

Philippians 4.1-9
April 17, 2016

In chapter 3.20-21 Paul states tells his listeners that they are “citizens of heaven”. The following instructions, therefor, are built on this foundation. This is how he instructs such citizens, belonging to such a kingdom, to live. This is how the new order works out in the daily lives of the Philippian Christians.

4.1

- Paul’s work brings him joy – described by him as a crown. His means of existence is service of Jesus, bringing him into service of others, his crowning achievement being the faithfulness of the friends he writes to.
- Hi instruction is to be steadfast, or stand firm “in the Lord”. Again, a picture of being enfolded and encircled by their master Jesus.

4.2-3

- Though generally encouraged by the Philippian response to the gospel, Paul is concerned about a dispute between two apparent leaders in the church. Euodia and Syntyche perhaps hosted the church in their homes and the two women have had some kind of falling out. It is important enough for Paul to name them in the letter, to get to the bottom of things.
- Unity is essential to the health and growth of the Church, and therefor it is vital for Paul.
- There is no room for infighting, backbiting, politics or grandstanding. There wasn’t 2,000 years ago and there isn’t today.
- He begins by first appealing to their identity, that they should “agree in the Lord”. The basis of their relationship (Jesus) supersedes any trouble they might encounter.
- Paul calls for an intervention of a third party. This is a necessary move to help the relationship move forward.
- The head of the family is Jesus who calls us to order. He is also the mortar in the bricks, binding us together in unity.

4.4-7

- The joy of the Lord is a primary command. It is not just a feeling but a reality we live in, need to recognize and walk in.
- Joy is like an app that runs in the background of our phone. But it doesn’t drain out battery, it benefits us. It may always not be visible or apparent, but it is working and true.
- Paul reminds the believers that today’s circumstance is not tomorrow’s promise – that heaven is.
- We don’t lose joy because we don’t lose Jesus.
- We are reasonable toward one another (v5), this word (epieikeia) can be described as “justice beyond justice”. It means everyone knows we’re on

their side, working for their good. Do we oppose people or come along side them?

- Real peace only comes with a relationship with God, and that relationship only thrives in one on one conversation. "Prayer is the right way for persons to interact" (Willard).
- Thanksgiving comes from peace
 - Gratitude.
 - Submission.
- Giving thanks to God reminds us that we have the relationship the right way round – we submit to him, not him to us.

4.8-9

- Echos of Romans 12.1-2.
- Think on the things of God, on the stuff that lasts.
- Thoughts matter because they translate to action.
- When we think on these things their opposites flee (lies, dishonorable things, etc).
- Paul says, "allow your mind to expand to the things of God, not grow small on sinful matters."
- Paul leads by example here.

Discussion Questions

- What stood out to you in this passage? Why?
- What did you learn? What were you encouraged by, or challenge by?
- Why do Christians fight amongst one another and what is the solution? Does Philippians speak to this before chapter four?
- How does joy work in your life? What is your understanding of it?
- What things are worthy of praise that we should think about? What might Paul be asking the Philippians to think about?