



## **Stand Firm in the Lord, Part 3 –Be Reasonable**

*Series: Philippians – To Live Is Christ*

Philippians 4:5

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In this chapter that we are looking at, Paul is in the process of some final exhortations to the Philippian church that deal with some serious issues. They are facing the opposition of the unbelieving world with its values and godlessness, the encroachment of false doctrine, cracks in the unity of the church, and the secession and abandonment of people once were in the ranks of the church. All of this was leading to dismay, trouble, anxiety and fear regarding the future in the hearts of the saints in Philippi.

What Paul wanted for them, more than anything else, is that they would be found faithful at Christ's coming, that they would stand firm in Christ. Out of his great love for them, because of his deep and abiding love for them, Paul's desire was that they would not desert Christ or His church, that they would not give up the fight for faith, but that they would stand firm in Christ. And so Paul gives them some rapid firm staccato, exhortations to do just that.

We have looked at two of them so far. First, referring to the disagreement between Euodia and Syntyche, Paul told them that in order to stand firm as the church, they were going to need to practice gospel integrity in their relationships. The gospel is all about what God has done in Christ to forge peace between a holy God and sinful men and all about how God has forged peace between those who are now brothers and sisters in Christ. And if the Philippians were going to be able to stand firm, their relationships with one another needed to be shaped and governed by the gospel, right? In the Lord, we find a solidarity that must not be broken, but in order for that to happen, we each must be willing to humble ourselves and submit ourselves to Christ and to His Word.

Then second, Paul told the Philippians that if they were to stand firm, they needed to be determined in every circumstance, every trial, every hardship, to rejoice in the Lord. And it's

true for all of us. You find your joy in God the Father, in His eternal love to you when there was nothing in you to love. In His choosing you to be His child, in His justification of you in the suffering and death and resurrection of Christ, in the giving up of His only begotten, holy, well-pleasing Son to redeem you from Hell. We find our joy in Jesus Christ as our Brother, as our Bridegroom, as our Shepherd, as our All in All, in Christ as Prophet, Priest and King, as our triumph over sin and savior from the wrath to come.

We find joy in God the Holy Spirit, in His regenerating work, making our dead souls to live and love God and His Christ, in His illumination of the Word of God to our hearts, in His grace that He gives to each of us in time of need, the strength He gives to you in temptation, the wisdom that He imparts to your souls, the faithfulness that He works in you, the way in which He is shaping you will of God and the grace of Christ ever more into the image of Jesus Christ. Delight that He is the promise of the full inheritance in the eternal presence of God. We have more than enough reasons to rejoice and the reason we should is because it is joy in the Lord that is the source of our strength to stand firm in Christ. ***“The joy of the Lord is your strength.”*** (Nehemiah 8:10, ESV)

### **Let Your Reasonableness Be Known to Everyone (v. 5a)**

And now, in this text this morning, Paul’s exhortation to us is: ***“Let your reasonableness be known to everyone.”*** (Philippians 4:5, ESV) Now at first, this command may not seem too earth shattering. But this command contains far more than you might think. This word that is translated as “reasonable” in the ESV has a wide range of meaning and content. Reasonableness speaks to a condition of the soul, to a character that includes a number of different ideas, which is why it is translated in a variety of ways in our English Bibles. It is a character trait that includes a number of different components – gentleness, meekness, graciousness, a sober evaluation of self, forbearance, and selflessness.

To understand this concept of reasonableness, we need to first understand what it isn’t, especially in this politically correct culture that wants to redefine the elements of Christian virtue to fit the spirit of this age. It seems there is no one more capable of telling you how a Christian should act than someone who isn’t. Isn’t that true?

