

VII. Philippians: *Rejoicing in the Advancement of the Gospel*
“Stand Firm in the Lord”

Philippians 4:1–9

Benny Youngblood

November 19, 2023 • Sunday Evening Sermon

Philippians is Paul's letter to the Church at Philippi and it's God's letter to you and me so we want to hear it that way. We want to ask God continually to give us ears to hear as we hear His Word read and then preached. Philippians 4:1-9 says *[1] Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.*

[2] I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. [3] 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.

[4] Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. [5] Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; [6] do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

[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. [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.

May God bless the reading and preaching of His Word now.

In this passage we see in the first verse a great exhortation that we're to stand firm in the Lord and verse begins with one of Paul's favorite connecting words – therefore. We've seen it several times already in this letter. Here Paul is connecting this charge to stand firm in the Lord with what he just said previously in this letter. He's telling us and those in Philippi to stand firm in the Lord because we have a great Savior, because He's forgiven us of all our sins and He's given us His righteousness in Christ. He's made us His own. He has secured us and is going to complete that work that He has begun in us at the day of Christ. We're citizens of heaven. We're not citizens of this earth. We're awaiting the sure return of Christ Jesus, who will come and when He comes, He'll give us a heavenly body and will no longer have this earthly body. When He comes, He'll usher in His great kingdom here on Earth. He will rule and reign and we'll rule and reign with Him forever and ever. He says, stand firm because of these wonderful truths.

He also says to stand firm because there's real enemies. Paul just told us in Philippians 3 that there's enemies in this world, who are enemies of the cross that have infiltrated in and are teaching false doctrines through false teachings. The enemy of Satan is sure and he's like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. We also have other enemies, even of our flesh, where we seek our own strong kingdoms here on Earth way too much. Paul also says to stand firm in Christ our Lord, because the mission is important. Stand firm because of that great mission to go into all the nations and take the Gospel, to be holy for Christ, to glorify God in all that we say and do. Because of all these great truths we are to stand firm in the Lord.

We also see in Philippians 4:1 the great love that he has for those in Philippi when he says *[1] Therefore, my brothers, **whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.*** He says, ‘You're my family, my family forever’ because they're his brothers and sisters in Christ. We're going to spend all eternity worshiping God and serving in

Christ. This love is that agape love, the selfless love, the love of Christ and he says, 'I love you dearly and long for you.' Earlier in this same letter he said, 'How I yearn for you all with the affections of Christ' (Philippians 1:8). Think of that person that when you get in your car and you leave their home, right when you leave the driveway, you miss them and can't wait to see them again. That's what he's saying when he says 'I long to see you. I yearn to be with you. I love you. The fellowship that we have is so sweet.' In this relationship we encourage each other, and build each other up. Therefore, stand firm in the Lord because I love you.

Stand firm means to be firmly planted in Christ, to be unmovable in the Lord, to persevere in the Lord. Pastor Reeder said often to stay on mission, on message and in ministry and that's exactly what Paul's saying right here. Stand firm in the Lord – keep on mission, on message in ministry. That last phrase, standing firm in the Lord, is he telling us where we should stand or is he telling us how we are to stand? Yes, both and we do this by standing in the Lord by His power and His strength. He's the One who keeps us. He is the sure Foundation, the Anchor of our soul. We stand firm in His Word by the Spirit. On His mission we stand firm in the Lord. I love the way the new American Standard translates this verse as it says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, whom I long to see, my joy and my crown **in this way**, stand firm in the Lord, my beloved."

This passage isn't just connecting us to what has gone before, but why it is right here in context, what's about to unfold. Paul is going to give us five different principles, five different exhortation, five different instructions on how we stand firm in the Lord. The first one is we're to stand firm in the Lord, in unity. We're united in Christ. He's made us one. He tells us in His Word, we're one body. Christ prayed in that garden that we would be one as He and the Father are one (John 17:21). It is so important to Christ that we would be unified as God's church over the Gospel of Christ.

