honoring to You and grant to Calumurdo himself that clarity of mind that we seek at such occasions, that You will lead him and guide him in a way to a decision that would honor You and that we pray would also be of benefit to ourselves.

But if it doesn't, Lord, come about the way we would seek, help us nevertheless to acquiesce in Your will. We pray that You would grant Your blessing to His congregation at this time.

We pray for all congregations, Lord, throughout our presbytery and who belong to us as a church and indeed in the wider sense beyond our presbytery and the rest of our nation and throughout the world.

Those who faithfully meet to worship You in different circumstances. Lord, we thank You for the common faith that You people hold. Lord, whatever differences there may be in practices or in backgrounds, in racial distinctions or other ways, we, Lord, ask that You would help us to rejoice in the fact that we have brothers and sisters throughout the world who worship You and to claim You as their God.

[ 17 : 55 ] Remember Your people again, we pray, in Ukraine. Oh, Lord, our God, we have our hearts truly soared as we find so much on our news of the devastation that has been wrought upon them as a people.

Lord, we pray for them. We pray for their president. We ask that You would help him in his ongoing resolve to resist the aggressor and to guide his people and to give them counsel and advice and to strengthen them with resolve.

We pray that You bless him and bless all, oh Lord, in that nation who seek to resist that aggression. And we know that although there are some that seem to be in support of Putin and of the Russian invasion, yet we give thanks that the many that resisted have made this known and continue, Lord, to seek the release of their country from such aggression.

Remember those who have had to flee into other nations. Remember those who look after them and give them help at this time by providing homes for them and providing finance and food.

Oh Lord, oh God, we pray for them. We pray that You would bring the situation to an end. We pray that the aggressor himself, the president in Russia, would himself, Lord, be removed from power.

[ 19 : 20 ] We pray that whatever means are open to You, Lord, to do so. We pray that this evil will come to an end. We pray that You would grant, Lord, freedom and release to those people of Ukraine from this terrible situation.

We ask that You would bless those who are in dire need as they escape from the country, those who carry children and whose husbands have remained behind to fight in the war.

Oh Lord, remember these mothers, we pray, with young children. Remember those who are pregnant, those who are seeking to escape with the difficulties that pregnancy itself brings. And remember them, Lord, we pray, as they seek to find comfort and alleviation from their distress.

Remember those young women, too, faced with what seems to be a prospect of a better life and yet find, oh Lord, that they will, if they accept, be locked into the terrors of sexual trade.

Lord, we pray against this and pray that You would grant to them the discernment. We pray that these gangs may be overcome by those who have the betterment of people at heart.

[ 20 : 34 ] We pray, too, for our parliament. Lord, we pray that You would bless them in this coming week as they debate this bill and we pray that the attempt to introduce the legalization permanently of home abortions will be defeated.

Lord, we pray in regard to abortion anyway and we pray that You would grant those who help, those with pregnancies, especially those who have unexpected or unwanted pregnancies in different parts of the country, but especially, Lord, in our own locality who help with a pregnancy crisis to those affected.

Oh, Lord, our God, we commit their work to You and ask that You'd encourage those who are seeking to bring counsel and advice and help practically and spiritually to such people.

And so, remember, Lord, we pray all of our people as we commend them to You and we ask tonight, oh, Lord, that all who are watching online as well and joining us and wherever they may be, we pray for them and ask that You would be pleased, Lord, to bless them in their own homes and families and localities throughout the world, wherever it is they belong to.

Grant the gospel tonight. may truly come to bless us and bless us inwardly and bless us permanently and for we seek the extending of Your kingdom and the glory of Your name and the furtherance of Your cause and we ask all of this with the pardon of how many sins for Jesus' sake.

[ 22 : 03 ] Amen. Let's read now from God's Word in the epistle of Paul to the Philippians. Paul's letter to the Philippians and the final chapter chapter 4.

And we'll just read from the beginning of the chapter through to the end just to remind ourselves of what we've already looked at in the chapter and tonight we're going to be looking at the next section from verse 4 to 7.

Amen. Therefore, my brothers whom I love and long for my joy and crown stand firm thus in the Lord my beloved. I entreat Yodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord.

Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are in the book of life.

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to people. The Lord is at hand.

[ 23 : 12 ] Do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God which passes all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things and the God of peace will be with you. I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me.

You were indeed concerned for me but you had no opportunity, not that I am speaking of being in need for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low and I know how to abound.

In any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

[ 24 : 21 ] Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble and you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving except you only.

Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. Not that I seek the gift but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. I have received full payment and more.

I am well supplied having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. A fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches and glory in Christ Jesus.

To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Once again we pray for God to follow a reading of his word with his own blessing.

[ 25 : 32 ] Let's now sing in Psalm number 31 in the Sing Psalms version page 36 Psalm 31 verses 1 to 7 tune this time is Heron Gate.

In you I have taken refuge Lord you are my shelter in distress O let me never be ashamed but save me in your righteousness. Lord turn your ear to hear my cry come quickly to deliver me and be my rock and firm defence my stronghold and security.

Verses 1 to 7 In you I have taken refuge Lord. In you I have taken refuge Lord You are my shelter in distress O let me O let me never be ashamed but save me in your righteousness Lord turn your ear to hear my cry come quickly to deliver me and be my rock and firm defence my stronghold my stronghold and security

You are my fortress and my rock for your midst be my sure guide Reserve me from the trap that said You are the refuge where I am where I am Redeem me Lord O God of truth I stand my covenant to you

I hate all those who trust false goals I trust the Lord for He is true I will rejoice and take delight in all the love that you have shown for my affection you have seen to you my soul distress is known

[ 29 : 37 ] Will you turn with me please now to Philippians 4 and we're going to look at verses 4 to 7 as we continue and come on towards the end of the epistle there are studies here that have been going on as you know for some time rejoice in the Lord always again I will say rejoice let your reasonableness be known to everyone the Lord is at hand do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus well here in these verses verses 4 to 9 especially you have what you might regard as a set of bullet points that the apostle is using as he comes towards the end of his letter here to this church in Philippi but they're not just randomly assembled bullet points if you like you can see the way that we have bullet points as you know nowadays when we list things in terms of bullet points they're not random points they're actually very closely connected together and you can see some of the ways in which they're connected together for example he's saying here that the peace of God will guard your hearts and minds and then he finishes in verse 9 this section by saying the God of peace will be with you the peace of God and the God of peace and all the way through in relation to these matters he's joining together some very important points that fit together so well in the way that he's advising counselling these Christians in Philippi to meet with the difficulties that they face as they're surrounded by those who don't share in their faith and indeed are hostile to them and we can say that in verses 4 to 7 the apostle has assembled these points under three imperatives three imperatives in the sense they're commands really we call them imperatives in the way that they're set out here there's rejoicing reasonableness and requests we could take these as the heading of our study this evening rejoicing reasonableness verse 5 rejoicing verse 4 and requests in verses 6 to 7 and if we just make our way through these we'll see how the apostle joins all this together and what we can take ourselves from this to encourage us tonight and to challenge us as well with regard to living our life in the setting in which God has placed us so first of all this rejoicing verse 4 rejoice in the Lord always again

I will say rejoice it's important you see there he's saying rejoice in the Lord always it's in the Lord that he is setting out the rejoicing for them and as he sets out this imperative to rejoice always and he repeats it there it's in the Lord that they are to rejoice and that's so so important because it brings before us the fact that in the apostles mind these Christians in Philippi know the Lord for themselves they have a saving relationship with the Lord as far as the apostle is concerned they have a live relationship with him they draw their encouragement and their strength from him they live for him they worship him they commend him to those around them as they live as Christians in Philippi in the difficulties that they faced in other words he's reminding us that our rejoicing is very different to what we might call in worldly terms being happy because being happy in the worldly sense of it is very much tied to your circumstances and the circumstances that make us happy and there's nothing wrong of course with being happy and having happiness on that level if you like there's nothing at all in the Bible to actually discourage you from being happy in the proper worldly sense but then the things on which that happiness is based can very quickly be taken from you even in a happy relationship and the happiness that a loving relationship brings we're very familiar with the fact that that can very suddenly or unexpectedly come to an end and if the basis of the happiness is that relationship itself or whatever else circumstances make us happy then the happiness is going to be drastically affected by the removal of what makes us happy in a worldly or secular sense remember it may well be in fact that the apostle was thinking of the words of the prophet

Habakkuk and other similar passages in the Old Testament Habakkuk it's a very short book as you know but it was written at times of crisis in the people of Israel of Judah and Habakkuk was a prophet in advance of the coming of the Babylonian captivity a Babylonian power that had overcome the Assyrians and was now making its way through to where Habakkuk lived and all the way through the prophet Habakkuk talks about the difficulties the afflictions the things that are coming the threats and all the things that will be involved when the Babylonians come and yet here you see how he finishes ends his prophecy in an absolutely wonderful way here's what he says in chapter 3 verse 17 though the fig tree should not blossom not fruit beyond the vines the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls now that's a drastic situation just imagine what he's saying there in a land that depends so much in their daily lives on these things the fig tree the fruit and the vines the olive trees the fields yielding food and the flocks and the herds in order for their daily sustenance all of these he says they'll be cut off and though they be cut off what happens then yet I will rejoice in the Lord

