

Passionate about the Church

Philippians 4: 1-3

In order to effectively lead a congregation of believers, the pastor must have a burden for the people within the congregation, while developing personal relationships with them. Paul understood this principle of leadership and provided a great example for pastors to emulate. While the Philippian letter is beneficial for the church at large, it could never be considered a generic letter, written without a particular people in mind. Our text reveals an intimate look into the life of Paul and the close relationship he enjoyed with the church at Philippi. He takes a moment to offer specific instruction regarding specific people and issues within this local body of believers.

There is much a pastor can glean from the leadership model revealed in these few verses. Like Paul, we need to know the people within our congregations, as well as the struggles and concerns they face. The congregation as a whole can glean much wisdom from these verse also. Paul desired the believers at Philippi to possess the same passion he had for the church. Each of us at Fellowship need to share the passion Paul had for the church. If we could develop this kind of passion and concern, our churches would grow spiritually and in number.

Let's take a few moments to examine the [details](#) within the text as we think on: [Passionate about the Church](#). First we notice:

I. The Delight of Paul (1) – [Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.](#) It cannot be denied that Paul found great joy in the church at Philippi. They brought great delight to him. This joy involved:

A. Their Position – Paul again referred to them as brethren. They were not mere acquaintances; these were fellow believers, being born again in Christ, and part of the family. They shared a closeness this world knew nothing of. Paul rejoiced for the relationship they shared in Christ.

- I am aware that our church is made up of individuals who possess different personalities and gifts. There are times when we may not agree on every detail of ministry, but we will always be family. Our relationship in Christ exceeds any difference of opinion we may have.

B. The Affection – Twice in this verse, Paul referred to them as “dearly beloved.” He longed for them. Again, these were not just people he had casually met in life. The church at Philippi was very dear to the heart of Paul. His love for them was without question, and he was never afraid to

express that love unto them. He never wanted anyone to wonder about his love and commitment to the church!

- The love those within the church share comes from the Lord. There is no other way to explain it. There are bonds between those within the church that are often closer than the bonds shared between physical family members. As God assembles a local body of believers, He places a love for that people within our hearts. I was almost 40 years old before I met any on you, and yet I can honestly say that the Lord has placed a genuine love for you within my heart.

C. Their Contribution (1) – The benefits of being part of the church at Philippi were not one-sided. Paul reveals that he too benefited from their love and devotion to him. The church had contributed much that enriched the life of Paul. He spoke of their commitment to meeting his financial needs on numerous occasions, but that was not all the church did to benefit him. He described the church at Philippi as his “joy and crown.” They were a constant source of joy for Paul, and he considered them as his crowning achievement in ministry. They were literally his “reward, his trophy in ministry.” Surely Paul is looking forward to the time when they all stand before the Lord, and the believers in Philippi will stand as his joy and crown then as well.

- The church in Philippi, being led of Paul, paints a beautiful picture of how a church should look. It reveals a committed, loving relationship between a pastor and the church he serves. They each have the other in mind, and are committed to each other. When a church is healthy, we all benefit from being associated with it.

D. The Exhortation (1) – *so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved*. While the church in Philippi wasn't perfect, Paul was well pleased with their efforts in ministry. They had carried on even in his absence, and he exhorts them to remain committed to the Lord. He wanted them to stand fast in the faith. John Butler described the exhortation as Paul's desire for them to stand *faithfully, firmly, and fearlessly*.

- We too must be committed to standing fast in the faith. We have received much and we are responsible to continue in the faith in order to pass it on to coming generations!

II. The Desire of Paul (2) – *I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord*. While the church in Philippi was prosperous in the faith and ministry, there was room for improvement. Paul desired them to continually pursue spiritual maturity. His desire revealed:

A. A Struggle – Apparently there had been some sort of disagreement between Euodias and Syntyche. They were not of the same mind, and Paul had become aware of the lack of unity. He knew such division would never be beneficial for the church, and it must be resolved if Philippi was to prosper.

