

The Joy of Citizenship in the Gospel – Philippians 4:2-5

Derek Berry
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[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was originally intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions, please contact Pastor Derek at Derek@chapelpasadena.com.]

Take your copy of God's Word and meet me in Philippians 4:2-5...

Please stand for the reading of God's word:

² I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. ³ Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand...

Reconciliation is a beautiful thing. Time and time again, we've sat back and witnessed the destruction that is begotten from bitterness and hatred. Consider the hip hop genre, as is the custom. Tupac and Biggie Smalls were at one-point good friends with one another. That is until Tupac felt as if he was betrayed by Biggie and Puffy back in late 94, early 95. This caused a rift, that many would say led to both of their tragic deaths. Neither of these rappers made it past the age of 25 before they were violently gunned down. Reconciliation never took place between these two individuals, and the result was death. But not all stories end this way, even within the world. Recently Kanye West and Drake ended what seemed to be a fairly personal feud between the two artists. Probably the most renowned story of reconciliation in hip hop was between Jay Z and Nas.

But my personal favorite story of reconciliation within the hip hop community involves rappers 50 Cent and Fat Joe. Most of you probably know the first rapper I just mentioned; few may know the second. These two artists were at odds with one another. They released song after song degrading and threatening one another. And then one day, a manager that they shared in common died. And all of a sudden 50 and Fat Joe emerged like they were friends. And the response of many was, "What happened?! I thought you hated one another!" They said, "we both knew a guy by the name of Chris Lighty. He was our manager and when he was alive, he always wanted us to be friends, but we never were. In his death, we decided not to allow his death to be in vain." So, there were two parties who weren't seeing eye to eye. But there was a death of a man that trumped any disagreement and hostility that existed between these two individuals. Chris Lighty's death was effectual, in that it brought about the reconciliation of these two individuals.

In our passage this morning, Paul the Apostle is addressing two women in the church at Philippi who were not seeing eye to eye. There existed between these two women a disagreement that challenged the unity within the church. But it's not the death of a common manager that should

have brought these two women together to agree with one another. It's the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, God himself, that is effectual in reconciling believers back with one another. The difference between Lighty and Christ, is that Christ's death was not due to his own sin, but rather the sins of his people. Also, the Lord Jesus rose from the dead in glory and now empowers his people by the Spirit to walk in practical reconciliation. So, this morning we'll consider how Paul handles this issue, and what we can apply within our own lives. Here are our points for this morning:

- I. *Labor for Unity (v. 2-3)*
- II. *Constantly Rejoice (v. 4)*
- III. *Be known for Gentleness (v. 5)*

² I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. ³ Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

We honestly don't know much about Euodia and Syntyche, besides the fact that these were two female members of the church that Paul is addressing. We also know that these two women had a special place in Paul's heart, as they labored side by side with him in the gospel. And if you're familiar with the Pauline epistles, you know how much Paul cherishes partnership in the gospel. This lends itself as a good opportunity to discuss the important role women have played all throughout the Scriptures. Maybe you believe the Bible is nothing more than an antiquated book in which women are seen as less than human. For many, this is reason enough to avoid the Scriptures altogether. Others just don't believe that women are meant to be used by God in extraordinary ways, "that's just reserved for men" one may say. And then there are others who just don't value women as they ought, particularly in regard to ministry, due to an ignorance of the Bible. And lastly, you have this group that assumes that a complementarian lens is the equivalent of one being a chauvinist. I reject all of these categories, as I believe you ought to as well. So, we'll look into the Scriptures and dispel some of these thoughts and ideologies in order to have a proper view of women in ministry, that will translate to a proper appreciation.

