LSB Philippians 4:1 - 9 Pt. 3

1 Therefore my brothers, loved and longed for, my joy and crown, ***in this way*** *stand firm in the Lord, my beloved. 2 I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to think the same way in the Lord. 3 Indeed, I ask you also, genuine companion, help these women who have contended together alongside of me in the gospel, with also 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 considerate spirit be known to all men.*

The Lord is near. 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is dignified, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, think on these things. 9 The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

This is now our third week together in this important passage of scripture. And it is so rich that I feel like we could spend a lot of time here and benefit greatly. Paul is telling us how to stand firm. How to be found standing firm on that day when we hear that shout, '*Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him*.'

This week has been a week of memory and reflection as different people weighed in on the legacy of my mentor and pastor, John MacArthur. And the common theme among those who loved him and some who didn't is that he finished well.

Even in declining health he never gave up on the effort to get strong enough to somehow keep going. He had a trainer helping him try to regain

enough strength to be back with the people he loved in the pulpit he loved. It took pnuemonia to finally subdue him. He just wouldn't quit.

He is an example of finishing well. Someone who weathered every storm that tried to deter him from the task the Lord had given him, and was standing tall, even at the final storm that finished his earthly life.

That's what these verses are about. *1 Therefore my brothers, loved and longed for, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.*

What does it mean to stand firm in the Lord. And what does it mean to finish well. And why is it important.

Paul has been encouraging us to stand firm, to be found standing immovable in trials and challenges against us because of our faith, and not only to be found remaining steadfast, immovable in our faith, our belief in Jesus death and resurrection for our purchase, but within that idea of purchase out of this condemned world, we walk with Jesus, in His kingdom, always moving forward in our likeness closer to Him.

We stand and we walk. We persevere in this life. In chapter 1 and verse 6 of this letter Paul states this truth, and why it never fails for those of us who have Jesus living in our hearts;

Ppn 1:6 *For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus*.

We believe it is Jesus who initiates our salvation. It is Jesus who quickens our dead spirits to life together with Him. It is Jesus who gives us repentence and faith to believe. And likewise, if those things are true, it is Jesus who continues to perfect what He caused and began within our hearts, until the day we see Him face to face.

That doctrine is called the perseverence of the saints. And it isn't

dependent ultimately on us persevering, it is true because He chose us, He purchased us with His blood on the cross, He died to take the punishment so that we could be forgiven, and He quickened us to life by His Holy Spirit. He dwells in our hearts, and it is that same person who initiated the life, who continues that same life within us until we meet Him face to face in the sky when He comes to take us to our new home with Him.

The reason finishing well is important is because it is glorious evidence that it was Him who truly saved us.

I want to read several verses this morning that speak of this phenomenon of finishing what Jesus began. And the idea of the word perseverence of the saints, is not that we struggle to persevere somehow in our flesh, it is the idea that the reason we DO persevere is because He is doing the persevering. In us. There is a sense in which if He began the work, we can never opt out. He who begins the work remains until the day it is finished. We're just sort of along for the wild ride. Fasten your seat belts.

Listen carefully to all of these quotes and download the text to review them again for your own stability in times of trouble. The common theme is the indestructability of the true called out saints that belong to Jesus;

You will be hated by everyone because of My name, but the one who perseveres to the end will be saved. Mark 13:13

By your patient endurance you will gain your souls. Luke 21:19

Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison to test you, and you will suffer tribulation for ten days. Be faithful even unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. Revelation 2:10

Because you have kept My command to persevere, I will also keep you from the hour of testing that is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Revelation 3:10

You need to persevere, so that after you have done the will of God, you will receive what He has promised. Hebrews 10:36

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him. James 1:12

if we endure, we will also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He will also deny us; 2 Timothy 2:12

To those who by perseverance in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality, He will give eternal life. Romans 2:7

Let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Galatians 6:9

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast and immovable. Always excel in the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. 1 Corinthians 15:58

who through faith are guarded by God's power for the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. / In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in various trials / so that the proven character of your faith—more precious than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:5-9…

But as for you, brothers, do not grow weary in well-doing. 2 Thessalonians 3:13

*We have come to share in Christ **if** we hold firmly to the end the assurance we had at first.* Hebrews 3:14

Here is a call for the perseverance of the saints, who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Revelation 14:12

You might hear all of those verses and say, well then, it isn't up to me, I can relax. Not so. At all. Like many many other times in the Bible this is a phenomenon our brains can't fully comprehend.

