

EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

PASTORAL INSTRUCTIONS ON SERVING CHRIST, PHILIPPIANS 4:1-9

A. Paul's concluding exhortation, a reminder to *stand firm*, to live what we believe (4:1), ***Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.***

1. He encouraged the Philippian Christians to stand firm in their pursuit of Christ.

a. *Therefore*, points to the conclusion of the main subject to *stand firm*.

- 1) *thus*, he looked back to his instructions on trusting Christ, Philippians 3:1-21.
- 2) Also, it is a look forward to his instructions on serving Christ, Philippians 4:2-10.

b. Standing firm demands more than instruction, it demands a source, *the Lord*.

- 1) The Lord Jesus Christ is the One we pursue and He is the One who keeps us.
- 2) Philippians 1:6, *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

c. Review of *standing firm* in Philippians 1:27, *Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,*

- 1) *in one spirit*, like-minded, the same attitude in how one deals with life.
- 2) *with one mind*, a singular purpose or desire.
- 3) *striving side by side*, working as a team for a common goal.
- 4) *for the faith of the gospel* which is the common goal, the center of our faith and testimony.

2. Paul's exhortation was delivered to those he dearly loved.

a. *my brothers*, is best translated *my brothers and sisters*, also, Galatians 4:8 and 21.

b. His love for them was beyond a physical attraction and was based on spiritual involvement.

- 1) 1Thessalonians 2:19-20, *For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy.*
- 2) Thomas Constable, *...he referred to them as his present source of joy and his future crown when he would stand before the judgment seat of Christ. He would receive a reward for establishing them in the faith.*
- 3) Charles Spurgeon, *He could never forget the time when he and Silas prayed with the women at the riverside, and afterwards prayed and sang praises unto God in the prison, when the prisoners heard them. Lydia and her household and the Philippian jailer were among the firstfruits of Paul's work at Philippi, and there was always a very intimate love between him and the members of the church in that place. They cared for him, and he cared for them.*

B. Specific duties that strengthen one's resolve to *stand firm* (2-9)

1. Pursue unity (2-3), ***I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.***

a. Paul put faces to two individuals who were not standing firm together, Euodia and Syntyche (2)

- 1) These were Christian women in the Philippian congregation who were possibly deaconesses.
- 2) The reason for their break in fellowship is not known.
- 3) Paul did not command them to reconcile but he *entreated* (encouraged them) to agree in the Lord.
 - a) Christians have much more in common than that would divide.
 - b) *agree* for Paul meant to *live in harmony*, note Philippians 2:2, *complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.*
 - c) True reconciliation comes when we major on majors which for a Christian is the Lord Jesus.
 - d) D. A. Carson, *Where there are disagreements of principle, argue them out. Take out your Bibles, think things through, find out why you are disagreeing, and be willing to be corrected.*

b. He encouraged another person in the church to help Euodia and Syntyche restore fellowship.

- 1) The person was called *true companion*, probably meaning a *fellow-worker*.
- 2) This person was probably the leading elder or pastor of the church in Philippi.

c. Paul reminded them of the women's faithful service alongside Paul, Clement and others.

- 1) Clement was a member of the church in Philippi or a member of Paul's ministry team known by those in Philippi.
- 2) Paul reminded the church at Philippi that those women's names were written in the *book of life*.
 - a) Luke 10:20, *Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.*"
 - b) Max Anders, *Disagreements even among mature Christians are not new. Mature Christians do not allow these disagreements to interfere with love and unity in the body of Christ...Quarreling is not the nature of the church nor was it of the women involved. They had fought alongside Paul like gladiators in the arena to spread the gospel message. God had written their names in heaven's registry of citizens alongside all the others to whom he promised eternal life. Paul sets the women on an equal level with others whom the Philippian church knew as faithful soldiers of the cross.*
 - c) Charles Spurgeon, *If the Lord Jesus Christ has written my name in the book of life, in the great family register of the redeemed, I defy all the devils of hell ever to get it erased.*

2. Be joyful (4-5)

a. Paul emphasized the need to maintain joy in the Lord despite the circumstances (4), ***Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.***

