

Philippians 4

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[0 : 00] And please turn with me in your Bibles to Philippians chapter 4, which you'll find on page 982 in the Church Bibles.! Philippians chapter 4.

And while you're finding that, let me just say what a real joy it's been to be with you for just over the past year. And the great thing about going as an IPC missionary is that even though I won't actually be here, it doesn't feel quite like leaving.

It feels like I'm still as part of IPC and will be still part of IPC. I'll still be seeing elders regularly in the presbytery meetings. And I'll be back every now and again for meetings here as well and to enjoy fellowship with you all.

So thank you all very much for this past year. So Philippians chapter 4. There is a conversation that happens in households everywhere.

Every year, you can pretty much write it down before it happens. And you will pretty much get it spot on if you were to write it down. If there is a household with parents and children, this conversation is going to happen at least once.

[1 : 22] It goes like this. Child says, Mummy, Daddy, can we get a, insert animal here, dog or cat or lizard or whatever it is.

And you don't need to get a prophecy to know exactly what the parent is going to say next to you. What does the parent say? Who's going to look after it?

There's a world of difference between reaching a situation or circumstance and being able to manage in that situation.

There's a difference between getting to the top spot in a race and maintaining it to the end. And while Paul has been teaching the Philippians throughout this book how to face a variety of particular circumstances, and especially difficult circumstances, as we come to the close of this book, he comes down to teach the Philippians how to handle pretty much any situation.

It's a big catch-all for any situation they might face. And especially how to handle them in ways that are consistent with what he's been teaching them so far.

[2 : 39] How can you handle any circumstance in a way that glorifies Christ, as they learn from chapter 1? And expresses humble unity in the church, from chapter 2.

And strives to know Christ more and more, from chapter 3. In short, from verse 1, how do you stand firm in the Lord?

Not just how do you get up, but how do you stand and keep standing in the Lord? That is what he's urging them to do in verse 1, to stand firm. And he has already shown them how to stand firm, particularly in the face of false teaching, as we saw this morning.

And so he urged them to do that, to stand firm. Then there are so many other ordinary, everyday circumstances, whether good or bad, difficult or easy.

And we need to consider, how do I live as a Christian in that circumstance? Well, yet again, you'll be surprised to find out, that we have the very same kind of pattern of thinking, that we've been seeing throughout the whole book, for us to observe here again.

[3 : 50] There is something to know, something to figure out, and something to do, yet again. And it's all based on Paul's prayer, for IPC Philippi, that you'll remember, that in chapter 1, that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness, that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

His desire throughout, is for them to grow in love and unity, and grow towards each other, as they grow specifically in knowledge, so that they can figure out, the gospel priorities that they need, figure out what is excellent, what is best, and so that they can do the right thing.

Now all throughout the letter, he wants them to grow in unity, and fellowship, and partnership. Now I was speaking with someone this week, who was a member of a Christian organisation, that had the word fellowship, in the title.

And frankly, from the way he described it, it didn't really sound like much of a fellowship, at all. Paul, their names were on the list of members, but, so they're technically united in that sense, but that is not the bare-bones unity, Paul is aiming for.

They've got that, they're in the same church together, but he wants them to grow as a family, it's a familial unity, a unity of love. And that grows as knowledge, and discernment grow.

[5 : 27] So what is the thing that they need to know, in this case? Well, in chapter one, he's given them, he's asked them to consider the goal of the gospel, to know where it's all heading, the day of Christ, and his glory.

And in chapter two, he's asked them to think about the manner of the gospel, what the gospel looks like, not like a superior tyrant, but like amazing condescension, and humility, and service.

Chapter three, he got them meditating on the content of the gospel, urging them to know the riches, and the superiority, the surpassing worth, he called it, of what they have in Christ.

And so here in chapter four, the underlying truth, that is holding up everything in this chapter, is the source of the gospel. The source of the gospel, which he's pointing out, especially in verse 19.

He's encouraging them to know, what makes the gospel possible, and that is God's providence. His providence rooted in his riches in glory, in Christ Jesus.

[6 : 36] Verse 19. Our shorter catechism, which is a really helpful document, which I recommend, that clearly spells out key truths, that is good to help you to understand, the Christian faith.

It tells us that God's providence, is his most holy, wise, and powerful, preserving, and governing, all his creatures, and all their actions. God controlling absolutely, everything.

And what determines, how he governs, the lives of his people, verse 19, is his riches in glory, in Christ Jesus. What determines, how he rules our lives, is everything that Christ is for us, and everything that Christ has done for us.

