

Missionary Mike Ball

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[0 : 00] Welcome to this week's message from Faith Bible Church of Lake Charles. We're excited to share a practical Bible-based teaching that we hope will encourage you and strengthen your faith.

Thanks for listening. Now, here's today's message. Thanks for joining us today. We hope this message encouraged you and gave you something to apply to your life this week.

If you'd like to learn more about Faith Bible Church or connect with us, visit our website at meetfaith.org. We'd love to hear from you. Have a great week, and we'll see you next time.

Well, if you have your Bibles with you this morning, I just wanted to open the Word with you. And you can imagine the news.

You can open up to Philippians 4. We're going to be in Philippians 4, verses 4 to 7 this morning. So you can do that as I begin. But you can imagine that the news that Abby and Sam received that their baby had a serious birth defect and probably wouldn't live past birth.

[1 : 24] He did, praise the Lord. And then to see him struggle when he was born and to see him struggle to breathe. He had to have oxygen about half the time.

To see him struggle to drink milk. He struggled with that. And to see him really just kind of go down, really take a downward direction his whole life.

To see all of that and to see our kids struggle through that and to grieve losing their son. As you can imagine, that's been a significant trial for all of us, and especially for Abby and Sam.

And in that trial, I believe they, and I think really all of us, have wanted above all else to honor Christ in this.

Right? The Lord has given this. We trust in the sovereignty of God. This is the way the Lord had it set out for us. So, how can we honor Christ in the midst of this?

[2 : 24] And that really ought to be our desire always, shouldn't it? And so, if it is, then I think, I think Philippians 4 helps us to get there. So, as we look at these four verses, there's kind of three sort of command statements.

One kind of has two together with it. I'm going to read this, and if you, as you go through, it's pretty easy to identify. Just identify those as you sit there and read through with me.

Identify those sort of command statements. Those will be what we'll be looking at today. It says there in Philippians 4, verse 4, 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 anything, 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. So, I believe that Paul is giving, based on the context here, he's giving these believers kind of a guide on how to honor Christ, and particularly in suffering and affliction.

[3 : 48] The context really is difficulties, opposition, suffering, disunity in the body. All of those elements are there in this letter to the church at Philippi.

If you go back to Philippians 3, verse 2, he says, Look out for the dogs. Look out for the evildoers. Look out for those who mutilate the flesh.

And you turn over to verse 17, or a few verses later, Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many of whom I often told you and now tell you, even with tears walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Their end is destruction, their God is their belly, and they glory in their shame with minds set on earthly things. We could go back to chapter 1, verse 28, that we're not frightened, we shouldn't be frightened in anything by your opponents.

This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation and that from God. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ, you should not only believe in him, but also suffer for his sake.

[5 : 10] So this speaks of opposition. Opponents, those against us, it speaks of suffering. Even Paul himself had been arrested and beaten and put in prison there in Philippi.

And then Paul reminds us, as we come into the verses that we're looking at this morning, as we come in there, verse 20, we see, But our, you see that word but, he kind of transitions, But our citizenship is in heaven.

And from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, By the power that enables him even to subdue all things, or subject all things to himself.

Therefore, my brothers whom I love and long for, my joy and crown stand firm, thus in the Lord, my beloved. And then we come to the verses right preceding verse 4.

He says, I entreat, Euodia and I treat 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.

[6 : 24] And then he goes into our passage this morning. And so, there's disunity. He even tells them, Hey, help these two women in their struggles.

Right? Help these two women to reconcile. So, these Christians, they face suffering, they face affliction, and you know, we're not really that much different. We, you may get opposition.

There may be opponents out there that don't follow Christ. We get opposition from unbelievers, just as they did. People reject Christ and become his enemies, and it's sad to see.

Sometimes there is disunity among us. We see that. I've been in enough churches, and been very intimately involved with enough churches, to see that pretty much every one of them, there was some disunity in the body.

