

1 Please be seated. Today we're continuing
2 our study together,
3 looking into the book of Philippians.
4 We've come to chapter four. Today it's
5 chapter four, verses one through nine. As
6 I was getting ready to to
7 share a message based on this text, it
8 occurred to me that this is a text
9 that has had tremendous influence on
10 me over the years in ministry.
11 UmFound it a long time ago, paid
12 attention to it a long time ago when I
13 was, probably before I was actually doing
14 official vocational ministry of any kind.
15 Used it when I was doing youth ministry
16 for my own
17 grounding, I suppose. Practical
18 instructions about how a pastor, a youth
19 pastor, all followers of Jesus, should
20 behave. How to conduct ourselves in
21 ways pleasing to God and helpful to
22 others. How to deal with church
23 problems. Churches have problems, you
24 knowAnd if you're involved in leadership,
25 I'm preaching to the choir here, but we
26 we got problems. We always have problems.
27 And this text speaks to those. Money
28 problems, space problems, programming
29 problems, calendar problems, commitment
30 problems, doctrine problems. But
31 the church's biggest problemseems to me,
32 and I think it's borne out by Paul in
33 this letter, in this text, is
34 what I would call a weight problem.
35 Along those lines, I would tell you that
36 post-heart attack, coming up on
37 10 years, hard to believe. Yeah,
38 Yeah yeah, yeah, yeahOne
39 of the best things I ever did. And I will
40 tell you one of the things I've gotten
41 more affirmation for than anything else
42 I've ever done was keel over
43 and survive. Which really,
44 there's a sermon in that, which I'm not
45 giving today, but I'm going to give you a
46 snippet. There's a little piece of that
47 that I experienced you know when I did
48 that heart attack, and so many people,
49 when I was recovering, were saying,
50 Oh, what a blessing that you're here,
51 what a blessing. Oh, I'm just here.
52 More More affirmations than anything
53 you've ever done. I
54 don't like that. I want people to
55 be happy about what I do. But you know,
56 there's a message in that, and it's a
57 message that I want you to take to heart,
58 as God is going to hit me over the head
59 with it. There is
60 more value in you
61 being than in
62 anything you can or
63 ever will do. That's
64 God's economy. Believe it. Oh, go
65 ahead and do lots of good things, that's
66 great. Obey God, perform all the things
67 that God wants you to do, that's all
68 very, very good. None of it will ever
69 measure up to the sheer value of

70 you being. Our
71 culture doesn't help us to affirm that
72 and remember that, does it? That's the
73 truth. All right, that's not the sermon
74 for today. But
75 along with this post-heart attack thing
76 and with other health concerns in you, my
77 life is now marked like never before by
78 an abundance of pill-taking.
79 Maybe some of you can relate to that. If
80 you If you can, I'm sorry.
81 And one of the side effects of some of my
82 medications is a noticeable
83 loss of appetite, and so some
84 significant weight loss.
85 So over the last few years, people keep
86 asking me if I've lost weight.
87 And of course, you know, after about the
88 50th time someone has said that to me,
89 I'm like, I want to respond and think, duh
90 You know, I have a mirror. But But they
91 say, Have you lost weight? They say, Yeah,
92 yeah, yeah somewhat over the last few
93 years. And then they tell me, you
94 probably understand this, that I look
95 good. In our culture,
96 one thing, lost weight,
97 leads to the other, look good.
98 This modern Western skinny logic
99 is not so logical in other cultures.
100 I remember getting a letter from
101 missionary friends of ours, Mike and Barb
102 Blythe, who were missionaries that were
103 sent out from our church in Southern
104 California when I was doing youth
105 ministry down there, and they went to
106 Nigeria. And in one of their letters,
107 they said that now and then, Barb and
108 Mike are told that they're looking nice
109 and fat. A compliment in
110 a world where weight is associated with
111 health and wellness.
112 In Hebrew, There is a wonderful word, one
113 of the most important Hebrew words of
114 all, that is the word kavod,
115 which is translated in our scriptures as
116 glory, like the glory of God is the
117 kavod of God. But this word
118 also is translated as
119 weight, or heaviness.
120 Which then, as I've learned about this
121 word over the years, it sort of has
122 struck me, and I got this from others,
123 that You know, the hippies of the '60s had
124 a lot of things wrong, as we look
125 back. But they had one thing right.
126 They sometimes would look at you or look
127 at somebody and say, Whoa, that's heavy,
128 man.
129 That was a good expression. I don't know
130 if they got it from the Hebrews, but it
131 works. That's
132 heavy, man.
133 God's glory brings weight
134 to our weightless world. And I don't
135 think that's a bad analogy for the
136 culture that we're living in today.
137 Everyone's just sort of floating free.
138 Gravity, whatever. That's not

