

Gems from Philipians

4 – Christian Lifestyle is Positive (Phil 4.2-23)

v.2-3: Paul says of Euodia and Syntyche that they have "contended at his side in the cause of the gospel". In his letters he mentions many women who have been great Christian workers and witnesses (Cf. Rom 16). Unfortunately these two are at loggerheads and the gospel is being damaged. Paul asks that they be given help to be of one spirit however they may differ in some things.

v.4-6: Here Paul characterises the Christian life as one of joy, gentleness, a quiet spirit, thankfulness and prayer. J.B.Phillips translation of verse 6 is "Don't worry about anything whatever but take everything to God in earnest and thankful prayer". (Cf. 1 Peter 5.7.) Remember Paul is imprisoned here and he has suffered the most terrible things to take the Gospel to others and may well now be facing death. But just as when he was in prison at Philippi (Acts 16) he is full of joy in Christ.

v.7: Those who trust in God like that, whatever their circumstances, have a firm inner peace. Peace is the fruit of trust and prayer.

v.8: Some Christians give the impression that the godly life rejects this world, all its people and all its needs. Paul takes a very different view. "Look for everything good, loving and lovely" he says and be part of it, Remember it is a world God so loved that He sent His Son ...". We are to play a very positive role in the world.

v.12-13: The Philippians had always supported Paul both with prayer and gifts. He is warmly grateful to them and grateful to God for them. He has had hard times and good times but in both he has maintained a deep trust and assurance in God. Whatever the circumstances he can do all God wants him to do because of the inner spirit, certainty and strength God gives. He is sure God will always meet his need while he remains in God's will and doing God's work (v.19) – and he is quite sure God will do the same for those to whom he is writing.

William Barclay said "No gift ever made any man poorer. He who gives makes himself richer, for it opens him to the gifts of God".

Questions for Discussion

1. Paul is sometimes regarded as having a low view of women. Do you think this is true? (Cf. Gal 3.28, Rom 16 etc).
2. How does Paul suggest they treat these two women who are at loggerheads and causing disruption in the church? Have you any experience of trouble and disagreement in a church? How was it dealt with?
3. Are you a worrier? How do you deal with worry?
4. Paul has had a very rough time of it since he became a Christian. Why then do you think he has so much drive and joy? Have you known any time of trouble when the joy of the Lord just filled and blessed you?
5. Many in today's society have material prosperity and it is easy then to forget God. Around us so many are always wanting more however much they have. We live in a greedy and selfish society encouraged and pushed on by commercialism. How do you find it affecting you? What do you do about it?
6. How do you feel about supporting missionaries and good charities? What do you do and how do you cope with so many appeals?
7. How do you balance contentment and responsibility? Give examples.
8. Paul speaks about peace, joy, prayer, thought, caring and the Christian response to circumstances. How would you sum it all up?
9. Have you a favourite text from this passage? Share and tell us why and what it has meant to you?