

Philippians 4 - Getting Along with Christians; The Meaning of Prayer; God's Rules for Doubtful Things

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1 Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, whom I long to see, **my joy and crown, standfirm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.**

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

1 Therefore, my dear brothers whom I long for, my joy and my victor's crown, this is how you must stand firm in the Lord, dear friends.

1 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

- "Therefore" - Paul's conclusion, his final remarks in this epistle

- "...my beloved" [2x] - *egō agapētos*, used 60x in the NT; 9x it refers to the love of the Father for the Son; 51x it refers to the love between believers

— This is further evidence that Paul is not writing to unsaved people, in order to get them saved; he's writing to saved people because he is aware of something (joy) lacking in their Christian walk (Cf. Matt 12:46-50)

- "...my joy and crown" - Paul planted this church 11 years earlier, and was proud of their progress in the Lord (Cf. 3 John 4)

- "...stand firm" - this command would not be necessary if it wasn't possible for a Christian to be blown to and fro and not "stand firm" in the resources that God has given to us (Cf. Eph 6:11,13,14; 1 Peter 5:9)

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

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

2 I urge Euodia and Syntyche to have the same attitude in the Lord.

2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

- "I urge" [2x] - *parakaleō*, to strongly exhort; this is not a suggestion, rather Paul is expressing his deepest desire

— Paul was made aware of an issue between these two women, which was compromising the unity of the Philippian church

- "...Euodia" - "success"

- "...Syntyche" - "lucky"

- These two women were at odds with one another, and their disagreement threatened the unity and effectiveness of the church

— Note that we're not given the reason for their disagreement. If the issue between them was a big deal, Paul would have commented on it. Because Paul doesn't tell us the cause of this lack of harmony between these two women, it's likely that the issue between them is not really the issue.

— Paul doesn't focus on the issue here, he focuses on their attitudes

- "...live in harmony" - *phroneō*, refers to their attitudes; Paul exhorts them to "be of the same mind" (Cf. 2:5)
- Our attitude determines our altitude. In 2:5, Paul uses the same Greek word (*phroneō*) to urge believers to have the same attitude as Jesus had during His Incarnation (Cf. 2:7, "emptied Himself").
- This tells us that the issue between these two women was not the main issue; their attitudes were the issue. These two women had lost sight of the proper attitude to have in service.
- The issue is the lack of Christlikeness that these two women were exhibiting
- When there is conflict within the church, or even within marriage, rarely is the issue really the issue. Whatever someone is upset about 99% of the time is not the real problem.
- The problem is that something has happened to the people involved at an attitude level where they are no longer walking out the *kenosis* (emptying of themselves) according to Jesus' example.
- They masqueraded their differences of opinion with some sort of spiritual issue, but to Paul the root cause of the division was their attitudes and their lack of a servant (*kenosis*, emptying) mindset

3 Indeed, **truecompanion**, I ask you also, help these women who have **shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel**, together with **Clement** as well as the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the **book of life**.

3 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.

3 Yes, I also ask you, my true partner, to help these women. They have worked hard with me to advance the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.

3 And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and *with* other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life.

- "...true companion" - the identity of this person is unknown
- Paul thought this issue was serious enough that Paul wanted to have someone in Philippi get involved to help resolve the issue
- "...shared my struggle in *the cause of the gospel*" - many will claim that these two women were not saved because of how they were acting and how Paul needed to call them out publicly
- However, this phrase (along with "whose names are in the book of life") removes all doubt as to the status of their justification: they were saved.

- "...Clement" - no background information is known, other than he was a fellow laborer with these two women and Paul
- Paul is requesting that Clement get involved, along with this "true companion" to help these two women change their attitudes
- "...book of life" - the record book containing the names of everyone who has trusted Christ as their Savior (Cf. Rev 3:5; 20:12,15)

Four Observations on Unity in the Body of Christ

1. Believers can return to the sin nature and jeopardize fellowship

Because believers are "dual-natured" (we keep our sin nature, but add our new nature at the point of faith). We have the Holy Spirit indwelling us, but we can retreat back to our sin nature at any time. This is why Paul tells us in Rom 13:14; Gal 5:13 to not return to our sin nature. If we were already glorified and without a sin nature any longer, this command would be irrelevant. But we continue to have a sin nature until our death or the Rapture, but once we're saved we no longer have to go back to it. When I go back to the sin nature as a Christian, it's a matter of my choice.

This is what happened to Euodia and Syntyche: they were believers who made a choice to go back to their sin nature and allow un-Christlike attitudes to overtake their minds, which in turn caused friction and division in the church.

The works of the flesh/sin nature are described in Gal 5:19-21, some of which include "enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying." These are all sins that affect relationships within the church.

Believers getting along within the body of Christ is a long-running problem, all the way back 1000 years before Christ. In Prov 6:16-19 Solomon lists the six things the Lord hates, seven are an abomination to Him: the seventh in the list is "one who spreads strife among brothers."

2. Believers are exhorted to live consistently with their position in Christ

Positionally, all believers are already united into one body (1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:28; Eph 2:14). Because of this truth, a believer cannot sever themselves in a war with another believer because that would be contradicting our position in Christ.

Our position in Christ has not just united us vertically with God, but it has also united us horizontally with other believers. We often get hung up with "justified" hurts, which are the most difficult to get over. We feel we have a right to be upset, to divide, or to lash out against someone because they did or said something to us. However, we're told to "empty" ourselves just like Jesus did during His Incarnation, and on the cross ("Father forgive them for they know not what they do").

