

Joy in God's Peace
Philippians 4:1-9

August 14, 2011

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^E Proverbs 23:7

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A. Introduction

1. Turmoil

- a. today people know more than ever before
- b. it has become so that a college degree is required for even an entry level job in some industries
- c. you need to read and almost memorize a small book in order to use your telephone and some of its gadgets
- d. but despite all of our knowledge and our technology, or perhaps because of it, we have more turmoil than peace
- e. those who have rioted and looted in Great Britain this past week have been using their cell phones to find out where the police are absent in order to carry out their vandalism
- f. the attitude is 'the authorities cannot stop me, so why should I stop?'
- g. the financial markets of the world are reeling, as country after country faces a crisis with respect to their debt
 - (A) in the US, every baby is born already in debt to the tune of \$37,000 as its share of the federal debt; and that doesn't include its share of the state debt, the municipal debt, and the family debt
 - (B) in Canada, the figure is over \$16,000
 - (C) G8 and G20 summits have done little to help
- h. trouble spots appear in the world one after another, and all the peace conferences keep on failing, because they have failed to invite the Prince of Peace to attend

2. Peace in the midst of turmoil

- a. God's intention is that His children have peace
- b. we had this verse on the overhead earlier; Jesus' promise: 'Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.'
(John 14:27)
- c. today's text resounds with the same message
- d. this peace is to be the logical outcome from the fact that the Christian lives in another world

- e. Paul has just summed up that fact in the previous chapter, Philippians 3:20-21, 'For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.'
- f. now he proceeds,

B. 'Therefore,' on this Basis: an Exhortation 4 :1

1. Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.
 - a. what Paul is about to say is conditioned by the fact that since the Christian's has new citizenship, is now living in the heavenly commonwealth, therefore the Christian has a new loyalty and a new responsibility.
 - b. note first, however, that although Paul now has need to rebuke, he prefaces this with an expression of his warm feelings to the Christians at Philippi
 - c. twice in the verse he addresses them as 'belovèd' -- those for whom he has a deep, abiding, Christ-like love
 - d. he addresses them with that term which emphasizes the family relationship of Christians, as brethren – despite the fact that those he is about to speak to are both women – brethren as being together God's children in God's family
 - e. these are the people Paul longs for, longs to see; for whom he has a sharp and passionate desire of affection
 - f. they are, for Paul, his joy – the laurel wreath with which the victor is crowned when he has pursued the race to the end – it is they, whom he will present as his trophies to Christ when He returns, as with the church at Thessalonica – 'For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.' (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20)
2. For this church he has this general exhortation
 - a. 'in this way stand firm,' 'thus' or 'so stand fast'
 - b. they are to take their stand as citizens of God's kingdom
 - c. avoiding the walk of those who are enemies of the cross

- d. following the example of Paul & those like-minded to Christ
- e. zealous in knowing Christ (Philippians 3:1-11)
- f. pressing on in spiritual progress (Philippians 3:12-21)
- g. so now he has a special word for two women, in their ...

C. Strife and Striving 4:2-3

1. Euodia and Syntyche (verse 2)

- a. this can be expanded: 'Please Euodia, I urge, exhort, entreat you; Please Syntyche, I urge exhort, entreat you; be at harmony, be one in the same mind in the Lord.'
- b. 'remember what I said a few minutes ago, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus"'(Philippians 2:5 AV)
 - (A) think the way the Lord Jesus thought when He humbled Himself to bring salvation to mankind
- c. something had upset the relations between these women
 - (A) it wasn't doctrinal – or Paul would have set it straight
 - (B) perhaps it was simply a clash of personalities
 - (C) in any case they were at strife with each other
- d. but, it appears that Eudia and Syntyche has already been trying to sort out their differences
 - (A) this is indicated by the word 'help' in verse 3
 - (B) it means 'take hold along with them,' 'lend a hand to them,' 'give them assistance' in their struggles

2. Synzygus, Help Them! (verse 3)

- a. 'Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.'
- b. That term, 'companion' or Synzygus, in Greek, means 'one yoked together' and many think that this was his proper name and Paul is playing on that name, just as he does with the name of Onesimus in his letter to Philemon
- c. Paul is saying, be a genuine Synzygus, a yoke-fellow, and give a hand to get things straight between

Euodia and Syntyche, to get them pulling together instead of apart

- d. 'they laboured with me in the gospel' (AV); they 'shared my struggle' – the word in Greek is sunathleo – which brings the language of sports: it is 'used of a group of athletes who played on a team together, co-operating with one another in perfect harmony to attain a certain end, the word having in it also the ideas of strenuous and agonizing effort'^{2}.
- (A) right from the first, women had a great part in forming the church at Philippi: Acts 16:13-14, 'And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled. A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshipper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.'
- (B) these two women were a key part of the evangelistic team, along with Clement and other fellow workers
- (C) we don't know their role: perhaps like Phoebe, they were deacons; or prophetesses like Philip's daughters
- (D) but they strove together with Paul
- e. let them be at peace! ... so, what are the ...

