

Philippians 4:1-7

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning everybody. So good to see all of you back in worship together again here in the church building.

You, the people, are the church. This is a building where we gather, but you are the church. Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, here we are. We've come and we've worshipped already. We've declared the gospel message. Why should we benefit from your crucifixion? Why should we share the reward?

But nothing but the blood of Jesus has forgiven us. And so, because we believe, then we will not perish, but you have given us eternal life.

Thank you for the songs of the faith, and would they speak to our hearts. Now, Lord, as we look into your word today, speak through me, speak to us all from your word, and help us to grow more like Christ. In Jesus' name, amen.

[1 : 11] Well, we're going to continue talking about the book of Philippians. We've gotten into the last chapter, starting today, chapter 4. We're going to begin there in chapter 4, verse 1.

And just a real quick review, just to say that the book of Philippians is simply a letter that Paul wrote to the church in Philippi.

If he had been writing to us, this book would have been called Moncurians instead of Philippians.

And so, Paul here writes a letter that is so full of truth, it is so inspired by God as he was writing, that it becomes Holy Scripture, the Word of God for us today.

And we know that Paul wrote it while he was in prison, probably in Rome. And so, here is somebody's idea of Paul, the older man, and Timothy, his young disciple, who always helped him and worked with him.

And so, they are discussing, perhaps, the issues in the church in Philippi. In today's passage, we're mostly going to focus on a great prayer that's in this passage.

[2 : 25] And as we begin, then, to talk about prayer, it reminded me of a story of a guy who was praying. And so, he was praying, and he said, Lord, so far today, I've been doing all right.

I haven't said any curse words. I haven't gotten angry at anybody. I haven't lost my temper at all. I haven't been jealous. I haven't stolen anything.

I haven't lied. I haven't felt greedy. I haven't felt lustful. I haven't had a bad attitude. He said, God, I thank you for all that. But now, I'm going to need some really extra help, God, because any minute, I'm going to get out of bed.

Well, we do need to begin our days with prayer, don't we? Amen. So, in this passage, the first slide, Mark.

This first verse, actually, if I had been breaking the Bible up into chapters, I probably would have let this be the last verse of the preceding chapter, because he refers back to that.

[3 : 33] He says, Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and my crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends.

So, how should you stand firm in the Lord? What he's just been talking about, last week's sermon, where he says, forget what's behind you. Keep your eyes on the prize, and walk in the faith that you've already attained to, and stand firm.

Now, we could preach a whole sermon on stand firm. There's too many folks who start this walk in Christ, and then some tough times come along, and they kind of fall away, backslide, fall out of fellowship.

But the Bible over and over, and Paul especially says, stand firm in what you believe. Now, that's a great sermon, but it's not the sermon I'm going to preach today.

Let's go to the next verses, verses 2 and 3. This is also an interesting sermon. Paul says, I plead with Iodia, and I plead with Syntyche.

[4 : 38] Aren't you glad we don't use those names today? Because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement. Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women, since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my coworkers, whose names are in the book of life.

Now, if you think about it, this letter was read to the whole church in Philippi. And then it got read again and again in many other places.

And Paul is calling out two women who are church leaders by name. And he's saying, you guys, it's been reported to me, y'all are having an argument of some kind, and it's not good for the church. So get over it. You know, we, I can't imagine that. What if I got up to preach, and I said, Phil and Glenn, you guys have been having some trouble with each other, now work it out.

I picked you guys that I knew love each other and not having any trouble. So, anyway, we can't imagine, like, what? He did that in a letter to the whole church?

[5 : 57] Well, you know, Paul didn't play. Sometimes we play a little church and we're going to be nice, but Paul was like, no, I'm going to try to get you into heaven. I'm going to get you molded with all my might into the image of Christ and teach you to walk this Christian walk.

And if I got to embarrass you a little bit to do it, well, it's okay with me. And, you know, Paul wasn't probably a real popular preacher. They didn't flock to hear him, but they knew that he spoke the truth.

Well, now my wife, Becky, her eyebrows went, oh no, it was horrible. She really loves this second part of this verse.

That part there where it says that Clement and the other co-workers whose names are in the book of life. And now Becky says that this proves she's going to heaven and she's not sure about me or the rest of you.

You see, her maiden name and her middle name is Clement. So the Bible says that Clement's name is in the book of life. Okay?

[7 : 09] The only person that we know for sure in the church is Becky. She's on her way to heaven. The Bible says so. Okay, no extra charge for that bit of wisdom right there.

