



Finer Grounds Bible Study

Philippians Lesson 13: Philippians 4:8-23

We have finally reached the conclusion to our study in Philippians. I hope over these past several weeks you have grown to love this beautiful letter as much as I do. This week as we begin, as we usually do, read through the letter in its entirety. Keep in mind how the entire letter has been building up to the climax at the beginning of chapter 4. Paul is now bringing the letter to a conclusion and bringing home a few points one last time.

Read Philippians 4:8-9

What things does Paul say we ought to dwell on?

How is this connected with the greater theme of the book?

According to verse 9 what things are Paul's readers instructed to practice?

What qualities has Paul been emphasizing about himself throughout this book that he wants them to be practicing?

What is the result of those things?

Why might this idea of peace been particularly appealing to the brethren at Philippi?

This passage is one of the most often quoted scriptures in the church today and it does offer a timeless truth. It is important though that we continue to view Paul's statements in the light of the context. We so often use this verse to discuss our entertainment choices and while it is a biblical truth that we should be making good choices about what we put in front of our faces on a daily basis, that isn't necessarily the message that Paul is trying to get across here. Remember, he is dealing with people who have gotten caught up in disputes and arguments and lost sight of



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the greater goal of proclaiming the truth of God's word.

Here is a list of definitions for these words:

- **True**-ALETHES-consistent with fact or reality, genuine, honest
- **Honorable**-SEMNOS-worthy of respect, dignified
- **Right**-DIKAIOS-upright, just, fair, in conformity with reality
- **Pure**-HAGNOS-having the characteristics of moral purity, holy
- **Lovely**-PROSPHILES-pleasing, agreeable, amiable
- **Good Repute**-EUPHEMOS-commendable, praiseworthy
- **Excellence**-ARETE-excellence of character, moral excellence, civic virtue
- **Worthy of Praise**-EPAINOS-something worthy of high commendation, praise approval, recognition.

Something to consider as you are reading through this list is that these are adjectives that more aptly describe people than things. In the light of the context, it seems as if Paul is instructing his readers to look at their brothers and sisters in Christ and dwell on the good things about them. It is so easy for us to get our feelings hurt and dwell continually on the one way in we perceive a person wronged us. We stew on this so much and maybe even rant to others about the situation that we not only color our view of this person but we taint other's opinion as well.

I don't know about you, but I have not lived a perfect Christian life. There are some things I have said that I have immediately wished I could breathe back into my mouth. I am certain there are times I have unintentionally caused hurt feelings. Some I probably don't even know about. What I do know is that it would break my heart if people's view of who I am was based entirely on those moments. I hope that my earnest commitment to God and others outweighs my failings in those areas. I pray that when people think of who I am as a person, they think about the good, honorable, and praiseworthy things about me instead of the times I have struggled. I think everyone can agree on this!

If I hope that others have that gracious attitude toward me, I absolutely need to freely offer it to others. We owe it to Christ to treat our Christian brothers and sisters with this type of love and respect. Maybe a sister in Christ did something that irritated me, but is that worth damaging the cause of Christ? Instead of constantly running that irritation through my mind, what would happen if I replaced those thoughts with the good things she has done for the church or the excellent way she serves and cares for others. This whole letter has been about retraining our brains to a new way of thinking and here we are giving one more way of doing so, focusing on the good in each other so that we don't get so caught up in the strife.

But this isn't just about our mindset, it's about our actions. In verse 9, Paul tells us



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that we are to practice the things we have learned, received, and heard from him. If we look at the whole context of this letter, those things he has focused on were his humility in service of Christ and continual focus on building up God's kingdom. Think back to chapter 1 where he described his joyfulness in difficult situations because they allowed him to spread the gospel message. Paul was one that consistently backed up what he taught with his actions.

Basically, the message of these verses is that we need to check our attitude at the door, get along, and get to work! Paul doesn't simply leave it at that though, he gives us the result: "the God of peace will be with you." Can you imagine the level of strife that must have been going on in this congregation for Paul to write an entire letter and address these women specifically? We all know how this type of quarrel can impact people personally. Every person involved is tied up in knots. Stress permeates the entire situation. Paul's promise is that if we make this earnest effort to view one another as we should and to focus on God's work, we will have God's peace.

Do you struggle with your mental dialogue about another brother or sister in Christ?

