

# Philippians 4

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[ 0 : 00 ] A very good morning to you all, and particularly to my little friends, boys and girls everywhere.

Good morning. I'm really glad I have these few minutes to talk to you, and especially in this time, because it is so easy for me to help you remember what country I come from.

You've heard Kenny saying that we work in Colombia, but I was not born in Colombia. I was born in another country, and you will tell me what country I come from, because I can tell you that there is a fellow country bear that is very famous these days because he appears in a film.

It's a small bear that once showed up in a train station in London. Do you remember the name of that train station? Paddington. And so they named the bear after the train station where he was found.

Paddington Bear. Does anybody remember what country Paddington comes from? You will hear that he comes from darkest Peru, and that's where I come from, too.

[ 1 : 17 ] And if you think of it, if you give me a blue coat and a red hat, I will probably look very much like Paddington. But not all Peruvians look like that.

Now, the thing is, I won't tell you the story, because if you haven't seen the film, I don't want to spoil it, either for the kids or for their parents who will see it with them. But he goes through many adventures.

I've even read in a paper a review saying that it's too scary for the children because there are so many dangers threatening this poor little bear.

But then his friends helped him in different circumstances. However, we have better than that. We are in a better position than Paddington whenever we face any difficulty in the world, be it when we are little children, when we are grown-up people, even when we are really old people, no matter in what moment of our lives we face danger, we face necessity, we face something that scares us, that worries us.

We can always say, the Lord is my shepherd. We learn songs when we are in Sunday school. We learn little rhymes.

[ 2 : 41 ] We know that those are the words of Psalm 23. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.

No matter where we are, who we are, what situation we are facing, we know we can trust him. So whenever you are scared, whenever you are worried for anything, whenever something is making you think, what will happen now?

Who will help me? Remember, the Lord is my shepherd, and that will bring warmth, that will bring peace to your hearts. Don't forget that.

The Lord is your shepherd. He will always be. God bless you, little ones. And we're going to sing again in Psalm 16 from Sing Psalms.

And the tune is Golden Hill, Psalm 16. And that's on page 17 from verse 6 to the end. And so on down to verse 11.

[ 4 : 06 ] You have made known to me the path of life divine. Bliss shall I know at your right hand. Joy from your face will shine.

Psalm 16 from verse 6 to the end. The tune is Golden Hill. The land allotted me. The land allotted me.

Is in the present sight. And truly my inheritance.

To me is a delight. I'll praise the Lord my God.

Who's counsel guides my choice. And even in the night my heart recalls instruction's voice.

[ 5 : 32 ] Before me constantly. I said the Lord, the Lord.

Because he is at my right hand.  
I'll not be overthrown. Therefore my heart is glad.  
My tongue with joy will sing. My body too will rest secure.  
In hope unwavering. For you will not allow.  
[ 6 : 44 ] My soul didn't get to stay. Nor will you leave.

Your holy one. To see the tombs decay.  
You have made known to me. The path of life divine.  
Bliss shall I know at your right hand. Joy from your face will shine.  
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Let's read God's word now in Philippians chapter 4. Philippians chapter 4. Philippians chapter 4.

[ 8 : 02 ] Philippians chapter 4. Therefore, my brothers whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

I entreat Judea and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also through companion, help these women who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together, with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are in the book of life.

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

[ 9 : 23 ] What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have received 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 have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. And you, Philippians, yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving except you only.

Even in Thessalonica, you sent me help for my needs once and again. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.

[ 10 : 36 ] I have received full payment and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

And my God will supply every need of use according to his riches and glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever.

Amen. Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. And may God bless to us this reading of his holy word. I'm going to sing again in Psalm 4 and sing Psalms.

Psalm 4, sing Psalms. And the tune is Ayrshire, Psalm 4, which is on page 4. We're going to sing from verse 3 to the end.

[ 11 : 38 ] Psalm 4, sing Psalms. Know that the Lord has set apart the godly as his own. The Lord will hear me when I call and my request make known.

In anger do not break God's law. Consider and be still. Present a righteous sacrifice and wait upon his will. Oh, who can show us any good?

I hear so many say. Oh, Lord, shine on us with your light. Show us your face, I pray. You filled my heart with greater joy than others may have found, as they rejoiced at harvest time when grain and wine abound.

I will lie down and sleep in peace. My heart will rest secure. For you alone, oh gracious Lord, will keep me safe and sure. The tune is Ayrshire, Psalm 4.

