

Paul's Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 14

Philippians 4:1-4
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Bruce: Good morning men. How you be? You be okay?

Men: How are you?

Bruce: I'll let you know. [laughter]

Well, let's pray and ask the Lord to go before us. Gracious heavenly Father we thank you. We praise you for the wonderful news about Don and the ministry to Croatia. We pray that you will be with them take care of them safely, provide for them, their needs for protection and may the gospel be proclaimed with great clarity and power. Father, we just pray that you'd open our eyes once again as we study the book of Philippians. Open our eyes that we might behold you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Men: Amen

Bruce: Let's turn to Philippians 4:1-4. Paul now comes to the conclusion in his letter to the church of Philippi, he begins with the words: *"Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord my beloved. I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche 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. Rejoice in the Lord always, again I will say, rejoice."* This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: Amen. One of the things that I discovered about the apostle Paul, just on my own observation as I have been teaching over these last several months, is that Paul is quite an enigma. He's got many different personalities. This is just a quick overview of this. In chapter 1 you see the trusting Paul, the trusting Paul. He trusts in the promises of God because he writes from prison, and said, even while I'm in prison God is using this for the furtherance of the gospel. So the very first chapter you see the trusting Paul. He's trusting in God's providence, not complaining, managing what he's been given and trusting the providence of God. Chapter 2 we see the humble Paul, the humble Paul using Christ as an example as modeled by Jesus, the necessity to be humble. He says we need to follow Christ to be humble as he was. He gives an illustration of the life of Christ. Then Paul talks about his own humility and how he needed to become humble. Chapter 2 we see the humble Paul. Chapter 3 I see the protective Paul, the protective Paul warning against false doctrine. Remember that section in chapter 3 he referred to them as dogs. How serious he was, almost the sense of being very, very protective of the flock of Philippi. False teachers were creeping into the congregation, and so he puts on his hat as a protector. So we see the trusting Paul, the humble Paul, and the protective Paul.

Chapter 4. We'll see the pastoral Paul, the pastoral Paul. Now Paul comes to the final chapter of his letter to the church Philippi and he urges the Philippian believers to come to a new level of living. He wants to take them to a new level of living. He does this by illustrating his own affection for them. Notice the word, therefore. In chap 4 verse 1 that indicates, as you know, that what He is going to say now is based upon what became beforehand, and that was the

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danger for those who wanted all Christians to become Jews and his concern for the worldly-minded people of the church. Now he's going to give some advice. He's going to tell us what to do to take and go to the next level of our maturation in Christ. I want you to notice how very tactful he is, and how very pastoral he is in addressing this church at Philippi. As he affirms his intimacy for them before he gives them instruction. It's a pretty good illustration for us. He affirms his intimacy for them, his love for them, before he gives them instructions. Not a bad principle in counseling, affirmation before instruction. That's what you see in Paul's life. That's where you see the pastoral side of Paul. Let's see his pastor's heart in verse 1. He addresses the people at Philippi, the brothers and sisters as his brothers and sisters. He first speaks to the family bond that they have because of the blood of Christ. They are blood brothers, he reminds them. That's a good technique to re-establish the relationship with the person before you begin to counsel them. He affirms the fact that we are one in Christ. Our union in Christ is what keeps us together. The blood of Christ is what cleanses us. The blood of Christ makes us blood brothers and so he affirms that. Notice Philippians 1:7, *"It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel."* And then go to Philippians 1:5 *"because of your partnership in the gospel from the very first day until now."* First thing that Paul does, he reaffirms his intimate care for them as brothers and sisters. He reminds them of the union they have in the body of Christ. The reason they are blood brothers is because they have union in Christ. And so in chapter 3, he warned them against those who were enemies of the gospel. You remember that he referred to them as dogs. Now he affirms that their names are written in the lamb's book of life.

