

“Philippians – Week 9”

SUNDAY, JUNE 21, 2026 - CASEY HEARN



Summary - “Stand Firm: Cultivating the Peace of God”

Week nine in the Philippians series picks up with a word that Paul uses deliberately: “therefore”. Every “therefore” in Paul’s letters is a hinge – it connects what has already been established to what must now follow. Last week’s runner pressing forward with eyes fixed on the goal, forgetting what lies behind, was the setup. Now Paul arrives at chapter four with a command built on that entire foundation: Stand firm in the Lord. What does it mean to stand firm? Pastor Casey Hearn presented Philippians 4:1-9 as a strategy – not for people who have it all together, but for people struggling to keep their footing on difficult terrain. The strategy is not self-improvement, but rather learning how to be grounded and rooted in the Lord. Every principle Paul names is rooted in the same phrase: in the Lord. Stand firm in the Lord. Agree in the Lord. Rejoice in the Lord. The thread is unmistakable. Paul also identifies five virtues to be intentionally cultivated: gospel unity with fellow believers, a spirit of rejoicing, humble gentleness that does not insist on its own rights, prayer saturated with gratitude, and a mind that dwells on what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and commendable. These are not boxes to check. They are the conditions under which the peace of God grows. And the promise is remarkable: when these things are cultivated and the mind is deeply dwelling on – not just skimming – in what is good, the peace of God will stand guard over your heart and mind like an elite soldier at his post. This will lead us as believers to experience peace, not because our circumstances have necessarily changed or worked out the way that we would like, but rather the God of Peace is with us and is guarding our hearts in the truth of Jesus Christ and His word amidst whatever circumstance we face.

Scripture - Philippians 4:1-9

Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. 2 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 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. 8 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.

Daily Reflection Questions (Use T.R.U.T.H. below)

DAY 1 | [MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK: PHILIPPIANS 4:1](#) – STAND FIRM IN THE LORD. Where in your life right now are you trying to stand firm for the Lord rather than in the Lord – relying on your own resolve, your own discipline, or your own track record instead of resting in union with Him? What would it look like this week to shift from straining in your own strength to simply staying in His? (Philippians 4:1)

DAY 2 | [MATTHEW 18:15-20](#) – WHEN A BROTHER WRONGS YOU. The situation with Euodia and Syntyche shows that conflict between believers is not new, and that Paul doesn't just tell them to get over it. In Matthew 18, Jesus gave His church a specific process for handling conflict – not to win an argument, but to restore a relationship and preserve the community. Think about a conflict you are currently avoiding or managing from a distance with a family member or friend. What would it look like to take that first honest, private step – not to win, but to restore, with the goal being to “gain your brother”, not to vent, or to prove your point, but to reconcile? (Philippians 4:2-3)

DAY 3 | [JAMES 1:2-5](#) – JOY IN THE TESTING. Philippians 4:4-6 shows that our rejoicing is grounded in trust, not circumstance. James says to “count it all joy” – not feel it all as joy, but to count it, meaning to make a deliberate assessment. Think about a difficulty you are in right now. What would it take to shift from emotionally reacting to your situation to making the deliberate assessment that God is at work in it? What specifically makes that shift hard for you? (Philippians 4:4-5)

DAY 4 | [ROMANS 12:1-2](#) – THE RENEWED MIND. Paul ties the renewal of the mind to “presenting your bodies as a living sacrifice” – worship lived out in ordinary daily choices. What is one specific, practical thing you could change about your daily routine this week to give your mind more time to steep in what is true and good, rather than what quietly pulls you away from God? (Philippians 4:6-8)

DAY 5 | [ISAIAH 26:3-4](#) – PERFECT PEACE. Isaiah 26:3 is a direct Old Testament parallel to the peace of God in Philippians 4:7-9. The peace God keeps is tied to the direction of the mind – the one whose mind is “stayed on you” receives perfect peace. The word stayed means propped up, leaning against – not a casual glance but a sustained posture. What is your mind typically leaning against throughout the day? What would it look like to lean it against God – rather than your own understanding or someone else's opinion – this week? (Philippians 4:7-9)

Daily Real Time with God (T.R.U.T.H)

T TALK TO GOD IN PRAYER- Start by asking God to help you understand the text and prepare your heart.

R READ THE BIBLICAL TEXT- Read the initial text, then read it again to look for key words and context clarity.

U UNDERSTAND THE TEXT - Explore who wrote the book and their audience, examine verses around the text, or look up key words to better understand their meaning. Ask questions like: Is there a sin to avoid? A promise to claim? A command to obey? What does it teach about God?

T THINK ABOUT AND APPLY THE TEXT- How does this verse change the way you live? Is there an application or choice you need to make to live or think differently?

H HONOR GOD IN PRAYER- Pray through God's Honor/Adoration, God's Kingdom/Surrender, God's Provision/Gratitude, God's Forgiveness/Confession, and God's Power/Protection (see Matthew 6:5-15).