The Bible teaches that we who are saved are in a sense indestructible. God begins it, and God finishes it. But on the other side of that same coin we are told that it's interactive. Part of the process is dependent on me. It's a walk. Moving forward depends on me getting involved.

In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul exhorts us to not just walk, but RUN in such a way as to win.

MacArthurs story of the relay race is the most perfect example of this I've ever heard. He was asked to pinch hit in a 4 man relay race. It wasn't his sport, but he was athletic enough and fast enough that he's usable in a pinch. So he's drafted into this relay race at a college event.

He says he was the weakest of the 4 runners so they put him in second lap. That way runner 3 can regain the distance he lost for them, and runner 4 is this unbelievable blur.

So he runs the second lap and amazes even himself how well he does, and number 3 guy puts them in good position to win the event and number 4 blur guy takes off and is way ahead of the rest of the field and on the far side of the track, he stops and sits down.

So the rest of the team runs over to where he's sitting, fearing the worst. Maybe his heart exploded. Maybe his muscles gave out. And they get there and they ask him, What happened?? And he says, I don't know, I just didn't feel like running any more.

You didn't feel like running!!! What about the rest of us who invested everything we had in this deal, counting on you to take it home. This was a team effort. A relay race.

Well, the parallel is obvious. We christians are in a relay race. We run and we hand off the baton to someone else who is faithful to carry it to the next person and the next person.

Pinch yourselve. Here we are, 20 centuries after Paul wrote these things, because of faithful people who carried the baton and handed it off to other faithful runners who handed it off to others until it got to us in 2025. And we need to run and hand it off to other faithful saints also.

I'm spending several weeks in this rich rich soil because Paul here tells us how to successfully run to finish well. This is imperative information for us. Paul's telling us how to finish, how to win this race. We all have a part in this. We're all carrying the baton forward. We all need to stay in this race to the end. We don't walk off the field and sit down and say, ah well, it doesn't matter, Jesus is going to finish with me or without me

So, after that long introduction, a quick review; Paul is formulaic. He tells us what to do to stay faithful and ultimately to win. In vss 2 and 3 we are told to think the same way. Members of Jesus live in unity. We think the same way. One God, one Jesus, one Holy Spirit dwelling in each one of us, one Book, we hold all these things in common, and we think the same way in the Lord.

We meet some guy from Lithuania who has the same Lord, the same God, the same indwelling Holy Spirit teaching him the same book and we are instantly brothers. I have kindred spirits all over the globe that hold all those things in common exactly as I do. We think the same way.

I don't spend time fellowshipping with either Catholics or Mormons, because they do NOT think the same way as this book clearly teaches. We true believers who hold the same God, the same Jesus, the same Spirit, and the same living Book in common, think the same way. The more we understand the book, the more we are united to each other.

There is unity on the doctrines of salvation by grace plus nothing. The doctrines of faith plus nothing. The doctrines of Christ plus nothing. The doctrines of holy Scripture plus nothing. Within those limits we think the same way. We are united together.

Next is joy. We are ordered to rejoice always. See it there in verse 4. The verb to rejoice is an imperative. We are under orders to rejoice. With sin removed and Jesus walking with me, it's an easy order to obey. He gives me all I need to rejoice. As long as I'm walking in step with Him, it's easy to keep rejoicing. He fills me up with joy.

Then next, we spent some time on this last week, we are restrained. We forbear others who treat us in ways we think might not be what we deserve. In humility, we accept all things, even though they aren't what we thought we should have had. We keep our power under control.

