

## Call to Peace

We are back in our series from the New Testament Book of Philippians. With Advent, the holidays, and special speakers and such... it has been a while since we were here, but I'm glad to be back.



There are all sorts of ways to approach this part of our week together, these talks (sermons). Our *default position* is to work through a section of the Bible (often a book of the Bible) in a series. The main reason we follow that route is that **we take the Bible pretty seriously around here**. Considering the Bible section-by-section, or even verse-by-verse, like this, keeps us *on track* to cover all the big ideas in the Bible... not merely jumping around through the stuff that is easiest to capture or most pleasing to digest. It is a good approach for a congregation.

I also hope that this approach impacts our *individual* study. This is God's Word to us. We ought to be in God's Word, studying and praying through God's Word, not only as a congregation in moments like these, but on our own, every day.

I know that you all must marvel at my extraordinary abilities as a Bible scholar (quite impressive I'm sure)... but my real hope is that you will see that you can do this yourself. You can read and understand and apply the Bible yourself... section-by-section, verse-by-verse.

So... we're back... and we'll be here in Philippians today, and three more Sundays, as we finish up this last chapter (chapter 4). If you would like to review, the previous 11 sermons are on our website; you can watch, or listen, or even read my manuscripts.

It turns out that today's passage, the first 9 verses of chapter 4, contains what I've been calling the **key verse** of all of Philippians. Let's read it out loud together:

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! <sup>1</sup>

I've been calling the series *Joyride Through Philippians* since **joy**, or the verb-form **rejoice**, is the prominent theme throughout the book.

Here in this final chapter of Philippians, we'll see that joy and peace are wonderfully joined together (joy and peace are commonly joined together in the New Testament).



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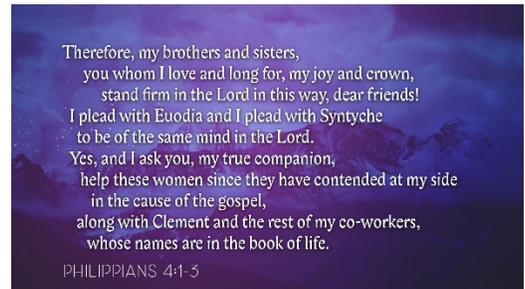
<sup>1</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Php 4:4). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

It makes sense, doesn't it? Doesn't it seem that where one is found the other is close by... where we find peace there is joy, and where we find joy there is usually peace too?

Philippians 4 starts with this encouragement:

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! <sup>2</sup>

This was Paul's encouragement to his friends in the new church he planted in Philippi... and it is an encouragement that endures throughout the ages for the *Church universal*, and our Church here at Northshore: **stand firm in the Lord**.



Notice the first word: *therefore*. It is a bit of a cliché, but it is worth repeating: “When we see a *therefore*, we ought to consider what the *therefore* is there for.” (Usually cliché sayings like this get that way because they are true.) So... what about that *therefore*?

A *therefore* refers to something that has come before, so it could be a reference to the preceding idea. If you are looking at the text, you can see that chapter 3 ends with the idea that the Believer's citizenship is in Heaven... the main emphasis being that we have God's promises that endure through *eternity*.

The promise of eternity is certainly solid foundation upon which believers in Jesus can stand firm, now.

But I'm pretty sure that the *therefore* here, that starts chapter 4, is more comprehensive than that.

Paul says “*that* is how you should stand firm in the Lord.” And what is *that*? It is more than just the promise of *eternity in Heaven* found in the previous verses. The ***therefore***, the ***that***, is all of the Book of Philippians up until this point in the text. In this final chapter, Paul is wrapping it all up. Considering all that has been placed before us in the Book of Philippians, that is how we can and should *stand firm in the Lord*.

Our citizenship as Believers *is* in Heaven, and that changes things for the here and now too; our citizenship is in Heaven, so *now* we are ***colonists***... we operate as a *colony of Heaven*, ruled by the King of Heaven, bringing the culture of Heaven to this outpost. That is how we should stand firm in the Lord... with joy.

