

THE FINAL FOUR

Philippians 4

Saul was surely voted “most likely to succeed.” Born to Jewish parents who were Roman citizens, he had “the right stuff.” He studied law under the Alan Dershowitz of his day, sat on Jerusalem’s high court and as a sincere, passionate, orthodox Jew, persecuted Christ’s first followers. Later, as Paul, Christ’s advance man, he rolled out the Gospel of the Grace of God to the Gentile world.

In *circa* A.D. 61, under house arrest in Rome, Paul writes to the church he’d founded in Philippi in ancient Greece. Even in chains, his letter exudes joy and thankfulness! **Let’s read Philippians 4:1-23.**

“Joy To The Girls”
Philippians 4:1-5

Despite his sufferings, Paul lived “the abundant life” Christ promises (John 10:10). His joy was constant and contagious. Watch how he addresses two early converts who’d gotten into a kerfuffle. His counsel? “Focus on what you spiritual sisters share in Christ.” They had helped Paul spread the Gospel which resolves the universal search for “**What must I do to be saved?**” Paul’s answer: “**Place your trust in Christ**” (Ephesians 4:31-32, p. 1064).

Forgiveness is costly. Jesus gave His perfect life, the only sacrifice which God accepts as payment for your sins and mine (**2 Corinthians 5:17-21**).

DISCUSS: Describe a ruptured relationship which only God could mend?

“No Worries”
Philippians 4:6-7

After Paul was taken to heaven to meet the risen Christ, imagine the cauldron of emotion when he described being with his Lord, receiving from Him the “secret” he was to preach and be beheaded for (**2 Corinthians 12:1-10**). How would you feel if you could have a private coffee with Jesus (**Luke 12:22-31**)!

The German word for worry is our word, *choke*. For *anxiety*, Paul’s Greek here means to “draw in opposite directions.” It includes the Greek for “mind” or “temple” where God resided in Old Testament times. Summing up, **to be anxious is to be torn in opposite directions, strangled with stress in mind, emotions and will.**

65% of us take anti-depressants daily. Playing a psychiatrist, comic Bob Newhart has the same advice for every patient. He yells, “STOP IT!” Paul chimes in, “Stop worrying and being anxious about even one thing.” Peter adds (**1 Peter 5:5-7**). 1,000 years earlier David wrote **Psalms 37:1-8**.

Worry drains hope, saps energy, wastes time and blurts out, "I don't trust You, God." Only His adopted kids have the literal option to ...(*trumpets blare!!*)! ...

WORRY ABOUT NOTHING - ing – ing - ing!

1. Tell God everything. Pour out your soul to Him (**Proverbs 3:5-6**).
2. Give Him thanks for everything (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). He guarantees that all that touches you is for your ultimate good (**Romans 8:28**).
3. God will guard your thoughts and emotions (**Psalms 118:5-9; Isaiah 26:3-4**). Nothing can sabotage His plans for you, so relax in the peace **OF** God which is that state of mind which, had not sin entered Eden, would have prevailed throughout the world for all to enjoy. Peace **WITH** God is ours when we surrender to Him, assured that our relationship with Him is permanently secure (**John 14:27-31; Romans 5:1-5, 8:1**).

DISCUSS: How does worry show up in your experience?

"Whaddya Think?"
Philippians 4:8-9

Neuroscientists ballpark that we have 70,000 thoughts a day. What we say and do reveals who we really are (**Proverbs 9:7-12**).

John Bunyan, we're told, wrote this on the flyleaf of His Bible: "Either this Book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this Book." What can we plant in our minds that will produce thoughts that result in God-honoring words and actions?

DISCUSS: Your mind is a supercomputer. What content is it routinely processing when it's in its default mode? What's on its screensaver?

"Had Enough?"
Philippians 4:10-13

Contentment is acquired. It's being satisfied enough to not be disturbed. It's ours when we let God, not feelings, decide what satisfies. With God as his Source, Joseph rose to rule Egypt, equipped for both pit and pinnacle. You can face anything, enabled and comforted by God's steadying presence.

DISCUSS: How do you balance ambition with contentment?

"Somethin's Gotta Give"
Philippians 4:14-23

God loves givers; giving is who He is. "For God so loved the world that He GAVE ... " God supplies your essentials including your #1 need – forgiveness! Recalling how Jesus fed a crowd from a lunchbox, Jonathan Cahn writes, "*Don't look at how little you have ... lift it up to the Lord and give thanks for it. And the blessings you have will multiply if not in the world, then in your heart*" (2 Corinthians 9:7-15).

DISCUSS: What and how have you learned about generosity?

"You've Got A Friend"

Joseph Scriven was born in Ireland in 1820. At 25 he emigrated to Canada after a dust-up with his parents. His first fiancée drowned. His second fell ill and died. Depression dogged him to the end; he also drowned. At 35 he sent this poem to his mother back in Ireland. It has reminded millions of Jesus' heart for the hurting.

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!
Oh, what peace we often forfeit, oh, what needless pain we bear
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged. Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy-laden, cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge. Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In His arms He'll take and shield thee. Thou wilt find a solace there.

Blessed Savior, Thou hast promised Thou wilt all our burdens bear.
May we ever, Lord, be bringing all to Thee in earnest prayer.
Soon in glory bright, unclouded, there will be no need for prayer.
Rapture, praise and endless worship will be our sweet portion there.

What does God want to hear from you today?

"For the sake of Christ, then, **I am content** with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12:10, Good News Bible)

“So **I am well pleased** with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, and with difficulties, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak [in human strength], then I am strong [truly able, truly powerful, truly drawing from God’s strength].” (2 Corinthians 12:10, Amplified Bible)

“That’s why **I take pleasure** in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:10, New Living Translation)

“The literal translation of this verse gives a startling emphasis to it, and makes it speak for itself with a force that we have probably never realized. Here it is: ‘Therefore, I take pleasure in being without strength, in insults, in being pinched, in being chased about, in being cooped up in a corner for Christ’s sake; for when I am without strength, then am I dynamite.’ Here is the secret of Divine all-sufficiency, to come to the end of everything in ourselves and in our circumstances. When we reach this place, we will stop asking for sympathy because of our hard situation or bad treatment, for we will recognize these things as the very conditions of our blessing, and we will turn from them to God and find in them a claim upon Him.” ~A. B. Simpson, a 19th century Canadian minister and founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance

His Deal

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