Here in Philippi, they had an issue. Philippians 4:2-3 says [2] *I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. [3] 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.* These two ladies, Euodia and Syntyche, had a heated argument. We don't know what it is. It's obvious it had been going on a while. Paul wrote the letter and it was received by the church at Philippi and it was important enough that he named them out in this letter. We know a little bit about them because Paul says these two have labored alongside of him, side by side in the Gospel. They helped plant the church at Philippi and they were co laborers with Paul and others. He names out Clement. We don't know who he is, but he was a leader in the church and Paul says these women labored beside him and Clement and other fellow workers. We know they're true believers because their name is written in the Book of Life.

Then Paul tells them divisions are not to be in God's church. He wants them to agree in the Lord. You have a disagreement, but you need to put it aside. You need to reconcile for the Gospel is too great, souls are too important, the work of Christ is too important. Reconcile, find agreement in the Lord and put that disagreement aside. Love one another with a love of Christ. Take care of this.

Paul has already used the phrase 'agree in the Lord' but we've translated it in this letter to be of the same mind for it's the same Greek phrase. Philippians 1:27 parallels to what Paul is saying here in Philippians 4. Philippians 1:27 says [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.*

That's the Lord's will. That is what Paul is praying for them – that they're striving in the Lord, side by side for the Gospel of faith, serving the Lord with one mind, and agreeing in the Lord.

The phrase 'agree in the Lord' is used twice in Philippians, once in chapter 4 and the other place is in Philippians 2:1-4 which says [1] *So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, [2] complete my joy by **being of the same mind**, having the same love, being in full accord and **of one mind**. [3] Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. [4] Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.* This is what he's telling these ladies, to have this mind, the mind of Christ. Have this love. Agree in the Lord.

Paul goes on in Philippians 4:3a saying "I ask you to ask you also true companion help these women." Is he talking about a particular person? Some versions say yoke fellow. Is that who he's talking to or is he talking to the church, those who would be true companions, those who would yoke up with him and help the ladies resolve their conflict? We don't know but what he is saying is "church, if two people are not getting along, if there's an issue, don't let it go on, help them reconcile this issue." Again, the Gospel is too precious, it's too important. Don't let divisions go on in the church.

From here my attention goes to Romans 15:5-6 which says [5] *May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, [6] that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* This is the Lord's will. That's what God's calling these ladies to, this is what God calls His church to. We're called to be unified in Christ, to stand firm in unity and Paul builds on this when he says, 'Stand firm in rejoicing for as you're unified let your unity be rejoicing in the Lord.'

Philippians 4:4-5 says [4] *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. [5] Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand.* Rejoicing is a theme in this great letter. To rejoice means to be full of joy, to have great delight, to be exceedingly glad that our joy in the Lord would be so full inside of us and inside our spirit and soul. That it would overflow through our life, through our words, that we would joy and rejoice in Christ. To rejoice isn't based on our feelings or our circumstances. Rejoicing is based on who Christ is, what Christ has done for us, and on the great work of Christ. You see our joy is in the Lord. We're to rejoice in the Lord, in His character, in the work of His Gospel in our life, in the Word of Christ, in the Spirit of Christ. And He says to rejoice at all times. Always make it a part of your life. Sinclair Ferguson said, "How is that possible? His words 'Rejoice in the Lord' provide the answer. This joy is not based on how we feel about our personal circumstances, but on the fact of our fellowship with Christ and on the facts about Him." Think about that, Paul is saying, and you will be able to taste joy, whatever the circumstances.

Let your reasonableness be known to everyone... This word reasonable or reasonableness means gentleness and meekness. It means fairness with others. A rejoicing heart leads to a reasonable life around each other, around other people. William Hendrickson, in his commentary says, "Sweet reasonableness is an essential ingredient of true happiness in the Christian's life. Now, such big heartedness, such forbearance, that patient willingness to yield wherever yielding is possible without violating any real principle, must be shown to all, not only to fellow believers." Our reasonableness is the fragrance of Christ. That's the glory of Christ with those around us, where the life of Christ is seen from our lives.

