



The Letter to the Philippians – Lesson 7

Philippians 4:2-9

Paul draws his letter a close with an outpouring of affection, encouragement, and wise counsel. Paul's primary concern throughout the letter has been that the Philippians take care to *stand firm* in their faith. They would be facing hostility and opposition; they would be encountering false teachers; they were understandably anxious about Paul's future and Epaphroditus' welfare. Above all, Paul encourages them set aside petty disagreements and to cultivate unity as they continue to strive for the work of the gospel.

1. Read Philippians 4:1-3 *Conflict: Paul urges resolution of a dispute.*
 - a. Look back at Philippians 4:1. What six terms does Paul use in 4:1 to express his affection for this community of faith?
 - b. Paul's warm expression of affection in 4:1 is a prelude to a difficult corrective that he delivers in 4:2. What do you observe about Paul's handling of the disagreement between Euodia and Syntyche? What is especially notable to you?
 - c. Look carefully at 4:3. Paul didn't simply tell these women to stop arguing; he enlisted a trusted friend to help counsel them to resolve their differences. How would that have been especially helpful for accomplishing reconciliation between these highly respected women?

- d. The rift between Euodia and Syntyche apparently causes Paul grave concern. Why might such a disagreement be a serious situation that warranted the attention and the concern of the apostle?
- e. Look back through the earlier chapters and see if you can find other places in this letter where Paul is concerned about promoting unity and avoiding conflict and interpersonal strife.

2. Read Philippians 4:4-9 *Focus on what is good and draw near to God*

- a. From what you've learned in the book of Philippians thus far, explain how one can "*rejoice in the Lord*" when life circumstances are difficult.
- b. What attitude does Paul promote in our relationships with others (Phil. 4:5)? Define and describe this quality. How does it serve to reduce disunity and conflict in our relationships?
- c. How does Paul's assertion that "*the Lord is near*" (Phil. 4:5) support Paul's exhortation to behave with gentleness? See also Phil. 3:20-21 and James 5:7-8 for parallel thoughts.
- d. What prescription does Paul give for dealing with anxiety and worry in Phil. 4:6-7? What exactly are we to do, and what will be the result?

- e. Read Matthew 6:25-34. How does this passage add to your understanding?
- f. **For personal reflection:** How might you offer prayers “with thanksgiving” when your life seems to be collapsing about you? In the midst of tragedy and sorrow, what can you be thankful for?
- g. The promised “*peace of God*” is nurtured and maintained as we develop a transformed thought life. Phil. 4:8 lists seven sorts of things that we are to set our minds upon. Give some examples of things that would qualify.
- h. **For personal reflection:** How can you apply this wisdom to your own circumstances? How might you go about changing the mood of your thought life? Do you have practical suggestions to offer?
- i. Paul has been both a teacher and an example to the Philippian believers. How is this two-fold position reflected in Paul’s instruction in Phil. 4:9? What benefit is offered for those who heed Paul’s challenge?

As we face the challenge of living in a culture that is crazy-busy and contentious, we recognize our need for a focused mind and the peace of God. We want to stand firm in the faith. Take a moment to pray that God will enable you to present your worries and requests to God with a thankful heart, remembering that you are precious in God’s sight, and God will keep you close.