

-Save This Page as a PDF-

Do Not be Anxious about Anything 4: 4-6

Do not be anxious about anything DIG: Do you know of anyone who embodies the qualities in these verses? How do these qualities relate to Paul's peace objectives in 4:2-3 and 7-9? Is joy an emotion? Why or why not? What is our spiritual stability directly related to? Why is thanksgiving such an important component in the prayer life of a believer? Why is gratitude so important in the prayer life of a believer?

REFLECT: On a scale of 1 (I'm going nuts) to 10 (I could lead a stress management seminar) what is your anxiety level now? Why? What in these verses could help relieve that stress? What is your lifeline to your relationship with ADONAI? Why should believers be calm and not be so anxious? Is prayer the first priority in your life, or a last resort? Is there any prayer of yours that is too trivial for God to hear?

The only sure reliable, steadfast, unchanging source of joy is God.

The question naturally arises as to how **Paul's** command to **stand firm in the Lord** (**to see link click [B](#) - Stand Firm in the Lord**) was to be applied to our everyday lives. **His** answer, introduced by the phrase **in this way**, can be seen in **verses 2-9**. He lists **seven basic, practical principles** that lead to spiritual stability: **(1)** living in **harmony (4:2-3)**, **(2)** maintaining a spirit of **joy (4:4)**, **(3)** maintaining **a gentle spirit (4:5a)**, **(4)** **being calm** in every situation **(4:6a)**, **(5)** reacting to problems with **prayer and petition (4:6b)**, **(6)** thinking about **godly virtues (4:8)**, and **(7)** obeying **God's** standard **(4:9)**.¹⁷²

(2) Rejoice in the Lord always (1:18, 2:17-18 and 28, and 4:10). This verse expresses the theme of the book of **Philippians**, that we are to **rejoice in the Lord** (see **[Bf](#) - Rejoice in the Lord**). **Joy** is such a vitally important factor in believers' spiritual stability that **Paul** repeats **his** command for emphasis: **and again I say, rejoice (4:4 NIV)**. Evidently it's not that easy to be **joyful**. **The Philippians** needed to rise above **their** circumstances.

Some, wrongly identifying **joy** as a purely human emotion, find **Paul's** twice repeated command to **rejoice** confusing. How can we be commanded to feel a certain way and produce an emotion? However, **joy** is not an emotion; it is a deep-down confidence that **ADONAI** is in control of everything for **His** children and **His** own glory, and thus, all is ultimately well, no matter what our circumstances are. Humanly, the worse our circumstances are, the harder it is to **rejoice**. But we are commanded to **rejoice** nonetheless. **Rejoice** (Greek: *chairete*) is a present imperative, calling us to the continual, habitual practice of rejoicing. Neither **Paul's** house arrest nor **the Philippians'** trials should surpass **their joy**.

It is true that we often cannot find reason to **rejoice** in our specific circumstances. Certainly the general wickedness, sorrow, misery, and death in the world evoke no **joy**. Nor are people a reliable source of **joy**, since they can change, hurt, and disappoint. The only sure reliable, steadfast, unchanging source of **joy** is **God**. That is why **Paul** commands us to **rejoice in the Lord**. The phrase **in the Lord** introduces an important principle: Spiritual stability is directly related to how a person thinks about **ADONAI**. Therefore, knowledge of **Him** is the key to **rejoicing**. Those who know the great truths about **YHVH** find it easy to **rejoice**; those with little knowledge of **Him** find it difficult to **rejoice**. **ADONAI** gave the **Psalms** to Isra'el in poetic form so they could be easily memorized and set to music. The first **three verses** of the book of **Psalms** promise blessings to those who **meditate** on **God's Torah**. **Blessed are those who reject the advice of the wicked, or associate with sinners, or sit in the company with mockers! Their delight is in ADONAI's Torah, and in His Torah they meditate day and night. They are like trees planted by streams of water, they bear their fruit in season, their leaves never wither, everything they do succeeds** (see **Psalms Ag - The Torah is a Tree of Wisdom**).

It is from that knowledge of **God** and repeated repetition and singing of **His** nature that our **joy** flows. So deep was **the apostles'** knowledge of **ADONAI's** character and purposes that even suffering for **Yeshua Messiah** was a cause for **joy**: **So, they left the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they were considered worthy to be dishonored on account of His Name (Acts 5:41; cf. Matthew 5:10-12; Luke 6:22-23).**

Moses' father-in-law Jethro rejoiced over all the goodness which ADONAI had done to Isra'el, in delivering them from the hand of the Egyptians (Exodus 18:9, cf. Deuteronomy 26:11). After the dedication of the Temple, **Solomon sent the people to their tents, rejoicing and glad of heart**

because of the goodness that ADONAI had shown to David and to Solomon and to His people Isra'el (Second Chronicles 7:10).

