

The Joy of Living the Jesus-Way

Philippians



PART 8: TEAMMATES STANDING FIRM TOGETHER

By Ben Froese

Philippians 4:1-9

4 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

2 I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

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 every situation, 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.

8 Finally, brothers and sisters, 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.

- Philippians 4:1-9

We're currently working our way through this series on the book of Philippians, and we've already seen that there is this really strong emphasis on the "teamwork" component of gospel ministry throughout this little letter.

Way back in chapter 1, Paul writes to this community,

"4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now," – Philippians 1:4-5

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The Apostle Paul considers these believers in Philippi to be “in partnership” with him.

In chapter 2, Paul then talks about Timothy and Epaphroditus. He refers to Epaphroditus as “...my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier...” – Philippians 2:25

The work of gospel ministry is a team endeavor. Today’s text continues to make that apparent.

I. Ministry Is A Team Sport

Ministry is a team sport. A group project.

Euodia and Syntyche, according to what Paul says in verse 3, have “contended at [his] side in the cause of the gospel.” And so has Clement, and “the rest of [his] co-workers.”

Sometimes we think of the Apostle Paul as being in a category all by himself—a larger-than-life missionary who traveled the world, preached the gospel, and changed history wherever he went. And no doubt, Paul played an extraordinary role in the spread of the gospel in the first-century world.

But this text reminds us that he did not do it alone. The advance of the gospel is not a matter of individual talent, effort, or spiritual gifting. Paul was surrounded by others who “contended at [his] side.”

Ministry is a team sport.

a) Ministry Can Be Messy

Like any team sport, ministry life – and church life more broadly – can be messy at times.

Paul pleads with Euodia and Syntyche “to be of the same mind in the Lord” (Philippians 4:2). While we don’t know the details of their disagreement, it seems there has been a rupture in their relationship, and Paul calls on another believer to help them work things out.

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A question worth considering:

What's something God has been putting on my heart to do, but I've been making excuses and choosing not to do it?

c) Standing Firm Together

Paul writes:

"Stand firm in the Lord..." – Philippians 4:1

This echoes Philippians 1:27:

"...stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel."

To stand firm is to stand firm together.

If ministry is a team sport, then following Jesus is a team endeavor.

II. How To Win At This Game

In verse 4-9, Paul now fleshes out what "standing firm together" looks like. He gives us five indicators that we are "winning" at this game.

1) Rejoicing In The Lord

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"
– Philippians. 4:4

To rejoice in the Lord is to rejoice in what God has done for us through Jesus.

Part of rejoicing is choosing gratitude – paying attention to God's goodness and giving thanks for the ways we see him at work. As we choose gratitude, train our minds to think about the right things, and put our hope in the gospel, the fruit of joy is cultivated more and more.

2) Evident Gentleness

"Let your gentleness be evident to all." – Philippians 4:5a

Gentleness is part of the fruit of the Spirit. It is a character quality that God cultivates in us as we open ourselves to him.

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It's also part of our witness. Paul wants our gentleness to be noticeable—to make it clear that there is something different about the people of God.

3) Prayer In Every Situation

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” – Philippians 4:6

Paul is not saying we will never experience anxiety. Rather, when we are anxious, we are to pray! To bring our requests to God.

Peter makes a similar point: *“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”* – 1 Peter 5:7

Prayer changes things, but it also changes us. As we bring our concerns and requests to God, we experience the peace that comes from him.

4) Thinking On The Right Things

Paul encourages believers to think about whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable.

Our thought life matters.

*“Our lives are always moving in the direction of our strongest thoughts. What we think shapes who we are.”*²
– Craig Groeschel

The question is: What are we allowing our minds to dwell on?

5) Patterning Ourselves On Good Examples

Paul encourages the Philippians to put into practice what they have learned and seen in him.

God often grows us through the example of faithful believers who have gone before us. We all need people to learn from – and we are all called to become examples for others as we follow Christ.

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Discussion

Open Up

Think about a team you've been part of (sports, work, school, ministry, etc.). What made that team enjoyable or effective? What made it difficult?

Dig In

Read Philippians 4:1-9

1. What are some things that first stand out to you in this text?
2. Paul mentions several people who “contended at [his] side in the cause of the gospel” (v. 3). Why do you think God would choose to advance the gospel message through a “team” rather than isolated individuals? How have you seen this “teamwork” component of ministry at work?
3. What do you think are some of the blessings of doing life and ministry alongside of others? What are the challenges?
4. Paul encourages Euodia and Syntyche to “be of the same mind in the Lord” (v. 2). Why is unity so important in the life of the church? Have you ever needed to seek peace and reconciliation with someone? What did you do well, and what could have you done better?
5. In verses 4-9, Paul fleshes out what “standing firm together” looks like. Which of these five actions do you find most encouraging right now? Which is most challenging?
 - Rejoicing in the Lord
 - Evident gentleness
 - Prayer in every situation
 - Thinking on the right things
 - Patterning ourselves on good examples
6. In the message, the question was asked: “What's something God has been putting on my heart to do, but I've been making excuses and choosing not to do it?” How would you answer that question today? Is there some sort of step that the Lord is inviting you to take?

Prayer

Take some time to share prayer requests and pray for each other. Pray in response to the invitation of this text to “present your requests to God” (v. 6). Present your requests to God, knowing that He is a loving Father who loves to hear from His children.

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References

¹ SHAPE Series: Sermon by Pastor David Fields - <https://www.summitdrive.com/series/shape/>

² Craig Groeschel, *Winning the War in Your Mind: Change Your Thinking, Change Your Life*, p. 1