

# **Philippians 4:1-9**

## **“The Peace of God through the Local Church”**

### **Introduction:<sup>1</sup>**

As you well know the earth is constantly spinning around and it takes 24 hours for the earth to rotate all the way around to where it was before. Some of you, however, may not have known that the stars rotate too, all except the North Star of course. In fact it was the stillness of the North Star that allowed so many people throughout history to navigate themselves from one place to another. The North Star was a constant in the sky for navigators.

For instance, you know if you're at the North Pole if at night you look straight up and see the North Star. However, the further south you go the closer to the horizon it appears. But it does not move.

Take a look at this time lapse taken of the night sky. What you will notice is that all the stars seem to be revolving around one single star. That star in the middle is the North Star. It's almost as if the stars collectively came together and said to the navigators “this is the way.”

Well, in the same way Paul is writing the conclusion of his letter to the church of Philippi and in it he gives several different calls to action for the church to obey and each of these commands, if obeyed, Paul says would point them or direct them to peace in the Lord.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://youtu.be/DoOuSo9qEII> How to Navigate Stars

To give you some context Paul is in prison for his faith and Emperor Nero is beginning to become more aggressive in his persecution<sup>2</sup> and it is possible that he would go after Christians in Philippi soon.

So there are some who believe that Paul gives these final actions in order to set their hearts on Christ who is the ultimate source of peace in trials and persecution.

So as we go through this text we will observe six actions for the church of Philippi to prepare for their future persecution and how these actions still apply to us today.

So I have entitled this message “The Peace of God through the Local Church” and what I hope you see, as we look at these six actions, is that Paul is instructing the church how to walk in peace in trials as well as possible persecution.

As for us this concluding passage can teach us that, “Where God is there our peace is also.”

### **Six actions to the Local Church that lead to walking in peace**

#### **1.Walk in peace by Standing Firm in the Lord (v.1)**

Paul says in v. 1, “Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown stand firm thus in the Lord.” In order to understand the first action given you must understand what Paul said in chapter 3.

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<sup>2</sup> Philippians 4:1-9 sermon by Jason Fritz and John MacArthur Philippians commentary

In verses just before this command Paul describes what we would consider to be an unstable church. They are doing the opposite of standing firm. They are wavering.

In verses 14-17 Paul tells the believers to push on to the “prize of the upward call of Christ” and then in v.18-19, he points out that some people who claimed to be Christians fell away from the faith and says, “their end is destruction.” So Paul tells the church in Philippi, “Do not waver. Stand firm.”

But I want you to see something important in this command. Notice that Paul does not say dig your feet in, tighten up your boots, and stand firm. He doesn’t say gather all the theological information you can, and stand firm. No, he says, “Stand firm, thus in the Lord.”

The source of strength for Philippi and for us today is to stand firm in Christ. Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Not physical strength. No, Christ strengthens us by being comforting in times of sorrow, giving contentment in times of trials, and by granting peace in the midst of stressful times.

### **Application:**

Therefore, we must also stand firm. I love how Paul implies in chapter 3:14-17 that Christians who stand firm are also striving “for the prize of the upward call of Christ.” That is that they are striving for the blessings and rewards that they will receive in the age to come.<sup>3</sup> There is no such thing as passively standing firm in Christ. Rest assured a wavering church is a peaceless church. But the church who stands firm in the faith is a church that is filled with peace.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.esv.org/Philippians+3/> study bible

So how do we stand firm? We, like Paul and like so many mature believers before us, must set our eyes on Christ and press forward to the goal of obtaining this prize. A church that strives towards this end pursues true doctrine, biblical missions, and true discipleship. We pursue true doctrine when we submit first and foremost to the word of God as our ultimate authority.

We go on biblical missions when we use our partnerships to advance God's kingdom through service and evangelism.

And we grow closer to one another and pursue to see others, like our ones, become fully devoted disciples of Christ.

Maybe you are currently looking for a church. If you are then ask yourself these three questions when discerning where God may be calling you: (Seniors, this guide is for you too) (1) Does this church submit to the authority of God's Word and right doctrine? (2) Is this church pursuing biblical missions? (3) Is this church serious about making disciples? If the answer is yes to all three of these questions then it is likely that you have found a church that is standing firm in the Lord.

## **2.Walk in peace by being like minded (v.2-3)**

Next in vv.2-3 Paul points out two women who are serving together, yet do not agree with something that has happened either in ministry or their personal lives. We don't know anything about these two women from scripture except that they (1) disagree with one another. (2) they

have served with Paul together in their sharing of the gospel. And (3) They are born again believers.

What their disagreement is about we cannot be certain but we can be sure that they are not following the proper behavior of two sisters united in Christ. Whatever disagreement they may be having, it is severe enough for Paul to inform the church that they, as a body, must deal with the issue.

