

Gospel Centered Steadfastness
Philippians 4:1-9

Introduction

1. Our passage today begins with a reminder Paul's affection for the Philippians: **"Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved."**
 - a. There is no question that Paul had a deep, emotional attachment to the Philippians
 - 1) In the opening paragraph of his letter he reminded them how often he thanked God for them and their partnership in the Gospel (1:3-5)
 - 2) He spoke of how they were in his heart and how he longed for them with the affection of Christ (1:7-8)
 - b. Here he writes of his longing to see them again, and refers to them as **"my joy and crown"**
 - 1) Throughout the letter, it is clear that in large part Paul's joy was a direct result of the Philippians themselves
 - 2) Their maturity, commitment, faithfulness and devotion to Christ, to one another, and to Paul brought him great joy
 - 3) His reference to them as his crown should be understood as a **"crown of exaltation"** as it is in 1 Thessalonians 2:19: **"For who is our hope or joy or crown of exaltation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy."**
2. After reminding them of his affection for them, he issues his first imperative in this section, and it serves as the overriding theme of the passage: **"Therefore...in this way stand firm in the Lord"**:
 - a. **"Therefore"** and **"in this way"** tie today's passage to the one before it
 - b. If you remember, in chapter three Paul encourages the Philippians to live out a Gospel centered righteousness, rather than a works based righteousness
 - c. As the final part of that discussion, in v. 17 he calls on them to follow his example, and warned them to avoid those who preach a works-based righteousness (he called them **"enemies of the cross"** and said their end was **"destruction"**)
 - d. So, **"in this way"**—i.e. by following Paul's example—Paul calls on them to stand firm in the Lord
 - 1) Paul simply uses the word **"stand"** here and the phrase is literally, **"stand in the Lord"**
 - 2) The word is only used 8 times in the NT, seven of them by Paul
 - 3) Every time Paul uses it he is referring to standing firm in one's faith in the Lord
 - 4) So when Paul says to stand he is referring to steadfastness in one's faith
3. What does it mean to be steadfast?
 - a. According to Dictionary.com, Steadfast literally means to be fixed in place, but is chiefly used figuratively to indicate undeviating constancy or resolution. Synonyms include words like unwavering, constant, reliable, dependable, sure
 - b. So, to be steadfast in the Lord or steadfast in faith means that we are resolute, consistent, unwavering in how we live out the Gospel
 - c. In other words, our lives should reflect Gospel Centered Steadfastness

- d. As Paul challenges the Philippians to this, he reminds us to remain steadfast in five different areas

A. We should reflect Gospel centered steadfastness in our relationships (4:2-3--harmony)
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1. We began our study in Philippians with a look at Gospel Centered Relationships, and saw how having the Gospel at the center of our relationships can help us be thankful for one another and to pray for one another.
2. However, simply because we share a common hope and cause in the Gospel, that doesn't mean we won't have conflict with one another at times
3. Apparently, that was the case with two women at Philippi, Euodia and Syntyche (2): **"I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord"**
 - a. We know almost nothing about these women because they are only mentioned here
 - b. What we do know is that they ministered alongside Paul at one point (3): **"who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life."**
 - c. We also know they were believers because Paul includes them with those whose names are written in the book of life
 - d. We also know they weren't getting along; we just don't know why
4. So, Paul calls on them to **"live in harmony in the Lord"**
 - a. More literally, he calls on them to **"think the same things in the Lord"**, or **"agree in the Lord"** as most English translations render it
 - b. This is the same language Paul used in 2:2-8 (**READ**) which is why he doesn't need to go any further here—he already explained what it means and looks like to live in harmony with one another
 - c. This is important because as the Body of Christ we are to live in unity, sharing the same purpose, same goal—which is living out the Gospel (see Ephesians 4:1-6)
5. And, as we might expect, sometimes we need help in working this out (3): **"Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women..."**--We don't know who this individual was, but Paul was calling on him to help Euodia and Syntyche work out their issues and live in harmony

B. We should reflect Gospel centered steadfastness in our attitude (4)
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1. The next area where we need to maintain steadfastness is in our attitude (4): **"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice!"**
2. Do you know how many times the concept of joy appears in the Bible? Some form of the word occurs over 460 times—18 of those occur in this book alone
3. Many people confuse joy with happiness, and while the two often go hand in hand, they are not the same thing:
 - a. Happiness is an emotional state
 - b. Joy is an attitude (otherwise it couldn't be commanded)
 - c. One can be joyous and/or rejoice even when unhappy, sad or troubled
 - 1) In 2 Corinthians 6:10 Paul wrote, **"although saddened, we are always rejoicing"**
 - 2) In James 1:2 he tells us to **"consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials"**

