

Philippians 11 - Carpe Vitam

Apostle Paul ended his letters with practical teaching for believers to live by. It might seem like a good idea to be known as a peppy, upbeat, and uplifting church, but if you read the Bible well, you will see that mankind needs a lot of admonition. However, we are blessed with passages like Philippians 4:4-9 where Paul wrote about the call for also having a positive spiritual outlook.

1. Seizing the day vs. seizing eternal life -

As we go to read Phil 4:4-9, we might be reminded of the Latin phrase, *carpe diem*, "seize the day."

Phil 4:4-9 Rejoice in the Lord alway: *and* again I say, Rejoice.

5Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord *is* at hand.

6Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

7And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

8Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things.

9Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

Without any context, *carpe diem* is a popular phrase presents an invigorating challenge to take charge of life. It suggests not being a victim of life and circumstances.

I remember a story about a woman who was very discouraged because of the many problems in her life. As she was walking down the street, she met a fellow believer who asked, "How are you doing today?"

With a sour look and a bitter shrug she replied, "Oh, not too bad—under the circumstances."

The other person quickly countered, "Well, get above the circumstances! That's where Jesus is."

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odb.org/US/1996/04/11/above-the-circumstances

We can live *under* our circumstances or we can *rise above* our circumstances.

The Roman poet, Horatio, penned the words *carpe diem*, to seize the day, which is somewhat compatible with what Paul wrote. Rejoicing in God's peace, exercising moderation, and focusing on the positive things of God are all ways of taking charge and rising above our circumstances. These things alone are great. On further analysis, we will find that while what Paul wrote seems to be compatible with what Horatio said, what Horatio had in mind was far less than what Paul had in mind.

Today's philosophy sounds very much like Horatio who followed the philosophy of Epicurus. Epicureanism taught that there was no existence after death and that the greatest good was pleasure. In Horace's poem, he challenged a lady not to be concerned about what fate the gods had in store for her. He challenged her to focus on the present. Epicurus' admonition was that if you could trust that the future would work out, you could act with confidence in the present. Horace reflected this in *carpe diem*. This could present a problem in that since pleasure was their highest good, *carpe diem*, according to Horatio and Epicurus, could lead to merely living a life that maximizes fun without regard for the future consequences, especially eternal consequences. *Carpe diem* has

influenced entertainment where people present a live for today with no sense of reality for the future mentality. It reminds us of an old beer commercial where people were told to "go for the gusto," or indulge yourself.

Paul dealt with that attitude in his admonition to Timothy. His challenge is not *carpe diem*, but *carpe vitam* – not just to seize the day, but to lay hold on life, especially *eternal* life.

1Tim 6:11-19 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

12Fight the good fight of faith, **lay hold on eternal life**, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. **[Timothy was saved, but he wanted him to have all that goes with life in Christ]**

13I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and *before* Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;

14That thou keep *this* commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:

Paul then spoke to the worldly attitude that was represented by Epicureanism. He challenged those that are rich in this world to turn their concerns for using riches properly for eternal reward.

17Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

18That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

19**Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation**

against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. [These also are saved, but they just had money that they needed to be good stewards over. Paul also wanted *them* to have the fullest life in Christ.]

Jesus came to give us not only eternal life, but an *abundance* of life.

John 10:7-11 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

8All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

9I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

10The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly.

11I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

He gave us eternal life by laying down His life as a sacrifice for our sins. The world is a thief that would rob us of the opportunity to have that eternal life. The world tries to tell us that we live only once so live it up while you can. Jesus offered us *true* life which is eternal, but He also gives us an *abundance* of life.

2. How to seize life -

After we have 'laid hold of eternal life,' we are free to focus on 'abundance of life.' Some people are concerned that they are going to miss out on life if they live according to the Bible. There *are* some things you will miss out on. For example, you will miss out on, like the effects on your body. Learning to live a Godly life you will avoid the drug and alcohol problems, venereal disease. You will avoid abusive relationships,

resources wasted on hopeless causes, and anxiety over the future. Going back to Philippians 4, Paul wrote some very specific instructions on how to seize life.

- Rejoice

Phil 4:4-9 Rejoice in the Lord alway: *and* again I say, Rejoice.

We need to focus on thanking God and appreciating what He is doing in our life. At any moment and in any circumstance we can find God's will and work in our lives. Some circumstances are clearly not as enjoyable as others, but we can learn through any trials. At the same time, every circumstance in our life is an opportunity to serve Him. Just the other day I had to drop the car off for servicing. Instead of being able to wait for it to be done, it was going to take longer to get to. I don't like to take the bus at times like that, but I don't particularly enjoy getting the exercise I need by walking back. However, on the way back, I saw a lady who is visually impaired waiting for the bus. I checked down the road to be able to let her know if she was going to have a long wait. I got to talk to her for quite a while which gave me the opportunity to invite her to church. As I talk with people about what they are going through, I invariably take note of how they don't have to be subject to their circumstances but can turn them into opportunities to rejoice. Rejoice in *everything*.

- Control your life

5Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord *is* at hand.

Paul talks about moderation, but this is something people don't understand very well. We think of the word *moderation* as meaning mild and not excessive. You might hear someone say that you can have anything as long as it is in *moderation*. A little alcohol, a little fornication, a little stealing, as long as it is in moderation. To *moderate* means to *control*. We use the phrase "reign it in" meaning we need to dial back our

excesses. We need to not only "reign it in", but to "take the reigns", or take control, of our lives. What Paul is referring to, here, is how we need to be very deliberate about controlling ourselves, especially because the Lord is at hand.