Today, we rejoice in our **redemption**, the fact that we have been purchased and set free (see the commentary on **Hosea**). In **First Samuel 2:1**, **Hannah** prayed and said: **My heart rejoices in ADONAI; my horn has been restored by ADONAI; my mouth speaks boldly against my enemies because I rejoice in Your salvation.** In **Psalms 13:5**, **David** confidently asserted: **I have trusted in Your lovingkindness, my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation** (cf. **Psalms 21:1, 35:9, 40:16; Isaiah 61:10; Habakkuk 3:18**). In **Psalms 71:23**, **David** rejoiced: **My lips will shout for joy - when I sing praises to You - and my soul, which You have redeemed.** Another reason for us to rejoice is that **ADONAI** has promised to **supply all of our needs.** **Paul** reminded the **Philippians** that **God will supply all [their] need according to the riches His glory in Messiah Yeshua (4:19).** The psalmist, in the counterpart to that promise in the TaNaKh, wrote: **For ADONAI, God, is a sun and a shield; ADONAI bestows favor and honor; He will not withhold anything good from those who do what is right (Ps 84:11).**

Paul rejoiced because of the privilege of serving **ADONAI.** To **Timothy** he wrote: **And I thank the One who has given me strength, the Messiah Yeshua, our Lord, that He considered me trustworthy enough to put me in His service (First Timothy 1:12).** He also rejoiced when **God's truth** was proclaimed, even by flawed messengers (**1:18**). **Paul's** declaration to the **Philippians** earlier in his letter: **To live is Messiah and to die is gain (1:21),** reveals that even the prospect of **death** could not quench his joy. The confidence **that neither death nor life, neither angels nor other heavenly rulers, neither what exists nor what is coming, neither powers above nor powers below, nor any created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God which comes to us through the Messiah Yeshua, our Lord (Romans 8:38-39)** produces both deep-seated joy and spiritual stability.

(3) Let your gentle spirit be known to everyone (4:5a Greek). **Gentle** (Greek: *epieikes*) **spirit** has a richer meaning than any single English word can convey. As a result, commentators and Bible versions vary widely in how they translate it. Sweet reasonableness, generosity, goodwill, friendliness, magnanimity, charity toward the faults of others, mercy toward the failures of others, indulgence of the failures of others, leniency, bigheartedness, moderation, forbearance, and gentleness are some of the attempts to capture the rich meaning of *epieikes*.

Perhaps the best corresponding English word is *graciousness* – the graciousness of humility that produces the patience to endure injustice, disgrace, and mistreatment without retaliation, bitterness, or vengeance. It is contentment.

Gracious humility runs counter to the cult of self-love that was rampant in ancient society, and is rampant in modern society as well. But focusing on self-love, self-esteem, and self-fulfillment leads only to greater and greater instability and **anxiety**. But those whose focus is not on themselves cannot be knocked off balance by inequity, injustice, unfair treatment, lies, or humiliation. We can say with **Paul . . . I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I find myself (4:11)**. Spiritual stability belongs to the graciously humble.

(4) There is no greater source of spiritual stability than the confidence that **the Lord is near**. And those who delight themselves in **His** holy power, **love**, and wisdom, and grow in their deep knowledge of **Him** by studying and meditating on **His Word** will live by the foundation of that truth and be spiritually stable. Because of the presence of **ADONAI**, we are **not to be anxious about anything (4:6a NIV)**. Given the realities of opposition to the Gospel from those outside the church **(1:27-30)**, the potential dangers of **false teachers** who promote a return to **the Torah (3:2-6)**, the presence of those who walk as **enemies of the cross of Messiah (3:18-19)**, and the internal conflict between **Euodia and Syntyche (4:2-3)**, the presence of **anxiety** would be understandable. Nevertheless, **Paul's** words remind us of **Yeshua's** teaching on the Sermon on the Mount (see **The Life of Christ Dt - Do Not Worry about Your Life, What You will Eat or Drink, or What You will Wear**).¹⁷³



(5) As Matthew Harmon relates in his commentary *Philippians*, instead of being

anxious, Paul instructs believers to **present your requests to God by prayer and petition (4:6b NIV)**. It's not as if **ADONAI** is unaware of our wants and needs even if we do not verbalize them to **Him**. After all, **the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And the One who searches hearts knows exactly what the Spirit is thinking, because His pleadings for God's people according to the will of God"** (Romans 8:26-27). Since Paul has previously commanded the **Philippians not to be anxious about anything (4:6a NIV)**, it follows that the requests in view here include **anything** that might produce anxiety. Even the smallest of matters can be brought before **God**, who cares about even the little things in life. Sometimes people are taught not to "bother" **God** with small or self-oriented requests. This is false humility. Even the smallest of matters can be brought before **God**, who cares about even the little things in life. Sometimes people are taught not to "bother" **God** with small or self-oriented requests. This is false humility.

Notice that these **requests** are to be **presented to God**. Our tendency can be to make our **requests/needs** to others, though often they take the form of complaints. Believers are absolutely called to **bear one another's burdens, and in this way you fulfill the Torah's true meaning, which the Messiah upholds (6:2 CJB)**. But often we can seek out help from others while neglecting to **present** our **requests** before **God Himself**. Sometimes this reluctance is rooted in the unbelief that **God** doesn't care about our **requests**, or that we don't need **Him** because we can take care of ourselves. Regardless, to expand on this idea, Paul identifies **the circumstances, the means**, and **the attitude** with which we should **present our requests**.

