



STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, January 31, 2010

The Power of God

What Difference Do It Make? (Week 4 of 4)

Philippians 4:10-14 — *The Word from the Bible (TNIV)*

I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles.

The Power of One

In this passage Paul, without losing his dignity or independence, expresses in detail his thanks for the gift which the Philippians sent by Epaphroditus (cf. 2:25). Paul writes from prison. Many scholars believe he writes from the dreadful conditions of the Mamertine Prison in Rome. This prison was known for its harsh conditions that included cells below ground that could only be accessed through a grate in the cell's ceiling. Each cell was barely large enough for a person to lie down with no bed. The evidence is strong that Paul spent his last days in a cell of this type and this letter was written from these conditions.

4:10-13. Verses 11-12 give an important clue to Paul's attitude. On the experiences mentioned here and in both I Corinthians 4:11-13 and II Corinthians 11:16-29. Paul knows how to live in such a way that his circumstances do not control his inner life.

The Greek word for content (used only here in the New Testament) is a term from Stoic ethics. For the Stoic, however, it did not mean a freedom in the midst of involvement, but an autonomy which excluded participation in the lives of others or compassion for them. For the stoic, serenity was a separation from the troubles of the day that came from an inner strength.

Paul's secret is the power of God which he has incorporated into his life. This power not only fortifies him against difficulty but enables him to live with it creatively. II Corinthians 12:1-10 is an important discussion of this power which comes from allowing Christ's strength to be made visible through the way human weakness is borne.

Prayer Focus

Trietsch is a praying church. This morning, as you worship, one of our prayer volunteers is praying for everyone in each section of our worship center. We believe that prayer changes lives and hearts for good and for God.

We invite you to join these volunteers by praying for those persons around you. We believe these prayers will have an immediate impact on those for whom you are praying.

Remember... someone is praying for you. Here are a few prayers to guide you.

Psalm 121

A song of ascents

I lift up my eyes to the mountains—
where does my help come from?

My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot slip—
he who watches over you will not slumber;
indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

The LORD watches over you—
the LORD is your shade at your right hand;
the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.

The LORD will keep you from all harm—
he will watch over your life;
the LORD will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.

Psalm 121

A Psalm. For giving grateful praise.

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.
Worship the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.

Know that the LORD is God.
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.

For the LORD is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Have a great week!

Next week we begin the series on relationships, "He Said. She Said."

***Invite someone to worship this week. You will be glad you did.
God is doing great things through the ministry of Trietsch.***

Tell someone you love them today.

Daily Readings

This sermon is the last in our series on “What difference do it make?” These passages focus on our relationship with God and our response to God’s call. There is a difference between believing and doing. Which of these is basis of your life of faith? The study guide readings allow us to dig deeper.

Monday, February 1 – Read Deuteronomy 30:15-16 — In the Covenant of the Law, God made promises to be with his people. But he also expected some things in return. What are the choices God is giving his people in this passage? What is God calling the people to do? If we no longer follow the Law, but live by grace, how does this apply to our lives today? What will you do this week to show your love for God? How will you keep God’s commands?

Tuesday, February 2 – Read Galatians 2:19-20 — Paul’s writings come from the heart of a servant—one who considered himself a slave to Christ. What must a person give up in order to have that kind of relationship with God? What does a person gain? What do you believe it means to die to the Law and to live for God? What does it mean to be crucified with Christ? If you have given up your life for his sake, what does what is the promise give to us in return?

Wednesday, February 3 – Read Philippians 2:8-11 — Paul is contemplating the wonders of Jesus becoming a human being—God incarnate. Why did God exalt Jesus? What does it mean that Jesus’ name is above every name? How do you “bend your knee” and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord? How will you show him your love and devotion the rest of this week?

Thursday, February 4 – Read Romans 12:1-2 — There is such an emphasis on God’s grace throughout Scripture that we are often tempted to live for ourselves and forget the source of all things—including ourselves. We can continue to conform to a “Me” world and forget about the person God created us to be. What does this passage encourage us to do that helps us focus on God and not ourselves? What does it mean to be a “living sacrifice”? How do you present yourself to God in this manner? How does the world try to squeeze us into its mold? What is it that renews our minds in a polluted, “Me” world?

Friday, February 5 – Read Psalm 150 — This week’s sermon is about the power of God we receive when we turn outward as God’s servant. We are not alone in our efforts in this world. We are partners with God through Jesus Christ. God wants us to live in this hope. This hope grows out of a devotion to Jesus that leads us to a daily response to every situation with the words, “as you wish.” Today, read this Psalm just as an act of worship and praise. Notice that the Psalm is completely devoted to God, not to ourselves. Take time to really worship the One who wants to be the focus of our lives.