So, we struggle. We struggle maybe with sickness, or we struggle with family problems, or issues at work. So, how can we honor Christ through all of that?

[7 : 33] Well, Paul gives us three things. He says, Rejoice, Be gracious, Don't worry, but pray. So, the first thing is we see there, Rejoice, Rejoice in the Lord.

And at first, that sounds a bit strange. When I'm in trouble, I should rejoice. What? Yes. Remember, Paul wrote this letter from prison.

Right? He's in chains. If anyone suffered, it was Paul, and he commands here, Rejoice. He was, and he was an example to these Philippians.

They would have known the story. Even if they hadn't been there in the very beginning with guys like, with ladies like Lydia, and others that came to faith in Christ right there at the beginning of that church.

They would have understood that he was beaten, he was bruised, he was taken there, put in prison, put chains on his feet and hands.

[8 : 32] But what is he doing there? He's singing chorus, praise choruses to the Lord. He's rejoicing as he sits there in prison. And so, he says it, not once, but actually twice.

Again, I say, Rejoice. Be full of joy. And this is a common subject in the letter. A word used several times throughout the letter. But Paul doesn't say, Rejoice because of opposition from unbelievers, people rejecting the truth, disunity, and trials.

We don't say, Oh yeah, I'm so happy because I lost my job. I'm so happy because my loved one passed away. I'm so happy because some trial has come into my life.

We don't, we don't say that, but really, the ultimate ground of our joy should never be our circumstances. But we can rejoice because of the Lord.

Rejoice in the Lord because of the Lord, because you are the Lord's. He saved you, as we saw there. Our citizenship is in heaven from which we eagerly wait for the Savior. I think verse 8 that follows right after this helps us because we're told there to whatever's true, whatever is honorable, whatever's just, whatever's pure, all of those things.

[9 : 56] Meditate. Think upon those things. So as we analyze, we look, we think about what's true, we think about what's good, we think about what's pure in life, and what God has given us, we can rejoice in that.

And I think that that is what enables us to live with joy above our circumstances. Maybe that's why God allows difficult circumstances in our lives and to come upon us so that we can learn this truth, to rejoice.

I mean, James 1, 2, you know, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. So to rejoice in the Lord in afflictions, we're actually kind of shifting the ground of our joy from the temporary to the eternal, from the created thing to the creator as we do that, as we rejoice.

So he says, first of all, rejoice. The second thing there is be gracious to everyone. Let your gentleness or your reasonableness be known to everyone.

And so, this word, I was kind of looking through and thinking about this word. What is this? Is it, you know, there's a lot of talk about, okay, what is this word, reasonableness or gentleness?

[11:24] And, you know, it has the idea, in fact, it's used several times to describe leaders in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1. It's used there in those lists of the qualifications for an elder and he said to be gentle.

And so the idea there is that we're not insisting on every right of the letter of the law or custom. We're yielding.

We're tolerant. We act with fairness. So, and as I think about that, as I think about my own life and I think about how I interact with people, I have a lot to learn into this.

Sometimes I tend to be a black and white kind of guy and I just, just follow the rules, you know, and sometimes they're my rules, you know, that I want people to follow. But we have to be gentle.

We have to be gracious with all. And I, and you know, and Paul, I think initially probably thinking, I think he's thinking of two things here because he says to everyone, I think, you know, first of all, he's thinking of one another because he's just said about these two ladies that are struggling in the church, he's just said, help these two women to reconcile.

[12:35] So there's a need for them and everyone there in the body to be gracious with one another. And I think gentleness is described so wonderfully in that what we call the mind of Christ there in chapter two, which I really believe is the key to maintaining, to developing and maintaining unity in the body of Christ, I think chapter two tells us.

And when we read there in chapter two, verse three, that beautiful description of the mind of Christ, do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourself.

Let each of you look not only to his own interest, but also to the interest of others. Beautiful description, I think, of graciousness, reasonableness, gentleness.

