

When Anxiety Won't Go Away: How to Find Peace When Life Is Unresolved | Philippians 4

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Preacher: Simon Lawrenson

[0:00] Good morning. Thanks for coming. It's good to see you. And particularly, I want to say hi to Natalia, who snuck in the back. If you don't know, Natalia is our friend from Ukraine.

So make sure you catch up with her at the end afterwards. It's amazing to see you back. So as Joseph said, as Joe said, we are finishing our studies in the Book of Philippians this morning. And so if you have a Bible, why don't you go ahead and turn there or scroll there. It's chapter four. We're going to start right at the beginning. But before we do, let's just have a word of prayer. Father, thank you for this morning. Lord, thank you for your word, Lord.

And we just want to ask, Lord, that your spirit would be amongst us now, teaching us, Lord, not my words, but your words. And Lord, we pray, Lord, that it will be your words that remain with us. And we pray, Lord, that you would speak to us individually this morning, as well as corporately. Lord, we believe, Lord, that you do speak today. Lord, we believe that you're alive and you're active and you're working among us, Lord.

[1:06] And so, Lord, we ask, Lord, that you'd help us just to put down the things of today, Lord, that might be worrying us or stressing us out. Lord, we pray, Lord, that we would learn to cast those anxieties upon you, Lord, because you care for us, Lord, and to have our eyes fixed upon you.

And so, Lord, help us to do that this morning. And, Lord, we want to thank you for the children's work, Lord. And we ask the same for them as we ask for us, Lord, that you would be at work in them as well, training them and focusing their hearts and molding their hearts towards you. Lord, we want to confess, Lord, that there are some difficult things about a Christian faith, Lord. And sometimes we believe one thing and sometimes our lives reflect something very different. And the struggles and the challenges of the day and the week and the month and maybe even the year sometimes don't add up to what we actually believe. Lord, and we pray this morning, Lord, you would help us to narrow that gap, bridge that gap, and see the one who stands in that gap for us. And so, Lord, we just want to ask you to help us, Lord. Lord, we can't, Lord, if we just open your word and we just read it, Lord, we're no better than anyone else, Lord.

[2:21] And we need you to help us. And so, Lord, just be with us this morning, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen. There is a particular kind of tiredness.

I know that you're like, oh, yeah, from a parent, isn't it? But it's not that type of tiredness. And I know if you're a teacher, going back after six weeks off and only working three days this week, there is still a particular kind of tiredness, isn't it?

But it's not that tiredness I'm talking about either. There is a particular kind of tiredness that comes from trying to hold everything together yourself. Do you know that?

Have you experienced that? Whether it's the relationship that you can't fix, the bank balance that you can't control, the diagnosis, the decision, the waiting, the thing that could go either way. Most of us have run the same experiment. If I could just control this, then I finally I'll be able to do this. Ever run that experiment?

[3:22] Most of us have probably run that experiment enough times to know that it doesn't work. Something else always tips over. And I want to remind you that Paul is writing this letter to the church in Philippi.

And he's writing as a man in prison. And he's waiting to find out whether he'd live or die. Like literally live or die. And he tells the church that he loves, rejoice in the Lord.

Like for me, that's a disconnect, isn't it? Like if I was Paul, I would struggle to write those words. But he says, rejoice always.

Don't be anxious about anything. And then he says, I've just learned to be content. And either that is the most naive thing in the New Testament, or it's the most tested.

And so here's the question that this chapter puts in front of us. I think I put it on the screen. I can't remember. Here we go. Here's the question that this chapter puts in front of us.

[4:30] And the question is this. What if the secret of an unshaken life was never getting control of your circumstances, but instead discovering that Christ is enough when you don't have it?

I hope that challenges you from the get-go. What if the secret of an unshaken life, and this is what we're looking at this morning, what is the secret to an unshaken life?

Is never getting control of your circumstances, but understanding and discovering that Christ is enough when you don't have that control. That's Philippians chapter 4. So let's open it up.

And the first thing he's going to say is stand firm. And everything after this is like, well, how do we do that? How do we stand firm? How do we live the unshakable life? So he says, therefore, my brothers, verse 1. And look, Paul's affection is unmissable.

