

Philippians 4:1-3

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everybody. If you would turn your Bibles to Philippians chapter 4.! We're going to be in Philippians 4 verses 1-3 today.

I'm so excited to be able to come before you this morning to be able to preach from God's Word and to see what He has for us this morning. Um, it's been amazing in going through the book of Philippians. Philippians is probably one of my favorite books in the Bible.

Uh, just because of how practical it is and how it directs our hearts and minds in worship to God and enjoying our relationship with Him. And as I read through the book of Philippians, um, I don't know about you, but there's sometimes to where it's like there's certain verses that I'm really excited to get to.

And so, like, you're reading, you just kind of, like, bypass over a few verses to get to the ones that you really like. And, and for me, like, it's the passage that we're preaching through today is kind of one of those verses where it's like, I know what's coming up.

I'm really excited to get there. And so it's like, okay, yeah, Paul, like, I get this, but, like, you're about to say something really phenomenal, you know? And so, but I want this morning for us to be able to take these few verses, like, Paul didn't just write this as filler words.

[1 : 13] Like, he has a message for us in it. So I want us to take a few moments here today and really ponder and consider what Paul has for us in this passage that we might be able to learn, um, how to better follow Jesus in it.

So, um, to get some context, I want us to read a few verses beforehand of what, uh, Nathan preached last week, just so we can get our mindset on what Paul is arguing for here.

So we're going to back it up to Philippians three, um, starting in verse 17. And Paul says here, he says, brothers join in imitating me and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

For many of whom I have often told you and now tell you, even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction. Their God is their belly and they glory in their shame with mindset on earthly things.

But our citizenship is in heaven and from it, we await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

[2 : 22] Now our text for this morning is therefore my brothers whom I love and long for my joy and crown stand firm. Thus in the Lord, my beloved, I entreat you, O dia, and I entreat syndic to agree in the Lord.

Yes. I ask you also true 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.

Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, thank you so much for your word. Thank you that we have it today, that it was written thousands of years ago, but yet it is still just as practical for us today as it was for its original audience.

And Father, I pray that as we desire to study it today, that we would be right and accurate in going through the text and that we would come to it with a heart of desiring to know you through it. And I pray that everything done would be in worship to you.

And we expect you to work in this. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. So as we look through this text, we see how Paul is building this argument as Nathan preached last week on verse 17, where he says, Brothers, join in imitating me and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

[3 : 32] And then he gives us two different groups of people. He addresses the first group of people and saying that these people were, it looked like they were following after Christ.

But as soon as things came into their lives or, or it didn't become necessarily convenient for them to follow after him, they left the faith. And Paul urges these people and he says, it even writes it with tears, you know, of how much compassion and love he has for them of desiring that they follow after Christ.

But then he contrasts it with those who are in this church and the Philippian church and showing how much love he has for them. And then the encouragement that he gives them, he says, but our citizenship is in heaven.

And from it, we await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

And the amazing thing about it is as he writes this encouraging and hopeful word, like if you remember, Paul in writing this book is writing it from prison.

[4 : 41] You know, he is actively suffering for the cause of Christ. And he looks at those who in the face of suffering or just in the face of uncomfotability have left Christ.

And to those who might not necessarily be suffering yet, but will probably end up be suffering, encouraging them in this truth of knowing that, hey, it is worth it for the cause of Christ.

Like one day we will be with him for eternity. And so he's setting everything up with this encouraging word and bringing us back to, you know, what is the purpose of everything that we are doing here in this world?

Well, as Jordan mentioned in his text that he read this morning, you know, that if Christ were not raised, we are of all people most to be pitied.

And what we do in this life is useless and worthless. Like he's building on that argument and saying, hey, Christ is who he said he is and he's worthy to be followed after no matter what may come along your way.

[5 : 39] And so then in starting in chapter four, he kind of concludes this idea and he says, therefore, my brothers whom I love and long for my joy and crown stand firm.

Thus in the Lord, my beloved. So I want to take a few moments here and kind of break down a little bit of what Paul is saying in this verse, because it's filled with a lot of amazing truth. And so first off, he addresses these Christians as his brothers in Christ.

And, you know, this is something that I have a tendency to just kind of like go over, you know, because I grew up in the church. I'm used to, you know, like everybody would greet like, you know, it's like, oh, hey, brother John, you know, hey, brother Lewis, you know.

