

Stand Firm in Your Faith

Philippians 4

INTRO:

This fourth chapter begins in verse 1 with an affirmation of love and a command for spiritual stability. Notice the words he uses to express his love for them- “whom I love”, “long for”, “my joy”, “crown”, “my beloved”. These believers weren’t just a distant group of people, they were family to him, and he’s instructing them as a loving father would to his own children.

He gives them a command to stand firm in the Lord. Why? Because there will be two things come against them, and they are two things every generation of believers faces: false teaching, and persecution. The internet is ablaze with false doctrine, things are contrary to the Word of God, and persecution is starting to ramp up. Some people are going to dislike you because of your views and your values, some will ignore you, and some will tolerate you, and some will hate you for your faith, if it’s real. Jesus said in **John 15:19 (ESV), “If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”** It’s only natural that those in the world hate you because your values are different and they will try and bully you and get you to back down from living for Jesus. So stand firm beloved. Have spiritual stability. As he instructs the church in this last chapter we see there is a lot of great instruction that brings spiritual stability to you as an individual and us as a church collectively. We don’t have the time to unpack every single verse but I’ve divided the chapter into three sections- a plea for unity, a cure for anxiety, and a lesson in contentment.

First we see this plea for unity...

I. A plea for unity (2-3)

- a. Paul calls out two people in the church and he calls them out by name- Euodia and Syntyche.
 - i. Agree in the Lord.
 - ii. He even calls for some unnamed person to help them. They need some sort of intervention, and arbitrator to bring this conflict to an end.
 - iii. Both of these women loved the Lord, they were part of a team who labored in the Gospel.
- b. Unresolved conflict becomes cancerous to the body of Christ. It destroys the unity that Jesus desires among His followers.

- c. Seeing the bigger picture inspires resolution.
 - i. Their names are written in the book of life. The book of life is where every believer's name is written.
 - ii. The book of life is an important term. The only other time you see this phrase, "book of life" is in the book of Revelation. So you see here and then in the book of Revelation, 6 times in the book of Revelation. I'll only mention two of those verses in Revelation.
 1. **Revelation 20:15 (ESV) And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.**
 2. **Revelation 21:27 (ESV) But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.** The fact that it isn't only referred to as the book of life, but the Lamb's book of life in that verse points us to the sacrifice Jesus made in order that our names can be written in the book of life. He didn't say the king's book of life, or the Lord's book of life, but the lamb's book of life- pointing to the sacrificial lamb that was slain for our sins.
 3. Is your name written in the book of life? If it isn't then you can change that today by giving your life to Jesus.
 - iii. When Paul brings up that their names are written in the book of life it makes you think, is the conflict really worth it? Look, we're going on to bigger and better things in the future, and whatever is causing our division isn't worth it in the grand scheme of things. Agree in the Lord.

II. A cure for anxiety (4-9)

- a. Anxiety is a big problem in today's world.
 - i. In 2025 a report came out that said "43% of adults feel more anxious than they did the previous year." It's no surprise because our culture is ambushed by many troubles-hurricanes and wildfires ravished cities, the Middle East is in war, dictators are seeking to rule the world, and AI is going to take over the human race.
 - ii. Anxiety among our youth is climbing because of uncertainty in the world. 39% of the youth between 13 years old and 18 years old struggle with anxiety disorder. If you just look at the amount of prescription drugs for anxiety you can see that people are looking for a cure for anxiety. Today more youth and young adults are medicated than ever before. This is the most medicated generation that is

growing up now. Antidepressants among teens and young adults have increased 66% just since 2020. The sharpest rise has been among teen girls and young women between the ages of 13 and 25.