- 3) Did you notice that Paul says to rejoice “**always**” (not just when we are happy or things are going our way)?
- 4) Did you also notice that he repeats the command twice?
4. So how do we do this? According to James, we do this by recognizing that God will use whatever the circumstances—good or bad—to build our faith (James 1:3-4): “...[**because you know**] **that the testing of your faith produces endurance, and let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.**”
5. When you think about it, Christians ought to be the most joyous people on the planet because of the Gospel, and this should be seen in our attitude

C. We should reflect Gospel centered steadfastness in our demeanor (5)
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1. Demeanor generally refers to one’s outward behavior such as the way one manages or presents himself or herself to others; I saw one reference to the fact that it implies characteristic posture or how one carries himself

Roger Peugh confronting me over my demeanor when writing critiques in seminary
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2. So what kind of demeanor should we have as disciples of Jesus? Paul answers that in v. 5: “**Let your gentle spirit be known to all men.**”
 - a. What does it mean to have a gentle spirit?
 - b. The word Paul uses here refers to being gracious and forbearing
 - c. In Ephesians 4:2 he says that a gentle spirit is one that is patient and shows tolerance for one another in love
 - d. Elsewhere he ties it to words like compassion, kindness, humility and being peaceable
 - e. In other words, our models are to be our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ
3. Did you notice here that Paul didn’t just say we are to have a gentle spirit among one another, but rather we are to make it known “**to all men**” (believers and non-believers):
 - a. Do you remember the words of Jesus? How are we to treat our enemies?
 - b. We are to love our enemies (Mathew 5:43-48)
 - c. When we are cursed and persecuted, we are to bless (Luke 6:28; Romans 12:14)
 - d. When we are forced to do something, we are to go the extra mile (Matthew 5:41)
 - e. If we suffer for doing good, we are to endure rather than lash out (1 Peter 2:20)
 - f. Rather than overcome evil with evil, we are to overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21)
 - g. We are to respond to wrath with a gentle answer (Proverbs 15:1)

My confronting woman who yelled at me on the beach compared to what Mom always taught her staff

4. Remaining steadfast in a demeanor of gentleness isn’t easy, but it is something we should strive for

5. One last note on v. 5: **“The Lord is near”** – may serve as a form of encouragement by both reminding them of the nearness of the Lord return, but also a reminder of his gentle demeanor in dealing with his enemies

D. We should reflect Gospel centered steadfastness in our countenance (6-7)

1. Countenance literally refers to the expression on one’s face, but it also represents or reflects what’s going on inside a person
 - a. When Cain got upset over God rejecting his sacrifice, God approached him and said, **“Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.”**
 - b. In other words, God could see what was going on inside Cain—in this case anger—because it was reflected in his face
2. In verses 6 and 7 Paul encourages his readers to develop a countenance of peace rather than one of anxiety (6): **“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”**
 - a. When faced with anxiety, we are to pray and petition God for what we need, and we are to do it with thanksgiving
 - b. When we do this, Paul says that we will reflect a countenance of peace rather than anxiety: **“and the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”**
 - c. So, God’s peace is His antidote to our worry, and it comes when we pray
 - d. Is it any wonder why Paul says that we are to pray without ceasing?
 - e. It’s the only way we can maintain Gospel centered steadfastness in our countenance

E. We should reflect Gospel centered steadfastness in our commitment to holiness (8-9)
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1. Paul concludes his challenge to stand firm by reminding the Philippians about what kind of things they should embrace (8): **“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.”**
 - a. In the interest of time, I won’t go into detail about each of these phrases; plus most are self-explanatory
 - b. Most render the last phrase as “dwell on these things” or “think about these things” but the word implies something more--giving regard to or giving credit to these things
 - c. In other words, Paul isn’t just calling on them to think about these things, but to give regard or credit to them—to recognize and embrace their importance and value
2. This is supported by the next verse where Paul calls on them to practice such things (9) **“The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.”**
3. And in doing so, we will reflect a Gospel centered steadfast in our commitment to holiness

Conclusion