But I'm not going to preach on quit fighting. Let's go to the next verse. Rejoice in the Lord always. I'll say it again. Rejoice. Everybody say rejoice.

Rejoice. Rejoice. Say it again. Rejoice. Now, this is an amazing book. Paul is in prison and 14 times in these four chapters he says rejoice or have joy.

He has a real secret to rejoicing no matter what's going on. He's in prison. And Glenn has kind of already preached on that two or three weeks ago. He said, I did? But anyway, so it's a really good thing to remember.

Rejoice no matter what's happening. Let's look at verse 5. Let your gentleness be evident to all. Oh my goodness. There's another whole sermon.

[8 : 13] Are you gentle? When people think of you do they think gentle? I'm not sure that Paul was gentle but he's encouraging folks.

Let it be known that you are gentle. Not quick tempered. Not hard to get along with. Not, you know, but gentle. It's a very good characteristic. And then I love this next part.

The Lord is near. Hallelujah. He's always near. He's always with you. But he's also near in this way. We are now a week closer to the return of Jesus Christ and the beginning of heaven than we were the last time we met a week ago.

We're a week closer. The Lord is near. Be sure you're ready for him. Now I'm going to tell you those are all really good sermons but I'm not preaching on any of those.

Let's get down to what I'm going to preach on. What I'm going to preach on is the prayer of peace. The prayer of tranquility.

[9 : 19] The prayer that will help you stay calm in the midst of the storm. So Mark let's see what that prayer is. He says here be anxious for nothing.

In other words don't be anxious. America's about the most anxiety ridden place you've ever imagined. There are more children now dealing with anxiety and adults and old folks and everybody's anxious.

It's just amazing to me. We've never had one. I didn't look up the statistics on this but probably anti-anxiety medicines are no doubt some of the best sellers in the whole world especially in America.

We are pill poppers and we're all anxious and worried and uptight about everything. And so Paul says don't be anxious. The Lord says this through Paul and then he gives the formula.

He says in everything whatever that situation is that makes you anxious in that very thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

[10:39] In other words he's saying you need to be praying very specifically talking to God about the situation you're dealing with. And then he throws in another thing with thanksgiving we need to remember that while we're praying and saying Lord help me pay this bill or Lord this health problem in my family or Lord this problem at work Lord this this whatever it is that I'm anxious about the thing that's keeping me awake at night the thing that is troubling me that comes to my mind again and again I want to also give you thanks God that you're at work you're on the job you're in control you're working everything together for good because you promised you would and so when you're praying and asking you're also thanking him for hearing your prayer you're speaking words of faith you're giving him thanks he says and then a great thing will happen the second half of that verse the peace of God which passes all understanding will guard your heart and your mind through Christ Jesus oh I got anyone of you that's walked with the Lord for at least a year probably has a story of a time that God made you peace that you just felt real peace even though the circumstances didn't make sense

I've gotten a lot of stories like that I've been walking with the Lord I don't know 40 plus 45 plus years I know it's been a long time and many times we've been in crisis mode and God gives peace I'll just tell you about one I've probably shared it before it's been about 13 or 14 years ago I was having trouble with Dean Horace I still have that trouble and so my doctor said I'm going to send you to Chapel Hill we're going to let them just check you out completely because I don't see anything wrong looking in your throat but let's make sure the experts there might be something so I go up and they really study from my teeth to the middle of my chest good they study this area and after all these doctors did all these cat stands blood tests and looking with all kinds of scopes up my nose and everything anyway after all that they call me back for the results and they say well there's good news and bad news the good news is there's nothing wrong with your voice you just talk too much and you want it my wife can tell you

