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Sermon Notes

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## Standing Firm for Joy, Part 2

### Philippians 4:1-4:9

#### I. The Pinnacle of God's Physical Creation: The Human Mind

##### A. The Vast Complex Universe

1. Stars: immense balls of burning gas, powered by nuclear fusion
2. Planets: in God-ordained complexity, each as large as God ordained, each circling the sun at exactly the distance God ordained
3. Earth's ecosystems: systems of fresh and salt water, of minerals and soil, of bacteria, microbes and fungi, of plants, of insects, land animals, sea creatures and birds... all marvelously created by God, immensely complex and in immensely complex relationship to each other

##### B. Nothing is More Complex Than the Human Body

Dr. Jerry Bergman: Chemically, the body is unequalled for complexity. Each one of its 30 trillion cells is a mini-chemical factory which performs about 10,000 chemical functions. And every cell has  $10^{12}$  (one trillion) bits of data—equal to every letter in ten million books! Each one also replaces itself every seven years. Each one is independent, yet cooperates with many millions of other cells.

The body's billions of parts all work together as a team—its 206 bones provide the framework and its 639 muscles enable it to move with incredible split-second timing. Its skill to balance is such that we can perform feats of acrobatics and yet have such strength that official human weight-lifting feats abound. Even demonstrations of incredible strength by normal people under adversity are common in medical records. Maxwell Rogers once lifted the end of a 3,600 pound car. The jack holding it up had collapsed and the car had fallen on his son.

##### C. No Aspect of the Human Body is More Complex Than the Brain

Your mind is to be the greatest theater of God's glory, and God will have it renewed by His written Word for His glory.

- 100 billion neurons; (Amazon rain forest stretches 2.7 million sq. miles and it has 100 billion trees)
- Each neuron has as many connections as these are leaves on an average tree

- If you simply counted the neural connections in the cerebral cortex, the outer layer of the brain, at the rate of one per second it would take 32 million years

During fetal development the foundations of the mind are laid as billions of neurons form appropriate connections and patterns. No aspect of this complicated structure has been left to chance. The basic wiring plan is encoded in the genes. It has been shown from previous studies that in developing embryos of animals, nerve cells are created in or travel to designated regions of the brain, and once in place send out axons along preprogrammed paths to make contact with specific targets.

The brain's billions of neurons connect with one another in complex networks. All physical and mental functioning depends on the establishment and maintenance of neuron networks. A person's habits and skills -- such as nail-biting or playing a musical instrument -- become embedded within the brain in frequently activated neuron networks. When a person stops performing an activity, the neural networks for the activity fall into disuse and eventually may disappear.

Dr. Jerry Bergman: Our body is controlled and coordinated by a nervous system of over 100 billion neurons and 120 trillion "connection boxes" packed together into an unfathomably complex set of neuro-passways. The system is much like a modern nation, inter-connected by billions of telephone wires. All of this in a brain and spinal column that weighs slightly over three pounds! In comparison, a bee has only about 900 nerve cells, an ant only 250. In the large gauge fibers, nerve impulses flash along at 300 miles per hour. **All told, the human brain and nervous system is the most complex arrangement of matter anywhere in the universe.**

The whole body system functions as a unified whole to enable a human to run, sing, remember, create and achieve the myriads of other phenomenal tasks we usually take for granted.

We are *incredibly complicated* in other ways as well. The adjectives in an unabridged dictionary which refer to human dispositions number a staggering 17,958. All of these words describe ways in which individuals can potentially categorize themselves—brave, kindly, liberal, powerful, *ad infinitum*. When the possible behavioral tendencies, talents, abilities, tastes, interests, attitudes and values—such as enjoying stamp collecting, travel, music or even one's inner thoughts and feelings—are added to the list, an almost infinite number is produced. One scientist estimated that our brain, on the average, processes over 10,000 thoughts and concepts each day—and some people process a much greater number.