Paul then says, 'The Lord is at hand.' The Lord is here, the Lord is near. More than likely, he's saying the Lord is coming and He's coming soon so make sure that you live every moment of every day with this realization. As we live with this realization that the Lord is near them it moves us to rejoicing. It moves us to be great in our reasonableness with one another. So, our rejoicing in the Lord, moves us now to stand firm in prayer with thanksgiving.

Philippians 4:6-7 says *[6] do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* Notice the contrast in verse 6. God is telling us here not to be anxious. Don't let worry control you.. Will we get anxious? Yes. We're in a fallen world. We're not perfect. We deal with things. We deal with anxiety; we deal with worry but what do we do with it? We immediately replace our anxiety with prayer. We go to God and take those cares and worries and throw them upon Him through prayer.

We replace that anxiety with prayer to the Almighty God, and we think of His great promises that He has given us, such as this; Romans 8:28, 31-32 and 38-39 which says *[28] And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. [31] What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? [32] He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? [38] For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.* These are great promises that move us to come before the Lord in prayer and to replace that anxiety with prayer because He also tells us in, I Peter 5:7, *[7] cast all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you.* We know He cares for us.

We come to Him in prayer with Thanksgiving. We have to discipline our life to make sure that our prayers are filled not just with everything that we want to ask God to do for us, but with great thanksgiving in all of who He is and what He has done for us. Every prayer needs to be enveloped with thanksgiving to the Lord. To be thankful makes us to be humble and takes us to stand on the promises and Word of God. It takes for us to hold by faith in who God is and His great Word. Prayer with thanksgiving is the true antidote for anxiety.

God then follows up Philippians 4:6 with a promise in verse 7 that the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Now, that great peace of God will replace the anxiety in our hearts when we come to Him in prayer with thanksgiving. It will replace the worry of our minds with the peace of God. Again, why is it so? Because of who He is. He's our sovereign God and He has a plan and that plan is He's working all things out for His glory and for our good. We also know that we're coming to God in Christ Jesus, the Prince of Peace, who says in John 14:27, *[27] Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.* Then John 16:33 says *[33] I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.*

The Lord Jesus Christ is the One who lives within us and who is with us always. He is the Prince of Peace and just as He did in that boat with His disciples when the storm was coming around, He said "Peace be still." And every molecule obeyed his voice, everything got still and a great peace came. That's how He is in your life and mine. He says, "Peace be still" when we go to Him in prayer as we lay everything before Him and we exalt, praise and thank Him. He says, "Be sure My Word is true. I'm with you and working. You can trust Me, dear loved one here's

My peace.” He has given us His great peace and He says that peace of Christ is going to guard our heart and mind in Christ Jesus. William Hendrickson said this; ‘The man of trust and the man of prayer has entered that impregnable citadel from which no one can dislodge him and the name of that fortress is Christ Jesus.’ I love that He guards our heart and mind because He’s that great citadel. He will guard our heart and mind by His peace and by the sure calm assurance.

I’ve had many opportunities to applying this passage in my life and even lately but one that really stood out as God was building this into my life and into my marriage was with my wife, Belinda when we had just had our first child. We had moved back to Birmingham and I was on staff with campus outreach. We were raising support and we had to up our support that year due to our expanding family needs. We would get a report in the fall that would tell us where we are in our support. When I looked at this report, we were thousands of dollars behind in the pledges from the people who said they would give to what needed to come in by the end of the year. I showed it to Belinda. I told her I was going to make a plan so I went through everything I could think of and started making a list of names, numbers and started working out when I could ask people for support.

