

# BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

## Sage Advice

Philippians 4:1-9

2008

### Introduction

The Book of Philippians was written by a man who had found true joy and peace of mind:

1. Even though he was imprisoned at the time! - Phil 1:12-18
2. Even though he was facing capital punishment as a martyr! - Phil 2:17-18

Paul has told the Philippians how to “prokope” in the midst of *external* conflicts.

Now he tells them how to prokope in the midst of *internal* conflicts in the body of Christ.

This passage is set against the background of two quarreling women in the church at Philippi (4:2) whose conflict was threatening to destroy the unity of the church.

### I Paul Expressed His Love

Verse 1 serves as a transition verse, summing up what has been said up to this point and paving the way for what Paul is going to say about Christian unity.

A. He referred to the Philippians as: [Verse 1a]

1. His **brothers** = Adelphoi = In this letter, this is the seventh use out of nine.

a. Those whom he loved = Agapetoi

Phil 2:12 “Therefore, my dear friends ...”

Matt 3:17; 17:5 “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

b. Those whom he longed for = Epipothetoi

Phil 1:8 “God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.”

**Application:** The biblical benchmark of godly leadership is agape love!

2. His **joy** and crown

**Crown** = “Stephanos”

A laurel wreath awarded to a victorious athlete. It was a crown of achievement.

Paul considers his friends, disciples and fellow workers his trophy in life!

**Application:** The priority and goal of disciplemaking!!

1 Thess 2:19-20 “For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.”

B. He instructed them to stand **firm** in the Lord [Verse 1b]

**Stand firm** = Steko = “To remain stationary or firmly anchored” (Phil 1:27)

Refers to “soldiers who refuse to leave their posts despite personal risk/danger”

**Application:** Standing firm is a consistent requirement for a godly life!

1 Cor 15:58 “Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”

## II Paul Expressed His Concern

A. He **pleaded** with Euodia and Syntyche: [Verse 2]

**Euodia** means "sweet fragrance," and **Syntyche** means "pleasant."

Apparently these women weren't living up to their names!

This fractured relationship between these two women had created disorder and disharmony in the church and was significant enough to justify public rebuke!

### Application:

When Christians fight with each other, several things happen

1. The Lord's reputation is harmed
2. The church's ministry is hindered
3. The peace of God is forfeited

**Pleaded** = Parakaleo = “To call, invite, exhort”

Repeated for emphasis: “I appeal to Euodia and I appeal to Syntyche.”

1. To **agree** with each other in the Lord

**Agree** = Phroneo = “To share the same opinion or mind”

Clearly, this was not an issue of false doctrine. We know from Paul's epistles to the Galatians and the Corinthians that if there had been a serious doctrinal departure Paul would have confronted it head-on.

1. These women were locked in a battle over egos
2. They were seeking a following
3. They were vying for influence -- enlisting the support of other saints

The unity that Jesus prayed for in John 17 was being disrupted by their conflict.

John 17:23 “May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

**Note:** The key to this kind of agreement is found in the phrase, “in the Lord”

If we are abiding “in the Lord”:

- a. We will be in agreement with the Word of God
- b. We will be in agreement with the Law of Love - Gal 5:13
- c. We will be in agreement with the leading of the Holy Spirit

If two people are mutually in submission to God and His Word, they will be well on their way to agreement with one another!

B. He requested his yokefellow: [Verse 3a]

**Yokefellow** = Syzygus

While the identity of this person(s) remains a mystery, Paul's purpose does not: He wants this person ...

1. To **help** these women

**Help** = Sullambano = "To seize, capture or aid"

The word "help" isn't really strong enough. Paul is urging his co-worker in Philippi to "aggressively aid" these women to resolve their destructive bickering.

**Application:** The Bible has clear directives on how to handle a dispute or offense:

1. If you are the offender: Matthew 5:23-24
2. If you are the offended: Matthew 18:15-17

- C. He commended these women as those: **[Verse 3b]**

1. Who have **contended** at his side for the gospel
  - a. Along with Clement (otherwise unknown in the NT)
  - b. Along with the rest of his fellow workers

**Contended** = Sunathleo [Athletics] = "To wrestle or strive in company with"

Phil 1:27 "... stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel ..."

Unfortunately, these two women who once fought side-by-side for the gospel were now locked in a bitter battle that threatened to undermine the testimony of the gospel and the church!