This human brain is the most incredibly complex physical creation in God's universe... and it was created for a specific purpose:

1. Created in the image of God
2. Created to glorify God and enjoy Him forever
3. Created to "Know the glory of God"

It is also the center of everything the devil wants to do in your life... the battleground for the war of sanctification... will your mind be used for the glory of God or marinate in sin: in pride, in anger, in lust, in covetousness, in anxiety

Our focus this morning is the human mind... how it is to be used for God and His glory

## II. Context: Stability for Eternal Joy

### A. The Call to Stand Firm

***Philippians 4:1 Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!***

### B. The Drive for Progress

#### 1. The call to stand firm connected deeply to Philippians 3

***Philippians 4:1 Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!***

He has been teaching them the secret to standing firm in Philippians 1-3

#### 2. Central message of Philippians 3: I press on

***Philippians 3:12-14 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.***

#### 3. Work out salvation with fear and trembling: Philippians 2:12-13

#### 4. Paul's drive in Philippians 1: PROGRESS

a. growth globally... worldwide advance of the gospel

b. growth individually... personal growth in Christ for each Christian... for the Philippians and for others

## III. Seven Steps to Spiritual Stability

***Philippians 4:1 Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!***

### A. Review: Last Week's Message

In Philippians 4:1-9, Paul gives the Philippians seven steps toward building a foundation for joy

Already considered the first three:

- Cultivating Harmony in the Church Fellowship (vs. 2-3)
- Determining to Rejoice NO MATTER WHAT (vs. 4)
- Learning to be Gentle (vs. 5)

Now, let's look at the last four:

- Developing a Confident Trust in the Lord (vs. 5-6)
- Reacting to Problems with Thankful Prayer (vs. 6-7)
- Controlling Your Thought Life (vs. 8)
- Imitating Godly Examples (vs. 9)

The control of the heart and mind is essential to each of these

It is the heart and mind that must learn a confident trust in the Lord

It is the heart and mind that must learn to respond to trials and problems with prayer and not with anxiety in verse 6-7

It is the heart and mind that must be controlled in verse 8

It is the heart and mind that takes in Paul's doctrine and guides the body to live a pattern of godliness

#### B. Developing a Confident Trust in the Lord (vs. 5-6)

##### ***vs. 5-6 The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything***

1. Our confidence and trust is based on the fact that God is near us at all times

***Matthew 1:23 "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"-which means, "God with us."***

***Matthew 28:20 "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."***

2. Therefore we need not... in fact MUST NOT be anxious about anything

To be "anxious" literally means to "divide the mind"... to work something intensely over in your mind so that you are buffeted back and forth by some tormenting thought... blown and tossed to and fro by your thoughtlife... FORGETTING THE SOVEREIGN GOD who rules actively over your life

3. Two Kinds of Anxiety

- a. helpful anxiety: concern and focus over Christ and His Kingdom

***1 Corinthians 7:32, 34 An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs-- how he can please the Lord.***

***An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit.***

- b. concern for the spiritual welfare of other

***2 Corinthians 11:28-29 And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?***

The same Greek word used for these... anxious about how to please the Lord; anxious about the spiritual welfare of others

- c. "anxiety" not the proper term... concern, care, focus

### 3. Bad anxiety

to fret and be concerned about temporal things... fretting about being late to this meeting, or having enough money in the future, or about whether this or that thing will happen

40% of anxiety spent on things that never happen

30% spent on things over which we have absolutely no control

only 8% spent on vital matters over which we do have control... and still ANXIETY is not called for there, but PRAYER

### 4. Bad anxiety is the marvelous gift of IMAGINATION used for something evil

Imagination is usually a good thing: when used creatively, people can write books or poems, make beautiful art, solve difficult mathematics problems, invent new inventions, discover new chemicals for medicines... all this from imagination

**BUT** Anxiety is imagination gone bad: Imagining what **MIGHT** happen... all the evil things that **MIGHT HAPPEN** in the future

### 5. Anxiety is a great INSULT to Christ... it says to Christ

"I don't trust what you might do in my life! Either you are not truly good or you are not truly wise or you are not truly powerful."

Illus. Imagine driving down the highway in a rainstorm with your six-year-old son. The dangers of the road become too much for him to handle and he screams, “Daddy, we’re going to die! We’re going to die!” Imagine even more the six-year old saying “Father, I cannot trust you to drive us safely... let me take the wheel.”

