

LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Philippians 4:1-7

Philippi was the *first place* in Europe where the *gospel was preached*...and it was *preached* by **Paul** and **Silas**. Written in a *tender language*, it *abounds* with a *deep expression of kindness*. In essence, **Paul** is basically writing a *thank you note* to the believers at **Philippi** for *their help in his hour of need*...but he also uses the occasion to send along some *instruction* on *Christian living* and *Christian unity*.

His central thought is simple...**only in Christ is real unity and joy possible**.

With Christ as their *model of humility* and *service*, he emphasizes that they can enjoy a *oneness of purpose, attitude, focus, and labor*...a truth which **Paul illustrates from his own life** and one the **Philippians** desperately *need to hear* and *imitate*.

As we will see here in **chapter 4**, within the church there were *fellow workers* that were *at odds* with each other...and this was *hindering the work* in *proclaiming the gospel*...and what it was to *live a new life* in Christ. Because of this, **Paul** exhorts the church to **stand firm**...to **live in harmony**...to **rejoice in the Lord** always... to **be anxious for nothing**...and by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known. And then, **the peace of God shall guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus**.

The key words...*to live is Christ*...and then *consider it all joy*.

- **Chapter 1**...Paul gave *an account of his personal circumstances* and *how his circumstances had turned out for the greater progress of the gospel* (**vs. 12**).
- **Chapter 2**...He gave *an appeal* to the believers to have the *attitude of Christ*...to have the *mind of Christ*...an *exhortation to humility*.

- **Chapter 3**...He emphasized the *prize of the Christian life* ...the ability to *know and experience Christ personally*.
- **Chapter 4**...Now he gives the *reward of the Christian life* ...the *peace that comes with the presence of Christ*. *Peace with others*...*peace with self*...and *peace regardless of your circumstances*.

Paul's love for the **Philippians** was evident *throughout this letter*...but it's especially apparent here in the opening verses of **chapter 4**. One of his *chief concerns* was that these people's lives would be *characterized* by the **fruit of the Spirit**. **Love, joy, and peace** were uppermost in his *heart* and *mind* for them. And in order to experience such *grace*...and the same is true now, as it was then...Christ must be at the *center of a believer's life*. **Paul** made this plain as he wrote to the saints at **Philippi**.

I. STAND FIRM IN THE LORD: (**vs. 1**)

Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved (**vs. 1**)...

Therefore...introduces this *exhortation* and *applies* what he wrote in **chapter 3** about *sanctification* and *glorification*.

My beloved brethren...revealed his *love* and *affection* for this congregation.

My joy and crown...Crown (Gk. *stephanos*) describes the *runner's wreath* or *victor's crown*. These saints were to their *spiritual father* what *victory wreaths* were to *runners in the Greek races*.

Stand firm...This is the *same exhortation* that **Paul** gave them back in **chapter 1** verse **27**...to have the same *steadfastness*. Also, it's the *same exhortation* that he gave the believers in **Corinth**.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.”

~I Corinthians 15:58

It’s an **imperative**...which makes it a *command* with almost a *military ring* to it. Like *soldiers on the front line*, believers are commanded to **hold their position** while *under attack*. They aren’t to collapse under *persecution*... or *compromise* or yield to *temptation* and *sin*.

II. CULTIVATE HARMONY IN THE FELLOWSHIP:

(vs. 2-3)

I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord (vs. 2)...

The *two women* mentioned...**Euodia** and **Syntyche**...were *not living up to the meanings of their names*. **Euodia** means *a prosperous journey*...and **Syntyche** means *a pleasant acquaintance*. Since **Paul pleaded** with these *two to live in harmony in the Lord*, it’s obvious that they were *at odds* with each other, *causing dissension* in the church. This helps explain **Paul’s earlier plea for unity** back in the *first 4 verses of chapter 2*.

To live in harmony...literally reads, *to be of the same mind*.

Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life (vs. 3)...

Obviously, at one time **Euodia** and **Syntyche** shared in **Paul’s struggle in the cause of the gospel**. But as he wrote this letter, they were *not in harmony with each other*. They were *contentious* rather than *content*.

The *identity* of **Paul’s true companion** *isn’t known*...but he knew that he *could count on him* to *work with the women* and bring them *back to fellowship with each other* (**Galatians 6:1-2**)...and to bring them back **together with Clement** and the **rest of his fellow workers** who had shared with his struggle in the cause of the gospel.

III. MAINTAIN A SPIRIT OF JOY: (vs. 4)

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! (vs. 4)...This verse expresses the *theme of the book* of **Philippians**.

Joy verse **happiness**. The word **happy** comes from the *middle English word happe* which means *luck* or *good fortune*. People are *happy* when they consider the things that happen to them to be their *good fortune* or that they got *lucky*...i.e. it depends on *external circumstances*.

Sometimes the *trials, circumstances, and pressures of life* make it *almost impossible* to be *happy*. But **Paul** didn’t tell his readers to be *happy*. He *encouraged* them to **rejoice in the Lord**. In fact, he said it *twice* here in **verse 4** (also in **chapter 3 verse 1**). Christ is the *only* One in whom the *sphere of rejoicing* can take place. Surely there are *many circumstances* in which Christians *can’t be happy*...but they can *always rejoice in the Lord* and *delight* in Him. You will hear more about this when the **Ripken’s** are with us in a few weeks.