- iii. **Proverbs 12:25 (ESV) Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad.** What we have in this passage is a good word from the Lord.
- b. God has a cure for anxiety and it's found in His Word.
 - i. All of you are familiar with Kindle. Kindle is a tablet for reading electronic books, it's probably the most popular for e-books. The number one underlined book according to Kindle is the Bible app. And the number one underlined verses in the Bible app is Philippians 4:4-7. That's amazing. So out of all the books Kindle offers, and out of all the underlined words in all those books, is Philippians 4:4-7.
 - ii. He sets the table with three statements.
 1. He begins this passage with a command to rejoice- v4.
 - a. Twice in that verse we see the word rejoice- both times the word is in the imperative- meaning they are commands, not suggestions. And the fact that they are imperatives means that you can make the decision to rejoice- you can actually live a joyful life. Remember Paul is writing this from prison, he's lost his freedom and yet he can talk about rejoicing.
 - b. If you recall in the book of Acts chapter 16, when Paul planning the church in Philippi he was imprisoned there for his faith, along with Silas. And what did they do, they were praying and singing hymns to God. He was an example that you can rejoice in all circumstances, because our joy comes from the Lord. Nehemiah 8:10 says, "The joy of the Lord is your strength."
 2. The second statement in setting the table is v5, "let your reasonableness be known to everyone." This can be translated as gentleness, or gentle spirit. We are to carry a gentle spirit, not get all upset at every little issue- that's not Christianity.
 3. The third statement that Paul makes in setting the table for dealing with anxiety is the end of verse 5, "The Lord is at hand." He's saying the Lord is near, He's at hand." At hand could mean regarding space or time- most translations say near. I'm not absolutely sure which way it should be interpreted- but I

am absolutely sure that both are true of the Lord. If you know Jesus He is always close to you, and if you know Jesus you know that He can return any moment.

iii. He says, “do not be anxious about anything.” This would be a harsh statement for someone whose anxious. If someone was in my office and said, “Pastor I’m dealing with anxiety.” And I responded, “Well don’t be anxious for anything!” That would sound kind of harsh wouldn’t it. That’s not the best advice. He’s not reprimanding a person for being anxious, he’s offering help here. And what the Holy Spirit says through Paul is what I believe to be the cure for anxiety. He calls us to three things here:

1. **He calls us to prayer.** Notice three words he uses: prayer, supplication, and requests. These are all ways of going to the Lord and talking with Him. You need to know that God has all power and He is full of love and compassion. He has more resources than any human being on the face of the planet.
 - a. “In everything.” Do you go to the Lord with everything? This leads you to a logical inference and that is to identify anything that would cause you anxiety.
 - b. And the key is to go to Him in thanksgiving. When we begin to thank God for what He’s given us and how He’s provided for us we begin to see how great He is and how little our troubles are.
2. **He calls us to ponder** (8)
 - a. Think about these things. The word means to think about, to reason about, to ponder. Ponder means to think deeply about things.
 - b. And he makes it clear that it matters what we think about. Does your think list look like this? 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.
 - c. Have you ever tried to count how many thoughts you have in one day? It would be impossible. But the researchers at the Laboratory of Neuro Imaging at the University of Southern California did count them. They said your brain is a three pound computer that

produces about 70,000 thoughts per day. How many of those thoughts fall under the list that we just read.

- i. Think about our youth and what goes through their mind every day. Between video games, screens on their phones, social media, computers, and TV. How much of that do you think is pure and noble and excellent, and lovely.

3. **He calls us to practice (9)**

- a. You can learn a lot, hear a lot, and receive a lot from the Lord. But if you don't practice these things there's no impact. It's one thing to know something, and it's another for it to become a reality.
- b. Practice these things and the God of peace will be with you. Notice in verse 7 he says the peace of God, but here he says the God of peace. Whether your seeking the peace of God, or the God of peace, the source is the same. We want the peace of God, but where do we find it? We find it in the God of peace.

III. A lesson on contentment (10-23)

- I know you would probably agree with me when I say that we live in a society that is discontent, dissatisfied, and that we never have enough and what we have is not good enough.
- Contentment shows a gratitude towards God and a trust in Him in all circumstances.
- **Global statistics show that if you have a roof over your head and a meal on the table three times a day then you are richer than 93% of the world. If a person wears a pair of shoes he is richer than 75% of the world. But in the United States credit card debt averages more than \$16,000 dollars per household. Why is that? Because we never have enough.**
- **Grisel and I like to watch those home improvement shows. We used to watch Chip and Joanna, Fixer Upper, Home Town, the Property Brothers. And when we look at those shows we start to think, "wow, we live in a dump."**
- We get tired of the old pretty quick- in the physical, in the occupational- get tired of our jobs, in the relational- how many marriages have dissolved because one spouse wanted a newer model? It happens, it's tragic.
- There's nothing wrong with wanting to update your home, or improve your marriage, or look your best- but there's a difference between that and a insatiable desire for

things that are newer and bigger and greater, it can start to consume us, instead of finding contentment in whatever our circumstances.

