



MAY 9, 2021 | PASTOR PETER YI

“Is Your Name in The Book of Life?” (Philippians 4:1-3)

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

²I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in The Book of Life.

Today I want to speak to you about The Book of Life. We've all probably have heard of this at one time or another, we've come across it in our Bible readings. But today we're going to take a deep dive into what this is and how it relates to each one of us. Now, before we look at The Book of Life, let's look at the verses that lead up to it. This sermon is kind of in two parts. It's actually kind of two sermons in one, which is something I repeatedly warn young preachers not to do, but I'm going to violate my own advice today.

The first half of this sermon, I think will speak to us, especially in light of the announcement I made last week. And the second half of the sermon I think will be even more important, as it relates to our eternity. So let's get into the first half.

In verse 1, Paul encourages the believers in Philippi to stand firm in the Lord. That's an exhortation for every Christian, in every time, in every season of life, isn't it? There is never a time, when we stop standing firm in the Lord. What's the specific reason or reasons behind Paul's exhortation? Well, we have to look at the end of chapter three. Here's what he writes.

²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

The reason we can stand firm no matter what the trial we might be going through is because of Jesus. He's our Saviour and he's the Lord and he's the Christ, and he's coming back to take all the citizens of heaven back home. Thus, our waiting is not a 'looking-at-the-clock, pacing back and forth' type of waiting; rather, it's an active waiting that stands firm; we don't get swayed or distracted; we're focused on the mission and the tasks that are set before us. We have our eyes fixed on Jesus Christ. So that's what I say to each of you. Stand firm in the Lord. Don't look to the left or to the right. Keep your eyes on Jesus.

I want us to also notice the language of affection that Paul uses in this verse. He calls the Philippians his brothers and sisters. Then he says they are the ones he loves and longs for, they are his joy and crown, and they are his dear friends. Even from the very beginning of this letter, Paul has used so much endearing language to express his love for these Christians. Let me bring you back to chapter 1 where he writes,

(Philippians 1:7) It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me.

⁸ God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.



You know, I couldn't help but to echo Paul's sentiments in our current situation. His words are echoing in my heart more now than ever before. As you know, in less than two months I will no longer be your pastor, but that won't change my feelings about each of you. Like Paul said of the Philippian believers, you are my brothers and sisters; we are family. I do love you and will long for you. You are my joy and my crown. In one sense, I feel like a proud parent, sending you off to embrace the next chapter of growing as a church. And of course, I consider you my dear friends. How could I not after all these years?

But those are not only the affections of a pastor for his church, it must also be the sentiment of members for one another. As you look at those around you, the people in this church, they too are your brothers and sisters; they too are the object of your love and longing. They too are your joy and crown, and they too are your deepest and closest friends. Let's continue to grow in that intimacy.

We now come across Paul exhorting two prominent women in the church to be reconciled. Their names were Euodia and Syntyche. We know they were leaders in the church because Paul refers to them as those who contended at my side, who struggled and labored together, in the cause of the Gospel. We don't know in what way these two ladies did that, but Paul knows them by name, and he recalls the work they did together. And perhaps that's why he calls them out publicly, by name, in this letter...because they were prominent, because they were leaders.

Paul pleads with them, he urges them, he exhorts them. It's strong language, which tells us how serious the issue was. It could have been a personal offense, it could have been over some ministry disagreement, we don't know. But it was affecting the church. I can't help but to think that in one sense, the entire letter, up to this point, was a set up, for this gentle rebuke. Earlier in the letter Paul speaks of their partnership in the gospel. He speaks of his deep affection for them. Then in his prayer he mentions how God would make them pure and blameless. Then he mentions his own struggles while imprisoned. His anguish to be with them in person. His internal struggle between living and dying. To go on living means he will continue to serve the Lord, and if were to die, he would be in the Lord's presence, which is better by far. And then he says, whatever happens to me, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel. He says, "Stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel". That's how chapter 1 ends. Then in chapter 2 the subject of unity continues. Paul writes,

(Philippians 2:1) Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

(Philippians 2:5) In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Then he quotes that early hymn about Jesus...his humiliation and exaltation. Then he mentions two amazing Christians, Timothy and Epaphroditus. And then we get to chapter 3 and he speaks about his Jewish pedigree and his accomplishments as an Apostle and says they are all garbage compared to knowing Jesus our Lord. He said to put the past behind you, and look forward to Christ. That's all that matters.

I can just picture Euodia and Syntyche gathering on Sunday morning at the house church. They're sitting on opposite sides of the room. They pass by each other but don't say a word. Perhaps everyone in the room senses the tension between these two ladies. Everyone takes their seat, and the worship service begins. When it comes time for the message the pastor gets up and says, "Earlier this week Epaphroditus arrived and has delivered words from Paul. Instead of a sermon, I will read his letter."