Anxiety takes the wheel of control from our loving Savior because we imagine He will do us harm

## 6. Comprehensive command

***“Be anxious for NOTHING...”***

Not for: cancer, AIDS, diabetes, or any disease; not for poverty, unemployment, disability or any financial situation; not for wife/husband/child/parent/friend for their lives or safety; not anxious about success or failure about any earthly thing: college grades, job afterwards, future life in any way

**BE ANXIOUS FOR NOTHING!!!**

But that doesn’t mean DO NOTHING... we are not to be like modern Stoics, who merely accepted with grim resignation whatever blind fate brought to them

In Philippians 4, we are commanded to be active... and Scripture as a whole calls us to ACT on anxiety and stamp it out like a serpent with vigorous actions

## 7. HOW do we develop this confident trust in the Lord?

### a. doctrine: God’s providence

Anxiety is the direct result of bad thought life, bad doctrine and little faith

All are solved by immersing your mind in Scripture

Scripture teaches God’s total providential rule over all things for His glory and the good of His people

***Romans 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. [NASB]***

***Psalms 115:3 Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.***

***Proverbs 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.***

Because God actively rules over every detail of His universe for His own glory and the salvation of His people, we dishonor God by our great anxiety over small matters

We can be like Jesus, asleep in the boat on a cushion in the midst of a life-threatening storm... totally trusting in God to watch over Him and His welfare

It was Jesus who taught us the most of God’s providential control of all things

**Matthew 6:25-34** *"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? 28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

Your Father knows what you need before you ask

Your Father provides for all your needs

Your Father has never failed you

**Matthew 10:29-31** *Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. 30 And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.*

Christ HATED anxiety and worked against it always... mostly by REASONING with us, showing us how foolish it is to worry

Attack worry be immersing your fretful mind in Scripture... more on mind control in a moment!!

- b. practice: life experience
- c. practice: regular thanksgiving
- d. practice: consistent prayer life
- e. practice: spiritual warfare
- f. practice: mind control

C. Reacting to Problems with Thankful Prayer (vs. 6-7)

**vs. 6-7** *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

1. An active prayer life is a HUGE part of the stability that brings joy

2. We anticipate problems in the future not with ANXIETY but with confident prayer
3. “Prayer and petition” = diligent, persistent prayer... not just once, but many prayers
4. “In everything” = there is nothing we should not pray about
5. Prayer is a great gift from God, and the secret of much Christian joy
6. Entrust the matter to God... lay it before His throne for His wisdom to dispose of, for His goodness to make it become good for you, for His power to bring it about precisely His way... and when you have laid it at His throne, leave it there
7. Prayer drives out anxiety, and makes the heart ready for God’s peace
8. Thankfulness: a great gift, the outflow of a trusting heart... it shows great faith to thank God before the answers have come; thanksgiving is the opposite of a complaining spirit; thankfulness is our responsibility as believers in a sovereign and loving God
9. Result: the peace of God
  - a. note: if we are believers in Christ, we already have “Peace with God”

***Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ***

This is a permanent state of being **AT PEACE WITH GOD**... God is no longer your enemy, He is now your Father; God is no longer against you, He is now for you in every way; we are in a state of peace in Christ, and nothing can alter that permanent secure position

But the “Peace **OF** God” is different... that is an **EXPERIENCE** of peacefulness in our minds and hearts; our minds and hearts are easily distracted, easily moved from a peaceful state. **BUT GOD** is **ALWAYS** at peace... at peace with Himself, at peace with His children, at peace with His eternal plans

If you want to experience God’s peace, then pray without ceasing and with trust and thankfulness

You will not only have a **STATUS** of “Peace **WITH** God”... you will have the **EXPERIENCE** of the “Peace of God”

- b. it “passes all understanding” = in one sense it **MAKES NO SENSE**... why would a condemned prisoner about to be executed have peace and joy? It transcends all understanding... in another sense, it means God gives peace directly without giving you the understanding of what He is doing in the specific situation you are praying about... this is a peace that rises above the workings of the mind
- c. it will **GUARD YOUR HEARTS** in Christ Jesus... literally “stand guard over you”... peace will be your guardian angel



***1 Peter 1:5 who through faith are shielded by God's power***

***Psalm 3:5-6 I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD sustains me. I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side.***

***Psalm 4:8 I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.***

God's supernatural peace is the reward of a faithful, trusting prayer life... and this is a great step toward the stability that is the foundation for joy