- The final words of this epistle are centered around a “thank you” and appreciation for the Philippians support of Paul’s ministry. This is not the first time they have given to his ministry because he starts out in verse 10 he says, he rejoiced in the Lord greatly that they have revived their concern for him. And he says in verse 16 that they sent him help in Thessalonica for his needs. And in 18 he commends Epaphroditus by name for the gifts they sent- and he calls it three things- a fragrant offering, a sacrifice, and acceptable and pleasing to God.
- And kind of gives them a blessing in verse 19...Notice it says He will supply every need of yours, not every greed of yours. This church in Philippi gave sacrificially out of their poverty, they were not a rich people, many just had enough to eat.
- But Paul wants them to know that even though he’s very grateful for their gifts, he does not covet their money. In fact in verse 17 he says...
- I want you to notice three quick things about contentment in this passage:

a. Contentment is learned (11)

- i. He says this in verse 11 because contentment doesn’t come naturally to us. Dissatisfaction is the default of our humanity. Things are not good enough. Our human nature tends to complain about what we don’t have and what we can’t do and we envy what others have and what others can do.
- ii. An example of this is when the people of Israel after God delivered them from 400 years of slavery in Egypt...
 1. God met all their needs- their shoes didn’t wear out, He provided the food and water they needed to survive, He gave them protection from the elements of nature, and yet all they could do was complain.
- iii. **Seneca, the Roman philosopher of the 1st century said, “It’s not the man who has too little, but the man who craves more who is poor.”**
- iv. A recent study in America has shown that as GDP has grown in America, happiness and satisfaction has decreased. In other words, the more prosperous we’ve become as a nation the more dissatisfied we’ve become.
- v. **1 Timothy 6:6 says, “But godliness with contentment is great gain.” The next verse says, “For we brought nothing into this world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.”**

- vi. **Illus. Grisel and I saw the movie Michael Jackson...I happen to click on a documentary of his life on TV, it was an hour long, but said that he died \$500 million dollars in debt when he died. How do you make the kind of money he did and die in that kind of debt? Some of it wasn't his fault but his financial managers. Some of it was because of the money he spent.**
- vii. So we must learn to be content because we lean towards dissatisfaction.

b. Contentment is a choice (12)

- i. In verse 12 he talks about various life situations. He says there were times he had plenty, and there were times I had poverty. There were times I was well fed- I had steak and lobster- surf and turf- and there were times I had nothing but bread and butter- there were times I had only beans and rice because I couldn't afford the carne asada- it was beans and rice and Jesus Christ.
- ii. He's basically saying that I'm going to be good with when I have much and live in abundance, or whether I have little- it doesn't matter because the Lord is with me.
- iii. **Hebrews 13:5 (ESV) Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."**
- iv. You can choose to be discontent or you can choose to be content. Are you able to say, I may not have much, but the Lord is with me. Being content in every situation brings honor to the Lord because it show we are grateful no matter what. And when we are discontent we are showing a lack of gratefulness to God and saying, "Lord I'm not happy with what you blessed me with, I want you to give me more blessings so I can be happy." I'm not grateful for my abilities, my job, my spouse, my children, and on and on. Discontentment is an affront to God, contentment honors God.

c. Contentment is in Christ (13)

- i. We quote this verse in a lot of things, and that's ok, but notice the context here. He's saying that whether I have a lot or I have a little, it doesn't matter because my strength for life and ministry comes from Jesus.
- ii. We live in a world that is constantly saying you're not good enough, you're not talented enough, you're not rich enough, you're not pretty enough- but we do have enough because Christ is enough!

- iii. I can be content enough and I can be grateful in all circumstances because I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.
- iv. God is not opposed to having ambition, having drive, having lots He has blessed you with- use it all for the glory of God.
- v. Is Christ enough for you?
 1. **Psalm 131:2, “But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me.”**
 2. A weaned child is a child who has just moved from it’s mother’s breast milk to solid food. The child has survived the fragile stage of infancy. A weaned child has great confidence and security in it’s mother because of it’s dependency upon the mother for survival, to meet the basic needs for survival in the child. The mother provided all the child needed, and was sufficient for the child’s needs. Do you have that kind of calm in your soul, do you see Christ as sufficient? Do you see Christ as enough? Would you be content if everything was lost and all you had was Christ?

CLOSE: If you look at this final chapter, and what all is said in it, you can see that when Christ is put on a pedestal unity is possible, anxiety can flee, and contentment is attainable.