

- iv. Practice must involve writing the Gospel on our hearts and minds.

## Conclusion

Eugene Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*: "It is not difficult in [a world of instant everything] to get a person interested in the message of the gospel; it is terrifically difficult to sustain the interest. Millions of people in our culture make decisions for Christ, but there is a dreadful attrition rate. ... In our kind of culture anything, even news about God, can be sold if it is packaged freshly; but when it loses its novelty, it goes on the garbage heap. There is a great market for religious experience in our world; there is little enthusiasm for the patient acquisition of virtue...."

## LIVE THE STORY

*The Gospel is intended to be learned and lived in community. The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.*

- What does Paul mean when he says, "the Lord is near"? How might this reality impact your response to others? ... your joy?
- Do you agree that bearing with others provides plenty of opportunity for anxiety? What kinds of anxieties might forbearance in conflict bring? What is 4:6 calling us to do in response?
- How do you deal with disagreement? Where did you learn this behavior?
- Do you agree that disputes between Christ followers cannot remain a personal thing? Why or Why not?
- Are there relationships in which you are not acting in line with the truth? ... in which your life is not being conformed to the truth of forgiveness or reconciliation?
- Have you ever thought about *practicing living*? Why is this important for the Christian who wants to *live the gospel*? How do we do it?

## Slaves of Christ (Part 10) Practicing and Performing the Gospel

Jerry Cisar — December 2, 2018

Text: 4:1-9

## Introduction

Martha Graham: "It takes about ten years to make a mature dancer." "Dancing appears glamorous, easy, delightful. But the path to the paradise of that achievement is not easier than any other. There is fatigue so great that the body cries even in its sleep. There are times of complete frustration. There are daily small deaths."

## I. Put It into Practice in the Presence of the Church (4:1-3)

- A. Our personal offenses are family business.
- i. Paul did not think that their inability to resolve their conflict was a private matter.

ii. **Christianity Today**: "Rooting out Causes of Conflict"

**Fear**: "Many church conflicts begin *when people become anxious about what is happening (or not happening) in the church*. When anxiety ... turns into worry and fear, people begin to lose perspective about what is actually going on; then you get conflict...."

"When we become aware of a problem, we sometimes overreact, and the problem becomes worse than what we feared in the first place. We act in fear and lose our ability to think clearly and understand circumstances accurately. We act or make decisions that we later regret."

**Needs**: "Sometimes our needs [either real or perceived needs] conflict with the needs of others, and that's when church conflict can begin."

**Sin**: "I readily see how others act selfishly, but I am oblivious to my own selfishness. That attitude only intensifies conflict."

- iii. Euodia and Syntyche must be willing to receive help.
- iv. Euodia and Syntyche were *present*, even if they were at an *impasse*.

B. Paul's appeal is to put into practice 1:27—3:21.

- i. Peter's sudden withdrawal of fellowship from certain members of the congregation was not in line with the truth of the gospel (Gal. 2:14a).

*The truth of the gospel is something which we must act in line with, in order to stop living a lie and to live the truth.*

C. These two ladies have contended at Paul's side!

- i. This word "contended" picks up from what Paul said in 1:27.
- ii. The Christian life was never designed to be free from contention or striving.

## **II. Put It into Practice in the Presence of the Lord Jesus (4:4-7)**

- i. Rejoice (see James 1:2)

*We rejoice because we now understand that God works through our suffering, even suffering another's sin which we have forgiven, and that His purposes are being accomplished in our struggle.*

B. Because we can rejoice in the midst of the struggle, we are enabled to show forbearance to all.

- i. 4:5: *Let your kind forbearance be known to all people. The Lord is near.* (mine)
- ii. It helps us forbear when we know the Lord is near. He is present. He is watching.
- iii. Knowing he is near means He is aware. He is aware, and He is just.

C. Do not be anxious, but pray (6).

- i. Bearing with others provides plenty of opportunity for anxiety.
- ii. Entrusting these anxieties to God in prayer is one more opportunity to enter Christ's sufferings.
  - a) Luke 23:34

b) 1 Peter 2:23

*We can only live in the unity Philippians calls for if we replace our anxious thoughts about ourselves and pray, entrusting ourselves to Him who judges justly!*

D. And the peace of God will keep you your heart and mind.

## **III. Put It into Practice in the "Presence of Mind" (4:8-9)**

A. There is no substitute for practice; not just practice, but intentional practice.

Martha Graham: "I believe that we learn by practice. Whether it means to learn to dance by practicing dancing, or to learn to live by practicing living, the principles are the same. In each, it is the performance of a dedicated, precise set of acts, physical or intellectual, from which come the shape of achievement, the sense of one's being, the satisfaction of spirit. One becomes in some area an athlete of God. Practice means to perform over and over again, in the face of all obstacles, some act of vision, of faith, of desire. Practice is a means of inviting the perfection desired."

B. Think on these things!

- i. There is nothing more true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy than the beauty of Christ's self-emptying, humility to stoop and serve.
- ii. "Think on it," is transformative thinking!

C. How do we practice this?

- i. Practice "is the performance of a dedicated, precise set of acts ... from which come shape of achievement."
- ii. Practice begins when we submit to the act of baptism and enter a life of dying and rising.
- iii. Practice is fortified in our gathered community as we worship together, sing together, pray together, and as we sacrificially serve one another in love.