Second thing, he does not only mention that you are blood brothers but your names are written in the book of life. As I look at this situation here with Paul, and his writing, these expressions of intimate relationships with his brothers and sisters, I think I pick up there a sense of loyalty. There's a sense of loyalty that Paul has to his brothers and sisters and that's why he uses the word brother, of course, that would include sisters too. He reminds them because of union with Christ and our intimate relationship. Because of the blood of Christ, there is one bond of inherent loyalty that must be demonstrated within the family of God. I think we need to be somewhat cautious in using the term brother or sister in Christ. Sometimes we flippantly use that so easily. We say she's a sister in Christ or a brother in Christ and that may be true. I'm not knocking it. All I'm saying, is that you when you use that term, inherent with it comes a sense of loyalty to that person, and Paul is demonstrating that. There's a sense of loyalty to this relationship that he is reminding them that comes with that, my brothers and sisters, because that comes with our union with Christ. I have a loyalty you and you have a loyalty to me. I need to take care of you and you need to take care of me. There is a sense of building loyalty, because of our union with Christ. Sometimes we just flippantly use the term, he's a brother or she's a sister in Christ. We don't understand the fact that there's a sense of loyalty that goes along with that, I think. We need to be somewhat careful. When I was with Fellowship of Christian Athletes anyone who genuflected was a Christian. Somebody scores a touchdown, oh, they are a Christian and so we refer to them as brothers in Christ. There's no sense of loyalty there. There's no sense of loyalty and so I just think we need to be cautious in how we use the phrase. When you use the term brother in Christ, remember this, there is a sense of loyalty back and forth because of your

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union with Christ. That loyalty is based in defined biblical terms. Through the biblical terms, this is my understanding of loyalty as it relates to our union in Christ and brothers and sisters together. It's a loyalty based on a common deep seated love that is self-sacrificing, thorough, intelligent and purposeful. It's a loyalty based on a common deep seated love that is self-sacrificing thorough, intelligent and purposeful. So men, whenever we say you are a brother in Christ, along with that goes a sense of loyalty to you and from you because of our union in Christ. That's the first thing that Paul wants to remind them of, the great sense of loyalty they have to each other.

Secondly, he refers to them as my joy. The Philippians were the joy of Paul's heart because he saw the fruits of the Holy Spirit. It wasn't their own activities that he took joy in. He saw the evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit being lived out in the lives of the Philippians. He had a great sense of joy for that because he saw the work of the Spirit. It was very evident in their lives. He praises them again and again. And thanks God for them because of the work of the Holy Spirit. Here are some cross references to help you understand why he refers to them as my joy. You can look at Philippians 1:1-7 and 1:29-30, Philippians 2:12, 2:17 and 4:10-20. He thanks God for them and the work of the Holy Spirit. Because of their unique relationship and union in Christ as family members, he takes special pleasure in their well-being and appreciation for their concern for him. Now should that not be the relationship between us as brothers, that we develop a pleasure in the well-being of one another and essentially pastor each other? That's the sense of loyalty that Paul is talking about modeling. It is to develop a sense of well-being for one another and essentially pastor each other.

Many of you know my dear friend, John Bishop, who has been up here to speak several times and did a retreat with me a couple of years ago. When I went to the Naval Academy, my father told me as I cross the white line and become a midshipmen and am no longer a civilian. I turned and looked at my father and I said dad, what's the one thing, one piece of advice you'd give me before I cross the line and become a midshipmen. He paused for a second, he said, "Ask the Lord to give you one brother to hold you accountable. Ask the Lord to give you one brother to hold you accountable." That's the best piece of advice my father ever gave me. My father is a very wise man, but his wisdom really came to the forefront when he told me that that has changed my life as much as anything. Because every time been I've always asked the lord to provide one or two brothers to hold me accountable I have them here in Pittsburgh. Some of you men here are part of that group. When I was in Vietnam, Pastor Win was the one the Lord provided to hold me accountable. Everywhere I've been I've had people to hold me accountable. That is part of the loyalty of brothers in Christ, the concept that we have is part of the brother in Christ loyalty. When John Bishop and I met, he was the class of head me he was the class of 65 and I was 66. We met, we found out that we were both brothers in Christ and we took that seriously. We started meeting my plebe year, his sophomore year. We started meeting in the 5th wing basement every night after a meal before we went to our room to study. We had about twenty minutes to a half hour before we had to be in our rooms to study. John and I just began a process of pastoring each other. I'm not talking about the pastoral sense of professional ministry. That is not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about a loyalty between a brother and a loyalty to another brother. We just began to hold each other accountable spiritually. We went through all our successes and our failures. John and I figured it out, to help me control my successes and to

