



## CrossRoads Notes:

**Title: Thankful in Tough Times**

**Theme: Guarding Your Heart in This Life**

**Series: Full Measure of Thanksgiving**

Philippians 4:6-7, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

**Introduction:** *This passage of Scripture was written while the Apostle Paul was in prison and gives us truths to protecting our spiritual hearts in this life.* (The Ryrie Study Bible; Matthew Henry Commentary; The Expositors Bible Commentary) The people to whom the Holy Spirit led Paul to write were faced with worrisome things. (Daily Study Bible Series) The fact is just being a human being, vulnerable to all chances and the changes of this mortal life is itself a worrying thing. The Early Church, just like us had normal worries over human situations. Being Christians did not protect them nor will it protect us from giving in to the temptation of taking one’s life into his own hands.

**Proposition:** *I would propose to you there are three powerful truths in today’s key text that will protect your relationship with Jesus Christ and enable you to express a life of thankfulness to God regardless of the circumstance.*

**Interrogative Sentence:** *Just what are the truths found in Philippians 4:6-7, truths the Holy Spirit revealed so powerfully to the Apostle Paul in prison? Just how can we apply them to our everyday life?*

**Transitional Sentence:** *The first step to guarding your heart and mind in this sin cursed world is, do not worry or be anxious about anything. Worry is a constant attack from the devil to distract us and keep us from enjoying God’s best. Paul addressed the sin of worry and so did Jesus. He taught, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? ...But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” (Matthew 6:25-34) The Apostle Paul and Jesus are on the same page and both of them are not giving a pep talk, but a charge not to worry! (The Preacher’s Outline & Sermon Bible)*

With this truth set before us, we must seriously consider, “What is worry?” “Worry” or “anxious” (merimnao) means not to be troubled in thought and heart so as to cripple you. (The Complete Word Study Commentary; Analytical Lexicon of the Greek, New Testament; Dictionary of Biblical Languages) The application is to be pulled in different directions. Our hopes and dreams pull one way, but fear takes us another direction, thus preventing

or crippling us from enjoying all that God has for us. The Old English root word from which we get our word “worry” means to “strangle.” You and I have fallen into this type of worry, thus we find ourselves not thinking clearly, no longer being productive, and looking for other avenues through which to work. Hours are wasted daily because of this sin and vision is not prayed through to completion. (The Bible Exposition Commentary)

Our key text says, “not anxious about anything.” “Anything” (*medeis*) means not even one thing, not one person, situation or circumstance. (The Complete Word Study Dictionary; Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament; Dictionary of Biblical Languages; Greek-English Lexicon)

C. Kingsley understood the heart of this portion of the message and it is so clearly presented as he wrote, “Be not anxious about tomorrow [or anything]. Do today’s duty, fight today’s temptations [through Christ] and do not weaken and distract yourself by looking forward to things which you cannot see and could not understand if you saw them. Enough for you that the God you serve is just and merciful, for He [rewards] every man according to his [labor].

The heart of this part of the message is, Christians are to be concerned about the things of this present life, but with a heart that enables them to look to the Lord with such a confidence that it frees their minds, strengthens visions and embraces the peace of God through Jesus Christ. This is done by taking to heart 1 Peter 5:7, “Cast all your anxiety on Him [Christ Jesus] because He cares for you.”

**Transitional Sentence:** *Once Christians grasp the truth that worry is sin, keeping them from enjoying the true peace of God, they are told to pray.* Our key text says, “but in everything, by prayer and petition, ...present your requests to God.” (Philippians 4:6) Ephesians 6:18 says, ““And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests...” 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, “Pray continually.”

The Holy Spirit has three powerful words: The first word is prayer, “(*proseuche*) which means a house devoted to prayer. (Thayers’ Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament) The second word is “petition” (*deesis*) meaning a specific petition coming from the heart with intense crying out, a gut cry for something or someone. It is interceding for a situation only God can do a work in or through. (The Preacher’s Outline & Sermon Bible; Practical Word Studies; The Complete Word Study Dictionary; Theological Dictionary of the New Testament) A third word is “request (*aitema*) meaning we are to be specific, giving details, telling Him exactly what we need. (The Preacher’s Outline & Sermon Bible; Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament; The Complete Word Study Dictionary)

For application’s sake, the Apostle Paul formed the habit of prayer as he faced every circumstance in this life. Have you and do you follow as Paul followed Christ? A.B. Simpson wrote, “Our God has boundless resources. The only limit is us. Our asking, our thinking, our praying is too small. Our expectations are too limited.”

