

Meditate on These Things

Philippians 4

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**BIG BEND
BIBLE
FELLOWSHIP**

Phil 4:1-7 – Be Anxious for Nothing

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

² *I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.* ³ *And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.*

⁴ *Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!*

⁵ *Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.* ⁶ *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;* ⁷ *and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

v1 – Why should we so stand fast in the Lord?

Therefore: This links together what Paul wrote here with what he wrote before. Because of the promise of resurrection (Philippians 3:21), the Philippians had all the more reason to stand fast in the Lord.

How were the Philippians Paul's joy and crown?

Paul used the ancient Greek word for crown that described the crown given to an athlete who had won the race. It was a crown of achievement (a *stephanos*); not the crown that was given to a king (a *diadema*).

- The Philippians, as they stand fast in the Lord, were Paul's trophy.

How can we stand fast in the Lord?

We can only stand fast when we are in the Lord (exercising our relationship with Him); any other place is not a secure place to stand.

v2 – Who were Euodia and Syntyche?

Apparently these two women were the source of some sort of quarrel in the church. Instead of taking sides or trying to solve their problem, Paul simply told them to be of the same mind in the Lord.

What was Paul's exhortation to Euodia and Syntyche?

To be of the same mind in the Lord: Whatever the dispute was about, Euodia and Syntyche had forgotten that they have a greater common ground in Jesus Christ. They forgot that everything else was less important than that common ground.

How may we be of the same mind in the Lord?

All Christians have the presence of the Holy Spirit who is our connection to the mind of God. All we need to do is listen to the Spirit within us and obey Him.

v3 – Who was Paul's true companion he asked to help the women?

Whoever this was, Paul instructed them to help these women who labored with me in the gospel. The true companion was supposed to help these women to reconcile and come to one mind in the Lord.

Who was Clement who was also to help the women?

There was a notable Clement in the early church who was the leader of the church in Rome and wrote two preserved letters to the church in Corinth. Yet we don't know if this is the same Clement. It was a common name in the Roman world.

- We can contrast the brief mention of Euodia and Syntyche with the brief mention of Clement. If you had to have your whole life summed up in one sentence, would you like it to be summed up like Clement or like Euodia and Syntyche?

Who were Paul's fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life?

There were others in Philippi who also helped Paul. They had the greatest honor in the world: to have their names in the Book of Life (Revelation 20:15).

v4 – What was Paul's exhortation to the Philippians?

Rejoice: Despite the circumstance from which it was written, joy is all over the letter to the Philippians.

How was the exhortation to rejoice related to whatever the conflict was between the two women?

As a cure for disagreements, the apostle says, 'Rejoice in the Lord always.' Remember what is really important!

- People who are very happy, especially those who are very happy in the Lord, are not apt either to give offense or to take offense.
- Those whose minds are so sweetly occupied with higher things, are not easily distracted by the little troubles which naturally arise among us mortals.
- Joy in the Lord is the cure for all discord.

How may we rejoice in the Lord always?

Paul's joy wasn't based in a sunny optimism or positive mental attitude as much as it was the confidence that God was in control. It really was a joy in the Lord.

How may we distinguish between joy and happiness?

Happiness is dependent on favorable circumstances; joy is independent on our circumstances.

v5 – What else did Paul exhort the Philippians to do?

Let your gentleness be known: The Greek word (epieikeia) that is translated gentleness here.

- Other translations of the Bible translate epieikeia as patience, softness, the patient mind, modesty, forbearance, the forbearing spirit, or magnanimity.

How may we exhibit the gentleness called for here?

This word describes the heart of a person who will let the Lord fight his battles. He knows that *vengeance is Mine, says the Lord* (Romans 12:19).

- It describes a person who is free to let go of his anxieties and all that causes him stress, because he knows that the Lord will take up his cause.

To whom should we extend godly gentleness?

to all men: The sphere is broad. We show this gentleness to all, not just to whom we please or to those in the church.

Why should we extend godly gentleness to all?

The Lord is at hand: When we live with the awareness of Jesus' soon return, it makes it all the more easy to rejoice in the Lord and to show gentleness to all men.

- We know that Jesus will settle every wrong at His return, and we can trust Him to make things right in our falling-apart world.

v6 – What else did Paul exhort the Philippians to do?

Be anxious for nothing: This is a command, not an option. Undue care is an intrusion into an arena that belongs to God alone. It makes us the father of the household instead of being a child.

Matthew 6:25 – *do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?*

How should we deal with anxiety?

Prayer: Paul wrote that everything is the proper subject of prayer. There are not some areas of our lives that are of no concern to God.

What is supplication?

Prayer is a broader word that can mean all of our communication with God, but supplication directly asks God to do something.

