

Westminster Presbyterian Church
Vero Beach, Florida 32966
Rev. Dr. Les Koerselman
February 14th, 2010

Psalm 99

II Corinthians 3:12-4:2

Philippians 4:1-9

Text: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

"Peace Partners"

I am reminded of a story about a little boy, who in the evening was saying his prayers. He knelt by his bed with his mother beside him. He fervently prayed, "Dear Lord, bless Mommy, and Daddy, and our home, **and give me a bicycle!**" His mother said: "For heavens sakes, Johnny, God isn't deaf." He said: " I know, but Grandma is sitting in the other room and **she** is hard of hearing." Sometimes we may believe that God is hard of hearing when a response to our prayers is slow in coming.

Our passage from Paul's letter to Philippi isn't for the timid of heart or for babes in Christ. For those just beginning their spiritual journey, this passage will seem to be too much and beyond our grasp. Why? Perhaps because for many their thinking is infantile. This surely is the case when we equate the good things in life with God's blessing and adversities as being a curse sent by God himself. A man of such thinking was caught in a storm while at sea. His friends exhorted him to offer a prayer lest they all perish. He declined saying he had not been in Church for fifteen years. The storm increased in its intensity. They made their appeal again. "Please, please offer a prayer unto God." And so, finally the sailor reluctantly said: "Oh, dear Lord, God, you know I haven't been to church in 15 years, but this one request I make of You, if you spare our lives and we make it safely to shore, I promise you I won't trouble you again for another 15 years!"

Some of us are like that when it comes to prayer. Prayer is seen as a last ditch effort to win the favor of God or to bail us out of some predicament. Some people possess an adversarial relationship with God and are content to blame Him for the difficulties and heartaches of life. Others still are like the spoiled child who comes knocking on the gates of heaven, demanding that God provide what they want.

As a consequence becoming a peace partner with God is impossible. Maturity in Christ demands that each of us submit to His authority. "There is no other name, in heaven or beneath the earth whereby we must be saved." "Ask in my name and it shall be given unto you." I want to remind you that God doesn't answer "e-mail", but he does answer "**knee-mail**". When we finally have the courage, born of the right spirit of humility to get down on our knees, then God can begin to work in and through us. Victor Hugo said this of a courageous life. He said: "Have courage for the great sorrows of life, patience for the small ones, and when you have finished your daily task, go to sleep in peace for God is awake."

How true it is. For those who have learned to wait upon the Lord have found a renewal of strength far beyond their imagining, far beyond their dreaming. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard what God has prepared for those who love him". Now as we examine this passage let us do so humbly. It is obvious that Paul had reached a level of spiritual maturity. If that be so, and I believe it is, then the import of this passage ought to find application in our own lives. How often it is the day to day occurrences that so discourage us, dampen our enthusiasm; destroy and weaken our faith. A wise sage once observed: "It is not the experience of the day that drives a man mad, it is the remorse or bitterness of something that happened yesterday and the dread of what tomorrow may bring."

When we approach God, and if we do so in sincerity of heart and mind, we ought to be aware of three great truths of which Scripture speaks: First of all, as we approach God we need to be aware of His love for us and all of creation. Secondly, our approach is made accepting the wisdom of God. And lastly, we approach God knowing his authority and power.

The Gospel of John has for our benefit the Upper Room discourse. In Chapters 14 through 17, we have the picture of our blessed Lord as he speaks with his disciples. He does so intimately and warmly. It is the night in which he was betrayed. Shadows flicker across the room. A meal has been shared, bread broken and a cup offered. It is then that Jesus speaks of a new commandment. "This commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you." Nothing happens in your life, dear friends, that God has not purposed or ordained unless it is for your benefit. Well, that separates the child from the adult when it comes to faith. You mean the heartache, the suffering, the difficulty that I am entering into right now has been ordained by God? Yes, Yes, Yes! That is precisely why St. Paul could say, "Rejoice, again I say rejoice".

