

Connect360: Rejoice in the Lord Always

November 9, 2020

- *Lesson 12 in the BaptistWay Press Connect360 unit "Pure Joy" focuses on Philippians 4:1-9.*

Paul began chapter four with a focus on love. We typically speak of love coming from our hearts. Paul said he had such love for the Philippians that he longed or yearned for their well-being (4:1). He called them his joy and his crown. These endearing terms speak both of the exalted view Paul had for his friends in Philippi and Paul's humility toward them. The "prize" that he was running the race to receive was actually found in relationship (Philippians 3:14).

With all of Paul's being, he devoted everything he had to the cause of Christ in others. His joy was found in seeing them unite together with Christ and with each other in the kingdom of God. His "crowning" achievement in life was to see the gospel spread across the world and transform lives. So, Paul beckoned the Philippians to stand firm in the Lord with the same love in their hearts as they unite together to serve Christ.

Yet, Paul was aware the unity of the church was hindered by a skirmish in the congregation. Paul did not need to explain the details of the disharmony; the church was well aware of what happened. Paul, simply, called out Euodia and Syntyche to avoid letting their differing opinions cause a schism in the church. Instead, he pleaded that they become one in mind in the Lord. The terminology Paul used here was precisely the same as in Philippians 2:2, where he pleaded for all of the people to be like-minded and one in love.

Harmony in diversity

In other words, amidst their diversity, Paul reminded them of the centrality of unity found in Jesus. Euodia and Syntyche are long-time friends and co-workers who have served alongside Paul, who refused to take sides. Instead, he reminded them they both were dear to him. Their names are written “in the book of life” because they have surrendered their lives to Christ. As co-workers of the gospel, they should put their petty differences aside and unite together with Clement and other co-laborers in the mission to serve and glorify Christ.

Today’s churches continue to struggle with uniting together in love. Petty differences easily divide God’s family over the less central matters. We should avoid letting the refreshments at church, choice of décor of the facilities, type of music selected, Bible translation used, political views, preference of leisure activity, or other secondary matters rob us of the joy we have in the Lord.

A heartbeat without movement is a flat-line of lifelessness; it is in the pulsation of the heartbeat that life is found. The harmony of diversity portrays to the world a much more accurate picture of the heart of God. Amidst our unique perspectives on many things in life, what unites Christ followers is who Jesus is, the salvation he offers, and the joy we find as we experience life with him. Joy is found through loving God and others with our whole hearts.

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