Whom I love and long for. My joy and my crown stand firm. Thus in the Lord, my beloved. So verse 1 is a kind of like a, it's a continuation of what he's saying.

[5:37] It's not a fresh start. That therefore reaches us back. And the therefore is Philippians chapter 3, verse 20. That's what it's there for. Paul is saying in that verse, he says, our citizenship is from heaven.

Who are we? We're citizens of heaven. And from it, we await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is going to transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

And so because of that, because that is true, because we are citizens in heaven, because we are awaiting a savior who is going to transform us to be like his, by his power, because that is true, stand firm.

That's Paul's argument. Now, what is quite interesting is that the English, in the English translations, at least the ESV, it kind of skirts around some of the Greek that's actually there.

It actually misses some out. That's actually quite helpful. The Greek reads, in this way, stand. It doesn't just say stand firm. It says, in this way, stand.

[6:47] And the word stand means to stand there. In this way, stand there. And I love that because like if you have had children or you have children, and they're kind of like, you know, like my children from time to time always did, you know, they'll be running around and you'd be like, stand there and do not move.

That's what Paul is saying. He's saying, stand there and don't move. He's not just saying stand firm, like we have to dig in, like we have to dig a hole and just sit in it.

He's saying, stand there and don't move. And so that is actually pointing us forward to the rest of this chapter where he's going to say what he's going to say next.

And it's almost like an intro, okay, to what he's going to say as he gives commands to the church in Philippi and to us about how to stand and don't move.

And the first command there is found in verse 2. Look at what he says. He says, And so notice that first command to stand and don't move is presented in a relational context.

[8:17] He says, stand and don't move. And the verse is about two Christian leaders who can't agree. Now, I know that might sound quite a strange thing for two Christian leaders to disagree on something, but I'll let you into a secret.

Sometimes it happens. And what I found interesting and I love about Paul is that here there are literally standing and not budging.

That's what he's getting at. They are standing and not moving. And Paul says, you need to learn to flex a little bit.

Right? I don't think like that's an accident. Paul isn't saying that you need to hold on to your personal preferences and don't move. He is telling these two women to stand and don't move by moving.

Right? And I think this is like one of the most common ways like people in a church can be shaken. It's in unresolved conflict.

[9:21] And so this is a very real danger for churches. And the answer for these two leaders, Paul says, is to agree in the Lord, which doesn't mean identical opinions on every matter.

And also it doesn't mean to agree to disagree. There is nothing agreeable about being so consumed by being right that taking in another perspective isn't even possible. There's nothing right about that. The more we agree to disagree, the more actually we allow truly dangerous beliefs to thrive and become normal. The more we permit ignorance to reign. The more we contribute and condone behavior, that is not okay. And so this is Paul's way of saying, ladies, work it out. Flex a little bit. Move. Stand firm. Don't move by moving. And he gives the reason why they should do that because their names are in the book of life. [10 : 29] Conflict resolution amongst believers isn't a matter of good manners. You can do that quite happily outside of the church.

It's a matter of taking seriously what it means when Paul says that both of you belong to Christ. And so Paul isn't telling us who is right. He hasn't said that. He is telling us the right thing to do and why. But conflict isn't the only way church and Christians can become shaken, can become moved unnecessarily. The command to stand there and don't move is not only outward. It's also inward. And I know that some of you will resonate with what I'm about to say. There is a quiet noise that many of us struggle with. And that is the noise in your own head. That speaks loudest to two o'clock in the morning. [11 : 36] And I'm sure you know that feeling. The house is quiet and everybody is asleep. And suddenly the thing that you've been managing all day is right there in front of you. And maybe it's the diagnosis.

Maybe it's the conversation that you don't know how to have. Maybe it's the child that you're worried about. Or the financial pressures. Or the future that you just don't know about. And that's what Paul turns to with this next command about standing firm.

He says, stand firm, don't move. And he says, look, replace your anxious instability, the thing that is shaking you, with God-centered responses.

Replace your anxious instability with God-centered responses. And the first one is there in verse 4. And he tells us to rejoice in the Lord.