2. Whose **names** are in the Book of Life

**Definition:** "The Book of Life is the Heaven's registry of those who have been forgiven, adopted and granted full rights as citizens of God's kingdom in the commonwealth of heaven" (Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; 22:19)

**Application:** The importance of keeping your perspective in the midst of conflict!

1. Refuse to demonize the other party in a conflict
2. Remember that their names are written in the Book of Life
3. Review your rolodex of their positive contributions and fruit

### III Paul Expressed His Counsel

- A. **Rejoice** in the Lord always **[Verse 4]**

1. "I will say it again: Rejoice!"

**Note:** Present, active, imperative meaning; **"Keep on rejoicing in the Lord"**

Consider the example of Paul who made it his practice to rejoice:

1. He rejoiced in his imprisonment on death row
2. He rejoiced in his partnership with other believers - Phil 1:4
3. He rejoiced in the advancement of the gospel:
  - a. Despite his chains - 1:12-14

- b. Despite the mixed motives of those who envied him - 1:18
- 4. He rejoiced in the love and unity of the saints - 2:2
- 5. He rejoiced in the prospect of being a martyr for Christ - 2:17
- 6. He rejoiced in the faithful service of Epaphroditus - 2:25-30
- 7. He rejoiced in the people under his leadership - 4:1
- 8. He rejoiced in everything - 4:4
- 9. He rejoiced in the concern others expressed for him - 4:10

**Application:** Rejoicing is the mark of maturity and faith in God!

It is the fruit of a Spirit-filled, Spirit-led, Spirit-empowered life! - Gal 5:22-23

B. Let your **gentleness** be evident to all [Verse 5]

**Gentleness** = Epieikeia = “Patience, softness, forbearance”

Eph 4:2-3 “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”

**Gentleness is evidenced by:**

- a. The willingness to yield one’s “personal rights”
- b. The ability to give way to the wishes or preferences of others
- c. The capacity to consider others better than yourself and their interests above your own.

1. The Lord is near [this is the motivation for everything preceding]

The context allows for this phrase to be understood in one of two ways:

a. **Temporally near:** The Second Coming

James 5:8 “... be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.”

b. **Spatially near:** He is close to every believer

Heb 13:5 “God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”

C. Do not be **anxious** about anything [Verse 6-7]

**Anxious** = Merimnao = “To be pulled in different directions [hopes and fears]”

The English word “anxious” comes from an Old English word that means “*to strangle*”.

It was used to refer to wolves killing sheep by biting their neck, thus strangling them. This is what worry does in your life. It will choke the life right out of you!

**Quote:** *Worry is like a rocking chair, it keeps you busy, but it doesn't get you anywhere!*

(Erma Bombeck)

Worry fixates on hypothetical possibilities that usually never come to pass!

Worry saps our energy, distorts our thinking and steals our joy!

**What were the Philippians anxious about?**

- 1. The day to day challenges of their lives - Matt 6:25-34
- 2. The injustice of Paul’s imprisonment and his impending death - Phil 1:12-26
- 3. The understandable fear of persecution - Phil 1:27-30
- 3. The unsettling impact of conflict between church members - Phil 2:3-4; 4:2-3

Fortunately, God has a remedy for anxiety and he shares it through Paul ...

1. But in everything

a. **By prayer** = Proseuche = "To adore or worship"

Proseuche is prayer that is focused on God's power, God's sovereignty, God's love and faithfulness and God's promises. It is the antidote to worry!

**Quote:** "When we get our eyes off our troubles and can focus them on the face of our Heavenly Father, then as He grows larger in our hearts, our problems grow smaller in our minds!"

**That is why David wisely prayed to God in the midst of his crisis:**

Ps 27:4 "One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple."

b. **By petition** = Deomai = "To make specific requests"

God invites us to make petitions

Matt 7:7-8 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."

c. With **thanksgiving** = Eucharistia = "An expression of gratitude"

1. An expression of gratitude for prayers previously answered.

The story of the 10 lepers - Luke 17:11-19

2. An expression of faith for prayers yet to be answered.

Rom 4:20-21 "Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised."

3. An expression of submission to the Lordship of Christ

Col 3:17 "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

4. An expression of adoration and worship to the Lord

Eph 5:19-20 "Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

**Quote:** "Nothing brings Christ nearer or drives the devil away faster than a genuinely thankful heart!"

1 Thess 5:16-18 "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

2. Present your requests to God and the **peace** of God:

**Peace** = Eirene = "Tranquility of the soul!"

- a. Will guard your **hearts** in Christ Jesus
- b. Will guard your **minds** in Christ Jesus

**Guard** = Phroureo = “To guard, watch, protect”

Undoubtedly, Paul, observing the Roman guard chained next to him, used a military metaphor to describe the peace of God that stands like a guard over the hearts of believers who apply God’s remedy for anxiety!

