

Intro

Letters of Paul - last week part of Paul's letter to the Romans,
Today Phil. Much easier letter - shorter - pastoral - most positive.

Philippi -- in Greece -- famous Greek city. Named after Philip -- father of Alexander the Great. Famous battle -- the one portrayed at the end of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar (Mark Anthony etc defeated Cassius. and Brutus "the noblest Roman of them all")

Paul had visited Philippi on three occasions and both Luke and Timothy had been there as well. Paul is writing to them when imprisoned in Rome in AD 63.

In his final words of the letter, Paul sets out things which a Christian to avoid and things for a Christian to practice.

I. Unity

Throughout this letter Paul has urged the Christians to work together
2: 1-4, 14 -- read

Phil 2:1 If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Phil 2:14 Do everything without complaining or arguing,

Now he decides to be more specific and name a couple of names.

PHP 4:2 I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord."

It is a grim thought that all we know about Euodia and Syntyche is that they were two women who had quarrelled!

Euodia and Syntyche go down to history as the breakers of the peace.

Think ! Suppose your life was to be summed up in one sentence, what would that sentence be?

Do you want to be the kind of person that other people find is a pain to have around, would you want to be the kind of person that people enjoy having in their company? The choice is ours

We don't know what happened with these two women -- it seems some man was asked by Paul to sort them out. (in the wrong place at the wrong time!)

Serious though-- infighting can really damage a church.

II. Joy

In contrast Paul moves to something which should be characteristic of the Christian -- **joy** -- verse 4 -- read.

'Rejoice in the Lord always,' says Paul -- That is a hard nut to crack.

Isn't always rejoicing impossible ?

Easy to say that joy is largely a matter of temperament -- and I can't overrule my moods,

Or -- joy is largely a matter of circumstances and I can't determine these.

Well Yes! Temperament has a great deal to do with joy; and circumstances have a great deal to do with it as well.

But isn't it the job of the Gospel to make us masters of our temperament, and independent of our circumstances?

Look at Paul's situation -- (in prison, in chains at this time)

Paul doesn't rejoice in his circumstances, but he does rejoice in God -- God's goodness to him and God's blessings and promises -- all this despite his circumstances.

And Paul builds on this in verses 6 and 7 where he writes about the choice between worrying and praying. (why pray when you can worry?)

III. Peace *Philippians* 4:6, 7

Do not be anxious about anything; but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Even though we are better off than almost all the people in the world, life is still a worrying thing. (seem to get more anxious about life as you get older)

Paul's solution is prayer.

(i) Paul stresses that we can take *everything* to God in prayer.

"There is nothing too great for God's power; and nothing too small for his fatherly care."

A child may take anything, great or small, to a parent, sure that whatever happens to them is of interest to his parents,

We may in exactly the same way take anything to God, sure of his interest and concern.

We can pray for *ourselves*. We can pray for forgiveness for the *past*, for the things we need in the *present*, and for help and guidance for the *future*. We can pray for *others*. We can commend to God's care those near and far who are within our memories and our hearts.

But note that Paul lays it down that "*thanksgiving* must be the usual accompaniment of prayer." -- the very act of thanking -- often offsets our own anxieties.

Do not be anxious about anything; but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

The result of believing prayer is that the peace of God will guard our hearts. The word that Paul uses (*phrourein*) is the military word for *standing on guard*.

And this peace of God which guards our hearts "passes understanding"

It passes understanding -- because we cannot understand this peace -- which is only of God's giving. It can never be of our contriving; it is only of God's giving.

But the way to this peace is in prayer to learn to entrust ourselves and all whom we hold dear to the loving hands of God.

Conclusion

Unity, Joy, Peace - what's not to like?