Before engaging in this exercise, I must provide a couple of precursors. If you don't understand the culture in which the Old and New Testaments were written in, you won't appreciate the counter cultural ground-breaking moves made by Jesus and his apostles. Imagine there was a church that existed in the deep south in the 1700's. What if I told you the pastor, who is a white man, decided to hire black men as his co-pastors. And that he paid for them to attend seminary and shared the pulpit with these gentlemen. Well, this may not mean much to you considering the context we live in. But if you take into consideration the cultural climate of his day, the fact the blacks weren't allowed to read, nor teach anyone other than African slaves, you would be taken aback. You would understand that even if not explicitly stated, this pastor is seeking to highlight and emphasize the imago dei of blacks in his context. Now maybe in a thousand years from now, someone will claim this pastor didn't do enough, simply because they don't have a grasp on what these steps would have meant for these individuals in the day and time, they were living in. In the days of Jesus and the apostles, the Jews would regularly thank God in their daily prayers that they weren't born a gentile, slave, or a woman. That should tell you something.

We'll look at examples in both Testaments. Now remember, often times the authors of historical narratives sought to get a point across to their audience by the way in which they recorded certain events. Allow me to provide you with an example. We see polygamy plastered throughout the Old Testament, which leads many to ask if God had an issue with it. Well besides Genesis 2 and the specific command for kings not to acquire many wives, we have the narratives themselves to go off of. The message the Spirit is seeking to get across through these biblical authors is the fact that polygamy never works! There is always unnecessary strife and strain involved when a man decides to marry multiple wives. When Solomon says in Ecclesiastes that he has not found a woman among all these who basically doesn't scheme, that's meant to be an indictment against him! Brother, you are the one who picked your wives! His poor decision making, at least in this area, is put on full display, because we clearly see that there is no shortage of women of virtue in the Old Testament. So just keep all this in mind as we do a quick survey, particularly of these narrative passages.

A woman is the first and only character in the Old Testament to confer a name to God. In Genesis 16:13, Hagar names God "the God of seeing." And given the significance of naming in the OT, this is especially noteworthy. The woman plays a role so crucial that she's the special object of Satan's hatred in Genesis 3. There's enmity between the woman and the serpent because it is the woman who will give birth to the serpent-crushing seed. We see entire Old Testament books dedicated to the stories of women like Ruth and Esther. Esther provides a picture of the coming Savior in that she's willing to risk her life for the joy of saving her people. Jesus Christ actually gives his life for the joy of saving his people. And of course, example after example can be provided in the Old Testament of women being used to further God's purposes in mighty ways. Some of these women are mentioned in the hall of faith in Hebrews 11, including Sarah and Rahab.

Women are the first to believe that Jesus and his forerunner would soon be conceived. Zechariah disbelieved and was cursed with being mute, while Elizabeth and Mary received the announcement in publicly expressed faith. The New Testament's first poetic song was sung by Mary and the first to declare the Messiah's presence on earth was Elizabeth. We see Jesus honoring women in several ways. He went out of his way to speak with a Samaritan woman who would have been unclean for several reasons. And you may say, how is that honoring? All he did was speak with her. Again, you must know the times and Jewish culture in order for this to hit differently. It was women who financially supported the ministry of Jesus out of their means. And in a time where women's testimonies meant next to nothing, God's providential plan was for women to be the first witnesses and proclaimers of the risen Jesus.

And despite what some may try to tell you, Paul had the upmost respect and appreciation for women in general, and women in the ministry. This doesn't change the fact that Paul believed that men and women have different roles within the home and church. This was ordained by God; therefore, Paul was carried by the Spirit as he wrote instructions on leadership in both of these contexts. But just as Jesus and the Father have different roles in a spiritual sense, one submits to the other, as do husbands and wives have different roles and yet are equally valuable.

Notice, Paul wasn't labeling these two as gossips or busybodies. No, look at what he says. *Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together.* This is the exact same terminology that we find in 1:27.

Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel... -1:27

Meaning, even mature believers can have disagreements that need some type of mediating. Paul and Barnabas had a rift between them as well in the book of Acts. Paul didn't desire to bring Mark along with them on their next missionary journey, due to the fact he abandoned them on their last trip. This was Barnabas' cousin, so he wanted to give him another chance. This led to a splinter, where Paul took Silas and went his way, and Barnabas took Mark and did the same. So mature Christians can clearly disagree. But Paul views unity as so essential, he calls these two out by name, which is a rare occasion in his writings. But he does so with gentleness and grace. He could have made an apostolic appeal or demand, but he rather "entreats." Here's a few other times this exact same Greek word, "entreats," is used in the NT.

But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him... -Luke 15:28

...when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things. -1 Corinthians 4:13

I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ... -2 Corinthians 10:1a

How often do we like to flex our authority muscles? Paul, an apostle with Christ's authority, prefers to entreat with gentleness concerning these two believers who are at odds with one another. And in the midst of his entreating, he affirms them! There is much we can learn from the apostle concerning the way in which we correct others. Myself as much as anyone else.

So, Paul follows the steps of what is found in Matthew 18. Jesus instructs his disciples to go one on one when sinned against, and then bring someone into the equation who may act as a mediator. So, Paul addresses this "true companion," which is literally "yokefellow." Once again, we can only speculate on the identity of this yokefellow. There are some who posit that this was his actual name, if translated as Syzygus, which seems unlikely to many. Others believe it to be an elder in the church, or possibly even Luke himself, since he was present with the Apostle in Philippi. Whoever it is, Paul is asking this individual to act as a peacemaker. This is a wonderful ministry that the Lord Jesus has given his people. We're blessed to step into a situation where Satan is seeking to gain a foothold and apply gospel methods that interrupt his plan and model our God! Jesus would say it like this,

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. -Matthew 5:9

Now I believe there's a hint of evangelism in this text, in the sense that we're given the ministry of reconciliation between God and man, but there's definitely a horizontal application in mind as well. When we're called on to step into a situation as peacemakers, there's a blessedness present.

Why would we be called sons of God for peacemaking? Because we have a peacemaking God. This is his MO! If you're being used to create and cause division and hostility between believers, you're a tool of the devil. But if you are seeking to bring believers together who are not agreeing, you're a tool in the hands of God. How do I mirror God when I'm peacemaking? In other words, how is God a peacemaker? Well, it's interesting that the next two lines relate with the answer to this question.

Here's what he says next,

whose names are in the book of life.⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.

And this will lead us to our second point this morning:

II. Constantly Rejoice (v. 4)

So here it is. The reason we rejoice, is because our names have been written in the book of life. We know our names have been written in the book of life, because we have been reconciled with God through our peacemaker, The Lord Jesus.

...but rejoice that your names are written in heaven... -Luke 10:20c

Here we see the Lord Jesus instructing his disciples to rejoice over the fact that their names are written in heaven. First, what is this book? We see mention of it in other Scriptures. Let's briefly examine those texts so we can get a better understanding of this book.

...and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. -Revelation 13:8

So here we see that someone's name being written in the book of life has impact on the here and now on earth. All of those whose names are absent from this book will worship this false satanically driven world system. But those who have their names in the book of life will be drastically different. This next text is referring to those who will be welcomed into the New Heavens and Earth, and the temple that is now the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb.

But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. -Revelation 21:27

So once again, we see a distinction between those who lead a life of sin, and those whose names have been written in the book of life. Last text we'll look at concerning the book of life is found in Revelation. This text describes the Great White Throne judgement, which I pray none of you have to experience first-hand.

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had

done. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. -Revelation 20:11-15

Now I want you to notice what is being said here. It doesn't say what they have done has an effect on whether or not their names are in the book of life. Contrary to popular belief, there's not a scale in which your good and bad works are being weighed, and Saint Peter decides if you've done enough good deeds to allow you unto heaven. At first glance, it may appear that way, but if you carefully analyze what's written, you avoid this error. He says the dead are judged according to what was written in the books. And then after rereading verse 13 it's clear, that there are levels of severity of punishment in the lake of fire based on various factors. One including the amount of exposure you were given to the gospel. For those who were exposed and yet continued to reject, their punishment will be greater. The Lord Jesus mentions this in one of his parables.