And then we're to be gracious to those who are outside. They may not treat you well. Those outside the body of Christ may not treat you that well. Although I've found, oftentimes, there are very honorable unbelievers that don't know Christ.

But a lot of times, sometimes we'll find that they will not be so honorable with you. Right? We, you know, we run into that often.

[13:56] But we show mercy as we have received it. And I think that's how we shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation that chapter 2 talks about.

So when trials come, you know, I've seen people, I've probably done it, who are bitter, who are cruel, who are unkind, but then I've also seen people in trials who were so very gracious.

And which honors Christ? Which attracts people to Him? So let us be those who, that we are known for graciousness.

We are known for gentleness as those who follow Jesus. And then we get here in verse 5, kind of a reason for everything. And I think that, and the idea here is that the Lord's presence and His coming is near.

And so I think that Paul gives this, although it's not connected this way grammatically, I think that Paul's giving us some motivation, a reason. And so we see there in verse 5, it says, the Lord is at hand.

[15:15] He's near. I mean, this is a reason to be gracious, but it's also a reason to rejoice. And it's also a reason to not worry, but to pray. So I believe Paul kind of intended it as a motivation for all the commands.

It's kind of right there in the center of it. And I think it's kind of, it kind of motivates us as we think about this truth. And there's kind of two meanings you would have. And really, I don't know that the

context really, maybe you can go back to chapter 3 and get a little bit, and that's why I would say maybe it's the first of these.

But there's really two sort of meanings here of what he's talking about when he says the Lord is at hand. First of all, and maybe what it truly is, is that the Lord is near in coming, temporally.

He's, he's, he's being, he's close in point of time. Right? And I think, I think that's what we, you know, we believe in the imminent return of Jesus Christ.

He can come at any time. But what, what will the Master do if he finds, if he comes and he finds his servants beating his fellow servants and being ungracious, we will be ashamed before him at his coming.

[16:29] So, we should be gracious. And we rejoice because his return is near. There's also a second option that could be here, and that is that the Lord is near.

He's, he's close in proximity. Spatially, he's near. He's, he's near in presence. And, and that has kind of two implications. For one, I mean, he's present with us.

That means, and we know the Lord sees and, and hears all. But when we think about that truth, he's near, he's present with us. Well, that means he hears, he sees all that we do.

That's a motivation. But there's also the aspect that if he's with us, he, he, he cares for us. Right? That's the, the idea that he's with us.

And again, I'd say likely it's the first of those two options that he's near in coming. But, you know, grammatically, there's nothing that says that it has to be one or the other.

[17:30] And I wonder if, you know, I think either definition kind of gives us a reason. It motivates us to strive in these ways of living. If we think about that, either way you want to go with it there on the Lord is at hand, that, that should motivate us toward rejoicing, being gracious, not worrying, but praying.

So we come to the third thing there, the third truth, sort of the third command statement, never be anxious in anything, be prayerful in everything.

So we read there, verse six again, do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

Be anxious for nothing. And this doesn't mean that we don't care about people. This word is actually used also back in chapter two to speak of Timothy.

And when he describes Timothy, there he uses this word that he cares. His care for you. So this word is not that we don't care about people.

[18:43] This word, and I think the way that it's being used here is excessive concern. Worry. And for believers who are suffering, facing trials, I mean, this is especially applicable.

Don't worry about anything, pray about everything. And while unbelievers in trouble are a lot of times filled with worry, they're filled with fear, disciples of Christ, we can cast all our cares on him for he cares for us.

We pray. The Lord is near. We pray. And notice the words there for pray are words that are sort of synonyms for prayer in there.

We've got prayer, supplication, request to God there in verse six. And we pray about everything and with thanksgiving. We know he has helped us.

I bet everyone in here could give some testimony to how the Lord has been near to you and how he has helped you. And we have so much for which to give thanks.

[19:59] We think about what's true instead of what might or could happen. Do you ever dwell in the what ifs of life? Do you ever sit there, you know, and ponder upon that or just, you know, a lot of times we struggle because of that.

