“WOMEN OF FAITH”

PHILIPPIANS 4:1-7

MAY 8, 2005, SUNDAY 11:00 AM – DR. JACK GRAHAM

Thank you so much Laurie Gayle, I first met Laurie Gayle and her husband Todd a…, up in New York, upper state New York at a wonderful Christian family camp known as Camp Of The Woods and a…, in fact my good friend Norm Son______, I see Norm and Carol here this morning, it’s wonderful to see you all; a…, introduced us. I heard Laurie Gayle sing at Camp Of The Woods, so she’s been here twice now and you’re always welcome back home in Dallas, you’re wonderful dad and folks, servants of the Lord here in this area and a…, we are so grateful for you. In fact Laurie Gayle is gonna be signing. She’s got a wonderful CD of a…, Broadway hits and songs they…it’s a part of my collection I assure you it’s wonderful. She’s gonna be signing these if you would like at Main Street Bookstore after a…, the service and a…, so Laurie Gayle thank you for doing that and I would encourage you to go by. It’s a wonderful album of great, great music. But a…, it is great to have good friends and Norm I saw that article in the paper this week about your perseverance in bringing the Dallas Mavericks a…, it was a great article. Norm is a strong believer along with his family. And how bout those Dallas Mavericks last night? A…, it’s all good! [applause] Thank you Norm for bringing so much excitement to this city and a…, for your faith and your perseverance in making it happen and of course, Don and Linda Carter and so many others, but a…, Norm was the man who made it happen and had the dream and the vision of the Dallas Mavericks and a…, now has the dream and the vision of a family camp in upper state New…New York, a long time camp, really, that he’s taken over in leadership and just a wonderful experience. I would encourage you to go up there and check it out and be a part of a…, The Camp Of The Woods, near Speculator, New York in the Adirondacks, it’s magnificent.

Well, it is Mother’s Day and a…, I wanna bring you a message on the subject, Women Of Faith. Take your Bibles, turn with me to Philippians chapter 4. For those of you who have just joined us today we are in a series of messages from the book of Philippians, this joyous book given to us by the apostle Paul full of faith and optimism and stories of faith. You know the Bible is full of stories of faith, specifically the faith of women who contributed by making this world a better place in which to live and have advanced the kingdom of God. Today we’re going to meet two women in our text who partnered with Paul in spreading the gospel in Philippi and beyond. But these wonderful women, the ladies in our lives who have influenced us so much; we read their stories in the Scripture. Women like Jochebed, the mother of Moses, whose love and sacrifice ultimately helped deliver a nation, or Miriam the sister of Moses who led the children of Israel in praise, having crossed over, dry shod, through the Red Sea. [Exodus 15:1 & 21]

Sing you to the Lord for He has triumphed gloriously.

And it just seems that God has so often put a beautiful and glorious song just as we’ve heard this morning into the hearts of a Woman Of Faith. We think of Ro…Ruth whose godly devotion to her…to her love for her family, as well as her love for God; is an example of God’s redemption of our lives. I think of Deborah; I have to think of Deborah, that’s my wife’s name, and Deborah was a woman who was a warrior and a courageous, faithful woman of God. Or what about Esther, a courageous woman who said: [Esther 4:16]

“…if I perish, I perish!”

But she determined to deliver her people, the Jewish nation, and she did because of her courage. Then there was the widow of Zarephath, whose hospitality and whose sacrifice a…, ministered to the prophet Elijah. When you
move to the New Testament, of course, we meet many wonderful women as well as mothers. There’s Mary, the mother of our Lord, who gave birth to the King of kings and the Lord of lords. There are the other Mary’s, Mary of Bethany who poured out all that she had in honor of Christ, pouring out her love for Him. There were the women at the tomb, Mary Magdalene and others whose life’s were transformed by the grace of God. When we move to the letter of Philippians we know that it was a woman who first met Christ there at Philippi, a Ly…Lydia, a seller of purple, a business woman that Paul there who was leading a prayer group down by the river side and that prayer group in Lydia’s household ultimately became the seedbed for the church at Philippi.

What could we do without the women of influence, the woman of God in our lives, our own women, our own mothers who have loved us and cared for us and blessed us and so it’s fitting that a…, we honor women today and mother’s today or where would we be without them? Not existing, for starters. But, you know, our moms have always been able to say the right thing at the right time and we all can remember some of the classic statements our moms have given us a…., I think these are pretty universal things that moms would say like:

Clean your room!

Or…

Remember to wear clean underwear you never know what’s gonna happen.

Or…

Do your homework!

Or…
Take out the trash!