If God knows everything, why should we pray?

Many of our prayers go unanswered because we do not ask God. God is often waiting on us to demonstrate that we need His help with what we need.

Why should we pray with thanksgiving?

We should not have a whining, complaining spirit before God when we let our requests be made known. We really can be anxious for nothing, pray about everything, and be thankful for anything.

v7 – How should prayer immediately benefit us?

peace of God: The Bible describes three great aspects of peace that relate to God.

- Peace from God: Paul continually used this as an introduction to his letters; it reminds us that our peace comes to us as a gift from God.
- Peace with God: This describes a relationship that we enter into with God through the finished work of Jesus Christ.
- The peace of God: This is the peace spoken of in Philippians 4:7. It is beyond "all mind"; that is, beyond our power of thinking; it is fruit of the Spirit.

How is it the peace of God surpasses all understanding?

It is peace in the midst of circumstances that is far from peaceful. It is a peace that is beyond our ability to explain – therefore it must be experienced.

- Art project to show peace... most artists showed something like a placid lake reflecting the mountains beyond but one showed a storm on the ocean battering coastal cliffs with a bird nest and a mom going about her business feeding her young.

What does it mean to guard our hearts and minds?

The word guard speaks of a military action. This is something that the peace of God does for us; it is a peace that is on guard over our heart and mind.

What happens when a person loses their heart or mind?

It often is connected to an absence of the peace of God. Without the peace of God, there is no guard for their hearts and minds, they are given over to irrational thinking to do irrational things. Thus, without peace, we have fear...

2 Timothy 1:7 – *For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind*

This is why the fearful narrative of COVID has been so successful in controlling people. Fear causes them to blindly follow the ruling elite with a plan for their deliverance since they lack the critical thinking that comes from a sound mind.

- Hegelian Dialectic... Agenda: Centralization of Power – Thesis: Manufactured Pandemic Threat – Anti-Thesis: The Vaccine is our one and only protection – Synthesis: removal of freedoms, transfer of power from the many to the few.

Phil 4:8-9 – Meditate on These Things

⁸ Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. ⁹ The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

v8 – What does it mean to meditate?

To fill your mind with a topic... Christian meditation should be contrasted with Eastern religious mediation where a mantra is repeated over and over to empty your mind.

What is the problem with an empty mind?

Luke 11:24-26 – *When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.'* ²⁵ And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. ²⁶ Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

What Eastern mystics are doing with their transcendental meditation is opening their minds to their “spirit guides” (demonic influence). Christians cannot be possessed by demons but they can certainly be influenced by demons.

On what should we meditate?

Whatever things are true: In a world of fake news and rampant deception we can trust God's Word.

Noble... just... pure... lovely... good report... virtue...

praiseworthy: These, Paul would say, are the fruit and the food of the mind that is guarded by the peace of God.

When we put these good things into our mind, they stay in our mind and then come forth from us.

- You are what you think...

Proverbs 23:7 – *as he thinks in his heart, so is he*

Why is mind control such an important aspect of our Christian life?

Much of the Christian life comes down to the mind...

Romans 12:2 – *do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*

Renewing our minds is an essential aspect of our relationship with Christ. We should exercise our minds to be:

2 Corinthians 10:5 – *casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*

Thus, what we choose to have on our mind matters.

v9 – What should we do so that God will be with us?

Paul essentially said, “Follow me as I follow Jesus.”

- If the Philippians did as Paul had instructed, not only would they have had the peace of God, but the God of peace would have also been with them.

Phil 4:10-20 – Philippian Generosity

¹⁰ But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. ¹¹ Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: ¹² I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. ¹³ I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. ¹⁴ Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. ¹⁵ Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. ¹⁶ For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. ¹⁸ Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. ²⁰ Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

v10 – How had the gift from the Philippians flourished?

Paul was again thanking the Philippians for the financial support brought by Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25). Paul didn't want to imply that the Philippians didn't care before, only that before they lacked opportunity. When they had the opportunity, then their care for Paul flourished again.

v11 – Is Paul saying he didn't need the help from the Philippians?

Not that I speak in regard to need: Paul reminded the Philippians that his thankfulness for the Philippians' giving wasn't because he was needy (though he was in fact in need), but because it was good for them to be givers.

Why was Paul content with his needy state?

I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: This was how Paul could say that his thankfulness was not based upon his own need. Even though Paul was in need, he was content where he was at – even in his Roman imprisonment.

v12 – How did learn to be content?

I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound: Paul experienced both being in need and being well-off practicing being content in both states. Being content is part of experiencing Christ working in our lives.

- He experienced how powerfully the grace of Christ supported him even in difficult circumstances.