139 heavy, man. Weightless world,
140 people keep trying to convince themselves
141 there is no up, there is no down, they're
142 just floating. It's not true.
143 Nobody actually really believes that, but
144 you kind of say it. But God's glory
145 brings weight to our weightless world.
146 And one might say that
147 we in the church are simply
148 not heavy enough. The
149 church in general, in Reno, in America,
150 seems, at times, to be
151 losing weight. And the world
152 around us says, Hey, you're
153 starting to look good. According to
154 Paul, One of the most important things,
155 maybe the most important thing we can do,
156 must do, as followers of Jesus, is
157 stand firm in our faith in
158 Jesus Christ. Stand
159 firm. Maybe you could translate that
160 budge not. Budge
161 not, lest ye be budged. And
162 when I think about not budging, or
163 standing firm, One of the
164 things I think of is offensive lineman in
165 the NFL. 300,
166 350 pounds. Now to make a
167 career as an offensive lineman, we'd all
168 have to put on weight. Lots of
169 weight. And by the way,
170 stand firm for Jesus and the culture that
171 brings us the NFL and tells us that
172 Sunday is now the Lord's Day,
173 no. Tells us that Sunday is
174 not the Lord's Day, But it is the
175 NFL's day. That
176 culture, you stand firm in Jesus, that
177 culture will find it
178 very offensive. But to make a good life
179 for God, we must stand firm
180 in Jesus. And to stand firm in Jesus, we
181 need to put on spiritual weight. We then,
182 like the Philippians that Paul wrote to,
183 are called to put on this spiritual
184 weight, so we will stand firm in our
185 faith. How do you do that? Well, first of
186 all, it seems to me, you've got to stop.
187 Stop acting like spiritual anorexics.
188 Stop being spiritual bulimics.
189 Stop our silly combination of spiritual
190 overeating and lack of obedient exercise.
191 Stop behaving like Christian statues,
192 which make good pillars, but are dead,
193 cold, frozen tributes on the outside to
194 what they should be on the inside,
195 instead of following the biblical program
196 for spiritual bodybuilding. Tired of
197 flabby faith? Want to stand stronger with
198 Jesus? Long to go the distance
199 against those heavyweight sins that are
200 knocking you out? You've come to the right
201 place.
202 1-9. Paul's apostolic
203 workout plan for weight increase.
204 How do we stand firm in the Lord?
205 Start putting on spiritual weight
206 according to the inspired instructions of
207 Paul the Apostle. Let's take a look at

