

Stand firm in Joy

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[0 : 00] Thanks, Kel. Morning, church. I don't know if you have ever had a party or an event that you have been so excited for, so excited, you're so keen that it's changed your whole week.

Everything about that event in the future is what has changed. And I don't know about you, one of the things is that a lot of people love Christmas. And in our little household of three friends, something that we like to do is Christmas in July. And I personally am not a particularly festive person, but for some reason in the month of July, I get a bit festive. In fact, a week before the event, I start looking at Pinterest. I'm scrolling through to find good Christmas recipes. I'm also thinking about putting some Michael Bluble in the car. I then remember about not buying those bonbons in December for July. And I'll call my friend who's never cooked before how to make custard so that they don't bring scrambled eggs for dessert. And the three of us have cleaned the house. We've prepared it. We put Christmas decorations. And we've done that because we are so excited for the next day. We're excited for this Christmas in July hang because it's changed everything that we do. It's that event tomorrow that I know is coming, but I am living as though tomorrow is already here.

Tomorrow changes how you live. So in Philippians, we're going to be encouraged about a tomorrow. A tomorrow that is good news. That for the Christian, if you put your trust in Jesus, your tomorrow shapes your today. And I'm not talking about your meals for tomorrow. I'm not talking about a big project, nor Christmas in July. For Paul, the big tomorrow is that day when he goes home and is with his Savior, Lord Jesus. So why don't you join me as I pray?

Greatest God, you are good. So good that you have given us your word this morning. Speak to us today. Transform us so that we can be more like your son Jesus and that we might know you deeper and deeper.

Amen. So have your Bibles open with me in Philippians 4. Now, Paul's biggest concern in the previous three chapters have been about the gospel of Jesus, the good news of Jesus. The gospel is where Paul finds steadfast joy. Jesus is where he finds his hope, even though he is in chains. In fact, he calls the Philippians to find confidence not in themselves, nor their status or achievements, but in what Christ has accomplished. He says in Philippians 3 verse 8 that he considers all his achievements and status as lost. He considers them rubbish that he may gain Christ. Why?

Because Christ is his Savior and his Lord, and he knows his future with Christ. He says it so aptly in Philippians 3. So flip back with me to Philippians chapter 3 verse 20. Paul says, but our citizenship is in heaven and we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Heaven is his home. Paul looks forward to that great tomorrow. It's the tomorrow that lasts for eternity, and that's what frames Philippians 4. And we're going to see that Paul's tomorrow shapes three things, our relationships, our mind, and our everyday. And so right now we land in verse 1 of chapter 4, and he goes on to say, therefore my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends. James a few weeks ago has already described the relationship that Paul has with the Philippians as partners in the gospel. But notice how the language has changed. He calls the Philippians his joy and crown. The image here is not of a king's crown, but it's a reward given to a winner of a race. For Paul, the Philippians are his crown. The people he's invested in, prayed for, longed for, disciplined, pointed them to Jesus. A big part of Paul's love and longing for the

[4 : 41] Philippians is the hope in seeing them in heaven for eternity. But he then moves to something quite different and something quite bold. So look with me in verse 2. I plead with Iodia, I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. Paul publicly calls these two women out by name, which he doesn't usually do, and encourages them to reconcile. He wants their

reconciliation rooted in who they are in Jesus. Now imagine being called out like that in a letter, that you'd almost think that either Jodia or Syntyche or even both of them are in the wrong, they're the bad people. But Paul doesn't accuse them.

We're not told what happened or what caused the breakdown of their relationship. In fact, Paul in verse 3 urges the Philippians to help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel. Jodia and Syntyche are co-workers for the gospel. And from what others have gathered, they were probably long-time friends. This isn't a matter of bad theology where someone needs to be corrected. For some reason, they've had a fallout. And what is interesting is Paul's motivation and his reminder of who they are. End of verse 3, it says, For Paul, he didn't want them united because he was conflict-averse, not because it made him sad, even though it would have been, but because they are in the book of life. In other words, because they have a certain hope, a certain tomorrow and eternity with Jesus, Paul's calling them to live as though tomorrow shapes their life now, their relationships today. If your confidence is in Jesus, you're a citizen of, not a citizen of earth. Let me say it again. If your trust and hope is in Jesus, you are not a citizen of earth. You're a citizen of heaven. If heaven is your tomorrow, it changes how you view relationships. So friends, can I ask, are there relationships that are in urgent need in your heart that you must resolve? I'm not suggesting that this is easy by no means.

