

Finding Joy in Tough Times

Finding Joy in Hard Times

December 2, 2018; *Philippians 4:10-23*

DAY 1: Learning contentment

Philippians 4:10 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.

1. Remember, Paul was writing from prison. Why does Paul rejoice?
2. It's one thing to have "concern" for someone. It's another thing to put actions to your concern. What is the difference between these things?

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

3. When Paul had financial support from people and churches, he and his mission team were able to give full-time to the ministry. There were times when Paul supported himself as a tentmaker.
4. It might be easy to have a bad attitude when people or churches are not supporting the work of the Lord. If Paul had ever had a bad attitude, he seems to have overcome it. How did this shift away from a bad attitude occur? (v. 11)

Philippians 4:12 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.

5. What different circumstances had Paul faced?
6. Paul was content. How does he say he became content?
7. Contentment is easy in "good times." It's another thing in "bad times." What strikes you from today's verses?

DAY 2: “I can do everything through Him who gives me strength”

1. Yesterday, we read that Paul had learned to be content in all kinds of situations. Sometimes he had “plenty” and sometimes he was “in need.”

2. It is to this specific difficulty that Paul writes this next verse:

Philippians 4:13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

3. Though the immediate context is Paul’s fluctuating financial situation, do you think Paul’s conclusion in verse 11 relates to more than just financial settings?

4. Of course, the key word is “everything.” There are lots of varied challenges in life.

5. What comes to mind in your experience? Have you been in a trial or challenge where you discovered that you could “do everything” through Christ? What was your challenge?

6. He attributes his ability to “do everything” because Jesus “gives me strength.” What factors come to mind in the kind of strength you received?

7. Put yourself in Paul’s shoes. There were times when people and churches supported him and his mission team. Other times, not so much, yet Paul learned to be content. Why? Because it was Christ who gave him strength. If you had been Paul, what would have helped you be content? What would the strength that Christ gives look like? What thoughts would have helped you?

DAY 3: Generosity and investment

1. Paul was very grateful for their concern and the actions of giving along with their concern.

Philippians 4:14 Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles.

Philippians 4:15 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;

2. What strikes you about Paul's statement about the number of churches that were supporting Paul and his team?

3. As discouraging as that must have been to Paul, what do you sense in his attitude?

Philippians 4:16 ...for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need.

4. What does this say to you about the Christians in Philippi?

Philippians 4:17 Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. ¹⁸I 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.

5. What was Paul's attitude toward their repeated gifts?

6. How did Paul look at their repeated gifts?

7. Does their attitude toward giving challenge you? In what way?

DAY 4: Generosity; God meeting our needs

Philippians 4:19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

1. This verse is one of the most well-known verses for Christians.
2. Generally, we look at verse 19 as a blanket promise, that God will “all” our needs.
3. Some wonder if Paul is giving this promise just to the Philippians because of their generosity. The question is, would Paul claim the same promise for other Christians who did not practice generosity and stewardship like the Philippians? What thoughts do you have about this?

4. The emphasis in this verse is in the inexhaustible supply out of which God meets our needs. Paul piles up words to expand our understanding of the immensity of God’s riches.

5. What pictures come to mind about God’s glorious riches in Christ?

6. A parallel passage comes to mind.

2 Corinthians 9:6 (RSV) The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work. ⁹ As it is written, "He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures for ever." ¹⁰ He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your resources and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way for great generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God; ¹² for the rendering of this service not only supplies the wants of the saints but also overflows in many thanksgivings to God. ¹³ Under the test of this service, you will glorify God by your obedience in acknowledging the gospel of Christ, and by the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others; ¹⁴ while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God in you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

7. What similarities do you see about people’s generosity and God’s promise of blessing?

8. In what way are you challenged regarding your own generosity?

DAY 5: We started with grace, we continue in grace

1. We wrap up our study of Philippians with Paul's closing verses.

Philippians 4:20 To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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.*

²³ *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.*

2. What strikes me is that Paul often finishes his epistles with the big, important ideas and concepts he wants his reader to remember.

3. Verse 20 is our North Star truth. The glory of God is above everything and that for which we live!

4. In verse 21 Paul reminds the Philippians about our essential identity: "saints." A "saint" in the New Testament is not a "saint" in the Catholic sense, a "super" Christian. "Saint" means "the holy ones." It's a statement, not about our spiritual maturity, but about how God sees us.

5. Why is this important?

6. In verse 22, Paul tells them that the Christians where he is send their greetings, "*especially those who belong to Caesar's household.*" You remember that back in chapter one, Paul had been sharing his faith with Caesar's guards, and some of them became Christians! Even in prison, Paul was about the Father's business!

7. Finally, Paul finishes with the most important jewel of our faith—grace!

a. We began our faith with the grace of God.

b. We continue in the faith, not based on our spiritual efforts, but on the grace of God.

*Colossians 2:6 (RSV) As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so live in him,
7 rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.*