I will take joy in the God of my salvation God the Lord is my strength he makes my feet like the deers he makes me tread on my high places you see what he's saying though all of this will take place or should take place yet I will rejoice in the Lord my God in other words he's saying though the Lord should take away what effectively is a worldly or this worldly foundation for happiness I have something better than that he's saying I have another foundation I have a better foundation I have the Lord my God and though I would not be able to rejoice anymore in the ordinary things of life even though they are essential in many ways yet I will rejoice in the Lord my God and that's really what the apostle is saying here with regard to the Philippians as well that's how he's putting it here and why he's repeating it to reinforce the point he's saying to the Philippians your rejoicing is different to just the ordinary sense of being happy because being happy is itself largely taken up with the things of this present life with material things with financial comforts but the apostle is saying rejoice in the Lord always and again

I say rejoice Timothy Keller in one of his books American pastor in his book counterfeit gods the empty promises of money sex and power and the only hope that matters that's the title of the book he says this rejoicing in the Bible is much deeper than simply being happy about something Paul directed that we should rejoice in the Lord always but this cannot mean always feel happy since no one can command someone to always have a particular emotion and he says this to rejoice in the Lord is to treasure a thing it is to assess its value for you to reflect on its beauty and importance to reflect on its beauty and importance until your heart rests in it and tastes the sweetness of it rejoicing is a way of praising God until the heart is sweetened and rested and until it relaxes its grip on anything else it thinks it needs in other words rejoicing in the Lord is something you do more and more the more you are weaned away from trusting in the things of this world and the more you and I by God's grace are weaned away from trusting and having our hope and confidence in the things of this world the more that enables you to rejoice in the Lord and to know what that's like to have himself and to be able to say about him like

[ 38 : 59 ] Habakkuk said it's not easy and only by grace can you say it but to say about that if all of that that I have in a worldly sense would be taken away I still have the Lord and because I have the Lord I can continue to rejoice in him in his salvation and all that he means to and the value that I place upon him is that not how it is with yourself it's not an easy thought to have in your mind the removal of someone or something that you deeply love and are truly happy with it's a very difficult thing to contemplate the removal of that some of you have already had that removed we've all I'm sure experienced that and people especially being removed by death from us in an unexpected way but what Paul is saying to us is difficult though that is and hard though that is to accept and to live with and to contemplate even in advance of it this is what he's saying rejoice in the



Lord because whatever is removed from you in this life and you can see it with the Ukrainian Christians as they give interviews on television what has been removed from them they've had most if not all of their worldly comforts removed their homes are destroyed their church buildings many of them destroyed their livelihood is destroyed their family is uprooted and some of their families destroyed and yet they haven't lost their faith those Christians they're still saying that they are expressing their faith in Christ their faith in the Lord that's exactly what you find here in Paul's counsel to the Philippians rejoice in the Lord always again I will say rejoice and of course we do have so much even in a worldly sense that we can say to God thank you for and to be happy and to rejoice that we have these as well but it's himself especially that you need to have and must have tonight because only there can you have this lasting through joy and happiness so that's the first thing rejoicing second thing is reasonableness in verse 5 rejoice in the Lord always let your reasonableness be known to everyone now you can see that this is something that comes into relationship and comes into especially the way that we are required to treat other people let your reasonableness be known to everyone in other words those that you meet with those that you interact with let your reasonableness be known to them let that be what characterizes the way that you deal with them what does he mean by reasonableness well it's a word which can and is in other places translated gentleness in fact if you go to the qualifications for the eldership and at this point elders ears should be fully listening including my own remember the first timothy chapter 3 passage where he says that if anyone aspires to the office of overseer by which he means elder he desires a noble task therefore an overseer an elder must be above reproach the husband of one wife sober minded self-controlled respectable hospitable able to teach not a drunkard not violent but gentle there's the word reasonable same word exactly translated reasonableness in Philippians 4 the word gentle or gentleness not quarrelsome and so on not violent but gentle not quarrelsome that's what's meant by Paul being reasonable let your reasonableness let your gentleness be known to everyone to everybody that you meet everyone he's not leaving anybody out he's not saying pick and choose who you're going to be gentle with or reasonable with it has to be something you do to everyone because a lot is at stake when we're otherwise not just for elders of course but if you meet somebody a man who's always quarreling with people even though he may very well be a Christian that person is not fit to be an elder because he doesn't meet the qualifications for eldership that you find in the New