- 1. Hearts = Susceptible to wrong feelings
- 2. Minds = Susceptible to wrong thinking

**Note:** We aren’t told that all our problems will immediately be resolved!  
 We aren’t told that we will understand the “Whys” of our problems.  
 We aren’t even promised that the problem won’t get worse.  
 We are simply told that if we turn to God, worry will give way to faith and anxiety will give way to God’s supernatural peace.

**Quote:** You will never know the peace of God until you know the God of peace!  
 Rom 5:1 “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ...”

**Illustration:** “In the pioneer days of aviation, a pilot was making a flight around the world. Two hours into one of the legs, he heard the noise of a gnawing rat in his plane. He was anxious that the rat might gnaw through a vital cable or control of the plane. So he put his plane into a climb and kept going until he was 20,000 feet up. The gnawing ceased and the rat died. Why? It couldn’t survive in that atmosphere!

“Worry is like a rat in your heart and in your mind. If left alone, it will gnaw at you until it destroys your life and until it steals away all your joy, power and energy. But, the rodent of worry cannot live in the secret place of the Most High. It cannot breathe in an atmosphere that is steeped in prayer and influenced by the Word of God. Worry dies when we ascend to the Lord through prayer and His Word.”  
[https://www.sermonnotebook.org/new%20testament/Phil%204\\_6-7.htm](https://www.sermonnotebook.org/new%20testament/Phil%204_6-7.htm)

#### IV Paul Expressed His Vision

- A. He wanted them to think about: **[Verse 8]**

**Think about** = Logizomai = “To calculate or to think about carefully”

1 Thess 5:21-22 “Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.”

- 1. Whatever is **true** (alethes) = “Consistent with fact or reality”  
 John 17:17 “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”  
 2 Tim 2:15 “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

**Application:** Are you looking for truth? Get God's truth into your heart and life!

- a. Make time to read, study, meditate on, and memorize the Bible
  - b. Take notes during the sermon and discuss the application questions
  - c. Take a class at a Bible College
  - d. Read good Christian books; history, theology, apologetics, biographies
2. Whatever is noble (semnos) = "Worthy of respect or honorable"
    - a. Deacons - 1 Tim 3:8
    - b. Wives of leaders - 1 Tim 3:11
    - c. Older men - Titus 2:2
  3. Whatever is right (dikaios) = "Upright, just, righteous"
    - a. In a Jewish sense of maintaining the law of God - Luke 1:6
    - b. In a Greco-Roman sense of being a model citizen
  4. Whatever is **pure** (hagnos) = "Innocent, chaste, undefiled"
 

Phil 1:9-10 "And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ ..."

Phil 2:14-15 "Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe ..."

    - a. The purity of God - 1 John 3:3
    - b. The purity of believers - 1 Tim 5:22
    - c. The purity of women - Titus 2:5
    - d. The purity of God's wisdom - James 3:17
  5. Whatever is lovely (prospiles) = "That which is pleasing and attractive"
 

Prov 24:3-4 "By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures."
  6. Whatever is **admirable** (euphemos) = "Well-spoken of, reputable, of good report"
 

2 Cor 10:5 "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

**Application:** Critical thoughts others vs. gracious thoughts of others
  7. Whatever is excellent (arête) = "Moral excellence or virtue."
 

2 Peter 1:5-8 "For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness, [knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love]. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."
  8. Whatever is **praiseworthy** = Epainos = "Worthy of approval, recognition or praise"

**Quote:** “What a man or woman thinks about -- what occupies his/her mind will eventually shape his/her character, his/her words and eventually his/her actions.”

Rom 12:2 “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

**Application:** Do your TV programs, movies, video games or books pass that test?

Ps 19:14 “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.”

**Practical steps to having our minds renewed:**

1. It is intentional
2. It requires self discipline
3. It is motivated by obedience
4. It is instructed by the Word - Psalm 1:1-6
5. It is enabled by the Holy Spirit
6. It is rewarded with good fruit

B. He wanted them to put into practice: [Verse 9]

**Put into practice** = Prasso = “To perform repeatedly or habitually”

1. Whatever they had **learned**
2. Whatever they had **received**
3. Whatever they had **heard** from Paul
4. Whatever they had seen in Paul

Paul frequently encouraged the believers to follow his example:

1 Cor 4:16 “Therefore I urge you to imitate me.”

1 Cor 11:1 “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”

**Application:** You are already an example -- either good or bad!

1 Tim 4:12 “Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.”

C. He wanted them to be confident:

- a. The God of **peace** will be with you

**Note:** Not the peace of God, but the God of peace!!

Heb 13:20-21 “May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

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