

Philippians 4:2-9

Paul's How-to Advice of Walking the Christian Walk

What's going on in the church (v. 2-3)? Some sort of internal strife in the church involving Euodia and Syntyche. If it had been a serious doctrinal departure between these two Christian women, we know from Paul's epistles to the Galatians and the Corinthians that he would have confronted the issue head-on. Since Paul has nothing to say here, it's likely they were only petty issues.

Why then was this disagreement important to Paul? Disagreement causes divisiveness, which is like a cancer in the church. People start taking sides, hindering the unity, effectiveness and ultimately the early church's witness to world.

What does Paul propose as the solution to the conflict? Christians are to agree with each other "in the Lord." Instead of taking sides or solving their problem, Paul simply advises them to be of the same mind in the Lord. Euodia and Syntyche had forgotten in their dispute that they have a greater common ground in Jesus Christ. We must put aside our petty personal differences so that the Lord may be magnified and His work advanced.

What qualities of character need to be demonstrated in like situations? In a practical sense, it's a call to humility by laying aside pride: *in humility value others above yourselves (Philippians 2:3)*. For the sake of the church or the relationship, who will be the one to step up in genuine humility?

What is one of the main themes of Philippians (v. 3)? Partnership in the gospel. Several "fellow workers" are identified as laboring alongside Paul in spreading the gospel.

What is the Book of Life? The heavenly book containing the names of all believers: *Rejoice that your names are written in heaven (Luke 10:20)*. Also Hebrews 12:23.

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books....Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:12, 15).

How do you ensure that your name is written in the Book of Life? By placing your faith and trust in Jesus Christ to be your Lord and Savior.

What was Paul's five-part recipe for conflict resolution (v. 4-5)?

- Rejoice in the Lord. Get beyond yourselves and look to the Lord.
- Let your gentleness be evident to all. Speak with kindness to each other.
- Do not be anxious. Relax and give it all to God.
- Be thankful. Expressing gratitude for our blessings
- Present your requests to God. Prayer realigns us with God, restoring peace

What are the two aspects of "rejoice" that Paul commands in counteracting the attitude of disagreement (v. 4)? *In the Lord* and *always*. *In the Lord* is a reminder of His authority over them, and that Euodia and Syntyche had much in common as sisters in Christ. Paul's joy wasn't merely sunny optimism or a positive mental attitude—it was the confidence that God is in control.

Rejoice always...How do we rejoice in tough times? *In the Lord*—who He is, what He's done—by reflecting on His many promises with an accompanying heart of gratitude.

Paul was not urging us to be unrealistic, saying that we should never feel sad. Even Jesus wept (John 11:35). Paul was advocating focusing on the blessings we have in Christ (Ephesians 1:3), being grateful for them regardless of how sad we may feel at times—such as his good example of singing hymns when he was in prison (Acts 16:25).

What does Paul mean by gentleness (v. 5)? It describes the heart of a person who lets the Lord fight his battles, knowing, *“It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord (omans 12:19)*. Gentle people are not spineless but selfless—not insisting on their rights or privileges, considerate toward others. Of course, there is a time to stand for what is right.

Gentle answers turns away wrath. The Greek word *epiekes* is translated as “gentleness,” which is probably best understood as “yielded rights.” We are to be gentle, yielded people.

Do not be anxious about anything! What is the bottom line issue with anxiety? Anxiety is self-centered worry often over uncertainty. At its root it is unbelief and sinful, doubting God’s goodness, grace and power in our lives. He has our best interests at heart, and His promises are always bigger than our problems.

Note: There is a difference between anxiety and legitimate concern.

How do we deal with anxiety according to Paul? Prayer is the Christian’s antidote for anxiety.

Present our requests to God, and what will happen (v. 6-7)? Note: this isn’t necessarily saying we shall receive what we ask for. It is a promise, however, of a peace found only through the sovereign influence of Jesus Christ. This “peace of God,” a phrase occurring nowhere else in the New Testament, acts as a sentry guarding the believer’s heart (affections) and mind (thoughts). One of the purposes of prayer is to align our hearts with God’s heart. The end result of such an alignment is peace.

What aspect of life does v. 8 address? Our thought life—a mental purity issue. The Bible clearly teaches that we can control what we think. While God’s peace does guard our heart and mind, the responsibility to control what we think is our doing—the person with an impure thought life will not experience “the peace of God” guarding their heart and mind.

What kind of things hinders our thought life? Our sinful nature; the things and morality of the world—TV, movies, computers, books, magazines, etc. While not inherently sinful, when coupled with our sinful nature, these things often undermine our relationship with our God.

How do we deal with immoral or impure thoughts? By prevention and substitution. We can prevent immoral thoughts by feeding our born-again nature, by developing the daily spiritual disciplines of Bible reading, prayer, confession, meditation, and Scripture memory. Memory verses from Scripture can be substituted when immoral thoughts attack.

What is the source of sinful desires? Our sinful natures are the primary source of our sinful desires: *Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death (James 1:14-15)*.

Colossians 3:1-2: Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above....Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. “Set your hearts...minds” both require intentionality.

Right thinking is important, but what are the even higher standards found in v. 9? Just do it! Wholesome conduct (v. 9) should follow wholesome thinking (v. 8).

Is Paul egotistical (v. 9)? No. He’s saying as he follows Christ’s lead—behave like me in that way. Do not behave like others, the Judaizers (3:2), or act like enemies of the cross (3:18).

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2010 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

This is copyrighted material provided by Officers’ Christian Fellowship (OCF). Permission is granted for use in local groups. For more information about OCF: www.ocfusa.org.