Verse 4. Rejoice in the Lord always, again. And that's repeated just to get our attention. So we don't, like, skip over it. He says, I will say again, rejoice.

[12 : 39] And notice that he says rejoice in the Lord. This is not rejoice in your circumstances. No, it's not rejoice when you finally are up at two o'clock in the morning. And you look at your watch. And now all of a sudden it's six o'clock.

And you manage to drift off anyway. And don't rejoice at that point. Paul says rejoice in the Lord. Not in your circumstances. And actually rejoicing in the Lord is actually the only way always makes sense, isn't it?

Okay, so this is a change of focus. It's easy, isn't it, to focus on the things that are challenging us. Isn't it? Don't tell me I'm the only one. Or the things that are on our minds.

And 2 a.m. is actually the perfect time to do that because there's nothing else going on. And so Paul here is commanding us to replace anxious instability with God-centered responses.

Simply rejoice. Not rejoice that you are awake. Rejoice in the Lord. And then the next thing he says in verse 5 is to respond.

[13 : 51] So rejoice, verse 4. Verse 5, respond. Respond with gentleness. He says, let your reasonableness, and that word is gentleness, be known to everyone.

And then almost startlingly he says, the Lord is at hand or the Lord's near. And so rejoice in the Lord is about changing our focus. And then let your reasonableness is about changing your posture.

The first to rejoice in the Lord is about our inward orientation towards Christ. And then the second, let your reasonableness be made known to everyone, is about our outward orientation towards people.

And Paul says that you're able to do this. Why? Because the Lord is at hand. Now you might ask what that phrase means. Well, I'm glad you've asked because I'm going to tell you.

The phrase, the Lord is at hand, carries both comfort and expectation. Right? So it is comfort because he is near to help.

[14:55] That's what that phrase means. The Lord is near to help. But it's also expectation. He is coming soon. He is near to help.

And he is coming soon. Same thing. And this is the amazing thing, like, you know, about the gospel. We talk about, you know, the gospel, the good news of Jesus and what Jesus did on the cross. It's actually the cross that makes the Lord is at hand more than just wishful thinking. Like, think about it. Like, what is to say as we go through this chapter that this is actually God-centered, gospel-centered Christianity rather than whatever the latest thing or whatever the world, another world religion might say.

Like, like, there's lots of people and lots of places you can go to just say, you know what? If you just sort out your thinking, you'll feel better. And it's true. Like, you can sort out your thinking and you can feel better.

It makes you feel better. You can have a gratitude journal and write all kinds of stuff in your gratitude journal. And I'm not mocking those in any way, shape or form.

[16:08] But you can do those without Jesus. You can rejoice without Jesus. I mean, Southampton fans can't.

But you can rejoice without Jesus. Not truly, probably. And so what makes this more than just wishful thinking?

Well, simply the cross. Because at the cross, God demonstrated that he is not distant or indifferent or unwilling to come near.

Right? In Christ, God came near to us, entered our world of suffering, bore our sin, defeated its power and rose from the dead.

And the cross proves that God has acted decisively to bring us back to himself. And the resurrection proves that Christ is alive and reigning.

[17:12] And so when Paul says the Lord is at hand, it isn't telling anxious Christians just to imagine. Imagine that God might be near.

And I want you to imagine so hard that you get warm and fuzzy about it. He's reminding them of a reality that is already secure through Jesus.

That the God who came near at the cross is the risen Lord who is with his people now and is coming again. And because of that, you don't have to be defensive, aggressive, demanding or grasping.

And again, in the context of standing firm, the idea of reasonableness carries with it this willingness to yield, the willingness to move.

Stand firm, don't move. Oh, but you need to move. You need to yield. Be reasonable. And then look at the third thing he commands.

[18:21] He says in verse 6, do not be anxious about anything. Now, this isn't a suggestion to suppress feeling. Paul is saying don't be anxious about anything.

But look what it's followed with. The alternative is but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

Like Paul doesn't say stop feeling anxious. Like we can feel so anxious that it stops us doing things. But one of the things that it doesn't stop us doing is feeling anxious. Sometimes we can get anxious about being anxious. And I know that in my own life, I have experienced anxiety that has stopped me doing many, many, many things.

