

Intro The Lord is at hand. The Lord is near. The truth that our God is not limited by size or spatial dimensions has enormous implications for living and working together in joyful unity. The question we are directed to address from God's Word this morning is clearly related to the appeal directed at us to resolve conflict and live submissively to the same mind in Christ. That question can be worded this way . . . what are my options when faced with conflict, other than desiring and demanding my way?

More specific to the text of Philippians, what is the flip side of the unresolved conflict between these two ladies in 4:2-3? How could they have handled their conflict without a breakdown in the partnership and their joy? How can you and I do more than just survive in our relationships, families and ministry partnerships, but actually experience growing joy in the midst of challenges? The answer is a doctrine. It is something that is true about God. Your joy and freedom from joy robbing conflict is found in the simply stated truth of Philippians 4:5b . . . the Lord is at hand.

We learned from our study of conflict in 4:2-3 that the process of conflict usually follows a pathway that begins with an unmet desire that morphs into a demand that controls our judgment of others and causes us to punish others until they agree to our demands. It is not pretty. Since we are growing in our commitment to living together in loving submission to Christ and resolving conflict, we now turn to learning the mechanics of how to do that in the everyday world of stress and challenges. Where do we get the resources, perspective and help to live with and love challenging people? The Lord is at hand!

Philippians 4:1-7

Admonition to stand firm	1
Stand firm by resolving conflict	2-3
Stand firm by living in the presence of God	4-7

Please note that the scripture text before us this morning consists of three commands/imperatives clustered around an independent statement of truth about God. The truth, the Lord is at hand, is surrounded by and supports each of these independent commands. These commands provide the alternative behavior to living in conflict with each other. Because the Lord is at hand, you can rejoice in all things, be known for your reasonableness and you can stop worrying. These behaviors can only be temporarily externally mimicked at best without the rock solid truth of the presence of the Lord.

Turn your attention with me to the five words at the end of verse 5. This phrase teaches a truth that is clearly presented throughout the Bible known as the presence of the Lord. God is everywhere present, not necessarily in the same way, but he is present. God is not limited by size or space dimensions.

2 key passages that help us understand these truths about God are Psalm 139:7-10 and Jeremiah 23:23-24.

This is a special and important truth to the core message of growing joyful gospel partnerships in this Philippian letter. 1:6 teaches us that God began a work and is continually and presently completing that work in our lives. 2:1-11 teaches us that Jesus became present with us in his self humiliation. There are two important components of this truth to remember and apply to our lives when facing conflict. When you think of the truth 'the Lord is at hand,' two dimensions of meaning should come to your mind and strengthen your heart.

1. The Lord is present with me now.

2. The Lord is coming back for me soon.

1. The Lord is present with me now.

Psalm 34:18 The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

Psalm 145:18 The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.

Psalm 37:23-24 The steps of a man are established by the Lord, when he delights in his way; though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the Lord upholds his hand.

2. The Lord is coming back for me soon.

Phil. 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body . . .

1John 3:2-3 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him . . .

James 5:7-8 Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits . . . You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

Three commands for your life in the presence of the Lord . . .

1. Rejoice in the Lord. 4:4

This is the fourth mention of the need for God's people to rejoice in this letter. We are taught to rejoice when Christ is preached even if we are significantly hurt and disappointed (1:18). We are reminded to be glad and rejoice when faced with the potential of martyrdom or losing a close friend (2:18). We are told to rejoice when confronted with the challenges of false teachers and confusing messages (3:1). Learning to rejoice rather than resist and demand is a key message for those of us committed to advancing the gospel in joyful partnerships.

Key components of rejoicing include . . .

- Recognizing that rejoicing in the Lord is more than mere optimism or future joy.
- Connecting your real life context with the presence of the Lord. 'in the Lord'

Acts 16:25 At all times – adverse circumstances God at work 1:6

Apply . . . Ask God for joy/ Psa.86:4

Train heart for joy/Psa 139:6,14,17

Confess for joy/Psa 32:10-11

2. Be reasonable to everyone.

4:5

Reasonableness, moderation, graciousness, gentleness or forbearance is a key response and quality necessary to the advance of gospel focused relationships in the home and church. One writer has described this quality as being known for not caring about being known. Let's look at this command and understand how it is connected to the core truth of the Lord being at hand.