And we were just kind of like used to calling each other brothers and sisters in Christ. And sometimes we take that a little bit for granted. I know I take that a little bit for granted, but just how amazing it is to be able to have this community together in Christ.

You know, as I look out across this room, I see a lot of people with probably a lot of different backgrounds, a lot of different stories and a lot of different ideas and dreams.

[6 : 44] But the thing that unites all of us together, hopefully here in this room, is that we are united together in Christ, in the family of God. And how amazing that is just to think through and ponder and consider.

And it's really something that Paul is going to be addressing here later on in these verses and really building upon. And so we see how Paul and his expression of love towards the church greets everybody with this familial love with one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

And how that is what unifies us and brings us together. Secondly, we see that he has a yearning love for these brothers and sisters in Christ.

He says, therefore, my brothers whom I love and long for. You know, like I said earlier, Paul is writing this from prison. He's thinking back to this church that he has worked in and known and seen these people who are once not followers of Jesus turn to Christ, becoming followers of Jesus.

And just seeing how God is working in their lives and just being excited in that work that God is doing in them. And he says here that in the very first part that they're his brothers.

[7 : 56] They are those whom he loves and longs for. And as I was just thinking through that in my own life, like, man, isn't it amazing? You know, like I said, that we have this body of Christ, but that we also, you know, just love and long to be with one another.

Like, I don't know about for you guys, but for me, when we had everything going on last year with the pandemic, like that was literally probably the thing that I missed the most. Was not being able to gather together like this as the body of Christ, to be with one another and to worship Christ together as one body.

And and as I think back, I think, man, that's honestly one of the things that transformed most for me when I wasn't a follower of Jesus in comparison to when I started following after Jesus.

Is that when I went to church as a kid, you know, my parents forced me to go like Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night, like literally every time the church was open. And and I just wasn't a fan of it.

You know, like I just didn't like going to church. It made me uncomfortable being around people who are following after God when I knew that I wasn't. And how radically transformed it was when Christ saved me, you know, and he gave me a heart to follow after Christ.

[9 : 09] How amazing that transformation was in my relation to the church to where, like, I hated going to church beforehand. But now I loved and longed for it because I wanted to be together with people who are following after Christ and being encouraged by being a part of the body of Christ.

And just seeing how God was working in their lives and their encouragement for me, for what Christ was doing in me. And so we see we see Paul having the same kind of love towards the Philippian church of of just loving and longing to be with them once again, worshipping Christ together.

Thirdly, we see that Paul views them as his rewarding love. He says an interesting phrase here. He says my joy and my crown.

And that kind of like caused me to can like think back and consider like what exactly is Paul saying here? You know, because if you're if you're kind of tracking with a lot of things that he says through the New Testament, you know, he he talks about how Christ should be his joy.

Right. Like that's what he talked about a lot, like kind of in the beginning of this book of pursuing after Christ, Christ being the fullness of joy and everything else that he had in life. He counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

[10 : 26] And so how is Paul drawing that connection with what we talked about a few weeks ago and now connecting it to the followers of Jesus being his joy and crown?

Like how does he work those two together? And so as I began doing some reading and studying on and just seeing what other pastors and commentators had to say, it was really cool just to see how Paul in this argument is just connecting how much united in Christ they are together with the body of Christ.

Like he's not just necessarily looking at these people as his joy and crown of being like, man, you know, like as I preach, you know, I hope Daryl really likes this message.

You know, that would be my joy and crown, you know, if he affirms it when we talk about it later.

Like Paul's not doing that. What Paul is doing is these people are his joy and crown because he sees his mission in life as being to make Jesus great in his life and to try to encourage other people to do the same.

And so when he sees these Philippian believers who have made Christ their sole satisfaction, the one that they are going to trust in as persecution comes to their church or as they suffer for the cause of Christ and seeing them stand firm in that, that's his joy and crown.

[11 : 45] Like that's his reward and seeing like, man, I have preached this message to you and I see God working in your life where it has made it a reality in your life.

And I'm seeing you endure for the cause of Christ as I have desire to see that in you. And that is my joy and my crown and how important it is for us to be able to have that mentality and mindset.

You know, like how much have I, how much of us, like in our desires to be friends with people and even in our church, like encourage people in that way?

