

PHILIPPIANS: OVERCOMING BROKEN DREAMS GOD'S WAY
"Part IX: Gaining God's Peace With ALL Our Taxing Relationships"
(Philippians 3:17-4:9)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Relationships with others can at times become so taxing we don't know what are the right things to do or even **think** in them.

(1) Once a believer asked me whether he should or should not bail a certain associate out of jail. The accused party had repeatedly been in trouble and had often been in trouble with the law as a consequence. Finally, after one very bad incident, the police had arrived in response to a "911" call and taken the party off to jail.

The family wanted the party bailed out but didn't have the money to arrange it. They had asked this Christian who could help to arrange for the bail, but he was wondering if it was God's will for him to let the associate sit in jail and repent from his error.

What was he to do -- "lovingly" bail the associate out or let him sit in jail and think about what he had done in hope that he might repent and be different when eventually released?

(2) Some parents in our Church have struggled over whether or not it was just for them to keep their teen son or daughter from attending the local high school prom! On the one hand, they want their teen to have fun with those their own age, but they have known of the crime that occurred on prom nights when they attended high school decades before! They have applied their decades-old insight today!

Well, are such parents **right** on their stand regarding the prom, or **not**? Or, are they just outdated, not in touch with the values and possibly greater maturity of *today's* teens? **How do they know?**

(3) Over the years, I have noted questions believers have held regarding **themselves** in relationships difficult for them. (a) A wife wants to know if **she** is the sole cause of her husband's lovelessness to her. (b) A daughter who has been told she is too quiet has wondered if her personality has a major defect in it that makes her unlovable! (c) A child insecurely wonders if he may be less loved by his parents because of the name he was given at birth! (d) A son anxiously lives with a charge made by a parent that people have always complained about him to the parent, implying he has a possible personality defect!

Is there a way for us to live peaceably with all of our relationships -- even with those that confuse us about how we should view OURSELVES? If so, **HOW?**!

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "I am restless and confused about relating to somebody, for I question what I MYSELF possibly OUGHT to be doing or BEING in that relationship. Is there is a sensible, peaceful solution to this?!"

- I. **When Paul wrote to the Philippian Church, he addressed an interpersonal conflict between the ladies Euodias and Syntyche, for their strife apparently affected the whole Church body, Phil. 4:2.**
- II. **That address belongs to a broader treatment on how believers can gain peace in ALL their relationships, whether the issues focus on others or questions they have about THEMSELVES, Phil. 3:17-4:3:**
 - A. Regarding those with spiritually harmful, errant beliefs, the believer was to guard himself from close contact with them, Phil. 3:2-3, 17-19.
 1. Paul had previously warned the Philippians of those who aggressively promoted spiritually harmful Mosaic legalism on the Christian community, Philippians 3:2-3.
 2. He also warned of others who advanced a lustful, self-gratifying gnostical system valuing earthly things that also opposed the cross of Christ, Philippians 3:17-19. (Lightfoot, *Philippians*, p. 154-155)
 3. Thus, whether those with errant theology pushed spiritually harmful submission to the Mosaic Law or loose, godless living of the Gnostics, believers were to beware of them, Phil. 3:2, 17.
 - B. Conversely, toward those who lived by faith for the life to come, the believer was to mimic and join in fellowship, Phil. 3:15-17, 20-4:1.
 - C. Then, problems between fellow workers in the same faith were to be addressed in grace so people in the Church could live in peace, 4:2, 3.
- III. **Yet, if being at PEACE in such relationships was hard, the believer was to heed God's directive on finding peace as follows (4:4-9):**
 - A. He was to rejoice in his relationship with God in Christ, Phil. 4:4.
 - B. He was to let his **gentle forbearance** as a grace-based' believer become the hallmark of his interactions with others, Phil. 4:5 where the KJV "moderation" is better rendered, "**forbearing gentleness**", *Ryrie Study Bible, KJV*, footnote to Philippians 4:5. [Note: such a forbearing gentleness was foreign in **BOTH** the oppressive Mosaic Legalists and conceited, lustful, earthy Gnostics!

