

Main Reading: **Philippians** 4:1-9

[Illustration]:

Imagine that you live in Philippi in the 1st century—let's say 65 A.D.

It's Sunday morning, and you and your family are preparing to go to church.

Soon, you'll travel to a well-off friend's house and gather with fellow believers to remember the day when Jesus rose from the dead.

You are eagerly waiting to sing songs, hear a few sermons, pray, and enjoy the fellowship.

When you get there, the elders inform you that a letter has arrived from the apostle Paul.

So, at the start of the service, the Senior Pastor stands before the church to read *this* letter.

Chapter 1 is read. Paul is in jail...but he's getting to preach to the Romans!

We learn that whether we live or die, we do it for the Lord.

Paul says that he's constantly praying for our church.

Chapter 2 is read. Paul encourages us to be humble, just as Jesus—God in human flesh—was

humble by coming to the earth to die and save us.

He tells us to do everything without complaining or arguing.

And he tells us that our dear friend, Epaphroditus, is doing well and in good health again!

Chapter 3 is read. Paul tells us to watch out for people, who teach things

that don't align with what we have already heard.

He reminds us that righteousness comes through faith and not by works, religion, or heritage.

He tells us to press on toward the goal, and reminds us that our citizenship is in Heaven.

But, then.....our pastor reads chapter 4, and things get awkward.

Paul calls out two women, who are sitting among us, by name.

Imagine if you were one of these people...what would *that* be like?!

Well, this is the situation that's described in Philippians 4, so let's dig down and look at it closely.

Whenever you jump down in the middle of a letter, and you read **"Therefore,"**

you would be wise to ask "What is the **therefore** there for?"

Because usually "therefore" follows a long discussion, and the writer is telling you what to do now.

We are studying the Bible, not to just fill our heads with the **truth** (although that's a good start),

but, *ultimately*, we want the truth to **affect** our life.

"Truth always comes with a "therefore," because the truth always affects how you live." — Steve Lawson

['Therefore' occurs 442 times in the NIV Bible, 1220 times in the KJV, 785 times in the ESV]

In this case, Paul had just discussed the truth about how Christians are citizens of Heaven...

And obviously that *should* cause us to live in a certain way.

Paul is about to tell the Philippians how all of this truth applies to their lives, but before he does,

He piles on several words of **affection** towards them.

He says he **"loves"** them and calls them **"my beloved."** He makes it clear that he **"longs"** to see them.

And he calls them his **"joy"** and his **"crown"**

His joy: Paul is in jail, but he finds **joy** *not only* in Christ but *also* in the faithful Philippians.

His crown: In the ancient **olympic** games, winners received a **wreath**/crown to wear on their head.

Instead of a **gold** medal prize, they were awarded a *fancy* for winning the event.

So, Paul is saying that the Philippians are the **fruit** of his ministry.

They are proof that *all* of his effort has payed off, had an impact, and been successful.

Now, I want you to know that a ministry is **not** validated by the number of people it draws in...

If you told *every single* person you knew that Jesus can forgive them of their sins,

and *none* of them believed what you said, you have done a **good** job.

If you went to the streets and **shared** the Gospel, and *not one* person got saved...congratulations!

You've obeyed the command of Jesus. **Luke** 24:25-27, **Matthew** 28:19-20

Sometimes we fall into the trap of **pragmatism**—"the ends justify the means."

A pragmatist might say, "Since people don't like our message, let's **change** it to get a bigger crowd."

Or, "Tonight's Bible study was unfruitful because less people showed up"

This mindset pays no attention to the **process** and only focuses on **results**.

But here's the Christian stance: We **obey** God in the process, and **trust** God with the results.

I say all this to say, Paul *already* had a reward for preaching the Gospel—being obedient to Christ!

But the *extra* reward was that the Philippians being a faithful church for close to 10 years!

And Paul tells these people to "**stand firm**" — it's a **military** term.

It's the orders that a commander would give to his army... "Don't back down!"

Basically, "Keep doing what you're doing...and don't stop!"

v. 2-3

In verse 2, Paul does something *hard* but *necessary*. He calls out 2 churchgoers for their **conduct**.

Imagine being at the service and hearing the names of Euodia & Syntyche come up in the letter...

I think it could've been a little **awkward**—we might've been friends with the two of them.

So, what could have been so serious that Paul had to call these women out?

Something was *off* about the way these women were behaving...

Paul indicates that a **rift** had come between them...and it wasn't good.

We don't know *exactly* what it was, but it was big enough to be mentioned publicly to the church.

And worse than that, this issue has been *permanently* recorded in the pages of our Bibles.

And since it's there, I want us to take a look at a few things.