But Paul isn't saying stop feeling anxious. And I can't tell you over the years how much I've struggled with this verse. Stop feeling anxious. And I'm like, yeah, but you can't just say that, Paul.

[19:33] Like give me some bones, Paul. Give me some flesh on those bones, Paul. What does that mean? Look, what does he mean? What he simply means is this. He doesn't say stop feeling anxious.

He says take the anxious things to God. That's what you need to do. And so it's not eliminate your fears.

It's just change what you do with your fears. And like, as I read that, aren't you glad that we have a God who is near? Because he's saying, look, you have a God who is near.

So what are you going to do with your anxiety? Well, take it to God. Why? Because he's near. Wouldn't you want to take it to him? That's Paul's suggestion. It's Paul's command is take your anxiety.

Don't worry about your anxiety. Like just cast it before God. And because he is near to help, the next thing Paul says is to make requests from God. Look at it.

[20 : 31] He says, he says, with thanksgiving. With thanksgiving. Let your requests be made known to God. And so this thanksgiving comes, notice, inside the prayer, not after the outcome.

Yeah? It comes inside the prayer. Prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. We're not thanking God because the problem got solved.

We might be, but that's not the reason. We're thanking him while it's still unresolved. Like that is a skill, isn't it? To thank God while the problem is still there.

Why? Well, because thanksgiving simply reorientates us towards what is already true about him, not as what is true about our circumstance or us. Anxiety says, and this is draining, anxiety says, I've got to hold this together.

And if I don't hold this together, my life is over. That is the basic human-centered response. You trace it all the way back to the Garden of Eden.

[21 : 45] I'm going to go and hide, which is Adam's response, or I'm going to blame my wife, which is also Adam's response. Anxiety says, I've got to hold this together.

I've got to look good. I've got to be good. I've got to achieve. I've got to do this. I've got to do that. And if I don't, then I'm exposed. But prayer says, God, this is yours.

Here's what I need. And that's God-centered. That's a God-centered response. And I can't tell you that's easy. I can't tell you that's easy to do. And so Paul's point is, is that to move, to change, where you take your concerns.

Where do most of us take our concerns? Well, to ourselves, or to our spouse, or to our friends, or to our parents, or to our boss.

And Paul says, actually, there is one who is closer to you than your problems. So take it to him.

[22 : 53] And then in verse 7, it says that the peace of God, which is the promised result, with a caveat that I'm going to come back to. And the peace of God, and it's carefully worded, not, and God will fix your circumstance.

But the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. That word guard in the Greek is a military term for soldiers who are standing there and not moving.

So if you ever want a picture of someone who would stand there and not move, you know, go up to Buckingham Palace or Horse Guards Parade, and you'll see people who are standing there and not moving.

And so Paul uses that as an example. But I also want you to note that none of those guards, if you picture one of those lifeguards, or Grenadier guards, or whoever they may be, and they're standing there, none of those guards, just by being there, remove the threat outside of the gate.

Like if you've seen those TikToks or whatever they are, videos, reels, of Horse Guards Parade, and you have these people who come up and maybe kind of coax the horse, or tease the horse, or make fun of the guard.

[24 : 16] Like just by being there, the guard hasn't removed the threat. The threat is still there. The guard's job simply is to be the last line of defense at that place, so that the people inside that place are not the last line of defense.

And that's why, and this is what Paul is promising. God's peace doesn't remove the threat. God's peace doesn't remove the circumstance.

And the reason that Christ can be your last line of defense is that he has already stood in the place where you'd have been overrun. He's already stood there.

The cross is where the real threat has already been dealt with, right? We can spend our lives like worrying about all kinds of things that might happen to us, losing our job or our health, our reputation or our money, our relationships, even our lives.

And some of those things are genuinely painful and genuinely frightening. But under all of them is a far greater reality that we will one day stand before a holy God and we cannot save ourselves.

[25 : 39] We cannot save ourselves from the judgment that our sin deserves. That is the ultimate threat, isn't it? And this is where the gospel is so radically different. At the cross, Jesus didn't simply come to give us a technique for staying calm when life gets difficult.