208 Philippians 41 through 9 and what Paul
209 says here. There's a bunch of commands.
210 Here's the word of God. Therefore, my
211 brothers, whom I love and long for, my
212 joy and crown, stand firm thus in the
213 Lord, my beloved. I entreat
214 Iodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree
215 in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true
216 companion. Help these women who have
217 labored side by side with me in the
218 gospel, together with Clement and the
219 rest of my fellow workers, whose names
220 are in the Book of Life. Rejoice
221 in the Lord. Again, I will say,
222 rejoice. Let your
223 reasonableness be known to
224 everyone. The Lord is at hand.
225 Do not be anxious about anything, but in
226 everything by prayer and supplication
227 with thanksgiving, let your requests be
228 made known to God, and the peace of
229 God, which surpasses all
230 understanding, will guard your hearts and
231 your minds in Christ Jesus.
232 Finally, brothers, whatever is
233 true, whatever is honorable,
234 whatever is just, whatever is
235 pure, whatever is lovely,
236 whatever is commendable, if there is any
237 excellence, if there is anything worthy
238 of praise, think about
239 these things. What you have
240 learned and received and heard and seen
241 in me, practice these things,
242 and the God of peace will be with
243 you. Let's pray. Lord
244 Jesus, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Father, once
245 again, we look to you and ask that
246 you would open our hearts, open our
247 minds, to receive what you would
248 give us through your word today. Lord,
249 help us to affirm
250 at the outset, but then also
251 affirm by our responses that
252 your word is living and active
253 and powerful, that it
254 causes what it calls us to.
255 May we be sensitive to,
256 malleable before the goodness and
257 the truth and the power of your word
258 today. We pray this in your name and for
259 your sake. Amen.
260 Paul loves the Philippians, and so
261 he tells them to do one thing.
262 Paul commits his love before he
263 commands a response.
264 The outs is my brothers, whom I love and
265 long for. Tell them that right up front.
266 I remember when my daughter, who
267 helped to lead DBS this year, did you
268 know that?When she
269 was about three years old, I'd be tucking
270 her into bed, and she would look
271 up at me with her big,
272 wide, brown eyes,
273 and she would say, Daddy,
274 I would never give you away
275 I don't know where that came from. I
276 mean, she didn't learn it from me.

277 I don't think she learned it from any of
278 the you know kids' songs that she
279 listened to on our cassette player.
280 I I didn't know where it came from. I
281 mean, was it because she was insecure
282 about my love for her, or her her
283 security in our family? I don't think so,
284 I sure hope not. But she would say,
285 Daddy, I would never give you away.
286 And invariably, I would respond, saying,
287 I would never give you away, Jen. You
288 are my precious little girl.
289 Now, the context of Philippians 4's
290 string of commands is that we are God's
291 beloved children. Our citizenship,
292 we've been told already in this letter,
293 is in heaven. Not could
294 be, if we filled out the right paperwork.
295 It is. So,
296 in light of that, then Paul commands,
297 first of all, and the overarching command
298 is stand firm in the Lord. To stand firm
299 in the Lord better, we must put on
300 weight. And Paul explains, then,
301 what I'm calling the apostolic workout
302 for spiritual weight increase. First he
303 says, work at
304 reconciliation.
305 Reconciliation in our own personal
306 relationships. You know, we're made for
307 relationships. And when those
308 relationships are sour, or
309 or damaged, um
310 sources of pain and bitterness,
311 it's not good, and it really matters.
312 I entreat Iotia and I entreat Syntyche to
313 agree in the Lord. Apparently these
314 two women were fighting with each other.
315 In the church, can you imagine that?
316 See, hurtful relationships inhibit
317 growth. Nothing inhibits our growth in
318 Christ like actual, unhealthy, hurtful
319 relationships with other believers.
320 Failure here inhibits all other
321 steps, I think, seems to me.
322 I think perhaps the order of these
323 commands is significant, and he starts
324 here. You know what, whatever else I say,
325 If these two women and you and whoever
326 else cannot get along, have a busted
327 relationship, you're not going to be able
328 to hear and respond to these things well.
329 We must agree, not just in principle, but
330 in practice. Anybody in this room
331 who brings confusing dissonance to your
332 mind, against whom a silent anger
333 burns within or a louder rage
334 sometimes erupts without,
335 You must take steps toward
336 reaching agreement and harmony.
337 This is not a suggestion. It is a
338 command. And Paul goes further.
339 Verse three, Yes, I ask you also, true
340 companion, help these women who have
341 labored side by side with me in the
342 gospel, together with Clement and the
343 rest of my fellow workers, whose names
344 are in the Book of Life. We are also
345 to work toward reconciliation in the