I talk too much he says but we found a spot on the top of your lung right here that has nothing to do with your voice but it looks like cancer and we need you a biopsy next week and if it is cancer we'll get it tested right then while you're asleep if it's cancer we're going to take out most of that lung maybe the whole lung and then when you wake up you'll go to the oncologist and they'll talk about all the treatments radiation chemo whatever and I said well I'm happy for the good news my voice isn't bad but precious anyway the biopsy was like this is serious we'll do it next week as fast as we can so I called in to work and said I'm going to take off a couple days and Becky and I said let's get away together this might be the last time that we will have a normal weekend together where I'm in good health and I'm feeling good and we're just going to get away together we went down to Okrakochuk that's a great place have you ever been there you got to get on a ferry to get over there it's a great place anyway we were down there we'd never been before got into a hotel went out walking on the beach one day we decided to rent mopeds little motor scooters go riding around the island together within two seconds Becky had wrecked her her name her name is in the book of life but she's a lousy motor scooter so anyway we had a great week together and we prayed together many times and I took a lot of time just reading my bible praying and I was kind of saying Lord how in the world does this happen but by the end of that three or four days we were down there the peace that passes all understanding had come upon me and when I went into that surgery I had this peace that I had manufactured where I just felt like God I'm in your hands there's not a better place to be if they take out my lung you're with me if this is terminal hallelujah I'll be with you if it comes out to be nothing I'll praise you for that and no matter what you do I thank you God that you own the job and ah that gave me a peace that passed all understanding well praise the Lord when it was all over and I woke up and my mind cleared my Clement who's in the Lamb's Book of Life was standing right there by the bed I looked up and I think I had to ask her three times before my mind was cleared up you know anesthesia and everything and I thought I said what was it she said you don't have cancer it was just some kind of little scar tissue or something probably you had

pneumonia or something

[16:56] I think I had to ask her four or five times to really let it sink in but God gave me a peace that no matter what the answer would be I'm just going to have peace with it and that's the victory in Jesus and that is the victory of prayer the prayer that passes all understanding now somebody sitting here says but Matt I've prayed about my situation and it's like God didn't do anything that's just easy for you to say but it hadn't worked that way for me well see here's our problem we wish let's look at the next slide Mark we wish that prayer was like the lottery that if you could just play the right number if you could just say the right prayer you'd get the instant jackpot but prayer's not that way you see we live America's really bad at this we live in an instant society instant oatmeal instant coffee instant loans instant gratification we believe in love at first sight instant replays we don't have time for anything and so this idea that we might have to pray and wait what?

has God lost his mind? no prayer is more it's not like a lottery it's actually more like let's see the next slide Mark it's more like planting a seed prayer is a very patient activity because God is very patient and so every time you pray it's like you've planted a seed now we always have a garden and we go out and plant those seeds and if we look the next day if I dug it up the next day it looks like nothing happened and it just happens so slowly the seed starts to grow and we keep watering it which is like saying another prayer and the sun shines on it which is like God's blessing and we keep doing what we can do but mostly we just wait and finally we end up with more tomatoes and cucumbers and peppers and stuff than we can eat we've had more okra than if anybody here loves okra please tell us it's still coming in we'll bring you some okra so anyway it's just been amazing but it didn't happen like that we had to wait and prayer is that way every time you pray you're planting a seed and you're planting a seed prayer is also let's look at the next slide prayer is also a lot like an investment account every time you pray it's not like the lottery it's like you're making a deposit in the bank of heaven that draws interest and over a lifetime your prayers pile up at the throne of God and the grace of God is very much available he hears you he's on your side he's got your back you've made a huge deposit

I did a little calculating I've had some kind of job since I was about 11 and I got to calculating that when I was 16 I was making about 15 dollars a week and if I had put five dollars a week starting at 16 in the stock market five dollars a week until now I would have deposited a total of 13 thousand dollars you say well what are you going to do with that you can't even buy a new car for 13 thousand but the stock market in the last that many years has grown 10 percent a year and my five dollars a week if only I had done that today it would be worth 360 thousand dollars five dollars a week Becky as poor as we were we probably could have managed five dollars a week we could have not eaten the day you know but there was 360 thousand prayers like that you keep praying and one day it's overwhelming how God has been at work and is working things out in your life it's overwhelming what he does the blessings of it keep planting seed keep making a deposit in the bank of heaven so last slide Mark what is this secret then to being calm in the storm it is to pray with thanksgiving and to keep praying with thanksgiving and let the peace God gives you help you not to have anxiety about things you see

God wants us to pray he commands us to pray he expects us to pray we need to pray he chooses to use us he chooses to use our prayers it makes no sense to me I wouldn't I can't imagine using your prayers but that's what God does he uses your prayers so let's don't proceed without prayer don't proceed in this church with our plans in your family in your life without prayer talk to God about everything see it up there in everything let your request be made done with thanksgiving the peace of God will be with you so starting today and continuing and every day and during the day keep making deposits in the bank of heaven keep planting seed and let

God give you the peace that passes understanding we're going to pray together we're going to have a final song and Elias said Papa you tell me when it's time so Elias I'd like you to come down and stand with me let's all stand and sing together worship leaders