Many Christians, especially after Covid, do "church" through a computer screen. That is not church. They don't have to interact with anyone, they don't have to like anyone,

and they don't have any opportunity to practice the "one anothers" that are described 59x in the NT.

There are so many "mega churches" today, where Christians who simply want to relieve their guilt and get a "liver quiver" for the day will go, because they can attend anonymously, they don't have to talk or interact with anyone, and never walk out authentic Christianity in their relationships.

How do we live out our positional unity in Christ is described in Eph 4:2-3: with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Romans 15:7 Accept others as they are	Ephesians 5:19 Speak godly words
Romans 16:16 Greet warmly with enthusiasm	I Thessalonians 5:11 Encourage
Ephesians 4:32 Be kind and compassionate	Hebrews 10:24 Spur others on
2 Corinthians 13:11 Agree, live in peace	I Peter 4:10 minister
Romans 15:7 Welcome, Salute, Greet, embrace	Romans 14:19 Building up
Galatians 6:2 help, carry, bear each others burdens	I Corinthians 12:25 Wait for
I Corinthians 7:5 Do not deprive each other	Romans 15:5 same mind
I Peter 1:22 love earnestly, with a pure heart fervently	I John 1:7 fellowship
James 5:16 tell, confess your sins, wrong doings	Galatians 5:13 servants
Romans 15:7 Receive	ONE ANOTHERING
	James 5:16 Pray
Colossians 3:9 Do not lie	Acts 7:26 Don't hurt each other
Romans 15:14 instruct	I John 3:18 love in word and deed
John 13:14 Wash the feet	Mark 8:16 Discuss and reason, confer
Galatians 5:15 Don't bite and devour	James 4:11 Avoid Slander
Galatians 5:13 Serve in love	Romans 12:16 Live in harmony
Ephesians 5:21 Submit, subject	Colossians 3:16 Teach and Admonish
I Peter 4:9 Offer Hospitality	Ephesians 4:12 Be forbearing
Romans 12:10 Honor others above yourself	Colossians 3:13 Forgive one another
I Peter 5:5 Clothe yourself with humility	Romans 14:13 Do not judge [condemn]

3. When believers fail to do so, the church's witness is neutralized
Jesus said in Matt 12:25, a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. If the church is at war with the church, the church can't stand.
Jesus said in John 13:35, all men will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another.

Jesus said in John 17:23, when believers are perfected in unity, like the Father and Son, the world will know that God sent His Son and loved them, even as the Father loved the Son.

How is the world supposed to know about Jesus? They learn about Him when they witness the love among believers.

Disunity within the body of Christ (church) cannot change our position in Christ, but it can neutralize your spiritual growth, destroy your fellowship with God, halt your progressive sanctification, and affect your rewards at the Bema Seat of Christ.

Last but not least, in keeping with the theme of this epistle, disunity in the body of Christ will destroy a believer's joy.

4. There is a difference between true and false unity

The world and secular church today is preaching the need to turn down truth and give in to compromise in order to increase unity. However, the Bible never instructs us to deny, diminish, or change truth in order to obtain unity.

If someone denies a biblical truth in order to promote unity, that person is outside of biblical parameters. The unity at all costs approach is not biblical. There was unity at the Tower of Babel, and God said that if they were to continue, "nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them" (Gen 11:6).

Paul is saying to stand on truth, and when it comes to excursions back into the flesh, not having the attitude of Christ, which creates dissensions and factions, this is what we are to avoid. Look at the unity that existed in the early church...they had fellowship, they had all things in common, they shared their possessions with each other (volitionally), they ate together, and they enjoyed favor with all people. But what was that unity based on? Acts 2:42a...these new believers continually devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. Truth was the basis of their fellowship and unity, not a watering down of truth in order to obtain some fake unity. Unity is always based on a common truth. The unity of the early church came out of/was the result of the early commitment to apostolic doctrine.

Disunity isn't always a bad thing...God can work through disunity. Fleshly disunity, of course, is wrong/sin, but there are times when disunity is a good thing. in 1 Cor 11:19 Paul says, "there *must* also be faction among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you." Paul told the Corinthian church that some divisions within the body of Christ were good because they created a distinction between those whom God approves as faithful and trustworthy, and those who are not.

Paul, as he was embarking on his second missionary journey, was asked by Barnabas to take Mark along. Paul didn't want to because Mark had abandoned him on his first missionary journey, and there was a "sharp disagreement" between Paul and Barnabas

(Acts 15:36-40) about taking Mark, so much so that Paul and Barnabas split. Paul took Silas to revisit the churches of Asia Minor and Barnabas and Mark went to Cyprus.

V. Enablement (Phil 4:4-19)

(1) Peace (4:4-9)

Many believers do not walk in joy because they feel the weight of the world on their shoulders. We think the Christian life rests completely on my strength. God never intended for us to shoulder the burden of living the Christian life through our own power. That is an impossibility that God does not expect from us. If someone is walking under these circumstances, there is no way that they can experience the joy of the Lord in their life. Paul now gives us three resources for our daily life that will result in joy. These resources are our birthright in Christ:

- Peace (v4-9)
- Contentment (v10-13)
- Provision (v14-19)

Unbelievers are "enemies" of God (Rom 5:10), but once a person comes to Christ, they are no longer an enemy, but now have peace with God (Rom 5:1). So our (vertical) peace with God is intact and cannot be changed, but our practical/experiential (horizontal) peace with others requires a choice on our part. We are now to take our positional peace with God, and begin to experience that peace horizontally with other believers.