Testament and no Christian should have that quarrelsomeness that lack of gentleness that opposite of gentleness about them what he's saying here let your reasonableness let your gentleness be known and of course that itself goes back to Jesus as well the way that he actually handled hostility and met with hostility when he was reviled he did not revile back he did not reply in kind to the abuse that he received and that's so important for ourselves and very difficult at times especially if we're more naturally fiery type of people because for one thing the credibility of the gospel is at stake that's why one of the reasons that Paul is so concerned with this they're facing people outside of the church in Philippi that are hostile to them they need to hold out the gospel message of salvation in Jesus Christ just as you and I do today but in many ways for that world out there the credibility of the gospel is assessed in terms of your life and mine it's in terms of how you speak to them how you react to them how you actually deal with the hostility that you meet within them in many ways they're going to measure your

Christianity by that let your reasonableness let your gentleness be known to everyone and for that we need God's grace we need to pray for this and pray that God will give us this and continue to enable us to be this kind of person that's gentle and reasonable with everyone else rejoicing reasonableness and of course that too as we said is reflecting what Christ himself was when Paul wrote to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians he made an appeal to them 2 Corinthians 10 verse 1 there's the apostle saying I appeal to you I entreat you by the gentleness of Christ in other words he's saying by the gentleness that you know characterizes Jesus I'm appealing to you by that and he goes on to then speak about what he is seeking from them well here is this reasonableness rejoicing reasonableness and now requests he's saying don't be anxious about anything of course he's saying here the Lord is at hand now we came across a similar reference this morning in James chapter 5 the Lord is at hand and you'll find some people suggesting that Paul and others were mistaken when they thought the Lord was near the Lord's coming was near and they'll say to you well there's all of these hundreds thousands of years more than two thousand years since the apostle wrote this surely he was mistaken if he was saying the Lord is at hand what does he mean well he means for a start that for those who live by faith the Lord is at hand every day the coming of the Lord is a reality to them every day it might not be tomorrow it might not be even during their lifetime but as far as they're concerned in the workings of their faith in the operating of their faith in the exercise of their faith the Lord is at hand the coming of the Lord is as near to them as they think about it as they require it as they desire it as they look forward to it as if he was here personally in his physical presence the Lord is at hand we're aware of his coming whenever that will be and he's saying don't be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God well there's a number of things there that we need to just briefly go over first of all the anxiety itself he says do not be anxious or you might say over anxious he's saying about anything he loves to use this word anything and everything and everyone he's saying let your reasonableness be known to everyone no exceptions and he's carrying that here saying don't be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication make your requests he's not leaving anything out as he says this to them and now we're facing the same because the word of God here is saying this to us now when you have anxiety sometimes anxiety is very understandable and there are many things in our lives that we may be anxious about but anxiety always turns you in on yourself to some degree or other anxiety this kind of worrying always turns in on yourself you begin to look at yourself you begin to look at your circumstances you begin to assess things in that very inward personal way remember how

Jesus in Matthew chapter 6 that great passage as part of the Sermon on the Mount as he said to the disciples not to be anxious about what their clothing would be what they would eat what they would put on because he said for a start the birds of the air and those animals in the creation are looked after by God will he not actually look after you more than them because you are his disciples seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you we live in a world of anxiety we live in a world that's just so full of anxiety we live in a world that can hardly put anxiety behind or aside taken up with so much materialism and so much to do with financial concern and so much to do on that sort of level of the ordinary things of life that people's lives are so crowded with various ways of looking at life that anxiety is the outcome stress affecting families affecting individuals affecting work affecting all sorts of things in human life well Paul is saying he's very aware of that of course and remember where he's writing from he's not writing from the ease of a country house somewhere where he's able to relax and take it easy he's writing from a prison cell he's writing from being imprisoned he's writing being chained to a Roman soldier as he writes to these beloved

