

Talk – Phil 4.2-9 – Standing Firm - Practically

Bible Reading

Philippians 4:2-9

Central Truth

Standing Firm - Practically

Purpose

I want to listener to be given some specific ways that they can stand firm and be challenged to put them into practice.

Outline

Do as I say and as I do!

Stand Firm in the Lord

Unity in the Lord (4:2-3)

Peace of God (4:4-7)

Rejoice

Be Gentle

Do not be Anxious

Pray

Think (4:8)

&

Practice (4:9)

True
Noble
Right
Pure
Lovely
Admirable

Do as I say and as I do

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Talk

Do as I say and do as I do!

- Someone once told me that ‘Parenthood is the great leveler’
- You tell a child for the four hundredth time to turn off their light – only to look behind and realise that you had left your own light on.
- In exasperation you ask them to clean their room yet find yourself climbing into an unmade bed at the end of the day.
- You yell over the top of the kids to tell them to stop yelling, only to realise that you have just demonstrated the very thing that you have told them not to do.
- You implore your child to get dressed, thinking that this basic discipline is something you do everyday and so should not need to be said – only to walk out the door and realise that you are still in your slippers!
- Each of these examples, may or may not have happened in the Noakes household in the last seven days!

- ‘Parenthood is the great leveler’ – the institution which more often than not highlights your deficiencies.
- Just about every parent should be able to resonate with the expression ‘do as I say not as I do!’

- Well tonight we come to look at the final chapter of the letter of the Philippians.
- Paul has spent three chapters helping the church in Philippi to know ‘why’ they should live different to the world around – he will now tell them ‘how’.
- And to his credit, he says ‘Do as I say *and* do as I do!’

- So tonight, I want us to get practical and see how we might apply some of what Paul has taught into our own lives.
- So let’s ask God to help us...

Prayer

Dear Lord and Father,

*You are the God of peace to whom we come to as we gaze upon your word.
Give us understanding so that you might guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus
and help us to know how to use our hands and bodies to serve you faithfully.
Amen.*

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Stand Firm in the Lord

- Right, it is always good to make sure that we are all onboard.
- Not all of us have been able to make it to church over the last few weeks, so let me do a quick summary of what Paul has written so far.

- In chapter 1, Paul gave thanks for the partnership that he shared with the Christians in Philippi – and challenged them to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel (1:27).

- In chapter 2 he called upon them to be humble – and gives them the best example of humility – Jesus himself.
 - He who made himself nothing ignoring his status and position as God and lowered himself to take on the status and position of humanity.
 - Then died – the death which humanity will experience because they have ignored God.
 - And then was exalted to the highest place and given the name which is above all names so that all things, all people, would give him the honour and glory that he so deserved.
 - That salvation he then gave to all who follow him – so that they too would be exalted to sit with him in glory for eternity.
- So Paul says – be humble and be like Jesus so that you might hold firmly to his word of life – and in turn help others to hold firmly to his word and be saved.

- In Chapter 3, Paul told them to be confident, not in what the world offers or in what they might achieve, but to be confident in knowing Christ and the power of being raised with him, and participating in his suffering because the race that they run now is a heaven bound race and one which has already been won by Jesus who gives his prize to all who follow him.
- He then describes the value of being citizens of heaven who wait for the day when the benefits of citizenship will become an experienced reality – and says that while you wait – *stand firm in the Lord*.

- And so, we begin chapter 4 and what Paul does is get practical and says - if you are going to stand firm then you need to be:
 - *united in the Lord*,
 - *at peace with God* and
 - be people who *think* about and *put into practice* what they believe.

- So allow me to take us through those three points – and get practical.

Unity in the Lord (4:2-3)

- First, unity in the Lord – Chapter 4:2-3 [*READ 4:2-3*]
- There is an issue – between two women Euodia and Syntyche [*Sin-T-Key*].

