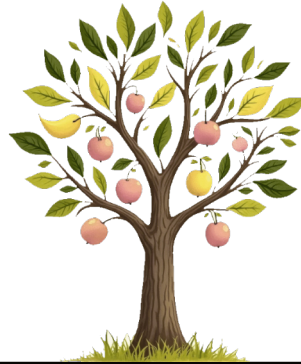


# THE NARROW WAY IS THE PATH TO JOY



HIS ANGER LASTS ONLY A MOMENT,  
BUT HIS KINDNESS LASTS FOR A LIFETIME.

CRYING MAY LAST FOR A NIGHT,  
BUT JOY COMES IN THE MORNING.

(PSALM 30:5 NCV)



THERE IS AN UNDENIABLE, RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OUR  
OBEDIENCE TO THE LORD AND OUR JOY IN THE LORD.

### 1. We are commanded to rejoice in the Lord, 4:4.

- (Philippians 4:4–7 ESV) Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.

- A. The Lord is our ultimate and only source of true joy.
- B. So, yes, in the Lord is where we find joy.

### 2. We are commanded to stand firm in the Lord, 4:1.

- (Philippians 4:1 ESV) Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

Doesn't it just make sense that our joy is tied directly to our obedience.

- A. Standing firm in the Lord we find our joy in the Lord.
- B. Paul commands his beloved brothers to stand firm in a certain way in the Lord.

Thus – in the way indicated; in this manner; following a specific course of attitude and action.

- C. It is significant that Paul commands them to stand firm—not marching out to victory but standing firm in the complete victory Christ has already won for us.

- (1 Corinthians 15:57–58 ESV) But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

- i. We are to stand firm in the faith.

- (1 Corinthians 16:13a ESV) Be watchful, stand firm in the faith.

- ii. We are to stand firm in the freedom for which Christ set us free.

- (Galatians 5:1 ESV) For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

- iii. We are instructed to take up the whole armor of God that we may withstand evil and stand firm.

- (Ephesians 6:13 ESV) Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

- iv. We are to stand firm in the true grace of God.

- (1 Peter 5:12b ESV) ... exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.

### 3. We stand firm in the Lord when we press on toward spiritual maturity and in doing so we do not lose sight of our heavenly calling, 3:12-16.

- (Philippians 3:12–16 ESV) Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. 16 Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

The question is not ... Are we now complete in our faith? ... because we aren't. The question is ... Are we pressing on? Are we in active pursuit of being complete as to who and what God would have us to be.

- A. We have not reached perfection but we press on for the perfection which is ours already in Christ Jesus.
- B. We press on by focusing on what lies ahead—the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.
- C. Those who are mature in Christ have this “pressing on” attitude for the Christian life.
- D. We press on by holding true—standing firm, holding fast—to what we have.

### 4. We stand firm in the Lord when we live as citizens of heaven who are waiting for the return of our Lord from heaven, 3:17-21.

- (Philippians 3:17–21 ESV) Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. 18 For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

- A. We press on by imitating the lives of those who are faithfully pressing on along the narrow way.
- B. Those who do not press on are vulnerable to falling away as enemies of the cross of Christ.

- i. Their end is destruction—death and hell.
- ii. They are driven by their desires.
- iii. They glory in the direction of their lives.
- iv. Their minds are not set on pressing on to the upward call but on earthly things.

**C. Those who press on live in view of these three things.**

- i. They live and make daily decisions with a keenly perceptive and discerning awareness that their citizenship is in heaven.
- ii. They live in a heightened awareness of the reality of the return of their Savior from heaven.
- iii. They live with the joyful anticipation of the transformation of their weak, mortal bodies to be like the glorious body of Christ himself.

**5. We stand firm in the Lord when we come along side fellow believers to help bring healing to their contentious relationships by directing them to come to agreement in the Lord, 4:2-3.**

- (Philippians 4:2–3 ESV) I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche **to agree in the Lord.** 3 Yes, I ask you also, true companion, **help these women**, who have labored **side by side with me in the gospel** together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, **whose names are in the book of life.**

4:2 agree ... φρονέω [phroneo] – to think, to dispose the mind in a certain way; to be of the same mind i.e. agreed together, cherish the same views.