He didn't tell us to go and box breathe, however helpful that might be. Or doing some mindfulness coloring, however helpful that might be.

He came to stand between us and the judgment that we deserve. He took our sin upon himself. He bore God's judgment in our place. He died the death that we deserve.

So that those who trust in him can receive the righteousness that could never be produced by themselves. And then he rose from the dead, proving that sin and death had been defeated. And so look, if you don't know Jesus today, let me tell you what's on offer. Jesus doesn't simply offer you a religious calm.

[26 : 48] He offers you friendship with God. He offers you friendship with God. Like that is crazy. He doesn't promise that nothing painful will ever happen to you.

He doesn't promise you that you're never going to lose your job. You're never going to get sick. You're never going to experience grief or walk through suffering. Christianity is not Buddhism in Christian language.

Jesus offers you himself. Think about that. He offers to stand between you and the judgment that you cannot withstand.

The thing that is going to move you. Jesus says, I'm going to stand between that. He offers forgiveness instead of condemnation. Righteousness instead of guilt.

Friendship instead of separation. Life instead of death. And because he has already dealt with the greatest threat at the cross. You don't have to face everything else as though you're facing it alone.

[27 : 54] That's what Paul is saying. He's saying the Lord is at hand. That's not wishful thinking. The God who came near in the person of Jesus who went to the cross for you stood in your place.

And rose from the dead. And he is not a distant God. He is near. And if you belong to Christ. Like the thing that could ultimately destroy you has already been dealt with.

Your circumstances may shake you. But they cannot have the final word. Your future is secure. Not because life will always be safe.

But because Jesus has already stood between you and the judgment that you deserve. Jesus didn't simply come to stand behind you.

While you face your greatest threat. At the cross Jesus stood between you and it. So the cross means the worst thing that could ever happen to you has already been dealt with in Christ.

[29 : 00] The worst thing. The ultimate threat. And so Paul isn't saying. Stop worrying. Try harder. To be peaceful. He's saying.

When life is shaking you. And it will. Don't let your circumstances dictate your response. Stand firm in the Lord by turning your attention to Christ.

Your posture towards people. And your anxieties towards God. And then verse 8. Paul turns to the mind.

After he's turned with the heart. He now turns with the mind. And he's going to tell us to rehearse praiseworthy things. Rehearse praiseworthy things. Finally brothers.

Whatever is true. Whatever is honorable. Whatever is just. And pure. And lovely. And commendable. Paul. If there's any excellence. If there's anything worthy of praise. Think about those things.

[30 : 02] It's easy to touch this list. Of course. From the previous verse. But I want you to think about it. Is it the same movement. Or the same thought. Paul is saying that anxiety.

Often runs in a loop. And you'll notice. If you struggle with anxiety. In any way. Shape or form. You know that anxiety runs in a loop. Of rehearsed.

Worst case scenarios. My wife is. Laurie is very good at reminding me.

That. Some stuff hasn't happened yet. And it probably won't. But that's what anxiety does. It gives you a loop. Of the worst case.

What's the worst case? And then what's the worst case? And you're like. Man it's three o'clock by now. What's the worst case? And you go. Worst case. Worst case. Worst case. And you wake up for work.

[30 : 59] The next morning. And you feel exhausted. And you say to. I say to Laurie. I didn't sleep well. And she's like. I know. And she was like. What were you thinking about? And I'm thinking. Look. Worst case.

And she's like. Yeah. But it hasn't happened. And it probably won't. I'm like. Where were you at two o'clock? She says.

I was lying awake. Hoping you'd go to sleep. But look. This is the same thought. Right? Paul is saying. The mind needs. A different diet. Not just a single prayer.

It needs a different diet. And so. What are you thinking about? Are you thinking about things that are. Worthy. Worthy things.

That's why he says in verse 9. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me.

Practice these things. Practice these things.

[31 : 57] Practice these things. If. If. If. If you're a musician.

Like I'm a musician. I've been a musician. For. I'm a student of maths. 49 years. And you'll know. To be any. To be any good. Actually at anything.