We need to be *deliberate* Christians who are good stewards over life. To take control means to *plan* our lives for God.

- Trust and thank God

6Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

7And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Don't forget to pray. What is your *plan* for prayer? Whatever we do, we do by the power that God gives us. To be thankful, we need to appreciate God and all He is doing. Remember that our circumstances are heavenly opportunities.

Mark 9:41 For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.

Thank God for the opportunity to serve Him. Not everyone is going to respond to us sympathetically for God, but that is not where our success lies. Our success lies in *sharing* the Gospel or what God has taught us. Our joy lies in a life that is exciting in Christ. All the while, we know that God is always at work. This is why it is important to keep under the teaching of God's Word because that is how we truly come to understand God and His will. This leads us to the last principle.

- Be careful what you set your mind on

8Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things

are honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things.

9Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

There is a list of things here to "think on." Even if we are only capable of one thought per second, that is still a finite amount of space in our heads to be occupied. We might be confronted with many responsibilities that we can't avoid tending to, but the emphasis here is on what we *choose* to pay attention to.

Truth - the greatest truth we can attend to is Jesus, of course, because He *is* the truth, the way, and the life (John 14:6). And then there is the Word of God because His Word *is* truth (John 17:17). What is your *plan* for knowing God's Word? There are all kinds of resources for knowing God's Word online, but don't neglect the attendance at Sunday School, worship, and church Bible studies. It is at church where you have the greatest opportunity to learn in a real life context. What are your *plans* for getting to church?

Honest - Focusing on that which is honest is differentiated from *truth*. Honest refers to the idea of being honorable, or honest with oneself. Are you attending church because you are honest with yourself about your need for the things of God? For too many people, it is a happy coincidence that they are at church. They prove to be dishonest when they let some little thing discourage them. Our honesty with the things of God is more apparent when we have a grievance and we do the right things *anyway*. What are your *plans* to examine your heart?

Just - Focusing on that which is *just* are those things that God commands us to render unto men, whether honour, deference, and obedience to our superiors

in the state or the family; the guidance and protection of inferiors; friendship and assistance towards equals, or kindness towards all. This includes the laws and duties of the city and society in which we live, except when they conflict with conscience.

Pure - We should be careful not only to preserve our bodies from pollution, but our hearts, tongues, eyes, and dress, cultivating modesty

Lovely - This brings into question the whole question of aesthetics. It is usually not until some new trend has run its course to the extreme that we notice how ugly it is. Sometimes when I am in a store I will try to engage in a little humor to spark a conversation. One day the store radio was playing one of the common things that really can't pass as music even though people won't admit it. That was bad enough, but the "singer" never found a flat note they would miss. I remarked to another customer, "Oh no, now I will be humming that tune all day long." He understood and laughed in agreement. That bit of so called music was strictly from the world. There is also a lot of so-called Christian music that people rave about that is really nothing more than their old worldly music that has been sprinkled with a little holy water. It takes a little honesty to be able to admit to ourselves that what the world offers is *not* lovely. There are many things that people think are aesthetic, but if they are honest, those things reflect the corruption of sin. Nancy was taking an art class during a time when a group of young art students on campus was protesting with their new found freedom to express their sexual obsessions, and thinking themselves to be quite clever. However, when she shared a beautiful plaque from the book of Jeremiah about the potter's field to her Jewish professor, who was a potter, they snidely complained. They insisted that he remove it because it was religious. They missed the artistic setting of the Scripture. Then they went to a lot of trouble to leave a piece of filthy, blasphemous work of so-called art for her to find on her chair to make a

statement of their rebellion against God. What *plans* have you made to surround yourself with things that are lovely?

Good report - Things of good report include people who have a great Christian reputation. It can include movies, shows, literature, and commentators that have a good reputation amongst Godly people. If we have an interesting Christian book, video, biography, we should share those with others. We should deliberately seek out missionary stories, videos from Godly scientists who share the glory of God's creation, and outstanding Christian work, for example, and not the trashy sitcoms, movies, or magazines that the world produces.

Paul summed everything up in a catch-all "if there be any virtue." Virtue speaks of excellence in general. He exhorts us that *these* are the things we should be thinking of. As was said before, there are enough things we encounter throughout the day that we *have* to contend with. When it comes to what we can choose and plan to fill our minds with should be Christian excellence. In the end, Paul concluded with the principle that this where our leadership must be Godly because people need to learn from them.

3. God's peace -

Paul's last word in this section is that you will achieve God's peace.

Phil 4:9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

This begins with the peace that we have *with* God through Jesus Christ.

Rom 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

Rom 6:18-22 Being then made free from sin, ye became the

servants of righteousness.

19I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

20For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.

21What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things *is* death.

22But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

As we yield ourselves to God and pursue Christian excellence we will live in God's peace and will truly live rejoicing.

Do you know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord? Have you acknowledged to Him that you are a sinner with the awareness that your sinfulness will be judged, sending you to Hell? Have you submitted yourself to Him as the master of your life? Do you create plans to live rejoicing every day?

If you are a believer, are you knowingly engaging in activities and things that grieve the Spirit of God. Have you deliberately surrounded yourself with things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report? All of these work toward holiness.

Heb 12:14 Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

1. Seizing the day vs. seizing eternal life - Phil 4:4-9, 1Tim 6:11-19, John 10:7-11
2. How to seize life - Phil 4:4-9, Mark 9:41
3. God's peace - Phil 4:9, Rom 5:1, Rom 6:18-22, Heb 12:14