That is the guiding principle, for how God rules our life. So if that is the case, that is the very simple truth, God ruling our lives, that source of the gospel, God's control, and God's merciful control, God's gracious control, of our lives, that riches and glory in Christ, what do we figure out, on the basis of that?

That's what we know, so what do we figure out? Well in chapter 1, as we considered, the goal of Christ's gospel, that helped us to see, that we needn't worry about, what happens in our lives, because the end is fixed, that's what we figured out, in chapter 1.

[8 : 05] And then in chapter 2, what we figured out, seeing Christ's humble service, well we figured out, that we should consider others, as more important than ourselves, that is what we figure out, other people are more important.

Chapter 3 this morning, as we considered, the glorious content of the gospel, the glorious message, that helped us figure out, that anything else is rubbish. If you want to add anything to Jesus, you'll just take away from him, you're adding rubbish.

So what are we figuring out, here in chapter 4? As we look at God's, total and gracious control, of all things, we figure out, that we can live anywhere.

We can live, anywhere, we can maintain, any situation. We can handle, being anywhere. And so that classic verse, verse 13, probably one of the most, abused verses in the Bible, I can do all things, through him, who strengthens me.

The problem with that, is not that it's not true, it's just, what does it mean? It means, I can live in any circumstance, as we see in verses 11 and 12, just before it. It says, I have learned, in whatever situation I am, to be content.

[9 : 22] 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.

If you go to Waterstones, and consult the self-help section, I admit, I haven't checked recently, but I'm pretty sure, I'll be right. There's probably, not a book there, called, How to Get Poor, is there? And even among those, that would talk about, getting rich, there's probably none there, but how to be rich, how to handle being rich, and especially none, to say, how to handle being rich, or for the glory of God.

But that is the secret, that we know, that is all we can figure out, based on God's gracious, merciful provision, and providence, and ruling of all things, is that, that according to those riches, we can live anywhere, we can live in any situation, wealth, or poverty.

Now these few weeks, I've had to spend some time, looking at websites, for apartments, in Paris, to try and see, what I can try and find, when I get there. And we all have a list of criteria, don't we, of where we are willing, to live, where we want to live.

[10 : 45] But the Christian mindset, whether or not, we want to choose, a particular place to live, is that we could live anywhere. We could live in any situation. We're completely freed up, not to worry about, our circumstances, but to know that we could live, in any of these circumstances.

All our needs, will be supplied, if God is in control, and that control, is being guided by God's, by his riches, in glory in Christ Jesus. All our needs, will be supplied.

Not everything you want, but everything you need, everything that God knows, is good for you, you will get. All of which also means, to look at the beginning, of the chapter, that if God is guiding, all of that, and everything I need, I already have, there's no real reason, for me to fall out, with my brothers and sisters, is there.

If God is completely, in control, and I have everything I need, why would I fall out, with a brother or sister? There's no real reason, to hold a grudge. We don't know, what the disagreement was, between these two women, in the church, Iodia and Syntyche.

These two were very keen, active women, in the church. And you see, there's no real reason, for them to be disagreeing. He's not saying, let's all agree, that Iodia is right.

[12 : 11] Or let's all agree, that Syntyche was right. He's saying, just agree, in the Lord. Agree that you are one, in him. And he gets, people to help, he gets this, this true companion.

It's a strange word, so you'll see, in the footnote, loyal Syzygous, that might have been, his name. It's unlikely, because, we can't find records, of anyone else, called that, but it's possible.

It might be, the true yoke fellow, or companion. companion, it's the real colleague, someone who has labored, side by side with him. He's asking, for this person, to help him, to get them, to agree. Like, but in verse 4, we've got, even more, reasons, to rejoice, in the Lord. If God is in control, of our life, we have, all the more reason, to rejoice, in the Lord.

And we rejoice, in such a way, that our reasonableness, or, we could call it, gentleness, or intolerance, or patience, is seen, to all people. The Lord is near, even things, that are problematic, are not really, ultimately, a problem.

[13 : 19] So, rejoice, and be, reasonable, be patient, with the world around you, with the people, next to you. God is in control, you have every reason, to be patient.

It also means, that you've got, nothing to be anxious about. No reason, to be anxious about anything. If you can take, all your problems, and needs, to the Lord, who is in control, of everything, and is governing, all for, according to his riches, in glory, in Christ.

Then we can ask him, for anything. And we can thank him, for all things. And there's no need, to worry about it. If he is really near, if he's really there, if he's really in control, and really controlling, things according, to his riches, in glory, in Christ Jesus, there is no need, to be anxious.

