

Philippians 4:1-9

Introduction – Staying in Tune Spiritually: Guitars, pianos and all musical instruments have a tendency to go out of tune. With most instruments, every time you play, you have to check them just to see how far they've gotten out of whack. But if you stay on it, re-tuning day after day, they don't normally go out all that much. We're the same way in that we need to "stay in tune with Jesus" by keeping our thought life and attitudes in the right place.

To stay in tune with Jesus, our thoughts and our attitudes need to be repeatedly adjusted.

4:1 Transitional verse. Therefore points back. So ("thus" or "in this manner") points forward to our present passage. What follows shows us how. This is how we stand fast in the Lord.

4:2 We need to be of the same mind. This is a common emphasis for Paul. Two big points:

- He is not referring to doctrinal differences. Whenever those come up, he is more than willing to take sides and set the matter straight.
- He is not referring to someone involved in some kind of scandalous sin. Again, if that were the case, he would certainly do whatever was needed in order to right the wrong – to get the person back on the right track.

In this case, the matter is probably some personal disagreement – some inability for these two women to get along. It's probably some petty argument, but in a church, little arguments can lead to big problems because anything and everything can eventually have spiritual roots and spiritual consequences. Paul knows how important unity it is in any church and for the good of any ministry. He's already brought it up in this letter before now.

***Php 1:27 NKJV** Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,*

***Php 2:2 NKJV** fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*

4:3 **True companion** "true yokefellow" (KJV), "true partner" (NLT); possibly a proper name "Syzygus" or a creative term for someone who worked side-by-side with Paul. Luke and others have been suggested, but we really are not sure. At any rate, this person is asked to help out.

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- **Application:** Our relationships with others may need constant adjustment or "retuning" to keep us right with the Lord individually.

4:4 **Joy in Philippians:** The words “joy” and “rejoice” occur frequently in Philippians. Paul is making a pretty strong point about joy here in this book. Let’s review all the different places.

- **Philippians 1:4**
- **Philippians 1:25-26**
- **Philippians 2:2**
- **Philippians 2:16-18**
- **Philippians 2:28**
- **Philippians 3:1**
- **Philippians 3:3**
- **Philippians 4:1**
- **Philippians 4:4**
- **Philippians 4:10**

In putting this emphasis on joy and rejoicing, Paul is not unique or original. The Psalms, for example, use similar words of encouragement dozens if not over 100 times. For example:

***Psa 5:11 NKJV** But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You;
Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them;
Let those also who love Your name
Be joyful in You.*

***Psa 35:9 NKJV** And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord;
It shall rejoice in His salvation.*

And remember this passage from the apostle Peter:

***First Peter 1:6-9 NKJV**⁶In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,⁸ whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,⁹ receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.*

To stay in tune with Jesus, our thoughts and our attitudes need to be repeatedly adjusted.

- Christian joy is one of those qualities that may need to be adjusted in order to keep us right with the Lord. This is not a mindless, air-headed quality, but a deep understanding of who Christ is and who we are in Him.

4:5 **Gentleness** = selflessness, reasonableness, the opposite of a self-seeking, self-promoting attitude; “your sweet reasonableness” (Matthew Arnold)

The Lord is at hand This can be understood two ways:

- 1) The Lord is near to all of us, meaning He is present with us; He is in our midst. Therefore, we should shy away from a self-seeking or self-promoting frame of mind. The disciples obviously felt embarrassed when Jesus caught them arguing over which of them was the greatest.
- 2) The Lord is at hand, in the sense of “He is coming soon.” The NLT actually translates this verse as follows:

Php 4:5 NLT *Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.*

Christ’s return should be a motivation to live a holy life. It should be a purifying hope within the heart of every Christian. John puts it this way:

1Jn 3:2-3 NKJV ²*Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.* ³*And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*

To stay in tune with Jesus, our thoughts and our attitudes need to be repeatedly adjusted.

- Reminding ourselves of the Lord’s return can keep us in tune with Him.

4:6-7 **Be anxious for nothing.** Here Paul explains that prayer is the cure for anxiety. What stands out is that the sentence is in a command form. In other words Paul is not so much telling us that there is nothing to worry about, or saying we don’t have to worry, because God is in control or some other such mild encouragement, but saying straightforwardly that we ought not worry and we ought to pray instead. In other words, there is a right way and a wrong way to deal with our concerns. We can worry, which is wrong; or we can pray, which is right.

“I have yet to meet a perennial, worrying, uptight person who has a good prayer life. There may be one, but I haven’t yet met them.” – Don Carson

According to the Online Etymology Dictionary, our word *worry* comes from a German root meaning “to strangle” (See <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=worry>). This is no mere coincidence. Jesus drew a similar comparison in His parable of the sower.

Matt 13:22 NKJV *Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares [or equally well “anxiety”] of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.*

So if we want our lives to be fruitful spiritually, we will hear Paul on this and pray whenever an opportunity to worry comes our way. That should keep us praying pretty often.

The result of consistent or persistent prayer is that God’s peace will **guard** our **hearts and minds** through Christ Jesus. The following is from the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*:

This peace of God transcends all understanding, that is, it is beyond man's ability to comprehend. This peace guards the believers. Guard ... translates a military term which means "to protect or garrison by guarding." Like soldiers assigned to watch over a certain area, God's peace garrisons the hearts and... minds, that is, the emotions and thoughts, of God's children.

To stay in tune with Jesus, our thoughts and our attitudes need to be repeatedly adjusted.

- Watch out for worry. We need to consistently and persistently take the things that concern us and give them over to the Lord in prayer.

4:8 **Christian Meditation** There are types of meditation that are decidedly un-Christian or un-biblical. There is a type of meditation that is biblical to the core and that is what Paul is advocating here.

Unbiblical meditation would include Transcendental Meditation or the meditation practiced in Zen Buddhism. They have their source in the Hindu-Buddhist tradition rather than the Judeo-Christian. They are normally non-theistic, pantheistic or atheistic in their worldview or beliefs. We could call these types of meditation "mind-emptying", whereas, biblical meditation wants us to intentionally fill our minds with right thoughts – to intentionally focus our thoughts on God or on things that are pleasing to Him. Listen to these verses from Psalm 119:

***Psa 119:27 NKJV** Make me understand the way of Your precepts;
So shall I meditate on Your wonderful works.*

***Psa 119:97 NKJV** Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.*

***Psa 119:99 NKJV** I have more understanding than all my teachers,
For Your testimonies are my meditation.*

***Psa 119:148 NKJV** My eyes are awake through the night watches,
That I may meditate on Your word.*

Then, finally, this one from Psalm 19:

***Psa 19:14 NKJV** Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
Be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.*

To stay in tune with Jesus, our thoughts and our attitudes need to be repeatedly adjusted.

- Biblical forms of meditation can help us to control our thoughts – which impact our attitudes and actions in the end.

4:9 Lastly, Paul draws attention to his own example. We should consciously live in such a way that if someone imitated us, they would be encouraged to do the right thing.

Conclusions:

- **Our relationships with others** may need constant adjustment or “retuning” to keep us right with the Lord individually.
- **Christian joy** is one of those qualities that may need to be adjusted in order to keep us right with the Lord. This is not a mindless, air-headed quality, but a deep understanding of who Christ is and who we are in Him.
- **Jesus is coming soon.** Reminding ourselves of the Lord’s return can keep us in tune with Him.
- **Watch out for worry.** We need to consistently and persistently take the things that concern us and give them over to the Lord in prayer.
- **Practice biblical forms of meditation.** Biblical forms of meditation can help us to control our thoughts – which impact our attitudes and actions in the end.