Like, am I excited when I see God working in someone's life, you know, transforming them and seeing how they are growing in Christ and just celebrating that together?

You know, like that is something that is absolutely amazing. It's a miraculous work as, as God takes us from being people who are not followers of Christ, transforming us to having a heart for Christ and then making us more and more like Christ until the day when we finally get to be in his presence.

[12 : 51] And how Paul, in his love for these people, is saying like his joy and crown is seeing how they are becoming like Jesus. And that's his mission and mindset for what he has in his ministry and how much that should be our mission and mindset as well.

And so we see here in the very end of the verse, he says, Stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. And so we see Paul's committed love that he has for these believers.

Paul calls on these believers to stand firm for Christ. You know, you remember, like in these last few verses, he gives this dichotomy of two different people, one who like it looked like they were following after Christ and then they left.

And then those who are now following after Christ and have this hope of Christ's return. And so he's saying, man, stand firm in this. The thing that you know to be true, the thing that you have seen God work and you stand firm in it, like it is worth it, it is worth it to stand for Christ in the midst of a generation that will not be standing for Christ, that will persecute you for your faith.

And how important that is for us as well to stand firm in what we know to be true. And that is something that is very hard sometimes, especially in a community or in a society that really rejects that message a lot.

[14:17] Like it, I don't think it's ever been easy to follow after Christ in any society or any time in history. But man, like it is, it is honestly really hard sometimes to stand up when you are in a community of working with people who are not followers of Jesus or just in a society that's completely against his word and message of how important it is for us to stand firm in what we know.

Like to not be swayed by the opinions of other people, but to know what Christ has said in his word and to stand firm and to have that restful assurance and foundation in it.

And that's what Paul then leads to on this very last phrase. He says, stand firm thus in the Lord.

And this phrase in the Lord is going to show up multiple times in our passage and really shows up a lot in the book of Philippians as well.

So Paul is not saying here, stand firm in whatever you feel to be right or whatever you have like a passion and desire for, and just to plant yourself there, but he roots it and he grounds it and standing firm in the Lord.

And this is the foundation that he's going to work through this whole passage of rooting us back to what really is, number one, the unifying factor of us.

[15:35] And number two, what's the most important thing in our lives? It's our relationship with Christ and what Christ has said. And so he points us, he roots us back to these things and he celebrates that work that he sees in these believers.

Now, as we go into verse two, we see him addressing an issue in the church where this might not necessarily be happening. So he says in verse two, he says, I entreat you, Odea, and I entreat Sendeke to agree in the Lord.

And so this is a very short verse, and I don't know about you, but I like to be inquisitive. You know, I'm like, man, I wonder what they're disagreeing about, you know, like I want to know what other people's problems are.

And so we see how Paul doesn't do that. Paul just leaves it very generic and blank and just says, I entreat you, Odea, and I entreat Sendeke to agree in the Lord.

And so we don't necessarily know what the issue was. We don't know what they might have been disagreeing about, what their issue may be with each other was. But we know that Paul here in this letter is addressing it to them for them to be able to agree together in the Lord.

[16:51] And I think the reason why he leaves this kind of vague and why the Holy Spirit inspired him to do so is so that when we as followers of Jesus read this passage, you know, we can really just take it into our circumstance in our environment.

You know, like if he had if he had talked about the issue that they were disagreeing with, you know, we might be able to put up and say, well, my issue is like way more important than this little trivial issue, you know, that that you, Odea and Sendeke were disagreeing with.

Or maybe like we might put it a little bit below. But we see how he leaves it generic and open so that, you know, we can see how important it is no matter what our disagreements or issues are with one another as we desire to come together to follow after Jesus, how important it is for us to be unified.

And I loved the psalm that Nathan read this morning in preparation for for the service today and how it just begins with how good and how pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity.

And and like I said, you know, this unity is not just built up in and just manufactured things. You know, I love like as I as I went and looked at this verse, sometimes I like to put myself a little bit into it to think like, OK, if I were Paul addressing this to the Philippian church, like how would I try to

correct this issue?

[18 : 19] You know, like I want to be a pastor one day. So I want to kind of think in that mindset of like, OK, I kind of want to be like Paul, right? Because Paul was a really good follower of Jesus. And so I want to be able to think in his mindset of how he how he helps the church follow after Christ.