So don't be anxious, about anything. He says, in verse 6, but in everything, by prayer, and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request, be made known to God.

So rather than being anxious, we can commit, all these concerns, to the Lord, and know this peace, that passes, understanding, in verse 7. And it's a peace, that protects us, it's a peace, that guards, our hearts and minds, as we seek, to stand firm.

[14 : 41] So having figured out, that we can handle, any situation, we can live, with any circumstance, what we do, that's our final stop, what we do.

Well at the beginning, since that we can live, in any circumstance, let's stand firm, as he orders, and to stand in unity, stand together. That is his desire, all throughout, is to stand firm, together.

Not stand firm, with the people, you would like to be Christians, but stand firm, with the people, sat next to you. Not stand firm, with some abstract Christians, but literally, the people sat next to you, right now, as I'm looking at you, stand firm, together.

And stand firm, in the Lord, agreeing in the Lord. Verse 3, Paul is really stressing, their unity, and fellowship, and calling them back, to think about that.

As he asks this, this friend, this loyal companion, he stresses, kind of, how it's all being done, together. In English, you've got, words that begin with, co, or com, or con, kind of show, that it's all

being done, together, and there's a Greek equivalent, of that, and it's four times, just in that one verse.

[15:56] And you can kind of see, a little bit, companion, that it's in that word. The word help, has it there, to kind of help together, to lay the side by side, the fellow workers, that they're all together, they're all in this, together.

together. It means that we, if we can be united, we should be united. We can handle, being in this situation, united.

And it means, we can trust God, for all things, trust him, to supply all our needs. Trust him, pray to him. If we feel anxious, we can turn to him, we can commit, these anxieties, to him.

Turn to prayer. And it means, we'll have a whole host, of good things, to think about, instead of worrying, in verse 8, in that wonderful, that famous verse. Rather than being anxious, we've got a whole host, of things to think about, instead.

Can you think of any, true things? Can you think of any, honourable things? Can you think of any, just or righteous things? Pure things? Lovely things?

[17:03] Commendable things? Can you see any, excellence anywhere? Do you see anything, worthy of praise? Think about those things. And then obey God, so that the peace of God, will be with you.

One of my professors, at seminary, wrote a book, called Mindscape. It's a great little book, for what, and he says, it's for people who worry, and it's for anyone. And he helps us think, about the landscape, of our minds, or the mindscape, is the word he calls it.

And turn to this, list of good things, that are a real defence, against any worries, we might have. And it's, a call for us, to go to prayer, and meditate, on these good things, it's all based on these verses.

So I recommend that book, Mindscape, by Timothy Whitmer. It's really worth reading. And then later in the chapter, it means, we can be really generous, as the Philippians, had been towards Paul.

If God is supplying, all their needs, then we can look out, for those who, who might have needs, and be the means, by which God supplies needs. They had made it, a real priority, to partner with Paul, in the gospel.

[18:17] Now when, when lots of other churches, hadn't, they were, they were the first ones, and sometimes the only ones, to partner with him, in giving and receiving, as you see, from verse 16.

He's pointing out, just how helpful they were, as they trusted in God, as they trusted in his providence. They realised, how it freed them up, to be generous, to support the work, of the gospel. And then it, it freed them up, and it can free us up, to do even just the small things. Just caring for one another. Greeting each other. Now that bit at the end, final greetings.

And that's in the Bible. That is God's word. And that is in this chapter. It fits within, the whole range of things, that follow, from our trust in God. Greet every saint, in Christ Jesus.

The brothers who are with me, greet you. All the saints greet you. Especially those, of Jesus' households. That would have been, the fruit of several conversations, surely, with lots of different brothers. Saying, what are you writing now?

[19:19] I'm writing to the Philippians. Do, do give them my regards. Do, do give them my greetings. I do love that church. I do love how they're supporting you. Do give them my greetings. Thinking of one another.

Caring for one another. All fruit of resting, on God's gracious provision. It's all part of what we get, when we rest in God.

Showing love, and care for one another. Growing in love together. Proving this excellent thing, as we enjoy his great peace. That, that is the result of all this.

The, the God of peace will be with you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, be with your spirit. And another result, verse 20, glory to God. He, close it with that doxology, before coming to the greetings.

So, the result of all this, resting on God's providence, is peace, and grace, to us, and glory to God. And that is possible, in any situation.

[20:22] You have never faced, a situation, where you cannot, glorify God. And where you will not have, peace and grace, from God. There is no circumstance, that you will ever face, where your needs, will not be met, by God.

You will have his peace. You will have grace, from him. You will have your needs, supplied. And he will be glorified. Let's pray together.