What if this happens? What if that happens? Someone has said, why worry when you can pray? And the question is, is that what you do?

When you face trials, difficulties, suffering, do you worry or do you pray? I heard a preacher some time ago preach on this passage.

and he suggested that each one make a list of their concerns. Make a list of your concerns in life.

And each ask the question, what do I do more of? Do I worry about this or do I pray about this? So I went through some of mine and I do this sometimes because it's a good thing to do.

[21:10] You know, from the time that I found out about Abby and Sam and their baby and what was likely to happen with him, with Jonathan, you know, and all that was going to take place, did I worry more about that?

Because it was a lot of months. I mean, she found out about this in July and he's born late in November. And so did I worry more about that or pray more about that? When I encounter problems in the churches there in Fiji that we are part of, do I worry more or do I pray about it?

When I hear that there's conflicts or issues maybe with my children in the state some 7,000 miles away, something they're struggling with, what do I do more of?

Do I worry or do I pray about it? I can remember back when I was an engineer. I was an engineer for about 12 years and I can remember back the issues that would sometimes come up in work. [22 : 15] I remember I kind of struggled with this. I was right there in Philippians 4, 6 of am I going to worry about prayer this? And I remember memorizing Psalm 56, 11 and God I put my trust I will not be afraid.

What can man do to me? Because I would think about what if I've done this wrong and it's going to cause some big problem in this project or whatever. What did I do more of? Did I worry or did I pray?

And when I examine it in those terms and I really am honest with myself I'd have to admit that I worry more than I prayed. And that's really not living according to the gospel.

Because by worrying I thought I can solve the problem. But the fact is I need the Lord always. every hour I need you as we sang this morning.

Just like at the beginning of my salvation I realized that I needed Christ. I can't do it. I cannot take away I can't deal with my sin problem. I need a Savior and I trusted Him.

[23 : 24] And that doesn't end there. We are people who live by faith. We're constantly growing entrusting the Lord. And I think part of that and I think that our prayers really are recognition that we need the Lord.

So I would encourage you take those things out. Everything. Recount them to the Lord. Pray about them. And commit them to Him.

And then we have the last thing a result to desire. The peace of God there in verse 7. It gives a great promise doesn't he? The peace of God that surpasses all understanding and it will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

You know, worry leads to all kinds of turmoil in our lives, in our mind, our heart. It can often lead to all kinds of physical problems, sickness even.

Stress can do that to us. And I think worry can sometimes be related there with stress. It can do that. But as we trust the Lord with that peace and we pray about it instead of worry about it, peace will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

[24 : 32] And I think the Lord wants us to live in peace and with peace. I think that's why in many of the epistles their opening lines is grace and peace to you. Because there was a desire for believers to live with peace and in peace.

So how can you honor Christ in trouble and suffering? Well, three things. Rejoice. Rejoice. Be gracious to everyone. Don't worry but pray about everything.

And do so because Jesus is with you always and he's soon to return. Do so because God promises to give you his peace when you pray and you trust him. So in trials let's commit to honor Christ.

And I think it'll make all the difference in our lives but I think also in the lives of the many people that the Lord has put in our path in our communities and in our neighbors and at work and things like that we can impact them by just obeying and doing what Paul set forth here in Philippians 4.

And I think if we can rejoice if we can be gracious if we can pray instead of worry well I believe we'll be those who shine as lights.

[25 : 50] Just as it says there we can be those who shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Father thank you so much.

Thank you for the word. Thank you for this passage that instructs us. I think that helps us in the challenges that we face in life. Help us to live these things out. We need your grace to do this. I think it's kind of a tall order when I look at it and I'm honest with myself I see how difficult this is and I really I think we all need your grace in this. So give it and help us to be committed to these things and may it make a difference in our lives and in those that we are around.

We thank you in Jesus name. Amen. Thanks for joining us today. We hope this message encouraged you and gave you something to apply to your life this week.

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