Often it takes time, but perhaps consider what Paul encourages the Philippian church. Look forward to the day that Paul is looking to, where we will be united with Christ in his presence forever.

Dwell on the fact that your tomorrow is heaven, where all people in Christ have been reconciled with God and to each other. But for some of us here, disunity, conflict in the church, it hasn't been a thing. We think, you know, for ourselves that we're a pretty agreeable person.

We don't make a huge fuss. We think we're pretty likable. But that doesn't mean that your tomorrow is changing your relationships. Because you can be a friendly person, yet not invest in gospel relationships. Relationships that are shaped by tomorrow. Your schism might not be worship preference or a big relational fallout. But perhaps it's that you're not making space for relationships with Christian brothers and sisters, or investing in Christian community with your time, your treasures, and your talents. You might not have it in your head, but the relationships you make here in this church with Christian brothers and sisters, it matters for eternity. If you are serving in a ministry where you are preaching the good news of Jesus, whether kids' ministry, whether in community group, whether it's out in your workplaces, it matters for eternity. When you are sharing and making coffee, building that community here at Morning Tea, it matters for eternity. When you pray for and with someone, it matters for eternity. So can I encourage you to take one small step? Wherever your journey with

[8 : 57] Christian community is, maybe it's finally to say hi to that person who you've been sitting next to for 10 years. It could be to give a person in your community group a ring to check in on them this week in their devotional life. It could be even to sign up to a community group. If you have an inkling that someone is falling away from church community, from Jesus altogether, do you go and think, that matters because Jesus is coming back? Friends, there's always a reason and there's always good things to use your time with, but Paul encourages the Philippians, perhaps there's a better thing.

Your relationships now affect eternity. Jodia and Syntyche's relationship matters because Jesus is coming back. Whatever it is, after the service, when you plan your calendar, make space for Christian community and book it into your diaries. The next thing that Paul talks about is that tomorrow shapes your mind.

So let's have a look at verse 4. Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice. Despite the conflict that's going on, Paul calls them again, like in chapter 3 verse 1, to rejoice. But this time, always, in all circumstances, on the highest of highs, the lowest of lows, Paul says that the Christian is to rejoice even despite this conflict. Joy for the Christian isn't only when the sun is shining and my emotions are stable. Joy is still required when the darkness is set in, the clouds, and all I can see is darkness. Because our joy is set into something that is hopeful, that is certain, a tomorrow that is coming. A tomorrow that is coming. And you might not feel that, but perhaps your joy and your hope is not in the Lord. It might be elsewhere. It might be in getting good grades.

It might be when our kids are happy. Because if you fix your eyes on something that is not certain, changing, movable, joy can't last. Paul encourages that joy can last when it's fixed on a certain hope and a certain faith. But what is more is then in verse 6. Do not be anxious about anything, but

in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And it's really important to note here that Paul is not talking about anxiety disorder, nor is he talking about the physiological experience some of us have when we do get anxious. In fact, the word used here is the same word in the original text used in chapter 2 verse 20, where he describes Epaphrodite's concern, interest, or anxiety for the Philippians. So the word could actually also be a good thing. In fact, even Paul himself in chapter 2 verse 28, he talks about himself getting anxious, the possibility of it.

So the anxiety that Paul talks about here in chapter 4 is a worry that sits outside of the Christian reality. But what is that Christian reality? How does Paul end the sentence? But in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. Prayer is a posture of dependence. It recognizes that the reality is that God alone is the one who is sovereign, in control over everything. Anxiety goes amiss when you lose sight of who God is. He's already got your whole life mapped out from birth to eternity. Often what happens when I am worried is that I'll overthink about all the outcomes that might happen. In fact, I am anxious because I realize at that very moment I am not in control. That moment of anxiety for me is a reminder that I am to be Christ-dependent.

