**Philippians 4:10-23**

We have reached the end of chapter four and the end of Paul’s inspiring letter to the Philippians. But I hope we all agree that we will not set aside the lessons Paul’s supplied to us as we strive to live out the mind of Christ with fellow believers and reach out to those who have not yet developed a relationship with our Savior.

Do you remember the purpose of the letter to the Philippians? It was *to encourage believers to find Christ-centered, Spirit-empowered joy in living, serving, sharing, and resting.* The theme is summed up with a word Paul repeats throughout the letter: “*Rejoice!”* We can have an infectious, deep-seated joy when we have confidence that Christ is in control—not just of the bit things, but of the little things as well.

As we discovered in the first verses of Philippians 4, such joy can be applied to strained relationships as well as to difficult circumstances, leaving us worry-free. As we fix our minds on things that are positive, uplifting, virtuous, and excellent, we become transformed individuals, enveloped in God’s wonderful peace. What a way to live!

As Paul begins to wrap up this great letter to the Philippians, he explores another realm that could use a healthy dose of authentic joy: contentment. In verses 10-13, Paul again presents himself as a model for his readers to follow. Then, in verses 14-19, we see the fruit of contentment: generosity. Finally, in closing (verses 20-23), Paul concludes his letter with a joyful, grace-filled farewell. **Read Phil. 4:10-23.**

Paul could say something that would be overconfident if you or I said it: “*Do what I do*.” I don’t want my little grandson to follow down the pathway that I went. I don’t want him to have his grandpa for an example. But Paul could make his life an example to other believers. Paul lived in that sanctuary of power because He had made Christ the very center and outside edge of his life.

*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* (Phil. 4:10).

We said earlier in our study that the Epistle to the Philippians is primarily a thank-you note. Before Paul got down to the thank-you part, he dealt with Christian experience. He has been talking about Christian experience throughout the epistle. Now he is thanking them for their gift.

For two years the church in Philippi had lost touch with Paul. They did not know where he was after he had been arrested in Jerusalem and then put in prison for two years. The next time they heard about him, he had been transferred to a prison in Rome. They apologized to him for not having contact with him and for not communicating their gifts to him during those years. Paul is excusing them in a most gracious manner. He says, “*I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last you have revived your concern for me. I know you have always been concerned for me, but you didn’t have the chance to help me.* In other words, “*You had lost contact with me so that you didn’t have the opportunity to be helpful to me*” (4:10). How gracious Paul was!

*I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances* (Phil. 4:11).

Paul said that he never made an appeal to them. He never sent out an SOS for help. Paul had learned to be content in whatsoever state he was. It didn’t matter whether he was in prison or out of prison. Many of us think that if things are going right and if we are in the right place, then we will be contented. That means that we depend on the circumstances of life for our contentment. I have asked the Lord to give me contentment. Our circumstances have a great deal to do with our contentment, don’t they? But Paul had learned to be content regardless of his state.

*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* (Phil. 4:12).

Paul says, “*Though I appreciate your sympathy, I know how to live on the lowest plane economically, and I know how to live on the highest plane. I have done both*.” There were times when he had nothing, and he was content. There were times when God had given him an abundance, and he had learned how to abound.

Now we come to a verse that is often quoted, but I think there are only certain circumstances in which it should be quoted. This verse is geared to life. It gets down where the rubber meets the road. This verse needs to be worked out in life.

*“I can do everything through him who gives me strength,”* or “*I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me”* (Phil. 4:13).

When Paul says all things, does he literally mean all things? Does it mean you can go outside and jump over your house? Of course not. Paul says, “*I can do all things in Christ*”— that is, in the context of the will of Christ for your life. Whatever Christ has for you to do, He will supply the power. Whatever gift He gives you, He will give the power to exercise that gift. A gift is a manifestation of the Spirit of God in the life of the believer. As long as you function in Christ, you will have power.

This is what Paul is saying about himself — “*I can do all things in Christ*.” Now, if you are a member of Christ’s body, He is the Head, and you are to function in the context of His will for your life. His will is the track on which you are to run.

Now Paul is not saying that we can do all things. I can’t jump like a grasshopper can jump. When I was in school, I played football, basketball, baseball and ran track. In addition to running the sprints in track, I also did the triple jump, but I can’t jump anymore. You see, I can’t do all things, but I can do all things which God has for me to do from the time He saved me to the time He will take me out of this world.

“*Through Christ who strengthens me*.” Christ is the One who will strengthen you and enable you to do all that is in His will for you. He certainly does not mean that He is putting into your hands unlimited power to do anything you want to do. Rather, He will give you the enablement to do all things in the context of His will for you. When you and I are in Christ, and we are moving in Christ on those tracks, we are irresistible. There is no stopping us. But the minute you and I step out of that glorious position, step out of God’s will either by sinning, by our own willfulness, or by lack of fellowship, we are not going anywhere. But if we stay on that track, we can do all things in Christ. “*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you*” (John 15:7). We need to do a better job of making sure where we are before we start asking. It is essential to be in His will.

Let me emphasize this: It is essential to be in God’s will, and His will is determined by a knowledge of His Bible. So many individuals feel that if they can take a little course, it will solve all their problems. Well, it won’t solve them. The key question for all of us is, “*How much time do you really spend in the Word of God?*” The Word of God is the answer; and it’s so simple I’m not able to charge for it! Why not forget the little courses that are being offered and get down to a serious study of the Word of God? Many people start with the Gospel of John. As wonderful as it is, there are sixty-five other books in the Bible. If you get the total Word of God, you will get the total will of God for this life, and you will have a basis on which you can operate. There is joy, there is satisfaction and sheer delight in being in the will of God and doing what God wants you to do.

*Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles.* (Phil. 4:14).

Paul wants them to know that he appreciates their gift— “*Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles.*” This is his personal thank-you.

*Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only* (Phil. 4:15).

This church in Philippi was a jewel. There are churches like it across this country today. It is prayer that our church, FPC Newport, will also become that kind of church. The church at Philippi had a wonderful fellowship and a heart for the things of God. God is blessing them in marvelous, wonderful ways. The Philippian church was close to the apostle Paul. They were the ones who sent support to him—Paul was their missionary. Wouldn’t you have loved to have had Paul as your missionary and to have had a part in his support?

*“for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need.”* (Phil. 4:16).

We know from the account in Acts 16 and 17 that Paul had to leave Philippi by the request of the authorities. He went on to Thessalonica, where those who opposed the gospel he was preaching, set the city in an uproar. No one was helping Paul but the Philippian believers— “*For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need*. *Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account”* (Phil. 4:17).

That church in Philippi has been getting dividends on their contribution right down to the present time. Paul wrote them this epistle to thank them. We are studying the epistle today, and we are profiting from this study. This is a part of the dividends of their contribution. They have stock in the apostle Paul, if you please. They still have a part in getting out the Word of God! And so, it is with us—we need to get this Word out. One of the missions we support in this church is Gideons International. These men and women (Gideon Auxiliary) have a passion for sharing the Word of God throughout the world. Last year they shared 84 million Bibles/Testaments in over 200 countries and when possible also took the time to personally share their testimonies to individuals. It is hard to imagine, but there was even more demand for God’s Word which could not be met because of lack of funds.

*“I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God”* (Phil. 4:18).

The Old Testament background is the sacrifice, not of atonement for sin, but of thanksgiving and praise. The priest in the Old Testament went into the holy place to put incense on the altar, and it ascended with a sweet smell. A Christian in his or her giving is like a priest making an offering to God. When it is made in the right spirit, it is, as Paul is saying to the Philippian believers, more than just making a donation or taking up a collection. It is an offering, an odor of a sweet smell to God. And that is what our gift is when it is given in the right spirit.

*“And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus”* (Phil. 4:19).

Thinking of their sacrifice to supply his need, Paul assures them that God would supply all their needs. He doesn’t say all their wants—he doesn’t include luxury items —*but all their needs*. However, He does supply luxury items many times. When He does, it is surplus. He does it out of His loving-kindness.

Paul began this letter with a prayer (1:3-5; 9-11); now he brings it to a close with a doxology:

*“To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”* (Phil. 4:20).

God gets all the glory. He will not share His glory with another.

*“Greet all the saints in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send greetings. 22All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household”* (Phil. 4:21–22).

He greets each believer personally. The believers who are with Paul also send their greetings. Again, we are told that some were patricians, nobility, members of the household of Caesar. They now belong to Christ, and they want to be remembered to the Christians in Philippi.

Paul final words in this letter are:*ˆThe grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.” Amen* (Phil. 4:23).

**Application for us: Philippians 4:10-23.** Both Paul and the Philippians exhibited a high level of spiritual maturity in their Christlike character, as expressed through contentment and generosity. How do we follow their example? How can we develop the marks of maturity evidenced by Paul and the Philippians? Let me suggest three places to look in our lives that will enable us to grow up in our joyful resting in the Lord.

First, *look within . . . and release or let go.* Is there something in our hearts that’s stunting our spiritual growth? Something that’s holding us down and keeping us from experiencing true contentment and joyful generosity? Perhaps it’s a need for comfort rather than contentment or a desire for luxury rather than generosity. Maybe it’s an unquestioned sense of entitlement instead of self-sacrificial benevolence. We need to do a little internal diagnostic test. We should ask, “What’s keeping us from experiencing the kind of contentment Paul describes in Philippians 4?” Or, “What’s keeping me from giving more time and money to the cause of Christ than I do now?”

We need to look within and release those things.

Second, *look around . . . and respond.* Sometimes we don’t give our time, energy, or financial resources because we’re too busy to see the needs. The Philippians saw Paul’s needs from many miles away and responded immediately, continually, and faithfully. They sent not only money but also personal help—Epaphroditus. They didn’t wait for another church to act first. They saw the need and met it. Why don’t we try it? There’s no need to start with something extreme like a long-term commitment to a jungle tribe in South America. But we can find a missionary working there and support them. Or we can find a place to serve in our own church. Or we can reach out within our neighborhood or community and help. Many different kinds of people need our help and will welcome it.

Look around . . . and respond.

Third, *look up . . . and rejoice.* We should never forget to take time and look up and survey all that God has done in the past, is doing in the present, and promises to do in the future. Don’t forget to praise Him and thank Him for what He has done for you, remembering that every good gift comes from Him (James 1:17). As Paul did with the Philippians, rejoice ov**e**r the good things God accomplishes daily in the lives of others, and thank Him. God loves to hear our words of gratitude and our expression of praise.

Look up . . . and rejoice.

**Prayer:** *Thank You, Lord, for Your presence with us throughout this study. As we close the Book of Philippians, we pray that the insights and learning that Paul supplied to us will not die, but, instead, may they continue to abide within us and bear fruit in our ministries throughout the year. We ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit as we strive to live out the mind of Christ with fellow believers and reach out to those who have not yet developed a relationship with You. We ask this in the name that is above all names, Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen!*