346 lives of those around us.
347 Friends, this is a very counter-cultural
348 command. In a culture that says,
349 The worst thing you can be is a busybody.
350 The worst thing you can do is stick your
351 nose in somebody else's business. Right?
352 Radical individualism. Stay out.
353 Not welcome. Mind your own
354 business. Those
355 are completely un-biblical,
356 un-Christian commands.
357 I'm sorry. It's the way it is.
358 So we are also to work toward
359 reconciliation in the lives of those
360 around us. When we see others
361 who are at odds, what do we
362 do? Well, I'd say first and foremost,
363 pray. Best thing we can do. Pray for
364 those people. But we can also
365 confront or confess.
366 I remember when I was on staff at our
367 church in Southern California, we sort of
368 made a rule together that no one was
369 going to receive a bad report about
370 anybody else on staff. If
371 somebody came to me to complain about
372 Pastor whoever, my response was to
373 be -- I wasn't perfect about this, by the
374 way, but but I remember it,
375 and I I did try. My response would be,
376 Hey, well you need to
377 talk to Pastor so-and-so. Don't
378 tell me about your problems with
379 him. Talk to him about your problems and
380 see if he can't work them out. This
381 triangle thing that's just so much a part
382 of the way we do life is not
383 good. I mean, it feeds our egos.
384 You know, it's nice to be on the in about
385 how people feel about somebody else
386 without having any sense of
387 responsibility for doing anything about
388 it. But I remember this rule.
389 No. If somebody comes to me and wants to
390 complain about Dan, my response
391 is, I'm not Dan. I'm not hearing
392 it. Ohh You
393 need to talk to Dan. Oh, I don't want
394 to do that. Well, then don't talk to me.
395 Okay. And maybe another step would be
396 maybe suggesting a three-person coffee
397 date with you, person A and person B.
398 Hey, how about if you and me and Dan get
399 together, and let's talk through some
400 things. Let's see if we can't ...
401 recover our love for one another and our
402 basic respect and affirmation for one
403 another. Paul seems to think this is a
404 really important thing. We put our
405 spiritual weight also when we, second,
406 work at rejoicing in the Lord. Rejoice in
407 the Lord always. Again, I will say
408 rejoice. There is always reason
409 to rejoice in the Lord. Amen? We
410 sing it all the time. We sang it today.
411 Our days are full of blessings. When our
412 days are over, through our faith in Jesus
413 Christ, our Lord and Savior, we will find
414 ourselves in the place of ultimate and

415 eternal joy and peace and
416 adventure and glory. Hallelujah.
417 However, such rejoicing is not
418 natural to us in our present
419 position of brokenness and
420 alienation from truth and goodness,
421 from God.
422 remember, well, you don't have to
423 remember very far, I'm a UCLA fan. I
424 went to UCLA, that was my undergraduate
425 school. And I pay attention,
426 more than I should, pardon me,
427 to UCLA athletic endeavors,
428 especially in major sports. UCLA
429 basketball, yay, UCLA football. Well.
430 And in my house, when my kids were
431 growing up, we had the dance of the
432 UCLA high fivers. You know,
433 UCLA won a game, and we'd jump around and
434 we'd give each other high fives. And the
435 kids didn't know what was going on, but
436 Dad says we should do this, or we do.
437 I will tell you, Danielle hasn't ever
438 been into this whole family tradition
439 like this. For
440 her, other things have been more
441 important. Things like family
442 meals, School homework,
443 piano practice. I mean, more
444 important than the Rose Bowl? More
445 important than a Pac-12 championship? Come
446 on!
447 Danelle just hasn't been
448 adequately trained.
449 Well, now she still hasn't been
450 adequately trained.
451 But I was not going to
452 make the same mistake with my kids.
453 They were well trained to celebrate
454 Bruin victories.
455 I found myself asking, though, every once
456 in a while, Am I training them as well
457 to rejoice in the Lord? To
458 be spiritual heavyweights?
459 Rejoicing in the Lord means rejoicing in
460 who He is for
461 us, as well as in what
462 He does for us.
463 It's important. We put on
464 spiritual weight then also when we work
465 at reasonableness, what our ESV
466 translation calls reasonableness, it's
467 gentleness in the NIV. Let your
468 reasonableness be known to everyone, the
469 Lord is at hand. This This work for
470 reasonableness means
471 magnanimity, forbearance,
472 as I said, gentleness in the NIV.
473 Literally, sweet reasonableness.
474 This is about what outsiders see when
475 they look at us. A gentle,
476 magnanimous, reasonable
477 spirit and way.
478 And our example in this is Jesus.
479 And Paul seems to indicate that a key in
480 this is to remember that the Lord is at
481 hand, or the Lord is
482 near. And I think he may have
483 intended purposeful