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- These ladies have been important to the work of the gospel – they have contended at Paul’s side.
- Lovely to see women in positions of prominence in the Bible and Paul upholds them as such.
- We don’t know what the disagreement was, feel free to speculate!
- Yet it might be more fruitful is recognise that sometimes disagreement happens – and often among strong-minded Christians.
- Presumably each of these women have given priority to the gospel and they hold a different understanding of how that should be applied.

- Paul doesn’t silence the disagreement, what he wants to see is that they have the *same mind in the Lord*.
- It is very hard to stand firm *in the Lord*, if you don’t have the same mind *in the Lord*.

- I don’t think Paul is instructing them to simply put the disagreement aside.
 - I don’t think he is telling them to play happy families and just put on a smiling face when in one another company.
- There is obviously an issue, what is significant about this issue is that it seems to be damaging the unity that should exist in this church.
- A unity that should be defined by the gospel.
- So, he says have the *same mind – in the Lord*.
- It is a unity that would please Jesus.

- What does that look like?
- If the disagreement you have, if the disunity that you are part of, is preventing the church family from doing what Jesus has asked you to do, then you don’t have the same mind in the Lord.

- It is against the nature of the church to claim our unity and citizenship in heaven yet practice disunity on earth.

- Remember what he said back in Chapter 2
 - ‘if you have any encouragement from being *united with Christ*, if you have any comfort from his love, if any partnership with the spirit, if any tenderness and compassion – then make my joy complete’ – How?
 - ‘by being *like-minded* having the *same love* being *one in spirit and purpose* (2:1-2).
- To be united – is to first recognise that you are together in Christ – and that what you do should be directed by having the same spirit and purpose as him.
- You can not do that if you put your needs before that of others.
- You can not do that if you argue from self-interest.
- You can not do that if your agenda or your feelings or your preferences are always put before others.
- You can not do that if you are actively working against the efforts of others.
- You can not do that if you don’t work to see what to other is saying or doing.

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- To contend side by side, to be fellow workers, means to be actively together and united in serving Jesus.
- You will notice, that Paul doesn't call on the women to sort it out on their own, he calls in others – he asks a true companion to step in to help these women deal with their disagreement.

PAUSE

Application

- Friends, there doesn't seem to be a lot of disagreement or open conflict among our church family – that is good.
- I hope that is indicative of a church family who have the same mind in the Lord.

- One way to test that is to look at how we serve side by side together.
- When each member of a church family is playing some part in contending for the gospel.
- **At 5pm Church** we have 171 people on the roll
- At 7pm Church we have 232 people on the roll
 - that is wonderful. I suspect that is even bigger than the church in Philippi at the time that this letter was written.
 - And one of the great things about this church, is that many who serve the gospel, serve in multiple and different ways.
 - You could say that our collective love language, is service.

- Our unity in the Lord will show itself in more and more ways as every member [all 171/232 members] serve the gospel in some way.
- Partnership is expressed in participation, unity is expressed in our union together.
- And so an encouragement to those in this family who are not currently serving in anyway, please become a partner and help those around us to stand firm in the Lord – by having the same mind and serving side by side for the gospel of the gospel.

LONG PAUSE

Peace of God (4:4-7)

- Second, standing firm in the Lord – means having *the peace of God*.
- You can see that in verse 7 – *'the peace of God which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus'*.
- What does it mean to have the peace of God? It sounds attractive.

- When the Bible talks about the 'peace of God' it is referring to the comfort, that serenity in which God himself lives. It is part of his character.

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- You can see in verse 9 he is called the ‘God of peace’ – an expression that is used often by Paul as he closes off his letters.
- We know that the fruit of the Spirit includes peace.
- We know in John 14 that Jesus encourages his disciples not to be troubled because he gives them the ‘peace of God’.
- It is the state in which God exists and enjoys but which is also given to those who trust in Jesus – they share in *his* peace.

