

Dr. Ron Armstrong • May 16 & 17, 2020

Letters from Prison: Working to Feel Better

Philip. 4:1 Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!

[2] I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. [3] Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

[4] Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! [5] Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. [6] Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. [7] And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

[8] Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. [9] Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

[10] I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. [11] I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. [12] 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. [13] I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

[21] Greet all the saints in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send greetings. [22] All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.

A. Before we “get to work” feeling better, let’s set some reasonable expectations for ourselves.

1. There is a tendency to set timelines for when we ought to “be better” or “get past it.” Hurts and troubles don’t own a calendar.
2. When problems/hurts/tragedies hit, there is a natural progression to our reaction.
 - a. Shock.
 - b. Adjustment process. The process depends on the circumstances. For example:
 - I. For loss, the process is grief.
 - II. For a financial setback, the process may be a lifestyle change.
 - c. A new normal develops. This does not require resolution, answers, or fixes. The mind adjusts to good, bad, and even heart-rending.
 - d. Allow occasionally better. God heals over time.
 - e. Practice better. This is where Paul’s directions come in. How can you practice being better?

B. Paul’s specific directions:

Action called for	Purpose or Result
Agree in the Lord	Reconciliation
Rejoice (name the good things)	A better perspective helps us see that not everything is bad
Be gentle	Reduced conflict
Pray and petition	Reduced anxiety
Thanksgiving	Peace of God
Focus on what’s true, just, and pure.	Focusing on blessings eases the sting of hurts