

Philippians Series #8

Phil 4:1-9

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There are many places in Philippians where Paul could have ended the letter but then it keeps going. Today we will jump into chapter 4:

But first a meme:



Philippians 4:8

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Phil 8 reminds me of the song we sing “Whatever” It feels like a beautiful sentiment.

And it also reminds of this meme: this is because we are disconnected with Paul. If you just read words without knowing the person who said them (on social media) it can be hard to understand. So today I want to connect verse 8 with the rest of the book.



Philippians 4:1

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, **stand firm in the Lord in this way**, dear friends!

Where there is a “therefore” we need to know what it’s there for.

Philippians 3:17,20-21

17 Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do....20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Lets’ s go back to Chapter 3: Last week Eric talked about Paul living in the shadow of his sin against Stephen. Eric suggested Paul was constantly looking back at his approval of Stephen’s stoning. Stephen actually mimicked Jesus’s words when he was on the cross.

Philippians 4:1

Therefore,

**stand firm
in the Lord in this way,**

This refers to a house built on a rock and able to withstand storms.

**Our past story *interpreted by*
our future hope *informs*
our present reality.**

Last week, Eric wanted us to think about our present reality in light of our pasts and our future hope.

I decided to make a diagram of this statement. When our past story is interpreted through our future hope, then we know how to live presently. This is what it looks like to walk with Jesus today.

Our past story *interpreted by* our future hope

regret new life
failure resurrection in Christ
disappointment earth made new
abuse wedding feast

informs **our present reality**

peace
hope
joy
love

When we live like this, we can now care for others in love. This is what it looks like to walk with Christ.

But this is not always how we live. Instead, this is what our life could look like if we don’t live this way:

Our past story *informs* our present reality

regret struggle
failure addictions
disappointment anger
abuse control

predicts our **uncertain future**

anxiety
hopelessness
fear

Our past story *interpreted by* **our future hope**

regret
failure
disappointment
abuse

new life
resurrection in Christ
earth made new
wedding feast

informs **our present reality**

peace
hope
joy
love

Again, notice our past story stays the same but the way we live our lives is vastly different depending on whether we let our past story vs. our future hope dictate our present realities.

Philippians 4:1

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, **stand firm in the Lord in this way**, dear friends!

This is what NT Wright says this verse could read like:

Philippians 4:1

Well then, my dear family – I miss you so much, you’re my joy and crown! – this is how you must stand firm in the Lord, my beloved people. (N.T. Wright)

Philippians 4:2-3

2 I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.
3 Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

This part of the letter is Paul’s response to the news from home. He longs for the people to be of the same mind, especially those who aren’t getting along. I kept thinking of Paul’s “dear family.”

The People of Philippi

Claudius
Salome
Abram

What if we could visit a time machine and hear first-hand from actual people who lived in early Philippi: (*3 readers present the following situations:*)

Salome:

Hello, I am Salome. I moved to Philippi after my husband died in a mining accident in a village nearby. I had heard there were Christians here who take care of widows. I found Euodia, who took me in and helped me deliver my baby. She cared for me as her own daughter and showed me the way of Jesus. I have joined her in the care of other widows, especially when they are left, as I am, with no one to speak for them in the courts. I do not know how I will care for my daughter as she grows, except through the generosity of my fellow Christ-followers.

Claudius

Hi, my name is Claudius. I am a praetorian, a member of the imperial bodyguard. I am stationed in Philippi and it is here that I met Paul while exercising at the gymnasium. He taught me the good news of Jesus Christ and I left the cult of the emperor. Now, though I no longer fear death, I do not long to go to battle for the glory of Rome. My superiors have noticed a change in me and I have been promoted. My new position puts me in direct contact with members of Caesar's own household. I worry how they may respond to my faith if they find out and I am afraid that God may call me to share the good news of Jesus with them.