Tools for Further Study

- <https://www.blueletterbible.org/>
- <https://www.bibleref.com/>
- <https://www.gotquestions.org/>
- <https://answersingenesis.org/answers/>
- <https://gospelcoach.ai/>
- <https://carm.org/>

Key Thoughts

The “Therefore” That Holds Everything Together - Paul opens Philippians 4 with a word that is doing heavy lifting: therefore. This is not a casual transition – it is a hinge. Everything Paul has said about pressing on, forgetting what lies behind, imitating Christ, and being transformed by His power has been building to this. Because of all of that, he says: stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

Standing firm, however, is not a white-knuckle act of personal resolve. Pastor Casey illustrated it with a hike at The Cove, the Billy Graham Training Center in Asheville – an intense climb where even the descent required deliberate, careful footing. The gravel was loose. The grades were steep. Every step demanded intentionality. Even what looked like the easy part – coming downhill – turned out to be where you were most likely to slip.

“Without a strategy, you will lose stamina, stumble, and drift toward uncertainty, anxiety, and defeat. No matter how strong you think you are, you cannot stand firm in your own strength.”

– Casey Hearn

The Apostle Paul’s strategy is not a one-time decision but a set of virtues requiring intentional care and preparation – the way you till a garden, fertilize soil, and deliberately nourish what you want to grow. All of it happens in the Lord: not through the Lord as a last resort, but in Him as the source of every ounce of strength.

Cultivate Gospel Unity (vv. 2-3) - The first virtue Paul names does not come from abstract theology – it comes from a real conflict between two real women. Euodia and Syntyche are called out by name in a letter that would be read publicly to the entire church. Paul does not tell them to get over it. He entreats them – the word means to compassionately plead – and he calls in a “true companion” (a “yokefellow” in the King James) to come alongside and help them reconcile. Like two well-matched oxen yoked together, this companion would pull the plow with Paul by walking alongside these sisters toward peace.

This is more than conflict resolution. The goal is not to agree to disagree and move on. Paul’s language – “agree in the Lord,” “one spirit, with one mind striving side by side” – points to gospel unity. The stakes are the mission itself. Striving together for the gospel is what is at stake.

- Gospel unity is purposeful, not passive – it keeps the main thing in focus
- It requires lifting your eyes off your own hurt and agenda and recognizing that peace among believers exists for gospel purposes
- When a conflict needs outside help, asking a trusted leader to walk alongside you is not weakness – it is the biblical model

“Unity among believers is of huge importance and must be dealt with compassionately, directly, and for the sake of the gospel.” – Casey Hearn

Key Thoughts

Cultivate Rejoicing and Humility (vv. 4-5) - Verse 4 is not a command to manufacture happiness. Paul is not telling us to pretend that hard things are fine. The rejoicing he calls for is in the Lord – it is rooted in a view of God’s sovereignty over circumstance, knowing He will purpose all things for your good and His glory. You are not rejoicing that something bad is happening. You are rejoicing in the One who holds all things together.

Verse 5 adds a third virtue: reasonableness – better translated as gentleness or gentle spirit. The defining characteristic is striking: the gentle person does not insist on his own rights. That cuts against the grain of how we naturally operate. We like to get our way. We track what is fair. But this humility is the image of Christ Himself (Philippians 2:1-4), who counted others more significant than Himself. The Lord is at hand (v. 5) – He is near. He sees. We can release our grip because He holds it all.

- Rejoicing in the Lord is not positive thinking – it is a posture of trust in God’s sovereignty
- Humility means releasing your claim on your own rights, timing, and way
- The Lord’s nearness is both a promise and a prompt: He is near to all who call on Him (Psalm 145:18)

Cultivate Prayer with Gratitude (v. 6) - Verse 6’s command – “do not be anxious about anything” – is not a scolding. It is an invitation. The antidote to anxiety is not willpower. It is prayer with thanksgiving, bringing every concern, every decision, and every fear before God.

“Regret carries yesterday’s burdens. Stress carries today’s burdens. Anxiety carries tomorrow’s burdens that haven’t even gotten here yet.” – H.B. Charles, Jr.

God says: give it all to me. But many of us treat prayer the way we treat AAA – a number to call only when we’re broken down on the side of the road with no other options. The question a college student once offered as a prayer accountability tool cuts right to the point: “Have you prayed about it as much as you’ve talked about it?”

In prayer, the secret ingredient is gratitude. Gratitude is not about making God feel appreciated. It is a posture that changes us:

- Gratitude shifts your focus from your circumstances to God’s sovereignty over them
- Gratitude expresses faith and humility, acknowledging God’s faithfulness in the past
- Gratitude opens your heart to worship – beholding God rather than being consumed by your situation

When you are struggling – in your marriage, in parenting, with your employer, in your sense of direction – start by thanking God for what He has already given. That is not denial. That is worship. And it moves your focus from your little kingdom to His great Kingdom purposes.

Key Thoughts

The Peace That Guards and the Mind That Dwells (vv. 7-8) - Verse 7's promise is famous, but the key word is often overlooked: guard. "The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Guard is a military term describing the active protection of a vigilant soldier in the midst of conflict.

