

March 13, 2016

Finding Peace in a Troubled World

"I have learned the secret of being content in every situation...I can do all things through him who gives me strength."
Philippians 4:11-13

"Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel...the important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached..."
Philippians 1:12-18

"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, that will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet, what would I choose?"
Philippians 1:21-26



One of the greatest gifts that we are promised as followers of Jesus is a peace of mind that *"...transcends all understanding..."* In the last hours of his life on earth Jesus promised, *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."*

Jesus promises us peace, but do you and I have any real peace? I don't think that most of us would claim that we do. In the Apostle Paul's letter to the believers in Philippi he talks about peace and joy and encourages these dear friends of his to have both.

If we understand the context of this letter we might better understand why the Apostle writes these things to these brothers and sisters. The believers in Philippi were Paul's first converts in Europe. Until Paul and his team crossed into what is today Greece he had worked in what is today Turkey and the Middle East. These believers included a woman named Lydia and the man who ran the local jail in Philippi.

They had heard, it is clear, that their dear brother and mentor had been arrested and taken to Rome to face the Emperor. And, they knew what the likely outcome of that trial would be. They were about to lose their dear friend and their hearts were troubled and their peace and joy were disappearing.

So the Apostle writes to them encouraging them to find the secrets of contentment and peace and joy that he had discovered. Paul's letter to these believers, then, is a road map for us to follow if we wish to find peace, joy and contentment.

I have come to believe that the real source of joy and peace is contentment. That is where Paul ends his letter. ***"I have learned the secret of being content in every situation."*** And what is that secret? Paul would say it is this fundamental belief, ***"I can do all things through him who gives me strength."***

In this letter the Apostle is going to point the way for you and I to experience the same peace and joy which he has found. He begins to show us this in the very first chapter. He was arrested in Jerusalem because some of the Jews there had falsely accused him. He is in chains because of their challenge.

So, he is sitting in a room complaining about how bad his situation is and how unfair everything is. Of course, that is not what he is doing at all. His response to his unfair arrest is to understand that he has been given the opportunity to preach where he might never have otherwise come.



And, even though he knows he may well be put to death because he will be tried before the Emperor, he is not afraid. He calmly explains that for him, "**...to live is Christ, and to die is gain.**" I am convinced that Paul's peace in the face of such challenges is the product of his choice to rely on the Father. His single minded focus on what really matters is the product of his complete surrender to God.

Paul has accepted that whatever is happening in his life God has control over it. He has surrendered control of his life to the Father and so, whatever the Father does in his life is acceptable. That same surrender also allows him to focus all of his attention on what matters the most; the preaching of the gospel. Do you and I have that single minded focus? Do we live in peace believing that whatever happens, God is in control? Or, are we overwhelmed with fear and anxiety?

"My peace I leave with you; my peace I give you." Have you found that peace?