Reasonableness, in a Christian, is not looseness or softness on the gospel of Christ in order to be more acceptable to proud and lost humanity. It is not “being reasonable” to downplay sin and the judgment of God, because those aren’t popular themes among unbelievers. The testimony of our Lord is a testimony of a Savior crucified to pay the penalty of sin for a repentant and believing people. He died to rescue sinners from the awful eternal judgment that they deserve. While that message may not “sell” in today’s self-focused culture, that is our only message. So, it is not “being reasonable” to eliminate the offence of the gospel. As Paul said: **“For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”** (1 Corinthians 1:18, ESV)

Reasonableness is not moral flabbiness or permissiveness that winks at sin and acts as if it’s no big deal. It’s not a lack of conviction, not a lack of faith or belief, that leads to sinful compromise. It is not indifference to or tolerance of immorality. It is not accommodation to the sinful human wisdom of this age – kids will always rebel, sin is harmless, sex before marriage is inevitable, abortion is ok in some instances, love is love no matter what. These are all the worldly and pc versions of reasonableness.

But true reasonableness is a character trait that is rooted in faith in Jesus and in one’s standing and relationship with Christ. Someone who is reasonable understands Christ and who they are. A reasonable person is stable and sure because his soul is resting in the finished work of Christ for salvation. Someone who is reasonable is self-controlled and clear in his or her thinking. They are confident in Christ and in the power of the gospel. They refuse to be provoked. They don’t have to strive for position or recognition or their perceived rights. A reasonable man or woman is not self-seeking but is concerned for the glory and honor of Christ. Someone who is reasonable is not easily offended because self is not on the throne, but Christ is. Someone who is reasonable is easily entreated and desires to be at peace with others. Someone who is reasonable patiently endures personal offense for the sake of making the gospel known. Someone who is reasonable refuses to be personally provoked to sin by personal offenses. They seek to be gentle, gracious and forbearing with other sinners like themselves but without violating the truth. Someone who is reasonable has learned how to temper justice and mercy. They are uncompromising champions of truth and at the same time extenders of mercy. They can uphold God’s truth while holding out the offer of forgiveness in Christ to those who have turned their backs on God or who are hostile to the gospel. They stand above the fray.

You can see how different true reasonableness is from the spirit of this age. Everyone in our culture, it seems, is clamoring for their rights – gay rights, transgender rights, women’s rights, the right not to be offended by anything. The entire spirit of our age is unreasonable, because of its godless (except for me) worldview where all that matters is me. Reasonableness goes out the window if you are your own God. Instead everyone must bow to your will. It makes for impatience and harshness.

But if we seek to be reasonable; we do not seek for glory for ourselves, we are not seeking to win the argument, or make our point, or advance ourselves. We don’t assert our rights, or promote ourselves or make demands based upon position, privilege, possession, status in life, because it is not about my kingdom or me. It’s about Christ and His kingdom. To be reasonable means that I am broken from the delusion that it is my life, my reputation, my story, my exultation that matters.

A reasonable man sees things from God’s perspective. He seeks to be fair-minded, looks for opportunities to be gracious in his dealings with other people. He is willing to suffer personal loss for the sake of the gospel. He’s forbearing of sins and offenses against him, in order that he can bring the truth of the gospel and the truth of God’s word to bear in every situation in which the Lord places him. He puts love and what is best for others above himself. So you can see that this character trait of reasonableness is a multi-layered, multi-faceted thing. A mixture of grace and truth.

### **The Example of Our Lord Jesus Christ**

It is a character trait that is manifestly present in our Lord Jesus Christ. Consider the example that our Savior gives to us. John testified of Him in his gospel: **“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14, ESV)** I want you to think how Christ modeled this trait of reasonableness – gentleness, meekness, graciousness, forbearance, and selflessness. He was approachable by children, approachable by a Roman centurion seeking Christ to heal His servant. He was patient with His argumentative and often confused disciples. He endured the insults of a Pharisee named Simon in order to defend a woman who anointed Him with oil and speak gospel truth. He was exceedingly gracious to a woman caught in adultery while at the same time dealing with the heart of the men who sought to have her condemned. He fed hungry men and women with bread for their bellies but did

not neglect their need for the bread of life, gospel truth, although they rejected and mocked Him. Christ was able to say to the broken: **“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”** (Matthew 11:28–30, ESV)

And yet at the same time He could say of the Pharisees: **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.”** (Matthew 23:15, ESV) This is the one that would call the religious charlatans of his day snakes, white washed tombs, blind leading the blind, hypocrites, liars, children of Satan. He fearlessly pronounced the coming judgment on those who corrupted God’s Word. But He didn’t defend Himself. Instead, this same Christ offered Himself as the sacrifice for those very sins that he identified.