- In a world which seems so frantic and distracted and burdened and chaotic and damaged – the whole idea of God’s peace should be attractive.
- And Paul says that is what those who believe in Jesus should share in.
- How? Practically he offers four suggestions:

Rejoice

- Rejoice (verse 4) [*Read 4:4*]
- One way to ensure that they are not too inward looking – is to simply point them to the Lord – so rejoice in the Lord.

- Over and over again in this letter Paul calls on the Christians in Philippi to rejoice – they can do that because of the partnership they share in Christ.
- We have called this series ‘Joy’ because it is the first application for those who know the peace of God.

- When Christians gather, when Christians understand what it means to have the peace of God – the response should be to rejoice.
- You know the joy it can be to gather with the many voices and sing the praises of the new born king at Christmas – well that is the joy that should be present whenever Christians gather in the name of the Lord.
- And here is a tip – the further you sit apart from one another – the harder it is to be encouraged by others as we all sing the praises of God.

Be Gentle

- Next - Be gentle - (verse 5) [*Read 4:5*]
- Paul says: Watch your manner - be gentle.
- I love that their gentleness ‘should be evident to all’ –
- Gentleness is not always a quality that is obvious – unless of course it is outstanding gentleness.
- When there is disagreement, then his call is that they be gentle.
- As he has just given instruction about Euodia and Syntyche, then you have to assume that the readers of this letter are taking mental notes about how they are going to approach helping these ladies in their disagreement.
- I am sure that this instruction applies to the way that they are called to live out their faith in a variety of circumstances.

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- And note the added incentive of being gentle - because 'the Lord is near' – which could be a way of saying that the Lord is watching the way in which you conduct yourself.
- Oh, how this is an instruction that I can learn from!
- And it rings so true, whenever I am not gentle, then the feelings that follow, the regret, the rethinking – it is nothing close to peaceful.
- Paul's instruction – if you want to understand the peace of God, then be gentle with others and they might also be gentle with you.

Do not be Anxious

- So, Rejoice in the Lord, Be gentle – and – don't be anxious (verse 6)
- If it is a concern – or a worry – Paul says don't be anxious about anything.
- That is a fairly all-encompassing statement.
- Don't be anxious about anything!
- The reality that Paul is describing, is that if you are trusting in God and trusting that he would do what is best, then no matter what the concern, then he has it covered for your benefit.
- That does not mean he will remove burden or trouble – it means he will not leave you when you are in the midst of that burden or trouble.
- Anxiety is such a buzz word today.
- To be anxious is very real. I don't in anyway want to devalue a person who struggles with anxiety.
- I imagine that it won't help someone struggling with anxiety to simply say to them 'Do not be anxious about anything!' – as if they had never thought about that as an option!!
- Let me say, that I suspect we, as a society, are so much more susceptible to anxiety because we have made the goal of life - 'happiness'.
 - 'Happiness' seems to be the absence of worry or concern.
 - 'Happiness' is expressed in the drive we have to be personally comfortable.
- And so, if we can make ourselves comfortable, either by acquiring more things, or avoiding more issues, or running away for those things that make us concerned or worried, then at some point I will be 'happy'.
- That is bollocks.
- You don't have to be Christian to see the fault in that kind of thinking.
- What it does it makes each person an island – and pushes you away from all things relational for fear of being hurt or inconvenienced or put out.
- 'Happiness' will never come if you are trying to determine it yourself.
- And so, bit by bit we become more and more anxious and more and more alone.

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- Paul says, there is another way. Don't be anxious - because God will not leave you when you are in the midst of that burden or trouble.

So where does that leave the person who is anxious?

Pray

- He says, Pray (verse 6) [READ 4:6]
- In everything, pray and petition God. Talk to God, present your requests to him - thankfully.
- He uses four different words to encourage his reader to pray. He must think this is a good idea.
- Whatever it is that is on your mind...
 - pray
 - petition (appeal to God for help),
 - give thanks to God,
 - ask him for what you request.
- Prayer is a demonstration of trust – in that you ask the one who you know is able to help. So, whatever the issue, ask God.