You need to give a chunk of time. Every single day. To it. To it. Don't you. If you're an athlete. You have to do the same thing. What. What do you do? You have to practice. And you have to practice. Regularly.

Daily. And that's what Paul is saying. He's saying practice. Practice thinking about worthy things. Now for you.

That could be. Again. Keeping a journal. And you're writing about worthy things. And you're meditating about worthy things. For some of you. That might be. Rehearsing now. On the way to work. And you've got your. Your radio on.

[32 : 55] And you've got some worship music on. And you're. You're singing. The top of your voice. With the windows down. Without a care in the world. That's one way for me.

To just to get traffic out of my way. But look what he says. He says. What you have learned. And received.

And heard. And seen in me. Practice these things. And the God of peace. Will be. With you. Now can I just tell you. What Paul is not saying here. Paul is. Paul is not promising.

That prayer. Removes. Financial pressure. He's not saying. That prayer. Will resolve. Family conflict. He's not saying.

That prayer. Guarantees. The outcome. We. We want. Like. How many of us. Have prayed for some really stupid stuff. Over the years. And we think. Lord. Thank you. For not answering my prayer. Right.

[33 : 53] What Paul is promising. Is a. Is a guarded heart. In the middle. Of the unresolved thing. Right. And just. Get your head around that. It's a guarded heart.

In the middle. Of an unresolved thing. We. We love resolution. Don't we. Unless you're a jazz musician. Like I am. We love resolutions. Right. If you're into jazz. You hate resolutions. But we won't go there. Right.

You like things. Just being settled. Done. Finished. Close the door. Walk away. Resolution. Paul is saying. Look. There is a.

There is a. A. A. A place of understanding. A place of learning. Paul is promising. That.

You can have a heart. That is. Guarded. By the peace of God. As the one. Who is standing watch. Over your life. Right in the middle.

[34 : 48] Of that unresolved thing. Not after it. Not in the warm up to it. But right there in the middle. And look. This distinction.

Really. Really matters. I believe. That God does miracles. No amens there. Should I say it again? I believe. That God does miracles today.

Right. But Paul isn't saying that. He isn't saying that if I pray right. The problem goes away. He's saying.

If you can just utter one single word of prayer. I'll promise to stand watch over your life. No matter what you're going through. That's what he's promising. He's saying.

I'm going to be your last line of defense. So you don't have to. You don't have to. You don't have to. So what kind of. So what does this kind of prayer do?

[35 : 44] Well simply. It moves our posture. From relying upon. Me. To relying upon. Him. And again.

That's not going to happen overnight. Because it takes. Practice. It moves our posture. To think. I've got to. Do this.

I've got to hold it together. I've got to hold the fort. To relying on God. But look.

There is a. A form of instability. That isn't about. A single anxious moment. It's about.

An entire way. Of relating. To what we have. And don't have. And so. Paul turns. To that last. And it's here.

[36:40] That he makes. One of the most. Misquoted statements. In the whole. New Testament. He says. In verse 10. I rejoice. The Lord greatly.

That now. At length. You have received. Your concern. You have received. Your concern. For me. You are indeed. Concerned for me. But you had. No opportunity. Not. I'm speaking. Of being in need. For I have learned. In whatever situation. I am. To be content. And so. Paul is. Thanking the church. For the gift.

That they had. Previously sent. Through. Epaphroditus. But he's careful. He's careful. With how he. Thanks them. He says. In verse 11. Not that I am.

Speaking. Of being. In need. For I have. Learned. In whatever situation. I am. To be content. Like. He isn't.

[37:32] Falsely modest. About needing. The gift. He's saying. Thanks for the gift. But whether the gift. Was given. Or the gift. Was not given.

I'm still standing firm. The fact. That you gave the gift. Doesn't make me. Stand firm. More. The fact. That you. May not have. Sent the gift.

Or that I had a need. Doesn't make me. Stand firm. Less. Yes. The lack of the gift. Wouldn't have shaken me. Paul is saying. And in verse 12.

Is absolutely remarkable. He says. I know how to be brought low. I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance. I have learned the secret. Of facing plenty.

