

## Philippians 4:1-7

### Verse 1:

--**Therefore.** . . . brings us back to all Paul has been saying. He is going to give his final exhortations as is common in many of his epistles.

--**my beloved and longed-for brethren.** . . . Paul is encouraging them to push on in Christ and stand together for Christ because he loves them so much.

--I think to be called a Christian **brother** was very meaningful for Paul, and many of the early Christians who were shunned by their former cultures and families.

**\*Acts 9:17: And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."\***

--As Paul sat in that house humbled, blind, and waiting, the word *brother* from Ananias no doubt meant so much to him!

--**my joy and crown.** . . . For Paul, the family of God on earth was his present joy and the family of God in heaven his future crown (**1 Thess. 2:19-20**). People are infinitely more important than things.

--**so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.** What is his hope and prayer for a church that is doing well? That they keep it up!

--**stand fast** was another military term used for *holding ground* or *keeping one's standing*. Paul doesn't want them to retreat or give up any ground in the Christian life or work. \*Whose battle lines will be we sharing at the end—the family of God or the world?\*

### Verses 2-3:

--In the same vein, Paul pleads with two specific women in the church. We don't have a ton of details as to what their issue was, but we do know that there are always men and women at odds in the family of God. What do we know?

--First, Paul doesn't take a side in their issue because there wasn't a side to take. The apostle would have no issue rebuking or correcting by name if it was called for. All we have is a plea without a threat. \*Some people always want a spiritual leader to take a side\*

--Paul's neutrality means the issue was not bad doctrine or direct rebellious sin. The apostle would have never left either unaddressed.

--Second, these two women were not new believers. Both were faithful women who had a history of serving the Lord. Paul says they **labored with me in the gospel**. Who knows if these women were some of the originals from the very first prayer meeting where they met Paul (**Acts 16:13**)?

--Third, Paul's exhortation to them is not that they rebuke and forgive one another but that they should **be of the same mind in the Lord**.

--Fourth, Paul urges a **true companion** (the Greek is literally *Syzygos* which means *Yokefellow*) to **help** the two women, Clement, and all the other fellow-workers in Philippi.

--Whoever *Yokefellow* was (It seems Paul is making a play on what is likely their literal name) Paul has no issue with him teaming up in the yoke with these two women. That tells us that Paul sees their service as acceptable despite their unresolved issue.

--By urging the fellow-yoking of all these believers, Paul is essentially leaving the matter behind and trusting that Euodia and Syntyche will respond to his plea accordingly.

--Putting all that together while remembering the present context, I think we have a good picture of what is happening. We don't know the specifics of their squabble—we don't need to—they did. We only need what we have.

--It seems that these two women were having a Paul and Barnabas moment of their own. Their conflict was more over how to live worthy of the gospel as opposed to sinning against one another or direct rebellion requiring correction or church discipline.

--No matter how they move forward serving the Lord, Paul urges them to be of the same mind in the Lord. \*As Paul himself was able to do with Barnabas and Mark!\*

--It is important not to write off other **fellow workers** in the Lord—especially for issues of ministry method which do not rise to the level of correctable sins. We don't have enough laborers as it is, and as time goes on in the Lord, more and more step aside or fall away. **Be of the same mind in the Lord!**

--These other workers in the Lord are also written in **the Book of Life** so our connection with them is eternal—even if we move to different parts of the Lord's field here on earth.

--The Book of Life (**Ex. 32:32; Ps. 69:28; 139:16; Dan. 12:1; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 21:27; 22:19**) is interesting. All guesses as to the specifics of the Book of Life are speculation, but I believe the Book of Life is more than a list of names. I believe it is an actual book that records the story of life—eternal life in God. Which would make it the true story of the world and a record of how the golden thread of eternal life tied all those who are the Lord's to Him from Adam on. Those whose names are not written in this book are not part of the final story—the only true story that ends happily ever after.

#### **Verse 4:**

--Here Paul continues his exhortations with some short staccato commands.

--To **rejoice in the Lord always** is a command.