But unfortunately, we can be at peace with God, but still be troubled in our hearts about many things. We need to appropriate something that is ours by birthright, the peace of God, to our lives. This is the purpose of the epistle to the Philippians...to help believers experience peace in their lives, even when their circumstances are out of control (Cf. John 14:27).

On the Sea of Galilee, the disciples and Jesus were in a boat and a severe storm came (Matt 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25) while Jesus was asleep. As the storm grew, the disciples woke Jesus up asking, Don't you care about us? We're perishing here! When Jesus got up, He first dealt with the storm in the disciples' hearts, then He dealt with the physical storm affecting the boat.

(A) Prerequisites for peace (4:4-6)

Paul gives us four things that must happen before we can experience the peace of God, which transcends all understanding (described in v7).

(a) Rejoicing (4:4)

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!

4 Keep on rejoicing in the Lord at all times. I will say it again: Keep on rejoicing!

4 Rejoice in the Lord alway: *and* again I say, Rejoice.

- "Rejoice" [2x] - *chairō*, imperative mood, meaning it's a command not a suggestion
- The command is so important that Paul repeats it in the same sentence
- Paul does not put any conditions on the command to rejoice, such as you received a favorable report from the doctor, or you got the job or house that you really wanted. We're not to rejoice during those times only, but also when the opposite occurs.
- There were many reasons why the Philippian believers could have felt discouraged: Paul's imprisonment and possible death, Epaphroditus' illness, the antagonism of the Judaizers and other unbelievers, and friction between certain members of the church.
- He is not urging us to be unrealistic, nor saying that we should never feel sad. Even Jesus wept (John 11:35). Instead, he was saying we should focus on the blessings we have in Christ, and being thankful for these regardless of how sad we may feel (Cf. Acts 16:25)
- You might not "feel" like rejoicing, but the reality of the situation is that you don't need to "feel" a certain way in order to behave a certain way. Feelings proceed behavior. But if feelings always preceded behavior, we often wouldn't show up to work, sometimes we may not even get out of bed in the morning.

— But the Bible knows of no such doctrine of feelings preceding behavior, it just tells us to do something, regardless of how we feel about it

- When detach yourself from the idea that feelings precede behavior, you'll find that feelings don't precede good behavior, sometimes they follow it. Many times people are waiting for a feeling before doing something, but that's not what God says. He says to do something, and then tells us that whether the good feelings come as a result is up to Him.

— We behave our way into good feelings, not the other way around

— This is why we are not walking in the peace of God...because we're not rejoicing in all circumstances

(b) Gentleness (4:5a)

(c) Awareness of God's presence (4:5b)

5 Let your **gentlespirit** be known to **all people. The Lord is near.**

5 Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near.

5 Let your gracious attitude be known to all people. The Lord is near:

5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord *is* at hand.

- "...gentle *spirit*" - not so much of an action of gentleness than it is an attitude of the heart. If we want to experience the peace of God, we need to be a peaceable person.

— A person who is at war with everyone...their family, their friends, their church, their neighbors, at war on social media...cannot experience the peace of God because they are not a peaceable person

- One of the manifestations of the fruit of the Spirit is gentleness (Gal 5:22-23; Prov 15:1). You find yourself avoiding interaction with people who have a critical, negative, hostile spirit, and are drawn to people with a softer, gentle, Christ-like spirit.
- Your attitude determines your altitude. What a person accomplishes in life, who they interact with, where they go, is largely shaped by the kind of attitude they manifest.
- If you want to experience the peace of God that passes all understanding, watch your attitude very closely
- "...all people" - not only to those whom you like, or have the similar gentle spirit, or only to believers
- Our gentle attitude and spirit should be evident to every person we come into contact with, both in person/face-to-face, in our work, or online
- A forbearing person does not insist on their own rights or privileges; they are considerate and gentle toward others
- There is also a time to stand for what is right; the forbearing person is not spineless, but instead selfless
- "...The Lord is near" - another (3rd) prerequisite for the peace of God is to develop an awareness of God's nearness to us
- We often forget about the nearness of omnipresent and omniscient God (Cf. Ps 139). We forget that He knows us better than we know ourselves, He knows the words we will speak before they leave our mouths (Cf. 2 Chr 16:9).
- When we really understand that God is aware of our thoughts and motives, it changes our attitude. The posture of our heart is very important to God. Proverbs says that as a man thinks, so he is. It also instructs us to guard our heart with all diligence, for from it proceed all the issues of life.
- Long before there are actions or words, there is an attitude in the heart that will shape those actions

(d) Prayer (4:6)

- 6 Do not **be anxious** about **anything**, but in **everything** by **prayer** and **pleading with thanksgiving** let your **requests** be made known to God.
- 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.
- 6 Never worry about anything. Instead, in every situation let your petitions be made known to God through prayers and requests, with thanksgiving.
- 6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.
- The fourth and final prerequisite to experience peace with God is to be a person of prayer

