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Read Philippians 4:1–9. I will print the NET–2 translation.

CHAPTER 4 CHRISTIAN PRACTICES

4:1 So then, my brothers and sisters, dear friends whom I long to see, my joy and crown, stand in the Lord in this way, my dear friends!

2 I appeal to Euodia and to Syntyche to agree in the Lord. 3 Yes, I say also to you, true companion, help them. They have struggled together in the gospel ministry along with me and Clement and my other coworkers, whose names are in the book of life. 4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say, rejoice! 5 Let everyone see your gentleness. The Lord is near! 6 Do not be anxious about anything. Instead, in every situation, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, tell your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is worthy of respect, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if something is excellent or praiseworthy, think about these things. 9 And what you learned and received and heard and saw in me, do these things. And the God of peace will be with you.

COMMENTS:

The ESV translates v4:1 this way: “Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, STAND FIRM thus in the Lord, my beloved.” The preferred translation is stand firm. The Net–2 “stand in the Lord in this way, my dear friends” doesn’t catch the emphasis which is to stand with God in all circumstances.

If you know Roman soldiers, they were feared. If a soldier started to retreat without orders to do so by his commander, he would likely be killed by his fellow soldier. It was important to maintain your place in the rank to keep the troops from being cut into two groups. This would make them much easier to defeat.

Then we are surprised by Paul mentioning a disagreement between two women in the congregation. Since this admonition is found as he begins his closing remarks, it was not a morals problem or a theological disagreement. Paul would have settled that by his own remarks.

We need to remember the principle of unity. Anything which attacks unity, even personal feuds or disagreements must not tear apart the unity of the body of Christ. Even the United States Supreme Court demonstrates that. We have many very close votes (5 to 4). Even though there is only one vote difference, their ruling is accepted as the law of the land.

This does not mean they are always right. We know they were wrong in the original ruling on the Dread Scott case back in 1857. I believe the court was wrong when it made abortion legal. Life is a sacred gift from God and we must be very careful how we handle it. Why do we think that if the vote was close, that gives us the right to keep fighting for our point of view.

Unless I felt we were dealing with theological or moral issue, I believe we should go along with the majority vote and get on with the work instead of continuing to fight with one another. That is why God reminds us to submit to one another. It is not our natural tendency.

V. 3 also has a little mystery. Who is the “true companion?” One translator even took the route of believing that the Gk. word, súzugos was the last name of a person in the congregation. Most

assume its normal meaning, coworker, yokefellow, companion, etc. Pastor's generally discover that there is one person in the congregation who is the most influential.

When that person agrees with and supports the pastor, good things can happen. If they are in conflict, bad things are happening. We (the church, the body of Christ) are to be seeking to do the will of God for our congregation and community. We are not to be fighting to get things our way. That dishonors God.

We do get important information about these two women. They had worked with Paul and his co-workers in spreading the Gospel and are included in his comment that their names were written in the book of life. The mention of Clement is the only time we find his name. The early church believed Pope Clement 1 is the one and the same person.

Pope Clement I, also known as Saint Clement of Rome, is listed by Irenaeus and Tertullian as Bishop of Rome, holding office from 88 to his death in 99. He is considered to be the first Apostolic Father of the Church, one of the three chief ones together with Polycarp and Ignatius of Antioch. One ancient writing said he personal knew Peter.

Do not confuse this Clement with Clement of Alexandria who was not born until c. A.D. 150 in Athens and who died in c. 215 in Jerusalem. He was a convert to Christianity, an educated man familiar with classical Greek philosophy and literature. He taught at the Catechetical School of Alexandria.

Now we come to vs. 4-7 one of my favorite scriptures. Rejoicing in our circumstances can be difficult. They can change in a blink of an eye but rejoicing in God's love and care is easy. He never changes. He always keeps his promises and he is not fickle, loving us one day and hating us the next.

Let your gentleness be known by all and remember our gentle lord is close by to help us. He is the reason we can live anxiety free. We know where to drop off all our troubles. Place them in God's hands through prayer. There is one other important reminder. Do not just tell him all your troubles. Also take time to thank him for all of his blessings.

Many pastors have chosen to use v. 7 as a closing prayer after the sermon for the day. The gift of the peace of God doesn't just pass all human understanding. It goes way beyond our understanding (surpasses). Hearing God's Word works. As a child I learned to do that for my grandmother who helped raise me. I would just read the Bible to her and she found peace.

It is not a sin to turn off the news and listen instead to God. If the news fills you with anxiety, don't listen to it morning, noon, night and late night. Now we come to vs. 8 & 9. V. 8 concludes with the reminder, fill you mind with these thoughts: "think about these things." V. 9 points us to what we should do: Paul says do what you heard and saw me do. Watch your thinking and doing.

REFLECTION QUESTION: What do you do when a 2 year old is causing trouble? Distract them! What do you do when a 20 year old is confused about life choices? Distract them! What do you do when a 40 year old is facing failure, rather than success? Distract them! What do you do when a 60 year old is fearful of retirement? Distract them! What do you do when an 80 year old is concerned because life flew by so fast? Distract them! That is what Paul is suggesting when he counsels you to wrap your troubles in thanksgiving as you pray. That is what he is doing in verses 8 and 9 when urges you to watch what you think about and what you are doing with you life. I remember the lady who told me that whenever she began to be depressed, she looked for someone to help. When she focused on the needs of others, her needs and desires diminished as did her depression. Try it! You might like it.