"God's peace is not a quiet life free from trouble. It is God's own presence standing watch over your heart and mind when trouble comes. The storms still rage. The diagnosis is still serious. The uncertainty is real. But the peace of God in Christ Jesus has not abandoned His post." – Casey Hearn

Verse 8 shows how that peace is maintained: dwell on what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and commendable. Donald Whitney, in *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, offers a picture: your mind is a cup of hot water. The Word of God is the tea bag. There is a vast difference between dipping the bag and pulling it out versus allowing it to steep.

- Dipping: a few minutes of devotional reading, a quick prayer before a meal, scripture art on the wall, a Christian podcast in the background
- Steeping: sustained, daily engagement with the Word that shapes how you think, what you trust, and who you are becoming

The alternative to dwelling in the Word is dwelling in something else: social media, financial worry, relational obsession, cultural noise. We steep our minds in things that will not ultimately satisfy us. Daily, deliberate time in the Word is not optional maintenance – it is how peace is cultivated and kept.

Practice These Things (v. 9) - Paul closes with both a charge and a promise. The people of Philippi have learned, received, heard, and seen – four words describing the full weight of discipleship: instruction, reception of the gospel, testimony, and lived example. And now: practice these things. Repeatedly. Until they become your new pattern.

"The Christian life is not about generating your own peace, strength, wisdom, or joy. It's about living in union with Jesus Christ. If you are in Him, you have access to what He possesses. His peace can guard your heart. His strength can sustain you. His mind can shape your thinking. The power isn't coming from you; it's coming from the One you're in." – Casey Hearn

Practice these things – gospel unity, rejoicing, humility, prayer with gratitude, and a renewed mind. And the God of peace will be with you. Not His peace as a feeling to chase. The God of peace Himself, present with you in the middle of everything.

G.R.A.C.E Questions

ICE BREAKER: What is something you were absolutely convinced would be easy – but turned out to be significantly harder than the uphill? (Parallel parking, assembling furniture, cooking Thanksgiving dinner, training a puppy, hiking downhill – go.)

G – GIVE YOUR LIFE TO CHRIST - Surrender, both initially and daily

- Casey used the image of a passenger in seat 18A on a transatlantic flight – traveling at 500 mph without producing any of the lift. What would it look like for you to stop trying to generate your own peace and simply stay in Christ today – surrendered to what He's already doing rather than trying to manufacture it yourself?
- Verse 9 closes with Paul saying, "Practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you." Not just His peace as a feeling – the God of peace Himself, present with you. Is there anything you are currently holding onto – a worry, a conflict, a habit – that you haven't fully surrendered to Him? What would surrender look like in that specific area this week?

R – REAL TIME WITH GOD - Bible reading, prayer, scripture memory, journaling

- Pastor Casey described two kinds of engagement with Scripture: dipping the tea bag and pulling it out, versus letting it steep. Which of those best describes your typical time in God's Word right now – and what is one thing that is keeping you from going deeper?
- A student in Pastor Casey's college ministry kept herself and a friend accountable with one simple question: "Have you prayed about it as much as you've talked about it?" Think about the biggest concern in your life right now. How does the ratio of prayer to conversation – with friends, family, or in your own head – compare? What would it look like to adjust that ratio this week?

A – ACT IN OBEDIENCE - Following through on what God is teaching

- Of the virtues Paul names in Philippians 4:1-9 – gospel unity, rejoicing, humility, prayer with gratitude, and a renewed mind (dwelling on what is good) – which one is God most clearly calling you to put into practice right now? What does one concrete step in that direction look like this week?
- Pastor Casey said cultivating these characteristics takes intentional care and preparation – the way you'd till a garden. Where in your life is there an obvious gap between what you believe and what you actually practice day to day? What would it look like to build one specific habit this week – with your spouse, your kids, or on your own – to start closing that gap?

C – COMMIT TO COMMUNITY - Accountability, discipleship, doing life together

- Is there a conflict with a fellow believer – a family member, a friend, someone in this church – that you've been managing from a distance rather than addressing directly? What would it look like to take one step toward reconciliation this week, even if it means asking a trusted person to walk alongside you?
- Paul calls the "true companion" in verse 3 a yokefellow – someone who pulls the plow with you. Who is that person in your life right now? If you don't have one, what is keeping you from pursuing that kind of accountability relationship – and is there someone specific you could take a step toward this week?

E – ENGAGE YOUR WORLD - Stewardship of your life, influence, and mission

- Think about the people in your life who don't follow Jesus – coworkers, neighbors, family members. When they look at how you handle pressure, conflict, or uncertainty, what do they see? Does your visible life tell a different story than what you say you believe?
- Pastor Casey said that "living a life free of anxiousness exalts the gospel." Who in your life is watching you navigate something hard right now – a health concern, a job situation, a relationship? What is your response to that difficulty communicating to them about God, and what would it look like to be more intentional about what that response says?