

## PHILIPPIANS (IV)

### Never Give Up the Christian Walk (Chapter 4:1-23)

Over the last three chapters of Philippians, we have summarised Paul's argument under the following themes:-

1. Put the gospel first (Phil 1:1-26) – 1:27
2. Shine as stars (Phil 1:27 – 2:18) – 2:15
3. Emulate worthy Christian Leaders (Phil 2:19 – 3:21) – 3:17

In the last concluding chap 4, we shall focus on the theme, “never give up the Christian walk.”

In Matt 24:13, Jesus said, “he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”

#### **Introduction**

In 4:1, Paul reminded the believers at Philippians to stand firm in the Lord. The Christian life isn't a hundred meter dash. It's a marathon. It's a long race. It requires, as what Eugene Peterson said, “A long obedience in the same direction”

- What measures can we take in our Christian lives to remain on track for Christ?
- How can we stand firm in our faith and trust in God, especially in times of trials, temptation, persecution and suffering?
- How can we develop perseverance and endurance so that we never give up our Christian walk?

In chap 4, Paul gives several exhortations that will help us cultivate long lasting commitment to God.

Paul desires the Philippians to put their confidence in God in all circumstances. This applies to us as well.

4:1 – “Therefore.....stand firm in the Lord.”

This verse is transitional, pointing backwards to what we have already examined and forward to the chapter ahead.

Paul has warned the Philippians believers about false leaders (3:2); those who live as enemies of the cross (3:18-19)

- ❖ **Php 3:2** Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh.
- ❖ **Php 3:18** For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.
- ❖ **Php 3:19** Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.

- These false leaders are out to destroy their faith in Jesus
- Paul warned them not to be deceived by them and not to follow them.
- Paul encouraged them instead to stand firm in the Lord.
- Heb 12:1-2, “let us run with perseverance the race marked for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

The purpose of the exhortations in Philippians chap 4 is that we will stand firm and never give up the Christian walk.

**(i) Resolve to pursue unity with other true believers (4:2-3)**

- In verses 2-3, Paul deals with a serious problem in the church fellowship. Euodia and Syntyche, two women in the church, apparently are having some kind of conflicts and there is broken relationship between them.
- Paul does not indicate what the conflict was between them, but whatever it was; it is bringing potential division into the church.
- We know that they are believers (“**whose names are in the book of life**”) who have worked with Paul and others in the cause of the gospel. They once contended side-by-side for the cause of the gospel; now they contended against each other.
- What happened between them, we are not told.
- Tragically, this is all that we know about Euodia and Syntyche. Whenever the bible is read, they will be remembered forever for the division which they caused. Not a very pleasant legacy to be remembered this way!
- What does Paul do?
  - Paul personally and directly pleads with Euodia and Syntyche to “**agree in the Lord**” that is to live in agreement and unity.
  - Paul’s desire is that the broken relationship is restored.
  - He even requests a certain brother, loyal yokefellow, to help these women sort out their problems and to bring reconciliation between them
  - Who is this yokefellow, we don’t know. Whoever he is, Paul had confidence in him to handle this delicate and important business of reconciliation.

There is a lesson for us to learn about Christian unity.

Paul exhorts us to stand together in unity.

- ❖ 1Co 1:10 I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that **you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.**
- Taking sides in a dispute between people will only make matter worse.

- What we should do is attempt through prayer, support, and encouragement bring reconciliation.
- Make sure we agree over the gospel. Work hard to develop agreement on matters of greatest importance: the gospel, the Word of God, the glory of Christ, the beauty of holiness, the ugliness of sin, especially our own.

Unity is so important that Jesus prayed for the church to be united in John 17:20-21.

Our pursuit for unity is motivated by our love for God and for people. If there is any dispute, we need to humble ourselves, be willing to apologize and be willing to forgive each other. I know forgiveness is very difficult when you have been hurt badly but in the power of God, if you don't give up, it can happen. We need to deal with it in love to restore relationship.

Prov 19:11 – A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.

As we resolve to do this, we will stand firm and never abandon the Christian walk.