Know that the Lord has set apart. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[ 12 : 42 ] Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. face I pray you build my heart with greater joy than others may have found as they rejoiced at harvest time when green and white above

I will lie down and sleep in peace my heart will rest in you for you alone oh gracious Lord will keep me safe and sure again a very good morning to everyone here I don't want to start without expressing my gratitude for this invitation to come over to Louis and particularly here in Stornoway here in this we furlough tour that we are doing with my wife and also for the delightful hospitality we are enjoying at the

Martins house in the months we've been working now in Colombia for 16 years as part of the work of the Bible Seminary in Medellin myself as a teacher there administration for a while in the last few years also doing counseling work with pastoral families that's been one of the concentrations of our work over there my wife Patty she is a family therapist so she does her own thing in counseling in a family Christian center but we together have been doing some work with pastors and ministers and their families when they are going through difficult times themselves and one of the issues that we have found in our counseling and indeed in our own lives because we are not exempt from the bumps and the difficulties of life ourselves has taken me to study this epistle to the

[ 17 : 13 ] Philippians with some detail and have found in it a real treasure of knowledge and the wisdom and answers to some difficult questions in life so let me ask you to come back to this epistle of Paul to the Philippians and we will use different parts of it to look into the theme that we have for this morning but it is condensed in a way in the first few words of verse 4 in chapter 4 which I think we pass through too quickly when we read a chapter like this or a text like this rejoice in the Lord always again I will say rejoice and this is perhaps one of the characteristics of

Philippians it's an epistle in which the word joy or its derivatives rejoice and joy appear up 16 times in only four chapters it's a word that comes out once and again and again and again and if we think that Paul is writing this letter in a circumstance in which most of us would be really really downcast and sad and worried and not thinking precisely of joy that wouldn't be a word that comes to our minds when we are in prison when we are awaiting trial when we are even thinking that the outcome of that trial would be our execution as it actually happened to him not long ago we were visiting with friends and this friend of ours was telling us how for the first time in her life she was pulled out the road by a police woman and she had not seen the lights flashing on a part of the road that went by school and of course when that happens you have to slow down to 20 normally the limit there is 30 but when the lights flash you have to go down to 20 she just didn't see the lights until she was pulled off and she was asked to sit in the back of a police car while she read her rights and she was in tears she had never really broken the law she had never had to be treated like that and she felt awful thinking of what would happen if she was taken to court the big fine she would have to face and even a little brush with the law was so shaking for her it was so terrible for her and I feel myself like that even a fine a small fine sets me out and say how could

I be so careless I don't like that and this man is in prison awaiting trial and possibly execution and he writes to us and to his friends in Philippi and to us today a letter that goes on saying rejoice rejoice in the Lord how can he come to that position how can he come to that situation now one thing we have to bear in mind is that he is not talking about the same thing we would talk about if we think of this particular area of our lives one of the things I could have asked the children but I could ask you yourselves is who wants to be happy of course if we are asked that all of us want to be happy right so we all agree in that but what if we take the next step and I ask you what does happiness mean for you what will make you happy and then we will have different ideas of what will make us happy but happiness is a very elusive concept a very difficult thing to grasp even in our minds because things that make us happy will make us happy just for a wee while and we are happy and we think if we get this if I get this

I will be happy and you can think of this young man who thinks that if I only could get a girlfriend I will be very happy and lo and behold there's a girl that shows up in his life and now he has a girlfriend but then he said oh if I could only have a wee car to take my girlfriend around and show her the place I would be very happy and then he gets the car and he's happy for a little while until he realizes how much oil that car passes and how much time it spends in the garage rather than on

the road and oh I would be happy if I had a better car and then he goes on and on he might have a Ferrari and he wouldn't be happy because he always will want something bigger and faster and more powerful and that happens to all of us oh if I only could have a grandchild and there is there it is you have a beautiful granddaughter oh but I want a grandson too and then when you have it you want three and you want four and then you see the lady next door she has 15 grandchildren oh I wish I could have 15 grandchildren myself and so on so happiness is always ahead of us happiness is the carrot hanging at the end of a rod so we will we never attain it we are always running after it and happiness becomes very little moments of satisfaction interspit with very long periods of frustration and the happiness that a hearty meal brings to our lives ends up at the moment that you start thinking where the next meal will come from but Paul here is talking about something totally different he's speaking about joy and he mentions as

