

Joy and Peace Under Pressure

Philippians 4:1-9

The people Paul is writing to are under pressure. We all know that living like that can take its toll: relationships suffer, we lose our sense of inner peace, and because life is not good for us we can become resentful or cynical about good stuff in other's lives.

Unity in Place of Division

Paul singles out two ladies, Euodia and Syntyche and urges them to be reconciled. All Paul's previous teaching about how we are to treat one another and be united together, is focused on this relationship. It is in our relationships that the rubber hits the road, where the Christian faith must be worked out.

Firstly, Paul doesn't take sides. He urges them both to be reconciled.

Secondly, Paul affirms these ladies. They are on the same team.

Thirdly, he asks the church to get involved in their reconciliation. It is all our responsibility.

Joy and Peace in Place of Anxiety.

Instead of feeling overwhelmed by circumstances, Paul encourages us to do three things: to rejoice, to be reasonable, and to pray.

Rejoice: we can rejoice always, even during times of trial, because it is rejoicing in God and not in our circumstances. God is good, and the gospel is always good news, and Christ has conquered, so we can always rejoice.

Be reasonable: If you are unreasonable, and always picking fights, it has a corrosive effect on your inner peace and poise. Being reasonable and seeing others points of views is crucial for unity, but also for our own hearts. We can be reasonable because 'the Lord is at hand': we can leave the fighting to him.

Pray: Paul says that rather than be anxious we should pray: we can entrust our situation to the God who loves and cares for us. We can do so with thanksgiving knowing that he is in total control and is working everything for our good.

As we pray we will know God's peace guarding our hearts and minds like an army guards a city.

Grace in Place of Cynicism

When good things aren't happening to you, it is easy to become resentful or cynical at the good things happening to others. But Paul says we should take note of good things, all the evidences of God's grace, wherever we see them, and let them become fuel for our joy and worship.

But ultimately it has to be the good news of Jesus – the teaching Paul and the apostles have passed on to us that must define what good is, and mold and shape and change us.