Application

- Friends, what is your prayer life like?
- How does it compare to the level of anxiety that you feel?

- Rejoice in the Lord, Be gentle, don't be anxious and Pray.
- And in each you come to understand and enjoy the peace of God – such that it will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- It strikes me that each of these principles should help those in a church to be united in the Lord.

LONG PAUSE

Think (4:8)

&

Practice (4:9)

- What does it look like *to stand firm in the Lord*?
- Practically Paul has suggested that they need to be
 - *united in the Lord*,
 - *at peace with God* and
 - now third, he says be people who *think about* and *put into practice* what they believe.

- Look at verses 8 and 9 [READ 4:8-9]

- In any and every situation that comes before this church – before the members of this church – Paul says *think!*
 - think about what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable.

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- - in other words, focus on the excellent and praiseworthy things – not on the issues or complaints or uncertainties.
- - if the church is to be the expression of the wonder of God – then be the church who focuses on the wonderful *qualities* of God.
- - lift your sights – from the dilemmas of the day, to the worthy things of God – that which is true, noble, right, pure, lovely and admirable.
- Notice they are qualities – not things!

- Now I take it, that this is helpful for giving perspective.
- It is not that Paul is saying ignore the conflict or the tensions – and only think about those excellent and praiseworthy things.
- This is Paul, giving the issues perspective.
- He says concentrate on the good things – the more profitable things – allow those to be the things that captivate you.
- Rather than being held back by the issues that threaten to derail you or those things which divide you.

True

- Be *true* – for followers of Christ – truth should be important.
- The Christians should seek or stand for that which is true in each of the theaters of life that they operate – be that areas of faith or science, study or work, family or friends.

Noble

- Be *noble* – strive for personal moral excellence
- Behaviour that is worthy of honour and can be *esteemed* in the eyes of others around.

Right

- Embrace that which is *right or just* – as defined by the character of God.
- So much of what is promoted today is in the name of that which is *right and fair* – according to the world.
- The Christians should be promoting that which is *right and just* according to God.

Pure

- Be *Pure* – I don't think this speaking just about sexual purity but all areas of moral purity – thought, speech and action.
- If the Christian is to be pure then that may mean fleeing that which is impure and avoiding that which will tempt you to live or act in an immoral way.

Lovely

- Be *lovely* – behave in such a way the is simply attractive and beautiful.
- That will not happen unless you are considering the other person at each point.
- And it results in others *appreciating* how you treat them.

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Admirable

- And *admirable* – to behave in such a way that is respected and revered
- And it results in others *admiring* how you treat them.

- These imperatives, these virtues will be relentlessly demanding.
- They will continually call upon the Christian person to live at a standard which the world around will not understand or even try to emulate.

- And I hope you will notice that they are qualities that would be comfortably at home in Christ himself.

- It is those things that the Christian person should think about as the stand firm *in the Lord*.

- Yet Paul doesn't leave those things only as things to *think* about – he wants them to be *put into practice*.

Do as I say and as I do

And so finally he says – 'do as I say *and* as I do'.

- He has modelled these qualities in what he has taught, and offered and demonstrated – so that the Christians in Philippi would follow his example, as he has followed the example of Christ.
- And he wants this church to model them in turn to others – so that they too can follow the example of Christ.
- They should be people who not only *think about* what they believe, but people who *put into practice* what they believe.

Application

Friends, what should this mean for us?

- I am quite sure that just about every person here (Christian or not) can see the value of that which is true, noble, right, pure, lovely and admirable.

- It would be a shame if we only *thought* about those things – and did nothing about *putting them into practice*.
- Stand firm – in the Lord - practically.

Prayer

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Note about church next week – Paul finishes this letter by stating that he has learned the secret of contentment.

- It seems to me that many in our world might be particularly interested in learning how they might find contentment – and so next week the sermon that I will prepare will be particularly aimed to help those who don't know Christian contentment – and if that might be helpful for some of your friends or family I would encourage you to invite them along.