That's why Romans, the 5th Chapter shouts at us: "We rejoice in our suffering, knowing that suffering produces character and character produces hope and hope does not disappoint us. "

John wrote in his epistle, "let us love one another, for love is of God." And as if to add emphasis to this thought he writes, "God is love". When we discover the importance of "Knee-mail" we also uncover the great truth that God loves us as though we are the only person in the entire universe. "Nothing, no nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

As we enter into a life of prayer we also discover the wisdom of God. Shortly before King David died he instructed Solomon saying: "So be strong, show yourself a man, and observe what the Lord your God requires. Walk in His ways and keep His decrees and commands, His laws and requirements, as written in the Law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go, and that the Lord may keep His promise to me. If your descendants watch how they live, and if they walk faithfully before me with all their heart and soul, you will never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel." As Solomon ascends the throne, God asks of him, "What shall I give unto thee?" "Give unto your servant an understanding heart to judge your people in order that I might discern good from evil." Solomon realized, as we must, that the wisdom of God far surpasses the foolish intellect of our own minds. Later Solomon wrote in Proverbs 3:5-6 If we could learn this it would save us from a world of heartache, miss-steps and tragic consequences as a result of foolish decisions. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thy own understanding, and in all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct Thy paths."

"Knee Mail" offers us the love of God, "Knee Mail" offers us the wisdom of God. "Knee Mail" offers us the power of God. Every person, whether it be saint or sinner, has at some point felt powerless and impotent. The winds and waves of life beat against one and all and there are moments when we feel life is too much for us. It is in those moments that we throw up our hands in despair. Remember, there were times when the greatest of God's saints doubted the authority and power of God.

Moses doubted the ability of God to speak through him. Moses doubted the authority and power of God in delivering the people from bondage. But God used Moses to demonstrate to Pharaoh and all of Egypt 10 great plagues that rendered them helpless. No sooner is their freedom realized but what a crisis erupts. The army of Pharaoh has followed them and now with the sea in front and no escape possible the Israelites fear for their lives.

One can only imagine the feeling of helplessness that swept over the people. God then speaks through the voice of Moses as he commands, "Fear ye not. Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord which I will show you this day." Moses is immediately told to stretch forth his hand over the waters of the Red Sea, and the water is parted and the people walk over dry shod.

As their journey through the wilderness continues, the people begin to bemoan their condition. "Would that we had died in Egypt!" Again the enemy of adversity confronts them as they long for water in a desert. The Lord God says to Moses: "Moses, speak ye unto the rock before their eyes and it shall give forth his water." Moses speaks and the water gushes from the rock. God's power and authority results in deliverance. When Moses is about to die, he reminds the people of Israel of God's power. "Remember, that the Lord God brought us up out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm."

Centuries later, the prophet, Ezekiel is confronted with the authority and power of God. He is taken to a valley of dry bones. God asks him, "Can these bones live?" Ezekiel humbly answers: "O Lord God thou knowest." God then commands Ezekiel to speak unto those bones. As he speaks the four winds of the earth are gathered together and the breath of life is breathed into the bones. They begin to clatter and clang together as they are assembled into skeletons. Sinew and muscle begin to take form and skin covers the body. To Ezekiel's, amazement he now sees a vast army standing upon their feet. Then the Lord God says: "This will I do for the House of Israel and then ye will know that I am the Lord when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my spirit in you and you shall live."

Friends, is not the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and He who is also the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ available to us? Are we a people void of His love, wisdom and power? Is not Jesus who was raised to life in this place? Can we not yet hear the voice of Jesus say to each of us: "Fear not for I am with you."

I want to leave you this poem. It is of the type that my mother used to collect and place in her scrapbooks. It is without authorship, but the truth of these words yet possesses depth and meaning. The poem is entitled, "His Presence."

HIS PRESENCE

My presence shall go with thee, so calm thy troubled fears
My promise is unchanging through all of the circling years.
Mid scenes of gloom and gladness, when weary or distressed
My presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest.

My presence shall go with thee, most blessed assurance here
While in the lower valley beset by doubt and fear
No evil shall befall thee, close sheltered to my breast
My presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest.

My presence shall go with thee, though in a foreign land
And far from home and kindred this covenant shall stand.
Neither time nor space can sever, love knows not east or west
My presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest.

It's time to grow up. Hear again the words of Paul: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, make your requests known unto God."

Will you pray with me?

Gracious Father, we live in troubled and difficult times. Yet, we believe that throughout all generations You have been there to love, guide, uphold, sustain and direct. So for us, who are perhaps troubled and anxious about many things, speak again, and as we speak to you, let your spirit fill us, for it is in the name of Jesus that we ask it. Amen.