

The Gospel According to Philippians
Peace through Gospel-Mindedness
Philippians 3:20 – 4:9
Sermon Outline

Introduction: Philippians 4:4-9 is not a little treasure box of disconnected sayings on how to have a happy life. It is a profound and comprehensive strategy for “waging peace” in the church.

I) What sort of peace is Paul after?

A) Not merely inner peace

B) Shalom—Hebraic peace

- Incomprehensible
v. 7: The peace that passes all understanding
- Powerful
v. 7: Guards the hearts and minds
Romans 16:20: The God of peace crushes Satan under our feet.
Hebrews 13:20: The God of peace brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus
- In Christ
v. 7: The peace of God will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

C) The church is the place where the shalom of God has broken in

II) How do we fight for peace in the church?

A) Habitual rejoicing

v. 4: Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say, rejoice!

- The object of worship is Christ
- Such rejoicing must be habitual

B) Universal kindness

v. 5: Let your reasonableness be known to everyone.

- Everyone
- Why everyone?

C) Constant praying and thanksgiving as an antidote to anxiety

v. 6: Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

- Anxiety and division
- The solution to anxiety fueled division: Habitual prayer with thanksgiving

D) Habitual right-thinking about each other

v. 8-9: Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable...

- What do you do when the only thing you can see about a fellow believer is what makes you want to hit or run away from him?

Conclusion: *The Lord is near (v. 5).* We don't have to fight or win or fear or control

Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) Philippians 4:6-9 is not a free-floating list of disconnected sayings on how to have a happy life. It has a context and the context is the fight between Euodia and Syntyche. How is 4:6-9 a good strategy for finding and building peace in the church?
- 2) When Paul speaks of peace, he does not mean merely, or even primarily, “inner peace”—mystical detachment from the world. He means Hebraic peace—or shalom. Shalom is the long-promised, comprehensive, end-times, supernatural re-ordering of our broken world in which wholeness and harmony replace the brokenness and discord that have, since the fall, afflicted every part of life. It is a peace that “surpasses all understanding” because it is a harmony that we can neither explain nor produce. Think about your marriage, or your home fellowship group, or your church: Is there a quality of harmony about these groups that a sociologist could not explain? Or have you seen God bring his peace to an impossible church situation you have been in the midst of?
- 3) Paul tells us (twice!) to “rejoice in the Lord always” (v. 4). Happily, he does not command us to rejoice in each other’s ideas and priorities for the church (we may find it hard to do this some times). Nor does he command us to rejoice that we all get along all the time (we don’t always get along). But he does tell us habitually to rejoice in the Lord. What does it mean to rejoice in the Lord, and how can this be a powerful weapon for fending off division?
- 4) Paul commands us in vs. 5 to “Let your reasonableness (courtesy, gentleness, forbearance) be known to everyone.” Why “everyone”? Why does he allow no exception? Why do we take our frustrations out on innocent people—our spouses, kids, close friends, parents? Imagine what would have to happen inside you if you kept this command consistently.
- 5) Paul commands us in vs. 6 not to be anxious about anything. How and why does anxiety lead to division? Have you ever seen this happen in the church? How was it handled?
- 6) The antidote to anxiety according to Paul is habitual prayer with thanksgiving. Why is this such a powerful antidote? How do you avail yourself of this antidote? What might you do to improve?
- 7) Philippians 4:8-9 sounds at first like “My Favorite Things” from “The Sound of Music.” Think about nice things and you won’t feel so bad! But this is to trivialize the text and to tear it from its context. Consider it as part of God’s arsenal for waging war against division by commanding you to think rightly about whomever you happen to be fighting with at the moment. Try this exercise: Make a list of whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, or worthy of praise about this person. The list could be from the past, or it could be from what you see him or her doing with respect to other people (not much may be coming your direction at the moment). As you make the list, you do not have to pretend or lie to yourself about what is not yet all that it should be—but train your mind for the moment to dwell upon all the good things that God has put into this person. Then take it a step further: Imagine what this person will be like when all of these good things are finally perfected. Take a moment to thank God for what the person. Finally write him or her a letter acknowledging what you see. See if this does not help on the “peace front”.