And as I was thinking through, I was like, OK, how would I solve an issue or a conflict? And so, you know, when we have issues or conflicts together, the reason why we have issues and conflicts with each other is because, number one, party A thinks that they're right and that they are thinking through things in the best way.

And then party B thinks that they are right and that they're thinking through things in the best way. And so when they bicker back and forth, you know, one side is trying to show how they're more right.

The other side is trying to show how they're more right. And so then in my mindset as a third party, I'm like, OK, how about I just like work out a compromise? Right. Like you take some a party A, you take some a party B and work it out together, you know, and make this work.

But if you look at the text, that's not necessarily how Paul addresses this issue. He doesn't say you like you need to compromise here with syndicate and syndicate. You need to compromise here and work with you.

[19 : 30] Odia. What he does is he unifies it back to the foundation. He says, I entreat you, Odia, and I entreat syndicate to agree in the Lord. And he makes the foundation Christ.

He says, like, whatever issue most likely this was, like in comparison to everything else that he has mentioned in these verses of just showing the intensity of like how important it is to follow after Christ.

And you're disagreeing here. Like, remember what the point is. Remember what the foundation is for our life. The foundation is in Christ.

And that's where we are unified. And that's where we need to go back to. And it just caused me to just think back and consider, like, man, how many times do I take just like really small issues and make really big issues out of them?

But then when you look at the overall church and the things that God is working, you know, in his people, like how how trivial a lot of my things are that I find like, oh, I'm unified with this person, you know, because he believes, you know, in this way.

[20 : 40] And I'm not trying to detract from doctrine and saying this, you know, like a couple of weeks ago, Nathan, I think, did a really great job and kind of talking through a really fancy term called theological triage.

And basically what that is, is like showing how, you know, there's different like teachings and things that we believe that have differing levels of importance. So I don't think Paul in this is saying like, hey, I don't care, you know, what you think about the Trinity.

I don't care about what you think about, you know, if Jesus is the son of God. Like, no, he's he's rooting it and grounding it in the things that are ultimately important. Like we are to agree in the Lord, like in in what Christ has said, rooted and grounded in it.

But there's a lot of times where I think a lot of divisions and issues that arise in churches aren't because of these intense doctrines that we need to stand for.

But a lot of times are just really trivial and things that honestly don't really matter too much in comparison to eternity and in comparison to the thing that we have been called for and making Christ great in our lives and showing the love that he has for us in the body of Christ.

[21 : 52] And so that's why I love how Paul in his addressing this issue really brings it back to the Lord in this like, hey, whatever this issue is, it's not that important.

Like agree in the Lord together. And remember, this is our focus. This is our drive. This is what we're trying to accomplish as a church. Like the mission of the church is to make Jesus great in the community and in the people around us and to encourage one another in building up our faith and following after Christ.

And when we lose focus of that, when we start to enter into these different issues and things like that, that honestly don't really have a lot to do with eternity and the mission, that's when a lot of divisions and issues arise and come about.

And we need to remind ourselves that the thing that unifies us, the thing that brings us all together in this building is the fact that we are in Christ and how amazing of a truth that is and how we need

to remember and remind ourselves of that great truth.

And so we see here how Paul calls them into unity and how Paul gives them this mission and he uses the whole church in this as well.

[23 : 08] Like if you look at verse three, he says, yes, I ask you also true 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.

And so we see here how this is not just an issue that you already and syndicate just work out together. He's calling the whole church to be a part of it. He first addresses this person who he calls as his true companion.

And so, like I said, I'm kind of inquisitive. So I'm like, oh, I wonder who the true companion is. And and, you know, Paul doesn't actually say it. So we don't really know. But but but some people believe that it might have been Luke who followed along with Paul.

There's a few other thoughts out there, but nothing really conclusive. But really, that's not the main issue of the of the text and of the verse. The main thing is he is calling these people who are a part of the church to come alongside these women and to help them to agree in the Lord, to be unified together in faith.

And and that is so amazing. Like as we follow after Christ, it's not a solo mission. You know, like all the time when you see Paul on his missionary journeys or just together in the church, like he's never like solo Paul.

[24 : 32] Like he is always together with people. He is always working with the body of Christ to accomplish the work and the mission. And I think sometimes in American culture, we have a very like individualistic mindset.

