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Session 10

PHILIPPIANS
The Letter of Joy
CHAPTER 4 (Verses 4-9)

RECAP OF CHAPTER 1:1-3:7

- Philippi was the church that blessed Paul's heart the most. They were the ones who had reciprocated his love and had lived their faith out in a purity that other churches he established had not.
- The city of Philippi was a miniature version of Rome. It was a "Rome away from Rome" in every respect.
- (1:13) "The whole praetorian guard" came to know that Paul was IN CHAINS FOR CHRIST!

POWER VERSE: (1:21) "FOR TO ME, TO LIVE IS CHRIST AND TO DIE IS GAIN."

POWER VERSES: (2:6-11) Scholars consider this the greatest passage Paul wrote about Jesus!

POWER VERSES: (2:12-13) CONTINUE TO WORK OUT YOUR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING

- (2:12) The Greek word for "work out" is *katargazesthai*. It means to bring to completion, showing that although we are gifted salvation by grace from God, we have personal responsibility to continue in that work of the Spirit through our obedience in walking out and working out our faith.
- (3:3) Paul gives us three examples of how true Christians are the true circumcision. "Who serve God in spirit." "Who boast in Jesus Christ." "Who put no confidence in the flesh."

POWER VERSE: (3:7) BUT WHATEVER WERE GAINS TO ME I NOW CONSIDER LOSS FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST.

- (3:10) According to Paul, to know Christ intimately means to know the "power of His resurrection," the "participation in His sufferings" and "becoming like Him in His death".
- (3:12) Until another English translation of the Bible words it so beautifully, "I press on to try to grasp that for which I have been grasped by Jesus Christ."

PAUL'S CROWN AND JOY (4:1)

- (vs1) Paul is revealing how incredibly deep his love and affection was for the Philippian church. Despite his dire circumstances in prison, their faith and friendship brought him incredible joy.
- There are two Greek words used for crown. *Diadema* was the royal crown for a king. Paul uses the other Greek word *stephanos*; that crown was made of interwoven wild olive, parsley and bay leaves.
- It was a crown for a victor of athletic games, for the highest honored guest at an important banquet, or for those who had achieved their highest ambition or conquest.
- Paul is saying to the Philippian church, compared to all my other achievements for Christ, you are my greatest achievement. You are my pride and my joy. At our final banquet of God, you are my crown.
- Three times in the first four verses of Chapter 4, Paul uses the charge "in the Lord" for good reason.
- "Stand firm in the Lord in this way dear friends". The Greek word *stekete* is used for "stand firm." It means to stand firm in the shock of a battle when an enemy is attacking.
- (vs2) Paul urges Euodia and Syntyche to "agree in the Lord." When there's division between Christians the great unifier is their identity and submission to Jesus, not in their fleshly attempts at unity.
- (vs3) These two women obviously were close to Paul, were strong in their ministry together at one point and were mature enough to know better.
- What is beautiful about this passage is the underlying fact that women had a prominent place in leadership in the Philippian church.
- In Greek culture women were supposed to be seen and speak as little as possible.
- Paul obviously saw the incredible value of women just like Jesus did. This was revolutionary.

REJOICE IN THE LORD (4:4-5)

