



KING'S CHAPEL

Daily Devotional - Philippians Study

Week 5 - Day 1

Approaching God

Read Acts 2:14-18

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: " 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

Yesterday, we celebrated Pentecost Sunday, traditionally recognized by the church 50 days after Easter Sunday. In the reading above, we see a bold Peter filled with the Spirit and preaching the gospel in front of a large crowd whereas only hours earlier, he along with the other disciples were locked in an upper room afraid and uncertain about what to do next. They prayed. The Holy Spirit descended upon all believers. This is the transformational glory of God at Pentecost. Before He comes there is misunderstanding and division, but now with the language of the Holy Spirit there is rejoicing. Pause and reflect as you enter into today's time with the Lord. What would you want to pray regarding the Holy Spirit in your life today?

Bible Reading, Study & Meditation - Philippians 4:1-9

Slowly & carefully read the passage 2 or 3x's before taking notes & answering questions

Philippians 4:1-9

1 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.

Start with Engaging the Text: Take a few minutes to highlight, circle, or underline key words. Which words or phrases stand out to you as significant?

Daily Study Questions

Continue using the A.B.C. method to study today's passage if you are enjoying that tool. Otherwise use these more directed questions that are based on a similar approach of making observations about the text followed by self-reflective meditation questions. You may find it helpful to read through the commentary in "Resources for Further Study" at the end of today's study to answer these questions.

To Study the Passage:

- What is the situation Paul is addressing in vs. 2-3? Who are these women and what is Paul longing for? How does he articulate that? Who is supposed to help?
- How might vs. 8 relate to Paul's discussion of the conflict of the two women the church in vs. 2-3?
- What promises are offered in this passage that stand out to you? Look specifically at vs. 7 & 9. Reflect on what these promises meant to the church in what they were going through. How do they relate and speak to you today?

Meditation & Reflection Questions

- Vs. 2-3 appear to be a "special appeal" to two women (Euodia and Syntyche) who have been in conflict with one another for awhile. After all, it would have taken some time for Epaphroditus to give Paul this news and for the message from Paul to get back to Philippi. He certainly would've guessed it wouldn't have resolved itself by the time his letter arrived. Think about your role in the body of Christ in settling disputes. How are you tempted to respond? When have you seen a dispute between Christians handled in a positive and healing manner? What's your part?
- Paul's word for "rejoice" in vs. 4 means to celebrate in the Lord and carries a sense joy welling up and making a corporate community of believers want to celebrate publicly. What are some ways we can celebrate as believers today, even in the midst of isolation and difficult issues in our lives and world?

Close in Prayer:

Prayer: Let my prayer today be: "Come Holy Spirit and fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth." Come Holy Spirit and fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth.

Resources for Further Study

Phil. 4:1 - *Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown...*

Paul thinks of the maturity and progress of the Philippians as a crown of honor which he wears with gladness, and their perseverance in the gospel brings him great joy. This is the beauty of Christian interdependency

This Greek term (*stephanos*) could refer to two different types of wreaths: a wreath made of laurel, parsley, or wild olive leaves that an athlete was awarded for victory, or a wreath worn by a guest at a joyful banquet. The Latin-speaking members of the church would think of the Latin term *corona*, which was an award of valor in the Roman army.



statue of Roman athlete with a crown (Archaeology Study Bible)

Summary of Philippians 4:1-9

You never know when its going to happen. Two people who one day are good friends, working alongside each other in the church or community, can suddenly get cross with each other. A sharp word from one, half-heard by the other; a bitter response, said hastily and without quite meaning it; then the slamming of doors, the face turned away in public, the sense (on both sides) of hurt so great, and offense so deep, that nothing can mend it. Almost every church has had to deal with such incidents. It is particularly sad and tragic when it happens within the church community where the whole ethos ought to be one of mutual love, forgiveness and support; but the chances are that since each will accuse the other of being the first to have broken this code, neither will be prepared to back down. It then calls for a certain amount of what in international relations is called "shuttle diplomacy" on the part of a pastor or wise friend before any progress is made.