- Show me a person who doesn't pray regularly and I'll show you a heart that is bound up with all sorts of storms and anxieties. Tell me how anxious you are about things and I'll tell you about your prayer life. If you're anxious about everything, your prayer life has dissipated or become superficial. If you want to solve the anxiety in your life, prayer is the solution.
- "...be anxious" - *merimnaō*, to be emotionally unsettled due to a future contingency; to be troubled with cares; it is in the imperative mood, meaning it's a command not a suggestion
- It describes someone with internal turmoil because they do not know how a situation is going to work out
- We have numerous contingencies in this life...things that we worry about because we don't know the final outcome. Will I be able to retire financially? Are my children going to be ok? Will a strained relationship be restored? Will my health issue be resolved?
- Anxiety is one of the worst sins a believer can commit against God. Because *merimnaō* is in the imperative mood, a command, so if my heart and mind is given over to anxiety, I'm violating the command of God, which is sin
- The Bible also says that without faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb 11:6). When my heart is anxious, I'm not walking in faith, thus I cannot please God. When I'm trusting God, I'm not anxious. We cannot experience both anxiety and faith simultaneously because they are polar opposites.
- So when I'm anxious, I'm not trusting God. I'm trying to fix the future contingency in my own mind. So because I'm not trusting God, I have anxiety. I'm not walking in faith, which puts me in a precarious position because without faith, I cannot please God.
- When God describes unbelievers in the Lake of Fire in Rev 21:8, the first two descriptors He uses are "cowardly" and "unbelieving," even before other sins such as murder, immorality, idolatry, and lying. He mentions their anxiety and lack of faith as the first two, before mentioning what we would consider much more heinous sins because without faith, it is impossible to please Him.
- Prov 28:1 says, The wicked flee when no one is pursuing, but the righteous are bold as a lion. Unbelievers are afraid when there's nothing to be afraid of, but in contrast the righteous are bold as a lion because they walk by faith in an omniscient, omnipotent, and holy God.
- Unbelievers are afraid, but that trait should never characterize a believer in Christ
- According to Lloyd Ogilvy, the Bible gives us the command to "fear not" a total of 365x
- "...anything" - when a believer becomes anxious about any single little thing in their life, rather than entrusting that to God, they are walking in sin
- However, Paul commended Timothy for being "anxious" (same Greek word) over the welfare of the Philippians (2:20), so not all anxiety is necessarily bad

- So what are we to do with all of these anxious thought that come into our minds every day? God never removes something from our lives without replacing it with something better.
- The Bible never says "Don't" without replacing what I shouldn't be doing with something better that I should be doing. God knows that there's going to be a void/vacuum in my life when, under God's power, I abstain from doing something that He doesn't want me to do. But at the same time, what is going to fill that void/vacuum in its place is something much, much better (Cf. John 10:10).
- Legalism will never disclose this. They only concentrate on the things that you should not do, the list of rules that you must abide by. They never focus on the "why"...because God wants to replace the good or the better in our life with His best.
- "...everything" - notice how "nothing" is juxtaposed with "everything"; we are to worry about nothing because we give everything over to the Lord, via prayer. There is nothing too trivial in our lives that we can't take to God.
- The importance of "everything" is that I am not giving every single one of my worries and anxieties to Him, in prayer, than "the peace of God which passes all comprehension" (v7) is an impossibility in my life
- If every time we experience an anxious thought or worry, we give it immediately over to the Lord by prayer, then what we'll begin to experience in my life is peace, which beforehand was an impossibility
- "...prayer" - *proseuche*, the most general term for our communication to God. it is simply talking to God; in context, it is telling the Lord about every contingency that is bugging or nagging at you, that you have (or will) become anxious over
- "...pleading" - *deēsis*, supplication, or "supply"; it's asking God, out of His unlimited "supply" to meet my needs in a certain area that is causing me to be anxious (Cf. 1 Peter 5:7)
- "...with thanksgiving" - *eucharistias*, grateful acknowledgment of past mercies, including the fact that He has heard and answered our prayer
- Why should we be thankful when anxiety comes into our life? Because God will always do something for our good out of every problem or trial we face, if we allow Him.
- Paul taught us this in Phil 1...God can use negative circumstances to bring about positive results. So by faith, when we become anxious about something, or an anxious thought enters our mind, we are to take every one of them to the Lord in prayer, relying on His infinite supply, by faith because He is omniscient, omnipotent, and good, with thanksgiving because we know God will take these negative circumstances and use them for good.
- God is going to move His hand in the midst of a problem because the problem is the only way God could move His hand in order to do certain things that accomplish His will

- When we understand God's rubric, paradigm, blueprint for bringing problems or trials into our life, and trust that His purposes are good, then when I am asking God to meet a need, I can do so with thanksgiving because I know that He will work this situation out for mine and His good.
- "...let your requests be made known to God" - *aitemata*, individual requests of God that form part of the whole prayer
- Notice that it doesn't say to let your requests be made known to your spouse, your therapist, your best friend, your parents, or your pastor. No! Let your requests be made known to God.
- It's interesting that many believers will go to everyone on this list with their problem before they will go to God. Here's some news...everyone else is tired of hearing about your sob story. It's time to take it to God, the only one who can fix the problem.
- Paul is not saying God is a last resort, after you've discussed your situation with everyone else on the list. God is the first and only resort.

Worry is assuming a responsibility that God didn't intend for you to have.

