Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Whenever fishermen or sailors encounter an unescapable storm – they allude to it as “the perfect storm”.

The reason that they call it a perfect storm is because of all the combination factors that come together at the right time and place to make the storm unescapable.

The wind, the rain, the height of the waves. Maybe the storm merges with another storm and it simply magnifies the intensity.

Now, we don’t have to be out in the middle of the ocean to experience a perfect storm, we can experience it one in our own home.

We lose your job, our bills start piling up, and suddenly our health starts to fail. Wave after wave comes crashing down on us.

What are we supposed to do? How do we respond to such a predicament?

Apostle Paul will give us the answer this morning in a very profound and concise manner.

But before he does that, Paul will have to address the church regarding a few issues.

Let's pray…

[Philippians 4:1-7 NKJV] 1 Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved. 2 I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names [are] in the Book of Life. 4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord [is] at hand. 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Whenever we come to the word "therefore" in Scripture, it's wise to stop and ask what it's there for.

Always remember that the chapters and verses were added later on by man to help us read the bible.

This letter that Paul wrote was one continual message written on a scroll to be read out loud to the church.

So this therefore here at the beginning of chapter four is the continuation of the point that Paul was making at the end of chapter three.

And last week, we finished out study with Paul reminding the church in Philippi, as well as us, of the following things,

1. That our true citizenship is in heaven – don't focus on satisfying the flesh – focus on the eternal.
2. Paul also reminded us that when Jesus Christ returns we will all be given glorified bodies just like Him.

1 Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

Now, in this first verse, look at the words that Paul uses to address the church.

First of all, Paul uses the word beloved (twice) – it means loved ones. Not only does God love you but I love you as well – this is what Paul is telling the church.

What a wonderful example Paul is demonstrating to the church on how to treat one another.

In the gospel of John, Jesus commanded His disciples and us as well to do the same.

[John 13:34-35 NKJV] 34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

You see church, love is the hallmark of the church.

We can't preach the gospel of the love of God if we are not actively practicing the gospel of the love of God within the church.

If we don't love one another, we will not be encouraging one another.

If we don’t love one another, we will not be sharing one another’s burdens.

We will not be praying for one another.

The church will become a dead church – simply going through the motions and forsaking the command we were given.

Turn to the First Epistle of John.

[1 John 4:11-12 NKJV] 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.

This is why we are to love one another, it is proof that God abides in us.

It is through our love for one another that the world will see that there is a God.

Paul also addresses the church as longed-for brethren,

Paul yearned to return to Philippi – the church in Philippi was started by Paul – back in Acts 16 with the likes of Lydia.

He knew many of the people there and because he is under house arrest – he start reminiscing about past times and longs to reunite with them one more time.

Paul then addresses them as my joy and crown.

Seeing the church mature spiritually brought Paul joy.

There are two words for crown in the Greek, and they have different backgrounds.

There is diadema (Greek #1238), which means the royal crown, the crown of kingship – this is not the word that Paul uses here

The word that Paul uses here is stephanos.

It was the crown of the victorious athlete at the Greek games. It was made of wild olive leaves, interwoven with green parsley, and bay leaves. To win that crown was the peak of the athlete's ambition.

It was also the crown with which guests were crowned when they sat at a banquet, at some time of great joy.

It is as if Paul said that the Philippians were the crown of all his work.

So because the return of Jesus Christ is imminent and because they are citizen of heaven and not of Rome, Paul wants the church to stand fast in the Lord.

Fourteen times in the New Testament, the believer is commanded to stand fast or told to be steadfast.

It is a military term for a solder standing in battle and not retreating.

It means to stand in one place, to be immovable, to persevere no matter the circumstances.

We live in a time where the church has turned to compromise instead of standing firm on many of the biblical truths.

They have allowed the opinion of man to supersede the Word of God.

Turn with me to Ephesians 6 –

Let’s remind ourselves regarding the armor of God.

[Ephesians 6:10-20 NKJV] 10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual [hosts] of wickedness in the heavenly [places]. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints-- 19 and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

As you look at all the different element of the armor of God,

The breast plate of righteousness

The shield of faith

The helmet of salvation

The sword of the Spirit

There is an area of the body that is always left unprotected – and that is the back.