1. Paul cared more about the church's unity than superficial fellowship.

He could've **avoided** the tension and let everyone pretend like everything was fine.

2. He doesn't side with either woman.

I know if I were in that church, I'd be asking, "But Paul...Who is in the **right**?!"

However, Paul didn't say that *either* of them were right...

So, it couldn't have been an issue over **beliefs**, doctrine, or anything like that...

If it *had* been, Paul would've brought the correct **teaching** in order to settle it.

See, sometimes, people's beliefs compromise the *foundation* of Christianity.

[Denying Jesus' identity or human sinfulness, for example, completely changes the Gospel]

But, in this case, neither persons' *beliefs* were compromising the truth or the Gospel.

The **intensity** of this disagreement was compromising the gospel.

Whatever these women *first* started arguing about was probably small potatoes...

But the disagreement had **escalated** into something *more* than their initial differences.

So, Paul tells these women to **"agree in the Lord."**

The goal was not to "find middle ground," but to stop letting the dispute ruin their **fellowship**.

They needed to realize that they *can* be **sisters** and **not** be the **same**.

I want you to know that we don't have to agree on *every* detail

about *everything* in the world to be **brothers** & sisters in the faith.

And I guarantee that you will **not** agree with people in your church about *everything*.

But, we can *still* have unity. **"We can have unity without uniformity."** — Trevin Wax

3. He involves the church in the reconciliation.

He tells the *direct* recipient of the letter to **"help these women;"** putting Clement on the task as well.

Also, notice that he acknowledges that Euodia & Syntyche's names are **"written in the book of life."**

v. 4

This is perhaps the **theme** verse of Paul's letter to the Philippians.

After all, the words 'joy' and 'rejoice' appear **13** times in just these 4 chapters.

And this particular verse is *incredibly* famous. But it was written in the context of **conflict!**

We might feel that this type of **drama** sucks the joy right out of us...

but *even* a conflict is not a good excuse to quit rejoicing.

In all reality, having joy will be crucial to—and active in—the **reconciliation** process.

See, rejoicing is a *very* powerful thing...When *I* see you rejoicing, it can help fix my bad attitude.

Or, when you have a rough day, and I rejoice, it may lift your spirits.

Rejoicing is also a powerful [ministry](#) to unbelievers. Our joy can have an impact on them.

In this world of [anxiety](#) and depression, the Church's joy makes us shine *brightly*.

Now, this *doesn't* mean that our evangelism becomes: "**You know before I knew Jesus, I wasn't happy.**

I was sad. But now, I'm happy. So, you should become a Christian and be happy like me."

That's **not** the Gospel—and sooner or later, even as a Christian, you won't be extremely happy.

But, here's the thing: "***Even when I'm unhappy, the truth is still true.***" — Voddie Baucham

And we can *always* rejoice that we know the truth; we have heard and learned the [answers](#).

See, our rejoicing is *not* unguided...it is "***in the Lord.***"

We Christians can *truly* rejoice in the Lord because we know [Him](#),

we know what He's [done](#), and we know what He is [doing](#).

Here are 2 things that Jesus is doing *right now* that we should rejoice over:

1) Jesus is Building His Church — [Matthew](#) 16:18

Every day, people are being saved and brought into our family of believers. Praise God!

2) Jesus is Praying for Us — [John](#) 17:20, [Hebrews](#) 7:25, 1 [John](#) 2:1

When we sin, Jesus [advocates](#) for us. He remembers us and keeps his forgiveness toward us.

Furthermore, hear this remark from Charles Spurgeon:

"What a gracious God we serve...who commands us to rejoice!"

QUESTION: HOW SHOULD JOY AND GRIEF COEXIST IN YOUR LIFE? WHICH IS EASIER FOR YOU TO EXPRESS?

v. 5

In this mission of reconciliation between these women,

Paul wants *everyone* at the Philippian church to display a [gentle](#) spirit.

If you try to go about reconciliation in a prideful, *reckless* way, it will not go well. [Proverbs](#) 15:1

So, we need to practice *gentleness* in our relationships.

[Paul even lists gentleness among the fruits of the Spirit in his writings]

Another thing, that's very important in our lives, is this fact: **"The Lord is at hand."**

Even in the midst of a conflict, Jesus is **present** among His believers.

If this situation of strife had cause any **heartbreak** at Philippi,

The people were to remember that the Lord is close by.

For us, today, we should remember that God is **not** far from us, even in the days where we are **sad**,
upset, or lonely—even when rejoicing is *hard*—Jesus is with you. **Psalm** 34:18

If you feel alone/lonely, be assured that **"God + one always makes a majority."** — Steve Lawson
v. 6

Here is another super famous Bible verse, and I want you to *really* look at it and listen.

