

WEDNESDAY BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

Christ Church, Crouch End Hill

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No: 20

Philippians Chapter 4

INTRODUCTION

The conclusions of Paul's epistles are rather like a letter which finishes with a P.S. followed by P.P.S. and then P.P.P.S. as he jots down all the extra thoughts and personal encouragements which he wants to pass on to his readers. It isn't always easy to study such a mixed jumble of thoughts. The one theme which does give some unity to the passage is that of the pressures we face - problems in relationships, worry over personal circumstances, the pressure of temptation, the needs we have which must be met. Paul was no stranger to such pressures himself but found strength to cope "in the Lord" (a phrase which comes up frequently in this passage). He urges his readers to "stand firm in the Lord", "agree in the Lord", "rejoice in the Lord" and so on.

AIM

To see that "in Christ" we are given strength to stand firm against the various pressures we face.

People, like things, react to pressure in different ways.

Which best describes you?

Do you:

- Explode - like a bomb
- or** Implode - and turn in on yourself
- or** Collapse in a heap
- or** Suddenly topple over when the pressure gets too tough
- or** Get tossed about hither and thither
- or** Sway in the wind but stay in one piece
- or** Stand firm despite it all

READ PHILIPPIANS 4

Questions for discussions

Disagreement

- Imagine Euodia and Syntyche belong to your church - what might have caused their disagreements? How would you go about helping them to agree? (vv 2-3)
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- Paul doesn't spell out exactly what the problem was between Euodia and Syntyche - doctrinal? ethical? ecclesiastical? personal? - the trouble was not that they had disagreed but that they had caused a division in the church. What is the difference between disagreement and division? Is disagreement wrong? What should we do when there is disagreement?
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- What causes division? What can we do to see that divisions do not occur? How do we heal divisions?
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Worry

- What things cause us to worry? How can God help us cope with those worries? (w 4-7)
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- How can we possibly rejoice when everything is going wrong?
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- How does God's peace keep guard in our hearts and minds?
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Temptation

- How do outside influences from things we read, watch, see in the world create pressure on us? How can Paul's advice in verses 8-9 help us as we face the pressures of the media and the world around us?
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- What examples can you think of the good things Paul encourages us to concentrate on?
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Need

- How much is our contentment dependent on outward circumstances? What makes us discontent? What is the "secret" of being content? Would you be content in Paul's circumstances?
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- Why was Paul reluctant to rely on the help of others? (See 1 Corinthians 9.1-18) What does Paul value most about the support of the Philippians? What does this passage teach about the value of Christian giving?
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Notes

vv.2-3 Euodia and Syntyche appear to have been part of the group who worked with Paul. We don't know who the true "yokefellow" was unless Syzygus' (the Greek word for yokefellow) is his proper name and Paul is calling on him to be true to that name in bringing these two together.

"The book of life" is the record of those who belong to God (see Revelation 20.12-15). It is like the register of citizens kept by a city such as Philippi.

v.5 Forbearance is the considerate thoughtfulness for others which gives way out of courtesy.

"The Lord is near" - Paul is probably thinking of the expectation of his return, rather than his constant presence.

v.6 "Anxiety is an attempt to carry the burden of the future oneself, prayer is leaving it in the safe hands of God. Thanksgiving for past benefits is the surest road to confidence in future ones." (G. B. Caird).

v.7 Inward peace flows from our relationship with God. It keeps guard over our hearts and minds protecting them from fear and worry. The Greek word for 'keep' suggests a garrison guarding a city.

v.13 Paul's strength comes not from himself but from the Lord who gives him strength in his weakness (See 2 Corinthians 12.9-10).

v.14 Paul is not ungrateful for their gift. He especially values the concern it shows.

vv.15-17 Paul speaks of their financial support in terms of a commercial investment in the cause of promoting the Gospel. He received material support - they received spiritual blessing. It will produce rich dividends in the service of the Kingdom. God will reward them for their generosity.

v.15 Paul cannot be thinking of his Gospel-preaching only beginning after he left Philippi, so he must be thinking of it from the point of view of his relationship with the Philippians. He is referring to the early days of his missionary work after leaving Macedonia.

v.19 The Philippians may well have impoverished themselves in giving to Paul - but Paul assures them of the generosity of God's provision, on a scale befitting his wealth. As always in Paul's thinking, God's generosity takes place within the context of our relationship with Christ.