I've said it several times along these four chapters but I will concentrate in only three statements that he makes that help us think a little bit on what this is about that he's talking about in chapter 4 verse 4 we've read that he starts saying rejoice in the Lord always again I will say rejoice when was the last time that you stopped and think if you rejoice in the Lord we're all Christians or we are all people interested in Christianity otherwise you wouldn't be here on a Sunday morning but are we all people who rejoice in the Lord this is perhaps the most important question that this text is asking us we are so foolishly used to center our sense of well-being in things and in circumstances that probably only people who are deeply in love at this moment would understand what it means to rejoice in another person to rejoice in the very presence of another person but if we are not in that particular moment or situation in life we would probably not even know what it means to rejoice in the

[ 25 : 24 ] Lord we are so hypnotized by our love of the blessings that we receive from God that we forget the God from whom we receive those blessings we want more blessings we want more of his care more of his love more of his grace or more of whatever it is that we think we are needing at a particular moment but what about him and we get angry with God when we think that those blessings are not coming fast enough when they are not abundant enough in chapter three of this very same letter Paul tells us how he put in a bag everything that he had considered important in his life up to that moment his academic achievement his aristocracy pedigree his reputation as a very moral law abiding citizen he put all that in a bag and put a label on it that said skublos which is a word that is much much harder than rubbish and he said

I count all this as pure rubbish because I want to know Jesus Christ and the power of his resurrection how prepared are we to set aside everything in this life just to know Jesus and the power of his resurrection in our lives no we stick to those things that bring us satisfaction that bring us status that brings us a sense of worth or whatever it is and so we are missing the main point in this life do you remember that question in the catechism what is the chief end of man man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever sadly one of the things that you see missing in Christians lives these days is precisely that joy

Christian life seems to be a burden how are you oh they're plodding not too bad and where's your soul where where do your devotions take you oh to obedience yes but what about enjoyment we are called to enjoy him to enjoy God to rejoice in the Lord you remember the rich young ruler he made the right question to the right person with the right attitude and obtained the perfect answer what shall I do to get eternal life oh these are the things you have to do all of them I've done them okay there's only one thing you have to do there's only one thing that is tying you down that's anchoring your life go and sell everything you have give it to the poor and come follow me but he didn't it's a very sad story he didn't and most of us don't we don't do away with those things that get us down in order to follow him

I myself find very often in that position in that situation sometimes I see it sometimes I need my wife or somebody else to tell me look you are choosing something different than following him you are doing the same as Adam and Eve did you are choosing the rubbish you are choosing sin you are choosing what is dark what is horrible what is painful what is deadly rather than following him who is the truth the life the way the way where the way to the father the way to the God we are called to enjoy so joy becomes something that just is not there something that we've heard about something that we've read about something that we sing about in our worship because the sounds are full of calls to rejoice in

God but sadly we don't yes we have believed yes we are saved yes we have the hope that one day when this horrible life ends I will enjoy glory with God and that is true but he came to give us eternal life now not when we die he came to give us abundant life to us now not just when we die when we die we'll be made perfect but we are called to live in a way that we can find joy in our Lord no matter what the circumstances no matter if we have or we have not and that takes me to the second point which is also in this chapter 4 verses 10 to 13 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

[ 30 : 52 ] I am speaking of being in need for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content I know how to be brought low and I know how to abound in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger abundance I need I can do all things through him who strengthens me after what we have heard from a man who has let go all anchors that impeded him in his heart for Christ and has been freed from human concerns and anguishes nothing can drop him from the joy that he finds in Christ we find him now saying that circumstances either abundance or necessity that will not rob him from his joy because that will not rob him from contentment and there is no joy without contentment we need to learn to be content and what is contentment somebody said that contentment is knowing that

God knows what he is doing even if he means that I will go hungry today that doesn't mean that he has forgotten me that doesn't mean that he is hungry at me so he has not given me today my daily bread he means that for some reason that maybe we will never know he has decided that that is the right thing so I will be content I will not let my joy fly away I will not let the evil one to rob me of what is mine because it is a gift from God and that is the joy that he has brought into my life by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and that is what Paul is saying Paul has found the secret of life I have found I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger he is there in a prison in a dungeon I don't circumstances where if they were a little bit lagged or if they were very stringent what I know is that he says none of this will rob me of my joy and he seems to have found the same secret that many many years before the prophet Habakkuk had found himself when he wrote though the fig tree should not blossom nor fruit be on the vines the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no hurt in the stalls NFT have nowhere learn learn to be content with what god has for you in your life i will rejoice in my lord the god of my salvation i will rejoice in my Redeemer. And so the scriptures enjoin us to rejoice. May there be plenty or little to count on.