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<sup>2</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Php 4:1). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

We should also notice an aspect of joy revealed here. Paul speaks of brothers and sisters, the *Family of Believers*, bound together by faith... with bonds that are as strong as blood (perhaps even stronger). These are those he loves and longs for, separated by distance and circumstances.

He calls these fellow believers his “joy and crown.” When he refers to them as his *crown*, it includes the meaning that his friendship with them as Believers, believers under his care who knew Jesus because Paul made the introduction, was his eternal reward. And he called them his **joy**.

For Paul, joy was more than some abstract **idea** or elusive **feeling**; joy was demonstrated in flesh and blood. These people, these relationships, were his joy.

Let’s not settle for the small measure of joy that comes from a mere idea or feeling... or even the joy that comes from stuff and various comforts. True, deep, real, lasting joy is attached to people. And that leads us into what follows:

<sup>2</sup> I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.<sup>3</sup>

It would be really easy to just skip this verse, because it is *kind of weird*. We don’t know much at all about Euodia and Syntyche (their *names* are even weird, to us... actually not all that uncommon in Philippi 2,000 years ago).

Here are some things we do know:

**They were important to Paul...** so important that he would name them. It was common for Paul to name names when it was about commendation or greeting, but rare that he would name names when addressing a problem.

**They were his coworkers in the gospel.** He said:

they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my coworkers, whose names are in the book of life. <sup>4</sup>

Euodia and Syntyche were likely among the first believers in Philippi and served at Paul’s side to build the church. It also seems that their leadership continued as Paul moved on.

**They were prominent leaders in the Philippian church.** The brevity of this reference leads us to believe that they were well known by all, and the trouble between them was common knowledge. Paul didn’t need to go into a bunch of details, because they were evident to all in Philippi.

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<sup>3</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Php 4:2). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>4</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Php 4:3). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

**They were women.** That is significant. There are churches these days that reserve some leadership posts and responsibilities for men (some don't allow women pastors, for example). I believe that such positions are supported by a misinterpretation of Scripture.

Here is a clear example of women in church leadership from the very beginning. They were women with a problem... it wasn't a *problem* that they were women.

**They were not disqualified from serving, or somehow outside of the faith.** Their "names are in the book of life." Whatever their problem, it was likely more a matter of *practice* than *doctrine*... differing approaches to **doing the Gospel**. Perhaps one was more mindful of Jewish customs, and the other was not (a common point of contention in the early church). Maybe one wanted juice in the communion cups, while the other expected wine. Or one wanted to sing from the hymnal with an organ accompaniment and the other wanted a band with new songs every Sunday. It is hard to say. Is it hard to imagine what leaders in the church might disagree about, especially when it comes to matters of style and practice?

Whatever it was in their case, it was a cause of friction and tension worth addressing.

Paul asked that his "true companion" would help these women. It is interesting that he didn't name that companion... but apparently they all knew who he was talking about. If I had to guess, it could have been Luke, the one who penned the Gospel of Luke, as well as the Book of Acts. Luke was with Paul on his journeys, including his pioneering visit to Philippi. If it wasn't Luke, it was probably someone *like* Luke... someone who accompanied Paul for some time, likely from outside of Philippi but remained to serve the new and growing church.

So here were these two leaders with a known dispute that was likely hindering the work of the Gospel in Philippi. Notice what Paul said about it. He didn't *settle* the dispute, calling one out as *right* and the other as *wrong*. He didn't offer a practical solution, or ruling, on what was likely a practical matter. Instead he offered this directive:

be of the same mind in the Lord<sup>5</sup>

He didn't say be of the same *practice* or the same *style*, but be of the same **mind**.

You may have heard it said that the Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in American life. That often seems true... and it is not just about race.

