

## Living in Community

**Sermon Text:** Ephesians 4:17-32

**Study Texts:** Philippians 4:1-9

**Sermon Recap:** In Ephesians 4:17-32, Paul is concerned with developing two major topics in the Christian life. First, in vv. 17-24 he develops for us an understanding of **who we are in Christ**. Paul desires that we see who we once were and yet no longer are because of Christ; he warns us not to live like pagans. In contrast to who we were, Paul calls us to live as new creations, having received the gospel of grace. But he does not leave us wondering. Vv. 25-32 are concerned with explaining **how we must now live in Christ**. One commentary sums this passage by asking, “Have you come to know Christ? Are you dressed in His righteousness? If so, live out your new identity as a new creation in Christ *for the good of others* and the glory of God.”<sup>1</sup>

**Sermon Connection:** In Philippians 4:1-9, Paul addresses a similar issue as that of Ephesians 4:17-32. Just as he wanted the Ephesian church to live out the gospel in their lives, so also he desires the same for the Philippian church. Paul opens the text with a broad command that applies to every aspect of the Christian life, “...*stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.*” Keeping in mind that Paul’s letters are written to communities of faith, we read and hear this command to stand firm in the context of community. We stand firm together as we learn to live out the gospel in our own lives and in the community life of God’s church.

### Lesson Plan

**Lesson Goal:** To see that the gospel applies to every aspect of our life and that God cares about how we live individually and within gospel community.

#### **Lesson Points:**

**Point 1: Love Within the Gospel Community (vv. 1-3)**

**Point 2: Life Within the Gospel Community (vv. 4-9)**

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<sup>1</sup> Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians, Christ-Centered Exposition*, 115.

**The Context:** Having come to the end of the letter to the Philippians, Paul sums up all that he has said to them regarding the goodness of God, the special care of God in the provision of salvation through Jesus, and the necessity of humility, love, and faithfulness within the body of Christ. He calls upon this church in the Roman colony of Philippi to stand firm, to love one another, and to glorify God.

**Point 1 - Love Within the Gospel Community** (vv. 1-3)

- Note how Paul addresses the community in v. 1. What do we learn about love within the gospel community from how Paul speaks to these people?
- What does Paul mean when he calls the Philippians his “...*joy and crown*...”?
- What does it mean to “...*stand firm in the Lord*”? See 3:20-21.
- How does standing firm in the Lord affect our loving one another within the gospel community of God’s people?
- Note that Paul never tells us what Euodia and Syntyche (pronounced *Sin-tee-kee*) are at odds over. Rather, he merely instructs them to “*agree in the Lord*.” What do v. 2-3 teach us about love and conflict in the gospel community?

**Point 2 - Life within the Gospel Community** (vv. 4-9)

- Paul commands the Philippian community to rejoice always, or to always be filled with God-centered joy. This joy refers to a deep-seated conviction that God is sovereign, faithful and that He is working out His salvation within us. How does such a conviction shape community life?
- Paul uses the phrase, “*The Lord is at hand*” to remind the Philippians that God is an ever-present reality for His people. What fruits come from such a reality in the life of God’s people? V. 6-7.
- Verse 8 calls to the foreground something we can often forget or neglect. Paul is reminding the Philippians that there is a community ethic (a right way of living) demanded for God’s people. How then are we are to go about life within the gospel community?
- Paul grounds his command for a community ethic (right behavior) in his teaching and his lifestyle. How is this instructive for our understanding of discipleship and life together in gospel community?

**Group Reflection Activity** - Ordinary Life - Making a Community Commitment

- Ask the question, “What would it take for you to willingly join something that has implications for your whole life?”
  - How does such a question call our understanding and participation in gospel community into question?
- Take some time to ask, “What kind of time does Growth Group occupy throughout your week?”

- Rethinking the Ordinary - Think through your average week, the things you do
  - Chores
  - Errands
  - Recreation
  - Meals
  - Service
  - Rest
- What would it take for you to include others in these weekly activities? Think about this both spiritually and practically...
  - What would this require of me spiritually and practically?
- What sacrifices would I need to make to include others? Am I willing?
  - Why might this be hard for me?
  - How might it benefit others? How might it benefit me?

### **Application Questions**

- Does Paul's heart for the Philippian church reflect your heart for the people of your growth group? The people of Parkwood?
- Does my commitment to my growth group community reflect what the Bible teaches?
- Where is my commitment lacking, and how can I seek help from my growth group in this way?
- What are tangible ways I can include others in my daily/weekly life?