Worry is a trickle of fear passing through the mind which soon cuts a crevice so deep that it drains all other thoughts away.

(B) Promise of peace (4:7)

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

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

7 Then God's peace, which goes far beyond anything we can imagine, will guard your hearts and minds in union with the Messiah Jesus.

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

- Once we have satisfied the four prerequisites for peace (joy, v4; gentleness, v5a; awareness of God's nearness, v5b; and prayer (v6), God says here is what I'm going to do for you...

- "...peace of God" - an inner tranquility, from God, that cannot be gained from anything or anyone else. It cannot be gained from alcohol, drugs, religion, sex, material goods, riches, or anything else that man uses in an attempt to obtain peace

- "...surpasses all comprehension" - because this peace is from God, and cannot be obtained elsewhere, it is outside of any human understanding; the peace of God is confusing to the world system because it is not based on one's circumstances

- When you're in a storm in your life, and you're walking through it with the peace of God, not only will the world not understand you (because they would be hammering the panic button a long time ago if they were in your shoes), but they will often get irritated with you. You can have people at work, at church, or even in your own family becoming upset with you because you aren't panicking about a negative circumstance or storm in your life.
- The peace of God cannot be understood by the world system because it is not based on one's circumstances. This peace is "other-worldly" (John 14:27).
 - "...guard" - *phroureō*, a military term meaning to protect; Paul wrote Philippians while in a Roman prison, chained to a Roman centurion (1:7; Cf. Eph 6:20)
- Paul is saying that just as this Roman centurion is protecting/guarding me while in prison, the Lord Himself is going to stand guard over your heart and you'll begin to internally experience peace
- Notice that the verse does not say that the peace of God will fix all of your circumstances. It doesn't say that once we fulfill the four prerequisites for peace, that we will no longer have any problems to speak of.
- No, it says that God will guard/protect our heart and mind. What He does say is that you can experience the peace of God that is incomprehensible to the world around you, an inner tranquility so deep and satisfying that the world will be upset or irritated with you, in the midst of (and in spite of) your negative circumstances.
- This verse doesn't promise that we will receive what we ask for. God knows our real needs better than we do. We must remember to praise God for the prayers that He *doesn't* answer!
- This verse also does not promise peace as the indicator of God's will when we are praying about what we should do. Paul did not say here that if we need to make a decision, God will make His will known to us by giving us peace about the right choice. The promise of this verse is that if we pray, rather than worry (v6), God will give us peace. Anxiety brings no peace, but praying does.

(C) Maintaining peace through a positive thought life (4:8-9)

A believer can be at peace one moment, then circumstances change and all of a sudden you're not at peace any longer. So how can we maintain and protect that peace so you're not an emotional yo-yo?

8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is **true**, whatever is **honorable**, whatever is **right**, whatever is **pure**, whatever is **lovely**, whatever is **commendable**, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

8 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.

8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is fair, whatever is pure, whatever is acceptable, whatever is commendable, if there is anything of excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—keep thinking about these things.

8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things.

- The answer on how to maintain the peace of God is to have a disciplined thought life

— "You can't stop the birds from flying over your head, but you certainly can stop them from building a nest in your hair."

— The problem is not the fact that we have anxious/worrisome thoughts because they come out of our fallen nature...the issue is what am I volitionally deciding to dwell/meditate upon. What am I allowing into the arena of my mind to contemplate, to consider, to ruminate on.

— What happens between my ears is largely going to determine whether or not the peace I had yesterday will continue over into today

- "Finally" - Paul already began to conclude this epistle with "Finally" in 3:1; now this is the "final" "Finally" that wraps it up

- When you begin to try to maintain a disciplined thought life, what believers love to do is create a set of self-made rules that they commit themselves to following: this TV show is off limits, but that one is ok; R-rated movies are off-limits, but PG and PG-13 movies are ok. Skirt length above the knee is off-limits, but below the knee is ok. All this does is create a confusing, legalistic maze of rules.

— Then what happens next is that the rules become more important than what God has said. The rules we make up actually supplant God's Word as the instruction and guidance for our life. But God doesn't give us rules to follow (if He did, we've have a lot more than 66 books of the Bible; the rule book would read like the IRS tax code). Instead, He gives us principles to follow.

— When you understand these principles, then you can make decisions based not upon my own rules, but rather according to the principles God has outlined. The principles that God gives us for maintaining a disciplined, God-pleasing thought life are contained in this verse.

— There are eight principles that God gives us to help us make the decision as to which thoughts to allow into the arena of our mind:

- "...true" - *alethe*, valid, honest, reliable (Cf. Rom 3:4)

- "...honorable" - *semna*, worthy of respect (Cf. Prov 8:6; 1 Tim 3:8,11; Titus 2:2)

- "...right" - *dikaia*, refers to what is right or upright

- "...pure" - *hagna*, denotes cleanliness and connotes moral purity

- "...lovely" - *prophile*, what is amiable, agreeable, or pleasing
- "...commendable" - *euphema*, admirable; refers to what is praiseworthy because it measures up to the highest standards
- What makes this verse remarkable is the virtues mentioned here are *pagan* virtues! These words do not occur in the great lists of Christian virtues: love, joy, peace, patience, et al. They are taken from Greek ethics and from Greek philosophers.
- If the thought in our mind passes the eight tests above, then we're free to "dwell" and ruminate on it. But if it doesn't, we push it out of our mind.
- It is critical that we guard our minds from thoughts that do not pass this eight-part test, because private thoughts always lead to public actions.
- Satan is not after every single part of my life. He's most successful by strategically attacking the mind because most believers don't understand Phil 4:1-9, thus have no screening mechanism whereby they can deal with the thoughts that Satan implants.
- If Satan can lodge an untrue thought into my mind and get me to ruminate on it, without it first passing this eight-part test, then Satan is going to largely influence our thinking, then our actions.
- Satan cannot possess a believer, but he certainly can significantly influence one. That is why there are so many passages in the Bible about a believer's thought life: Col 3:2; Ps 1:3; Joshua 1:8

Prov 23:7a: For as he thinks within himself, so he is.

