

STUDY GUIDE

LETTERS FROM PRISON: PHILIPPIANS (Week 10)

A MESSAGE SERIES AT NEW CITY CHURCH

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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.

Background

The greater the external turbulence, the more important the internal stabilizers. Turbulent skies instantly make nervous passengers thankful for the stabilizing engineering of a plane. Paul is in jail when he writes this letter; he is in the midst of extreme external turbulence and in this passage, he teaches us all about finding stabilizers that can never be taken from us.

A Principle.

The Principle to start with is simple: apply *BIG* truth in little places. This is much different than how most modern people approach dealing with stress and anxiety. We want a quick fix and a step by step approach to solving all of our issues. But, Paul says we have

to start with the big questions before we can address how to find peace in turbulent times. Paul, when dealing with an argument between two people in the Philippian Church doesn't talk about method. He reminds them of who they are and what is to come:

Phil 3:20: ... our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

He says look at the BIG picture! **He doesn't go to method.** Paul NEVER starts there. That is how he can be a rock. Everything is about the big things first.

“We must meet the uncertainties of this world with the certainty of the world to come.” - A. W. Tozer

Questions for Reflection

1. Why do you think we are tempted to start with how to do something before we stop and ask the bigger questions?
2. How does understanding that our citizenship in heaven help us stop being petty?

Three Practices.

One we have the principle we can move on to the practices/ disciplines that help bring peace. Paul teaches us to practice **moderation, prayer** and the **presence** of God.

Moderation.

5 Let your reasonableness (moderation) be known to everyone.

The word for “reasonableness” is best translated moderation. This means a radical evenness of temper. Paul is saying that whether we are weeping, rejoicing, crying or celebrating we cannot let our

moods be so dramatically altered based on the circumstances but rather we should be known for a tremendous evenness of temper.

***If you understand God's grace,
it makes the worst times bearable
and the best times leave-able." - John Newton***

In Luke 10, we see the perfect illustration of this; Jesus sends out 70 people and gives them power over demons and diseases. When the 70 return they are rejoicing on and on about the power they had and Jesus gently reminds them to "rejoice that your names are in the book of life." Jesus centers them on eternity, not the here and now.

Questions for Reflection

3. What does it feel like for our moods and emotions to be driven by our circumstances?

Prayer.

6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

This passage tells us that it is good to ask God for the things we need but the KEY to this prayer (this anxiety relieving prayer) is that we are thankful for your current circumstances and for ***ANY answer*** God gives. Yes, any answer. If there is a God like the one described in the bible, then there has to be things we don't understand. Jesus says we have to be willing to be as a child and understand we don't know it all.

Questions for Reflection

4. When you pray, do you consider that your request may not be answered how you'd like it to be answered? Do you see how that might be the BEST answer you can get?

Presence.

7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus....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.

Paul says when we pray in a thankful way and don't let our circumstances drive our mood and outlook on life, then we can have the peace of God. Then, he takes it a step further and says that the GOD OF PEACE will be with us! So, we should not just be seeking the peace of God, but the God of Peace. When our prayers are all about us and what we want, then we might just be seeking the peace of God. Seeking the God of Peace will change how much you pray and what you pray about.

***if you aim at Heaven you get
earth thrown; if you aim at earth,
you get neither. - C.S. Lewis***

Questions for Reflection

5. Are you seeking the God of Peace or just the peace of God?