And hunger. And abundance. And need. So. Both directions. Notice. Both directions. Are named as tests. Right. Lack.

[38:30] And abundance. Look. We. We. We tend. Really. To. Think. Only. Of. Lack. As a threat. To contentment. Don't we. But Paul says.

Abundance. Tests. Contentment. Just as much. As lack. Does. And. When we have little. We know. That we need God. And when we have plenty. We can quietly. Convince ourselves.

That we don't need God. Right. We think how quickly. We adapt to. Comfort. You know. The. We've all noticed.

That the weather has changed. This week. Right. Apart from today. But we've noticed. That the weather has changed. And. 20 degrees.

Used to feel. Pretty comfortable. But now. The thermostat reads. 19. And you may be. Reaching for the controls. Why? Or simply.

[39:27] Because of the fact. That comfort. Has a remarkable ability. To turn yesterday's luxury. Into today's necessities. And that can happen spiritually. We can have a. A warm home.

Food in the fridge. Money in the bank. A secured job. Good health. A comfortable church. And without ever. Consciously. Rejecting God. We can gradually. Stop needing him.

Prayer becomes. Less urgent. Generosity. Becomes more difficult. We haven't necessarily. Become hostile to Jesus. We've simply become.

Comfortable enough. To live without. Much dependence on him. So here's an uncomfortable. Question for you. For those of you.

Are comfortable. Has God given you enough. To enjoy him. Or has he given you enough. To forget him. Is your comfort.

[40:25] Making you more grateful. More generous. And more dependent on Christ. Or simply more comfortable. Without him. And perhaps the test of abundance. Isn't whether.

You have enough. But whether what you have. Is making you need Jesus less. And that phrase. At the beginning of verse 12. He says.

I know how. That's initiation language. Right. He's saying. Hey guys. I've learned. The secret. Which means.

This was an instant. And it didn't come easy. It was learned. Over time. Through both kinds. Of circumstance. I've lived. He said.

In times of plenty. And in times of lack. And only by living. Through both. I've learned. The secret. Of relying. On God. In both. And he gives us.

[41:19] One of the most. Misquoted verses. In the entire New Testament. Here it is. Verse 13. He says. I can do all things. Through him. Who strengthens me. Now. We've read.

The book of Acts. And Paul's. CV. Doesn't marry up. With that verse. Does it? His CV.

Includes. Beatings. Imprisonment. Shipwrecks. Hunger. Sleepless nights. And people trying to kill him. He has. No idea. Seemingly. How to make a shipwreck.

Go well. In fact. Paul's relationship. With boats. Was spectacularly bad. He. He couldn't get out of prison.

Just whenever he fancied. He couldn't. Avoid being beaten. With rods. He couldn't stop people. Misunderstanding him. He couldn't persuade. Anyone.

[42:12] And. Or everyone. To become Christians. He couldn't. Make the thorn. In his flesh. Disappear. Despite asking God. Three times. For it to go. And so.

If we know that. Then what does this verse mean? Well look. This verse doesn't mean. That Paul could do anything. That he set his mind to. It means.

Paul. Had learned that. Through Christ. He could face. Anything. God. Is going to put in front of him. If everything else. In this chapter.

Is true. About God. Then whatever else. Is next. Paul. Is confident. That he could face. Paul. Paul is not making. A claim.

About limitless. Capability. He is making. A claim. About limitless. Sufficiency. In any circumstance. Going back to the text.

[43:08] You'll see that. The all things. In verse 13. Is defined by the. Any and every circumstance. In verse 12. So it's not that. I can achieve anything.

But. I've learned. That whatever circumstance. Christ allows me to face. He will give me. The strength. To remain unshakable. And then finally.

In verse 14. Paul moves on. To tell us. About releasing. Your resources. Verse 14. He says. Yet it was kind of you. To share my trouble.

And you. Philippians. Yourself. Know. That in the beginning. Of the gospel. When I left Macedonia. No church. Entered into partnership. With me. In giving and receiving. Except you only. And even in Thessalonica.

You sent me. Help for my needs. Once and again. And so Paul is commending. The Philippians gift. To him. He says. Not that I seek the gift. But I seek the fruit.