Jesus did not seek the honor that was rightly His – He was gracious, gentle, forbearing and selfless. When He stood before Pilate with an opportunity to rescue himself from the false accusations from the Pharisees that would lead to His death on the cross for sinners, he refused to defend Himself. **“So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?” Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?” Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” Pilate said to him, “What is truth?”** (John 18:33–38, ESV) When Jesus was facing His death, He said: **“Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?”** (Matthew 26:53, ESV) Jesus did not seek glory for Himself, He did not assert His rights or His standing, and He did not allow anything to get in the way of His mission. There were more important matters than getting His rights – saving the souls of ungodly men and women.

Even when He was crucified on the cross, and both of the men who were crucified on either side of Him were reviling Him and mocking Him, He remained gracious, gentle, forbearing, and selfless. He bore with them, even unto the point of one of the men, having his eyes opened, coming to repentance and faith. To Him, a former reviler, Jesus said: ***“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”*** (Luke 23:43, ESV)

Jesus, as Paul has already told us, was willing to lay down His rights, willing to bear with sinners, willing to be gracious, willing to be selfless, willing to trust in His Father, for the sake of the gospel, for the sake of our souls. Jesus, ***“who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”*** (Philippians 2:6–8, ESV)

This is the gracious selflessness of Christ, the forbearance, the gentleness, and the reasonableness that our Lord showed in order to redeem us as His people. And if we have been redeemed, if we have had our sins washed away by the blood of Christ, if we have been made partakers of eternal life in Him, graciously given an eternal standing in Him, if we have experienced this sort of gracious forbearance from Him, then we ought to act in that same manner with others. Not asserting our rights, but gracious forbearing with sinners, saved and unsaved, in order to bring the gospel truth to bear in their lives, for their good, out of love for them.

It’s not easy. It’s not automatic. Sometimes it’s very difficult. As a father I have experienced this with my kids... As a pastor I have experienced this... There have been times when I have done this well and times when I haven’t. But if we are going to stand firm and thrive as a church, it is a characteristic trait that needs to define us as a people as we relate to each other and others – gentleness, meekness, graciousness, forbearance, or selflessness.

It is a character trait that ought to rule in this fellowship, but it can only do so as Christ, by his grace, renews our minds by His Spirit from the spirit of this age through godly wisdom that comes from above. Reasonableness – gentleness, meekness, graciousness,

forbearance, and selflessness – that’s not a natural human trait. It is created in us only by the Spirit of God and by His grace. It is a character trait that only comes from godly wisdom.

### **Reasonableness is Rooted in Godly Wisdom (James 3:17-18)**

James speaks of the wisdom that gives rise to this kind of life in James 3, starting in verse 17 where he says: **“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” (James 3:17–18, ESV)** If the life-giving principle of your life is the grace of God in Christ, if your main focus is to live according to the gospel, and the leading of the Holy Spirit, it will boldly show in very real, readily discernable ways, especially as it regards relationships with other people. It will be shaped by the wisdom of God. Look at how James describes it here.

He says the wisdom from above is first, above all, **pure**. That is, it’s unmixed, uncontaminated by fleshly thinking. It shows in a life that is marked by integrity and moral sincerity with others. In fact, the Greek root for the word “pure” is the same as the root for the “holy.” The implication is that if you are operating out of a gospel-centric wisdom, your relationships will tend toward holiness and not sin.

If you are led by gospel wisdom, you will be **peaceable**. That is, you will be ready and willing to seek and to promote peace. As a result of true humility and esteeming others as greater than yourself, you won’t be seeking offense or keeping a record of wrongs. You won’t be easily offended or put off. You will not use excuses to avoid relationships with people. Instead, this word is used of the person who actively restrains discord and calms those who are turbulent around him, whose presence promotes peace. Real wisdom is peace-promoting. It has an agenda to promote godly, spiritual, true Christian unity amongst believers. It recognizes that unity is a very, very priceless but important commodity and it seeks to promote peace.