Paul himself was an *excellent example* of one who had *inner joy* even when *external circumstances*...such as *persecution, imprisonment, and the threat of death*...were *against him*.

“Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

~I Thessalonians 5:16-18

Joy isn't a feeling or emotion...it's a deep-down *confidence* that *God is in control of everything*...for the *believer's good* and *His own glory*. Thus, *all is well* no matter what the *situation* or *circumstance*.

Rejoice...Gk. *chairete*, is a **present imperative**, calling believers to the *continual, habitual practice* of **rejoicing**.

IV. LIVE WITH A FAITH: (vs. 5)

Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near (vs. 5)...

In addition to **joy**, believers are to have a **gentle spirit** which is to be *evident to all*.

Gentle spirit...Gk. *epieikes*, suggests a *forgiving, long-suffering, non-retaliatory spirit*. *Joy* is an *inner quality* in *relation* to *circumstances*, and it *may not always be seen*. But the way one *responds* to others...whether in *gentleness* or *harshness*...*will be noticed*.

Why be *gracious* and **gentle**? Because **the Lord is near**... He is **Emmanuel**...*God with us*. He is *omnipresent*.

V. TRUST THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD: (vs. 6)

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God (vs. 6)...

“For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life...And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?...You of little faith!”

~Matthew 6:25a, 27, 30b

Be anxious for nothing...stop worrying...a **present active imperative** in the Greek. It literally means...*stop your habitual worrying*.

Worry...Defn. *Interest paid the devil before it's due date*.

People that **worry** will say that they *have concern for others*. In reality, at it's core, **worry** is *based on self-centeredness*.

It has been studied that less than **8%** of the *things that we worry about* in life actually *come to fruition*.

Paul's appeal to be **anxious for nothing** isn't a call to a *nonchalant, carefree life*. To *care* and be *genuinely concerned* is one thing. To be **anxious** and *worry* is another.

Paul exhorted the **Philippians** to *pray* instead of being **anxious** and *worrying*. *Praying* with **thanksgiving** involves *trusting* God. The **four words** that are used here describe a believer's *communion* with God...

- **Prayer...**Gk. *proseuche*, describes a *believer's ability and willingness to approach and commune with God*.
- **Supplication...**Gk. *deesei*, emphasizes *requesting or petitioning for an answer to a specific need*.
- **Thanksgiving...**Gk. *eucharistias*, is an *attitude of the heart* which should always *accompany one's prayers*.
- **Request...**Gk. *aitemata*, speaks of *definite and specific things asked for*.

VI. REST IN THE SECURITY OF GOD: (vs. 7)

When the *exhortations* of verses 4-6 are *heeded*, the **peace of God** will *flood* one's *anxious, worried soul*.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (vs. 7)...

The **peace of God** is *supernatural*...not *psychological*. The Lord Jesus Christ is a believer's **peace** and *every child of God* has **peace** with God through *justification by faith*.

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”

~Romans 5:1

This **peace of God** that **Paul** is writing about is *directly related* to the believer’s *walk with God*. This **peace transcends** all *understanding* and *comprehension*...that is, it’s *beyond man’s ability* to *grasp* it.

Guards...Gk. *phrouresei*, is a *military term* which means *to protect* and *defend*. It’s the picture of establishing a *military compound* to *protect* and *defend* an area of *strategic value*. Like soldiers assigned to watch over a certain area, God’s **peace surrounds, protects, and defends** the **hearts and minds** of His children.

In **1973**, **Steven Spielberg** was hired to make a movie based on **Peter Benchley’s** novel about *shark attacks* called **Jaws**. The movie was so scary that even to this day millions of Americans panic when they get wind that a shark might be present in a beach area. A persistent shark phobia has been known to keep people away from the beach.

But, an article in **Foreign Policy** magazine claims that on average *less than one American (0.92 people) dies* each year from a *shark attack*.

So just in case you really need something better to worry about, here’s a list of some items *more likely than sharks to cause your death* while living in the United States:

- *Trampolines account for an average of 1.1 deaths per year.*
- *Roller coasters take 1.15 lives per year.*
- *Free-standing kitchen-range tip-overs cause 1.31 deaths per year.*
- *Vending machines account for 2.06 deaths per year.*

- *Riding lawnmowers take 5.22 lives per year.*
- *Fireworks cause 6.6 deaths per year.*
- *Skydiving accidents account for 21.2 deaths per year.*
- *Getting crushed by a television or furniture causes an average of 26.44 deaths every year in the United States.*

By the *grace* of God, our *minds* and *thoughts* can be *transformed* so we *experience* the **peace of God** instead of *worry* and *anxiety*.

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- **When anxious or worried...Rejoice in the Lord (always).**
“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!”
~Philippians 4:4
- **When anxious or worried...Relate carefully with others.**
“Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.”
~Philippians 4:5
- **When anxious or worried...Relieve anxiety by praying.**
“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”
~Philippians 4:6
- **When anxious or worried...Reflect on praiseworthy things.**
“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.”
~Philippians 4:8