The circumstances are direct: **in every situation (4:6c NIV)**. This reference to **everything** parallels to the **anything** of the previous clause (**4:6a**). In other words, we should **not be anxious about anything**; but instead, **in everything** make our **requests known to God**. It is important to note that Paul excludes *nothing* as a legitimate matter of prayer, as if some matters are simply too trivial to bring before the **God** of the universe. Make no mistake, ADONAI wants us to pray for big and important things, but **He** also wants us to pray about even the small things that threaten to make us **anxious**, such as the details of everyday life.

The means of making our **requests known to God** is **by prayer and petition (4:6d NIV)**. This combination of **prayer and petition** is common in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures) and occurs in the B'rit Chadashah

as well. **Paul** calls for **prayers and petitions** to be offered **for all the people (First Timothy 2:1)**. Later in that same letter he describes the righteous widow, who **continues in prayers and petitions night and day (First Timothy 5:5)**. While the word **prayer** (Greek: *proseuche*) has the more general sense of addressing **God**, **supplication** (Greek: *deesis*) has the more specific sense of an *urgent request to meet a need, exclusively addressed to God*. Thus, in one sense the combination of these two terms can be distinguished from each other, but in another sense we need to understand that the effect of these two terms is more for emphasis than distinction.

The attitude with which we should make our **requests known to God** is **with thanksgiving (4:6e NIV)**. The noun (Greek: *eucharistia*) refers to *the expression of gratitude*. In one sense it's ironic that this is the only occurrence of this word in **Philippians**, which is soaked with **thanksgiving** and *gratitude*. This **thanksgiving** is rooted in the character of **ADONAI** who is sovereign, faithful, wise, good, and generous. But it is also connected with the act of making **the requests themselves**. The goal of our prayer life is to align our **prayers** to **God's** will. Sometimes **ADONAI** says, "Yes," sometimes **God** says, "No," and sometimes **the Lord** says, "Not now." As we make our **requests known to God**, we should **thank Him** in advance because by faith we believe that **God** is our loving **Father** and in **His** perfect timing, will answer according to **His** glory and our good.

For many believers and churches, **prayer** is not the first priority, but the last resort. As long as things happen according to our plans and desires, we often see little reason to **pray**. Biblical faith, however, sees **prayer** not as a last resort but as the passionate and persistent integration of human desires, hopes, and fears into the redemptive purposes of **God**. **He** seems to use our **anxieties** to drive us to **prayer** when our comfort will not. Therefore, **prayer** plays an essential role in the life of the believer and the church. In most cases the revival of **God's people** and the awakening of sinners from their spiritual deadness are connected with **God** first moving **His people** to **pray** in anticipation of **His** action. A prayerless life is a sign of a self-sufficient person; a **prayerful** life is a sign of a **God-dependent** person.

A key component of a **prayerful** life is **thanksgiving**, and *gratitude* is far more important than most people realize. When **Paul** describes humanity's rebellion against **God**, he roots it in ingratitude. **Because, although they know who God is, they do not glorify Him as God or thank Him; On the contrary, they have become futile once God is eliminated from their thinking. Claiming to be wise, they have become fools (Romans 1:21)**. This might seem like a shocking

claim, but fundamental to our rebellion is a failure to be *grateful* to **God** for who **He** is and what **He** has done for us. In fact, *gratitude* should form the very basis of our entire life. **And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Yeshua, giving thanks to God the Father through Him (Colossians 3:17).** In fact, a lack of *gratitude* reflects a lack of understanding of the Gospel. Where gratitude is lacking the Gospel is not only misunderstood but misapplied. How can we not be *grateful* to **God the Father** for **His love** and mercy shown to us? How can we not be grateful to **God the Son** for dying the death we should have died? How can we not be *grateful* for **the Spirit of God** who produces **His** fruit in our lives and empowers us to reflect the image of **Yeshua Messiah**?¹⁷⁴

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for **Your love** and care for me! **Your** steadfast **love** is always there to provide for my comfort, protection and help. **Your love** is full of wisdom and mercy, and I know that I can always run to **You** for help and guidance with my struggles and trials. **Cast all your worries on Him, for He cares for you (First Peter 5:7).** It is so comforting in times of trial and in good times to remember how faithful **You** are. **This I recall to my heart - therefore I have hope: Because of the mercies of ADONAI we will not be consumed, for His compassions never fail (Lam 3:22).** **Your** never-failing compassion gives peace and joy to the heart of my soul. **You** are always watching and listening, ready to help and to comfort. **You** guide, protect and **sustain** me. **Cast your burden on ADONAI, and He will sustain you. (Psalms 55:22a).** **Your** eyes are always watching carefully over me for I am precious in your sight O heavenly **Father.** **Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them shall fall to the ground apart from your Father's consent. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not fear; you are worth more than many sparrows (Matthew 10:29-30).** Thank **You** that when my mind is fixed on **You**, I will be filled with **Your** perfect peace! **You** are so worthy of all my love! In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*