Because we are never to turn our backs in spiritual warfare.

We don't surrender. Retreat is not an option.

We are simply commanded to stand and allow God to do His work.

And church, the amazing thing is that God has already won – all we are asked to do is to stand.

This is what Paul is reminding Philippi to do.

No matter what adversity we face, no matter the chaos around us as the world continues to sink into deeper wickedness. We continually stand in the Lord.

Let’s look at verse 2.

2 I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.

So for the first three chapters, Paul spends his time encouraging the church to persevere and here in chapter four, he begins to address some of the issues that were facing the church in Philippi.

The first issue is among these two prominent ladies in the church.

Now, we are not told what the disagreement was – only that it was apparently bringing division to the church.

Unfortunately, this happens in every church.

These disagreements do not have to be doctrinal issues.

They can be something as silly as a disagreement over the types of donuts that are available.

One person will say, “Well I don’t like when they bring apple fritters”

Then, that person will find someone else doesn’t like apple fritters and they will find someone else and so on.

Eventually, the church is divided between those that hate apple fritters and those that don't understand what the big deal with apple fritters is all about.

Here is an example of silly disagreements that I have seen in the church,

- Bible translations – I'm an Old King James purist or ESV, NIV purist.
- Choice in worship music – I like hymns only or everything must be acoustic.

  We must remember that worship is all about Him – not us.
- I read about a congregation that had a disagreement on whether or not deviled eggs were an appropriate dish at their potlucks. The church was literally divided on this issue.

You see, these divisions will rob us of our joy and will only draw our attention from Jesus Christ.

We become so consumed on being right that we lose focus.

Notice how Paul isn't taking sides on who is right or wrong.

He implores both of them to refocus on what matters and not on their silly disagreement.

And Paul begins this by reminding them of what they already had in common – Christ Jesus.

These letters were usually read out loud to the congregation, so you could imagine the reaction of these two ladies sitting on opposite side of the church, among their little inner circles as they were called out by name.

“Set aside your differences and be of the same mind in the Lord.”

This doesn’t mean that we are all to think exactly alike. We all have different likes and dislikes. We all prefer things a certain way.

However, we do not allow our differences to take away our joy in Christ. We do not allow our differences to divide the church.

Always remember that unity does not equal uniformity.

You see, Paul learned from his mistakes early on in his ministry. Because in the book of Acts, Paul and Barnabas had a disagreement – it wasn’t one in theology – it was a disagreement on whether or not to take John Mark with them on their ministry.

You see, John Mark had quit on them during the previous missionary trip because he got a little homesick. Barnabas wanted to give John Mark another chance and Paul was adamant that they not take him.

So because each of them didn’t want to give into the other’s demands, they split and they each went their own separate ways.

No longer were they of one mind – their stubbornness divided them.

[Philippians 4:3 NKJV] 3 And I urge you also, <u>true companion</u>, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names [are] in the Book of Life.

Now, here in verse three, Paul addresses this individual – this true companion, to help resolve the issue between Euodia and Syntyche.

Now, we don't know who this true companion is – some people claim that it might have been Epaphroditus who we read about in chapter two and is the one who is going to deliver this letter to Philippi or possibly even Timothy.

Paul also brings in Clement to help as well.

These two women, Euodia and Syntyche, were faithful workers with Paul in the work of the gospel. Yet, they had a falling out with each other. Paul knew that this unfortunate dispute needed to be cleared up and it needed to happen soon.

Notice how Paul is using all the available resources to stop this quarreling between the two individuals.

In verse 4, Paul gives the church another command.

[Philippians 4:4 NKJV] 4 Rejoice in the Lord <u>always</u>. Again I will say, rejoice!

We are commanded to rejoice.

Now, we cannot be commanded to be happy – because happiness is a response to our circumstances.

However, to rejoice – it is a choice.

To rejoice - is a decision that is made instead of a sensation.

And Paul simply doesn't command us to rejoice – he commands us to rejoice in the Lord.

No matter what are circumstances are – we can rejoice in the Lord.

Knowing that the trials we are going through – that they serve a purpose in our lives.

That God is sovereign and in control.

This is why we can rejoice.