[ 50 : 21 ]    Philippians that's the situation that's his context and yet he's saying in that context rejoice in the Lord always and in that context he's saying let your reasonableness be known to all men here he is with this Roman soldier chained to him if this soldier asks him something why is it that you're so content Paul why is it that you have this outlook on life well in a reasonable way he's going to actually explain that to him now he's saying don't be anxious about anything what a remarkable thing for a man in prison to say to those he's writing to but that's how it is now he's saying it's not a magic formula it's not something in which Paul could or anybody could actually somehow or other come up with the idea well I'm just not going to worry about things anymore and that's it I'll leave it at that just don't worry be happy it's far from being the case in prison yet he's still saying in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God now you could fill that out we could spend a long time we haven't got the time just now to do it but these four words that he uses to describe prayer are in themselves importance the word prayer itself which is a general word expressing pretty much everything to do with prayer and then he uses the word supplication which is really to entreat someone to come and to specifically appeal to God and then treat God for something supplication and then there's thanksgiving if thanksgiving is missing from our prayers we're not praying properly that's why we always seek to not just include thanksgiving actually we should try and begin with thanksgiving we have so much to be thankful for before we come to ask for anything else and Paul is saying thanksgiving here's a man in prison saying remember to be thankful when you're bringing your concerns to God in everything by prayer supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God a word request meaning the specific items that you're setting before

God in prayer and you know there is nothing too small to bring before God just like there's nothing too big whatever it is you specify for yourself for your children for your relatives for your district for your neighbors whatever it is you have specific requests to put before God God is not too big to consider these God is not saying look I am God I'm not concerned with these things as if there were trivialities make your requests known to me saying as Galick this morning we were thinking about the patience and the long suffering of God when you come to God with your requests God is not going to turn around and say I'm not going to deal with that that's just far too small an issue to bring before me bring me the big things in your life bring me the big concerns bring me things that affect large numbers of people or nations in the world or big things in your own life specifically that you want to major on he's not saying that he's saying make your requests known whether they're big things or small nothing's too small nothing's too great and for the children here tonight think about this as well whatever it is that's of concern for yourself as you grow as your life develops this is something for you as well within this wonderful passage what God is saying to you rejoice in the Lord when Jesus is the center of your life you have a ground there of rejoicing you have a reason to be happy above any other happiness and when it comes to asking things from God whatever it is you want to ask him as long as it's not something that would make him annoyed something that would make him that's against the teaching of the

Bible to ask for you can ask for whatever you like as long as it's according to the will of God however small a thing it might be don't ever be afraid to go to God and say Lord please help me with this whether it's your homework or your situation in school or whatever it is with your friends if you've fallen out or others have fallen out with you anything at all God is saying you make your requests known to me bring them to me and then he promises and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus so there's our anxiety there's the antidote for it in prayer the full orb prayer using all of these terms and descriptions and then comes this wonderful guardian in response the guardian of our souls the peace of God which passes all understanding will guard your hearts and that's exactly the word that Paul used the guardianship of our hearts and you see it's the peace of God this is not some self therapy that the apostle is advising these Philippians to somehow try and manufacture for themselves he's not saying if only I had a book that I could send you as to how to help yourself to be happy how to help yourself to actually come to peace in your life it's the peace of God it's God that creates this peace in our hearts it's a peace that comes with Jesus and with knowing

Jesus that's why it's connected there it's a bullet point but it's connected to the first one rejoice in the Lord because this is the peace of God that will guard your hearts and mind in Christ Jesus it's not some kind of self therapy or just persuading yourself that you can work yourself into peace it's the peace of God and you see it's not God promising or Paul saying to these Philippians you should just pray that God will take away all your troubles everything that causes you pain there's that species of theology in the world today that would suggest to you that actually God doesn't want you to have any difficulties in your life and that what you should pray for really is that God will take away all of these difficulties out of your life and then things will be well and then you'll be at peace no Paul is saying I'm in prison I'm writing to you from a prison cell from my uncomfortableness from my pains from my own afflictions and I'm writing to the Philippians he's writing to these Philippians in their circumstances of difficulty as well and he's not saying oh God's going to take away everything that causes you pain and takes away your trials and then all will be well with you no he's saying in the pain in the midst of the trials as life goes on as you come to trust in God as you come to make your concerns known to him to bring your peace to him to bring your request to him that's where his peace is going to guard your hearts as you face the difficulties as you wrestle with the problems as you try and face up to your anxieties this he says is how to do it prayer supplication thanksgiving request to God and then the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds through Christ