A stable person isn't blown and tossed by earthly circumstances... they bring everything to the Lord in prayer

And God sends a supernatural peace which cannot be explained to guard you and keep you in joy

#### D. Controlling Your Thought Life (vs. 8)

***vs. 8 Finally, brothers, 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.***

1. As we've seen throughout this letter, so much of the life of joy Paul is commanding is a life in which our thoughts are under the control of the Holy Spirit
2. Just as many think we cannot control our emotions, so people think we cannot control what we think about

Devil's goal with television and movies and books and magazines: pollute your thoughtlife

3. This verse implies we can control our thought life... the verb is "logizomai"... means to dwell on, meditate on, fill your mind with

The Christian life is a thoughtful life... filled with the fruits of the mind, careful thinking

Illus. Trip to Jamestown, Yorktown and Williamsburg... battlefields from three different eras... battlefield on the original site of Jamestown (English settlers and the Powhatan Indians); battlefield in Yorktown where our nation won its independence in 1781; battlefield prepared by Confederate soldiers during the Civil War

The true battle of sanctification is a battle for the mind:

***Romans 8:5-6 Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace***

Some people feel there is no way to control your thoughtlife... but that control is essential to the Christian life

4. Healthy meditation is absolutely essential... look at what Paul gives your minds for a diet:

- a. whatever is **true**: Christ Himself who is the way, the truth & the life, God's word which Christ says is truth, true doctrine...

meditate on **TRUTH** not on **FALSEHOOD**

- b. whatever is **noble**: elevated things, honorable, weighty, serious, worthy of respect

meditate on **NOBLE THINGS**, not lightweight, frivolous, or dishonorable

- c. whatever is **right**: means righteous, lined up with God's righteous character and standards

meditate on **RIGHTEOUS THINGS**, not unrighteous things

- d. whatever is **pure**: holy, morally clean, free from wickedness... pure like Christ

meditate on **PURE THINGS**, not impure, unholy things...

Illus. If your thoughts for the last week were filmed and all your friends and family watched the movie, would you be ashamed?

It is amazing what we will think about doing that we would **NEVER** actually do in real life

With our minds, we trust Christ, pray to Him, love Him, and think about Him

**AND** with our minds we lust, we covet, we complain, we are impure... **MY BROTHERS THIS SHOULD NOT BE**

- e. whatever is **lovely**: things that are beautiful, attractive, perfect... like the New Heavens and the New Earth

- f. whatever is **admirable, excellent, praiseworthy**

You are what you think about!! Your behavior will be directed by your thought life

Solomon said **Proverbs 4:23** Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

The best way to obey this command is to meditate on the Scriptures continually

***Psalm 1:1-3 Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.***

E. Imitating Godly Examples (vs. 9)

**vs. 9 *Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me-- put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.***

1. As we've discussed before, Paul here presents himself as a role model of daily life as well as right doctrine
2. Right doctrine:

***Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me***

- a. Paul taught the Philippians carefully the right doctrines with his mouth
- b. he patiently brought them to maturity through doctrinal instruction

3. Right lifestyle

***or seen in me***

4. PUT IT INTO PRACTICE... live it out... don't just know it, DO IT... and the God of peace will be with you

#### IV. Summary and Application

God calls you to make steady progress in your Christian life... AND ALSO to stand firm

We are to make our journey with JOY, and for that we must have stability

Paul gives the Philippians seven steps toward building a foundation for joy

- Cultivating Harmony in the Church Fellowship (vs. 2-3)
- Determining to Rejoice NO MATTER WHAT (vs. 4)
- Learning to be Gentle (vs. 5)
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- Controlling Your Thought Life (vs. 8)
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Application:

- 1) **Harmony:** If you are out of fellowship with anyone in this church, make an effort to be reconciled to them

- 2) **Joy:** Make a decision to rejoice, especially during times of trial... complaining is a habit that can only be broken by praising God actively... cultivate a joyful heart
- 3) **Gentleness:** If you are given to harshness, make developing a gentle manner a key matter of prayer
- 4) **Trust:** learn to defeat anxiety by biblical truth and constant prayer
- 5) **Thought life:** Above all, control your thoughts by constant meditation on Scripture...