



IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH
SERIES: TOGETHER FOR THE GOSPEL
SCRIPTURE: PHILIPPIANS 4:1-9
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INTRODUCTION

Most of us know what it is like to lose the battle in our minds before anything has happened. We replay conversations, assume the worst about someone's motives, worry about finances, stress over our children, dwell on past failures, or imagine future problems that may never come. Left unchecked, our thoughts shape our emotions, our decisions, and eventually our actions.

Paul understood that lasting peace is not found by changing our circumstances but by allowing God to transform our thinking. In our text today, he gives believers a practical framework for directing their minds toward what honors Christ. These verses are more than a list of virtues—they provide a filter through which we can evaluate our thoughts, our decisions, and even our emotional responses to life's challenges.

Text

Philippians 4:2-9

² I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord.³ Yes, I ask you also, true companion,^[b] help these women, who have labored^[c] 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.

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness^[d] be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹ What you have learned^[e] and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Explanation

Peace When There is Conflict

We must begin by admitting we know very little about the individuals named in this passage. Outside of these verses, Scripture does not reference Euodia, Syntyche, or Clement again. There was a well-known early church father named Clement who lived in Rome and wrote around AD 96, but this is a different man named Clement. Presumably, the Philippian church knew these three individuals personally.

It's encouraging to reflect on how seemingly *ordinary* people—whose stories we don't fully know—played significant roles in gospel ministry alongside Paul. They weren't apostles, but they made a lasting impact. The fact that their names are recorded here reminds us that we don't need a biography written about us to make a meaningful difference for Christ.

We also don't know the nature of the conflict between Euodia and Syntyche. Paul provides no details—no timeline, no cause, no blame. We can assume that

Paul heard about the conflict from Epaphroditus and that the church at large may have been aware as well.

It's worth noting that Paul does something here he rarely does: he calls out two individuals by name, urging them to reconcile. Typically, when the apostles mention people by name, it's to greet them or commend them. There are a few exceptions (see 3 Jn. 1:9-11; 2 Tim. 4:10; Gal. 2:11-14), but generally Paul avoids mentioning names.

So for Paul to mention Euodia and Syntyche by name is significant. He likely did so not to shame them, but because of the high regard in which he and the church held them. They were respected, mature believers who had served faithfully. Perhaps omitting their names would have felt impersonal or even dishonest.

Paul says they "labored side by side with me in the gospel." Though we don't know the details of their ministry, it's fair to say these women were faithful servants of Christ. Paul isn't trying to humiliate them; he's expressing confidence in them—and calling the church to come alongside them in love and support.

This conflict reminds us that even mature believers can find themselves in disagreement. That alone doesn't mean they are weak or immature Christians. The true test of maturity is not whether we experience conflict, but how we handle it when it arises.

Paul appeals to a "true companion" to help mediate. But who is this person? We're not told. Some speculate it was Epaphroditus, mentioned earlier in the letter. Others suggest it could have been Luke since some scholars deduce from Acts that Luke traveled with Paul and may have remained in Philippi for a while.¹ Some even propose that *Syzygus* (the Greek word for "companion") was the person's actual name. Still others believe Paul was addressing the church as a whole.

Ultimately, we can only speculate on the person's identity. Nevertheless we can draw out a few important principles about the role of a peacemaker that the true companion was asked to fulfill:

1. *Peacemakers are often needed to resolve conflict—and there is no shame in seeking one.*

¹ Scholars speculate this since Luke is the author of Acts and there are moments when he uses "we" to describe Paul's journeys. Thus, Luke could have included himself when he refers to "we."

2. *A mature peacemaker* is essential. They must be respectful, good listeners, able to facilitate communication, and equipped with biblical wisdom.
3. *Peacemaking is honorable*. Paul calls this person a “true companion”—a worthy and noble title.
4. *True friends help resolve conflict*. They are indeed companions. True friends are those who don’t take sides quickly and are cautious towards one-sided gossip or even slander.
5. *Peacemaking is a humble task*. The best peacemakers work behind the scenes, aiming not for recognition but for restored relationships. Perhaps that’s why Paul leaves this person unnamed—to emphasize humility and the quiet dignity of their role.

