

CANeelled – Living Can in a Can't World

6/6/21

Philippians 4:1-13 | 1 Timothy 4:7-10

Sunday AM

Most of you know, I spend a lot of time on a golf cart w/ my sons meandering the paths of PTC. For Colin, it's a form of therapy, while for Camden it's driving practice – in either case, we have a blast looking for wildlife and enjoying the time out/about.

Recently, my golf cart has been showing signs of possession as something's wrong w/ the accelerator sensor. One min., we can be motoring along as normal, and the next, we're zipping around 35+ mph b/c the governor won't kicked in. It's exciting, but scary. At other times, the power will suddenly drop off and we'll find ourselves going 1 mph. The other day, we were driving by Kidron Elem. when the power bottomed out and we were going so slow people were passing us on foot like we were sitting still. All I could think of was the Little Engine that Could – "I think we CAN..."

Last week we began a series looking at how we CAN thrive as Jesus-followers in a post-Christian CC.

CC is a mass form of ostracism sweeping across our nation where groups of offended people are exerting influence to silence/banish people/issues they dislike.

As a result, a number of people have lost their jobs, families, reputations, and even their lives by this apparent self-righteous, mob mentality.

It's happening in nearly every sector of society – to actors, CEO's, politicians, SCOTUS candidates, w/ books, cartoon characters, and more. This isn't to say some of these people/issues didn't need to be confronted – they likely did. Yet, it's the self-righteous hatred/vitriol by which it's being done that's so scary and alarming that should have us all concerned.

WTM – Last week, we began learning how we can engage others who might be seeking to cancel us. From the blind man in John 9, we learned we must be:

- 1 – ALERT to the ways of men
- 2 – ASSURED of the Miracle God's Performed in Us
- 3 – ADAMANT in Our faith w/ Gentleness/Respect

Today, I want to look at a passage in Philippians 4, to learn how we CAN live in a CAN'T world.

But first. let me remind you of a few guidelines:

- (1) This series isn't about making a political statement – but a Gospel statement.
 - (2) Peer pressure isn't always evil/bad, but any PP used for a godless, self-agenda is seldom good
 - (3) Our current CC is the way it is b/c we're living in a post Christian culture where most people are living oblivious to the truths of God.
 - (4) Our focus will be on what we CAN do and not on what we CAN'T do.
 - (5). Whether living in a PC or CC, our calling to the message/mission of Jesus hasn't changed.
- W/ this in mind, turn w/ me to Philippians 4:

*My brothers/sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, **stand firm in the Lord** in this way... Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, w/ thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ. Finally, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is*

lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – dwell on these things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice... I can do all this thru Christ who gives me strength. Philippians 4:1, 4-9, 13

Talk about a powerful text. You can sum up the entire Christian life in this one passage. Yet when Paul penned these words, Christianity was NOT popular. In fact, it was basically against the law to be *Christian* and many people lost their lives as martyrs b/c of their faith in Christ. And yet, this in no way diminished their calling to G.C. living.

I'm certain, based on Scripture and the current climate of our post-Christian, CC, Christians are going to see/experience new forms of persecution – and yet, God's message/mission will continue on.

Jesus said – *Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against b/c of Me. Rejoice and be glad, b/c great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way, they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Matthew 5:11-12*

Notice His next words. No matter the tides of culture:

You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world... In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Meaning – even though we may be living in a post-Christian, CC – as Jesus-people, our response has nothing to do w/ circumstances/conditions and everything to do w/ our convictions/conduct. (SAY 2x)

Raises Question – How CAN we live in a CAN'T culture? I think Paul gives us clarity in Philippians 4.

I Dig **DEEP** – *Stand firm in the Lord*

stand firm (*steko*) to be constant, fortified, and in a continual state of firm commitment. **IOW** – don't ever wander, wain, or waver in your walk/commitment to Christ – instead, be *steadfast/immoveable always abounding in the Lord...*

Paul was reiterating what he'd already encouraged the Philippians to do in 1:27-28.

*Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know you will **stand firm** in the Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel w/out being frightened in any way **by those who oppose you.***

By those wanting to cancel you. So, how do we stand when the tide of culture pounds against us?

When my kids were younger, going to the ocean and getting in the waves was a humorous event b/c of their inability to stand up to the waves – they'd literally get bounced around by the tide. No matter how hard they tried, it took them down/under b/c they weren't strong enough in themselves to stand. **The same is true for us spiritually.** We can't stand against the waves of culture in our own ability; but we don't have to. B/c in salvation, God has deposited the H.S. in us and called us to abide in Him. So now, in/thru Christ, we have His ability to stand firm against the tide of culture.

We have the ability thru the H.S. to live in alignment under God when we dig deep into abiding in Him.

To be clear – abiding isn't measured by how much you know about God, how good you are, or how much you go to church. Abiding is about surrendering to, seeking after, thirsting for, waiting on, and trusting in God – so that you can know, experience, see, taste, touch, and hear Him in your life.

II COUNT Your Blessings – *Rejoice in the Lord*

rejoice in the Lord always – to daily/habitually return to source of your joy *at all times* and *in all ways*.

IOW – Don't get caught up in the shenanigans around you/outside your purview that distract/disappoint – instead, stay focused/dependent on God at all times. **Let Jesus alone, and nothing else, be your joy!**

It's scary how we can get distracted/disappointed so quickly by our politics, professions, pundits, and problems to cause us to lose sight of God will/way.

Paul talked about this w/ the Colossians – *Since, then, you have been raised w/ Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden w/ Christ in God.* Colossians 3:1-3

The writer of Hebrews also spoke to this idea: *Since we're surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that entangles. Let us run w/ endurance the race marked out for us, fixing your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. Who, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, scorning its shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary or lose heart.* Hb. 12:1-3

How do we rejoice in the Lord? By counting our blessings and remaining focused on what's important in life – as Hebrews 12:1-3 outlines – **by choosing to:**

- (1) Throw off anything that can trip up/restrain us
- (2) Live out the calling God has on our lives
- (3) Focus our life/efforts on knowing/serving God
- (4) Never forget what Jesus endured for us

*Joy isn't an accident of temperament or an unpredictable providence; joy is a matter of **choice**.* J.I. Packer

III BE Relationally Gentle – *Let gentleness show*

gentle (*epiekes*) forbearing/reasonable. It describes a person who might be right but chooses relationships over being correct – being gracious instead of hard – w/out compromising the truth.

It's treating others the way you want Jesus to treat you.

Meaning – to be gentle/forbearing is to selflessly bear someone else's load, even though they don't deserve it – so they might engage/experience God. It's being merciful/accommodating w/out being compromised.

Our life is seriously defective w/out H.S. gentleness; Let a man be zealous/enterprising, pure/upright, yet what a rebuke to his Christianity, if he is universally declared to be stiff, impracticable, unamiable, and austere in general deportment! *Eadie*

Paul is saying that possibly the most un-Christian action we can exhibit is **conviction** w/out **kindness**, **righteousness** w/out **grace**, and **belief** w/out **concern**. It's tantamount to saying, I might be forgiven, but I'm never going to forgive! I deserve it, but you don't.

If Jesus and the early church have taught us anything – it's that to live in a culture where the tide is against us, it's absolutely mandatory to be gentle/reasonable – w/out being compromised.

IV **PRAY** Intentionally

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, w/ thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ. 4:6

Anxious refers to allowing the worries of this world to consume us. But Paul explains that **thankful prayer** is God's only antidote to anxiety.

Worry is having excessive concern over the affairs of life. The key word is *excessive*. Worry happens when we can't think of anything else b/c it's become our preoccupation. It's an all-consuming feeling of fear and uncertainty – and it's a sin. It's a sin b/c (1) it displaces God in our lives as we try to live life w/out God as though He doesn't exist; and (2) b/c it distracts us from the things that really matter in life.