POWER VERSE (4:4) **REJOICE IN THE LORD AT ALL TIMES. I WILL SAY IT AGAIN—REJOICE!**

- (vs4) “Rejoice in the Lord.” Everything Paul is doing points his brothers and sisters in Philippi to the centrality, power, salvation, freedom, friendship and joy in Jesus Christ.
- “Don’t be distracted by legalists, hyper-grace people, hardships, divisions, drama, or anything else.”
- Paul, who could have everything to complain about, is rejoicing in Jesus, his church family, eternal life and victory. When we have true focus, perspective and intimacy in Jesus, nothing should get us down.
- The first mention of “rejoice” was the importance of rejoicing and refocusing in the Lord.
- But, it’s almost as if Paul, as he was writing, was analyzing his circumstances, Philippi’s circumstances, all that was uncertain, but came back to the centrality of who Jesus is for us, to us, through us and the promise of guaranteed victory and life in heaven. So, he again emphatically writes “I will say it again—Rejoice!”
- Christian joy is completely separate in its source from anything on earth. Christian joy’s source is simply the constant presence of Christ. Like two lovers that are always happy when they’re together.
- When you are with, being loved, and loving the love of your life, nothing else matters.
- No matter what you are going through right now in life, in Christ, you can rejoice! He is enough!
- (vs5) The word “gentleness” in the Greek is *epieikeia*. It is one of the most difficult words in the entire Greek language to translate. Like the word *shalom* in the Hebrew it takes multiple words to describe.
- Wycliffe translates it “patience.” Tyndale and Cranmer translates it “softness.” The ESV translates it “reasonableness.” NASB, “gentle spirit.” KJV, “moderation.” The Living Bible, “unselfish and considerate.” The Message, “make it as clear as you can to all you meet that you’re on their side.”
- Someone who has *epieikeia* in their life knows when not to apply the strict letter of the law and when to shift or move from justice towards mercy.

“Let all the world know that you will meet a man half-way.” C. Kingsley

- When Jesus had the woman who was caught in adultery before Him, He could’ve sentenced her to death, but instead showed mercy and grace. He took the justice that was deserved for her and whomever she committed adultery with on Himself on the cross.
- Jesus was only hard on the teachers of the law who knew better, but yet incredibly gracious on the Samaritan woman or the heathen who didn’t know God, and hadn’t been in His presence.
- “*Epieikeia* finds the middle ground between justice and mercy and grace.” Russ Hurst
- Why is it so important to have *epieikeia*? “The Lord is near.” Jesus is watching and with us in everything we do. We are His representatives in all we do. We should be constantly mindful of this.

*“To desire justice is human. To show *epieikeia* is Divine!”*

POSITIONING YOURSELF TO RECEIVE GOD'S PEACE (4:6-7)

POWER VERSES (4:6-7) 6 DO NOT BE ANXIOUS ABOUT ANYTHING, BUT IN EVERY SITUATION, BY PRAYER AND PETITION, WITH THANKSGIVING, PRESENT YOUR REQUESTS TO GOD. 7 AND THE PEACE OF GOD, WHICH TRANSCENDS ALL UNDERSTANDING, WILL GUARD YOUR HEARTS AND YOUR MINDS IN CHRIST JESUS.

- (vs6) These are two incredibly strong statements that every Christian will have to die to in their daily battle in life to truly live in freedom in spirit, mind and soul. God means anything and everything.
- The first battle is the battle of control and living in the natural. You are probably used to trying to control everything in your life, and naturally feel it is your responsibility to fight your way through life.
- The second battle is the battle of trust and belief. To believe that God is good and that He cares about you as much or more than you do, is incredibly difficult for you especially if you have trust issues.
- The third battle is to understand that God desires to be a part of your life in a way that you've never thought of. He cares about everything. God's Word tells you His thoughts towards you outnumber the sands of the sea. Try contemplating that one. You can't process that volume of care and love.
- Nothing is too small for His omniscient eyes not to notice and He desires to help. Nothing is too big for His omnipotent power, and He loves to show the strength of a loving Father. Nothing is too hard for His omniscient mind to know the answer or the way through, and He will walk us through the most difficult labyrinth by His Spirit.
- Prayer is the ultimate privilege and blessing. The mere fact we can come into God's throne room and speak to Him should cause us to be in awe. If we really knew that when we are praying we are before Him in His eternal throne room, we would be speechless and on our faces.
- Thanksgiving for who God is, what He has already done, and as an expression of faith is only proper.
- I heard it said, "Thanksgiving must be the universal accompaniment of prayer. The Christian must feel that all his life as if it were suspended between past and present blessings."
- Notice, we are to present our requests to God. We don't command God to do anything. He is God. We are not. We can speak assuredly when we know His Word, but everything else is a request.
- When we know something is God's expressed will, we are the ones who need to be reminded of it, not God. It is us who is strengthened and come to a full measure of faith when we say, "God, according to your Word you say you desire that none should perish. Bring my friend to you and your salvation."