Paul’s hope and goal is that Euodia and Syntyche would “agree in the Lord.” This echoes the call to unity found in Philippians 2:1–5:

“If there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus...”

Despite their disagreement, Euodia and Syntyche had a bond far stronger than whatever separated them—they both knew and served the Lord. They had labored for the gospel together. Paul’s charge isn’t just about easing tension. It’s about *gospel advancement*. He wants the Philippians to see beyond themselves and align their hearts with God’s mission.

Peace When There is Anxiety

In the verses that follow, the theme of peace continues. While Paul has just addressed helping two women reconcile their relationship, he now turns the church's attention to experiencing personal peace. The two are closely connected. It is difficult to help bring peace to others when our own hearts are filled with worry, frustration, or fear. As believers learn to experience God's peace personally, they contribute to a culture of peace throughout the church.

With emphasis and repetition, Paul commands the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord. There is no better perspective for cultivating peace. A church and its

individual members are most at peace when their attention is fixed on worshipping Christ rather than dwelling on their circumstances. When conflict arises, it is often because someone has lost sight of the Lord. Rejoicing does not mean pretending that life is easy or ignoring painful realities. It means choosing to remember that Christ is still reigning even when life feels uncertain. Whether we are facing pressure at work, difficulties in marriage, concerns over our children, financial strain, or unexpected health issues, rejoicing reminds us that our greatest confidence rests in the Lord rather than in our circumstances.

A second way to experience peace is by being reasonable. Being reasonable means we are willing to hear another person's perspective, evaluate our own thinking honestly, avoid unnecessary extremes, and pursue solutions rather than simply proving ourselves right. It means allowing truth, rather than assumptions or emotions, to guide our responses. James 3:17 expresses a similar idea when it says, "But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere."

This quality is especially needed in our relationships. Whether discussing a disagreement with a spouse, navigating conflict with a coworker, responding to criticism, or working through differences within the church, it is easy to enter conversations with our minds already made up. Too often we seek to win the argument instead of seeking wisdom together. Paul says our reasonableness should be evident to everyone—not only to the person with whom we disagree, but also to those watching how we handle conflict.

Paul then adds, "The Lord is at hand." The emphasis is that God is near. He has not abandoned His people, nor is He late in accomplishing His purposes. Yet many of our inner struggles and relational conflicts grow because we live as though God is absent. We react as if everything depends on us alone. Imagine having a difficult conversation with someone if Jesus were visibly sitting in the room. Most of us would immediately become more patient, careful, and gracious with our words. The reality is that Christ is present with every believer through His Spirit. Remembering His presence changes the way we respond to others and the way we face life's pressures.

Paul next addresses anxiety and prayer. He tells the Philippians not to be anxious about anything but instead to pray about everything. Anxiety often works against everything Paul has just commanded. It makes rejoicing difficult because our attention becomes consumed with the problem. It clouds our ability to think reasonably because fear magnifies worst-case scenarios. It can even cause us to forget that the Lord is near and fully in control. Adults know

how quickly anxiety can take hold. Left unchecked, anxiety begins to shape the way we think and respond.

Instead of allowing anxiety to control us, Paul tells us to pray. Nothing is too small to bring before God, and nothing is too overwhelming for Him to handle. Because the Lord is near, every prayer is heard. Prayer is not our last resort after we have exhausted every other option; it is our first response because we know the One who rules over every circumstance.

Paul also tells us to pray with thanksgiving. Anxiety has a way of narrowing our focus until we see only what we fear might happen. Thanksgiving deliberately reminds us of God's faithfulness in the past. As we remember His provision, His mercy, and His answers to previous prayers, our perspective begins to change. We move from being consumed by what we cannot control to remembering the God who has been faithfully caring for us all along.

If we follow Paul's instruction, God promises us His peace. This peace does not originate within us through positive thinking or emotional resilience. It is God's own peace given to His children. God Himself is never anxious or uncertain. He rules over every detail of history and accomplishes His purposes with perfect wisdom and timing. Because He is sovereign and because we have access to Him through prayer, we can entrust our burdens to Him.