Now, it's interesting to see that Paul says here that he has learned to be content. It is not natural. It doesn't come from inside us. It's not part of our nature to be content. We need to learn. We need to train ourselves to be content with what God has for our lives.

[ 35 : 28 ] We have to look for God's intentionality even in the midst of our trials and our tribulations, trusting that he knows best.

Sitting there like Job when he looks into his wife's despair. She's suffering as much as he is. And then she says, come on, curse God and die, please.

Apply yourself a little bit of euthanasia. If you curse God, he will kill you. Do that. Don't go on suffering as you are suffering and making me suffer. And then Job says, no, no, no, no.

Shall we receive from God only the good and not the evil? He knows what he's doing. And there is Job in the list of the heroes of the faith.

He learned to be content even in the most awful of circumstances as the one he had to go through. So it is our privilege and also our duty to learn to be content and experience the joy that is God's gift to us.

[ 36 : 50 ] Not only to experience it as a personal thing that will bring joy to our lives, but as part of our witness to the world.

Are we presenting a gospel that is enjoyable? And I don't mean it in a very superficial way.

Oh, come to the Lord and you will be rich and he will solve all your problems and he will heal you of any disease that you have. That not always happens. Sometimes your problems become worse when you become a Christian because your wife leaves you and you're thrown out of your job or whatever.

Your friends forget about you. Whatever. That's not the thing. The thing is that you find the one who is your redeemer and you find the God that brings you to the joy of your salvation.

Even Jesus says to the apostles, do not rejoice in that demons are being subject to you and that wonderful things are happening through your ministry. No! Rejoice in the knowledge and the certainty that your names are written in the book of life.

[ 37 : 59 ] Does that bring joy to our lives? Do we transmit that joy to the people we talk about Jesus Christ? Is that the Christianity we are living, experimenting, and taking to others?

Do we invite them to a party or are we always inviting them to a funeral? So it is a privilege and it is a duty. It is a call from God to rejoice in him and it is a gift from him.

Happiness is emotional. Happiness is fleeting. Happiness is something that we build up. You cannot build up joy. You cannot buy joy.

You cannot go and look for it anywhere. Joy is a gift from God. If you don't have it, ask for it. In Jesus, you will find it.

Let us pray. Our Father in Heaven, we give you thanks for this gift. The greatest gift of all, your own Son, coming as our Redeemer.

[ 39 : 09 ] To exchange our death for his life, our sin for his holiness, our misery for his glory.

And in that gift, through Christ, we come to a totally new and known dimension of life, your very presence.

And in your presence, bathed in that light, in that purity, in that sanctity, we can rejoice.

We can rejoice in knowing that you are our shepherd, that you are with us, and you do not let our hand go, even if we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, knowing that from the very beginning, when we confess with our mouth that Jesus Christ is the Lord, to the rest of eternity, you are our Father, our loving Father, and the one who will show upon us goodness and mercy and beauty.

Let us live that joy. Let us know that it is there, that you are there, even in the dark hours of the night, when the storm is raging, when we feel alone, when pain is unbearable.

[ 40 : 32 ] Let us rejoice in knowing that you are with us, that you love us, that you know what you are doing. May you bring joy and contentment to your people, O Lord, through the pages of the scripture, the truth that jumps out of it and comes into our lives, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, speaking to our own spirits, and the grace of Jesus, who is the one who has made all this possible, and in whose name we pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. We sing again from Psalm 133 from the Scottish Psalter.

It is in page 424. Page 424. The tune is traditional art prose. Behold how good a thing it is and how becoming well together such as brethren are in unity to dwell like precious ointment on the head that down the beard did flow even Aaron's beard unto the skirts dead of his garments go.

As Hermost due the dew that doth on Zion heals this end for there the blessing God commands life that shall never end. Psalm 133. Psalm 133. Behold how good a thing it is and are becoming well together such as brethren are in unity to dwell like precious ointment on the head that down the beard did flow he leant fear and to the skirts did all his garments grow a demon stew the dew the dove on

Zion hills descend for there a blessing God commands thy path shall never end now may love grace and peace from father son and holy spirit may be upon us all now and forever amen