Why would someone need to learn to be content when they abound?

When things are going well, there is a temptation to want more out of fear for losing what you have. There is also a temptation to think your favorable circumstances are as a result of your own efforts exclusively not recognizing God's blessings...

Proverbs 30:8-9 – *Give me neither poverty nor riches—
Feed me with the food allotted to me; Lest I be full and deny You, and say, “Who is the Lord?” Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God.*

v13 – What is the secret to contentment that Paul learned?

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me: Paul learned that to achieve contentment in all things, he needed the strength of Jesus Christ.

How do people often take this verse out of context?

They think that it applies to the Christian being able to do anything they want... if you just have enough faith the Christian can be a superman. Instead, the strength of Jesus

in Paul's life was evident in his ability to be content when he suffered need.

v14 – How had the Philippians shared in Paul's distress?

In speaking about his ability to be content, Paul did not want to give the impression that the Philippians had somehow done something wrong in supporting Paul. But there was a real sense in which the giving of the Philippians was better for them than it was for Paul (you have done well). Godly giving actually does more good for the giver than for the one who receives.

v15-16 – What happened when Paul left Macedonia after first establishing churches there?

No church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only: The Philippians were the only ones to support Paul during this particular period. Paul especially remembered how they supported him when he was in Thessalonica. (1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:7-9)

v17 – What was Paul more thankful for than the gift of the Philippians?

Paul wasn't so much interested in the gift on his own behalf, but in the fruit that the Philippians would receive as a result of their giving. Their giving increased the fruit in their account before God.

What is the principle here that applies to giving?

That we are never the poorer for having given. God will never be our debtor, and we can never out-give God.

v18 – How did Paul characterize the gift of the Philippians?

Paul described the gift of the Philippians in terms that remind us of sacrifices in the Old Testament (Genesis 8:21, Exodus 29:18, 29:25, and 29:41). Our giving to God's work is similar to Old Testament sacrifices, which also cost the person bringing the sacrifice a lot.

v19 – What did Paul promise the Philippians regarding their own financial needs?

My God shall supply all your need: The Philippians were not wealthy benefactors who could easily spare the money. In 2 Corinthians 8, it is plain that their giving was sacrificial.

How could Paul be confident in making this promise?

He knew God, that He is in control and had the resources to satisfy any need.

This verse is a great illustration of the miracle in 2 Kings 4:1-7, where Elisha told the widow to gather empty vessels, and pour the oil from the one small vessel of oil she had into them. She miraculously filled until every empty vessel was full.

- Our needs are like the empty vessels.
- God is the one who fills the empty vessels.

This promise simply expresses what Jesus said...

Luke 6:38 – *Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.*

This should not be taken to mean that what we receive from God will always be material blessings in this world which is the teaching of the Prosperity Gospel.

Matthew 6:20 – *lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.*

v20 – What did Paul desire for God?

Be glory forever and ever: Paul genuinely wanted God to be glorified and was willing to be used in whatever way God saw fit to glorify Himself.

Amen: This was a word borrowed from Hebrew meaning, “So be it.” It is an expression of confident and joyful affirmation.

Phil 4:21-23 – Greeting and Blessing

²¹ *Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you.* ²² *All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar’s household.*

²³ *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.*

Amen.

v21-22 – To whom did Paul want his letter to greet?

every saint: Paul did not here give specific greetings to individuals as he did in other letters. Rather, he greeted every saint in Christ Jesus. This also is another example of the fact that the title saint applies to all Christians, not just to an elite few.

What does it tell us that there were saints in Caesar’s household?

This special greeting is evidence that Paul was still used by God during his Roman imprisonment, when the gospel extended even into the household of Caesar.

- Nero was the cruel emperor of Rome; yet in his family there were Christians...but whether this relates to the members of the imperial family, or to guards, or courtiers, or to servants, we cannot tell.

v23 – Why did Paul end his letter reminding the Philippians of God’s grace?

The Christian life begins and ends with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, so it was appropriate that his letters began and ended with grace also.

Why was Paul’s last word to the Philippians “amen”? Isn’t that reserved for prayers?

Amen was a fitting word of affirmation. Paul knew that what he wrote to the Philippians was worthy to be agreed with, so he added the final word of agreement, Amen.

What applications can we glean from today’s discussion?

- Christians should be characterized by joy, even in the midst of circumstances that are hardly joyful.
- Christians should be characterized by gentleness as we remember that we need to let God fight our battles.
- Christians should not be fearful and prayer helps still our anxieties.
- Christians should pursue the peace of God which results in rational thinking.
- Christians should fill their mind with things of God which helps us even in this world.
- Christians can not outgive God and we reap eternal benefits when we give.