- Meaning – a few definitions of this response to challenge and conflict with each other:

Galatians 5:22 fruit of Spirit 2Cor.10:1 true of Christ 1Tim3:3; Tit 3:2 Elder/overseer

Fair-mindedness, the attitude of a man who is charitable towards others faults and merciful in his judgment of their failings because he takes into account their entire situation.

A willingness to yield under trial and a refusal to retaliate when attacked.

A humble, patient steadfastness which is able to submit to injustice, disgrace and maltreatment without hatred or malice, trusting in God in spite of it all.

An unabrassive spirit under provocation.

- Extent – to everyone, probably more emphasis on having a winsome influence on pagan neighbors. Let it be seen.

- Connect to 'the Lord is at hand' how can you be reasonable?

Psa 46:1 present help in trouble

Jas. 5:7-9 coming to vindicate your cause

1Cor.15:58 steadfast, immovable, abounding . . . knowing

3. Stop worrying.

4:6-7

Jesus taught clearly that anxiety and worry indicate a lack of trust in God's care. This command assumes that the Philippian believers have been taking matters into their own hands rather than entrusting themselves to a faithful, caring creator. Note the basic command and the method of connecting our concerns with the presence of God in prayer.

- Natural reactions to the troubles of life result in stressful anxiety. 4:6

Anxiety/concern for others can be good – 2:20

Anxiety blocks God from the life circumstance; it keeps others at a distance as well.

Worry is not a partner/community building force, it separates and weakens relationships.

Matt. 6:25-34

- Supernatural reactions to the troubles of life result in turning to the Lord in prayer. 4:6-7

God manifests himself as 'at hand' when you pray as instructed . . .

- Turn your heart to the heart of God - 3 synonyms for believing, expectant prayer
Let them be made known to God . . . lay all troubles out before God; total dependence
- Surrender your way to God by thanksgiving – surrender to God's will regardless the circumstances.
- Enjoy protection of God's peace – peace activated by pouring heart out to God

Psalm 34:4-7 I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.

The Lord is at hand.

- 1. Rejoice in the Lord. 4:4**
- 2. Be reasonable to everyone. 4:5**
- 3. Stop worrying. 4:6-7**

Conclusion Do you believe that God is present with you? Rejoicing in conflict, graciousness to all and taking our anxiety to God in believing prayer are the faithful actions of people who want to advance the gospel over their own personal causes and comfort. These supernatural, partnership building and gospel promoting behaviors are only possible as we learn to recognize the presence of God in our lives.

Study Questions

1. What impressions or decisions did you come to as a result of the teaching of God's Word today?
2. Read Philippians 4:1-9 as a group.
3. Explain the relationship between the three commands in 4:4-7 and the stated core truth that the Lord is at hand. Where else in the scriptures is God's presence promised for handling tough assignments?

4. Of the many Psalms mentioned or referred to in this study . . . which ones did the Holy Spirit cause to stick to your soul and why? Ask group members to help you memorize some of these for use in conflict.
5. What practical implications for handling conflict can you draw from Acts 16:25 – see story of 19-24?
6. Role play the right response to Euodia and Syntyche's conflict. For sake of role play, their conflict was about Euodia, who did not do what she promised to do in helping with a ministry, leaving all the work and problems on Syntyche who was sick that week and her father was in the hospital. Syntyche confronts Euodia in the parking lot after church in front of friends and an elders wife! Euodia . . . complete the story and apply the Lord is at hand by thinking through how these ladies could respond according to the three commands. Role play it in a marriage conflict if you are courageous and creative enough!
7. When you pray specifically, letting God know your specific requests, does his peace still guard your heart and mind even if . . . your requests are not in line with his will? . . . he does not give you your requests? What is it that that triggers or activates the peace of God according to these verses?
8. What practical ways can you grow in your awareness and application of the truth that the Lord is at hand? How can you reduce your response or lag time that exists between your reaction in the flesh and remembering that he is on the job and in control?
9. Focus your prayer time on praying for each other to grow in your awareness of God's presence and the resulting joy that comes from living before his face.