[13:04] Not self-dependent, but Christ-dependent. And this passage isn't saying to be stoic, have no emotions, and don't care or concerned about anything in life. Because Paul does. Epaphrodite does.

Their concerns are about God's concerns. And they're placed in the Christian reality. And what is the Christian reality? What is Paul's encouragement to us? To place our worries in the Christian reality. God is sovereign. So pray to him. Lean on him. For me, as I kept reading this passage, I thought, what happens when I don't have that joy, that lasting joy we were talking about before? What do I do when I'm worried, sick about tomorrow? Have a look at verse 8. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things. What are the things that you are thinking? Are you thinking of things that are pure? Is there some self-talk or self-condemnation that doesn't fit with how God sees you? But instead, let your mind think of all of these things. True, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable. And what encapsulates all of these things? It's the gospel. The gospel is from God's true word.

It gives us the means to know the righteous one. The gospel is so shockingly gorgeous, lovely, and beautiful. It is full deserving of my attention that God would send his perfect son to die on the cross for a sinner like me. So fix your eyes on the Lord. Meditate on the promises God has given to you in Jesus. So think of your brain as a piggy bank. Bear with me, be with me. Your brain is to be a gospel-filled piggy bank. Instead of thinking, I'm not enough, drop this gold in your head. I no longer need to strive for Christ is enough for me. When you're feeling lonely, meditate on Deuteronomy 31 verse 8, that God will never leave you nor forsake you. Preach the gospel to yourself daily, that your piggy bank is full of riches, of gospel knowledge and wisdom. And gosh, I am not saying that I've got this by no means. And I'm not even close to even being truly a beginner at this. But let's keep gazing at Jesus, the hope of our tomorrow, because I also need accountability. I need godly community around me to intervene when I'm grumbling too much. I need people to remind me that God's working and changing me, sanctifying me when I don't even think it's happening. But there's a promise there for us in verse 7, right? Have a look. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Verse 7 is a promise. It's a promise for the one who brings all this to the Lord. And there have been indeed times for me, and I'm sure for many of you, where there are sleepless nights, where anxiety or despair just sink in. Paul is not here saying, you need to will yourself to have the feeling of happiness. Instead, you're encouraged to lean to Jesus, the one who knows your worries, the one who is in control. God will be the peacemaker in your heart. We don't know when that day would be, but trust in that promise here, that peace will come.

Maybe not now, but it will come. A prayer I have for my friends whose brains are crippled by anxiety, and it's a prayer I pray when I'm in good spirits for my future despairing self, is that the Holy Spirit will intervene in mind and heart to bring hope in the gospel. Because in those moments, it's really hard to see outside of it. Let's be real. It's really hard. So let's be a community that starts praying before crisis strikes. Ask the Lord to intervene in your heart and pray for peace. Ask that he will preach the gospel into your heart in those moments. And our final point is that tomorrow

changes our every day. Paul's partnership with the Philippians has been long, deep, and fruitful. And the Philippians haven't been able to support Paul physically or financially, but they have now with a gift. Check out verse 10 with me. I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I've learnt in whatever situation I am to be content. Notice in verse 11 that although he is thanking them for the gift, he was not in need of the gift. But simply, Paul enjoys that the gift represents their renewed partnership. His reason, however, for not being in need isn't the fact that he's in plenty. He hasn't suddenly won the lottery and now he's content and no longer in need. It's not like suddenly the bank has given him a massive growth on his compound interest. No, in verse 12 it says, I know what it is to be in need and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learnt the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. Friends, don't forget this is Paul. Paul who is in chains in the hope that the good news will be proclaimed despite the chains. No, no, no. But more than that, he believes and he's seen that these chains have served to advance the gospel because his brothers and sisters are being bolder and more courageous with the gospel. And in verse 12, in some translations, the first phrase of Paul being neat is actually as Paul being made low, being humiliated. And this is counter-cultural in this era.

[19 : 25] An era where power was everything and to be humiliated was the worst possible thing. So how can someone who in those situations be content? Verse 13, I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Now this is a commonly known verse and often it's taken out of context to refer to particularly large, extraordinary events like just before the HSC. I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength. Before you do a hike to the Himalayas, I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength. Now it is true that everything I do is because the Lord has graciously enabled it.

I rise each morning because God has graciously given me a new day. But this verse is not talking about that. Paul's not referring to the wild, extravagant event. Paul is talking about the secret to his contentment.

Paul is talking about the contentment of the everyday, the good everyday, the best everyday, the awful, the worst everyday, the mundane, boring everyday. He can be content in all of those things and it's a power that's outside of himself. Because where does Paul find his sufficiency and contentment from? It's from Christ. Not from himself, but from Christ's strength.

But what does that mean? What does it look like to be content in Christ? We've already seen that all Paul's life is for and about Christ. If Paul is poor, he has Christ. If Paul is in want, he has Christ. But even if Paul has plenty, he has Christ. Paul has been so confident in what Christ has accomplished for him. It's changed who he is. He's so certain about what he has received already in Christ.

[21 : 30] But as we've seen, Paul's eyes are fixed forward to tomorrow. He finds contentment in his everyday because of his tomorrow. In fact, the gift that the Philippians have given him, it's not even the gift itself that he rejoices, that he's thankful for, but the fruit of the gift. Have a look at verse 17.

Now that I seek the gift, not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. He hopes that God uses that gift so that the gospel might be advanced. So that God's kingdom is grown and he knows it. He's confident in it. That God alone would be glorified. And Paul is then so confident about God who provides for the Philippians in verse 19.

And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. You see, contentment is fickle when it's about you and me. At our nature, we will always want. We've been made to be needy because we have needs. But when it becomes us-centered rather than Christ-centered, having our needs met in Christ, we won't be fully satisfied. We are all living for tomorrow. The thing is, what is your tomorrow? Is your tomorrow the whims of life? To have a house that is finally gorgeous. Is it that perfect relationship that you've been wanting, idolizing, praying for? Because the answer for Paul is that in all circumstances, none of those are the secret to contentment. Or is your tomorrow something greater? If you love Jesus, your tomorrow is found in heaven.

The secret to contentment is found in Christ. You no longer need to strive to get into God's good books because Christ paid the price. And you are already in God's good books. Finished, paid, done.

[23 : 42] You've found the most fulfilling purpose in life, which is to treasure him and make him known. And perhaps you've been listening to this today. You've been reading this passage. You've been reading the entirety of Philippians and been thinking that you don't currently feel the joy or contentment that Paul has. The joy that Paul has expressed. You can't help but keep being worried about a particular matter. But what's Paul said about the source of our joy? This series we've learned already that biblical joy is a steadfast experience fixed on our salvation in Jesus. You don't need to live legalistic lives to attain salvation because you can only attain salvation through trusting in Jesus.

For Paul, the only secret to the content life is Jesus. Do you hear it? The key word is Jesus. If what I described earlier is you, perhaps what you need is to reacquaint yourself to Jesus, see his character, see his steadfastness, his promises fulfilled in Christ. I want you to listen really carefully here. If you're trying to find joy, contentment, gospel-centered relationships, you don't need a new lifestyle. You don't need a new fad, a new calendar, a new diet, a new whatever.

You need the gospel to sink in deeper and deeper. So be bold and share this with your community group, your Christian brothers and sisters, that you've lost that awe. Because can I tell you, there'll be a flock of encouragement and people who want to pray and be there for you. Be encouraged that Jesus has secured your certain tomorrow. And maybe you sat here for this entire talk not knowing who Jesus is, but wanting to have that lasting joy and contentment, wanting to have that certain forever tomorrow.

Come take your first step. Chat with me, chat with Jess, or the person who's brought you. We'd love for you to see who Jesus is. Because the tomorrow in heaven that has been made certain in Jesus changes everything. It changes your relationship. It changes how you think. It changes your every day. So stand firm. Stand firm in joy and unity. Live as if heaven is your home.

Because that great tomorrow is indeed coming.