⁴⁷ And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. ⁴⁸ But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more. -Luke 12:47-48

So, this Great White Throne judgment is specifically for those who have directly or indirectly rejected the gospel message. So how do we know one's name has been written in the book of life? And how do we reconcile the idea that what someone has done will not gain them entrance based on Revelation 20, but then in a chapter over it seems as if it does point to works, in that, *'nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

The answer is found within the gospel. Ever since Adam, the first created being, sinned in the garden of Eden, we're all born in a natural state of rebellion towards God.

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned... -Romans 5:12

And the penalty of sin is death, eternal separation from God.

For the wages of sin is death... -Romans 6:23a

And we're presented with a real problem when we read Proverbs 17:15

He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord. -Proverbs 17:15

So how can God remain just while justifying wicked beings such as ourselves? I need you to understand the gravity and the weight of the peril that humanity is in. Because only then, will the gospel be good news to you.

God the Father sent his One and Only unique Son to live the perfect life that is required from us. And then at the end of his life, he took the full wrath of God that we deserved for our sin. And as promised in Genesis 3, death was only a bruised heel to the Lord Jesus, as he resurrected three days later. And now, if you were to repent, meaning turn from your sin, and place your faith in the finished work of Jesus, you would so prove that your name has been written in the book of life. Here's what happens when God saves someone.

²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. -Ezekiel 36:25-27

A person cannot remain unchanged after coming in contact with God, any more than a person can remain unchanged after being hit by a semi-auto truck. He transforms those whom he saves. Therefore, the people of God always have a reason to rejoice. There's constancy in our joy. Despite our current conflicts, we know what we've been saved from, and we know that we will spend eternity in his presence. Hence, Paul instructs the Philippians, ⁴ *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.* Verse 5 introduces us to our final point this morning.

⁵ *Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand...*

III. Be known for Gentleness (v. 5)

The word for reasonableness here is a little difficult to translate from the original language, but most scholars would agree that gentleness is the best translation. What do most of us want to be known for? Is it your extraordinary good looks? Or possibly your sense of humor, or your quick wit. Perhaps you'd like to be known for your wealth or brilliance. And then again, maybe there are more pious ambitions, such as the desire to be known for your prayer life, or excellent teaching skills. Out of everything Paul could have encouraged his audience to be known for, he tells them to be known for their gentleness. This quality should be naturally produced by the one constantly rejoicing in the gospel that saved them. And yet, if I can be completely honest, this seems to be a virtue that many of us struggle with, particularly those who are in leadership in various areas of our lives. I agree with one writer who said, "gentleness is perhaps the most neglected virtue among Christians today. Jonathan Edwards once wrote,

a lamblike, dovelike spirit and temper" is "the true, and distinguishing disposition of the hearts of Christians...A virtue, which I need in a higher degree, to give a beauty and luster to my behavior, is gentleness. If I had more of an air of gentleness, I should be much mended." - Jonathan Edwards

True for him, and also true for me. I've noticed that many Christian men resist gentleness as they believe manliness is mutually exclusive. Dane Ortlund writes a very powerful article on this issue with The Gospel Coalition. Many men associate gentleness with being effeminate, and therefore jettison the virtue all together. And yet, who is the prototype man? It's none other than the Lord Jesus. This same Jesus said,

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. -Matthew 11:29

So therefore, if you're a Christian you must allow the Lord Jesus to define manhood, as opposed to our culture. Unfortunately, there have been many "godly" men, and I use that term loosely, who reject gentleness for this tough guy persona. I'm referring to pastors by the way. A very well-known former pastor in Seattle comes to mind. He was and is known for everything but being gentle. And yet, many men were drawn to his ministry. In his mind, this is how you win the men over. Who wants to hear anything about gentleness? I want to draw those who enjoy fighting and other manly activities. No wonder this didn't last. I like what DA Carson says,

One of the tests that can be applied to determine whether a movement is of God, though certainly it is not the only one, is to observe to what degree those affected are making it their aim to be known for gentleness. In this, they are becoming like their Master.