In the coming weeks we will spend time studying Paul's words that he has learned to be content with whatever situation he finds himself in. There is humility in that attitude. Christians don't strut around protesting what they didn't get that they thought they should have gotten.

Then the little term, in verse 5, the Lord is near. It's actually a bridge to what we want to consider today. Pray. Cry out to God.

You know, in the original manuscripts there are no periods to end a thought and paragraph breaks. Therefore, I like to think, and I think it's kind of logical, that the original intent for what Paul writes about prayer in verse 6, begins with those bridge words, *the Lord is near*.

Sometimes it's easy to be in unity, to think the same way, no one's disappointing us, no problems on the horizon. It's easy to rejoice, everythings humming along perfectly, we're actually receiving beyond what we ever expected, blessings are falling around us.

Other times, not so much. Satan's causing chaos in weaker believers. We

might want to wring someone's neck. We might all be suffering together from outward pressures, like when the Covid gods told us to cease and desist meeting together. Lots of possible challenges. Not to mention individual health crises in our members.

Lots of internal and external pressures against our joy. Challenges to obediently continually rejoice. And in it all, Paul tells us, in order to keep running, and finish well, remember that you aren't in this alone.

The yoke you put around your shoulders in order to pull this plough is a dual yoke. Remember that in Matthew 11? Jesus says, take my yoke upon you. And the word he used is the one that describes a double yoke.

Yes there is a plough to pull, but you don't do it alone. Jesus is right beside you in a common yoke, pulling with you.

There will be pressures. There will be trials. Jesus promised us trouble in this world. But we never face it alone. Vs. 5b *The Lord is near.*

He's right there next to you, pulling with you. The Lord is near. And since He's right there with you, pulling in common with you, talk to Him!
This is a no brainer people. The most logical verses in the Bible.

The Lord is near. 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

There's pressure, there's disappointments, there's problems and challenges, storms and disasters. Emergencies. Mistreatments. People who drive you nuts. Kids that drive you nuts. Spouses that drive you nuts. Paul's ordering you, in the Lord, to rejoice in all of it, even when you're at your wit's end;

The Lord is near. 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

There are outside pressures we have no control over. Have you experienced a pervasive pessimistic observance that God is judging the very nation in which we live.

You can talk to godless neighbors and say that the culture of our national presence is getting ever increasingly demonic, and many will understand exactly what you're saying and agree with you wholeheartedly.

There's an underlying current that seems to be dragging us increasingly into darkness. Why are people burning things down. Why is there so much of what our culture wants to call mental illness, but we all sort of know it's demonic, people doing crazy wicked things.

Some nut case knocks off a fire sprinkler head in the Mizpah Hotel and floods it and causes serious damage, and we give them a pass saying, they're mental.

We all sort of know; that historic lodge that many of us experienced and enjoyed and were helped by it's presence and beauty didn't just burn itself down. All these other weird fires all over the place.

Our nation is under deserved judgement from God and we can see and feel the darkness increasing around us. We may not be able to dwell in peace for much longer. Our highways are more dangerous. All of it begins to swell up. You wonder why me and Jeff are difficult to dislodge from Tonopah at all. Everywhere we go there are lunatics doing evil things.

And our nation, wicked and bankrupt as it is, is the bright spot on the globe. Think about being a christian in Ukraine, where most of the young men are dead, and the buildings in the city are bombed out hulks.

Or think about living in Israel where you hope that expensive dome that bursts most of the rockets in flight continues to work as violence and hatred are the order of the day. Those christians there in those troubled places have the same order as we do. Rejoice in the Lord, christians. No matter

your surroundings.

Have I made you feel gloomy and anxious? I did it on purpose.

The Lord is near. 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

The anxiety is real. But the pressure relief valve is just as real. Talk to Jesus. If you're a real christian, He's right there next to you, in the other half of a common yoke, pulling with you. Actually you're useless and He's doing all the pulling, but that's another sermon for another day.

The pressures are real. The relief is real. Talk to Jesus. He is near. Inside your heart. Tell Him your fears and troubles.

Anxiety is real. Sometimes we experience it almost crushing us. But in verse 7, the relief is just as real.