- Unfortunately these issues continue to plague the church today. A lack of unity is often the greatest hindrance to a local body of believers. We will not always agree, and that is fine, but when we do disagree, we don't have to become disagreeable.

B. The Solution (2) – *I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.* Paul urged the ladies to let the Spirit guide them in their disagreement. He knew the Lord would guide them in the right path. Although they had disagreed, the Lord could provide a path forward in unity, allowing them to get past their disagreement and share a common vision.

- Paul reveals the key we all need to embrace. Inevitably we will have disagreements from time to time, but these don't have to be detrimental to the health and prosperity of the church. We must commit to seeking the Lord, while being willing to submit to His leadership when disagreements arise. Unity is essential if we are to prosper in ministry.

III. The Devotion of Paul (3) – *And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life.* Here we see the committed devotion Paul had for the church. He mentioned:

A. Their Submission – Paul was pleased that the church shared his vision and joined him in the work of ministry. Their devotion to the Lord enhanced his devotion to them. He referred to the believers as “true yokefellows,” “those who labored with him,” and “fellow-laborers.” These were also committed to the church and lived in submission to the Lord. They were not content to watch someone else labor for the Lord; they too were committed to being involved.

- The Lord has a work for each of us to perform within this body of believers, and it takes all of us to be successful in ministry. God has uniquely gifted each of us to contribute to the work of ministry, and if we are not committed and submissive, the ministry as a whole will suffer.

B. Their Significance (3) – Paul admonished the church to help the women who labored with him, and Clement also. We don't know who these women were, but the church would have known them. While he doesn't mention them by name, Paul revealed their contributions had been quite

significant. They had labored behind the scenes, serving in obscurity, but their labor had not gone unnoticed. Paul was greatly appreciative, and he desired the church to help them in their efforts.

- We have discussed them numerous times in the past, but it bears repeating – your efforts for the Lord are needed. You may not receive the recognition you desire or deserve, but each of you make significant contributions to the success of our ministry efforts. I am appreciative of all you do for the Lord. I am aware of many acts of kindness and assistance to others that are not mentioned publicly. Rest assured that the Lord sees and He knows. He will reward you openly when you stand before Him for those acts of kind service you performed in secret!

C. Their Solidarity (3) – These had faithfully labored with Paul in the Gospel. They had embraced the vision and knew the importance of sharing the good news in an effort to reach others for Christ. They faced adversity and opposition for their commitment, but they were determined to stand fast in the Lord. These were looking forward to things unseen, trusting the Lord by faith.

- We need to share the commitment of those who labored alongside Paul. We must commit to keeping the main thing, the main thing. There is much we can do as a church body, but we must never engage in any activity at the expense of the Gospel. Sharing the Gospel of Christ is our priority. We must stand fast in the faith and continue to reach others for Christ!

D. Their Security (3) – *whose names are in the book of life*. It is interesting that Paul began this statement with the word “Therefore.” He is pointing them back to the assurance they have in Christ. He reaffirmed their security in the Lord here. Those who labored alongside Paul were confident of their eternal destiny. Their names were written in the book of life. They knew they were secure in Christ, promised an eternal home with Him, regardless of the struggles they faced while serving Him.

- This perspective will provide peace and great boldness in the faith. We too will face increased opposition as we strive to serve the Lord, but we can face these struggles with confidence, knowing we are secure in the Lord. Those who have come to saving faith in Christ have their names written in the book of life. We will be welcomed into our eternal home and reward because of our relationship with Christ. Regardless of what we encounter in this life, we are promised eternal life with the Lord in heaven!

Conclusion: We need to share the burden and passion Paul had for the church, being committed to the faith and one another. We must stand together in unity, contributing to the work of ministry.

It is a privilege and a pleasure to serve the Lord and His church. I am thankful for each of you and your efforts for the Lord. Together, with the help of the Lord, we can see great things in ministry.

Are there needs in your life? Are you passionate about serving the Lord alongside those within the church? Are there disagreements and a lack of unity that you need to address? Do you know Christ as your Savior and Lord? Are you sure your name is written in the book of life? Bring those needs to Jesus. He alone can provide the help you need.