**Transitional Sentence:** *Thankfulness in tough times begins with not being anxious, by taking everything to God in prayer and by having a heart of thankfulness in all things.* 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 says, “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.” To fail to give God thanks is a symptom of unbelief. (Romans 1:21)

The true victories enjoyed in this life by born again Christians are obtained through joyfulness, prayerfulness and thankfulness. As long as the child of God is joyfully and prayerfully seeking God's guidance, he can look at aggravations, temptations, afflictions and persecutions as being opportunities for being transformed into the image of Christ Jesus. (The Expositors Bible Commentary; The New Bible Commentary; The Bible Knowledge Commentary; Matthew Henry Commentary) Romans 8:28-29 says, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. ...to be conformed to the likeness of His Son...”

Jesus knew aggravation in ministry. In Gethsemane, Jesus took Peter, James, and John into the garden with him and gave them very clear instructions, “stay here and keep watch with Me.” (Matthew 26:38) “Keep watch with me,” meant “stay awake and pray!” (The Expositors Bible Commentary; The Bible Knowledge Commentary; The Bible Exposition Commentary)

When you find that you are alone in prayer, and in reality, there is no tougher time than to stand alone in prayer, it is time to thank God and allow Him to enable you to pray like Christ did. Jesus did not fail His watch in prayer and He intercedes for you right now at the Throne of Grace. (Hebrews 12:2-3)

Jesus knew of another tough time in His obedience to God, His Father. Satan is our adversary. He is “the prince of this world;” (John 12:31; 14:30) “the prince of the power of the air;” (Ephesians 2:2) “the god of this world;” (2 Corinthians 4:4) “the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.” (Ephesians 2:2) The distinct personality of Satan and his activity among men are very easily recognized. We have just read how he tempted Jesus Christ. (Matthew 4:1-11) Satan is the prince of the demons. (Matthew 12:24) He is the constant enemy of God, of Jesus Christ, of the divine kingdom, of the followers of Christ, and of all truth; full of falsehood and all malice, and exciting and seducing to evil in every possible way. His power is very great in the world. He is a “roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” (1 Peter 5:8) Mankind is said to be “taken captive by him.” (2 Timothy 2:26) Christians are warned against his “devices,” (2 Corinthians 2:11) and called on to “resist” him. (James 4:7) (Easton's Bible Dictionary; Tyndale Bible Dictionary; Willington's Book of Bible Lists)

We can be thankful in the tough times of having to be alone in prayer, in the tough times of Satan's attacks and we can be like the Apostle Paul who wrote, “To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in

insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)

The whole of Scripture teaches us, if we are seeking with all our hearts and strength to walk in obedience to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, in our afflictions we can be thankful for the opportunity to rest in “Christ’s” power. (2 Corinthians 12:9) When Christians are afflicted, their value of ministry does not decrease, if anything it increases by presenting opportunity for the Lord to manifest Himself in and through His faithful children.

In reality, there are tough times. Being alone in prayer, being attacked by the devil, suffering affliction and even persecution are tough times. “Persecution” originates in ignorance of God and Christ, (John 16:3) hatred to God, Christ and the Word of God. (John 15:20,24; Matthew 13:21) And because of mistaken zeal (Acts 13:50; 26:9-11) (New Topical Textbook) Jesus said, “...No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.” (John 15:20) Paul wrote to the young pastor Timothy, “In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,” (2 Timothy 3:12) Paul also told Timothy that the Lord rescued him out of persecutions and sufferings and enabled him to be faithful and patient, to express love, and to endure all that came against his work for the Lord. (2 Timothy 3:10-11)

Loss of loved ones, financial instability, changes, uncertainty, and temptations, all come at us from our adversary. This is why the Holy Spirit moved the writer of Hebrews to point us in the right direction. “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” (Hebrews 12:1-3)