I was just working away and Belinda comes in my office and says, “Hey Benny, do you think that we ought to pray about this?” I knew what the answer was but I said, ‘Why don’t you go pray about it? I’m going to keep trying to come up with a plan of how to raise this money.’ She kind of looks at me and smiles and I smiled back and I left my paper and pen as we knelt beside the bed and poured out our heart to the Lord as I laid out all our worries and anxieties. How was He going to supply all this? I don’t know but we just prayed and God gave us His peace. He said, “I got you. I’ll take care of you.” He did take care of us and as I went and asked people, I went with the peace of Christ to guard my heart and mind and the Lord provided. That was a huge lesson for me to see that God is God and when I’m overwhelmed with anxiety, then I need to take that to Him, lay it at His feet and cast my burdens upon Him for then His peace comes in and guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

As we stand firm in prayer with thanksgiving, we also stand firm with right thinking, with biblical thinking. Philippians 4:8 says *[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.* To stand firm in the Lord, we have to have right thinking. We have to set our mind’s right, not just today, but every single day. We have to take our thoughts captive to Christ, His Word and His mission by His Spirit. Proverbs 23:7 says, ‘As a man thinketh, so is he.’ Colossians 3:2 says *[2] Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.* Romans 8:6-7 says *[6] For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. [7] For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.*

Here in Philippians 4:8 Paul goes through six ‘whatever statements’ to show us the kind of things to set our minds on. These are specific things, but these are the things to set your mind on every single moment of every single day. Whatever is true – those things that are truthful, those things according to the Word of truth. Whatever is honorable – those things that are honest and worthy of respect. Whatever is just – those things that are righteous and holy. Whatever is pure – those things that are holy, clean, sacred and innocent. Whatever is lovely – those things that please the Lord, those things that breathe out, the love of the Lord. Whatever is commendable – those things of good report, think on those things. Then he makes a summary

statement of if there is any excellence, anything worthy of praise, think about these things. These are the things were to set our mind on every moment of every day.

We're not to think about the converse. We're not to think about those things that are dishonorable, unjust, impure, unholy, despicable, negative and self-serving or anything that is worldly, anything that is evil. We're to turn our mind from that and turn our mind to Christ and set our minds on the things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent and anything worthy of praise. Sinclair Ferguson said "A mind full of these will leave little room for anxiety producing, peace disrupting, joy destroying thoughts." I love that. If we fill our mind with the things of Christ, which we should every moment of every day, we need to make sure that we set your mind on the things of the Lord, then we will be able to stand firm in Godly living.

Philippians 4:9 says [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.* Paul is telling those in Philippi that when he was there, he taught them these things and his life was an example for them so he is writing this letter to encourage them to live out these things in their lives. They need to practice these things. That word 'practice' is a continuous action, perpetual. It's a lifestyle for us – the things of the Word, the things that Godly men have taught us and lived out in their life. That is Godly living. Make sure this is your lifestyle.

Then Paul gives us a great and wonderful promise – the God of peace will be with you. There'll be nothing quenching the Spirit. The Spirit will be pouring out with you. His Spirit will be ministering to you. He'll give you His peace, love and joy. He'll give you His strength. He will bless you. He will encourage you. He will walk with you. He will give you insight into what to say and do in your life. The God of peace will be with you as you follow Him. He will not forsake you or leave you (Hebrews 13:5).

The application for this study is that as you are hearing about this great peace that is in Christ and all these great things that God will do for you but you don't know if I've ever trusted in Jesus Christ and have that relationship with God then don't go away without surrendering your life to Him right now. Trust in Him as your Lord and Savior. So, what about those who already know Him as Lord and Savior, who are His? Then He is telling you to be strong in the Lord. Stand firm in the Lord. Stand firm in unity. Stand firm in rejoicing. Stand firm in prayer with thanksgiving. Stand firm with right thinking. Stand firm with Godly living. Stand firm in the Lord O Church of God. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father God, we come before You thanking You for Your great Word. Thank You for the Gospel of Christ and how You've given us salvation in Christ. We thank You, Father God, for who You are. We thank You for Your Word that gives us promises that You are with us, that You'll never leave us or forsake us and how Your Word of truth teaches us how to live for You. We pray now that You would lead, guide and direct us by Your Spirit to obey You and to be doers of Your Word, not hearers only. We pray this in Christ's Name, Amen.