Paul says – the solution to worry is talking w/ and handing off our concerns to God. It's casting our cares on Him b/c we know He's willing/able to handle them.

Notice what happens – when we trust God in prayer, instead of ourselves, He gives us His peace to guard our hearts/minds no matter the challenge. *Storms may rage around us, but we have peace/calm w/in us.*

Contrary to popular belief – prayer isn't only about asking God for His provision, assistance, and guidance – instead, it's primarily about seeking to align our lives w/ His perspective/will. *The true objective of prayer is to gain God's view and involvement into our story.* This requires not only talking but listening/meditating on who God is and what He is saying to you.

Meaning – anxious moments should challenge us to not assume our solutions, jump to conclusions, or take matters into our own hands – but instead, force us to seek/see God's purpose/plan thru our opportunities – forcing us to our knees to seek His direction/plan.

V **LIVE** Responsibly

Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or worthy of praise – dwell on these things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice.

vs. 8-9 is a smorgasbord of thought. Paul says, if all else fails, *dwell on/live out* these qualities. No matter what's going on around you, be cognizant of what's happening w/in you.

Note again the qualities – *true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy.*

As I've tried to teach my children, I believe Paul is saying: (1) Always take responsibility for you, your thoughts/actions; and (2) take responsibility for your circumstances no matter how you got where you are.

dwell on these things – focus on, ruminate, think about, audit, mull over, and meditate upon.

You're not what you think you are; but... what you THINK – you are! *Unknown*

IOW – *right thinking* leads to *right living* – and *what we think matters* – *and it matters more than we think.* So, while I might not be able to control what others think/do, I can be responsible for what I think/do!

put into practice – refers to having repetitious and continuous action of daily living that which is *true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and worthy of praise.*

Meaning – As Christians, we're to practice our faith daily thru godly, obedient living.

NOW here's the clincher – the only way we can live these precepts is in/thru Christ. This isn't something I CAN do, but only something Christ in me CAN do.

This is why God deposits the H.S. in us at salvation – b/c it's impossible to live the Christian life w/out God. There's a difference b/w living a good life in my ability and living a God life in His ability. (See 4:13)

VI **TRUST** Completely

I can do all this thru Christ who gives me strength.

The focus here isn't on what *I can do* – nor is it a license to think I can do whatever I want in Christ's name. The focal point of this passage is last ½ of this verse – *thru Christ who gives me strength.*

Meaning – the only way we CAN live in a world opposed to God but needing God, is in/thru His power/ability w/in us – which requires our total trust.

This is why in the G.C. Jesus invites us to plug into **His authority** – it's b/c we're powerless in our flesh.

I like the way Kent Hughes describes it – Christ was in Paul – and Paul was in Christ. For Paul, being aware of Christ's presence was as natural as breathing – as God was *pouring His power into him*. It was as if a pair of jumper cables were attached to Christ, and then to Paul, so that Jesus' voltage poured into him.

So, when Paul said, "*I can do all things*," he wasn't saying look at what I can do for God in my ability – he was saying look at what God is/can do thru me when I surrender my life to Him. **Paul had learned that God always empowers His commission/commands.**

Where the finger of God points, the hand of God provides and powers the way. *Unknown*

So, there you have it – the (6) keys to living a **CAN** life in a CAN'T world – *Not by might, not by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord.*

1. Dig **DEEP** into Your Commitment
2. **COUNT** Your Blessings
3. **BE** Relationally Gentle
4. **PRAY** Intentionally
5. **LIVE** Responsibly
6. **TRUST** Completely

In a post-Christian CC, we can neither thrive/survive independently of God, we can only be compromised. But when we plug into God, as Paul has taught us here in Philippians 4 – we learn that in Christ – we CAN live for Christ, even in a CAN'T world. It's not – ***I think I can, but rather – I know He can!***