These women's present relationship actually contradicts Paul's earlier command to the church in Philippians 2 when he says,

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**.

Last week when Andrew and I were at the Together 4 the Gospel conference one of the speakers who preached Philippians 2 said, "Unity lives where self-regard dies and self-regard dies at the cross [of Christ]"<sup>4</sup>

In other words, those who strive to live in unity with one another have ultimately put Christ before themselves, therefore, putting others before themselves. And though these women have been doing gospel work with Paul it is clear that they have yet to learn the lesson of biblical

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<sup>4</sup> Greg Gilbert T4G Sermon — Philippians 2:1-11

humility and Paul calls the church to help these women set aside their issues and be like minded in the gospel .

**Application:**

Church, if we are going to be effective for kingdom work then we must strive for unity as well as put others before ourselves as Christ has done for us. We must agree in the doctrine and mission of the church.

**3.Walk in peace by rejoicing in the Lord always (v.4-5a)**

The third command Paul gives to the church is for them to “rejoice in the Lord always.” He is most emphatic about this command so much so that he doubles down and repeats Himself saying, “again I will say rejoice”

The word “rejoice” in the Greek can be translated to “be glad!” So Paul is saying ALWAYS be glad in the Lord.

It is the nature of every believer to be glad in the one who gives them life and satisfaction. If you look throughout this letter you will see the theme of joy and rejoicing in Paul’s life.

Even as he writes this letter from jail he commands that the church rejoice in the Lord.

I believe the reason why Paul is so emphatic about rejoicing is because Paul knows that Christ is his greatest good and treasure. He sees Him as supreme over his circumstances, his failures, his sins, and even his death. Nothing compares to the surpassing riches of knowing Christ in the eyes of Paul.

Therefore, Paul says we ought to rejoice— we ought to be glad. Not only because Christ is supreme but also because he is our Savior. In Philippians 1 Paul rejoices over the good news of Jesus being our Savior. Earlier in Philippians 1 there are some men who are speaking about Jesus for selfish gain and Paul couldn't care less because he knows the good news is being shared. He says, "Whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice."

Why does he rejoice? Because he knows that as the truth of the good news of Christ goes out more people will trust in Him as their Savior.

So according to Paul he can rejoice because Christ reigns supreme over his current circumstances and he is the one who can make all things new as Savior and King.

**Application:**

Let me ask you, are you rejoicing in Christ? Are you rejoicing in His work in the church or in your life?

If not then brother or sister, REJOICE! BE GLAD! Rejoice because the God who started a good work in you will bring it to completion. Rejoice in your marriage. Rejoice in your singleness. Whatever circumstance comes your way, find a reason to rejoice in the Lord.

Seniors, Rejoice because God has brought you to this moment of graduation.

Rejoice because of the friendships you have forged over the past several years.

Rejoice because God has given you parents who have provided for your every need.

In all things rejoice in the Lord always.

Here is my warning for students: College is filled with invitations to come and rejoice over things that do not honor Christ as Lord. The world will tell you to experiment, find yourself, express yourself, drink this, try that, skip class etc. It is a trap that leads to temporary joy and dissatisfaction.

Rejoice always in the Lord and you will find peace and strength and satisfaction in His Son Jesus.

#### **4.Walk in peace by letting your reasonableness be known by all (v.5a)**

The next command to the church is to “let your reasonableness be known by all” This is the same word Paul used in 1 Timothy 3:3 when he says that pastors should be gentle.

He goes on to explain that gentleness is not violent, not quarrelsome, and not greedy. One commentator put it this way, “[Gentleness] is a characteristic of peaceable and controlled kindness, the opposite of arrogance or domination. It is contrasted with harshness, wildness, drunkenness, violence and self-serving greed”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> M. J. Evans, [“Gentleness.”](#) in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 506.



Unfortunately living in gentleness or living reasonably among people is not easy. Everyday we are bombarded with conflict at work, in our homes, at our schools. As we watch the news or read the newspaper or scroll on social media, we are confronted with issues that challenge our worldview and demand that we pick a side.

The sad reality is that each of us in this room at some point or another have failed to live reasonably before our co-workers, family, and/or classmates. Over time our hearts have been hardened to differing perspectives, cultures, and ways of life and the church, yes even us at FBC, have built walls in order that we may live reasonably amongst ourselves but is it possible that we have closed ourselves off from living reasonably with those around us.

Do we carry with us a spirit of gentleness/reasonableness when we leave this building and enter into our work week? What do people think when they hear of First Baptist? Do they say things like Paul said about the church in Thessalonica?