You know, I know I certainly struggle with an individual mindset of like, man, I can just figure this out on my own. You know, like I can I can work out this problem. I can I can do this thing on my own. I don't need the help of other people.

But God has called us together as the body of Christ to help us in this cause of making us more like Christ. And so we see that Paul resorts to the body of Christ here.

He says, yes, I ask you, true companion, help these women who have labored side by side with me in the gospel. And I love the respect here that Paul has for for these women who disagree.

He's not kind of like casting them off and saying like, man, grow up. You know, like, why are you dealing with this issue? Like, Paul has some serious respect for them. Like in the word that he used that they have labored side by side is it's kind of like a military term with it that they have like strived together with Paul in this in this battle of of making Jesus great.

[25 : 50] And in sharing the gospel with people. And so he has a tremendous amount of respect for them. And just like all of us, you know, we all tend to have things, you know, that we need some correction with and need to be refocused and reminding ourselves of what our mission is.

I think Paul is like kind of doing that here in this letter, too. He's like he corrects them, but he also reminds them like, hey, look at all that we have accomplished together when you were thinking right.

Like when you were focused on the gospel, all the things that God worked in you and and the missions that we were able to accomplish together in Christ and just kind of encouraging that and saying, hey, I know God's work in you and causing you to do this and to reorient yourselves and refocus yourselves back onto this.

And so then he says he also includes another follower of Jesus named Clement. And then he says the rest of my fellow workers. And so really just putting together the whole church and saying being unified and this mission together.

And then when you see people who are kind of straying off on this mission, get them back focused, like get them back on track of making Jesus great. And then he concludes this passage with an amazing foundation.

[27 : 08] He says whose names are in the book of life. And as I as I read through the Bible, I don't know about you, but for me, like sometimes I see people.

I'm like, man, wouldn't it be cool? Like if I were included in the Bible, like if I were alive like 2000 years ago, you know, and I was living in Israel and I had an encounter with Jesus.

And and one of the New Testament writers like put me in a book like how amazing would that be? You know, like I think about in the Gospels, if you remember when right before Jesus dies and Mary

Magdalene comes to him and pours out the oil and washes his feet with her hair. And Jesus says the most amazing thing in the world. He says that people will be talking about this forever for the rest of eternity. Like what an amazing prophetic word and how amazing is that we still do like we still talk about her to this day for this work that she did for Christ. And I think, man, like wouldn't that be cool? Like if I were in that book and I had like, you know, a moment in that. But even better than that, even better than that is that my name is in the book. [28 : 20] Of life. And if you are a follower of Jesus, your name is in the book of life. And this is the best book to be a part of. Like this is the book that contains every single name of everybody who is a follower of Jesus.

And when we stand before God at the end of eternity and as our names are read from the book of life, it means that our sins have been forgiven. It means that Christ has a tone for us and that we have a relationship with God and that we can stand before him, not based on our own merit and not based on things that I can say, hey, God, look, I did this for you.

I did this for you. I deserve to be here. Like there is nothing that I can stand on and saying that I deserve to be with God for eternity. The only thing that I can rest in and have assurance in is what Christ has done for me.

And the only thing that you can have assurance in is what Christ has done for you. And if you believe that, if you are depending on Christ's work in your life and your faith in Christ for your salvation, your relationship with God, your name is written in the greatest book of all time in the book of life.

And that is what Paul really concludes this message here in this in this paragraph that we have studied, starting in verse 17 of telling these people to join in imitating after him as he follows after Christ.

[29 : 49] And we see his love for the church and how we are to intent or are imitate that as well and how the ultimate foundation is that we are unified and grounded together in Christ.

And that is confirmed by being written in the book of life. And that's where he and that's where he draws his line to and says, hey, like those people who you might have little disagreements.

Remember, their names are in the book of life. Like they have been saved. They have been redeemed. And they have been forgiven by me and made righteous by my righteousness.

And to remind ourselves of that and to remind ourselves of the focus of what is this all about? Like, why do we gather together as the body of Christ? Why do we follow after Christ? It's because of his transformation in our lives of making us like himself and then encouraging others in our journey of following after Christ to continue to strive towards that, to stand firm in Christ.

And to be unified and grounded in what Christ has done in our lives. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Amen.