

## Basic Essentials for Believers

In an old Mennonite church in Iowa these words are etched into the pulpit,

“Stand up, speak truth, sit down.”

Last week we began with the Basic Essentials for Believers.

### Essentials found in Philippians 4

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, my beloved brethren,  
whom I long to see,  
my joy and crown,

in this way **stand firm in the Lord**, my beloved.

<sup>2</sup>I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.

<sup>3</sup>Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women  
who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel,  
together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers,  
whose names are in the book of life.

<sup>4</sup>**Rejoice in the Lord** always;  
again I will say, **rejoice!**

<sup>5</sup>**Let your gentle spirit** be known to all men.  
The Lord is near.

<sup>6</sup>**Be anxious for nothing**,  
but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving  
let your requests be made known to God.

<sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension,  
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup>Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable,  
whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely,  
whatever is of good repute,  
if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise,  
 **dwell on these things.**

<sup>9</sup>The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me,  
 **practice these things,**  
and the God of peace will be with you.

Standing Firm in our Faith: Essential Attitudes, Thinking, & Practice  
...in this way **stand firm in the Lord**,

This is how to become stable as believers!

Several Areas of instruction are included in this text.

- I. **Attitudes that stabilize individual believers. :1-6**
- II. **Thoughts that we must let our minds dwell on. :8**
- III. **Actions –behaviors we must continually practice. :9**

Last week we covered the first two: Peace and Rejoicing.

### **1. Living in harmony**

The stability of every Christian is greatly enhanced when the church community is stable.

The church was meant to be a means of great encouragement:

“not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” (Heb. 10:25)

Peace may mean work, but the outcome is well worth the cost.

“be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”<sup>1</sup>

### **2. Rejoicing in every circumstance**

When trouble comes believers turn to God. By entering into His presence they experience His joy no matter what this world sends our way.

“In Your presence is fullness of joy...” (Ps. 16:11)

Paul was writing from a Roman prison. How could he rejoice?

He wrote of his absolute confidence that God’s purposes would be accomplished through his circumstances.

“..<sup>4</sup>in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, <sup>5</sup>in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger, <sup>6</sup>in purity, in knowledge,, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love, <sup>7</sup>in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left, <sup>8</sup>by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true; <sup>9</sup>as unknown, yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death, <sup>10</sup>as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.” (2 Cor. 6:4-10)

Most of what Paul went through is what normal people try to avoid.

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<sup>1</sup> Eph. 4:3; Col. 3:14.

I saw a picture of a poor refugee standing by his shelter. The caption read,  
*“These people dream of the things we complain about.”*

“Joy is not a feeling, it is the deep-down confidence that God is in control of everything for the believer’s good and His own glory, and thus all is well no matter what the circumstances.”<sup>2</sup>

James wrote, “When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives, my brothers, don’t resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends! Realize that they come to test your faith and to produce in you the quality of endurance. But let the process go on until that endurance is fully developed, and you will find you have become men of mature character with the right sort of independence.” (James 1:2-4 J.B. Phillips)

Joy is a sign of two things: Eternal Values Vs. Temporal Values.

- We live for the the Salvation of souls
- We long to glorify God in our lives

### 3. Humility

Humility here refers to a willingness to receive less than you deserve.

**<sup>5</sup>Let your gentle spirit** be known to all men.  
 The Lord is near.

***Gentle spirit*** – Epieikes – rendered sweet reasonableness, generosity, goodwill, friendliness, magnanimity, charity toward the faults of others, mercy toward the failures of others, leniency, bigheartedness, moderation, forbearance and gentleness, are some translations.

Best idea is graciousness – the graciousness of humility; the humble graciousness that produces the patience to endure injustice, disgrace, and mistreatment without retaliation, bitterness, or vengeance. It is contentment.<sup>3</sup>

The opposite is a negative attitude towards others.

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<sup>2</sup> John MacArthur, *MacArthur’s New Testament Commentary: Philippians*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 2001), p. 273.

<sup>3</sup> MacArthur, p. 276.