"Peace is the fruit of the believing prayer." M. R. Vincent

- (vs7) What is the fruit of prayer? Peace! Not just a peace of the heart, but one that permeates your being. Peace of the mind and spirit. When you've prayed until you've connected with God's Spirit, you will no longer have a burden of thought or emotion. You will not even care. Because you've touched heaven and the divine.
- The Greek word for "guard" used by Paul here is the word *phrourein*. It is a military word for a sentinel who is "standing on guard." God's peace will stand guard around your mind, your heart, and your spirit from any attack that comes from the flesh or from outside of you.
- God's peace that "transcends all understanding" is referencing that no man can contrive that peace from personal rational thought. It is gifted from God.

THE POWER OF PROPER FOCUS (4:8-9)

POWER VERSE (4:8) FINALLY, BROTHERS AND SISTERS, WHATEVER IS TRUE, WHATEVER IS NOBLE, WHATEVER IS RIGHT, WHATEVER IS PURE, WHATEVER IS LOVELY, WHATEVER IS ADMIRABLE—IF ANYTHING IS EXCELLENT OR PRAISEWORTHY—THINK ABOUT SUCH THINGS.

- (vs8) Our minds are always working. There's never a time they are completely dormant. Thoughts, information, images, memories, are constantly processing. But, we do have the choice of focus.
- What do we think about? Where do we let our thoughts and imaginations linger? The longer we focus on something the more emotions and decisions follow.
- "Whatever is true" - What God says about something is "the Truth." We set our thoughts and the hopes that follow on what "The Truth" says is true. We need to permeate our lives with His Word.
- "Whatever is noble" - This word really means that which has the dignity of holiness on it. Meaning, we should concentrate on that which is worthy of thought, not flippant, meaningless thoughts.
- The Greek word for "noble" is *semnos*. It is used of the gods or the temple of the gods. In this context, it means a person who moves about the world as if they are a temple of God. Is what you're thinking about even worthy of your time as a carrier of the presence of God?
- "Whatever is right" - The Greek word for "right" or "just" is *dikaiois*. It defines a person who gives God or their fellow man what is due them. It is the word for a "duty done." It's not a person who does what's self-serving or is focused on pleasure, but speaks to a person on a right mission for God.
- "Whatever is pure" - The Greek word for "pure" is *hagnos*. It speaks to that which is morally pure and fit to be brought into the presence of God. This person's thoughts are on what God would want them to think about and would stand against any analysis by God Himself.
- "Whatever is lovely" - The Greek word for lovely is *prospheiles*. The theologian Winsome translates it best to mean "that which calls forth love." This person's thoughts look for ways to show the love of God to others through compassion or kindness.
- "Whatever is admirable" - The Greek word for "admirable" is *eopHEMA*. It's incredibly hard to translate. But, it was used to reference the holy silence at the beginning of a sacrifice to the gods. Basically, the worshiper or believer is thinking about godly attributes which are to be admired and emulated.
- What attributes can you see in your life that are God-honoring? How is He shining through you? In what areas are you becoming more like Christ? That is *eopHEMA*.
- Then Paul puts every other possible category of thought under the final phrasing "if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-- think about such things."
- Simply put, do not waste your time, or pollute your mind or soul with anything other than that which will build you up and prepare you for whatever you're facing. This is a struggle against the natural flesh.
- (vs9) Paul lastly says, imitate me. Maybe there weren't a lot of positive examples for others to follow. Paul once again says follow me as I follow Christ. If anyone should not have had peace it was Paul. Yet, he put into practice that which he called them to. And in chains he was absolutely at peace in God.