- 1) The Philippians had many reasons why they could be discouraged
 - a) There was Paul's imprisonment, Epaphroditus' illness, attacks on the Gospel from those proclaiming false teaching, even disputes between fellow believers.
 - b) James 1:2-3, *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.*
- 2) He reminded them that their joy must be found in pursuing the Lord.
 - a) Philippians 3:1, *Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.*
 - b) 1 Thessalonians 5:16, *Rejoice always,*
 - c) Max Anders, *Christians should be known as joyful people. Such joy resides not in circumstances or positive attitudes toward life. Joy reigns in the heart only when Christ is Lord of life. Joy is always in the Lord.*
- 3) He repeated his command a second time for emphasis.
 - a) The Lord is the object of our joy.
 - b) D. A. Carson, *If we fail to respond with joy and gratitude when we are reminded of these things, it is either because we have not properly grasped the depth of the abyss of our own sinful natures and of the curse from which we have been freed by Jesus or because we have not adequately surveyed the splendor of the heights to which we have been raised.*

b. The next verse gives greater meaning to Paul's command to always rejoice (5), ***Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand;***

- 1) *reasonableness* may be understood as *gentle, considerate*.
 - a) Titus 3:2, *to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.*
 - b) James 3:17, *But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.*
- 2) A person who is joyfully pursuing Christ is less affected by slights from others or troubles that can overwhelm one's perspective.
 - a) Thomas Constable, *The forbearing person does not insist on his or her own rights or privileges. He or she is considerate and gentle toward others. Of course, there is a time to stand for what is right. The forbearing person is not spineless but selfless.*
 - b) Charles Spurgeon, *Do not get angry with anybody; do not begin to get fiery and impetuous. Do not push your own rights too far; stop short of what you might fairly demand. And when you feel, at any time, a little vehement in temper, check yourself, hold yourself in, bear and forbear. Go not as far as you may, nor even as far as some think that you ought, in defending your own rights; let your gentleness, your yieldingness, be known unto all men.*
 - c) A. W. Tozer, *Promoting self under the guise of promoting Christ is currently so common as to excite little notice.*
- 3) *The Lord is at hand*
 - a) F. W. Beare, *The Apostle is not speaking of the nearness of the Lord in his abiding presence with us, but of the imminence of his coming.*

- b) D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *In all we do we must always remember that the Lord may return at any time. His coming is always at hand, yes, but we do not know when, and so we must always live in the realization that he is coming.*

3. Trust God (6-7)

- a. Paul exhorted the Philippians to replace worry with trust in God (6), ***do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.***

1) *do not be anxious about anything*

a) There is nothing so great that God can't deal with it for your good and His glory.

b) *anxious* means *to worry about, to be concerned*, Matthew 6:25-34, *"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"*

c) D. A. Carson, *This passage does not deny the existence of anxieties, it tells us what to do with them. It does not tell us that if we have the right personality, we can live above tension; it tells us where we find strength and grace to help in times of need.*

2) Replace anxiety with prayer.

a) Nothing is too small nor too great to take to God in prayer.

b) Words used for prayer in this verse.

1] *prayer* is the word normally used in speaking to or making requests to God.

2] *supplication* is more urgent, specific.

3] *thanksgiving* is to express gratitude for benefits or blessings.

4] *requests* emphasizes specific items within the context of prayer.

c) Prayer is made to God who hears and responds.

1] God knows our needs.

2] Prayer is demonstrating trust in God.

3] Lack of prayer is trust in oneself.

3) Replace anxiety with thanksgiving.

a) Remind yourself of God's faithfulness, past and present.

b) Thank Him for his faithfulness in the future.

c) God can be trusted based on His promises and His provisions.

- b. The result of trust is peace from God (7), ***And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.***

1) Transition from verse 6 to verse 7.

a) Anxiety is the opposite of peace.

b) *And* identifies the bridge between anxiety and peace which is paved by prayer.

2) *the peace of God*

a) This is the only time this phrase occurs in the New Testament.

b) This is not peace *with* God but peace *from* God.

1] Thomas Constable, *This is peace that comes from God rather than peace with God. It is a peace that comes to us when we pray because we enter into the tranquility of God's own presence.*

2] Max Anders, *God's peace reflects the divine character, which lives in serenity, totally separate from all anxiety and worry.*

c) Characteristics of the peace of God

1] Incomparable

a] *which surpasses all understanding*

b] The peace of God is beyond human reason and imagination.

c] Charles Spurgeon, *It is deeper, it is broader, it is sweeter; it is more heavenly than the joyful saint himself can tell. He enjoys what he cannot understand. What a mercy that such a thing is possible, for otherwise our joys would be narrow indeed! Reason has limits far narrower than joy.*

d] J. Alec Motyer, *What we need today - as in every period of history - is the touch of the*

supernatural, something that cannot be explained except to say, "this is the finger of God."