“You have received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia [not only so], but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything” 1 Thessalonians 1:7-8

Church, in order for us individually and corporately to live reasonably before all, we must look to Christ for wisdom and strength. Dane Ortlund, a pastor and author wrote, “Looking inside ourselves, we can anticipate only harshness from heaven. Looking out to Christ, we can anticipate only gentleness.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers by Dane Ortlund

What Ortlund is getting at is that true gentleness comes when we submit ourselves to being like Christ.

Consider 1 Peter 2:23 when he says, “When [Christ] was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly.”

Here we see Christ living in gentleness. Though Christ was lied about, cursed at, and verbally abused he was silent.

When they beat him and nailed him to a cross he did not threaten them, instead, He said, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do”

All this was working together to the Father’s will as Christ handed Himself over in order to be judged in our place.

**Application:**

Please hear me: I am not advocating for us as believers to be pushovers. That is not living in reasonableness. What I am advocating for is that all of us as believers, in order to live reasonable lives before all, we must follow Christ's example in 1 Peter 2 and live our lives within the will of God. You see it was God’s will for Christ to be silent and suffer and to turn Himself over. His reasonableness was flowing out of His obedience to the Father.

In the same way if we are ever going to live in reasonableness before all we must submit ourselves to God's will and stand firm in that will as we communicate truth with humility and grace. So how do we live in reasonableness before all?

We obey the will of the Lord and we communicate His will to others with gentleness in action and truth.

**Here is just a few ways we can live in reasonableness:**

1. Be transformed by the renewal of our minds by knowing the word so that we can test and discern what is good and acceptable before God. (Romans. 12:2)
2. Allow our good works to silence the critics of our faith (1 Peter 2:15)
3. Trust in the Lord with above all else, including yourself (Proverbs 3:5-6)

This is not an exhaustive list but it is one step forward in becoming a people who are fully devoted disciples of Christ who seek to live in reasonableness before all.

**5. Walk in peace by praying in the midst of your anxiety (v.5b-7)**

Paul says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God." Notice two things Paul brings out in v.6, pray with **thanksgiving** and **supplication**. That is whenever we are anxious we should pray and as we pray we go to the Lord giving thanks to Him and also petitioning with him to answer our call.

The reason why we give thanks to the Lord is because it reminds our hearts and minds that The Lord is with us.

So when anxiety arises and you feel that the Lord is not with you I encourage you to pray. Tell the Lord all the things you are thankful for and allow the list you create to be a reminder that the Lord has been faithful and with you always.

And once you are confident in the Lord again make your request known to Him. Ask Him to take away your anxiety. Ask Him to grant you peace.

Why should we go to the Lord in prayer when we are anxious?

If you look at the end of v.5 you'll see that Paul starts his fifth command by reminding them that the "Lord is at hand."

**Illustration:**

In today's society it has become more and more clear that each generation is divided on how someone should deal with their anxiety.

In college the most stressful and anxious filled week is the week of finals. During that week students will stay up studying for a 8:00am test until 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning.

They will be filled with so much anxiety that they have mental breakdowns, they forget easy questions on their test, or forget to study for one test because of their fears of failing another one.

So schools around the country and even at Delta State, provide what's known as a "safe place" on campus. This is a place students can go to get away from the stresses and anxieties of their life and experience some peace.

Schools will provide massage chairs for students to sit in, they will bring in puppies, bunnies, and other soft animals for them to hold and pet in order to calm their nerves.

And as I am saying that there is an older generation who hears that and remembers a time where anxiety was dealt with by putting your head down and working even harder to get through it.

It was a bad thing to admit or show weakness when at work or school because it often times meant you were not competent enough to do the job.

You didn't have time to feel anxious because it was a sign of weakness.

But what we see from both the GenZ/millennials and GenX and baby boomers is that the object of their peace from anxiety is misplaced.

Think about it— younger generations are putting their hope for peace in giving up all effort, while the older generation placed all their hope and peace in their efforts.

But what does Paul say our object of peace is? What does Paul point believers to? Before he gives the command to pray he says, "The Lord is at hand." He is the object of our hope and peace.

So if you fall into the camp of the younger generations— massage chairs, bunnies, and puppies may help you forget your anxiety temporarily but it cannot grant you incomprehensible peace.

Likewise, if you are from the older generation, what will you do when the day comes and your body or mind is too weak to overcome your anxiety?

Paul says the “Lord is at hand” in order that the church in Philippi would be comforted in the midst of the persecution that would come. Now, for us today Paul says, “The Lord is near” therefore believe that when you are at home, or work, or in a dorm, or at a restaurant, or a ball game and anxiety strikes you can rest in the fact that God is with you. And because he is with you, you can go to Him in prayer anytime anxiety approaches.

This is why Paul says, “Do not be anxious about anything” because the God who created you is also with you.