\*Trapp (A Commentary On The NT): *"It is no less a sin not to rejoice than not to repent."*\*

--The focus is not on *how* we rejoice or what expression our rejoicing takes. The emphasis for Paul is on *why* we rejoice—**in the Lord**. The Lord Jesus Christ and all we have in Him is the ground of the Christians rejoicing. This places our joy beyond the circumstances of this life alone.

--Must we have all favorable circumstances to rejoice? Did Jesus? Did the Son of God have heaven on the way to heaven? Take away all we have on earth and leave me what I have in Christ. Where does that leave me? Take away all we have in Christ and leave me what I have on earth. Where does that leave me?

--The resurrected Jesus also commands disciples to rejoice.

**\*Matthew 28:9: *And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshipped Him.\****

--Take all our earthly physical pains, worries, losses, fears, and troubles and then see if there is not enough power to deal with them all in the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

--How often should we rejoice? ***Always!***

--Christians are not supposed to walk around black-cowled and sour-faced, whipping themselves and weeping. We have been given eternal life and eternal joy!

**\*1 Peter 1:8-9: *Whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.\****

--Someone might be tempted to say: *You don't know my pain, or You don't understand what you're talking about*—well, Paul sure does! Are you a child of God? Are you a citizen of heaven? Does Christ live in you? Is your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life? Then this is as close to hell as you will ever get!

--Salvation in Christ is a cause for continual rejoicing in the Lord—always.

**\*Psalm 64:10: *The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and trust in Him. And all the upright in heart shall glory.\****

--Rejoicing should be the daily tone of the normal Christian life.

\*MacDuff (In Christo): *"'In the Lord,' was the secret of the always rejoicing; the source of its reality, its intensity, and permanence. It was joy resultant from a living union with a living Savior. Hence not a fitful spasmodic joy, but deep, lasting, continuous. Not the ripple of the shallow brook gurgling over its pebbly bed, but the calm, steady, silent flow of the river in its well-worn channel, too deep to be noisy."*\*

#### **Verse 5:**

--***Let your gentleness be known to all men.*** The Greek word for ***gentleness*** is very hard to translate and includes the idea of: *forbearance, yieldedness, patience, reasonableness*, or your Bible might have the translation of *moderation*.

--The presence of joy and peace in a believer's life should impart to our daily living a certain moderation or mildness despite circumstances. We become even, balanced, surrendered.

--All our worries we make known to God, but our moderation is made known to men. Too often, it is the very opposite. We freak out before people and ignore God or live like He is not involved on our lives.

--**The Lord is at hand.** . . is either the Lord is near, or coming soon—very likely Paul had both in mind.

**\*Psalm 145:18: The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth.\***

--Our life should reflect the fact that we live in the presence of the Living Christ. How would you react if Jesus was right next to you? What if you knew He was coming at the end of this year?

#### **Verses 6-7:**

--**(6) Be anxious for nothing.** . . The Greek word for **anxious** (*merimnao*) means to be *drawn in different directions* and the root means *to strangle*.

--Jesus addresses His disciples about worry. **\*Matthew 6:25-34\***

--Jesus basically says we are not to worry about the little practical things required for daily life because **your Heavenly Father knows that you need all these things**. We are even not to worry about tomorrow's future needs Vs. present needs. Instead, we are to worry about His kingdom and His righteousness.

--Most of our worries are not only wrong, they are also misplaced! We worry about what we shouldn't and don't worry about what we should. \*Certainly, there is a physical worry that can be a part of the effects of sin on our physical frames, which require the help of a physician just like a broken bone—but most commonly, our worries are not of that type.\*

--**but in everything.** . . God knows that we cannot help but worry, so what He does is tell us what to do with our worry. God calls us to bring all our worries—big and small—to Him in prayer.

--David was such a wonderful example of this through the Psalms:

**\*Psalm 55:22: Cast your burden on the LORD, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.\***

--Peter learned this lesson as Christ's disciple:

**\*1 Peter 5:7: Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.\***

--We are to bring all of our requests **to God**. Our Heavenly Father wants all our requests brought directly to Him—not taken first to others for help and brought to Him as a last resort—as any good earthly father does. God wants to decide what is best for us, and even to give more than we ask.

--We don't bring all our anxieties to Him just to get what we want all the time. We do so because there is no greater privilege than to bring our very selves **to God**. Paul knows that difficult and worrying things will happen in life and he has discovered laying them at God's feet is what our Heavenly Father wants and is the best possible outcome for us.

