

5. Philippians 4:1-23

In Philippians 3, Paul discussed four points that would allow them to “*continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling*” (Phil 2:12):

Watch out for those who put confidence in the flesh.

Attain the resurrection of the dead.

Press toward the goal.

Live according to the pattern.

Chapter four begins with an affirmation these truths.

Stand Firm in the Lord

Phil 4:1

4 Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!

The expressions “that is how” and “therefore” at the beginning of the chapter demonstrate how the steps that Paul outlined in chapter three are those that help us stand firm.

2 I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. 3 Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

It is clear that Euodia and Syntyche had difficulty with one another; perhaps even provoking the admonitions of Phil 2:2-3:

2 Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

That these women contended at Paul’s side in the cause of the gospel illustrates the important role of women in the work of the Lord. Their names along with the rest of Paul’s fellow worker have their names written in the book of life which was first spoken in Ps 69:26-28:

26 For they persecute those you wound
and talk about the pain of those you hurt.

27 Charge them with crime upon crime;
do not let them share in your salvation.

28 May they be blotted out of the **book of life**
and not be listed with the righteous.

Jesus spoke of the book of life in his letter to Sardis in Rev 3:5-6

5 He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the **book of life**, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.

Rev 13:8 states the book of life belongs to Jesus:

8 All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast – all whose names have not been written in the **book of life** belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.

In Rev 20:11-12, the book of life will be opened with other books:

12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is **the book of life**. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.

Anyone whose name is not found in the life is thrown in the lake of fire in Rev 20:14-15:

The lake of fire is the second death. 15 If anyone's name was not found written in **the book of life**, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Rev 21:27 teaches explicitly that one's name must be written in the Lamb's book of life to enter heaven:

27 Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the **Lamb's book of life**.

Phil 4:4-7

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

When the trials and troubles of life are upon us, let us turn our attention to the joy we have in the Lord and rejoice. So important is this admonition that Paul repeats it: "Rejoice!" There is no getting around it; Christians are to be gentle, and that gentleness is outward and overt in order for all to see. The Lord himself cautioned in Matt 5:39-42:

39 But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. 41 If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. 42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

The "to all" phrase is all-inclusive, including wives and husbands, children and family, friends and co-workers, and even our enemies in our gentleness. At the very best, one should strive to be imitators of the Lord Jesus who said in Matt 11:29-30:

29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for **I am gentle and humble in heart**, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Anxiety is the great crippler in our lives. The Lord addressed this issue, trying to focus us on each day in Matt 6:33-34:

33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not **worry about tomorrow**, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Perhaps, the greatest challenge is how to eliminate anxiety in our lives. There are so many things that one could worry about: wars, debt, joblessness, health, children, the economy, etc. Paul's answer is to turn to the Lord in everything with prayers, petitions, and thanksgiving. Paul made a like statement in 1 Tim 2:1-3:

2 I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone— 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

Although we may not know how, the peace of God will guard our hearts and minds through all of life's troubles. We need not understand how this happens, only that it does happen for each and every child of God.

Think about Such Things

Phil 4:8-9

8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

How often it is said: “A good defense is a good offense.” Everyday, hardships notwithstanding, we may choose what to think about. Paul instructs us to think on the noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable. We are to think of the excellent and praiseworthy. The word used here for *excellent*, may be translated moral excellence or virtue. The positive steps in managing the troubles of the day must move beyond thinking to doing (*put into practice*) what we have learned, received, or heard from Paul and what we have seen in him. Paul described these acts as the fruit of the spirit in Gal 5:22-25:

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

Sinful nature (flesh), as contrasted to the spiritual attributes, is crucified with Christ, leaving a new nature of the excellent. In baptism, we put off the sinful nature of the flesh (passions and desires) and put on the fruit of the Spirit. As Peter explains in 2 Peter 1:3-7, having put off the sinful nature, we participate in the divine nature

3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.

I Can Do Everything through Him

Phil 4:10

10 I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. 11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Paul returns in these verses to his personal circumstance to illustrate the object lesson of being able to do everything through the Lord. Perhaps no human has suffered as Paul. His secret to survive is learning to be content no matter what. Paul has described his sufferings in 2 Cor 11:23-28:

I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. 24 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was

stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 26 I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. 27 I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. 28 Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

Paul's ability to suffer does not free the Philippians from responsibility; therefore, he begins this passage suggesting they should help. In verse 10, he began: "I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me." The next verses, 14-17 continue in that vein.

The Philippians Renew Their Support of Paul

14 Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. 15 Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; 16 for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. 17 Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. 18 I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. 19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

In the early days of the gospel, the Philippians sent support to Paul once and again; and now they have sent support to Paul in Rome by Epaphroditus. Paul describes their gifts as "a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God."

Many use this passage to teach that support of preachers must be direct from the church to the preacher. They teach that apostolic examples are mutual exclusive; that is, that since there are only examples of sending aid directly from assisting congregation to preachers, churches cannot send to another church (sometimes called the sponsoring church) and have the receiving church send it on to a preacher in the field. Without delving into the many arguments that have already been made through the years, we will note that if this example is mutually exclusive, a congregation could not send support via the U. S. Postage Service; but they would have to send it via a messenger like Epaphroditus. If apostolic examples are mutually exclusive, money from the collection on the first day of the week could not go to pay a preacher or the utilities but could only be used to help the needy. Indeed, we only have one example of how to collect money and in that example the money is to help needy saints. 1 Cor 16:1-4 offers the example of how to collect money; and in deed, we follow it to this day:

16 Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. 2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. 3 Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem.

Closing Comments and Exhortations

20 To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

21 Greet all the saints in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send greetings. 22 All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.

23 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.