So he begins, going through all the things that I just mentioned, and I imagine that with every sentence, the Holy Spirit is convicting these ladies of their sin, of their pride. Perhaps at this point their heads are down, staring at the floor, but still, they're listening. Then to their shock, maybe to their horror, they hear the next sentence.

(Philippians 4:2) I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.³ Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in The Book of Life.

Paul is not taking sides. He pleads with each woman individually. He asks them. Be of the same mind in the Lord. Be united. Forgive each other. Come back together. Then he calls upon a third party, a person he calls, 'my true companion' to help the two ladies bury the hatchet.

We all know that there are times where a relationship becomes so damaged that it requires the help of others. It can be a broken friendship or a broken marriage. Don't be ashamed to seek the help of a mature, impartial, third party in the church.

Now, for the remainder of this sermon I want to explore more deeply this idea of our names being written in The Book of Life. And of course, the most important question for personal application is this, "Is my name written there?"

This idea of a book of life is not something that first appears in Paul's writings. It's actually an idea that spans the entire Bible. It's found in the very first section of the Bible, the books of Moses; and it's found in the very last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation; and it's scattered in many places in between. The first time this idea is mentioned is in Exodus 32:32. Chapter 32 is the famous golden calf chapter. If you remember Moses was up on Mt. Sinai meeting with the Lord, and because he was taking so long, the people started to get anxious and asked Aaron to make an idol for them. Moses comes down and sees what's going on and is horrified, and a great judgment is executed on those who participated in the idolatry. Then Moses prays to the Lord,

(Exodus 32:31) "Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold.³² But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written."

(Exodus 32:33) The LORD replied to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book.³⁴ Now go, lead the people to the place I spoke of, and my angel will go before you. However, when the time comes for me to punish, I will punish them for their sin."

This is the first time any reference is made to a book that contains the names of those that belong to God, who remained faithful to him.

The next time this phrase appears is in Deuteronomy 29:20 which says,

(Deuteronomy 29:20) The LORD will never be willing to forgive them; his wrath and zeal will burn against them. All the curses written in this book will fall on them, and the LORD will blot out their names from under heaven.

Here God is warning the Israelites what will happen to those who violate his covenant, especially in terms of going after idols and rejecting and despising the name of God.



Fast forward several hundred years to the time of King David, where he writes about this in Psalm 69. It's a psalm that about crying out to God for deliverance from his enemies. In the middle of the psalm he calls down judgment upon his persecutors and says,

(Psalm 69:28) May they be blotted out of The Book of Life
and not be listed with the righteous.

This verse tells us that the worst thing that could ever happened to a person is to be excluded from The Book of Life. There is no greater judgment, no greater punishment, no greater curse, than to have your name missing from God's book. On the other hand, this verse tells us that those who are in The Book of Life are the righteous. They have been made righteous by God. And they live righteous and devout lives before God.

The next major section of Scripture that speaks about The Book of Life is the prophets. Let's begin with Isaiah. Chapter 4 of Isaiah gives us a picture of the end times. Though we tend to equate the end times with God's terrible judgment, we should also think of the end times as the time of God's gracious redemption. That's the focus of chapter 4. Listen to this beautiful description.

(Isaiah 4:2) In that day the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel. ³ Those who are left in Zion, who remain in Jerusalem, will be called holy, all who are recorded among the living in Jerusalem. ⁴ The Lord will wash away the filth of the women of Zion; he will cleanse the bloodstains from Jerusalem by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire. ⁵ Then the LORD will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over everything the glory will be a canopy.

Having our names recorded in the book has to do with the city's registry. It informs us who is and who is not a legal citizen of God's holy city. What are these citizens like? They are holy. They are the ones whose filth has been washed by the Lord himself. Again, they are righteous, or better yet, they are the ones who have been made righteous by God.

Now let's go to Ezekiel 13, which says,

⁹ My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations. They will not belong to the council of my people or be listed in the records of Israel, nor will they enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Sovereign LORD.

This is very similar to what we saw in Isaiah. It's a condemnation on the false prophets, who will not be listed in the records of Israel.

Next is Daniel chapter 7. In this chapter Daniel has a vision of the end times, which reads very much like the book of Revelation. It begins with visions of the coming of various beasts, but then Daniel is taken into the throne room of heaven, which also acts as a heavenly court room. A great judicial act is about to happen. Listen to these words.

⁹ "As I looked,
 "thrones were set in place,
 and the Ancient of Days took his seat.
His clothing was as white as snow;
 the hair of his head was white like wool.
His throne was flaming with fire,



and its wheels were all ablaze.
¹⁰ A river of fire was flowing,
coming out from before him.
Thousands upon thousands attended him;
ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.
The court was seated,
and the books were opened.

