

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for the precious gift of this day. Lead us through its joys, and may we continue to praise You within everything we do. Lead us through its troubles, and may we learn how to deal in a godly way with all that happen to us. Lead us closer to You, and may we become stronger in faith and confident in Your guidance. Lord Jesus Christ, we thank You for the precious gift of this day: AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

- *Worship the Lord for His glory and majesty as Creator of all*
- *Worship the Lord for His justice, His truth and righteousness*
- *Worship the Lord for His mercy towards all who have sinned*
- *Worship the Lord for His Gospel by which people are saved*
- *Worship the Lord for His providence, His friendship and care*
- *Worship the Lord for His defeat of evil, and His coming again*

Meditation

If my people would listen to me, says the Lord,
Then they would know how I answer their prayers.

If my people would turn to me says the Lord,
Then they would find through my touch that I love them.

If my people would read my Word, says the Lord,
Then they would not suffer through lack of knowledge.

If my people would love their neighbours, says the Lord,
Then they would find their own lives would be enriched.

If my people would do what I say, says the Lord,
Then they would discover that I am faithful to my word.

If my people would pursue the truth, says the Lord,
Then they would find themselves with me, in my Kingdom.

Life is a challenge for everyone, says the Lord,
And our souls find their peace when we rise to His call.

Bible Study - *Philippians 4:8-9*

⁸ To finish with, my friends, set your minds on what is true, honourable, just, pure, lovely and commendable; by which I mean anything of excellence and worthy of praise. ⁹ Make it your business to the things you have learned, received, heard and seen from me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Reflections

I don't know about you, but when I read a passage of Scripture like this, my spirit says 'Yes, of course, this is right, and I must seek to do what is said here. So I may think about this for a little, and reflect on the truly good things that have happened in my life recently, and chastise myself for feeling down when the Lord is so good. I may look carefully at the second verse in this passage, and remind myself of what I have recently learned from the study of God's Word, and resolve to build on what the Lord has revealed to me. But then life moves on, and I become busy with whatever requires my attention next.

So what has happened in this brief exchange with God's Word? I have read it, believed it, appreciated it, rejoiced in it and spend a little time with it; but has it made any impact on my life? Looking back over the last

few months, I reckon I have read many great texts such as this and have certainly heard a number of good sermons through which God has spoken to my heart. On each occasion I distinctly recall being similarly inspired, but to be honest, I cannot now remember the details of this inspiration and guidance. So, what has happened? Have I grown as a Christian merely by the act of hearing good things and being uplifted in spirit? Possibly. However, I am suspicious that I have not made the most of God's revelation to me, because I reckon that I have hardly changed as a person over these last few months. I have the same ups and downs, the same things infuriate me, and the reasons for my positive or negative feelings are no different. Certainly, those who know me are unlikely to notice much difference. I am therefore left asking whether the Word of God has made any discernable difference to me, and whether the Holy Spirit has done anything noticeable in me through all the inspiration I have been given. Should I be concerned about this, or am I making too much of this?

Wise Christian teachers have often reminded us that we grow slowly, sometimes in ways we cannot perceive, and continual exposure to God's Word is essential to build up our spiritual understanding. Certainly, our minds take in far more than we realise and although we cannot remember everything, the words of Scripture will embed within our minds and be recalled in all manner of ways and in all kinds of situations. We should not ignore the importance of this subtle spiritual growth, and we should rejoice in what it means to attend church regularly to take part in worship, to hear the things of God spoken and sung, and to listen to the preached Word of God. We cannot remember it all, but the Holy Spirit will nevertheless use it within us, as he will.

However, my spirit tells me that although this is important, God has more for me than this. The other day I was somewhat upset by the continuing pain I experience (because of my medical circumstances) and it was beginning to overcome me. I had to retreat from work on several occasions and take extra medication to prevent the pain running out of control. The Lord was gracious and I was able to keep going, but as they say, I did so 'at a cost'.

Then, in the midst of all this, the Lord reminded me that I had not exactly come to Him for help in the midst of my mini-crisis. He drew me to a number of texts such as this in Philippians 4, and reminded me that I was a loved child and that He was in control of my life. However, if I was to stop falling at the hurdle of pain every time it rose too high, then I had to be ready to deal with it according to all that the Lord has revealed about pain and suffering in His Word. I have since begun to draw up a list of texts that speak of God's care for the sick, of His ultimate victory over all sin and sickness, of His power to overcome, and much more. The passage we have read today helps by reminding me that if I set my heart on what I know, then I have peace. I have created a file on my computer where I keep these great tools to help me rise above pain, and the Lord has told me I must use it.

In the midst of real life, we need specific ways of putting our faith into practice. Paul knew this when he said '*set your minds on what is true, honourable, just, pure ...*' (Phil 4:8). I have to '*make it my business to do the things I have learned*' (to personalise Paul's words in Phil 4:9). I will not grow in the things of God by sitting back and waiting for the Lord to reveal what I need in each situation; I have a responsibility to take what God has given me and use it, pro-actively.

In this reflection, I have written about all this from a personal point of view. I hope you can see how it applies to you, for your circumstances will be very different from mine. If you set your mind on the things of God and make it your business to retain what you have learned, then you will find that the Lord will do more in your life than you have ever previously imagined. The Lord is always working for you, so work with Him.

God bless you

Paul H Ashby