- 2] *Impenetrable, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*
 - a] *Peace from God keeps one in a place of rest instead of following the road of anxiety.*
 - b] *Robert Lightner, Like soldiers assigned to watch over a certain area, God's peace garrisons the hearts and minds, that is, the emotions and thoughts, of God's children.*
 - c] *Gerald Hawthorne, Together these words refer to the entire inner being of the Christian, his emotions, affections, thoughts and moral choices. This inner part of a person, then, so vulnerable to attack by the enemy, is that which God's peace is set, like battle-ready soldiers, to protect.*

4. Think on worthy things (8), ***Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.***

a. Paul encouraged the Philippian Christians to think about things that strengthen one's resolve to stand firm.

b. *Finally*, is Paul noting the last of the imperatives for how to *stand firm*.

- 1) Paul will not list theological words but adjectives that describe how a Christian should determine what to choose and what to reject.
- 2) This word study focuses on morality grounded on the nature of God.

c. Specific virtues

1) *true*

a) It means *valid, honest, reliable*.

b) Christians must be people of truth, not controlled by speculation or opinion.

c) For Christians truth is sourced in the very nature of God,

1] John 3:33, *Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true.*

2] John 14:6, *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

2) *honorable*

a) It means worthy of respect, of good character.

b) The word is used only here and in 1 Timothy 3:8, 11 and Titus 2:2, *Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.*

3) *just*

a) It means *proper or right with an emphasis on God's standards*, Psalm 11:7, *For the LORD is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face.*

b) It is *appropriate*, Philippians 1:7, *It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.*

4) *pure*

a) It means *without moral defect*, note 1 Peter 3:2, *when they see your respectful and pure conduct.*

b) God's nature is the standard, 1 John 3:3, *And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.*

c) It carries the thought of modesty in what one thinks about, listens to and watches, F. Bruce, *Purity of thought and purpose is a precondition of purity in word and action.*

5) *lovely*

a) It means *agreeable, pleasing*.

b) The word is only used here in the New Testament.

c) F. Bruce, *They give pleasure to all and cause distaste to none, like a welcome fragrance.*

d) Gordon Fee, *...this word could refer to a Beethoven symphony, as well as to the work of Mother Teresa among the poor of Calcutta; the former is lovely and enjoyable, the latter is admirable as well as moral.*

6) *commendable*

a) It means *of good report, praiseworthy because it measures us to the highest standards.*

b) The word is only used here in the New Testament.

c) R. Lightner, *...relates to what is positive and constructive rather than negative and destructive.*

d. Paul summarized the list of virtues with a general description.

- 1) *excellence*
 - a) It emphasizes what is *morally right*.
 - b) The word is only used here and in 1 Peter 2:9 and 2 Peter 1:3, 5.
 - c) It carries the meaning of *virtuous* in 2 Peter 1:5, *For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge,*
 - d) Max Anders, *The first (excellence) encompasses what is best in every area of life, the philosophical good for which every person should strive. Here it is especially the ethical best a person can achieve.*
- 2) *worthy of praise*
 - a) It means *praiseworthy, commendable*
 - b) Max Anders, *The second term refers to that which deserves human praise. The catalog of virtues thus reflects the best life a person can live and the best reputation a person can thereby achieve in the community.*

e. The reason Paul gave this listing of words was so Christians would think on them.

- 1) Christians are to think, ponder, meditate on that which is good.
- 2) F. F. Bruce, *As good food is necessary for bodily health, so good thoughts are necessary for mental and spiritual health.*
- 3) Max Anders, *Finally, in this verse, Paul gets to his point: think on these things. That, joined with prayer will relieve all anxieties and lead one to praise God and live life the way he desires.*

5. Imitate apostolic teaching and conduct (9), ***What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.***

a. Paul told the Philippians that what he commanded was demonstrated in his life.

- 1) A. T. Robertson, *Paul dares to point to his life in Philippi as an illustration of this high thinking. The preacher is the interpreter of the spiritual life and should be an example of it.*
- 2) Hawthorne, *It appears that he [Paul] was of the conviction that the truths of the Christian gospel must never be abstracted from action and put into high-toned words and phrases, but always expressed in the life of the teacher.*
- 3) J. Alec Motyer, *For us, we no longer have Paul, nor any apostle, the commandment requires us to submit to the apostolic word...*

b. He promised them that they would have the peace of God if they lived what they believed.

- 1) Thomas Constable, *When they did so, the God of peace would be with them. Obviously God is always with His people (Matt. 28:20). Paul's phrase is a way of saying that they would experience God's presence by enjoying the peace that comes when we walk in fellowship with God.*
- 2) Paul described the peace of God in verse 7 which is incomparable and impenetrable.

CONCLUSION

- A. We stand firm in our faith as we think on worthy things.
- B. When we replace worry with trust in God we experience His peace.
- C. We need to follow the example of those who live the truth of God