7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

If I was one of those guys who likes to be clever and have each sermon point begin with the same letter of the alphabet, this one is easy peasy.

Here's your outline:
1) Vs. 5 Pressure
2) Vs. 6 Prayer
3) Vs. 7a Peace
4) Vs. 7b Perseverance

Back up to verse 6 please. Prayer is our pressure release valve. But Paul can never resist teaching us in the moment, how to pray.

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Paul uses two different words here to describe praying. The first is the same basic word used by Jesus when He taught His disciples how to pray, giving them the disciples prayer, which we call the "Lord's prayer". It is the act of speaking to God. Talking to God. The effort, the hard work of prayer.

The second word is more precise. It is specifically asking for what you perceive that is needed. Translated petitions, or sometimes supplications. It is a more specific asking for what you need.

As we mature as christians we understand more fully that very often we don't know how to pray or what to pray for, being limited in our understanding. Paul affirms that in our praying, the Holy Spirit helps us by praying in our behalf with groanings that have no words. In my case probably praying for the right stuff while I pray for the wrong thing in ignorance.

And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; Ro. 8:26

And then Paul adds this modifier. Pray with thanksgiving. Part of the humility of contented restraint is being thankful always for whatever it is that we got. We pray with thanksgiving.

We dwell within the sovereign plan of God. We may be in deep distress with pressures without and within. Things I don't want to imagine. But in it all we know and believe Romans 8:28. Right?

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28

This is an unconditional promise, and as such, we have unconditional thankfulness. No matter what disaster we're in! God, in sovereign control, eventually turns everything into our good.

Is someone causing you distress and grief. Pray about it with thanksgiving. It may seem out of control to you, but it's in control with God. We are to thank Him for all things. Good and bad. Because He turns the bad into our good.

Then verse 7 is the ultimate result. *7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

1) Pressure 2) Prayer 3) Peace 4) Perseverance

God can pour out peace that the world can sometimes see and marvel at. We can have God's peace, in us, in situations that the world would say, peace in this situation is unfathomable. Impossible. And yet, we enjoy God's peace, poured out in our hearts irregardless of what's happening around us, knowing He is in total control, and has unconditionally promised good for us.

You say, I see the peace, but where is the perseverance.

7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will ***guard*** *your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

It's the same greek word that Peter used in 1 Peter 1:5 that we read earlier.

who through faith are ***shielded*** *by God's power for the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.*

For us old school guys who love the NKJ and NASB the original KJV used the word kept. Guarded by a keeper. It's a military term. Someone stands guard to protect something.

The idea is that our hearts and minds are guarded, kept from being damaged or destroyed, shielded from harm, by the peace of God that comes through

prayer.

Daniel in the lions den is a visual picture of this guarding, this keeping that protects us in trouble. Peace in the midst of trouble guards our hearts and minds.

Prayer within the realization that the God who spoke the universes into existence actually loves us and sovereignly controls every thing, including whatever it is that's distressing us brings peace. It reminds us that God is in sovereign control and that the outcome, whether it's what we asked for, or not, is for His glory and our good.

That, if you believe it, is a recipe for inner peace. There is strength in praying and then humbly giving every outcome to God in faith. We are content with His answers, whether they are exactly what we asked for, or what He knows is actually what we need instead of what we thought we needed.

Finally, one more fun observation you haven't thought of and I laughed when it popped into my mind. Thank you Holy Spirit teacher.

Why does Paul delineate here that this peace will guard your hearts and minds. Simple. Women think with their hearts. Men think with their minds. Paul has them both covered, or rather God's peace is equally effective if you think with your emotions or whether you think more clinically.

By God's design, we think differently from each other. God's peace through prayer is equally effective for all hearts all minds. It pleased God to make men and women differently. It also pleased Him to give us prayer that equally gives a keeping, guarding, sustaining peace to both men and women.

I love the words from the old hymn; What a Friend We Have In Jesus,

Oh! What peace we often forfeit. Oh what needless pain we bear.
All because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer.