



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

STANDING FIRM WITH JOY & GENTLENESS, Pt.2 PHILIPPIANS 4:4-5
TO: WYOMING LEGISLATORS, SPOUSES AND THE GOVERNOR
FEBRUARY 16, 2011

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In Philippians, the word "joy" or rejoice" is mentioned 16 times. Jesus Christ is mentioned over 50 times. This is not by chance for real joy is found in Jesus Christ alone. No matter what the circumstances are or what hardship you might be struggling through, a believer in Jesus Christ can have true, deep abiding joy through life. That's the message of Philippians. As Paul exhorts the believer to stand firm in the Lord, it becomes clear that he sees this attribute as an absolute requirement for standing firm. Simply stated, Paul is saying to stand firm in the Lord in this way: by rejoicing in the Lord always. Believers can always be in a state of rejoicing no matter what is going on in their lives because their source of joy is found in their relationship with Jesus Christ. Believers possess a joy that need not be shaken through life's challenging tests. It endures because of a secure relationship in Christ. Paul commends us to stand firm as we serve and rejoice in the Lord.

Not only does Paul exhort the believer to stand firm, rejoicing in the Lord always, but he exhorts us to have a forbearing spirit towards all men. We touched on this last week and will continue our study as Paul takes us one step further. Even if wronged by others or unfairly mistreated we are called to have a forbearing spirit. We are to stand firm through all of life's harsh or unfair circumstances and rejoice always in the Lord with a gentleness that endures mistreatment without any malice or bitterness towards others. How can God ask that of us? Only through His gracious provision!

I. STAND FIRM WITH GENTLENESS- PHIL. 4:5

"Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand." Philippians 4:5

"gentleness" Greek word **"epielkes,"** gives the sense of patience, gentleness, moderation, contentment, mild, settled, sweet reasonableness, big heartedness, very generous, over generousness, charity towards faults of others, mercy towards failures of others, patience when submitted to injustice, mistreatment without malice, bitterness or vengeance, indulging personal failings of others and not be personally offended or bitter. Submits to dishonor, disgrace, mistreatment and persecution with an attitude of courteousness, with an attitude of patience, kindness and consideration. All of this without hatred, malice or revenge. It is being peaceable and gentle. This word knows no revenge. It is the charity towards the faults of others, mercy towards the failures of others. It carries with it patience and the ability to submit to injustice, disgrace, mistreatment without hatred, without malice, without bitterness and without vengeance. It says, when you have offended me, misjudged me, maltreated me, misrepresented me, you have not given me what I deserve, in fact you have given me what I do not deserve, you have ruined my reputation with some but I humbly graciously accept it and I still reach out in love to you.

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We are to stand firm through harsh or unfair circumstances and rejoice always in the Lord with a gentleness that endures mistreatment without any malice or bitterness towards others. And all of this is done without compromising on the truth in absolute humility. This is a hard and difficult way of life that Paul is exhorting us to... *in fact it seems impossible.* But this is critical to standing firm!! If we succumb to unfair treatment from others with bitterness, anger and vengeance, then we give way to sin in our lives and do not stand firm. We must remember Paul's words from 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, *"And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong."* Christ is all sufficient to meet our every need abundantly. We can look to Christ especially in adverse circumstances, and experience His strength in our weakness even when called to a standard that seems humanly impossible.

We all know we are weak in this area. Our pride is the first issue that gets in the way and yet that is to be the first thing we lay down. It is hard to take unjust criticism and underserved vindictiveness from others, and in the Capitol it is usually public! How can we honestly live to the standard Paul calls us to in this verse when we have to endure ruthless and spiteful actions by others? How can we respond with gentle forbearance? Only by recognizing that we serve a sovereign God and nothing happens by chance in our lives. Everything that comes our way serves to establish and mature us in our faith and we must submit our lives to the Lord will. And remember that when we suffer for the sake of the Gospel and continue in our faith (*standing firm*), we can expect God to use that suffering to spread the Gospel. Paul exhorts us to have the right attitude towards the events in our lives, remembering we are to shine as lights in a dark and watching world. The world will see no difference in us if we respond like everyone else; with anger, bitterness and vengeance. We are to shine as lights in the darkness to an unbelieving world. Our Lord said, *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."* (Matthew 5:16)