We can already guess what those books contained. These were the books of God's final judgment.

Then in chapter 12, Daniel mentions the books again.

¹ "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered.

This informs us that at the judgment, at the end times, only those whose names are written in the book will be saved.

Here's the last mention of this idea in the Old Testament.

(Malachi 3:16) Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name.

(Malachi 3:17) "On the day when I act," says the LORD Almighty, "they will be my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as a father has compassion and spares his son who serves him. ¹⁸ And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.

Here, it's called a 'scroll or book of remembrance.' Who's written in this book? Those who feared the Lord, those who honored the Lord, and revered the Lord. And these people are called the righteous, the ones who serve God, as opposed to those who are wicked and do not serve Him.

When we get to the New Testament, Jesus mentions The Book of Life only one time in Luke 10:20. It's when Jesus sent his disciples off on a mission, and they came back all pumped up because God had worked powerfully through them. Here's how it went.

(Luke 10:17) The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name."

(Luke 10:18) He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹ I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. ²⁰ However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

Jesus calms them down and tells them not to get overly excited at the success of their ministry; rather, rejoice that your names are written in heaven, meaning that we should rejoice because God has saved us, that we have eternal life.



Just a couple more verses. Hebrews 12:23 also mentions The Book of Life. This passage takes us full circle back to Moses and also the Prophets. As the author brings his letter to a close, he writes,

(Hebrews 12:22) But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, ²³ to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴ to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Now, as expected let's look at three passages from Revelation.

(Revelation 3:5) The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from The Book of Life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels.

(Revelation 13:8) All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.

(Revelation 20:11) Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is The Book of Life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵ Anyone whose name was not found written in The Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire.

Lastly in Revelation 21:27, in speaking of those who can enter God's eternal and holy city of Zion, it says,

(Revelation 21:27) Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Now, let's ask and answer some questions.

1. What does The Book of Life represent? It's the record of those who belong to God, who are his true citizens, citizens of the King and his kingdom, who will live with God and Jesus Christ for all eternity.
2. Do only perfect people get their names written in The Book of Life? Obviously not. Euodia and Syntyche weren't perfect. At the time of Paul's writing, they were living in disunity, embittered against each other, causing harm to the body of Christ. But Paul was confident enough to say that these two ladies were written in The Book of Life.
3. If my name is written in The Book of Life, could it later be deleted, if I were to commit some grave apostasy or terrible sin? No. If you're name is written in the book, it'll be there for all eternity. However, this implies that we can be deceived into thinking our names are there but can find out that it was never ever there in the first place. I'll give you an example. I was speaking to a lady in her 40s that had a revival in her faith. Her faith had come alive. But I knew this lady when she was in her 20s. She served in the church, had consistent church attendance, taught the children in Sunday school, and even went on mission trips. But she had a spiritual awakening late in life, in her 40s. So, I asked her, "So when you look back at all the Christian stuff back then, all those Christian activities you participated in, what do you make of them?" She said, "I was just going through the motions."



I was just doing what I thought Christians were supposed to do, but I'm certain now, that back then, I was not saved." You see, that can be you too. You may think you're saved, you may think your name is in the book, because you're going through the motions, but you may find out that you're actually not saved.

4. What happens if my name is not found in The Book of Life? The worst and most horrible judgment awaits you. You will be thrown into the lake of fire for eternity, because of your sin, because of your violation of God's holy law, because of your refusal to love God's son, Jesus.
5. How then do I ensure that my name is written in God's book of life? Well, it's not a book based on merit. You don't get in by outdoing everyone else, by being better than others. There's only one way to get in the book. You have to be made righteous. That means that something has to be done to you. More than it being something that you have to do, it means something has to be done to you. And what is that? God has to save you. God has to change your heart. Your heart, as it now stands, cannot change by itself. It has to be changed by God.

Here's how Jesus says it. You must be born again. Born again means you need to start over. Born again means that you need a new heart altogether. Born again means that the 'first you' needs to die, so that the 'second you' can come to life. It means that, just as you had no role in being born by your mother, so too in being born again, this is something that God does for you. He must breathe new life in you. He has to create in you a new heart.

So, call out to him. Cry out to him. "Dear God, I must be born again. You said it yourself, that I must be born again. Breathe new life in me. Give me a new heart. Help me to see my sin. I confess that I deserve to be blotted out from your book. But through your Son Jesus, who died for my sins, and rose from the dead; based on what he did, forgive me and receive me. I renounce my sins and accept Jesus by faith. Please God, write my name in your book of life."

Let's pray.