

**Philippians**  
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CHAPTER 4

**Phil 4:1 Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, so stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.**

It is important to note that Paul does not tell them to march forward into battle, but to stand firm. Note that he gives the same order when he talks of the armor of God:

*Eph 6:11 Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.*

*Eph 6:13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.*

*Eph 6:14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,*

The use of the word “therefore” means that what follows is based upon what preceded this section. He uses the familiar term “beloved brethren” to indicate his great love for them as fellow children of God. He longs to see them and he calls them his joy and crown. The word for crown is “stephanos”, which is the wreath given to those winning a race. His order for them to stand firm is not an offensive order but a defensive order. An offense attempts to gain ground and a defense defends ground already taken. Jesus came on the offensive but He has won the battle. All we are doing is maintaining what He has already won. Paul used the same Greek word that is translated “stand firm” in Phil 1:27 where he exhorted them to stand firm in unity for the gospel. We are all to stand firm in the victory already won by the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Phil 4:2 I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.**

**Phil 4:3 Indeed, true comrade, 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.**

It seems that Paul had been leading up to this point in his letter because of what he said in the following:

*Phil 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment,*

*Phil 1:10 so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ;*

*Phil 1:27 Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;*

*Phil 2:2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.*

*Phil 3:17 Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.*

Admittedly there is some conjecture to think that he was alluding to the problem between these two women in the previous verses but, with the similar encouragement from Dr. Boice, I think at least there is a good possibility that such is true. But even when he comes out and gives their names he is careful to not elaborate on the problem or to reprove them or give them some specific commands other than to live in harmony with the Lord. The problem is not one of false teachers but of disharmony among two children of God. It seems that there is no doctrinal issue but some sort of personality clash that can be healed when each person is in harmony with the Lord.

There has been a lot of controversy over the person to whom Paul is referring in verse three as he true comrade. The Greek word here translated as “comrade” is “syzygus” and literally means “yokefellow”. Some think that he is using a play on words to mean that any other Christian could help the women but most agree that the person is Epaphroditus who would be taking the letter. Paul is writing to the church that he has made Epaphroditus the person to help in the peace making between the women. Paul complements the women considerably as he refers to them as fellow workers in the cause of the gospel. We have no further evidence as to the identity of Clement and the other workers but that their names are written in the book of life. The book of life is the register in heaven of those people who are God’s children and thus people who have been given the righteousness of Jesus Christ (Rev 3:5; 17:8; 20:12; 21:27).

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

**Phil 4:5 Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.**

**Phil 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.**

**Phil 4:7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

These are a wonderful four verses that should be used for a recipe for the joy and peace of the Christian life. Rejoice has the meaning of applying joy to your life and, of course, joy is a fruit of the Spirit. Paul repeats his exhortation to rejoice, perhaps because the church had a hard time rejoicing because of their circumstances. All of us need this repetition! It is so easy to become depressed about our situations and forget that God is sovereign. With Rom 8:28 firmly implanted in our minds we should never have any problem rejoicing in the Lord. Surely we all have sorrowful situations in our lives but God has given us joy to counteract those worldly circumstances and we need to keep our focus on Jesus:

*Heb 12:1 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*

*Heb 12:2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

The word translated forbearing in the NAS version is better than “gentleness” as some translators use. We are to yield our rights to others and offer real consideration to others. Of course we do not compromise the truth but such a forbearing spirit will be a witness to what Jesus has done within us. When we have as our main concern the witnessing to others of the truth of Jesus it makes having a forbearing spirit much easier to attain. Paul then gives a reason for such a spirit and that is the coming Parousia. We are about 2000 years past the time of Paul and we are still waiting for that blessed time when true judgment will come, but the recognition of that coming event should still give us motivation to be more like Him in our walk.

