



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

October 8, 2021

DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC By Rev. Maria Szabone Berces



Source: Our Daily Bread

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

Today's Inspiration in one sentence

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

(Philippians 4:8)

Did You Know?

- Previously we learned that the early church was unanimous in its testimony that **Philippians** was written by the apostle Paul, and that scholars dated this letter around 61 AD.
- The city of Philippi was named after King Philip II of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great.
- It was a prosperous Roman colony, which meant that the citizens of Philippi were also citizens of the city of Rome itself. They prided themselves on being Romans, dressed like Romans and often spoke Latin. No doubt this was the background for Paul's reference to the believer's heavenly citizenship.
- Many of the Philippians were retired military men who had been given land in the vicinity and who in turn served as a military presence in this frontier city.
- That Philippi was a Roman colony may explain why there were not enough Jews there to permit the establishment of a synagogue and why Paul does not quote the Old Testament in the Philippian letter.

(The NIV Study Bible; Philippians)

Personal Insight

This coming Sunday and Monday will be all about Thanksgiving in Canada. But what does it mean for us and our families? Is it just a statutory holiday when we visit with our folks, and eat as much as we can? With other words: what our thanksgiving is based on? More importantly: does this 'holiday' have any implication on our everyday life?

Someone suggested that Thanksgiving is not a day or weekend, but an attitude. God has already lavished us with abundant gifts, and for me the most precious of these is the Holy One's *daily* companionship and providence. In all my joys and challenges, celebrations and struggles, I may know that God is with me, I am not alone. I can bring all these into God's loving presence, as Paul suggests, with thanksgiving. Not just on this single weekend, but **“in every situation”**. If we can remember to **present [our] requests to God** - always, and with thanksgiving - we have the promise that **“the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”** (Philippians 4:7) This peace will also enable us to put the excellent gifts of God's love into practice in our families and wider environment.

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



The Whatever

Brothers and sisters, whatever . . . is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Philippians 4:8

READ Philippians 4:1–9

Every Friday evening, the national news my family views concludes the broadcast by highlighting an uplifting story. In contrast to the rest of the news, it's always a breath of fresh air. A recent "good" Friday story focused on a reporter who had suffered from COVID-19, fully recovered, and then decided to donate plasma to possibly help others in their fight against the virus. At the time, the jury was still out on how effective antibodies would be. But when many of us felt helpless and even in light of the discomfort of donating plasma (via needle), she felt it "was a small price to pay for the potential payoff."

After that Friday broadcast, my family and I felt encouraged—dare I say hope-filled. That's the power of the "whatevers" Paul described in Philippians 4: "whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable" (v. 8). Did Paul have in mind plasma donation? Of course not. But did he have in mind sacrificial actions on behalf of someone in need—in other words, Christlike behavior? I've no doubt the answer is yes.

But that hopeful news wouldn't have had its full effect if it hadn't been broadcast. It's our privilege as witnesses to God's goodness to look and listen for the "whatevers" all around us and then share that good news with others that they may be encouraged. —
By **John Blase**

REFLECT & PRAY

Father, I know that behind whatever is excellent and praiseworthy is You. I love You. Amen.

What's a "whatever" story that's encouraged you lately? Who might want or need to hear your story?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

Joy is a recurring theme in Philippians (1:4, 25; 2:2, 29; 4:1). "Rejoice in the Lord always," Paul says. "I will say it again: Rejoice!" (4:4). He prays with joy for his beloved brothers and sisters, rejoicing because of their growth in faith, their firm stand and union in Jesus in the midst of persecution (1:27–2:2), and their faithful partnership in the gospel work (1:5, 18). As he closes his short letter, Paul acknowledges their great concern for him (4:10, 14–18), describing the believers as his "joy and crown" (v. 1). He encourages them to rejoice even in unfavorable and difficult circumstances, for joy in Christ transcends circumstances. (Paul was imprisoned when he wrote this letter, 1:14.) He affirms that even if he's killed for preaching the gospel, he'll rejoice, and he commands the Philippian believers to rejoice as well (2:17–18). — By **K. T. Sim**

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