- 9 As for the things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.
- 9 The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.
- 9 Likewise, keep practicing these things: what you have learned, received, heard, and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you.
- 9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.
- Paul says that he is their example on how to have a disciplined thought life...they learned this from him, received teaching about it from him, and seen it demonstrated by him
- Then Paul says, practice these things...peace comes and goes because mental discipline is not a habit of most believers. It's an "I'm in a bad spot, maybe I ought to try to fix my thought life" type of thing, if it's ever even addressed.

(2) Contentment (4:10-13)

(A) Paul's thanksgiving (4:10)

10 But I rejoiced **in the Lord greatly**, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned *before*, but you **lacked an opportunity to act**.

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned *before*, but you lacked opportunity.

10 Now I rejoice in the Lord greatly, because once again you have shown your concern for me. Of course, you were concerned for me but you did not have an opportunity to show it.

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

- "...in the Lord" - Paul didn't rejoice in his present circumstances, nor in the likelihood that he would receive a favorable ruling from his appeal to Caesar. His rejoicing was strictly "in the Lord."

— We often attach our joy to our circumstances, which can change any minute. But Paul attaches his joy to the Lord, who doesn't change, who is always faithful.

— Paul is contending that the only place you can find lasting joy is in Jesus Christ

- "...greatly" - *megalōs*, Paul wasn't just rejoicing in the Lord, he was "mega rejoicing"

— Paul always walked in the joy of the Lord, but here he says he is "mega rejoicing." Why? Because, even after leaving them 11 years earlier, the Philippians always had a concern for him. He was always on their mind and in their prayers. They never lost their love for Paul.

- "...lacked an opportunity" - the Philippian's love and concern for Paul was always there, but they had previously lacked the financial resources to provide and support him

— Now that God had provided them with resources (financial), they were able to demonstrate their love and concern for Paul tangibly by sending him financial support

- God has a purpose for prosperity. You can define prosperity as any resource that is beyond your basic needs. Once your basic need for food, shelter, clothing, and transportation are met, anything above that (disposable income) is prosperity.

— Even when we don't feel like we're prosperous, but the world's standards we certainly are. So we have to ask ourselves, why are these extra resources in my hands?

— Paul gives us that answer in this passage: God graciously provides these additional resources so we can be a blessing to others (Cf. 1 Cor 8:14; 2 Cor 9:6-12; James 2:15-16; 1 John 3:17).

(B) Paul's lesson (4:11-12)

11 Not that I speak from need, for I **have learned** to be **content** in whatever *circumstances* I am.

11 Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.

11 I am not saying this because I am in any need, for I have learned to be content in whatever situation I am in.

11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content.

- Prior to the Philippians providing him with financial assistance, Paul didn't have enough to meet his need, and now he does, but he was just as content then as he is now (after receiving their financial support)

- "...have learned" - *manthanō*, to learn by use and practice; to be accustomed to; to understand, grow; aorist tense, meaning Paul's entire experience as a believer has been a schooling from which he has mastered its lessons

— If we have to learn something, it means that it doesn't come to us naturally. I had to learn geometry before I graduated high school. I didn't lay my head on my geometry book at night hoping the information would seep into my ear and I would know it. I had to learn it through practice and experience.

— Contentment is a learned character trait, it is not something that will come to us naturally. In fact, contentment is foreign to our sin nature. The basic impulse of our flesh is a lack of contentment.

- "...content" - *autarkēs*, satisfaction; pertaining to being happy or satisfied with what one has; satisfied with the circumstances in which one exists

— We can have a drive to move up in life, to get ahead, but if we aren't content in our humble circumstances, we will not be content in wealthy circumstances either

— Being content is wanting what we already have. Our problem is that we're always wanting what we don't have. That is not contentment, and will never bring contentment. If you're not content with what you have, you won't be content with something you get.

Happy is the man who wants what he has. An unhappy man gets what he wants but never stops wanting. [Vikrant]

12 I know how to get along with little, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every **circumstance I have learned the secret** of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.

12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.

12 I know how to be humble, and I know how to prosper. In each and every situation I have learned the secret of being full and of going hungry, of having too much and of having too little.