Jesus isn't it interesting that he says it passes all understanding this internal peace that God gives to his people that God gives to us as an answer to prayer as an antidote to our anxieties and a strengthening in our toils and in our worries and our concerns and he's saying here it passes all understanding well you don't need to understand every single detail or even most of the details about how this peace of God comes to you or how it works to guard your hearts and mind you might be able to say you might be saying well I don't understand how this peace of God is able to guard my heart and mind you don't need to understand that in order to have it or enjoy it or benefit from it most of you came or many of you came here tonight in a car some of you driving some of you in a car driven by others you don't need to understand how that engine works how that engine transmits power to the wheels in order to benefit from having a car you get into it you learn to drive it you don't actually have to know anything much about how the engine works as long as you keep watching the warning lights and then take it to the mechanic but you don't need to actually know how it works to benefit from it to travel in it for it to be wonderfully efficient for you that's what he's saying about the peace of God it surpasses all understanding you can't possibly understand everything to do with it you can't pack all of that into your head into your heart because it's the peace of God it's the peace that Jesus died in order to achieve for us no way we can understand every detail of that but the thing is you don't have to the wonderful thing is you can have it and you have it in Christ it's yours when he is yours and it comes as an answer to these aspects of prayer that he's dealt with to bring out anxieties to God and he's saying it will guard your hearts that's an important word it will guard your hearts our heart needs to be guarded

[ 60 : 41 ] Paul has a vision here almost like these anxieties these worries coming to invade the space of our soul just like an invading army and what he's saying you face the invasion that's coming from these anxious thoughts that keep rising up in your soul that come as you look at things around you or in your family life or in your own life whatever it is very often the host of these anxieties are just like an army invading your soul and Paul is saying the peace of God is your guardian it's standing on sentry duty in your heart and that's how you face the anxieties you look to the peace of God and you bring yourself before God in prayer and the peace of God as he's pleased to bring it to you is the way God garrisons your heart and gives you that peace remember wonderful words of Isaiah and I'm just about finished Isaiah when he wrote in chapter 26 words I'm sure you're very familiar with but they're wonderful words where he says we have a strong city this song will be sung in the land of Judah this is words that he was setting out as a song to be sung open the gates we have a strong city he sets up salvation as walls and bulwarks open the gates that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in then he says this you keep him in perfect peace whose mind has stayed on you because he trusts in you trust in the Lord forever for the Lord God is an everlasting rock wonderful combination of terms but you see what he's saying you will keep him you Lord will keep him in perfect peace the peace that is your own you will give that to him who trusts in you whose mind is stayed on you because he trusts in you now it's not the trust that forms the basis of confidence for Isaiah you could say with if you wanted to emphasize the words you will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you because it is in you that he trusts that's the secret of the peace it's in you that he trusts you Lord are the source of the peace and therefore you Lord are the one he trusts in and as trusting in you you will keep him in your peace because the Lord God is an everlasting rock that's essentially what

Paul is saying Christ is your rock Jesus is your rock the Lord is your rock and as the rock your rock he is the source of your peace because as he says here it will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus you see the way he wonderfully provides what you might say is a literary envelope where he says in the Lord in verse four and he finishes verse seven in Christ Jesus same thing and within the envelope if you like where you have these two sides within the contents of the envelope you have all of these wonderful things the rejoicing the reasonableness the peace of God you make it yours by having Jesus as yours you don't manufacture this peace but you don't have to you and I couldn't do it anyway what you do need to have is to have your trust and faith in the

Lord Jesus Christ and to do that you accept him as he's offered in the gospel as a saviour to us as the saviour as our redeemer the only redeemer do you have something greater than happiness greater than happiness in worldly terms do you have the peace of God the rejoicing that's yours in Christ do you have Jesus himself do you know him whom to know is life and peace friends there is a lasting joy there is a lasting peace it is yours in abundance in the Lord Jesus Christ and if he's not yours tonight don't you want him and if you want him don't you want to take him now is this not your opportunity to come to know a joy and peace that no power on earth or in hell can ever destroy may

God bless these thoughts on his word to us let's conclude now by singing to God's praise in psalm number four psalm four in the sing psalms version on page number four and we'll read from verse four these final four verses in anger do not break God's law consider and be still present a righteous sacrifice and wait upon his will or who can show us any good I hear so many say O Lord shine on us with your light show us your face I pray and so on to the end of the psalm in anger do not break God's law in anger do not break God's law consider and he

[ 67 : 00 ] I st god's will O who can show us any good I hear so many say O Lord, shine up as with your light Show us your face, I pray You filled my heart with greater joy

Than others may have found As they rejoice at harvest time When green and white abide I will lie down and sleep in peace My heart will rest secure For you alone, O gracious Lord Will keep me safe and sure

Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ The love of God the Father And the communion of the Holy Spirit Be with you now and evermore Amen