**(ii) Resolve always to rejoice in the Lord; not to be anxious about anything, but learn instead to pray. (4:4-7)**

- Paul wrote this letter while in prison. He was a prisoner in a lonely cell in Rome, chained to two soldiers, guarded night and day.
- He is facing trials for his faith ([Php 1:16](#) .....I am put here for the defense of the gospel)
- and the possibility of being sentence to death ([Php 2:17](#) But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.)
- Paul had a good reason not to rejoice and to be anxious about his trials – but he did not!
- In spite of his difficult circumstances as a prisoner, Paul is rejoicing, not anxious but through prayer with thanksgiving, he experiences the peace of God, which transcends all understanding.
- Phil 4:4, “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice.”
- Paul is able to rejoice in spite of his circumstances because his joy is found in Christ.
  - ❖ [Php 3:7](#) But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.
  - ❖ [Php 3:8](#) What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ
  - ❖ [Php 3:9](#) and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.
- He trusted Christ completely.
- Like Paul, the ultimate ground of our rejoicing, not to be anxious about anything but learn instead to pray is because of what Christ has done on the cross. Phil 2:8, “He humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.”
- We rejoice in the Lord because:-

- ❖ Our sins are forgiven. We have been declared righteous because Christ has borne our guilt.
- ❖ We have received the gift of the Holy Spirit
- ❖ We are children of the living God
- ❖ The prospect of resurrection is sure (3:10-11)
- ❖ We will see Christ face to face and spend an eternity in the purest worship
- We can pray with thankgivings because:
  - ❖ It tells us where we find strength and grace to help in times of need.
  - ❖ Prayer acknowledges our weakness and dependence upon God.
  - ❖ Prayer is our affirmation of faith that God will surely deal with the situation we have just handed over to Him.
- Even though the circumstances may remain the same, we experience the peace of God in our hearts. The Holy Spirit calms us, and whispers in our hearts, “it’s all right now God will take care of it.”
- Our delight is in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what enables us to live with joy and peace above our circumstances.
- We may even be sorrowful, yet always rejoicing (2 Cor 6:10)
- Such a believer never gives up the Christian walk. Resolve always to rejoice in the Lord

**(iii) Resolve to think rightly and put them into practice (4:8-9)**

- There are some among us who are very good in cooking. Some are naturally gifted while others are the result of practice.
- They have great patience to follow a recipe’s instructions, scout around for the best ingredients, and put in hours in the kitchen to create the mouth watering dishes.
- In verses 8-9, Paul gives us ingredients for our mind to think about and then to put it into practice.
- These are the qualities we are to nurture in our Christian lives.
  - whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.
- It is important that we not only think about these things. We need to put them into practice.
- Rev Edmund Chan, Senior Pastor of Covenant EFC, said, truth does not transform us. Only applied truth will transform us.
- It is very thrilling to see the way in which some Christians have been obedient to these commands to think and to put into practice.
- William Carey was a young man, living in a generation (1761-1834) when there were no missionary meetings, pins up a map of the world in his workshop where he

worked as a shoemaker. He seeks to find out all he can about the non-Christian world.

- As Carey was thinking about the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations, he observed that the commands also apply to him and his church. When he suggested the idea to the leaders, he was told. “Young man, sit down. When God wishes to convert the heathen he will do it without your help or mine.”
- Who would have imagined that William Carey went on to become the father of modern mission? He went to India to preach the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ in spite of being put down by the church mission board. How could God use a shoemaker to impact the Indians who spoke totally different languages? History has it that William Carey translated Punjabi, Sanskrit in both New and Old Testament. He even completed a dictionary of Bengali and English.
- Oswald Chambers said, “there is only one golden rule for spiritual discernment, and that is obedience. We learn more by five minutes’ obedience than by ten years’ study.

Resolve to think rightly and put them into practice. This is foundational to the commitment never to give up the Christian walk.

**(iv) Resolve to learn the secret of contentment (4:10-13)**

- During his 25 years of ministry, Paul had known times when he had plenty and times when he was in need.
- Paul said he had learnt to adapt to both situations so that whether he is “well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want,” he had learned to be content.
- Dr Tony’s testimony of God’s provision, Can Two Walk Together page 45-47.
- We have a God whose endless resources will be used to meet our needs. If we constantly remember who our God is, we too will grasp the secret of being content, whatever our circumstances.
- When we live above circumstances, utterly content in Christ Jesus, it will ensure that we will stand firm and not give up the Christian walk.

**(v) Resolve to grow in the grace of Christian gratitude and generosity (4:14-23)**

- Paul also wrote to thank the church for their concern for him and the gifts they had given (4:10-20).
- It revealed their continuing love for him
- Paul said that the gifts were first and foremost offered to God: They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. (4:18)
- Paul is pleased that the Philippians have been so generous in the work of the gospel, and God will meet all their needs. (4:19)
- Similarly when we offer our gifts to the church, in our tithing and offerings, supporting full time staff or missionaries or the poor and needy, our gifts are a fragrant offering to the Lord.

- As we experience God's blessing in our lives, we should take opportunities to be his channel of blessings to others.
- As we grow in the grace of Christian gratitude and generosity, we will know more and more of the glorious riches in Christ.

### **Conclusion**

1Cor 1:8 – He (God) will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2Cor 1:21 – Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ.

Ultimately, we know that it is by God's grace that we are able to stand firm in Christ.

Never give up the Christian walk.