

CHRIST FOLLOWERS PAR EXCELLENCE
Philippians 4:1-9

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We keep striving with our eyes on the prize – and as we do, we need to . . .

Stand firm in the Lord

- There is that word “Joy” again! Then he continues with what’s gone before – stand firm – be faithful. Referring back to the promise the resurrection in Philippians 3:21, the last verse of the previous chapter, Paul is assuring the Philippians that they had all the more reason to stand fast in the Lord.
- William Barclay writes that Paul was saying that “*Only with Jesus Christ can a man resist the seductions of temptation and the weakness of cowardice. The word Paul uses for stand fast (in the Greek) is the word which would be used for a soldier standing fast in the shock of battle, with the enemy surging down upon him.*” In the Lord – we can stand firm.
- Francis Foulkes “*The Christian is to be characterized by an attitude of forbearance, patience, gentleness towards all people, and this prompted by the realization of the nearness of the Lord.*”
- What does all this say? It says Christ Followers don’t give up, and truthfully we can’t fail.
- And then, as we have our feet planted . . .

Agree in the Lord

- Next Paul implores two ladies in the church get along – because they are in the Lord. Unity happens in Christ. Disagreement is healed by being unified in our common faith. Barclay says, “*Men can never really love each other until they love Christ. The brotherhood of man is impossible without the lordship of Christ.*”

That's a strong statement but it's true. And Barclay means men and women – not just men. And Paul is telling these two leaders to settle their disagreement.

- Then he gives instruction to someone he calls “true companion”, here in my translation, to help to heal the strife between Eudia and Syntyche. We have no idea who this person is but he or she is to work with Clement to bring reconciliation. I'd like to think that in this wonderful, joyous church in Philippi, these sisters worked it out and their unity and ministry was restored. Barclay makes a wonderful point. He writes this: *“It is a grim thought that all we know about Euodia and Syntyche is that they were two women who had quarreled! It makes us think. Suppose our life was to be summed up in one sentence, what would that sentence be? Clement goes down to history as the peacemaker; Euodia and Syntyche go down as the breakers of the peace. Suppose we were to go down to history with one thing known about us, what would that one thing be?”* Think about that – do you want to be remembered for the fact that you quarreled or that you brought reconciliation. Regardless let's agree in the Lord.
- Let me take a quick bunny trail here and talk about the fact that it is very obvious that women were in key leadership in Philippi. When you have and chance read through in Acts 16 again. You will see that Lydia – the seller of purple – was already a worshipper of God and was one of the first baptized in Philippi. Acts 17 then records this, *And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.* Acts 17:4. Not a few! And Acts 17:12 records that many women and men of high standing in the Greek community became believers. What I'm trying to say is women have been in leadership in the Church from the very beginning. That is why we believe and teach that it is not one's gender that determines whether they can be in ministry or leadership – it is one's calling from God himself that determines that. Just sayin . . .
- Now here Paul is at it again. He tells the Philippians to . . .

Rejoice in the Lord

- That word joy AGAIN! It's now at least 12 times that we have seen the word in some form in Philippians. And that was despite the difficult circumstances from which it was written. Paul uses the word joy or rejoice in Philippians 1:4, 1:18, 1:25, 2:2, 2:16, 2:17, 2:18, 2:28, 3:1, 3:3, 4:1, and 4:4 and that's not all of them – we will see it again as we finish out the chapter over the next weeks.
- And following up on what we just looked at, it's the cure for quarreling. Here is where the quote you see in your worship folder comes in with Charles Spurgeon's words, *“People who are very happy, especially those who are very happy in the Lord, are not apt either to give offense or to take offense. Their minds are so sweetly occupied with higher things, that they are not easily distracted by the little troubles which naturally arise among such imperfect creatures as we are. Joy in the Lord is the cure for all discord.”*
- I love this from Barclay where he writes, *“So Paul says, “I know what I'm saying. I've thought of everything that can possibly happen. And still I say it—Rejoice!” Christian joy is independent of all things on earth*

because it has its source in the continual presence of Christ. Two lovers are always happy when they are together, no matter where they are.” The key ingredient for the joy of the Lord is Jesus Christ.

- And joy will enable you to . . .