Or…

If all the other kids jumped off the cliff would you jump off too?

Remember that one? Well, those are some things we heard our mothers say but a…., this week I was looking at some things that you will never hear your mother say, like…

If you be good, if you’re good on your birthday I’ll get you a motorcycle. [congregation laughter]

Or…

How on earth can you see the TV sitting so far back?

Or…

Go ahead and…

Now these are things you won’t hear your mother say, remember…

Go ahead and keep that stray dog, honey, I’ll be glad to walk and feed him every day. [congregation laughter]

Or…
Don’t bother wearing a jacket today that chill is bound to improve.

Or…

The curfew is just a general time to shoot for, it’s not like I’m running a prison around here. [congregation laughter]

Or you won’t hear your mother say this…

Let me smell that shirt, oh yeah, I think it’s good for another week or so. [congregation laughter]

Or…

I think that cluttered bedroom of yours is a sign of creativity.

Or…

Just leave the lights on all night it makes the house look more cheery.

Or…

Could you turn the music up louder so I can enjoy it too?

Or…

I don’t have any tissue with me, just use your sleeve. [congregation laughter]

You’ll never hear your mom say that; or finally…

Run, and bring me the scissors, hurry! [congregation laughter]

Well, moms advice is well taken for the most part, of course, and what we have in the book of Philippians here, chapter 4, is Paul like a parent giving counsel and advice to his spiritual children, the church at Philippi and he gets very personal and persuasive as this spiritual leader and mentor of the Christians there at Philippi gives admonitions to the people that he loved. He called them “dearly beloved” he called them “my crown and my joy” well, let’s read it beginning in verse 1: [NKJ]

1Therefore, my beloved and longed-for-brethren,…

And he said I can’t wait to see you.

...my joy and my crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved. 2And I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life. 4Rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say, rejoice! 5Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. 6Be anxious for nothing and in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.
Dearly beloved, he said it twice, dearly beloved, my crown and my joy. Paul understood something very important about life and that life is about relationships; relationships…our relationship with God and our relationship with our families and our friends and therefore it is appropriate on this Mother’s Day for husbands to honor their wives and for children to commend and cherish their mothers and that we would all cherish the godly influence of the women in our lives who have led us to Christ. Now if you want to be a person of faith, if you want to be a woman of faith, a man of faith then listen to the counsel of this spiritual parent, the apostle Paul, who sees you as the crown in joy of your life. That would be, I’m sure, the testimony of all the moms here today to their kids. You’re my crown, you’re my joy! And it should be the response to every child to crown their mothers with joy and with faith and with honor because she is worthy, she is a winner. Here Paul gives us these admonitions, this advice, counsel as well as commandment as to \textbf{HOW TO BECOME A WOMEN OF FAITH} and I wanna mention these to you this morning.

#1 If you want to become a women of faith then begin \textbf{BY STANDING FIRM}. Standing fast in the Lord, verse 4, ...verse 1 of chapter 4 says:

...so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

Stand fast because there’re challenges in life and there are problems and pressures in life that will tip you off balance and he’s saying in the midst of these challenges don’t be weak, but be strong. Find your strength in the Lord and stand there, because there are many enemies of the faith. Paul mentioned earlier in chapter 3, those enemies of the cross and it is vital if you want to be a person of faith that you stand strong in that faith, knowing that when the winds blow and the storms, or even Satan is on the prowl, attacks, that these challenges to our faith only make us stronger when we stand in the Lord. You know and athlete understands that balance is essential. In most every athletic endeavor it starts with the base up. That’s why it’s so important to have a strong base, to have strong legs if you’re an athlete, because it’s always your base that keeps you from being knocked over and so it is your base in life, your foundation in life, that keeps you strong in the midst of the assaults and the attacks that come against you. And when the attacks come these stretch you and make you stronger. Adversity enables you to strengthen the muscle of faith and faith is like a muscle, in order for it to be strengthened it must be stretched and Paul is saying here look, remain faithful in adversity, stand fast, be true to Him, serve Him, no matter what you’re going through; no matter the trials of your life, see them not as an obstacle, but as an opportunity to grow and stay strong in the Lord in the power of His might. Stand firmly upon the foundation of the Word of God. With so many voices today calling out to both men and women in our culture, telling us what we ought to be, what we ought to do, listen to the Word of God and build your life and your home firmly upon that foundation without compromise, be spiritually and emotionally stable as you are grounded upon the Word of God and never give up ground to the enemy. Stand firm, stand strong, even when Satan comes against your children, you can know, in Jesus Christ, if you will stand firm in Christ Satan can’t have your kids, they belong to Christ and don’t give ground not even an inch. But he said also if you wanna be a woman of faith then do so...

