



Borders Mission Circuit

Part of the Methodist Church of Great Britain



The **Methodist Church** 

Dear Friends in the Borders Mission Circuit Ministers message, 11th October

They say a little encouragement goes a long way! And its true isn't it? I can remember all different kinds words of encouragement spoken to me through my life, they have not been forgotten. I can remember the context, who said them to me and most interestingly I can remember how they made me feel.

The Bible reading today is from Philippians 4 1-9. I would like to invite you to read Pauls words as though this were a letter written personally to you. What encourages you in what he writes?

It is clear he was addressing a quarrel between Euodia & Syntyche and he is encouraging them to reconcile their differences. In the verses that follow Paul is encouraging a way to being and behaving to minimise such quarrels. In a sense, they are a spiritual exercise, designed to focus the mind in ways that drive out bad thoughts and create positive feelings towards others. Don't stoke up your anxiety; pray about things instead. Let your mind think about good, beautiful, honourable things. God's peace will then come to you, to guard your heart and minds in Christ.

The heart in the ancient world was the centre of the will, so the peace of God is not there to make you feel better but to help you do the right thing.

The Philippians are about to find themselves alone. Paul and his co-workers have supported them throughout their early days, and he has every faith that they will manage once 'released into the wild'. He tells them that even though he will not be there, God will be. And God will remain close and guard their hearts and minds.

The Philippians faced a time of uncertainty. The future may have looked bleak to them. Paul encourages them to rejoice rather than worry! It is a question of attitude – as the American writer Dale Carnegie put it, in a book

called How to Stop Worrying and Start Living: 'Two men looked out from prison bars, one saw the mud, the other saw stars.' Paul wants the Philippian church – and all who follow Christ – to look for the good in everyone and everything, and to fill our minds with all that is right, and beautiful, and just (4.8). How does this contrast with what we are fed daily through the our press, TV and social media?

Verse 7 says ' And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

The peace of God – not merely a psychological state of mind, but an inner tranquillity based on peace with God, the peaceful state of those whose sins are forgiven. The opposite of anxiety, it is the tranquillity that comes when a believer commits all cares to God in prayer and worries about them no more.

Transcends all understanding – the full dimensions of God's love and care are beyond human comprehension.

Guard our hearts and mind - a military concept depicting a sentry standing guard. God's 'protective custody' of those who are in Christ Jesus extends to the core of their beings and to their deepest intentions.

Life isn't easy, there are always hard and difficult times, no matter how deep our faith. Paul in his letter to the Philippians is encouraging them that it is okay to be afraid of hard or difficult times. Acknowledge it; just don't let it rule.

We are living in a hard time, that cannot be denied and so I encourage you to read and ponder on these familiar words (of the Benediction) : 'May **the peace of God** which **transcends all understanding keep our hearts and minds** in the knowledge and love of God (and Christ Jesus). Amen.

Every blessing, Deacon Sam.

On behalf of Rev Robert, Rev Ann, Rev Nicola & Rev Pete.