

## Philippians 4:1-9

### Section 1: 4:1-3 – Contend for the Gospel

*So then, my dearly loved and longed for brothers and sisters, my joy and crown, in this manner stand firm in the Lord, dear friends. <sup>2</sup>I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to agree in the Lord. <sup>3</sup>Yes, I also ask you, true partner, to help these women who have contended for the gospel at my side, along with Clement and the rest of my coworkers whose names are in the book of life. (CSB)*

#### Love

Paul expresses how much he loves the believers in Philippi. This reminds us that people are more important than possessions. People are more valuable than riches. People are more important than our personal comfort. Paul genuinely loved people. We need to love one another as Paul loved the believers in Philippi. In John 13:35 Jesus says,

*<sup>35</sup>By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. (CSB)*

Loving one another is a pillar in the church. We cannot be a faithful body of Christ without loving one another. Not just loving the ones you like, but loving all people. We must remember that according to 1 Corinthians 13, love is an action verb. Love is much bigger than an emotion. Love is a commitment to treat others well. For example, being patient, kind, merciful and gracious are a few characteristics of love.

#### Stand Firm

In light of loving each other well, Paul encourages the church to stand firm in the Lord. Paul is encouraging the church to keep living the Christian life faithfully. The phrase “in this manner” is a reference back to the previous section. Let’s review the recap of Philippians 3.

Let us make every effort to know Christ, and in knowing Him more intimately, become more like Him. Let us make every effort to heed these five challenges for growing in maturity:

1. Humbly acknowledge that you haven’t arrived.
2. Passionately pursue greater knowledge of Christ.
3. Never lose the wonder of the gospel.
4. Follow cross-centered, heavenly minded examples.
5. Live in light of your true citizenship.

It’s important to remember the source of our strength in which we can stand firm. Our strength isn’t in how long we’ve been Christians, how much we know about the Bible, or how many mission trips we’ve been on. Our strength for standing firm is the gospel. Jesus makes this strength possible. The Father has given us Jesus for our salvation and Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit for our sanctification. Through the Spirit we are able to walk with Jesus, glorifying the Father. Jesus makes it possible for us to stand firm.

#### Fight for the Gospel

So, we are to love one another fervently and stand firm in the faith...why? Because being a believer in this world isn’t easy. The gospel is not a message that is fully embraced and celebrated by the world. Have you ever considered that we have to fight for the gospel? If it was up to the world, the gospel would never be uttered again. We have to fight to get the gospel to the world. We must contend for the gospel.

What does this look like? Using every platform God has given you for His glory; jobs, money, neighborhoods, vacations, church, grocery stores...everything you find yourself doing...do it for the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31:

*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. (CSB)*

### Discussion Questions

- ❖ How do you show love to others in the church?
- ❖ How should “standing firm” in the faith impact your daily life?
- ❖ Why is it important to remember that our strength to stand firm comes from the Lord?
- ❖ What does it mean to “contend for the gospel”?
- ❖ How are you currently “fighting for the gospel”?

## Section 2: 4:4-7 - Rejoice

*<sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! <sup>5</sup>Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup>Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (CSB)*

### Rejoice

Paul commanded the people to rejoice. He repeated the command immediately, thereby emphasizing its importance. Their joy was to be in the Lord, and it was to be unchanging. Rejoicing always is easier said than done. But regardless of any circumstance that may come our way, we are to rejoice. How can we rejoice in the midst of trials and tribulations? If we ask, God will give us His peace which surpasses all understanding. It doesn't say God will always remove our trials and tribulations, but it does say God's peace will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

So many times, we are always looking for a “way out”. We forget that the testing of our faith develops endurance. James 1:2-4:

*<sup>2</sup>Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, <sup>3</sup>because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. <sup>4</sup>And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing. (CSB)*

Remember, our joy in Christ is not limited to our circumstances. The joy we have in Christ transcends our circumstances. As a second reminder, Paul is writing this letter from prison. Paul had a habit of rejoicing in prison and seeing people saved. Your rejoicing in the midst of trials and tribulations brings glory to God.