A. WITH HUMBLE GRACIOUSNESS. PHILIPPIANS 4:5

One who can live the exhortation to be forbearing is a firm, standing individual. This is a person who can say to another, you may have offended me, you may have misrepresented me, you may have misjudged me, you may not give me what I deserve, you may have tried to ruin my reputation, you may have acted in hostility against me...but, I humbly, graciously love you in spite of all of this and reach out to you. Philippians 4:5 could read this way,

BIBLE STUDY

LEGISLATORS/SPOUSES/GOVERNOR & STAFF/LSO: WEDNESDAY @ 6:30 AM, WYOMING STATE CAPITOL
HERSCHLER BUILDING, COMMONS AREA, BREAKFAST SERVED

CAPITOL COMMISSION WYOMING

STANDING FIRM WITH JOY & GENTLENESS, PT. 2 PHIL. 4:4-5

“Let your humble graciousness be known to all men.” Is that how you are known in the Capitol...in your home...your community?? Are you known by your humble, graciousness as you serve Jesus Christ?

B. WITH TRUTH. PHILIPPIANS 4:5

Often we are willing to *“soften”* the truth to gain some civil state. This is not what a forbearing and gentle spirit is referring to. We are called to stand firm in gentleness and immovable in the truth for which we stand. We are called to be humbly gracious and yet not compromise on any truth at any time. As we stand firm in God and His Word, we are patient when submitted to injustice or mistreatment from others as Christ was. Paul exemplified this in his life as well. Think back through all the times he was placed in prison, beaten or stoned and left for dead. He never compromised on the truth to make it easier for himself, but stood firm in the Lord rejoicing and extending mercy for the sake of proclaiming the Gospel. These are hard and high standards we are called to.

1 Peter 1:22 says, *“Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart...”*

Truth can never be separated from fervent love and fervent love can never be separated from truth. In truth, we can love fervently. But we cannot do it in our own strength. Therefore, Paul continues.

C. THE LORD IS NEAR. PHILIPPIANS 4:5

“near” Greek word **“eggus,”** means close, near, used in an absolute sense of both space and time.

The knowledge of Christ’s presence with us now and the certainty of His glorious return should shape the Christian’s life in every way. Psalm 119:151 says, *“Thou art near, O Lord”*. Psalm 34:18-19 says, *“The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves those who are crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivers him out of them all.”* It is a great comfort to know that our Lord is with us. He knows it will be hard and He doesn’t ask us to live this life alone. Our Lord encompasses every believer with His presence!!

God calls us to His service and then reminds us that He is at work in us through the Holy Spirit (Philippians 2:13). The only way we can possibly stand firm and rejoice in the Lord with forbearance towards others is if we have the Holy Spirit working in our lives and giving us the power to live according to His Word. 2 Peter 1:3 says, *“seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.”* God has given us everything we need

to live the life He has called us to. He knew it would be a high and humble calling but His grace is sufficient and His presence is assured.

How can we live this way especially if we have been so unfairly mistreated by others? Hudson Taylor, a missionary who gave his life to proclaim the Gospel to the people in China was confident in the One he served and was known for saying this, “God will supply the needs I have to carry out the job He has given me to do!” God will give us what we need and will always be with us! We are not alone. What a comfort! Paul knew of God’s presence as he wrote from jail to the Philippians.

Psalm 145:18-20 says, *“The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He will also bear their cry and will save them. The Lord keeps all who love Him...”*

Paul exhorts us to stand firm, united in our purpose to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, rejoicing with a forbearing spirit that remains patient even when submitted to mistreatment from others! This is all for the sake of the Gospel! And then Paul reminds us of the great truth that God is present with us always!

The writer of Hebrews concluded his letter by offering this benediction, *“Now the God of peace, Who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to Whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”* (Hebrews 13:20-21) May this be our prayer as we seek to do God’s will by standing firm with a forbearing spirit that is known to all men as we serve in the Capitol. May our lives be characterized by a deep love for the Lord, His work and God’s people. And may our life be one of sacrificial service to Jesus Christ and selfless affection for others, living worthy of the honorable name we bear!!

¹ MacArthur, John, MacArthur Commentary on Philippians. Moody Press: Chicago, 2001.Pg.276. Tape series, Grace To You, 1989, 50-39.