[44:07] That increases to your credit. I have received. Full payment. And more. I am well supplied. Having received. From Epaphroditus. The gift that you sent. A fragrant offering. A sacrifice. Acceptable.

And pleasing to God. And my God. Will supply. Every need. Of yours. According to his riches. In glory. In Christ Jesus. To our God. And Father. Be glory forever.

Amen. Look. And it's worth noting. That verse 19. Another misquoted verse. Sits directly beside. A discussion about their. Generosity. And the point that I think Paul is making.

Is that being truly content. And relying on God. Actually frees you. To be generous. We sung about it this morning. Didn't we? I am set free. Set free to do what?

Well. Look. If everything has been given to you. By God. And it's not dependent upon you. And you don't have to hold the fort. That's incredibly freeing.

[45:08] Because our normal natural. Without our God response. Is actually to cling to what we have. Isn't it? It's like I need control. I have to have control.

I have to have security. I need to keep things. And if I don't. Well what's going to happen? But practicing. Practicing. Practicing. Practicing generosity.

Actually releases. Not just the resources God has given. But releases the fear. Of losing control. And so Paul says in verse 21.

Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. And the saints greet you. Especially those of Caesar's household. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Be with your spirit. Look. As we. As we close this book. Let me say again. That Paul isn't offering a technique.

[46:10] For getting your circumstances under control. Right? He's offering the presence of Christ. In the middle.

Of circumstances. That you cannot control. He's offering the presence of Christ. Look.

For some of you. That might be this morning. That you're waiting for something to be resolved. And perhaps that's. What you've been asking God for. Lord change this.

Fix this. Remove that. Bring this. Take this away. Give me an answer. Make this better. And we should pray those prayers. Because we still believe God does miracles.

But Paul says. Let your requests be made known to God. Right? Bring him the thing that is frightening you. What is that thing that is frightening you this morning?

[47:13] Bring him the thing that you cannot fix. What is that thing that you cannot fix this morning? And notice what Paul actually promises. He doesn't promise that the situation is going to be resolved.

He promises that the peace of God will guard your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus. And that's a very different promise, isn't it? Because sometimes God changes the situation.

Sometimes, at least for a while, the situation remains exactly where it was. Like the diagnosis is still there. The relationship is still complicated. The financial pressure is still real.

The answer hasn't come. The future is still uncertain. But you don't have to hold it together this morning. So what is God offering you this morning?

Well, not necessarily an explanation. Not necessarily an immediate change in your circumstances. Not a promise that everything will work out exactly as you want it to.

[48:13] Listen, as we move into a time of worship, God is offering himself. He's offering himself. And so you can bring him your anxiety.

You can bring him your unanswered questions. You can bring him the thing that you cannot fix. And then you can say, Jesus, I don't have to hold this together.

You are here. You are enough. And while this remains unresolved, I trust you to stand guard over my heart and my mind. And if this morning you're carrying something that you don't want to carry alone, I would love to pray with you.

And I'm going to be at the back of the room during this next song. So come and find me. You don't have to have the right words or everything figured out.

Just come. We want to pray. We want to worship. We want to fix our minds on the one who is not promised to take everything away. But he has promised and he has stood in the gap and he will stand in the gap again.

[49:26] Let's pray. Father, thank you that you have freed us. You freed us from the need to be heard.

Lord, you freed us from the need to hold it together, to be strong. You freed us from people's opinions and perspectives.

Lord, thank you, Lord, that as we stand before you, because you have gone before us, because you went to the cross, because you went into the grave and out again, we're free.

We're free to give our stuff away and not be concerned. We're free to bring our anxieties to you and not be worried that you would think that we are weak and feeble and we don't have things together. Lord, thank you for freeing us. Lord, thank you that you are near to us. Thank you that we can bring our struggles to you.

[50:30] Lord, would you help us, Lord, to have God-centered responses to the trials of life. Lord, would you speak to us even now, Lord, as we sing.

Lord, that your desire is to come and be made known to us, that you offer us yourself rather than a situation. Lord, we praise you.

Lord, we thank you. In Jesus' name, amen, amen. Thank you.

Amen.