Verses 6 and 7 are two more verses from this book that many Christians have memorized but failed to always apply. Jesus always warned us to never be anxious:

*Matt 6:25 "For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?"*

*Matt 6:27 "And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life's span?"*

*Matt 6:28 "And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin,*

*Matt 6:31 "Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?'*

*Matt 6:34 "Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

*Matt 10:19 "But when they deliver you up, do not become anxious about how or what you will speak; for it shall be given you in that hour what you are to speak.*

As I wrote in my paper on anxiety, <http://livingtheology.com/Anxiety.htm>, anxiety comes into the heart of every Christian. But when we sense that anxiety it should warn us that we are not dependent enough upon God and His promises. Paul tells us the antidote to anxiety is prayer in a worshipful manner. Supplication could be translated petition but it denotes more the frame of mind in making the petitions. We need to have an attitude of kneeling in all of our prayers and especially when we are feeling anxious about anything. We should also make thanksgiving always a prominent portion of our prayer time as we thank God for everything in our life, even what is causing our anxious moments. Making our requests known to God just means that we state them properly for God knows everything. Sometimes just the process of verbalizing our requests can put them into a proper context that removes some of the anxiety, especially when we place those requests in the context of thankfulness to God for His blessings on us.

Verse seven gives us the remarkable promise that God will give us following such proper prayers. Only those who already have the peace with God can have the peace of God:

*Rom 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

*2Cor 13:11 Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.*

This peace from God surpasses all worldly understanding for only God's children can have such peace in any situation. To the world, peace is dependent upon circumstances but to the Christian this peace of God is present in all circumstances. Biblically the heart is a symbol for the aspect of humans in which emotions, trusts, and other such attitudes reside so the heart is the place where anxiety has its emphasis but the mind is where our thoughts reside that can activate the heart to be anxious. Thus the peace of God will quiet our minds and our hearts since we have the peace with God from Jesus Christ initially.

**Phil 4:8 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, let your mind dwell on these things.**

Paul now gives us another key for maintaining the peace of God. I remember being told that I am what I think about. If we keep our minds on the things told us by Paul in this verse there will be a mind readily acceptable of the peace of God. **Truth** only comes from Reality and not from the world:

*Col 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.*

*Rom 3:4 May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written, "That Thou mightest be justified in Thy words, And mightest prevail when Thou art judged."*

The word translated in the NAS version as "**honorable**" is sometimes translated "noble" and although there are worldly things that are honorable, the primary emphasis is what comes from God:

*1Tim 1:17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

Things that are "**right**" refer to whatever is approved by God, conforms to His standards, and is then approved by Him.

The word "**pure**" emphasizes ethical purity according to God's standards and in some contexts can mean chaste. The Greek word translated here as "**lovely**" appears only in this passage in the NT although another similar word is translated as such in:

*Acts 7:20 "And it was at this time that Moses was born; and he was lovely in the sight of God; and he was nurtured three months in his father's home.*

The word can mean pleasing or amiable and again the meaning is emphasized when the object is viewed from the eyes of God.

The Greek word here translated as “**good repute**” is also translated admirable in some other translations and the Greek word only appears here in the NT. The word refers to those things that are true in the highest standards available. Paul then focuses on our discernment as we are to choose only those things of **excellence** and worthy of **praise**. For both of these words the reference for their consideration is the perspective of God. Excellent is the highest of a grading standard and the base of grading is that of God. Praise is the reward given to those who are included in that state of excellence that is based upon the One to whom all praise is due: God.

Note that all of these words: true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, of good repute, due excellence and praise can be used in a worldly context in great literature and philosophy. But as stated above in Col 2:8, we are not to use these words in such a worldly context. When a child of God lets his mind dwell on all of these concepts he can then begin to really live life here as a Christian. The word “dwell” means to remain constant on whatever is the intended object. Another way of stating this result is that we must attain to the perspective of God in all that we think and then our actions will be those intended by our Father.

