

Mind Control

Philippians 4.2-9 ~ July 25, 2010

➤ Background on Philippians

- Paul first visited Philippi on his 2nd missionary journey
- The visit is recorded in **Acts 16.9-40**
 - Paul has a vision of a man from Macedonia saying
 - *“Come over to Macedonia and help us”*
 - Philippi is the major city of the area
 - On the Sabbath they went to the riverside where women met to pray
 - Lydia (from Thyatira) is converted and they stay with her at her house
 - Paul exorcises a demon from a slave girl fortune teller
 - Paul and Silas were arrested and beaten with rods
 - At midnight while they were praying/singing - earthquake strikes
 - They save the Philippian jailor from committing suicide
 - Magistrates plead with them to leave next morning – Roman citizens

➤ v2 ~ “implore Euodia” and “implore Syntyche”

- There is not much here ~ only 16 words ~ but we clearly infer 3 facts
 - 1. The dispute between the women is very public**
 - It may have begun as a small matter between the two of them
 - But by now everybody knows ~ everybody tempted to take sides
 - I think it's personal ~ no factions are referenced . . .
 - 2. Paul, from his vantage, does not see a clear culprit and victim**
 - He implores each woman individually to pursue peace
 - He had already hinted at this very same thought
 - ◆ **1.27** ~ *“let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel”*
 - ◆ **2.2** ~ *“fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind”*
 - ◆ **3.15-16** ~ *“let us, as many as are mature, have this mind ... let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind”*
 - 3. Paul believes the situation must be resolved ~ it cannot be ignored**

Xition: We'll get to the details of it now in verse 3 . . .

➤ **v3b ~ “these women labored with me in the gospel”**

- We learn 3 more facts about these women
 1. They were once “*of the same mind in the Lord*”
 - The text doesn’t say they were friends
 - But it does say they each “*labored with Paul in the gospel*”
 2. They once behaved more Christianly than they do now
 - Women didn’t preach or evangelize as Paul did (**1 Tim 2.12**)
 - But they prayed, taught, trained, served and supported Paul’s work
 3. Despite their present dispute Paul regards them each as true believers
 - Their “*names are in the Book of Life*”

➤ **v3a ~ “I urge you also, true companion, help these women”**

- They all (Paul, these women, true companion, Clement, fellow workers) labored in the gospel in apparent unity
 - Paul insists they strive to restore the unity they once enjoyed
 - **Why?**
 - *Why is trying to restore unity so important?*
 - *After all, what if this attempted reconciliation backfires?*
 - *Isn’t it better to let sleeping dogs lie?*
 - **No...**
 - *That’s what we want to do...*
 - *That’s what Satan wants us to do...*
 - *But we must do what God commands us to do...*
 - *If we don’t we’re behaving no better than an unbeliever...*
 - ◆ *God insists that we seek reconciliation*
 - If you do not obey Him in this, do you really expect Him to bless you?
 - This is what how God would have us treat those that refuse to obey:
 - **2 The 3.14-15** ~ “*if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother*”
 - We are to shun fellow Christians who stubbornly oppose God

➤ **v4-7 ~ Review of “Worry Warriors” message two weeks ago**

- Today’s message is wrapped around the previous message
- The last message can stand alone ~ but it was given in a context
- I’ve now presented that context ~ And will go on to verses 8 and 9

Xition: We’ll now briefly review verses 4 thru 7

- **v4 ~ Rejoice**
 - Paul and the Philippians were enduring persecution
 - Yet Paul urged them to rejoice... *How much more so should we?*
 - Paul pounded joy into them in this letter – as he does to us . . .
- **v5 ~ Conduct yourself as a Christian**
 - Prefer being wronged over wronging others
 - Allow yourself to be vulnerable / trust God to protect you
 - Be gentle and not quarrelsome with people
- **v6 ~ Be anxious for nothing . . .**
 - Worry will come . . .
 - But God has given us an antidote for worry
 - !!!: Deadly snake bite of worry remedied by antidote of thankful prayer
- **v7 ~ The supernatural peace of God fills us when we pray**
 - We seek joy and peace through many other means
 - But only thankful prayer – in the Lord – brings true peace
 - This peace guards our hearts and minds from evil
- **Recite verses 4 to 7 collectively twice through**
 - *“Rejoice in the Lord always ... hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”*
 - We memorize because the text serves as fuel for meditation later
 - And meditation leads to 1) understanding and 2) integration into our lives
- **v8 ~ “Finally brethren . . .”**
 - Paul began to end this letter at **3.1** with the same phrase
 - But he got a second wind (*or more precisely was filled with a 2nd wind*)
 - But now he really does begin to wrap up the letter
 - He begins the end with this admonition to meditate . . .
 - I need to address a thought that comes up here . . .
 - *“Is Paul just telling us to ignore the harsh realities of life here?”*
 - *“Is he just being a Pollyanna?”*