- C. Now, in **case** there was **ANY difficulty** in **ANY** such relationship (whether one had problems dealing with the legalists or the earthy Gnostics or in dealing with fellow brethren, or even viewing *himself* properly in such relationships), the **believer** could live at *peace* in a **comprehensive** way as follows (Philippians 4:6-9):
1. Paul noted a believer could feel **anxious** in relating to others as he had suggested in the section, and that due to all *sorts* of reasons.
 2. He then urged his readers to cease being anxious, Philippians 4:6a.
 3. To **accomplish** this, a twofold process was to occur (Phil. 4:6b-9):
 - a. Christians are to let their requests regarding all such relationship concerns be made known unto God **in prayers of faith**. Then, God's peace that surpasses all understanding would "stand sentry", protecting their hearts and minds from *harm* in all such relationships and one's encounters with others regarding them, Philippians 4:6b-7. (Ibid., Lightfoot, p. 161)
 - b. Then, they were to fill the *mind* with **wholesome** truths related to the issues at stake, whether they needed insight in dealing with legalists, lustful gnostics, fellow brethren or even with how they were to view themselves in these relationships, Phil. 4:8.
 - c. **[From 2 Timothy 3:16-17, we know Paul's list of wholesome truths given in Philippians 4:8 is found in Scripture, for it alone supplies all such wholesome information we need.]**
 - d. In so doing, "the God of peace" would be **with** them, an even stronger expression than verse 7's "peace of God," Phil. 4:9!

Application: Since dealing with restlessness in our relationships takes God's insight and interaction with us in them, (1) we need to **BECOME** Christians by faith in Christ as personal Savior from sin to be indwelt by God's teaching Holy Spirit, Jn. 1:11-13; 7:39; 14:16-18, 26. (2) Then we must fellowship with God by confession of sins done since salvation **TO GET IN TUNE** with God's ministry of **LEADING** us (1 Jn. 1:9; 1 Cor. 2:14-15; Rom. 8:14). (3) Then, God wants us to rejoice in Him and relate with gentle forbearance to all. (4) If tempted to be anxious about ANY relationship in any way, (a) we should check **SCRIPTURE** and **TRUST** its truth to live in peace. (b) If we fail to gain such insight on our own, we can seek **HELP** from reputable believers, 2 Tim. 3:14-15. God's plan is for us regularly to attend Church meetings where we can learn how to use Scripture effectively here, Eph. 4:11-16; Heb. 10:23-25!

Lesson: Restlessness we face in relating to others is solved by (a) being **INFORMED** on God's **WILL** via **SCRIPTURE'S** insight through God's **TEACHING** on such relationships, **AND** (b) **USING** that insight to trust the Lord in ways that produce **HIS** effective help for us **IN** them. >

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

We began our message with a question some parents had on drawing a line regarding their teen's attending the high school prom.

To be sure, every parent has the right to draw his own conclusion regarding such a social activity. However, *this* given set of parents wondered if their decision was **unbiblically prudish** -- if the strictness with which they were "drawing a line in the sand" was excessive as **God** would judge it as the stand was based on these parents' experiences in high school of **decades before!**

(a) Well, one of the parents attended the area Crisis Pregnancy Center's presentation of its work in a joint meeting with the Church Board and Mission's Committee. At that meeting Deborah J. Keefe, the CPC's area Director, stated that the CPC **Unionville** office closest to us is has a notably higher influx of **troubled** unwed mothers **every year** 6 weeks following area high school proms! So proms have the **same** effect as **decades before** -- enhancing levels of immoral conduct!

(b) Additionally, in last Sunday's Proverbs lesson, we learned in the Adult Sunday School class that what a maturing son or daughter does directly affects the joy or grief of his parents, Proverbs 10:1. Thus, it is fair for parents to be concerned about allowing a son or a daughter to be exposed to excessive immorality temptations -- the potential for complications for the **family** is not worth the risk to them.

Thus, aided by Scripture and this news that came from the parent's **regular** exposure to his **Church's** ministries, they found the **Lord** indicating they were **well** within the boundaries of conscience to restrict their teens on involvement with the prom.

This illustration is NOT used to teach all parents who allow their teens to attend any high school's prom thereby do ERR. Nor does it mean that all teens who attend their proms are immoral. However, Scripture with this insight that was gained from the parent's exposure to their regular Church involvement gave the parent **involved** reason to see his stand on the prom was **reasonable** before the **Lord!**