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manage my failures. We just did that part of the pastoring, it is part of the loyalty concept. I think it's so important to have friends that we can hold each other accountable spiritually. Because when we use the term brother in Christ, we are basically saying that we are blood brothers and people ought to see the relationship that we have in the sense of loyalty that we have to one another because of that unique relationship. So Paul refers to the people of Philippi as brothers and sisters. He refers to them as my joy, and now refers to them as my crown, my crown. It's for the same reason, because of his great affirmation for the work of the Holy Spirit that he refers to them, my crown. That's the title of honor he puts upon them. Paul is saying that his greatest honor is being their pastor, his greatest honor is being their minister, their pastor. This is true, but Paul is going to teach us that it becomes more evident when the Lord returns again, showing these people are the fruits of Paul's missionary labors. In other words, he's looking forward to the fact when the Lord returns, he's going to see the church of Philippi and see that they were part of his missionary labors. He views them as my crown, here's my crown and it's not what I've done. It's these people he's putting on the pedestal so that they are the real issue because of the work of the Holy Spirit. Look at 1 Thessalonians 2:19, you see Paul is looking forward to the Lord return so he can see the fruits of his labor which would be the people of for Philippi. What is our hope for joy or a crown or boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you for you are our glory and joy? Men, this is a great question for us to ask. What are your crowns? Are they your possessions? Are they people? Paul was saying this, my crown is people. It is the people that the Holy Spirit has made in union with Christ, they are my brothers and my sisters. There is the sense of loyalty to each other. We pastor one another we take care of each of other; they are my joy, they're my crown. So often times I think we think that our efforts are what we need to show off, the things we have done rather than the people we help mature. There's a sense of loyalty that Paul thinks about in this as he demonstrates his affection for the people of Philippi. He refers to them as my crown. Notice this, even deeper how he says he loves them. These words describe Paul's depth of feelings for the friends of Philippi. Twice in these verses he uses the term, which literally means beloved. That's a term that pours out of your affection for people, and he holds nothing back refers to his beloved. He loves them. Matthew Henry says this about brotherly love. Brotherly, love is the badge of Christ. Brotherly love is the badge of Christ's disciples. Here's the sense of loyalty men, do you see that coming through? Philip Brooks, the Puritan writer says, duty makes us do things well, but love makes us do them beautifully. Duty makes us do things well, but love makes us do them beautifully. Again some from Philip Brooks, "the proof of love is the capacity to suffer for the object of your affection". The proof of love is the capacity to suffer for the object of your affection. Here's a classic one, a Christian should so live that he would not be ashamed or afraid to sell the church parrot the town gossip. [laughter] A Christian should so live that he would not be afraid to sell the church parrot to the town gossip. [laughter] He loves them. He cares for them. He lets them know that they are his beloved.

Next, he says to longs for them. The intimacy of his affection for the people of Philippi goes beyond just external affection. He desires to be with them in the presence of their being. By this he means there is a deep yearning for his brothers and sisters in the physical ability to be with them, to have fellowship together. When he's not with them, you could say he has sort of a homesickness in his soul. Have you ever missed anybody like that? For the brother or sister in