Xition: What does it mean to be a Pollyanna?

➤ **Pollyanna verses Cassandra**

- Pollyanna was the heroine in a 1913 novel of the same name
 - She was an irrepressible optimist ~ seeing good in everything
 - *"Looking at the world through rose-colored glasses"*
- Cassandra – *"A prophetess of Greek mythology"*
 - Her Trojan War predictions, though true, were not believed
 - Someone who speaks a negative truth and isn't believed
- A Pollyanna is an incredibly hopeful person ~ an incurable optimist
- A Cassandra is a hopelessly honest person ~ a doom and gloomer
- One web site described them like this:
 - Cassandras are disparaged as "*nattering nabobs of negativism*" (W.S.)
 - Pollyannas are dismissed as "*pandering puppies of positivism*" (M.B.)
- *"Is Paul being a Pollyanna here?"*
 - No ~ To think that you probably misunderstand the text
 - Paul's admonition concerns meditation ~ not observation
 - **He's not commanding us to ignore sin in our world . . .**
 - **He is commanding us to not let it rule us inside and defeat us . . .**
 - It's a thin line that separates us from the evil that we oppose . . .

➤ **The sermon title is "Mind Control"**

- When we hear the term we probably think of controlling others minds
- But we cannot control our own minds let alone the minds of others
- Yet Scripture commands us to exercise control of our minds . . .

➤ **v8a ~ "whatsoever things are . . ."**

- true ~ "facts – not conjecture / not lies"
- noble ~ "dignified – not dishonorable"
- just ~ "fair – not biased"
- pure ~ "wholesome – not polluted"
- lovely ~ "beautiful – not ugly or base"
- good report ~ "successes – seek out the good"

➤ **v8b~ "if there is . . ."**

- any virtue ~ "*good in and of itself*" ~ INWARD
- anything praiseworthy ~ "*good as it impacts others*" ~ OUTWARD

Xition: What are we to do with this list . . . ?

➤ v8c ~ “meditate on these things”

- Allow these to fill your mind and nothing else
 - When something is full – nothing else gets in
- Our minds are always active
- “*Idle hands are the devil’s workshop*” (12th century)
- “*Idle brains are the devil’s workhouses*” (1732 book)
 - David stayed behind (idle body and idle mind)
 - He sought distractions and fell into adultery with Bathsheba
- We are to fill our minds with good . . .
- We are to think God’s thoughts after Him . . .
- We do this by:
 - filling our minds with **productive, constructive, God-honoring** thoughts
 - filling our hours with **productive, constructive, God-honoring** activities
- You can’t sit around all day with an empty head
 - You were made for much more . . .

➤ v9 ~ “**learned – received – heard - saw**”

- Mimicry is the highest form of flattery
- Paul commands us often in Scripture to follow his example
- III: Teacher in Irvine – “*Don’t watch ... listen*” “*Don’t listen ... watch*”
- With Paul, we can safely do both
 - His actions never differed from his commands

➤ **Let us tie this all together**

- Paul begins the 4th chapter with this dispute between two women
 - He instructs his true companion to help them settle the dispute
 - He then commands them to rejoice whatever their circumstances
 - He commands them to pray to address their worries
 - He then instructs them to meditate on godliness
 - And to mimic him in living godly lives
- Note the route these 8 verses (2 to 9) took
 - From corrective actions to preventive thoughts and actions
 - From addressing the entire body to individuals
 - From practical body life to practical individual holiness

Let us pray . . .