D. Paths to the Realization of Peace 4:4-9

1. Rejoicing in the Lord (verse 4)

- a. 'Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!' or, '... I am going to say it again, rejoice!'
- b. that word, 'rejoice' was a Greek greeting, used both in letters and in person, but Paul makes it uniquely Christian by the addition of the words, 'in the Lord'
- c. a greeting that wishes the other person well, their health and their happiness – 'may all that you encounter cause you joy and rejoicing; a deep inner satisfaction'
- d. but for the Christian it is not what he or she encounters, but rather, the being 'in the Lord,' the living in the sphere of Christ's presence, in union with Christ, that brings joy
- e. for that reason he can add the word, 'always' – that they exercise this rejoicing at all times, in all circumstances – remember that Paul was a chained prisoner in writing this

f. this is a path to peace

2. Showing Moderation (verse 5)

a. 'Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.'

b. the Greek behind that translation 'gentle spirit' has the idea of being fair, moderate, reasonable in one's actions

c. the philosopher Aristotle contrasted it to the kind of person who is sharply precise to his own rights, from which we can conclude that Paul is encouraging us – because while Paul is writing to the church at Philippi, he is also writing to us – that we should be satisfied with less than our just due, not making the same demands for justice for ourselves as unbelievers – this agrees with Jesus' Sermon on the Mount

d. and the reason given, is the nearness of the Lord

(A) either that He is ever present with us

(B) or His return is very close

(C) both are incentives to such a Christian spirit

e. and this, too, is a pathway to peace

3. Overcoming Anxiety by Prayer (verse 6)

a. 'Be anxious (AV. 'careful' = full of care) for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.'

b. how do you and I face the tensions, cares and worries that spring up on us unsought and undesired?

c. they certainly are the enemy of the peace God intends; so this verse is very closely linked with the one following; in fact, many would translate it as a single sentence

d. Paul uses four words that encompass and include just about every aspect of our prayer life, which we are told to employ in the face of everything that may disturb us

e. our approach to God in facing such things is

(A) by **prayer** – the Greek adds to a simple word for prayer a preposition, 'unto,' emphasizing a person to person encounter with God, of approaching God with the correct attitude, that of worship, awe and devotion

(B) **by supplication** – has the thought of expressing need, the confession of one's helplessness in the

- face for some difficulty and the faith and trust that God will help
- (C) **with thanksgiving** – the recognition that God has given the solution in times past and the assured gratitude that He will again do so
 - (D) **your requests** – has its focus on specific objects being asked as well as the recognition that the answer lies in the will of God and not in the will of the one asking
- f. this forms a pathway to peace

4. Discipline of Our Thought Lives (verse 8)

- a. **'Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.'**
- b. there is in this verse the meat for half a dozen sermons
- c. Proverbs 23: 7 tells us of a man in another connection, **'For as he thinks within himself, so he is.'** -- certainly what we feed our heart will come out of our lives
- d. and in this verse we have a set of foci upon which we can let our thought lives poke at will and benefit thereby
- e. indeed, the word translated **'dwell'** or **'think'** has more in it than giving a passing glance but that of giving careful consideration or reflection
- f. this pathway leads to peace

5. Our Practicum (verse 9)

- a. **'The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.'**
- b. when a lawyer, an accountant, a nurse, a doctor, has completed some section of studies or examination, there still remains a part of training to be done: the practicum, the putting into practice the studies undertaken
- c. here is the Christian practicum; putting into practice the studies of the past few minutes; the past few Sundays
- d. the virtues you see in mature Christians – those worthy of your respect – these things make part of your

own life

- e. this also is a pathway of peace, for with it comes the God of peace
- f. literally, the God of the peace – the peace described in

6. Quality of God's Peace (verse 7)

- a. what is this peace like?
- b. 'And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.'
- c. Paul says it is unlike anything you can ever understand!
- d. it passes all understanding; in Scots: beyond our ken
- e. this is the peace that begins at the cross: 'Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ' (Romans 5:1)
- f. but God's intent is that we should experience it every day
- g. because He has given it so that we be protected from care, from anxiety, from worry for He has set it up, for those who permit it, to be a sentinel, a guard, a garrison about
 - (A) our hearts – our inmost being that houses our wills, our desires, our very personalities; and,
 - (B) our minds – our thoughts and expression there of
- h. it is upper peace; it is inner peace; it is outward peace

E. Conclusion – God want you, too, to experience this perfect peace

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of my favourite commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

BM – Biblical Museum, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870

EBC – The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan

Volume 11, including Philippians, by Homer A. Kent, Jr

EGT – The Expositor’s Greek Testament, Philippians by H. A. A. Kennedy, Hodder & Stoughton, 1903

Kerux – The sermon and illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick to be found at the web-site, www.holwick.com.

Moule – The Epistle to the Philippians, by H. C. G. Moule, 1873 (and his commentaries on other epistles)

Motyer – Philippians Studies, The Richness of Christ, by J. A. Motyer; Inter-Varsity Press, 1966

Wuest – Philippians in the Greek New Testament by Kenneth S. Wuest, © 1942 Wm B Eerdmans

2. Wuest, *in loc*