Be reasonable in the Lord

- Paul writes, *Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand;* Philippians 4:5. Commentators point out that this word, which my translation renders as “reasonableness” is almost untranslatable, but what it really means is just that. Being reasonable.
- F B Meyer writes, “*Note the conditions. We must be moderate in our ambitions and gentle in our behavior.*” Another commentator, Kingsley Williams, says, “*Let all the world know that you will meet a man half-way.*” Being reasonable is about being just and merciful at the same time. In fact Barclay sums it up this way, “*Justice is human, but reasonableness is divine.*” This is what the hymn writer had in mind as she penned, “*May the Mind of Christ, My Savior*” and she based it on none other than Paul’s words to the Philippians in Philippians 2:5, which we just looked at last month when Paul said, *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.* When we have the mind of Christ, we will be reasonable.
- And we can also . . .

Trust in the Lord

- Here is what Paul writes, . . . *do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* Philippians 4:6-7.
- It seems simplistic but it’s true and it works. I’m not minimizing anxiety at all. I know it’s real. But listen to this from Archibald Hunter: “*Have no anxiety about anything is Christ's own warning against worry and what follows (in Philippians 4) reads like a practical comment on it, which says in effect: true prayer and anxious care cannot coexist: the way to be anxious about nothing is to be prayerful about everything.* F. B. Meyer writes, “*We must ever practice the presence of our Lord—he is always at hand. We must turn over all causes of anxiety to the Father's infinite care and leave them with him.*”
- Francis Foulkes writes, “*Anxiety is to have no place in his life because in everything there can be prayer. Thanksgiving should always accompany prayer because praise is always due to God, and because faith is quickened by the thought of what God has done already. When prayer replaces worry, God's gift of the peace which transcends human understanding comes in, and that peace acts as a sentry, guarding the Christian's mind and emotions from being overwhelmed by the sudden onrush of fear, anxiety, or temptation.*”
- So, what’s the solution? PRAY! Paul tells us to approach God in everything by prayer and supplication: There is not anything that is inappropriate to take to God prayer. David Guzik writes “*There are not some areas of our lives that are of no concern to God.*” God cares about EVERY aspect of our lives!

- So what's the difference between prayer and supplication? Well, they're the same thing and not. Prayer is the all-encompassing word for all of our communication with God, and supplication directly asks God to do something. Paul is telling us to be specific in our prayers – God knows, but he wants us to bring it before him. James 4 tells us, *You do not have, because you do not ask.* James 4:2c. Guzik says, *“Many of our prayers go unanswered because we do not ask God for anything. Here God invites us simply to let your requests be made known. He wants to know.”*
- As we do, we have the promise of peace. It's not just absence of strife but peace beyond our ability to imagine it. We have the peace of God, which Paul tells us, surpasses all understanding, and will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Here's a description:
 - Peace from God: Paul uses this often in his letters and it's the gift we have FROM God.
 - Peace with God: This is the relationship we have because of the work of Jesus on the Cross and his victory over death.
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 - When we have this peace it stands guard over our hearts and minds.
- Barclay summarizes it this way, *“The result of believing prayer is that the peace of God will stand like a sentinel on guard upon our hearts.”*
- And then, finally, we move on to . . .

Conclusion: This brings us to the goal of it all which is . . .

Excellence in the Lord

- Leading in from the idea of believing prayer, F. B. Meyer writes, *“We must thank him for the past and count on him for the future. While we pray, God's peace will descend to stand as centry at our hearts door. But we must possess the God of Peace as well as the peace of god- the one condition being that we must earnestly pursue all things that are true, just, pure, and lovely.”* These are beautiful words that describe Jesus Christ, AND his followers too.
- Francis Foulkes *“The Christian is to be characterized by an attitude of forbearance, patience, gentleness towards all people, and this prompted by the realization of the nearness of the Lord.”* He goes on to say that *“Paul uses eight words here to characterize the things which should fill the Christian's thought life—the true and honest; things worthy and noble; just and right; pure and holy; lovely and beautiful; the things that are of good report, pleasant to hear about; the things that possess moral excellence or virtue; the things that are praiseworthy. Let these things shape your attitude, then translate such thinking into action. The result will be the kind of life that follows the example seen and known from the apostle himself and not only will the peace of God be found, but the unfailing presence of the author and fountain of peace.”*
- This is truly being Jesus. This is excellence in the Lord. This is Christ Followers Par Excellence. Amen.

THE PRAYER CORNER IS AVAILABLE

Keith A. Tyson, M. Div.
2025

ABC March 9,

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