484 ambiguity here, for this at
485 hand nearness is in terms of
486 time. He's coming back pretty soon,
487 which means any difficulties we're
488 experiencing are always seasonal, and the
489 seasons are going to change. But it also
490 means near in terms of space.
491 The Lord is at hand. He's right here.
492 He's by our side. Our Lord sees us. His
493 help is always nearby. His strength is
494 always available, and we strive with him
495 toward his purposes. We put on
496 spiritual weight, and also when we work
497 at prayer. Paul says, Do not be anxious
498 about anything. But in everything by
499 prayer and supplication, with
500 thanksgiving, let your requests be made
501 known to God, and the peace of God, which
502 surpasses all understanding, will guard
503 your hearts and your minds in Christ
504 Jesus. Prayer is our
505 antidote to anxiety.
506 And peace from God is the
507 result. We put on spiritual weight
508 when we work at thinking well.
509 Finally, brothers, whatever is true,
510 whatever is honorable, whatever is just,
511 whatever is pure, whatever is lovely,
512 whatever is commendable. If there is any
513 excellence, if there is anything worthy
514 of praise, think about these things.
515 It strikes me that thoughts are like
516 food for our spirits.
517 We must choose wisely. Some have
518 said, You are what you eat. And
519 this may be true in some limited ways.
520 But this is always and in
521 many ways true. You are
522 what your mind eats.
523 Faults and poisonous thoughts? They
524 really are poisonous. They can
525 poison the individual person.
526 They can poison an entire culture.
527 Fast food thoughts? They're cheap,
528 they're easy, but they will keep you from
529 achieving greater health. They will work
530 against your efforts to put on needed
531 spiritual weight. What thoughts are
532 helpful and healthy? Which will help us
533 to stand firm in our faith and build
534 spiritual muscle? Paul gives us a helpful
535 list. Is it true?
536 Is it honorable or noble?
537 Is it just? Is it right? Is it
538 pure? Is it lovely? Is it
539 commendable, admirable, of good
540 reputation? Is it excellent?
541 Is it praiseworthy? Yes!
542 Chew and swallow.
543 No? Spit it out.
544 If we're going to stand in front of the
545 Lord, gain spiritual weight, our daily
546 workout discipline must extend to our
547 thought life. But Paul tells us we don't
548 want to stop there. We're at
549 doing well. Do you want to put on
550 spiritual weight? Verse nine, What you
551 have learned and received and heard and
552 seen in me, practice these things. You

553 know, my music teachers, as I was growing
554 up, pretty consistently across the board,
555 my piano teachers, my horn teachers, my
556 band directors, my choir directors,
557 when it came to my musical skills, they
558 had three words for me.
559 Practice, practice,
560 practice. You think?
561 Children's improvement in music or sports
562 or wherever else is linked to practice?
563 You bet. Ask your little league coach.
564 Ask your music teacher. Why should it be
565 any different for adults and for
566 spiritual things? Follow the
567 example of Paul the Apostle and other
568 spiritual heavyweights. Maybe it'd be a
569 good idea to read some good biographies
570 of the early church fathers, the Martin
571 Luthers, the Dietrich Bonhoeffers, the
572 C.S. Lewises. of history,
573 or grab a hold of a good missionary
574 biography. And if you've heard something
575 today that calls you to make a change,
576 do it.
577 Develop more of an attitude of rejoicing
578 in the Lord instead of habitually
579 complaining in despite circumstances? Do
580 it. Work at reconciliation in a
581 relationship, yours or somebody you see
582 around you? Do it. Show more
583 sweet reasonableness, more gentleness
584 toward others, like Jesus,
585 even if they don't deserve it? Do it.
586 Pray every day rather than worrying every
587 second? Do
588 it. Convicted and encouraged to clean up
589 a sloppy thought life? Do
590 it. Heard a command not only to think
591 Christianly, but to act like a follower
592 of Jesus? Do it.
593 So much to think about. So much to do.
594 All these commands can be overwhelming.
595 Yes. Paul concludes his commands
596 by commending a promise. The
597 God of peace
598 is with us.
599 And the God of peace will be with you, he
600 says at the end. Not static
601 peace, the concept,
602 but the living God. with us,
603 protecting us, guiding us, helping us,
604 correcting us, encouraging us, loving us.
605 We find ourselves in the
606 lap of a heavenly daddy
607 who says, and has
608 demonstrated this truth in
609 history, I will be with you.
610 I would never give you away,
611 for you are my precious
612 little child. It would be so
613 good, and I think there probably is some
614 of this going on even now, but if
615 observers of our church would say in
616 one form or another, You folks at
617 Covenant look nice and fat,
618 spiritually speaking. You've
619 really put on weight. That
620 would be a wonderful affirmation of
621 our God's good work in our midst,