That's good. In my own life, after God saved me, I sat under a few pastors in Houston who fit the "tough guy" bill. Boy they're men of God, but you better not cross them. Long suffering and forbearing weren't really a thing. That's until I sat under a man named Brandon Holiski in Tyler, TX. I have to give him a shoutout, because he is the most gentle and meek pastor that I have ever met. At first, I thought he was the aberration and not the other pastors I knew. But as he was patient with me and walked me through certain passages of Scripture, I received a clearer picture of what it means to be both a man, and a godly pastor. So, salute to Pastor Brandon Holiski. Because I honestly don't think some of you would like me if it weren't for his faithfulness.

The Lord Jesus Christ, who could drive out money changers from the temple, was also delighted to gather children, be gentle with outsiders, weep over the death of a friend, and allow John to recline on his bosom. And, of course, the supreme display of his manhood and gentleness was his sacrificial laying down his life for his people. Listen to Dane Ortlund,

Any immature man can be a forceful, unheeding, unloving "leader." Only a true man can be gentle. -Dane Ortlund

In the sermon preached at David Brainerd's funeral, Edwards speaks of what saints in heaven will look on when they see Christ:

The nature of this glory of Christ that they shall see, will be such as will draw and encourage them, for they will not only see infinite majesty and greatness; but infinite grace, condescension and mildness, and gentleness and sweetness, equal to his majesty . . . so that the sight of Christ's great kingly majesty will be no terror to them; but will only serve the more to heighten their pleasure and surprise.

Listen to these words from Dane Ortlund's article on this subject. It's a long quote but I thought it was so good I couldn't keep any of it out.

True manhood... isn't a hard, tough exterior with a soft, spineless interior, but just the opposite—a steely, rock-solid interior mediated through an exterior emanating with the beauty of gentleness. Manliness isn't machismo. Masculinity isn't inadequacy-mitigating posturing and chest-puffing. On the other hand, gentleness isn't cowardice. Both non-gentle masculinity and also non-manly gentleness are to be avoided. We're after a life that's both courageous and contrite, both tough and tender, both manly and gentle. But only in the power of the Holy Spirit can we be both at the same time. -Dane Ortlund

I believe the Apostle Paul would agree with the commentary that's been provided. Hear from our brother,

I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ... -1 Corinthians 10:1a

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. -Ephesians 4:1-3

It is this type of gentleness that will prevent the kind of rift that occurred between Euodia and Syntyche. So, believer, are you known for your gentleness? If not, look to your gentle Savior and allow the Spirit to convict you. Paul himself ends by telling us why we should obey this injunction. *The Lord is at hand.* Or literally, the Lord is near.

We can honestly only speculate what exactly Paul means here. He could be referring to time, or proximity. The former is referring to the fact that he's returning soon. If so, his argument runs like this: In light of the impending return of the Lord Jesus, lead a gentle life. This is plausible, considering what we learned the past couple of weeks concerning Paul's eschatological thrust. The latter refers to the Lord being spatially nearby. In other words, if the Lord Jesus were present in a room with you wherever you went, this would be enough incentive to deal with others in a gentler matter. Either way, we know both are true, therefore, allow this to be your incentive. The message of the Cross is reason enough to be gentle. Allow me to end with a quote from Charles Spurgeon on this passage and topic.

Do not push your own rights too far; stop short of what you might fairly demand. And when you feel, at any time, a little vehement in temper, check yourself, hold yourself in, bear and forbear. Go not as far as you may, nor even as far as some think that you ought, in defending your own rights; let your gentleness, your yieldingness, be known unto all men, Be forbearing, for the Lord is at hand. You cannot tell how soon He may appear. There is no time to spare for the indulgence of anger; be quiet; be patient. And if there be anything very wrong, well, leave it. Our Lord Jesus will come very soon; therefore be not impatient.

Let's pray.