\textbf{BY REJOICING ALWAYS} for verse 4 of chapter 4 says:

\textit{Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice!}

The contagious, conspicuous, continuous joy of the believer. The key phrase here is rejoice in the Lord and that’s also a phrase that we see Paul using so often, “in the Lord” we are in Christ and in Christ there is security and there is strength and there is serenity and therefore we can rejoice in all things. Our joy is beyond our circumstances or the situations of our lives because our joy is in the Lord. Christ is in us and He said, \textit{“My joy I give to you.”} Of all the things that I remember about my mother and my brother is also here and I think he
would say the same thing. I have many memories of her but the most outstanding thing I remember about her was her laughter, her joy. Her laughter filled the walls of our little home and I’m so thankful for giving me a mother who was full of joy, because that just, it just absolutely transforms the atmosphere and the temperature of a room, because you know, if mama’s happy, everybody’s happy, but if mama ain’t happy ain’t nobody happy. Heh, heh, heh! And so ladies, let the joy of Jesus fill your life. Now I know not everything makes us happy, that’s not what Paul is saying. He’s not talking about putting a plastic smile on your face and being superficial and phony, but he’s saying down deep in our lives there is a joy that bubbles out; what Chuck Swindol calls, “outrageous joy.” When Mary the mother of our Lord Jesus rejoiced in the coming of the Messiah, she sang a song:  

[Luke 1:47]  

“...my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior,”

My spirit has rejoiced and the joy that we know in Jesus sweetens the spirit and satisfies the soul and did you know even strengthens the body?

For the joy of the Lord is my strength.

A cheerful heart does good like a medicine...  [Proverbs 17:22]

Scientific and medical studies show that laughter relieves stress and thus is good, not only for the soul but for the body, that laughter is truly the best medicine. Therefore rejoice in the Lord, because to praise God results in a resplendent and a radiant life. Jesus is the source of this joy and when Christ is exalted in our lives there is joy. I love the definition of joy that I learned as a boy, that joy is the flag that flies high in the heart when the King is in residence there. When Christ is Lord of life then there is life to celebrate. So if you want to be a woman of faith or a man of faith...

Rejoice in the Lord always...

The psalmist said:  [Psalm 34:1]

I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise will continually be in my mouth.

The joy of the Lord is my strength, now Satan knows this and that is why Satan often tries to steal our joy, to rob you of the joy of life through some disappointment or defeat or discouragement in your life because Satan knows that if he can rob you, steal your joy he has you in a weakened condition and susceptible to failure, because it is the joy of the Lord that keeps you strong. You wanna stand firm in your faith? Thank God for the women through the generations who have stood valiantly for truth. I look in our own time and our own culture, often while men are standing back in the shadows waiting for something to happen, godly women are making something happen in Jesus’ name, standing firm for truth and if you wanna stand firm for truth be strong in the Lord and the power of His might then:

Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice.

For the...the joy of the Lord is your strength. Decide to have a great attitude every day and live with optimism and joy and the spirit of Christ who lives within you. That is the joy of life! That is the joy of parenthood, motherhood, fatherhood and every ot...every kind of hoo...d you may live in. But there’s something else, if you wanna be a woman of faith do it by standing firm and rejoicing also...a...rejoicing always but also...

**BY AVOIDING STRIFE AND RESOLVING CONFLICT:** now that’s right here in the text, because Paul
gets personal and calls the names of these two ladies who were partners with him and spreading the gospel there in Philippi and surrounding areas. We don’t know much about them, we know their names, but we know there were influential members of the church, but we also know that somehow a conflict had arisen between these two ladies. We don’t know the issue, we don’t why the conflict, but Paul was concerned about it and Paul knew that conflict in the church could disrupt, disturb, divide and even destroy the church. How many times in churches through the years have we seen the witness and the influence of that church severely damaged, if not destroyed by conflict, unresolved conflict. I’m not talking about divisions over central doctrinal truths, but I’m talking about typically personality conflicts and trivial matters that often split congregations and Paul knew that the witness of his Philippian friends were…was being compromised by this division and so he advises them, he says I implore you, I plead with you in verse 2, in fact he said it:

*I...I implore Euodia...I implore Syntyche...be in the same mind in the Lord.*

He said I implore you, I implore you!