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Christ where you have homesick in your soul just because you miss them? You enjoy their presence. It's their presence that makes you enjoy their activity, it's their presence. Paul was saying that he longs for them not only does he love them but he longs for them. Again he is affirming them in what he has already said in Philippians 1:7-8. Let's go back to that for a moment. He's affirming what he has already said. *'It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel for God is my witness.'* How I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. Notice the affection, whose affection is this? It's Christ's. He has developed a Christ like affection for his brothers and sisters. That's the highest quality we could offer, loving our brothers and sisters is love like Christ has loved. Paul says, I yearn for you to be in my presence and my presence is with you because I can love you with the love of Christ Jesus and have that affection for you. It's a quality love. It is not found in this world. It can only be experienced with brothers and sisters in Christ, because of the union with Christ. It's the sense of loyalty to one another that Paul builds into his affection. Now I believe there's some practical seriousness to the use of these terms that Paul addresses to describe his love for people at Philippi. My brothers and sisters, my joy, my crown, my love in whom I long for. We need to be careful not to use those terms until the Lord gives us a pastor's heart, because God will require every idle word, that we thought or we reflect upon to demonstrate our loyalty. I don't use the word pastor to mean a professional minister. But I mean as a member of the body of Christ, we can pastor each other if we understand the sense of the loyalty that is built into our terms, my joy, my crown, my love in whom I long for, my brothers and sisters. Paul has a pastor's heart and he's basically telling us that we need to develop a pastor's heart for our brothers and sisters and for one another. That's something we might want to consider down the road with our group. How do we pastor each other more effectively instead of sitting and listening to a lecture or something? Maybe we could discuss that.

After these wonderful expressions of affection and affirmation to the people of Philippi, he now begins to give some instruction some exhortations. He's affirmed his love for the people of Philippi. He's affirmed his desire to be with his friends and now he gives them some guidance to take them to a higher level of living, to take them a higher level of living. Notice the phrase, in the Lord, back to chapter 4 please, *"therefore, my brothers whom I love and long for, my joy and my crown, stand firm, trust in the Lord, my beloved."* Stand firm means having a union with Christ, in the Lord, means highlighting our union we have in Christ Jesus. It's in the Lord, it's not the world, it's not me, and it's not you. It's in the Lord, that's our union. That reminds me that I am in union with you because the blood of Christ. That's a good example for us to follow in our counseling, affirmation before instruction. Many times we just need to affirm the relationship with the person before we tell them how to get on with their life. Paul models that for us very well in this particular book. Stand firm in the Lord. Now what does that mean? More than anything else Paul told them this, the one thing I want to tell you to take you to the next level of life is stand firm in the Lord. Stand firm means to hold one's ground. Maintain a position, be steadfast or upright. It was used by a group of soldiers who were told that you cannot retreat and you must the depth of what he's saying about standing firm in the Lord. It's in our union in Christ that we stand and that's what keeps our fellowship solid. Paul was warning them against the pleasures of life. He's also warning them against spiritual warfare that we will be

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involved in spiritual warfare. We need to stand firm. We are to stand firm and not be moved by the opinion of the spiritually immature or the latest Christian fad. We need to stand firm. Now what are we to stand firm for? How do we do that? Well, I will offer for your consideration a couple of things. I think we are to stand firm for doctrinal stability, for doctrinal stability. Notice 1 Corinthians 15:58, *“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labors not vain.”* Galatians 5:1 *“for freedom in Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery”* Joshua 23:8 *“but you shall cling to the Lord your God just as you have done to this day.”* Stand firm, Paul says, stand on doctrinal stability. He warned them again those who are enemies of the gospel. Stand firm, don't let them infiltrate our churches. Stand firm for doctrinal stability. Also 1 Corinthians 16:13 *“Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.”* Act like men, be strong. Paul first of all says this to go to the next level of living against the systems of this world, and all the ingredients that try to infiltrate the body, you need to stand firm. Your command is to stand firm, I'll do the fighting. We stand firm because of our union with Christ. Christ will do the fighting for us.

