

**Devotions for the Week of September 1, 2019**  
**YOU GOT MAIL: A Journey Through Paul's Letters**  
**Victorious - A Letter to the Church in Philippi**  
**North East United Methodist Church**  
**By Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian**

**Sunday, September 1, 2019**

**Read Philippians, Chapter 1.**

Acts 16:12-40 records the founding of the Philippian church. Paul established this church during his second missionary journey, about 51 AD. Paul seems to have had a special friendship with the Philippians. The Spirit Filled Life Bible states that Paul's "*abiding message of his letter is the grounds and nature of Christian joy...a joy that ultimately arises from fellowship with the risen, glorified Christ.*"

Paul writes, "*For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.*" Paul understands suffering. He is imprisoned in Rome. He has suffered beatings, shipwrecks, hunger, loneliness, and many other heartaches along his missionary journeys. Paul wants the Philippians to understand what he has discovered. Joy does not come from a lack of suffering but from suffering for Christ. He writes, "*...in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death, For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*"

Paul has realized in the midst of his imprisonment that God is using his suffering to make “*evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that [his] chains are in Christ.*” Paul’s faith is at a point where he sees blessings in his sufferings as God uses his sufferings to create new opportunities for witnessing, to inspire others to preach more boldly, to bring him closer to Christ, pushing him to rely on Christ and Christ alone. Paul’s faith is even to the point that he recognizes the blessings even death will bring for in death he will be brought closer to Christ than in life. He writes, “*I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.*” Paul still has work to do before he can go home to be with Christ.

Personally, I find it very difficult to see God’s blessings in the midst of tragedy or heartache. Many times I don’t realize what God has taught me or shown me until well after the fact. Even though I know God uses suffering to mold us and shape us, when suffering comes I’m still not happy about it. Paul’s faith is an inspiration, something to strive for.

As the contemporary Christian song puts it, “*Blessed be Your name On the road marked with suffering Though there’s pain in the offering Blessed be Your name. You give and take away...My heart will choose to say...Lord, blessed be Your name.*” Try to give God thanks and praise regardless of your circumstances. Ask God to show you what He is trying to teach you through your

current struggles and to give you His joy in the midst of them.

## **Monday, September 2, 2019**

### **Read Philippians, Chapter 2.**

Paul calls on the church to be of one accord, for *“each...to look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others...”* He writes, *“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation...He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death...”*

Christ willingly laid aside His heavenly glory. Paul is saying that each of us must attempt to live with this same unselfishness, this same willingness to lay down our rights for the rights of others. As we all know, this is very difficult to do as we want to be right, we want to be in control, we want to serve our own interests. The only way it is even possible to live like Christ is in Christ, relying on the strength of the Holy Spirit. On our own strength, we can do nothing, and we will quickly return to focusing on our selves.

Throughout the day, let us think about Christ....think about who He was and is...what He went through for us...what He sacrificed. Throughout the day let us reflect on the One who left heaven, gave up all His rights for others, many whom never appreciated His gift and some who even crucified Him. Let Christ's example challenge us. Let us pray for strength to have the same

*“mind...which was also in Christ Jesus.” Let us, with God’s help, “become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom [we] shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life...”*

## **Tuesday, September 3, 2019**

### **Read Philippians, Chapter 3.**

Paul was a Hebrew of Hebrews but he considered his past, his heritage, his background, his accomplishments, as rubbish. He writes, *“Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection...”*

For Paul, his former manner of life was *“rubbish”* compared to the life he now has in Christ. How often it is our past accomplishments that define us? How often our heritage, our history, our churches are what define us? How often our success, our families, our ability to enjoy life are what define us? Paul would say that only one thing and one thing only should define us and that is our relationship with Jesus Christ. That relationship should be at the forefront of everything we do and where we find our identity as Christians. Everything else, according to Paul, is rubbish.

Often it is not our past accomplishments that define us, but our past mistakes. We think, “How could God ever love me?” Certainly Paul had to think those words

as he remembered how he persecuted Christians before his Damascus road experience. Our mistakes, our broken relationships, our failures can begin to define us instead of our relationship with Christ, our *“inheritance as saints of light.”*

Ask God to show you areas of your life, your past, your surroundings, that in your mind define who you are. Ask God to help you have eyes like His, to see those worldly things, your mistakes, your accomplishments, in light of Christ, in light of eternity. Ask God to help you begin to truly define yourself through your relationship with Christ and not who you are in this world. If you have accepted a relationship with Jesus Christ, you are a child of God; everything else pales in comparison.

### **Wednesday, September 4, 2019**

#### **Read Philippians, Chapter 3 again.**

Paul recognizes that he is nowhere near the goal of being like Christ, seeing like Christ. He confesses that he has not attained perfection, he is still stuck in the world and at times does those things he knows he should not do. Yet, he writes, *“I press on, that may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me...forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”*

We all fall short but we press on. We press on knowing that the victory is ours in Jesus Christ. *“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait*

*for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”* This world...our bent to sinning...will not win for Christ already has the victory and those who have placed their faith in Him will one day claim their citizenship in heaven and finally be fully transformed into the likeness of Christ.

Take time to confess to God where you have fallen. Receive His forgiveness. And then, get back up and “*press on,*” “*forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead.*”

### **Thursday, September 5, 2019**

#### **Read Philippians, Chapter 4.**

If I could only live out verse 6 every day, how my life would change...”*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God...*” What will happen if we do this? “*And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*”

Isaiah 40: 28-31 puts it this way: “*But those who wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.*”

How often my wife reminds me of this passage...”*Be anxious for NO THING...*” When I come home upset because of situations in the church or in our lives, she

reminds me every time, “*Be anxious for NO THING...*” I will always be grateful to God for giving me someone with a heart after His, that can remind me what I am so quick to forget when times are tough...for God said, Isaiah 54:17, “*No weapon formed against [me] shall prosper.*”

What is it in your life that is causing you to feel anxious? What is causing you to worry, to stress? “*Be anxious for NO THING...*” Give it over to God and trust Him...Lift it up to God in prayer right now, tonight, tomorrow...until you receive the “*peace of God*” and know that it is going to be alright...for God is good!

### **Friday, September 6, 2019**

**Read Philippians 1:6; 1: 21-24; 1: 29-30; 4: 4-7;  
4: 11-12; 4:13.**

We must learn to see our present circumstances in light of the future promises of God. We must believe that God will accomplish a good work in us, not fear death and seek each day to fulfill God’s purposes, recognize that faith often involves suffering but know that Jesus is always present with us through it, pray continuously, ask the Lord to help us, learn to be content in all circumstances, and believe that when God asks us to do something He will provide the strength to accomplish it.

Ask God to help you walk in faith.

## **Saturday, September 7, 2019**

### **Read Philippians 4:15-20.**

Paul told the Philippians how grateful he was for their gifts and how they were investments that would yield spiritual fruit. He writes, *“I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.”* The *“fruit”* that is established for the kingdom will be credited to your account and one day God will say, *“Thank you, my good and faithful servant.”* As Paul writes, your help is *“a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.”*

How are you investing in God’s kingdom, serving in His Church, using your gifts to help others learn about God’s love for them? What *“fruit”* are you growing by your service and actions, your ministry and mission? When God looks at you and your service to your community, your family, your church, does God smell, does God see *“a sweet-selling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice”*?

Pray about where and how you can step up and serve others in the church, your family, and your community, growing *“fruit”* that will *“abound to your account.”*

**Don’t forget to Invite Someone to Church Tomorrow!!!**