*And I urge you also, true companion,...*

He mentions someone, we don’t know exactly who it is, but he mentions someone there who may needed to step...needed to step in and help resolve the conflict. When we have conflicts, if we can’t settle those issues we may need someone to help us find restoration. But strife and division in the home, in the church, in the community, opens the door for the enemy to work. Listen to James 3 and verse 16:

*For where there is jealousy and selfishness, there is strife and every evil work.*

Strife, conflict, opens the door for every evil work of the enemy and keeping conflict, unresolved conflict out of your life is essential in being fit for life and living abundantly and rejoicing in life. And so Paul gives them some good counsel in verse 5 he says:

*Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.*

Now if you have, I’m reading from the New King James, which gives this word gentleness:

*Let your gentleness be known to all men. ...*

If you have a King James version, it uses the word moderation.

*Let your moderation be known to all men. ...*

I would read that in days gone by, that word:

*Let your moderation be known to all men. ...*

And…and I would wonder about that. I would say, you know I don’t like anything about that word moderate. I just don’t! I don’t wanna be a moderate Christian, I don’t wanna be a moderate Baptist, I can’t think of anything I want to be a moderate about. It sounds lukewarm, it sounds insipid, moderate:

*Let your moderation be known to all men. ...*

What does that mean? And I discovered that it…it doesn’t have to do really with what we believe, our
doctrines, it has to do with our demeanor and that’s why it’s given in other translations words like let your gentleness, let your gentle spirit, let your yielded-ness, let your sacrifice be known to all men. In other words lay down the armor and lay down the sword ladies and gentlemen and let your demeanor, let your attitude be one, not of arguing and fighting and bickering and quarrelling and being negative, but let your gracious, gentle spirit be known to all. One commentator, Matthew Arnold, gives it a beautiful definition, he called this word:

Let your sweet reasonableness be know to all. ... 

I like that.

...your sweet reasonableness...

You know in life, you know, when your right you can fight for the right and always be right in relationships, or you can be happy, take your pick. But typically, you can’t be right if you’re unreasonable and he’s saying be reasonable and be responsible to resolve conflict in your life and do it with yielded-ness and considerateness; be a gentle woman, a gentle man, to live a life of gentleness and of gratitude. I picked up a long time ago, these Rules For Relationships that I think Paul would approve this morning, like…

Agree more and argue less!
Listen more and talk less!
Produce more,...advertise less!
Confess more,...accuse less!
Laugh more and fret less!
Give more and receive less!

I believe that’s what the Scripture means when it says

Let your (sweet reasonableness) gentleness, be known to all...

If you have a conflict with someone in your family, among your friends, in the church, resolve that immediately, because nothing will steal your joy and ultimately hinder your faith like unresolved conflict in your life. Take care of it immediately it’s important. It’s good for you, it’s good for your family, it’s good for your friends, it’s good for the church and sometimes resolving it means just letting it go. If you’ve done everything that you can to resolve the conflict, let it go and let God take care of it. Take your hands off, because God’ll do a better job at taking care of the injustices. Someone hurts you, someone said the wrong thing, someone did something callous, someone did something carnal, someone offended you and it…just seemingly you can’t resolve it, you can’t get over it, you can’t get by it, it is down deep in your soul and you’re unwilling to let it go; God says let it go and let Me take care of this issue in your life. He’ll do a better job if you…then you taking care of the problem if you’ll just trust Him to do it.

One final word and that is if you want to be a woman of faith do so by standing firm, rejoicing always, avoiding strife and resolving conflict and PERSEVERING IN PRAYER, by practicing the presence of God. There’s another key phrase in this passage, in verse 5, the end of it. I want you to look at it, it says:

...The Lord is at hand.
...The Lord is at hand.

Therefore be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, ...let your requests be made
known to God;

...The Lord is at hand.

It’s evident to me that the Scripture here is not speaking of the coming again of the Lord, He’s spoken of that earlier in chapter 3, but the emphasis here is not the future coming of Christ.

...The Lord is at hand.

Or the Lord is near; but he’s talking about the Lord is here, the Lord is near. Practice His presence, realize, recognize His presence; He is as real as the flesh on your skin, He is as close as your heart, as your hand, the Lord is near and it is when you live in the conscious awareness of His presence in your life, of His nearness and dearness in your heart that is when you experience peace and power in your life because:

...The Lord is at hand.

You can immediately be in His presence, pray about everything. He says pray about your worries. He said don’t worry about anything, bring all that to Christ, bring that to Him in your prayers and then he said bring your wants, because:  [Philippians 4:19]

My God shall supply all of your needs according to His riches in glory in Jesus Christ.