What are some practical ways that you can make an effort to focus on the good in your brothers and sisters in Christ over the next few weeks?

How would the church look different if everyone focused on maintaining this godly view of their brothers and sisters in Christ?

At the risk of beating a dead horse, I'll ask this one again (but it's a dead horse that Paul keeps beating so it's okay right?!). How can you do a better job of imitating Paul's attitude of humble service this week?

Read Philippians 4:10-13

How does Paul describe his attitude in verse 11 and 12?

What does Philippians 4:13 mean in the context of Philippians 4:11-12?



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How does this attitude fit in with the overall theme of the book?

This is another of those “meme worthy” verses. So often it is quoted by sports teams or people trying to accomplish a difficult task. If we look at the context, we can see Paul wants us to consider a much deeper heart issue here. This verse is all about contentment. The “all things” Paul is referring to is living in any circumstance with God in view. It doesn’t matter what situation Paul found himself in or who was causing him strife, his relentless focus on Christ’s mission helped him find contentment. This is just one more way that Paul is encouraging us away from our selfish attitude. It doesn’t matter what situation or station you find yourself in. It doesn’t matter who has caused you trouble in strife. You can find contentment in focusing on God’s mission.

What are some ways that you struggle with contentment?

What are some practical ways you can focus on having an attitude of contentment this week?

Read Philippians 4:14-23

What had the Philippian church done to support Paul and share with him in his affliction?

How does Paul describe the gift they sent in verse 18?

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-5. Remembering Philippi is in Macedonia, how does Paul describe their giving here?

Why do you think Paul chooses to focus on the generous way the Philippian congregation gives at the end of his letter?

According to verse 22, who sends greetings to the Philippian congregation?



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How is this greeting a direct result of a selfless and humble attitude on the part of Paul?

This was not a wealthy congregation, in fact, in 2 Corinthians Paul described the Christians in this region as being in “deep poverty.” Paul wants them to know that he sees the enormous sacrifice they have made on his behalf not just sending money but sending people to minister to him while he is in prison. This is the attitude Paul has been discussing for the entire letter and even though they have some progress yet to make, he wants them to know that he sees the ways they are living selflessly. He knows they can accomplish the things in this letter because they already have giving hearts that desire to do God’s will.

It is like when you leave your children to work on a difficult task. After giving them instructions, often you remind them of how you are proud of them and talk about how you know they can do it because you’ve seen them do things like this before! Paul loves these Christians dearly and deeply appreciates everything they have done to help with his missionary work. It is not because he is frustrated with them that he writes this letter; it is because he is deeply concerned for their wellbeing and wants to address this heart issue before it becomes a detriment to their souls and hurts the mission of Christ.

This is one of my absolute favorite nuggets from Paul’s final greetings in any of his letters. So often once he waxes sentimental and starts offering greetings and telling them to greet each other with holy kisses, we tune out and skim. If we do that sometimes we miss some beautiful treasures! Let verse 22 really soak in: “All the saints greet you, **ESPECIALLY THOSE OF CAESAR’S HOUSEHOLD.**” Read that again! The ruler of the known world has Christians in his household because of Paul’s imprisonment!

We are currently studying through the last several chapters in Acts on Sunday morning and my amazing husband is doing a fantastic job of showing how Paul’s imprisonment actually was a catalyst for the message of Christianity to explode into places it had never been before...including Caesar’s own palace. In the conclusion to this letter, Paul makes one last effort to highlight what a humble attitude and focus on God’s mission can accomplish. I don’t know about you, but reading that verse gives me goosebumps. Think about the souls saved because Paul chose to embrace his current situation and not dwell on selfishness but focus on the mission and his love for others.

What are some amazing things you have seen the church accomplish because of a singular focus on God’s mission?



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Do you know people that have been brought to salvation because of someone's selfless effort?

How can you do a better job of focusing your attitude on the big picture instead of petty and selfish squabbles?

How would you summarize Paul's message to the Philippians in one or two sentences?

As we walk away from our study in Philippians, what is your number one goal that you have gleaned from this letter?

Take 15 minutes and read through Philippians one more time, focusing on Paul's overall message. I hope that you can see now why this is one of my absolute favorite books. This is a timeless message that every Christian needs to take deeply to heart. If each and every one of us maintained this type of attitude, the church would be such an enormously beautiful place!