12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

- This verse destroys the "prosperity gospel." Paul says that throughout his life, he has gotten by on "little" and also been blessed with much; he has gone hungry, without food, and he has been filled; he has both had abundance and suffered need.
- Paul is describing cycles of blessing and plenty, alongside times in his life of need and little
- In Rev 2:9, Jesus tell the church at Ephesus that He knows of their poverty (but they were rich). They had the riches of Christ (Cf. Eph 1), but financially they were poor.
- In 2 Cor 8:2-3, speaking of the Macedonians who gave financially to support the church in Jerusalem, even though they were in "deep poverty...they gave of their own accord"
- "...I have learned the secret" - *myeō*, to learn the secret of something through personal experience or the result of initiation
- We don't learn the secret until we're initiated; if we're not initiated, we can't learn the secret. The secret is that contentment doesn't come to us naturally, but rather it is something that God has to teach us
- But once we learn the secret of contentment, the joy in our Christian life will ramp up significantly because suddenly I'm no longer a prisoner to my circumstances
- What God teaches us when He teaches us contentment is to disassociate our circumstances from our joy, so that no matter what comes at us during the storms of life, we can be content because our joy and our circumstances are detached
- This is why so many Christians are unhappy and lack joy: because we never learn the secret. We're always adjusting our emotions based on the favorability or unfavorability of our circumstances
- The Israelites in the wilderness are the poster-children for discontentment:
 - Ex 1:13-14: The Egyptians used violence to compel the sons of Israel to labor; and they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all *kinds* of labor in the field, all their labors which they violently had them perform as slaves.
 - Ex 2:24: So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
 - Ex 14:12: Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, 'Leave us alone so that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness!"
 - Num 11:5: We remember the fish which we used to eat for free in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic;
- The Israelites were unhappy under Egyptian slavery, then God gets them out (miraculously), then they want to go back. No matter what God did for these people, they complained and grumbled. The Israelites are a microcosm of our hearts under original sin.

(C) Paul's source (4:13)

13 I can do all things through Him who **strengthens** me.

13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

- Remember back in Phil 1, how Paul was imprisoned, and other evangelists were taking advantage of his imprisonment to grow the popularity of their ministries. And Paul says, I don't care, as long as the gospel is being preached.

— This is an example about how Paul "learned" contentment no matter what circumstances he was in or no matter how people schemed to profit off of his demise

- So how did Paul "learn" the secret of contentment? Dependence upon the power of the Holy Spirit to strengthen us

- "...strengthens" - *endynamaoō*, if I have to be strengthened by God, it is not something I can conjure up in my flesh (Cf. 2 Tim 2:1; 4:17)

— No amount of self-help books, no amount of self-help fixes, no amount of religion can fix this. I cannot conjure up enough willpower in my flesh to fix this. This is something that comes only through Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

— Legalism will only point out your failures and get you to try harder, which just leads to more futility. However, the Bible tells us that these resources (the peace of God, the provision of God, the contentment of God) are at our fingertips.

(3) Money (4:14-19)

(A) Paul's thanks (4:14-16)

14 Nevertheless, you have done well to share *with me* in my difficulty.

14 Nevertheless, you have done well to share *with me* in my affliction.

14 Nevertheless, it was kind of you to share my troubles.

14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

- Paul had been gone for about 11 years, but just because he was out of their sight, it was not out of their minds

15 You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first *preaching* of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you alone;

15 You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;

15 You Philippians also know that in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church participated with me in the matter of giving and receiving except for you.

15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

- The Philippians were thoughtful and generous with Paul when he departed after planting their church on his second missionary journey
- It's likely that at least one of the gifts he refers to here is the same gift mentioned in 2 Cor 11:8, which reached Paul in Corinth

16 for even in Thessalonica **you sent a gift more than once** for my needs.

16 for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.

16 Even while I was in Thessalonica, you provided for my needs not once, but twice.

16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

- After Paul was driven out of Philippi he traveled to Thessalonica
- "...you sent a gift" - financial support of ministries was unheard of at that time
- "...more than once" - this is evidence that Paul was in Thessalonica for longer than three weeks (Cf. Acts 17:2). But that verse says Paul was in the synagogue for three weeks, not in Thessalonica for three weeks.

(B) Promise of reward (4:17)

17 **Not that I seek the gift itself**, but I seek the profit which increases to your account.

17 Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.

17 It is not that I am looking for a gift. No, I want to "see that you receive the fruit that increases to your benefit.

17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

- People who use what God has given them in any area typically are granted more and more opportunities

- "Not that I seek the gift" - Paul had a right to receive financial support for his ministry. Jesus taught the 70, as He sent them out, to not take their money belt or any provisions, but that when people heard the gospel and were blessed, they would support their ministry (Gal 6:6; 1 Cor 9:11; Cf. Luke 10:4,7).

— While Paul had this right, he would typically set it aside because he never wanted people to think he was in the ministry for the money (1 Cor 9:15-16)

- Paul didn't seek financial support, which was his right, for his sake, but for the sake of the givers, that they may be blessed

— If Paul forbade their financial gifts, he would not only be cheating them of the opportunity to be co-laborers in his ministry, but also cheating them out of a blessing from the Lord

God's Reward for the Giver

Prov 11:24-25:

24 There is one who scatters, and yet increases all the more, And there is one who withholds what is justly due, *and yet it results* only in poverty.

25 A generous person will be prosperous, And one who gives *others* plenty of water will himself be given plenty.

Luke 6:38: *Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."*

Acts 20:7: On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul *began* talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.

Heb 11:6: And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for the one who comes to God must believe that He exists, and *that* He proves to be One who rewards those who seek Him.

(C) Financial generosity is worship (4:18)

18 But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; **I am amply supplied**, having **received from Epaphroditus** what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.