This word focuses on ‘yielding, being gentle, and kind’ ... to all men.

**Earl Palmer says** that this word, Epieikes, means, “yielding, gentle, kind,” and carries connotations of openness, relaxation, moderation, gentleness and would be used today as “*mellowness*,” or “to chill out,” or “be cool.”<sup>4</sup>

James uses this word in a list of the qualities of wisdom,

“The wisdom that comes from God is first utterly pure, then peace-loving, **gentle**, approachable, full of tolerant thoughts and kindly actions, with no breath of favoritism, or hint of hypocrisy. And the wise are peacemakers who go on quietly sowing for a harvest of righteousness – in other people and in themselves” (James 3:17-18 J.B. Phillips)

A believer must have a gentle spirit of calmness. A willingness to be humble and receive less than deserved. Humility no matter how we are treated

#### 4. Confident Faith

The Lord is near.

**<sup>6</sup>Be anxious for nothing,**

The greatest source of spiritual stability is the confidence that the Lord is near. – either in space or time. (engus)

Chronologically this could refer to Christ’s return.

Or in a space, due to the nearness of his presence with us

Corrie Ten Boom said on one occasion,

“Worry does not empty tomorrow of sorrows; it empties today of strength.”

George Sweeting writes,

“Our English word worry is equivalent to the Greek word merimnao. It is a combination of two words: merizo, meaning “to divide,” and nous, meaning “mind.” Worry really means “to divide the mind.” It means we are double-minded rather than single-minded. The apostle James warned, “A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8)

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<sup>4</sup> Earl F. Palmer, *Integrity in a World of Pretense*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992, p. 159.

When we are double-minded, we resemble a monster with two heads facing in opposite directions, or we are like rudderless boats, unable to steer straight, “driven and tossed by the wind” (James 1:6).”

(Quotes, Sweeting, p. 458.)

“Peace is the brief glorious moment in history  
when everybody stands around reloading.”

As Don MacLean wrote, “Washington has a large assortment of peace monuments.  
We build one after every war.”

That is what it’s like with worry.

Momentary peace is just the interval between old worries and new ones coming.

God wants to give us His peace

Prayer connects our worries with God’s solution.

Pressure moves us to prayer, which moves God’s peace to us.

Be anxious for nothing,  
but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving  
let your requests be made known to God.

The word for security is amerimnos – “freedom from anxiety”

Another word for security is confidence.

#### **Four words that conquer anxiety:**

***Prayer*** – Coming before our heavenly Father to talk with Him.

Idea of worshipful conversation.

We can pray about anything that causes us to worry.

Worry and prayer cannot co-exist

***Supplication*** – specific – listing the people, trials, details

“Prayer with a sense of need.”

***Thanksgiving*** – rejoicing in the Lord, thanking Him for the trial (list reasons)

A thankful heart is a great way to express faith.

***Requests*** – telling God what you want.

J.B. Phillips version,

“Don’t worry over anything whatever; tell God every detail of your needs in earnest and thankful prayer, and the peace of God, which transcends human understanding, will keep constant guard over your hearts and minds as they rest in Christ Jesus.”

God’s peace will guard us. This military term means to surround or protect a garrison or city. The Philippians were familiar with soldiers on watch who guarded their city, since Philippi was a garrison town. God’s peace like guards protects our hearts and minds from outside forces that would cause anxiety.

Isaiah writes, “In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength” (Is. 30:15)

God is close to us and can handle all of our stresses.  
Instead of worrying we pray and experience His peace covering us.

A key ingredient in Christian stability is confident faith in God.

**These Attitudes are practical principles.**

Peace in the fellowship,  
Rejoicing in any circumstance,  
Humility no matter how we are treated,  
and a Confident Faith that God is near and is able to handle anything.

Together, they are essentials vital to our stability as believers.

It reminds me of a story of a man who went a little long but did a great job preaching. Afterwards he was fishing for a compliment from his wife, “Well, what did you think of the sermon?” he cautiously inquired.

She responded, “It wasn’t bad,” she said,  
“but you did miss several opportunities to sit down.”