

Sermon Outline

“Standing Firm: A Recipe for Stability,” – Philippians 4:1-7 – Robin Boisvert – May 12, 2013

Introduction

1. Paul wrote this letter from prison, although his tone was remarkably upbeat. Paul had several reasons for writing to the Philippians. He wanted to thank them for their support and partnership with him in advancing the gospel. He wanted to encourage them to imitate Jesus’ humble servanthood and pursue unity toward one another. He wanted to encourage them to live out their lives faithfully as citizens of the kingdom of God. And he wanted to exhort them to stand firm in the faith of the Gospel.

We should treasure our relationships in the Lord (verse 1)

1. The first exhortation is very personal and affectionate: *“My brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, my beloved.”* Paul treasured the relationships he had with these brothers and sisters. They were very dear to him. We also ought to treasure the relationships we have with one another through the gospel. They will last through eternity.
2. To think that we can stand firm all by ourselves is a big mistake. In fact, we need the Christ in each other to help. Because of trials or because of our own sin, we lose sight of what is true. Someone once said, *“I don’t need new; I need true.”* We need the love of true friends in the Lord who will tell us what is true.

We should strive to maintain those relationships (verses 2-3)

1. In verse 2, Paul addresses two women personally, Euodia and Syntyche. They weren’t able to agree and likely had a sharp disagreement.
2. Paul had earlier spoken about the importance of having the mind of Christ, humbly pursuing unity. Verse 3 tells us that these women labored side by side with Paul in the mission of the gospel. They were evidently very significant persons in the church. The fact that Paul would address them by name suggests their importance. But notice, he doesn’t command them. He begs and pleads with them. You can see his heart of concern for them and for the unity of the church.
3. It is a sad fact that we may not always be successful at reconciliation. But we should strive to have a clear conscience before God that we have made every effort to maintain the unity that exists in the Spirit. And regardless of the present state of affairs, the story is not over. We can continue to strive.

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Rejoice in the Lord always! Again I will say, Rejoice! (verse 4)

1. Paul's repetition is for emphasis. To stand firm in the Lord, we need to rejoice in him always. This is clearly not based on circumstances but on the Lord Himself.
2. Earlier in the founding of the Philippian Church (Acts 16) when Paul and Silas first came to Philippi, they were unjustly beaten and cast into the inner prison, their feet fastened in stocks. And what did they do? They prayed and sang hymns to God – they rejoiced! And God worked a miraculous deliverance on their behalf. He caused an earthquake to shake the prison – all the doors and the bonds of the prisoners were broken open.
3. We can rejoice in him as we recall that the Lord has everything under control. He is ordering all things that happen for his glory and the good of his people. He works all things together for good for those who love him and are called according to his purpose. In this we can rejoice.

The Lord is at hand (verse 5)

1. Verse 5 is not so much an exhortation to obey, as it is a statement to be believed and treasured. The Lord is at hand. He is near.
 - a. *"The Lord is near to the brokenhearted" (Ps. 34.18).* When you feel your heart is breaking for sorrow, turn to him and you will experience his presence.
 - b. *"The Lord is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth" (Ps. 145.18).* All that is required is to approach him sincerely. He will do the rest. All that you need will be found in Him.

Express your faith through prayer (verses 6-7)

1. The key to overcoming anxiety about **anything** is to pray about **everything**.
2. Prayer, petitions, requests—three words meaning virtually the same thing. Talk to God about everything, let him know what you want, what you need. Allow him to adjust your thinking, though. And let this be done in the context of thanksgiving—which is simply remembering with gratefulness what God has already done.
3. The exercise of prayer does a number of wonderful things for us:
 - a. Prayer is the means by which anxiety is vanquished.
 - b. Prayer is the key to the advancement of the gospel because it focuses our dependence upon God. He's the one responsible for any gains made in the mission.

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- c. It connects us with the God of Peace who gives us a peace that passes understanding and that garrisons our hearts against all fear and worry.
4. And the outcome of this ... *"And **the peace of God**, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."*
 - a. The word for guard is a military term. It was used of a detachment of soldiers guarding a city from attack. Imagine if you had a platoon of Navy Seals guarding us from all harm every step of your life, night and day. Well, the promise of God here is even better. The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will keep, will guard and garrison our hearts and our minds from anxiety in Christ Jesus.
 - b. When we are plagued with anxious thought, when our minds race ahead into the future, we may try to reason our way to a place of peace, but that rarely works. Human understanding – our hearts and minds – are not omniscient. We simply cannot plan for every contingency. And so often we don't understand all that the Lord is doing. But faith, expressed in prayer rests in God, the omniscient benevolent Sovereign Creator and Redeemer and Sustainer of our lives. So when we pray, not immediately, but eventually, the peace of God that surpasses all our human understanding will garrison our hearts and minds, knowing that He has everything under control.

Conclusion

1. Jesus said, *"Peace I give to you, my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your hearts be troubled neither let them be afraid"* (John 14:27). We who believe in Jesus are united with him in the deepest possible spiritual union: our lives are hid with Christ in God. And therefore...

*No power of hell, no scheme of man
Can ever pluck us from His hand.
'Til He returns or calls us home
Here in the power of Christ we'll stand.*

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Fellowship Starters

1. Take time as a Care Group to read Philippians 4:1-7.
2. How can you treasure and maintain the Christian relationships that God has given you?
3. In what ways are circumstances robbing your joy? How can thanksgiving and a vision of God's greatness return your heart to rejoicing?
4. Why is the truth that the Lord is near and at hand a truth to be believed and treasured?
5. Robin said, "The key to overcoming anxiety about **anything** is to pray about **everything**." What tempts you to anxious worry or fear? How often are you bringing all your cares to the Father in prayer?
6. Where can you make more room in your life for prayer?