**Phil 4:9 The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you.**

Now comes the really important point. We must apply what we have learned, received, heard, and seen in the ministry of Paul and the other apostles. We have to walk the talk or else we are hypocritical. The early church did not have all of the composites of the canon that we enjoy today and so had to rely on direct and indirect teachings from the apostles. We are blessed by having the entire canon for our study and application. We are without excuse for a bad walk. We have at our hands all the knowledge we need to walk in the peace of God and so only have ourselves to blame for any lack of peace. Many verses of scripture have been misused because they are taken out of context but here is a promise that we can rely upon and not worry about being misused. If we practice verses 6-9 then we will not have anxiety but only the peace of God.

**Phil 4:10 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.**

**Phil 4:11 Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.**

**Phil 4:12 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.**

**Phil 4:13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.**

Paul’s rejoicing was for the gift from the church at Philippi that had been sent via Epaphroditus earlier. His use of “at last” is not a rebuke but just a statement that they had finally had the opportunity to send him a gift. Paul had been shipwreck and in prison so the opportunities for the church to help him had been severely limited. Undoubtedly they also rejoiced at being able at last to help him and demonstrate their earnest concern for him. In verse 11 he quickly lets them know that he had not been primarily concerned because of his needs for surely he did not have any anxiety over those needs! Paul did indeed walk his talk! He was truly content in every

circumstance in which the sovereign God had placed him. In Stoic philosophy the word “content” describes a mental attitude of impassively accepting whatever circumstances came to a person. Fretting was deemed useless and the aim was for the person to have an attitude of self-sufficiency. Paul had the good attitude of such a philosophy with the great difference that his sufficiency was from God and not from himself.

Paul then described the worldly circumstances in which many people exist. He had times when he had prosperity and times when he had humble means. He had times when he had plenty to eat and times when he did not have enough food. He had times of abundance and times of great need that caused physical suffering. Probably context determines that all of these times were after his conversion and not to the affluent times he had before his conversion. Paul told the church at Corinth of some of his hardships with which he was content:

*2Cor 6:4 but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses,*

*2Cor 6:5 in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger,*

We read in these verses that Paul is indeed walking his talk about not being anxious in anything by giving them some specific examples of times when he practiced contentment and not anxiety.

Verse 13 has been misapplied many times by well-meaning people but it does not mean that the Christian can do anything he wishes to do. He has finished in the preceding verses telling how he has managed as a child of God over the years. He knows how to live in contentment regardless of his circumstances. He has learned how to live with and without worldly goods. And in all of his life circumstances his management has been through God who strengthens him regardless of his having abundance or suffering without sufficient food or comforts. I cannot take this verse and use it to make me a better football player or golfer. I can apply this verse to my life of service to my Lord in whatever circumstance He leads me.

#### **Phil 4:14 Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction.**

He now says that even though he was content even when in great need the church at Philippi has done well to share with him in his affliction. The early church knew well what sharing meant within the family of God as demonstrated in the following account:

*Acts 2:44 And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common;*

*Acts 2:45 and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.*

*Acts 2:46 And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,*

*Acts 2:47 praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

Some well-meaning people have taken this account of the early church as a basis for forming a commune. Others have said that the Acts verses are for another time and place and have no applicability to us now. I would say that, in analogy to bowling, that one response is a gutter ball

right and the other is a gutter ball left. We are indeed in a different culture but we are still to take care of other Christians first and others as God directs. Jesus gave the proper response to our stewardship when he was addressing the question of who goes to heaven and who goes to hell:

*Matt 25:34 "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

*Matt 25:35 'For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in;*

*Matt 25:36 naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.'*

*Matt 25:37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You drink?*

*Matt 25:38 'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You?*

*Matt 25:39 'And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'*

*Matt 25:40 "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of **these brothers of Mine**, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'*

I have put into bold type the ones who are the recipients of the stewardship. They are fellow Christians. We should be always alert to ways that we can assist our brothers and sisters in Christ whether they are in our church, out on the mission field, in prison, or wherever. For the Christian the issue is not whether or not to tithe for such was for the Jews. For the Christian the giving level is not 10% but 100% and we are to respond with a glad heart whenever God tells us to help someone. The stewardship may not be in money but it may be in time or in our teaching or in any way that we can assist other Christians. We are commanded to disciple and teach Christians so certainly fulfilling that giving is in proper response to the needs of others:

