

Radiant Church, July 9, 2017
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Joy in Gospel Unity
Philippians 4:1-9

Philippians 4:1 *Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.*

Stand firm in what? In their heavenly citizenship (Philippians 3:20-21)

What has Paul done so far?

He's defined and explained the gospel in several ways
Encouraged a passionate pursuit of Jesus
Developed the idea of a holy discontentment with our present maturity
Examined the "working out of our salvation" in grace-driven effort
And he's reminded us of our identity and citizenship in heaven

Now he helps his readers in Philippi see how all he's said fits into life as the church...

Philippians 4:2-3 *I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. 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.*

He calls out these two women by name, in public, and asks the entire church to help them put all of that into action by reconciling

Can you imagine being one of those two women?
Can you imagine that ever happening here with us?

(Some thoughts on how we avoid confrontation and repentance)

Why would Paul even care if two ladies aren't getting along?

1. A divided church is a terrible witness - to the people outside the church, and even to the people inside the church
2. And the other reason that motivates Paul? Unity produces joy

And Paul then calls for, he even commands a specific action as a logical response. In fact, he commands it twice

Philippians 4:4-7 *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about everything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God,*

which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Rejoice → reasonable → pray = peace

1. Joy can only come from a grateful, thankful heart
2. Being joyful all the time takes practice, but really it takes a complete heart make-over, that has to be done to us, not by us
3. Being joyful always - consistent joy - results in “reasonableness”
4. In this sense, reasonable points to being gentle - in our initial reactions to hurts and injustices, and gentle in our responses
5. And what motivates any of us to be “reasonable”? Because the “Lord is near,” in this particular case, meaning, God is not powerless in any moment, wondering to Himself what to do
6. And the most reasonable response to anything is to pray

Job 13:15 *Though He slay me, I will hope in Him; yet I will argue my ways to His face*

If and when we worry, we need to worry “to Jesus”
Because He is near
And because He is able

Or like King Jehoshaphat prayed...

2 Chronicles 20:12b *We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You*

We rejoice (are thankful), we are reasonable (more measured) and by instinct we go to God in prayer (humble and dependent). And this then results in peace:

With God
With each other
And even with our circumstances, good or bad

Paul writes, **Philippians 4:7** *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus*

When Paul said “will guard,” he likely had in mind both the city of Philippi, which was a Roman outpost with a military fort, and his own imprisonment in Rome

To be guarded, in Paul’s mind, meant nothing gets out and nothing gets in

But Paul also says what is being guarded: he says that the peace of God will guard both our hearts and something else...

The ancient Jews were taught in the “Sheva” **Deuteronomy 6:5** *you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*

But when Jesus quoted this as the greatest of the commandments, he added something to it:

Mark 12:30 *And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.*

Why did Jesus do that?

Jesus knew then just like He knows now that our hearts and our minds are not always on the same page; they do not always agree.

This is a way of saying that we do not naturally live out what we believe, or even that what we think we believe we deep down don't really believe

So, when we pray, we may think we're asking for God to do something, while what prayer really does is ask God to change our minds about something
to get our minds to agree with God's mind
and to get our minds and hearts to agree

But if it's just about not thinking or doing bad things...w fail
Instead, we have to replace those thoughts and actions with something new, something better...

Philippians 4:8-9 *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. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me - practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*

True = the gospel, what God says to be true, a Christian “world view”

Honorable = dignified, noble

Just = right thought or action, doing the right thing

Pure = single-minded, not distracted, not tainted by evil

Lovely = attractive to others for the right reasons, and seeing the beauty in what God is doing, even in the hard things

Commendable = the kind of thinking and conduct that is spoken of highly by other people

But, if I'm honest, this is not by instinct what I do. And most of the time I feel helpless to do otherwise

These virtues: truth, honor, justice, purity, lovely and commendable find their beginning and end in Jesus

I don't need better thinking...I need Jesus, to see Him as far greater, more powerful and far more satisfying than my actions would indicate

And in this, because I cannot do it by myself or for myself, I need grace

Joy is a gift of grace

Reasonableness is a gift of grace

Prayer is a gift of grace

Peace is a gift of grace

We set our minds on things that come from Jesus, honor Jesus, and are fulfilled by Jesus