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<sup>5</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Php 4:2). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Sometimes it seems that our congregations are not all that focused on being of the same mind in the Lord. Sometimes it seems that we are more concerned about being of the same:

- Style
- Politics
- Music
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Economic Status
- Dress

We should have no expectation that is what eternity is like. If Heaven is not segregated, why on earth would we segregate our *colonies of Heaven* in our days?

This is my hope for Northshore; I believe this it is **our** hope for Northshore. We are not interested in looking the same, or thinking the same, or bringing the same cultures or backgrounds an one another; these are not the things that bind us together. We are a **colony of Heaven** here, in **Kenmore** (and this region)... so we ought to look like this region, with all sorts of diversity. Let's not settle for being of the same style or politics or background or anything like that.

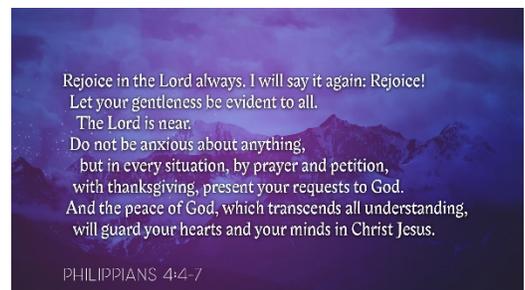
When it came to Euodia and Syntyche, they did not, perhaps, need to change their **practice**... but rather, it seems that they needed to change their **minds**. They need to “be of the same mind in the Lord.” That seems like a description of what God has in mind for His Church, to “be of the same mind in the Lord” not merely of the same style or culture or such.

So, what does it mean to be of the same mind in the Lord? What is this mindset that leads to peace? I'm glad you asked!

I submit what we read in the following verses:

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!<sup>6</sup>

**Joy** is vital to having the mindset of the Lord... so important it is worth saying twice: Rejoice!



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<sup>6</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Php 4:4). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

This is so much more than being merely *reactive*; this is **proactive**. Having the mindset of the Lord means that we are continually *on the lookout* for opportunities to rejoice. We set our minds on joy... even if our circumstances do not provoke joy, perhaps *especially* when our circumstances do not provide joy.

<sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be evident to all. <sup>7</sup>

Gentleness is a part of the mindset of the Lord.

Notice first that this is what **all** should see from Believers. (There is a clear *outward focus* here.)

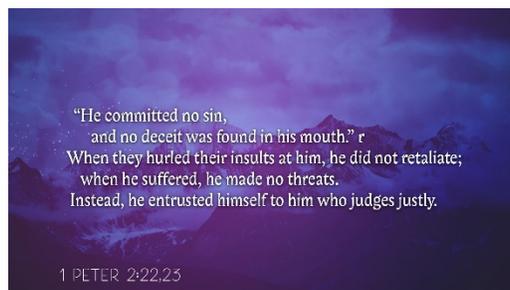
We need to be careful that the cords of love and fellowship that bind us together in the Church do not form a fence that keeps others out.

Our love is not only for God (upward facing) or among one another, but should be known by all.

It may be hard to pin down exactly what is meant by *gentleness*. Consider the context, that this is gentleness as an aspect of *the mindset of the Lord*. Consider the gentleness of the Lord in his dealing with us. And consider the gentleness of Jesus as He dealt with the brutality and betrayal of humanity.

<sup>22</sup> “He committed no sin,  
and no deceit was found in his mouth.” <sup>r</sup>

<sup>23</sup> When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. <sup>8</sup>



Jesus made his gentleness known to all, trusting Himself to the Father.

We make our *gentleness* known to all, and our **requests** known to God.

The text says:

The Lord is near.



<sup>7</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Php 4:5). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>8</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (1 Pe 2:22–23). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Scholars differ in interpretation here. Some determine that this is a reminder that **the Lord is returning**, coming at any moment... coming soon. Others determine that this is a matter of **the Lord being present** among His people, His church, by the power and working of His Holy Spirit.

I think it is *all* of that.