This is a **command** from the Holy Spirit: **"Do not worry"** [**Jesus preached on this in Mt. 6**]

To be anxious is to **disobey** God. At the root, it's a failure to recognize that He is in control.

If you are experiencing *intense* worry, the Bible is the best medicine for that. **Psalm** 1:1-2

One truth from the Bible, that may ease your worries, is that God has *never* been surprised.

He has *never* made a **mistake** or had to change His mind.

He has *never* **forgotten** something or needed a reminder.

And while we're on the topic, there *are* some Bible stories that make it *sound* like God has regrets...

Before He sent the flood, God says **"I regret that I made these people"**

But God knows the future, so it's *impossible* for Him to regret something...

So, what is happening in those stories, then? God communicates on our **level**.

He describes things in ways that we can grasp. **Deuteronomy** 30:11-14

[**Jesus called some fishermen to be His disciples by saying: "I will make you fishers of men"**]

So, don't misinterpret the Bible and think that God is caught off guard by your scenario...

Instead, be confident that He knows what He's doing and **trust** Him the process.

One tangible way that we trust God is through prayer.

Here, Paul characterizes prayer by supplication, petition, thanksgiving, and requests.

All the prayers in the Bible, which serve as examples for us, are built on these things.

Requests; *pleading* with God...Asking **James** 4:2 says “*you have not, because you ask not*”

At its heart, *effective* prayer is **humble** prayer; where you come and ask God
for strength, **wisdom**, and whatever else you need.

And *all* meaningful prayer is accompanied by *sincere* **gratitude**.

v. 7

The result of giving all your burdens to Jesus in prayer is the peace of God.

For most of us, in 21st Century America, we don't really know the value of peace.

Not many of us have *really* experienced **war** or unrest first hand.

So, peace, for us, is normal every day life...

But peace is key to the Gospel, and prayer helps us understand and *feel* peace.

Jesus Himself said, to His disciples, “**My peace I give to you**” in John 14:27.

3 TYPES OF PEACE THAT CHRISTIANS ENJOY

1) We have peace with God. **Romans** 5:1

2) We have peace of mind. **Isaiah** 26:2

3) And we have peace with each other. [Seen in the example of Euodia & Syntyche]

This peace is on a *supernatural* level and there is *no* explanation for it other than God provides it.

v. 8

Here, Paul provides **8** things that should characterize a Christian's thoughts/**focus**. Whatever is...

TRUE: The Bible defines what is true. Thinking about truth leads to Christianity, thinking about something else leads to idolatry.

HONORABLE: Think about high things...lofty things. “Get your mind out of the gutter!”

JUST/RIGHT: [Reference to Roman marketplaces. The Greek word describes this scenario: A weight would be placed on one side, grain would be poured into the other. When the two sides balanced, the price was confirmed and it was called “right” (dikaio)].

PURE: Wholesome content. The opposite of raunchy. Censorship in your mind.

LOVELY: Things that are beautiful in God's sight. He defines beauty...not us. P.S. — A gentle, *humble*, and quiet person is precious in God's eyes (1 Peter 3:4).

COMMENDABLE: Best explained here → [Ephesians](#) 5:14

EXCELLENT: God's character and nature; In all honesty, He is the only excellent person.

WORTHY OF PRAISE: Christians should dwell on things that have God's approval. If God would not applaud something, we should not be thinking about it.

This is so important because we become like whatever we dwell on.

It's a tired phrase, and a cliché, but it's true. "Garbage in, garbage out."

Whatever you study, you will become like. An [apprentice](#) will become like his teacher. [Luke](#) 6:40

So, let God be your teacher and dwell on His Word.

QUESTION: IN WHAT WAYS ARE YOU ALREADY THINKING LIKE THIS? IN WHAT WAYS ARE YOU FAILING?

WHAT ARE YOU DWELLING ON INSTEAD?

v. 9

Finally, Paul provides application. How were they going to put this into practice?

• **Imitate the things they had learned.**

In other words, the Philippians *must* remember what Paul had taught them while he was there.

For us today, who've never heard Paul speak in person,

this highlights the importance for all of us to sit under sound teaching and preaching.

• **Imitate what they had received.**

This is talking about what Paul wrote them in this letter.

Once they received it, it would have been read to them *publicly*—we must *still* do this today.

1 [Thessalonians](#) 5:27

• **Imitate what they had heard.**

Just in case any of them were new to the church, or too young to remember, trustworthy people at

Philippi could fill everyone in and remind them about Paul's behavior.

• **Imitate what they had seen**

For those who did remember Paul, they could follow his example from their memory.