**A. Contentious relationships in the church are one of the greatest dangers and discouragements we face in the fellowship of believers.**

**B. These two people were in a contentious relationship.**

- i. The Apostle Paul asks his true companion to help them.
- ii. These women had history together in laboring side by side with Paul and others in the gospel.
- iii. These women were believers—their names were written in the book of life.

**C. The only true way of healing a contentious relationship is for both parties to **agree in the Lord**—to submit to the teaching of word of the Lord.**

**D. Here are some conclusions we can come to regarding the relevance of these contentions to rejoicing and standing firm in view of the context of our text.**

- i. Contentious relationships in the church are a sad reality of church life.

- ii. Brothers and sisters in Christ will at times have contentious relationships.
- iii. Sin in the life of one or both people involved is the cause for contentious relationships .
- iv. People in contentious relationships often, if not always, need help to do the right thing to honor God and to restore joy in their relationship and joy in the body of Christ.

**E. We defeat the discouragement of contentions in the church in this way.**

- i. We do not dismiss contentious relationships as merely people being people but that they are a result of sin in the lives of those involved.
- ii. We offer to help contentious people to agree in the Lord by directing them to deal with their sin in obedience to the truth of God's word.
- iii. We approach such people in a spirit of gentleness with the purpose of restoration.

- (Galatians 6:1–2 ESV) Brothers, **if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.** Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

- iv. We are to watch out for and avoid contentious people if they refuse our help and refuse to deal with their sinful, contentious behavior.

- (Romans 16:17–18 ESV) I appeal to you, brothers, **to watch out for those who cause divisions** and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; **avoid them.** 18 **For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites,** and by smooth talk and flattery **they deceive the hearts of the naive.**

- v. Contentious people are those who do not serve the Lord but serve themselves. (See 3:19.)
- vi. Contentious people deceive the hearts of naive people in the church fellowship.

**F. We must protect the body of Christ from contentious people whose actions would undermine our ability to stand firm in Christ and rob us of our joy.**

**6. Rejoicing in the Lord is a fruit of and a reason for standing firm, 4:4-7.**

- (Philippians 4:4–7 ESV) **Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.** 5 **Let your**

reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- A. We are commanded to rejoice in the Lord.
- B. The person who stands firm in the Lord experiences joy in the Lord because his obedience brings him further into loving, intimate fellowship with the Lord.
- C. The joy of standing firm yields the fruit of an enduring, reasonable, gentle spirit which gives compelling testimony of a life well-lived in the Lord.
- (Romans 5:3–4 ESV) Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.
- D. Joy is the fruit of righteousness produced in us by the Spirit as we do righteous acts in standing firm in the Lord.
- (Galatians 5:22a ESV) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace ...
  - (James 3:18 ESV) And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.
  - (Psalm 119:165 ESV) Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.
- E. Joy is the peaceful fruit of holiness that our Father produces in disciplining our lives on the narrow way.
- (Hebrews 12:10 ESV) ... but he *[our heavenly Father]* disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.
- F. The person who finds his joy in the Lord trusts the Lord with the things that would otherwise bring him anxiety and rob him of peace.

**7. We stand firm in the Lord when we set our minds to think about the things God tells us to think about and do the things we have learned, 4:8-9.**

- (Philippians 4:8–9 ESV) Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is

any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

- A. God's formula for peace is the antidote the contentious person needs to counteract the poison that controls his life.
- B. Here is the formula ...
- i. Think about these things.
  - ii. Do these things.
  - iii. The God of peace will be with you.

**SO LET'S ASK OURSELVES ... DO WE EXAMINE WHAT WE THINK ABOUT ... WHAT DOMINATES OUR MINDS?**

- (Philippians 4:8 NLT) And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.
- Do I fix my thoughts on those things?
- What would have happened to the contention between Euodia and Syntyche if they had done this?
- What would happen in your life if you would do this?
- Do we see yet that walking in faithful obedience on the narrow way is the clear and blessed path to joy?

**Do I do the things that I have learned?**

**Do I HAVE JOY IN THE LORD?**