Abram:

My name is Abram. I am a trader living in Philippi while I have goods to sell. As I sat in the market every day, I met Clement who told me all about Jesus and Paul. I am eager to hear everything I can about the gospel of Jesus while I am here, so I can teach my family when I get home. Yesterday I received word that the drought back home has deepened and the crops my family depends on may not be enough for next season. I cannot go home before I sell the last of my goods, but I desire to make the long journey home to see my wife and children and know that they are safe.

Philippians 3:17

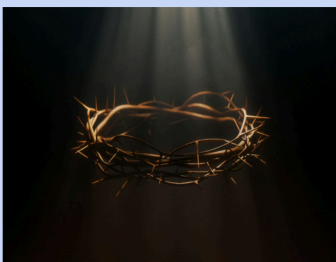
Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do

Paul knows the people of Philippi: He longs for them like he would a family. They are his joy and crown. The joy is the pleasure of God's company, the crown is the reward at the end that won't fade. There were widows and traitors and Romans, all with issues and anxieties, that we can connect with today. Paul knows this, and invites them (and us) to do something and to act in faith, moving forward. We have foundational knowledge about Jesus, the things he taught, and then we read more books and listen to more podcasts instead of putting what we know into action. We don't have to guess at what we should do!

Rejoice

Philippians 4:4

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!



Again, we talk about REJOICING today. This means to proclaim the kingdom, the king has come: HAIL, Jesus, king of the Jews. This means to celebrate that the kingdom has been established. This power is available to us now!

Rejoice – Be Gentle

Philippians 4:5a

Let your gentleness be evident to all.



Outside of all the issues and elections and candidates, the mail was most annoying to me along with the campaigners who ring

my doorbell when my kids are asleep. Most often, I opened the door and said to them “Please go away, my kids are sleeping.” Layne then says to me, “You are a pastor; you need to show kindness even to these people.” So this is my confession. We are to let our gentleness be evident to ALL, even during elections. This also means engaging with kindness and humility even with my spouse and children. This is how we follow Paul’s example.

Rejoice – Be Gentle – Pray

Philippians 4:6-7
Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.



We are also to pray like this, without anxiety. Our anxieties and fears should be given to God, laid at his feet. He doesn’t say Jesus will fix everything but he says you will have peace.

This reminds me of Jesus asleep in the boat while there was a storm going on: There is chaos and fear among the disciples: But what if we just went to sleep with Jesus in the middle of the storm?

We can actively pray: prayer isn’t passive.

Rejoice – Be Gentle – Pray – Chew

Philippians 4:8
Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.



This is a photo of a cardamom flower! My wife makes delicious curry that my daughter loves but she is deathly afraid of it because Layne uses real cardamom pods that you can bite down on occasionally and they have a very strong taste! The last time we had this, Saoirse got 3 out of 4 cardamom pods and spit them out. Now, we don’t like to spit out bad things: instead, we like to chew on our negative emotions. We chew on our anger, review conversations in our mind and imagine future situations in our

minds. We chew on the bad things when we should just spit them out. This verse is saying to chew (meditate) on GOOD things instead. We should spit out anger and chew on what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely and admirable. Paul wants people to stop chewing on their anger and contempt.

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|-----------------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| Our past story | <i>informs</i> | our present reality |
| regret | | struggle |
| failure | | addictions |
| disappointment | | anger |
| abuse | | control |
| <i>predicts our</i> | | uncertain future |
| | | anxiety |
| | | hopelessness |
| | | fear |

To be rooted in Jesus is to chew on these things in the pattern Paul gives us. We go back and forth between our past being interpreted rather than informed by our future.

We are to live out of our future hopes!

Rejoice – Be Gentle – Pray – Chew

Philippians 4:9
Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

You may have noticed that I left out one short verse:

Philippians 4:5b

The Lord is near.

We respond to this verse, not out of fear that we are being watched, but out of comfort that the Lord is near. Chew on what is good, the Lord is near. This is like a parent at the playground: the child sees the parent and can go have fun. We know that our Father is present and near, side-by-side with us. We can rejoice because of this.