

CITIZENS OF HEAVEN

THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church
Philippians 4.2-9 | November 15, 2020

Prepared by Rev. Curtis A. Bronzan
curtis@gspc.org | 562/493.2553 x115

I. Introduction to this Study

As we near the conclusion of the letter to the Philippians, the Apostle Paul engages disagreement and dissention between two leaders of the church. Pleading that they be of one mind “in the Lord,” prompts the founder of their community to remind them of their eternal salvation.

What’s more, he then recognizes how that eternal salvation begins here and now. Indeed, “the Lord is near”! Because of the Lord’s presence, we – as His followers – set our minds on that which is true, noble, right, pure, lovely and admirable.

II. Connecting with One Another

When was the last time you disagreed with someone? What caused it?

Was the disagreement worth the drama? Was it resolved? If so, how?

How about the last time you felt anxious. What caused it? Are you still anxious over that issue?

III. Study the Text

a. **Read Philippians 4.2-3.**

Here Paul addresses an issue that is personal, but not private. Because these two women “contended at Paul’s side” as missionaries and serve as leaders in the congregation, their disagreement needs to be reconciled within – and for the good of – the whole community. While we don’t know what the problem between Euodia and Syntyche was, notice that Paul doesn’t declare who’s right or who’s wrong.

Why do you think Paul addresses this issue so boldly? Do you think tackling problems head on helps them be resolved? Why – or why not? What is the significance of the phrase “in the Lord”?

b. How do these words instruct you to engage disagreements with others?

How does Paul’s unwillingness to “declare a winner” help you think about reconciling with someone?

How does his phrase “in the Lord” help you think about reconciliation?

c. Paul asks his “true companion” (though we don’t know who this is) to help these fellow leaders work out their differences.



Why do you think Paul invites a third party to help out? Is this similar to Jesus' instructions in **Matthew 18.15-16**?

- d. Next time you have a difficulty with someone, do you think inviting a mutual third party into the situation could be helpful? Why or why not?
- e. Why – in the midst of instructing two leaders to work out their differences – do you think Paul asserts that their names are “in the book of life”? (This phrase is also used in **Revelation 3.5, 13.8, 17.8, 20.11-15, and 21.27**)

f. **Read Philippians 4.4-7.**

In verse 7, Paul utilizes imagery familiar to his experience in a prison cell; that the peace of God *guards* our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Notice the flow of these verses:

Rejoice > Be gentle > Do not be anxious > By prayer and petition, with thanksgiving > Peace

Do you think this was meant as a progression? Did he mean for us to conclude that one action or attitude would help lead to the next? Why – or why not?

- g. How, in such circumstances, do you think he was able to encourage the Philippians to rejoice, to be thankful?

How, if at all, do you think his instructions were borne out of his own experience?

- h. Sometimes hindsight is 20/20. Think back to a time of difficulty in your life: How can you now discern God's presence in the midst of that season?

- i. **Read Philippians 4.8-9.** The categories Paul lists in these verses were well known in Greco-Roman culture, though he does not hesitate encouraging his fellow Christians to follow them as well. Our culture – or at least the evening news – is filled to the brim with things that are not true, noble, right, pure, lovely, or admirable. Where do you see such things in our world? And how do you set your mind on such things instead of being bogged down by the problems?

- j. What types of things are you anxious about? Recall Jesus' words in **Matthew 6.25-34**. How could offering up your worry to God in prayer change things?

- k. How could you be further encouraged to set your mind on the true, noble, right, pure, lovely, or admirable things?

IV. Pray

- a. Lift up the Euodias and Syntyches you are aware of – whatever disagreements, whatever divisions – that there would be agreement “in the Lord.”
- b. Pray for the witness of the church during this difficult and divisive political season.
- c. Ask God to transform your anxiety by His power, presence, and peace.