\*Beuchner (Whistling in the Dark): *“He does not deny that the worst things will happen finally to all of us, as indeed he must have had a strong suspicion they were soon to happen to him. He does not try to minimize them. He does not try to explain them away as God’s will or God’s judgment or God’s method of testing our spiritual fiber. He simply tells the Philippians that in spite of them—even in the thick of them—they are to keep in constant touch with the One who unimaginably transcends the worst things as he also unimaginably transcends the best.”\**

--How do we do this? What does it practically look like? Talking to God!

--**Prayer** is comprehensive communion with God.

--**Supplication** is our common method of specific prayer requests.

--And do not forget those two important words: **with thanksgiving!**

--Thanksgiving is a type of prayer as is evident in all of Paul’s epistles, but it should also characterize our approach to God in prayer. It is as if Paul cannot imagine an ungrateful child of God.

--Notice again the tone of joy and balance Paul expects the life of God to produce in us. The general tone of our prayers is not that of a person overwhelmed with condemnation, confession, or unworthiness—instead, it is that of joyful, yielded, gratitude.

--Are we always coming and asking of God in a panic and never thanking Him?

**\*Luke 17:17: So Jesus answered and said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?”\***

--This might seem simplistic, but the heart of the issue is that we don’t trust God. A lot of worry is simply a control issue, but two things happen when we come to God in prayer:

1) Our perspective changes and our plans become His plans. \*Paul in prison—Chapter 1\*

2) We leave our burdens with Him who has the power to control all things. Strangely enough, surrender sets us free from anxiety and worry. \*We don’t just pray to get the answer we want—that is control again—we pray to leave things at the feet of our Heavenly Father to work all things for our good.\*

--*A healthy prayer life and chronic worry cannot co-exist. No man can serve two masters.*

**\*Psalm 91:1: He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.\***

--(7) Here is the promised outcome of this type of thankful, prayerful life with God.

--**the peace of God.** . . . Peace, the quality of God’s own and therefore can only be sourced from Him, will be ours.

**\*Isaiah 26:3: You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.\***

**\*John 14:27: Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.\***

--The peace of God is promised to us! Is God the Father's mind anxious on the throne? Was Jesus Christ ever described in the gospels as freaked out, so stressed, or a hot mess? Is the Holy Spirit fearful at heart as He contemplates the future?

--This promise is not natural. It has nothing to do with psychology. The condition spoken of is not related to outside circumstantial or environmental stimulus. This is a *conditional* supernatural promise.

--***which surpasses all understanding***. . . Teaches us the promised peace is a resource of God's beyond all our searching. A resource there for our experience not our mental comprehension. Paul was a witness of this promise, as are many of God's sons and daughters here today.

--Again, God is not promising to deliver us moment by moment from all earthly conditions that worry or stress us. This is a promise that in the middle of those earthly situations, another heavenly force will be brought to bear in our lives.

--This peace will ***guard*** or ***garrison*** our ***hearts and minds through Christ Jesus***.

--The very peace that resides in the heart of God will hold the fortress of our innermost being so that it will never fall to an enemy siege of worry or anxiety. Enemy boots will not walk in the citadel of our heart and mind once they find their rest in Him.

--The spiritual tranquility of heart God wants us to experience can *only* be known as it comes directly from Him.

\*Henry (The Pleasantness of a Religious Life): *"It is the misery of the carnal, irreligious world, that 'the way of peace they have not known' (Romans 3:17) for they are like the troubled sea; there is 'no peace, saith my God, to the wicked' (Isaiah 57:20-21). How can peace be spoken to them that are not the 'sons of peace' (Luke 10:4-5) to them that have not grace for the word of peace to fasten upon? They may cry peace to themselves, but there is no true peace either in their way, or in their end: to such I say, as in 2 Kings 9:18, 'What hast thou to do with peace? Turn thee behind me'; but in God's name I speak peace to all that are in covenant with the God of peace, to all the faithful subjects of the prince of peace: they have experimentally known the way of peace; and to them I say, Go on, and prosper: go on in peace, for the God of love and peace is, and will be with you."*\*