Just like that mother who came to Jesus in the New Testament, she a Canaanite woman, she was a non-Jew, her daughter was demon possessed. She was in…she was frantic, but she came to the right place, she came to Christ and persevered in prayer and Jesus saw her faith and her perseverance and honored her and healed her daughter and delivered her daughter from those terrible demons. I believe that God has so made a woman that He has given you a capacity for worship that is precious and powerful. God has so designed you, ladies, that you would be a person of prayer and through the years we’ve seen that haven’t we? How women have prayed, most of the prayer ministries of churches are led by godly women who understand and practice this principle. But may God help you to be a person of prayer, a woman of prayer practicing His presence every day. Now, if you’ve been around Prestonwood for awhile you know that a…, that I spend a…quite a bit of time challenging men and exhorting men and kinda couching men up to be godly men and dedicated to Christ and a…, I do that as often as I can and a…, you know sometimes I’m hesitant to give commandments to women and I’m a…, you know, I just sorta back off a little bit, because you know, what do I know about a woman, but let me tell you what I do know and I wanna give you some good advice today ladies, because many of you have a problem that you’re not dealing with and that is you’re not taking good care of yourself, physically, spiritually and emotionally. I look at some of you and you’re on the go constantly, you’re pushing the kids somewhere, to school, to the ballgame, the soccer game, you’re here, there and you’ve got assignments at work, you’ve got the big assignment at home, you’re here, you’re there, you’re everywhere and so often you’re wound up tight and stressed up and no place to go and the reason is because you’re not taking time for yourself with God. You’re not taking time out of your schedule to practice His presence and to find peace in the midst of all the storms that are circling around you. You know I think this new deal with discipline with kids, you know, timeout, what is that? A…, timeout, [congregation laughter] But I look around and most of the women today are given their kids timeout. Your kids don’t need timeout, you need timeout. And you need timeout with God to pray and to be a prayer warrior for your kids, for your husband, for your family, for your church.

David McKinley, on this platform, our teaching pastor had a godly mother by the name of Jean and she was also full of joy and laughter in her life, but when I think of Jean I think of Jean’s prayer life, because she passed
away last summer and...and when they were looking through her...her prayer diary and she kept a prayer diary dated with prayers offered and prayers answered, it became a legacy, David, of her life and I know David and I both feel somewhat a..., lessened in our strength, because every day at 5:30 she was up praying for David and she included me often in those prayers, as well, and I just think what a difference that has made in David McKinley’s life and in his families life and...and when a woman prays like that and her legacy and her life is a life of prayer you can’t imagine the influence that it brings, it’s powerful.

My friend, a..., Franklin Graham a..., he was talking about his mother Ruth Bell Graham and when he preached the first time his mother came to hear him preach. Now, his mother was somewhat surprised that he was preaching because Franklin has been a rebel and had not come to faith in Christ, though he was raised in His faith and was the son of Billy and Ruth Graham he had not personally received Christ until he was a...a young man in his 20’s and so he came to Christ, ultimately he became a preacher and is a wonderful evangelist today. Franklin says,

To follow in my father’s footsteps, I had to go through my mother’s knee prints.

And he talks about his mother’s ministry in his life. He said,

Mama loved me unconditionally, I knew she prayed for me earnestly. She knew when to lecture me, when to punish me, when to hug me.

And he said:

As my father had a worldwide ministry, my mother had a home ministry, a home mission ministry with our family.

And he talks about the prayers of his mother, he says:

I know my life and ministry have kept my mother on her knees in prayer. To me her prayers are more than an example; they are channels of God’s power.

And then she once wrote a poem, Franklin writes, about how I had worn out my guardian angel. Some of you have kids that are doing that, they’re wearing out their guardian angel. Ruth wrote a prayer...a...a...poem about it and said any angel assigned to her prayers would have to stay busy with Franklin.

A few years ago a gospel music group had a song that went like this.

When mama prayed heaven paid attention.
The angels spread their wings and stood prepared.

When mama prays everybody oughta stand at attention and say thank you, thank you for your prayers, thank you for persevering, for believing in me and loving me through it all.

Mother’s are concerned today. Josh McDowell said they’re:

The 3 top concerns of Christian mothers are these:
I’m concerned that I won’t be able to protect my kids from the influence of the culture.
2. I'm concerned I'll become too busy to instill biblical values into my children and…

3. I’m concerned that I lack the resources to help instill biblical values into my children.

The top 3 concerns! The Bible says don’t worry about anything, not even these concerns, you pray about everything and if you will pray you will have the resources, you will have the time and yes, you will have the power to protect your kids in this culture. That is a woman of faith. Standing firm, rejoicing always, resolving conflict and persevering in prayer.