Yes, a vital part of the *mindset of the Lord* is the **urgency** that comes with knowing that Jesus is coming soon... that our time on earth is limited. We will either meet Jesus in death, or at His second coming.

*And*, a vital part of the *mindset of the Lord* is to live with His **closeness**. He is in our midst, working in us and through us. He is meeting needs, bringing comfort, healing bodies, saving souls. The Lord is near!

<sup>6</sup> Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.<sup>9</sup>

The mindset of the Lord is a mindset of trust and prayer. In every situation, we are called to trust God. We

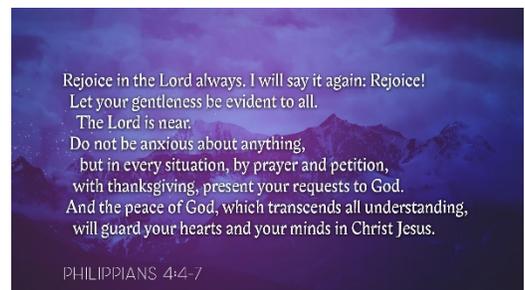
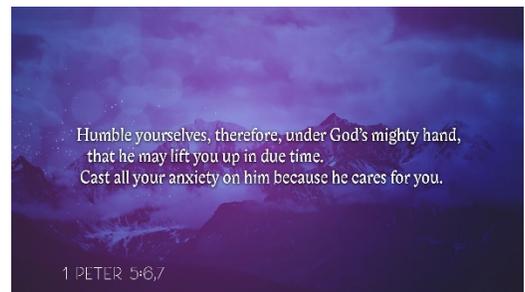
<sup>7</sup> Cast all [our] anxiety on him because he cares for [us].<sup>10</sup>

The mindset of the Lord is derived from, and nourished by, connection with the Lord in prayer. And the mindset of the Lord is marked by, and results in, trust.

<sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.<sup>11</sup>

The *mindset of the Lord* transcends all understanding. That is not a *knock* against understanding... but rather an acknowledgement that the *mindset of the Lord* is **supernatural**.

You may remember Gordon saying it last week: “We do the natural; God does the super.” We do all the understanding that we can (in the natural), and God covers it all with the super... transcending all understanding.



<sup>9</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Php 4:6). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>10</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (1 Pe 5:7). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>11</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Php 4:7). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Reading on... in verse 8 we see these *whatevers*; I'm going to *breeze right by them* now, because I want to spend more time here next week. But today, receive the promise at the end:

the God of peace will be with you.<sup>12</sup>

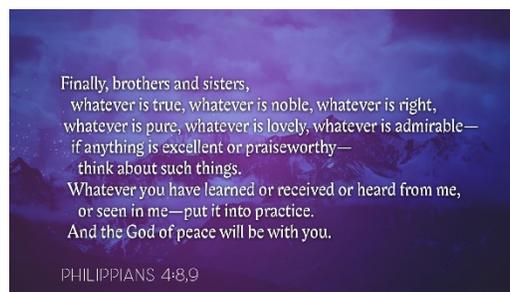
The *mindset of the Lord* is more than just that, a *mindset*. It is not merely that God will *give* us peace and joy and such... not merely that *the peace of God* is with us, but that *the God of peace* is with us.

This is our call to peace.

It is **peace with God**. Do you have peace with God today? It starts with believing in Jesus, turning from our ways, our sin, and trusting Him. Friend, that call to peace, this call to God, is for you today. Make today your day to believe.

It is **peace with one another**. Perhaps we need to change our minds again today. Perhaps we need that mindset of the Lord to wash over some difference or disagreement. Today can be a day to pray to God for strength and grace... it could even be a day for apologies and forgiveness.

It is **peace in the midst our circumstances**. We are called to cast our cares on Him, knowing that He cares for us. Today is a day to “not be anxious about anything.” We are called to present our requests to God. Let's do that today.



<sup>12</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Php 4:9). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.