Next thing he says is to do this, agree in the Lord, verse 2. Now he gives an example of two ladies who had some conflict. We don't know exactly what it is, but these two ladies were not in agreement with each other. They had a severed relationship, and Paul says make sure they come back to agreeing. Now to agree doesn't mean that you accept the other person's opinion. It doesn't mean that. Agree doesn't mean on every particular thing. The word agree means to have a disposed mind. Dispose your mind in a certain way is what it means to agree, not in uniformity but of the same mind. Have the mind that is disposed in a certain way. How do we become of one mind? Let me give a couple of examples. Paul's already talked about it in Philippians 1:27-28. Again, this is not agreeing upon every jot and tittle. That's not what we're saying. We are saying that you have to focus in agreement on one thing moving in one direction. Notice, Philippians 1:27, *“Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.”* That means the same direction. With one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel and not frightened by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation and that from God. In chapter 2, we are to become of one mind, verses 2-4, *“complete my joy by being of the same mind.”* It doesn't mean that they agree about everything, it just means that you are moving in the same direction. Your mind is disposed to think of one thing and that would be what the glory of God. *“Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind... (Here's one of the ways which you can develop your one-mindedness).. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”* We need to be people, agreeing of one mind, and we are moving in the same direction. The same direction.

Also, he reminds us then of this, not only stand firm in the Lord and agree in the Lord, but lastly, rejoice in the Lord. Look at verse 4. This is the third time that Paul uses the phrase, in the Lord. It is basically teaching us that all of the Christian experience is a matter of that relationship of being in the Lord, of our being in union with Christ, with the living Lord Jesus and the atmosphere of his presence and enabling grace. Now what does this mean to be, in the

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Lord? It's the last phrase that I just gave you. It means that we are in the atmosphere of his presence and all enabling grace in the Lord, is in the atmosphere of his presence and his all enabling grace. Rejoice means to feel happiness or joy, Paul tells us. He repeats the word rejoice a second time emphasizing that we need to pray in all circumstances and rejoice in all circumstances. Do you know what the key to joy is? It's your disposition. It's your disposition, what are you disposed to? The key to joy is my disposition. Where do you change your disposition? You change that by studying the scripture, by looking what Paul is writing to the church of Philippi. Change your disposition; that's how you become one mind. And that's beginning of our joy, because you see things differently because you begin to see the happiness doesn't depend on happening, but joy depends upon God. Do you have a disposition towards that? If you do your life is going be much more enjoyable because your disposition is towards happiness. Happiness has to do with happenings, but joy depends upon God. It makes you realize that rejoicing is a duty, it's a command; it's not an option. Some of things that I think are, I'll just rejoice in the Lord, it is a way of life. The scripture teaches us this. Look at Deuteronomy 12:7 rejoicing is a way of life. *"And there you shall eat before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your households, in all that you undertake, in which the LORD your God has blessed you."* How about Psalm 5:11, *"But let all who I take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may exult in you."* Let those who love your name may exalt in you. This is the daily activity, men rejoicing. We do this in everyday life experience. Psalms 32:11, *"Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!"* A couple others I'll give, you can look up yourself, Luke 10:20-21, Romans 12:15, and I Thessalonians 5:16.

So Paul says, after he affirms the fact that he loves them, he has a great desire for their presence. He now gives them some instruction, some exhortation in how to go to the next level of being mature in Christ. He says, stand firm in the Lord, agree in the Lord, and rejoice in the Lord. He's taking all aspects of our life, and saying we need to give that to Christ. It can be summarized with this statement; Paul is saying transfer all that you are and all that you have to all that He is. Transfer all that you are and all that you have to all that Christ is. May God give us the grace to do that for his glory.

Bruce: Let's pray. Father in heaven, we thank you for the clarity of Paul's counsel to us as brothers and sisters in Christ. Father we just pray that we would not take that word flippantly, but understand that because of our union in Christ, that we are blood brothers and, therefore, we have a sense of loyalty and have a desire for the well-being of the other person. May it be so, Father that we demonstrate that type of loyalty to our brother in Christ, for his sake we pray. Amen.

Men: Amen. (clapping)