Are we commanded to rejoice only whenever things are going our way? No

Are we commanded to rejoice only on Sunday mornings? No

Can we rejoice while the world around us is falling apart? Of course, Paul did.

[2 Corinthians 6:4-10 NKJV] 4 But in all [things] we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, 5 in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; 6 by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, 7 by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, 8 by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and [yet] true; 9 as unknown, and [yet] well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and [yet] not killed; 10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and [yet] possessing all things.

There are great sorrows in serving the Lord, yet also great times of joy.

[Philippians 4:5 NKJV] 5 Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord [is] at hand.

The word gentleness that Paul uses here in verse five is in refers to someone who allows the Lord to fight all his battles.

Remember, the early church was being persecuted. The natural response would be to demand justice.

We are called to go beyond that.

We all know about the story about the adulterous woman that was brought before Jesus.

Justice would point out that she deserved to be stoned.

That is what the law stated.

However, Jesus revealed His gentleness to the woman. He went beyond justice and demonstrated grace.

“Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.”

We are to have the same approach –

Now – our last two verses today,

[Philippians 4:6-7 NKJV] 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all

understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

In verse four, we received our first command this morning and that was to rejoice in the Lord.

One of the biggest mistakes that we make in our lives is instead of rejoicing, we resort to worrying about things that we cannot control.

These two verses are very important – especially in the society that we live nowadays because it is estimated that in the United States alone, over 50 million people suffer from a form of anxiety.

And the problem with worrying is that it is one of the things in our lives that takes away our joy in Christ.

Be anxious for nothing is a command – it is not a suggestion to us.

Turn with me to the gospel of Matthew 6.

[Matthew 6:25-34 NKJV] 25 "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? 26 "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you

not of more value than they? 27 "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? 28 "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; 29 "and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 "Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, [will He] not much more [clothe] you, O you of little faith? 31 "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 "For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. 34 "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day [is] its own trouble.

The problem with being consumed with anxiety is that we in effect tell God that we don't trust Him.

That is what worrying does.

"I understand what the bible says but when I get home and see all the bills piled on my desk or I hear about what's going on in Syria or other parts of

the world and I also worry about my relatives – especially those that do not know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior”

There is an alternative to worrying and Paul lays it out for us.

But, in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God.

I was a worrier and verse six is one that started to apply in my life, so instead of worrying about things I started praying about them.

I would pray that I was going to leave my burden at the foot of the cross and trust God just like the scriptures tell us in 1 Peter 5:7

[1 Peter 5:7 NKJV] 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

But, after a few days, I would find myself worrying about the same thing that I had prayed about – so I asked my pastor about it.

What’s going on?

What am I doing wrong?

And what he told me has stuck with me – he said when we lay our burdens at the foot of the cross, many times we go back to the foot of the cross and take our burdens back.

This is why we continue to worry. We truly don't cast our care upon Him.

All the energy that we spend worrying about something that we have no control over should be spent on making our requests upon the Almighty God that does have control over everything.

If we put our trust in Him and come before Him in prayer, the result will be the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding –

And that is the answer church.

I can think of no better example in scripture than the prophet Daniel.

Daniel was in a foreign land held captive,

They tried to indoctrinate Daniel in the ways of Babylon yet, Daniel did not budge.

They threatened him with death and eventually they threw him into the lion's den –

Not once, do we find Daniel in the midst of an anxiety attack.

You see Daniel was a man of prayer –

Daniel had the peace of God, no matter His circumstances, he trusted in what the Lord was going to do in his life.

Daniel rejoiced in the Lord.

You see, the peace of God not only guards us, but it also takes us a step further into His blessings.

This does not mean the absence of trials on the outside, but it does mean a quiet confidence in God, regardless of circumstances, people or things.

It is through this peace that we can face the different storms in our lives. It is a gift from God available to both you and me.

Amen.

Let's pray…

Dear Jesus,

Please forgive me of all of my sins.

I know that my sin has separated me from You and I am deserving of death.

I believe that you died for my sins and rose again.

I turn from my sins and I am asking that You come into my life.

Show me how to live my life that is right and pleasing to You.

I accept You as my Lord and Savior.

In Jesus name I pray.