But a word addressed in public to both parties might just break the deadlock (though you'd have to know what you were doing or it could backfire and make things worse). We assume from verse 2 that Paul knew what he was doing. Two women in Philippi, Euodia and Syntyche, have fallen out with each other, and he's appealing publicly for them to come to agreement. The commands of 2:1-4 were not, then, simply addressed to the church in general, though that was true as well; they had a particular case in mind. Somethings need to be tackled quickly, before resentment solidifies and cannot be softened and melted. The present disagreement between Euodia and Syntyche must have been going on for some time. Epaphroditus must have thought a word from the apostle Paul himself might now produce some change.

Who, then, is the "**true companion**" (vs 3) to whom Paul appeals for help on the ground of this pastoral dilemma? We don't know. Perhaps it was Epaphroditus himself, who was going to take Paul's letter back to Philippi; this mention here would then give him the authority to act in Paul's name. Or perhaps it was one particular church leader who Paul knew very well and who the rest of the church would recognize when addressed like this. After this brief aside for a particular problem, Paul turns to his real final command before he moves toward the end of the letter:

"Rejoice in the Lord!" vs. 4

In his world and the culture Paul lived within, this rejoicing would have meant public celebration. The world all around Rome, Greece, Corinth, and Philippi used to organize great festivals, games and shows to celebrate their gods and their cities, not least the new 'god,' Caesar himself. Why shouldn't the followers of King Jesus celebrate exuberantly? It's only their right; and celebrating Jesus as Lord encourages and strengthens loyalty and obedience to him. At the same time, it's interesting that he at once says that the public image of the Christian church should be of a gentle, gracious community (vs. 5). Exuberance must not turn into mere extrovert enthusiasm which squashes sensitive souls and offends those who are by nature quiet and reserved.

The three main things that will come into line if the celebration is joyful and gentle are the prayer which overcomes anxiety (vs. 6-7); the patterns of thought which celebrate God's goodness throughout creation (vs. 8); and the style of life which embodies the gospel (vs.9).

Anxiety was a way of life for many in the ancient pagan world. With so many gods and goddesses, all of them potentially out to get you for some offense which you might not even know about, you never knew whether something bad was waiting for you just around the corner. With the God who had now revealed himself in Jesus, there was no guarantee (as we've seen) against suffering, but there was the certainty that this God was ultimately in control and that he would always hear and answer prayers on any topic whatsoever. People sometimes say today that one shouldn't bother God about trivial requests (good weather for the church picnic; a parking spot on a busy street); but, though of course our intercessions should normally focus on serious and major matters, we note that Paul says we should ask God about *every* area of life. If it matters to you, it matters to God. Prayer like that will mean that God's peace - not a Stoic lack of concern, but a deep peace in the middle of life's problems and storms - will keep guard around your heart and mind, like a squadron of soldiers looking after a treasure chest.

The command in verse 8, to think about all the wonderful and lovely things listed here, runs directly opposite to the habits of mind instilled by the modern media. Read almost any news outlet - their idea of what's newsworthy is anything that is untrue, unholy, unjust, impure, ugly, of ill-repute, vicious and blameworthy. Is that a true representation of God's good and beautiful world? How are you going to celebrate the goodness of the creator if you feed your mind only on the places in the world which humans have made ugly? How are you going to take steps to fill your mind instead with all the things that God has given us to be legitimately pleased with, and to enjoy and celebrate?

Finally, reflect for a moment on Paul's command in verse 9. It is one of the most demanding ethical commands anywhere in the Bible - not so much for those who receive it, though no doubt it's that as well, but for the persons who give it. Which of us could say, after staying in town for a few weeks, that the way forward towards maturity and gospel-service was to do exactly what we ourselves had done?

As so often, Paul weaves into apparently brief and unconnected strands of thought a theme which turns, teasingly, this way and that. Where does "the peace of God" (vs. 7) come from? Why, from "the God of peace," of course (verse 9). Get to know the one and you'll have the other.