**Application:**

So church, when trials come our way, when anxiety begins to take over I exhort you to do two things:

1. Remember that the Lord is at hand. He is with you. He is with you when your faith is under attack. He is with you when your house is a wreck and you feel like a mess. He is with you when your teachers and professors are piling on work that seems insurmountable. He is with you always.

2. If your heart is having a hard time believing that the Lord is with you, then go to the Lord in prayer thanking him for all that you have and pray that prayer of thanksgiving until your heart remembers that the Lord is near. Then pray to the Lord and ask him for peace from the object of your anxiety and the Lord will prove once again that he is with you.

#### **6.Walk in peace by thinking and practicing what is praiseworthy (vv.8-9)**

Finally, Paul gets to his last command which is really two in one. In vv.8-9 Paul exhorts the church to think about and practice what is excellent and worthy of praise. We could say that Paul is telling the church to meditate [that is to think] and then apply [that is to practice] what is praiseworthy.

#### **Illustration:**

In sports you have two different categories of practice. At Holmes CC when I played football the first portion of our practice consisted of mental repetition while the second portion was physical repetition. During the first portion it was considered a good thing to watch film and mentally correct any problem you may have on the field.

The objective of our film sessions was to gain information, create an understanding, put together a plan and then mentally repeat the action in our head throughout the day until it was time to put it into practice physically on the field.

For instance, when I played offensive line one of the first things we learned is that our first step is always the most important step. If your first step is slower than your opponent then you are going to lose. If your first step is too wide or long then you are going to get off balance.

But if your first step is about 6 inches in the right direction and it is faster than your opponent then you would win the match 95% of the time.

So the coach would show us on film our bad steps and then he would be an example and show us what a good first step looked like. Our job was to mentally think about that first step with the hopes that our mental repetition would lead to practical application.

It never failed. When we stepped out on the field it was easy to spot who had taken the time to process and meditate on what we learned during our film session because those who thought about the coach's teaching would oftentimes take the right steps and coach would celebrate. Because to him we had meditated on what was right and then applied what was right.

To him what we had done was praiseworthy.

Here, Paul is urging the christians in Philippi to do the same thing. Verse 9 says, “What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me practice these things. And Paul yet again promises that if we do these things then “the God of peace will be with you.”

Application:

What is praiseworthy and excellent? My answer and encouragement to you is to pursue praiseworthy acts by looking at the Word individually, sit underneath the Word corporately, watch the Word lived out visually, and practice the Word eagerly.



First, look at the Bible and read it. Psalm 119:103 (NLT) says, “How sweet your words taste to me; they are sweeter than honey.” The bible is filled with wisdom and truth. It teaches us how to speak firmly but also with gentleness. It teaches us God’s will and how we can actively obey it. Read the word, meditate on what you read, and put it into action day after day.

Second, it is important that you receive the teaching of the word corporately. Not only is it a command but it's also one of the means in which you are properly equipped for the work of ministry. Ephesians 4:11-12, “He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelist, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry...” These positions are given by God to the local church. So it is vital for all believers to be connected to the local church as pastors preach, teach, and equip you for the work of ministry.

Third, we need to regain the practice of watching older, more experienced, and more mature saints obeying the word faithfully. Church we need to be a people who perfect the practice of learning how to follow Christ from more mature believers in the Lord.

A few years ago, in my first year here, I called brother Tommy Williamson into my office and asked Him to teach me how to follow Christ in ministry. These past four years of listening and watching him have been such a blessing on my life and I owe a great deal of who I am to him today.

Find mature believers that you can watch, meditate on their actions as they obey Christ, and follow in their footsteps in practicing obedience.

Fourth and finally, Whatever you read in scripture, whatever passage you are taught, whatever believer you observe, take whatever information of truth that you gather and put them to practice day, after day, after day, after day and the peace of God, the peace that surpasses all understanding will be with you in Christ Jesus.

**Conclusion:**

Church, in this room we have all sinned. Because of our sin problem it is difficult to find peace and rest among one another. But if we can come together in obedience and take action through these six steps given by Paul, not only will we find peace but we will find— all of us collectively, that the God of that peace is with us now and forevermore.

Therefore, brothers and sisters in Christ, Stand firm, be likeminded, rejoice in the Lord always, pray in the midst of your anxiety, and think and practice what is praiseworthy in Christ Jesus and the peace of God will be with you. God will be with you.

**Let's pray:**

Father, give us the strength we need to stand firm in our pursuit of you. Guide us into being a people of one mind in Christ Jesus. God, give us reason to always and forever rejoice in you. Father strengthen us in the good times and bad and grant us peace us from anxiety. Set our eyes on things that our excellent and praiseworthy in your sight. Lord grant us peace in every circumstance and help us to remember and know that you are always with us. Amen.