There will certainly be times when we do not understand what God is doing. We cannot see the whole picture because we are not God. Yet we know His character. We know He is good, wise, and faithful. As we trust Him, He gives us a peace that surpasses our understanding—a peace that steadies our hearts even when our circumstances have not yet changed.

Peaceful Thinking

As Paul continues explaining how believers experience God's peace, he shifts from our actions to our thoughts. If we want peace in our hearts, we must learn to think rightly. Our minds often become the battleground where peace is either cultivated or lost.

Many people assume they have little control over what they think about. Thoughts seem to appear without invitation, and before long our minds are consumed with worry, frustration, temptation, or imagined scenarios. We replay conversations, anticipate worst-case outcomes, dwell on disappointments, or become overwhelmed by responsibilities at work,

pressures at home, financial concerns, or uncertainty about the future. While we cannot always control the thoughts that first enter our minds, we can choose whether we allow them to remain. Paul reminds us elsewhere that we are able to "take every thought captive" (2 Cor. 10:5). Rather than allowing our minds to drift wherever they please, Christians are called to actively direct their thinking according to God's truth.

To help us do this, Paul provides eight qualities that should shape our thinking: whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and worthy of praise. These categories provide an excellent filter not only for our thoughts but also for our decisions, attitudes, and responses. Before making an important decision, responding in a difficult conversation, or dwelling on a troubling situation, these questions can help guide our thinking.

- **True** – What is actually true? What does Scripture say? What are the facts? Where might I be making assumptions or believing something that has not been proven?
- **Honorable** – Am I treating others with dignity and respect? Is there an authority I should honor? Am I responding in a way that reflects the character of Christ? Would I want someone to treat me this way?
- **Just** – What is right and fair? Am I pursuing justice according to God's standards, or simply seeking what benefits me? Am I being impartial, or is my judgment clouded by personal preference? What is my standard of right and wrong?
- **Pure** – What are my motives? Is my heart seeking to please God, or am I driven by pride, selfish ambition, or hidden desires? Would I be comfortable if every part of this decision were brought into the light?
- **Lovely** – Will this response strengthen relationships and promote peace? Does it reflect the kind of love described in 1 Corinthians 13:4–6? Am I building others up or unnecessarily creating division?
- **Commendable** – Is this a decision I would encourage another believer to make? Would mature Christians recognize this as wise? Will my actions provide a good testimony before both believers and unbelievers? If others knew all the details, would this still be an example worth following?
- **Excellent** – Am I offering God my best? Am I pursuing wisdom, diligence, and faithfulness, or am I settling for what is merely convenient or acceptable? Have I handled this responsibility with integrity and excellence?
- **Worthy of Praise** – Does this decision glorify God? Is this something I can sincerely thank Him for? At the judgment seat of Christ, would I desire His approval more than the approval of others? Am I seeking God's praise rather than the praise of people?

What a valuable framework for everyday life. Imagine filtering your decisions, conversations, and emotions through these eight questions before responding. Whether deciding how to handle a disagreement, making a financial decision, responding to criticism, or navigating an important family conversation, this passage gives us a practical guide for pursuing wisdom. As our minds become shaped by these virtues, our actions will follow. We become people who not only experience God's peace personally but also bring peace into our homes, workplaces, friendships, and churches.

Discussion Questions

- Why do you think Paul addresses our thought life immediately after teaching about anxiety and prayer? How are our thoughts connected to our experience of peace?
- Which of the eight virtues in Philippians 4:8 (true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and worthy of praise) do you find yourself neglecting most often? Why?
- Think about a recent situation that caused you stress or conflict. Which of Paul's eight filters would have helped you think about that situation differently?
- Looking at the category of truth, how can assumptions, incomplete information, or false narratives fuel conflict in marriages, families, friendships, or churches?
- Which of Paul's questions would be most helpful before making a major decision such as changing jobs, responding to criticism, making a large purchase, or confronting another person?
- Paul concludes this section by calling believers to practice what they have learned (Phil. 4:9). Why is it not enough simply to know biblical truth? How does consistent obedience produce greater peace?
- Looking back over Philippians 4:2-9 as a whole, which command do you most need to put into practice this week—rejoicing, reasonableness, remembering the Lord's presence, prayer, thanksgiving, or disciplined thinking? What specific step will you take?