*Matt 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,*

*Matt 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. "*

**Phil 4:15 And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;**

**Phil 4:16 for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.**

**Phil 4:17 Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.**

**Phil 4:18 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.**

Paul then proceeds to praise them for their unselfish giving to him over time. He seems to be initially referring to a time about 10 years previously (Acts 16 and 2 Cor 11:9) when he first began to preach the Gospel to them. At this early time they were the only church supporting him in their giving and in their receiving of his teaching. Our receiving of the gift of teaching by a disciple of Jesus is a great reward to the teacher! He is not saying that they are the only church

to assist him but the only church to do so at this early time. Thus they early recognized the gift he was giving them of his time and efforts to disciple and teach them. He then goes on to remember another time when he was in Thessalonica that they assisted him more than once (Acts 17:1). Paul's primary concern is always for the spiritual development of those to whom he is sent. When people show their generosity to help those who have helped them grow spiritually such is an indication of their greater spiritual development and that is Paul's primary goal for them. He appreciates the gift but his primary thankfulness is for their spiritual growth.

In verse 18 he then says that the gift sent via Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25-30) was sufficient for his present needs. The fragrant offering is also used by Paul in reference to the sacrifices of Jesus:

*Eph 5:2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.*

A fragrant offering also is used in reference to the Levitical offering (Lev 1:9, 13, 17: 2:12) and means that such offerings from an obedient heart are very pleasing to God. Paul is then telling them that God is well-pleased with their sacrificial giving from their obedient hearts.

**Phil 4:19 And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.**

Some people have misapplied this verse by saying that "we cannot out-give God", meaning that the more we give the more God will give us in a material sense. This is an awful, self-serving statement that is not based on sound understandings of the relationship between God and His people. The inference in verse 19 is that the sacrifices of this church to meet the needs of Paul have left them in a state of need also. Paul is then promising them that God will meet their needs by the same means that He used to motivate them to give to Paul. In Acts we are told of collections to be sent to the church at Jerusalem and in chapter 2 we read of the church members meeting the needs of other Christians. When we suffer need as a result of our dedication to the kingdom of God, God will indeed see to it that those needs are met:

*Matt 6:32 "For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.*

*Matt 6:33 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.*

God may not meet our expectations or our wishes but He will meet our real needs as long as the state of our neediness is a result of our work in the Kingdom.

**Phil 4:20 Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

**Phil 4:21 Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you.**

**Phil 4:22 All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.**

**Phil 4:23 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.**

Paul now closes this wonderful letter with a doxology. Even with all eternity to praise Him there will not be enough time to give him the praise and glory due Him. He asks them to greet every



saint in the name of Jesus Christ. He also sends his greetings from the other Christians who are with him at his prison home in Rome (Timothy, Epaphroditus, and others). The greeting from all the saints refers to those at the church at Rome. Those of Caesar's household would include some of the Roman guards and even Nero's immediate family. Since he includes them as saints, it seems that some of the guards and some of Nero's family had been converted by God using Paul's presence in prison. God had changed people who were initially damaging to Paul into saints and Paul remembers them in his greetings. We need to remember all of God's children in our prayers and concerns regardless of their degree of sanctification or how they treat us while they, like us, are imperfect children of God.

He ends this letter with a statement for the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to be with their spirit. It is our new spirit life given us by God that allows us to be in fellowship with Him and with other saints. He ends this letter with a similar way that he began it:

*Phil 1:2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

This final statement is for that grace to be with our spirit, which will cause all those who read this to be more filled with the Spirit of God as we focus on the grace of God that He has given to us while we were yet His enemies. Two thousand years later our hearts should also be warmed by this great benediction. We are seldom grateful enough for what God has given us and we still become anxious when our circumstances seem less than what we expected. We should all be on our knees with grateful hearts as we thank Him for the gift of the life and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen!