

Lesson 3

Giving Thanks for Others

Philippians 1:3-8

Imagine sitting in chains...alone... apart from those you know...away from those you love...and awaiting a verdict that will determine whether you live or die. These lonely and potentially fear-provoking conditions describe Paul's situation as we look at today's lesson. And yet Paul realized complete peace as he turned his thoughts and soul and prayers heavenward, and thought of others instead of himself.

This same remarkable peace can be yours, too, as you go through any difficulty. Many women sit alone—some for days, some for nights, and some for days and nights on end. Many of us are forced to spend large amounts of time apart and away from friends and loved ones. And countless others sit awaiting verdicts (from cancer tests, from lawyers, from spouses, from employ-

ers) that will point their life in new and oftentimes uncertain directions.

Aren't you glad that God's Word shows us—in the grievous circumstances of the apostle Paul's life—a marvelous way to experience God's perfect peace even in the midst of our problems? Take note of the three perspectives that brought great joy and peace of mind to Paul. And remember...they will do the same for you!

Philippians 1:3-8

³ I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

⁴ always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy,

⁵ for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,

⁶ being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

⁷ just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.

⁸ For God is my witness, how greatly

I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.

Out of God's Word...

1. What does Paul do when he remembers the Philippian believers (verse 3)?

How does he pray for these people who are so far away (verses 4-6)?

Verse 4—With

Verse 5—For

Verse 6—With

2. What do you learn about the character of God in verse 6?

3. How would you describe Paul's feelings toward his fellow believers (verses 7-8)?

...and into your heart

As I mentioned earlier, three wonderful perspectives helped provide Paul with peace of mind.

- *A Positive Attitude:*

How do you normally think of others? Are you positive? Petty? Picky? Gracious? Jot down the traits that generally describe your thoughts.

Now, do you need to make a conscious effort to nurture a more positive attitude toward others? Scan through Philippians 1:3-8 again and quickly note a few practices or perspectives from Paul's heart that will help you.

- *A Promise to Claim*

Write out verse 6 here:

In a word or two, what effect did this promise have on Paul in his situation?

And how did this promise affect the thoughts Paul had about the people he was writing to—people who were so

far away, people he might never see again?

Do you know a precious Christian who is far away from you, either physically or emotionally or spiritually? How can the promise from verse 6 give you peace of mind?

- *A Passionate Heart*

What does verse 8 reveal about Paul's heart toward those he knew, and how can you cultivate such a heart?

Heart Response

Oh, that we would learn Paul's formula for peace, and learn it well! In his awful circumstances he could experience the peace of God as he concerned himself with others. You see, he had a positive attitude, a promise from God to claim, and a passionate heart.

And Paul did another thing: He looked to God, our wonderful God who is the author and perfecter and finisher of all He begins, our omniscient

God who sees the end product as perfect and complete! God saw the people in Paul's life as they *would* be, and Paul sought to do the same. We, too, can rest in the same fact—that God sees those in our lives (ourselves included!) as they (and we) *will* be!

So, beloved, to experience the power of peace in every situation, begin with thanksgiving. Did you know that the giving of thanks is willful? It's a decision on our part. And giving thanks is also commanded by God. His Word tells us to give thanks *always* and for *all* things, in *everything* and *evermore* (see Ephesians 5:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:16,18). And the decision to do just that—to give thanks, no matter what (or in what situation)—has a powerful effect on our attitude...and our peace.

“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding” (Philippians 4:7) is indeed available to you and me. Why not give thanks for this fact?