When you are led by gospel wisdom, you are gripped by how enormous your own offences are and have been against a high and holy Lord, and how God in His mercy has sent His own dear Son into the world, the Lord Jesus Christ, who has kept God commandments which you

have failed to do, on your behalf. And how on the cross of Golgotha He propitiated the wrath of a sin-hating God against all your transgressions so that God now can look upon you with blessing and delight because in Christ you are accepted. You have peace with God through faith in your Lord Jesus Christ. There for you are determined to do everything to maintain that peace, never wanting to grieve the Lord.

If you are walking according to the wisdom that is in Christ, you will be **gentle**, forbearing, courteous, and considerate. You will be willing to lay down your perceived rights for the well being of others, just like Christ was willing to lay down His actual rights for we who did not deserve it. You will be patient with people as God is patient with you, giving them room to grow in Christ, refusing to be inflexible and severe in the way that you deal with others.

If you are led by the wisdom that is found in Christ, you will be **reasonable**. You will be willing to be entreated, not stubborn or unyielding, not standoffish, but willing to listen. You will be willing to respond to reasonable requests of you. You will not hold people to impossible standards or unbiblical requirements and expectations. You will not always be putting the onus on other people alone for the proper functioning of relationships but will bear that responsibility yourself, willing to communicate and invest in someone and not leaving it to them to do all of the work. You will seek to respond to others with the perfect measure of grace and forgiveness mixed with truth and faithfulness as displayed by Christ.

You will know you are operating according to godly wisdom when you are **full of mercy**, willing and eager to extend forgiveness and mercy to others by reaching out, even to those who have offended you, to help them in any way that you can. Not exacting but forgiving freely as God in Christ forgave you.

A life that led by the wisdom found in Christ will be **full of good fruit**. You will give evidence of the fruit of the Spirit as the pattern of your life -- the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control in some measure will be the pattern in your life. Not all of those fruits are fully developed, but none are missing and your life is moving in the direction of spiritual maturity and consistency.



You will find that you are **impartial**, literally unwavering. You will not be inconsistent or vacillating with people, not one way on a certain day and another on the next, and not one way with certain people and another way with others. Your life will be marked by reliability and you will seek to treat every confessing Christian as a image-bearer of Christ and therefore worthy of love and respect.

Last, when you are walking in light of the gospel, you will be **sincere**. To use a contemporary term, you will be transparent, real, without guile or pretense.

And James tells us the fruit of a life that is informed by, shaped by, and fashioned by gospel wisdom. He says: **“And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” (James 3:18, ESV)** The fruit of your life if you are walking with Christ will result in a harvest of righteousness.

The truth, beloved, is this: When we are consumed with the greater realities of Christ, His gospel, the bond of the Spirit and the unity of the saints, serving one another, loving one another, seeking reconciliation, extending grace, imaging forth Christ in the world, walking in holiness and faithfulness to the Lord, accomplishing the mission entrusted to us, seeking the lost to make Christ known to them – selfism disappears and petty issues evaporate. Christ is honored and the gospel that we profess to love and treasure, the Lord we profess to love and honor, the church, that we profess to love and be intimately connected to, is upheld and the gospel truth we proclaim with our lips is validated by our lives. Reasonableness reigns. The man who has been gripped by the grace of God, who has seen the depth of his depravity and his lack of standing with God, the man who has seen his spiritual bankruptcy before God, the man who has felt the weight of his sin and his offense against God, has known God’s hatred of sin, the death of Christ that his sin required, and the grace that he has received from Christ will be a reasonable man.

This is completely at odds with the wisdom of this age. The wisdom of this age is “make much of yourself, assert yourself, grab all you can, exalt yourself, insist on your rights, make a name for yourself...” If you live by this wisdom – you will find that you life will not amount to much... and ultimately you will find yourself estranged from Christ and worthy of judgment.

Paul says, let your reasonableness -- gentleness, meekness, graciousness, forbearance, and selflessness -- be known to everyone in the way that you live your life.

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