18 But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.

18 I have been paid in full and have more than enough. I am fully supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus what you sent—a fragrant aroma, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things *which were sent* from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.
- The animal sacrifices of the OT are no longer needed after Christ's complete sacrifice for sin on the cross. However, there are still sacrifices the believer should make, not to pay God back or to add to what Christ has done, but as a sweet aroma of praise to God for what He has done.

- If Paul shut himself off from receiving financial support, then he would have shut down the opportunity for the Philippians and others to send up to the Lord sacrifices
- Because we are priests of our God (Rev 5:10), we offer sacrifices to God
- "...I am amply supplied" - where God guides, God provides. If God is leading me to do something for Him, He will provide the financial and other needs necessary to do what He's called me to do.

- The problem with us is that oftentimes we will jump out ahead of God, not taking the time to correctly discern the will of God, and we jump out ahead of God out of ego or impatience or for some other reason
- When we do that, God says, Well this is your project, you fund it. When ministries or churches are constantly begging for money, you have to wonder whether they started in the right place, or if at some point they jumped ahead of God.
- The work of God, done in God's way and in God's timing, never lacks supply (Cf. v18; Acts 28:10). What God orders, He pays for.
- "...received from Epaphroditus" - Epaphroditus was the link between Paul imprisoned in Rome and the church of Philippi
 1. News of Paul's imprisonment reached Philippi
 2. Epaphroditus traveled from Philippi to Rome
 3. Word of Epaphroditus' sickness reached Philippi
 4. Some Philippians came to Rome to express concern over Epaphroditus' condition
 5. Epaphroditus returned to Philippi

Spiritual Sacrifices

- Body (Rom 12:1)
- Praise (Heb 13:15)
- Good works (Phil 2:17; 4:18)
- Financial giving (Heb 13:16)

(D) God's promise to supply need (4:19)

- 19 And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in **ChristJesus**.
- 19 And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.
- 19 And my God will fully supply your every need according to his glorious riches in the Messiah Jesus.
- 19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.
- Many interpret this verse out of context, believing that it means that God is obligating Himself to provide for all my needs
- However in the context of this passage Paul is talking about being a generous, giving believer, so when believers are generous financially, then God will supply all their needs
- You can't take this verse as some iron clad promise that any believer, even a stingy believer, that God will provide all their needs. The verse is a promise that if a believer is generous, as Paul describes in this passage, then God will look out for them and ensure their needs are met.
- Arguably, there are other verses that state that God will provide for the needs of all those in Christ (Cf. Prov 11:25; Matt 5:7; 6:33), but that isn't the context of this verse. The context

here is God's provision for the giver.

- The question believers have is that if I am a sacrificial giver, who is going to be looking out for my needs? This verse answers that question: God.
- God promises that He will provide for us, but He never tells us how. How God provides for us today may be different than how He provided for us in the past, or will provide for us in the future.
- A good exercise for a Christian is to take a piece of paper, and on one side of the ledger, list all of your responsibilities, then on the other side list all of God's responsibilities/promises. When you're feeling anxious or worried, go back to the ledger and you'll discover that what you have done is moved God's responsibilities from His side over to your side.
- We are not built to put something on our shoulders that God has promised He will take care of. When we do this, we're trusting ourself more than we're trusting God.
- "...Christ Jesus" - out Benefactor or Donor; we have huge resource and financial backing because Jesus owns everything (Cf. Ps 50:10)

God's Provision for the Giver

- Ex 16
 - God provided manna for the Israelites in the wilderness for 40 years
 - The manna lasted for as long as they needed it, until the day after they entered the Promised Land (Joshua 5:12)
 - During the 40 years, their clothes and shoes did not wear out (Deut 29:5)
- 1 Kings 17:2-6
 - Elijah was commanded to go into the wilderness, and God provided ravens to bring him food
- Ps 37:25: I have been young and now I am old, Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken Or his descendants begging for bread.
- Matt 6:25-34

VI. Conclusion (Phil 4:20-23)

(1) Doxology (4:20)

- 20 Now to our God and Father **be the glory** forever and ever. Amen.
- 20 Now to our God and Father **be the glory** forever and ever. Amen.
- 20 Glory belongs to our God and Father forever and ever! Amen.
- 20 Now unto God and our Father **be glory** for ever and ever. Amen.
- "...glory" - *doxa*, the chief purpose of God in all of history is to glorify Himself
- Why would Paul, at the end of an epistle on joy, give a doxology? Because we can't experience joy as a Christian if we're living outside of our design.

- If we live outside of our design, then we're living outside of the purpose for our existence
- If we are perpetually living for things for which we were not created for, outside of God's purpose for our lives, how can we expect to walk in joy?

(2) Greetings (4:21-22)

- 21** Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you.
21 Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you.
21 Greet every saint who is in union with the Messiah Jesus. The brothers who are with me send their greetings to you.
21 Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you.
- The "brothers" with Paul were likely Timothy and Epaphroditus

22 All the saints greet you, especially **those of Caesar's household**.

- 22 All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.
22 All the saints, especially those of the emperor's household, greet you.
22 All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.
- "All the saints" - the Christians in Rome, from where Paul wrote Philippians
- "...those of Caesar's household" - Paul had already referred to the praetorian guards; certainly a significant percentage of those who were chained to Paul became believers

(3) Benediction (4:23)

- 23** The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.
23 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.
23 May the grace of the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, be with your spirit! Amen.
23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.