622 and God is doing good work.
623 in our midst. Amen?
624 Let's pray. Holy Father, give
625 us the desire truly to stand firm in you.
626 Give us the dedication necessary to do
627 the things that will help us put on your
628 spiritual weight of glory in this
629 weightless world of ours. And give us the
630 discipline to do more than just think
631 about these helpful instructions from
632 your word, but rather to practice,
633 practice, practice. Thank
634 you that we do so in the assurance of
635 your never-ending love for us and
636 desire for our best, which is
637 in you. Amen. It's time for
638 us to pray for one another.
639 We encourage you to make use of our
640 prayers and praises page in your covenant
641 connection, in your own prayers during
642 the week. Let us
643 set aside all of our anxieties.
644 and let our requests be made known to God
645 together, here and now. Let's pray.
646 Lord God, it
647 strikes me that so often,
648 more often than not, the prayers that we
649 put in our covenant
650 connection and the ones that we share in
651 small groups or or with other
652 Christians in conversation are usually
653 about things for which we have great
654 anxiety. Someone is sick and we want them
655 to get well. Someone's going into the
656 hospital and we want them to come out
657 healed. Things that we're not sure about
658 in life. And so I'm reminded that
659 that coming to you like this, like what
660 we're doing now, is in fact
661 the great
662 antidote for being
663 stuck and fearful
664 in anxiety, of feeling
665 powerless and small, against forces that
666 are bigger than we are. And it's easy for
667 us in our present state to forget that
668 the greatest power that there is, against
669 which no other power can prevail, is you.
670 So thank you for that reminder, and thank
671 you for this opportunity to pray
672 instead of worry, and to know that in
673 so doing, we are doing the best thing we
674 can do, along with whatever else we may
675 be called upon to do, And so with that
676 in mind, we pray for the leaders of our
677 church as we begin the process of
678 seeking a new pastor for our church.
679 Lord, I'm excited about this adventure. I
680 want all of us to be as well. For all of
681 us to lean into our commitment to this
682 family and this fellowship as we look
683 toward this next new adventure that is
684 coming, and as we prepare well for
685 it, Lord, we pray for
686 the Howard family and the health concerns
687 related to them. Lord, we pray for our
688 friend Jeff, that you'd watch over him as
689 he has surgery this week. For Jan,
690 for Nike, for Shirley,

691 for Kellyanne, Emilyn,
692 Mallory, Lori and Paul,
693 and all the others affected by the
694 devastating floods in Texas.
695 Thank you for the response of so many
696 good people to help and to
697 help people recover. Lord, we pray
698 for families like the Lynch's and
699 Rivera's, family of Kellen and
700 of Caroline, and their losses
701 of loved ones. Thank
702 you for our neighbors next door. We ask
703 for your blessing for them. And for Noah
704 and Karen and Cody and Matthew and Weston
705 and Chase, Levi, Gary, Molly,
706 Brian, Anna, Margaret, Benjamin,
707 and Chandler, and all the others serving
708 in the military. May they know that their
709 service is
710 valuable and appreciated, and that they
711 are of great
712 value to you and to us.
713 Hear us now as we share together in the
714 special prayer that you taught us,
715 saying, Our Father, who art
716 in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
717 Thy kingdom come, Thy will be
718 done, on earth as it is in heaven.
719 Give us this day our daily bread,
720 and forgive us our sins as
721 we forgive those who sinned against us.
722 And lead us not into temptation,
723 but deliver us from evil. For
724 Thy is the kingdom and the power
725 and the glory forever.
726 Amen. Well, let's stand and sing our
727 closing hymn.