

Wil Owens

From Gospel Teaching to Gospel Practice; Phil 4:1-3

GPBC

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Introduction – When we get to the final chapter of Philippians, this is where the rubber meets the road, as the saying goes. As with most of Paul’s letters, he teaches first and then gives the application. Doctrine is the foundation for Christian living. Truth is very powerful, but we won’t experience any of the freeing, transforming, sanctifying grace of truth if we fail to put it into practice. The Christian life is built brick by brick upon learning and doing. It takes both to know the fullness of fellowship with Christ. We have to grow in our knowledge of God in order to know how to live for God. But if our journey is only the collecting of knowledge without putting it into practice, we just become “know it alls” while being “good for nothing.” The Bible says knowledge puffs up – merely knowing what the Bible says can result in a large ego and little impact for the kingdom. Nothing cuts away at our righteous pride quite like living out the faith. Mainly because every step toward Christ is always a step of humility.

James says – Be doers of the Word, and not hearers only.” Later he writes, “faith without works is dead.” Christianity doesn’t really come alive in our lives until it’s lived out in our lives. That’s where Paul goes in ch4. He has spent three chapters exposing false teaching and teaching the way of Christ – now he moves from doctrine to application, specific application. This is where the daily fight of faith is fought. Will we believe in God’s truth and rely on His grace enough to take action? It’s not true believing until it’s real living. Doctrine always requires, even demands, a response – and that response is always a response of faith – trusting that God’s Word is true and best for us, even when, and especially when, it’s difficult to follow.

- I. Paul’s Affirmation (v1)
  - a. Before Paul gives them specific instruction on how to apply his teaching on the way of Christ, he wants them to be assured of his love for them. He wants them to know he’s not being judgmental and condemning. He’s not nit-picking. He’s not beating them over the head with the Bible. He genuinely desires to see them excel in their journey with Jesus. He really wants to see them grow in

Christlikeness. So it's going to require a few difficult but necessary steps.

- b. Notice he refers to them as his brothers. He wants them to know he's not standing over them pointing his finger – he's with them.
  - c. He calls them his joy and crown. They need to know just because they have some work to do doesn't mean he's discouraged or disappointed with them. They are his joy. Their testimony for Jesus has encouraged Paul. No one is perfect. Everyone has another step to take in their walk. They are his joy and his crown. Paul views them as exemplary in many ways.
  - d. And to drive home the point he tells them he loves them, he longs for them, and beyond just brothers, he calls them his beloved.
  - e. Pastors are called to correct the church and to instruct specific application based on the Word, but it should always be done in a spirit of love, a desire to see the fellowship grow in faith, and with thankfulness for the evidences of grace. We have evidences of grace that are my joy and crown in our own fellowship.
    - i. 2 going on mission. Generous giving. Serving one another.  
Reading the Bible. Appreciation for the ministry of the Word.
  - f. So then Paul says – stand firm thus in the Lord – in other words, here's the next step you have to take.
  - g. Are there next steps for Grassy Pond to take as a whole? Is there a next step for you to take as a believer, for me to take as a believer? Absolutely – that's how we know we're growing. Yes, they may be difficult, but they're always necessary.
- II. Philippi's Situation and Resolution
- a. Situation – two women in the congregation are at odds with one another. They have had a falling out. We don't know the circumstance. We don't know who's at fault, who offended who, what was said or what was done. But the details are not the issue. Harmony, unity, reconciliation – that's the issue. So Paul says to these two women – I urge you, I entreat you, I beg you – agree in the Lord! Find your common ground in the Lord and put away your differences!
  - b. Resolution – Paul calls on the church to come alongside these two ladies and help them do what is right. These are good, godly women

– labored side by side with me in the gospel. Their names are in the book of life. But good, godly men and women can be sidetracked at times, and that’s when the church needs to lovingly, biblically encourage forgiveness and restoration.

### III. What It Takes

- a. If you are Euodia and Syntyche, this is going to require a humble, receptive spirit. Humility is the key – that’s why Paul spent so much time in ch2 teaching on humility and pointing us to Christ as our chief example of humility for the gospel.
- b. Euodia and Syntyche will not make any progress in reconciliation, and therefore any progress in their faith, without tremendous, gracious humility when their fellow members come to them as say, “We want to help you two godly women make things right and finish well for Jesus!”
- c. They can’t resort to whose wrong and whose right. They can’t resort to ignoring the other. They can’t refuse to admit any wrong. They will have to be humble, and they will have to be receptive – which means somewhere along the way, they’ll have to be willing to repent. Get over the hurt, get over the wrong, and reconcile in Christ – through the strength and grace and promise of Christ. As He has forgive us, so must we forgive one another.
- d. Euodia and Syntyche are going to have to have a humble, receptive spirit – that’s why Paul says “agree in the Lord.” But at the same time, those who approach them are going to have to have a humble, right spirit – that’s why Paul says “help these women.”
- e. It has to be someone trustworthy, someone these women will know really loves them and really wants them to be right with one another and therefore right with God. Someone who always goes around telling people what to do won’t be received. Being abrasive or condemning won’t be helpful. Not having an established relationship of Christian love won’t be helpful. But someone who they know knows them and knows the Lord, comes to them with a broken heart and an open Bible, God will use to melt the walls of bitterness and pride and open a channel of grace in the hearts of these two women. God uses humble, holy people to open channels of grace in closed, hardened hearts.

- f. How to have the right spirit – remember these women are fellow believers. Remember there will come a day when we may need to be receptive. Remember the goal is the glory of Christ.
- g. Gal 6:1-2

#### IV. What Is At Stake

- a. Sweeping it under the rug and looking the other way is not an option! Sin will always spread and influence others down the same path. And division will always multiply into disunity unless humility and repentance takes their place. If these two women do not reconcile, some in the church will side with one and others with the other, and the church at Philippi will lose its gospel witness. Paul tells the church, this has got to happen because you're unity is at stake. And if your unity falls apart, so will your gospel witness. That's what's at stake. If the believers in the church at Philippi allow this dispute to live on, the church will lose its power and witness – and the gospel will go no further in Philippi. But if they resolve and unify through humble hearts, the city will know the power of the gospel of Christ to transform people!
- b. John 17:20-21.
- c. Gospel teaching for gospel practice because it's the gospel that's at stake.

Conclusion – So how about it? How does this apply to you, to me? Is there someone you have wronged? Is there division? Are you part of the division? Are you aware of the division? Here is where the fight of faith takes place. Will we act on truth or just agree with truth and fail to act. Do we love the gospel enough in our lives, in the lives of one another, and in the lives of our community to take some difficult steps of humility – steps toward Christ? Maybe it's not division at all. Maybe there is another sin reigning in our hearts or maybe we are aware of a fellow believer being deceived and overcome? What will we do? Or will we just hear? May we pray to be humble and receptive to loving, biblical pleas. May we pray to be humble, right-spirited encouragers, exhorting and helping one another taking those difficult, next steps. This is truly where the rubber meets to road. Either we merely talk or we actually do. And if God is in it, and hearts are humble, God's blessings and grace will fall in abundant measure! That's revival!