

Problem-Solving Chapters of the Bible

EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS: Philippians 4

The fourth chapter of Philippians is a tremendous passage with some great promises from God. Look carefully at the promises in verses 6-7, 9, 13, and 19. Actually the whole book is very encouraging. Paul's epistle to the Philippian church was written from a *prison* cell but has more references to joy, peace, and rejoicing per verse than any other book in the Bible! Now look carefully at Philippians 4:7.

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Here we see that "*the peace of God*" will "*keep*" our "*hearts and minds*." The Greek word translated "*keep*" in this verse means to guard, and is clearly used in that sense in II Corinthians 11:32. In other words, this promise says that God's peace will guard our minds and our hearts (our mental and emotional health). Christians that experience the peace of God are protected from mental and emotional problems. Let's see how this works!

I. Be Right (vs. 1-5).

The chapter opens with admonitions for believers to be right with God and man. Staying right with God and man was one of Paul's secrets of inner peace. In Acts 24:16 he is quoted as saying,

"Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men."

See what he says in Philippians 4:1, 2, and 4.

"Stand fast in the Lord" (v. 1).

"Be of the same mind in the Lord" (v. 2).

"Rejoice in the Lord" (v. 4).

We can rejoice in the Lord when we know we are saved. Read Chapter 3, and see how to "*rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*" (v. 3). That's the way to be sure of your salvation. Trust in Jesus to save you, and not your own good works (Carefully study 3:4-9).

Then we need to "*stand fast in the Lord*"—stay right with God. Do this by following His commandments and example, and by confessing your sins when you fail (I John 1:5-9).

We also need to be right with each other. Euodias and Syntyche were two Christian women that were having trouble getting along (v. 2). The Lord through Paul told them to "*be of the same mind in the Lord*." We need to deal with inter-personal problems, and solve them with God's help. Look at Matthew 18:15, and follow it.

Making sure that you are right with God and man is the first big step toward solving emotional problems! Then take the other steps.

II. Pray Right (vs. 6-7).

The command, "*Be careful for nothing*," in verse 6 means, "Be anxious for nothing." It means that a Christian shouldn't worry about anything! How can a person fulfill that command? Look carefully at the verse again.

"Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer . . . let your requests be made known unto God."

Don't worry about anything; pray about *everything*! That's what it says. The things we don't pray about are often things we will worry about. The right kind of praying is the answer to and cure for anxious care or worry. How shall we pray about our problems?

A. Be earnest. "*Supplication*" means begging. Put yourself emotionally into your prayers. See the prayers of David for examples of supplication (Psalms 140-143 are excellent in this regard).

B. Be happy. Our prayers and supplications should be accompanied by "*thanksgiving*." Sometimes praying hard about problems that don't seem to go away can actually bring you *down* emotionally. This is why we must not forget to thank God. Often when the Lord

makes us wait for the answer to a *big* problem, He will send us answers to prayers for *little* problems, just to assure us that He is listening. Be sure to thank God for His blessings when you pray. Also be sure to pray about “*everything*” so that the Lord can show you His concern for all your problems, large and small!

- C. Be specific. The Bible tells us to “*let your requests be made known unto God.*” Tell Him just what you would like Him to do. Somehow this kind of praying brings the peace promised in verse 7. Jesus said,

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”
(Matthew 7:7-11)

Make a list, and make your requests. Of course, God is our Father, and He knows best. He may not grant every request the way we ask for it at first. But He wants us to make our requests, and He lifts the burden from our hearts when we do!

The results of the right kind of praying are both the supply of our needs (See verse 19) and the gift of God’s peace (verse 7) while we wait for the supply of our needs or the granting of our requests. Are you worried? Then *learn to pray!*

III. Think Right (verse 8).

Philippians 4:8 teaches us that we can control what we think about. It also gives us eight kinds of good things to occupy our minds: *true* things, *honest* (in the sense of honorable) things, *just* things, *pure* things, *lovely* things, things of *good report* (good news), things of *virtue*, and things of *praise*. There are all kinds of things we can choose to meditate upon any time of the day: good news or bad news, lovely things or ugly things, justice or injustice, truth or lies. Any of these things can be the focus of our thoughts because all of them exist. But your life will be better if you *choose* to think about good things. Notice that the word “*think*” in this verse is a command, just like “*be careful for nothing*” in verse 6. We *can* obey any of God’s commands because He will give us the power to do so (See verse 13). Don’t worry! Think about good things! These are commands we can choose to obey. What you concentrate upon in your mind has a lot to do with your emotional well-being. Stop feeding your mind with garbage from the television or popular music, and find better things to enjoy. The Bible is the very best source (although not the only source) of truth, honesty, justice, purity, and so on. Follow the admonition in I Peter 2:1-2. Put away the bad and feed on the good!

IV. Do Right (verse 9).

What is the verb, or what is the *command*, in verse 9? It is the little two-letter word “*do*.” If we do what we have learned, the God of peace will be with us. That’s the promise. Many Christians experience emotional difficulties because they are not doing what they know to do. See what Jesus said in John 13:17.

“If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”

The key to *happiness* is to do what you know to do. The space of time between when you know what the Lord wants you to do and when you start obeying is a time of both spiritual and emotional struggle. God gives wonderful peace to His servants that are doing His will. What should you be doing?

V. Believe Right (vs. 10-23).

Paul was a missionary who received financial help from the churches. In this letter, he is thanking the church at Philippi for their faithful and generous giving. In Chapter 4, he expresses several beliefs that kept him “*content*” in times of trial.

- A. You can learn contentment in any circumstance (vs. 10-12). The secret is submission to the will of God. God knows best, and everything that happens has a good purpose.
- B. Jesus Christ will give you the strength to face any situation (v. 13).
- C. Generosity earns eternal rewards (vs. 14-18). The eternal effect of a matter is the most important thing about it.
- D. God will always supply the needs of those who are doing His will (v. 19). He may let us “*suffer need*” (v. 12) for a while, but He will always finally come through (Psalm 23:1).

After you have read all of Philippians 4, try applying these five principles to your situation. It would be helpful also to memorize verses 4, 6-7, 8, 13, and 19.