### Do Not Worry

Anxiety is a robber of joy. Even Jesus addressed anxiety in the sermon on the mount (Matt. 6:25-34). Basically speaking, anxiety is worrying about the temporary things of this world. It is easy to get distracted by the things of the world and forget about the promises that await us in eternity. We battle anxiety by focusing on the eternal rather than the temporary. Paul explains this mindset in Romans 8:18-25:

*<sup>18</sup>For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup>For the creation eagerly waits with anticipation for God's sons to be revealed. <sup>20</sup>For the creation was subjected to futility—not willingly, but because of him who subjected it—in the hope <sup>21</sup>that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage to decay into the glorious freedom of God's children. <sup>22</sup>For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together with labor pains until now. <sup>23</sup>Not only that, but we ourselves who have the Spirit*

*as the first fruits—we also groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup>Now in this hope we were saved, but hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he sees? <sup>25</sup>Now if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patience. (CSB)*

The peace of God reminds us that one day all things will be made whole. We can look to the future with hope, knowing that we will experience complete healing from the curse of sin in the Kingdom to come. Paul wasn't speaking of a situation where circumstances changed or external needs were met. The peace of God is a gift given to us, so that we are able to endure. This reminds me of James 1:2-4:

*<sup>2</sup>Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, <sup>3</sup>because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. <sup>4</sup>And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing. (CSB)*

### Discussion Question

- ❖ Is it always easy to rejoice? Why are we tempted to complain and not rejoice?
- ❖ Why is it so easy to worry?
- ❖ How are we to battle worry?
- ❖ What is so valuable about the peace of God?
- ❖ Have you ever experienced God's peace in the midst of a difficult situation?
- ❖ Why is God's peace so important to a Christian?

## Section 3: 4:8-9 – Dwell on these Things

*<sup>8</sup>Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—dwell on these things. <sup>9</sup>Do what you have learned and received and heard from me, and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you. (CSB)*

### Dwell

When you have those moments of quiet or moments of reflection or moments to just think, what do you dwell on? What consumes your thought life? Paul lists several things we should dwell upon. Things that are:

- True
  - God is the source of all truth.
- Honorable
  - Anything worthy of respect.
- Just
  - Anything that is right according to God's Word.
- Pure
  - Thoughts and actions that align with God's Word.
- Lovely
  - Anything that is defined by love.
- Commendable
  - Anything that isn't offensive to God.
- Moral Excellence
  - Morality in accordance with God's Word.
- Praiseworthy
  - Anything that glorifies God.

What we choose to dwell upon matters. We must lead our minds to dwell upon God, His Word and His glory. For Christians to grow in likeness to Jesus, we have to have a renewed mind (Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 4:23). God has blessed His church with His Word as a primary means of purifying our minds. Jesus prayed in John 17:17: *Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth (CSB)*. Believers must always use the Word of God to examine if our beliefs, thoughts and actions are glorifying Him or not. David gives us an example of a prayer we could pray in Psalm 139:23-24:

*Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the everlasting way. (CSB)*

David knew that real change involves a change of one's thoughts. What we think matters, and it matters more than we think. We need God's Word to saturate our minds so that we may be renewed and kept from offensive ways. We can also read Psalm 1 to see a description of those that walk in joy. Psalm 1:2, *Instead, his delight is in the Lord's instruction, and he meditates on it day and night. (CSB)*

## Do

Paul again calls for believers to act upon their faith. There is a standard for Christians to live by. God's Word clearly reveals how we are to glorify God with our lives. This reminds me of James 1:22, *But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves (CSB)*. Acting upon your faith is commanded by God. We are not saved to stay put; we are saved to spend a life glorifying God.

Paul gives them himself as an example to follow. Finding people that are great examples of Christlikeness is important. Again, Paul is pointing to the fact that we need one another. We need the church.

## Discussion Questions

- ❖ What do you spend your time dwelling on?
- ❖ How do your thoughts impact your actions?
- ❖ How do we know the standard God has for us?
- ❖ What keeps you from fully living out the Word of God?
- ❖ Are you someone that others could follow and become more like Christ?

## Conclusion

We are to contend for the Gospel. Rejoice always. And dwell on things that are praiseworthy.

Living for God's glory impacts every aspect of our lives. This can cause some problems. Especially when we consider how easy it is to love the things in the world, making it difficult to separate ourselves from the temporary.

All believers are missionaries. We are all called to contend for the gospel. We are all called to rejoice. And we are all called to dwell on things that are praiseworthy.