

RETIREMENT SERMON  
THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:4-9

Philippians is called the joy epistle. Written by the Apostle Paul while imprisoned in a Roman jail, it is a message of encouragement to the church. Each chapter has a memorable verse. Chapter 4 has several verses that encourage and inspire us. Our text is one of the most inspirational scriptures in the bible.

As a 14 year old boy sitting in the first service of Community Church on February 27, 1966, I never thought that I would one day be the pastor of this church. When the church found its permanent home on Cascade Rd. 50 years ago I was excited about the potential for this ministry but never intended to lead this church. As this beautiful church building was erected in 1980 I was finishing seminary, ordained into ministry and pastoring my first church, Cove Rd. Church of God in Lafayette, Ga. My love for Community was growing but I was not sure what God was doing with my ministry. In 1985 God sent me to pastor the historic Cedar Ave. Church of God in Sharon, Pa. This was a preparation period as I witnessed many transitions in ministry. During my 13 years at Cedar Ave. I discovered the challenges in ministry as well as the celebrations of ministry. In 1998 God sent me to pastor the church that I love, Community Church of God in Atlanta, which I have served for the last 22 years. Today I am just thinking on these things.

As we reflect and think, we can choose to think on negative things or on good things. Paul in this text reminds us to think on the positive things. I have not been a perfect pastor but I have endeavored to be a good pastor. I discovered that faith can strengthen you in failure and that God will honor your humility. The challenges in ministry can cause one to be weary and worn. I came to Jesus, just as I was, weary, worn and sad; but I found in Him a resting place and He has made me glad. If I chose to focus on my wounds it would prevent me from seeing the glory of God. Jesus was wounded for us as He ministered to us. So every minister will be wounded for Christ's sake. God knows our weakness and is ready to heal us, help us and give us a hope. Think on these things.

Church, think on these four things as "We Celebrate an Ending for a New Beginning"

1. The Peace of God. (vs. 7)                      Peace that gives us hope when we are Worn
  - A. Passes all understanding (7a)
  - B. Peace that undergirds (7b)
  
2. The Presence of Jesus Christ.                      Presence that heals us when we are Weak
  - A. His gentleness is at hand (vs. 5)
  - B. His grace gives us hope (vs. 6)
  
3. The Power of the Holy Spirit. (vs. 8)                      Power that helps us when we are Wounded
  - A. His Spirit that guards us (vs. 7b)
  - B. His Spirit that guides us (vs. 8)
  
4. The Praise of God's People. (vs. 8d-9)                      Praise that honors God when we are Weary
  - A. Receive God's love always
  - B. Rejoice in the Lord always (vs. 4)