

Paul's Joy in the Philippian's Gift and in their Partnership (Philippians 4:10-23)

Philippians: Joyful Unity in the Gospel

Zionsville Fellowship | Scott McCullough | August 9, 2026

Good morning! It is good to be with you. I am thankful for the opportunity to share God's Word with you this morning.

What a wonderful journey it has been working through the book of Philippians this summer. Personally, it has been of great encouragement to me, and I am thankful for the men who have filled in during Drew's sabbatical. Ryan, James, Derek, Danny, Edgar, and Aaron. What a blessing to have so many men willing, able, and capable in escorting us through God's Word. Thank you!

The theme of our series has been Joyful Unity in the Gospel. This is based on Paul's numerous expressions of Joy in Christ throughout his letter. Paul rejoices in Christ, he rejoices in the work Christ is doing in others, he rejoices in Christ being proclaimed and in the gospel advancing, he rejoices in being able to live for Christ and even die if necessary, he rejoices in the great privilege to know Christ and share in Christ's suffering becoming like Christ, he rejoices in the promise of experiencing resurrection in Christ, and lastly we see Paul rejoicing in the gift from the Philippian church and their partnership in his ministry.

Along with these expressions of joy, Paul calls the Philippian church, and us, to stand firm in one spirit as one person sharing in the grace of Jesus and contending for the Gospel. He calls us to unity in Christ and unity in the work of advancing the good news that Christ came to save and redeem sinners.

Within his closing remarks, Paul also encourages in two of our greatest struggles in life:

- 1) Our struggle with anxiety as Aaron shared last week
- 2) Our struggle with being content

Several years ago, I had the opportunity to travel to Teopisca, a small town in Chiapas, the southern state of Mexico that borders Guatemala. I traveled there with our pastor and a fellow deacon from our church in Texas to visit one of the missionary families we supported.

Part of our Mission's strategy was to send an annual envoy to our supported missionaries for the purpose of encouragement and assessing health. We did this in addition to any visits they might make back to the states. That was the purpose of trip to Teopisca.

During our visit, we spent time with Lance, visiting members of the local church. One interaction has stayed with me all these years.

It was with a young family living on the edge of town in what I would describe as a shed. Tin roof, partial wood plank walls, dirt floor, with no utilities. It was a small shelter for this couple, their children, and aging parents they were caring for.

We did not speak Spanish nor they English, so all conversations were translated through Lance. However, the father of the household said one thing directly to us that needed no translation. He looked at us, and warmly said, “*Estoy Contento*”. “*I am content*.”

We were struck with how he could make such a statement living in extreme poverty and in a place hostile to evangelical Christianity? **Lance explained that they like many of their church lived in humble dependance on God for all things. For them, life was day to day survival trusting in God to protect them and provide for them. But more than daily needs and protection, the Lord had given them community and the saving grace of Jesus. He had opened their eyes to the true Gospel and therefore, he could say, “*Estoy Contento*.” “*I am content*.” God provided them all they needed and would continue to do so, and they learned to be content in their circumstances.**

As we come to the end of Paul’s letter to the Philippian Church, he leaves us with a similar message that is part of his larger narrative celebrating the partnership of the Philippian church. Celebrating is a fitting word for this section. Paul is grateful for their support and participation in the mission of advancing the Gospel.

If you would turn with me to Philippians Chapter 4, verse 10, and follow along as I read to the end of the chapter.

Philippians 4:10-23

¹⁰ I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. ¹¹ Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned, in whatever situation I am, to be content. ¹² I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

¹⁴ Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. ¹⁵ And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. ¹⁶ Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. ¹⁸ I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰ To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

²¹ Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. ²² All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.

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

Pray with me for God’s help to understand and receive His Word:

Father, we gather this morning to receive your Word and ask for your help. We ask for quiet minds and a posture of humility to receive your Word so it may take root in our hearts. We ask for your Spirit to guide us and show us the wonder and glory of Christ. Amen!

As I mentioned, throughout Paul's letter we see numerous expressions of his joy in Christ as he makes, "I rejoice" statements.

- In chapter 1 verse 18, Paul rejoices that Christ is being proclaimed in his imprisonment and through other's teaching – even those who mean him harm
- In chapter 2 verse 18, he says even if he is to face death and suffering for Christ's sake that he will be glad and rejoice

Paul is filled with joy – joy that can only come from knowing Christ, the Gospel, and the power of Christ's resurrection - knowing one day he too will attain the resurrection from the dead. Paul's joy in Christ brings him peace and gladness and sustains him in every circumstance, even imprisonment.

Paul makes one last "I rejoice" statement in today's as he considers the Philippian's partnership in advancing the Gospel. He says, *"I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me."*

Paul's Joy in The Philippian's Gift and in their Partnership

I. Paul's Joy in the Philippians Gift, verse 10

Paul is in Rome awaiting trial under house arrest, and it was up to Paul to fund his imprisonment. He had to pay rent for his home, purchase provisions, and most likely pay his guards to have access to guests. The Philippian church gathered a gift offering for Paul and sent it to him via Epaphroditus, who we read about in chapter 2.

Paul upon receiving the gift was filled with Joy. But it is worth noting how he expressed his joy. He did not say that he rejoiced in the gift or the Philippian's generosity; instead, he "rejoiced in the Lord." It may seem like a minor thing, but this is an important detail. Paul was on mission for the Lord and the Philippians participated in that mission for the Lord by meeting Paul's physical needs. This orientation is important. Paul's ministry is for the Lord and His Glory; therefore, the gift of the Philippian Church is for the Lord and His Glory also.

This should orient how we view supporting the work of our missionaries and giving in general. For example, our financial support of the Kohls in Japan who were recently with us. The Kohls are on mission for the Lord and therefore our support for them is for the Lord's mission. We give to the Lord out of our joy for the Lord and a desire to make him famous not just because we like the Kohls. I know it seems like a small thing, but it is an important reminder. Our giving should stem from our Joy in the Lord and our love for Him. Our giving should be for His glory.

It is also worth noting that Paul does not make them feel guilty for what appears to be a significant gap in support. He says, *"I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me."* Paul is acknowledging gratitude for their renewed desire for missions. The language he is using is

descriptive of plant blossoming or sprouting in spring creating new growth. He also wants to make it clear that he is not bitter about their lapse in giving, in fact, he is gracious by acknowledging that they “had no opportunity” to give - perhaps due to famine or poverty. He is genuinely thankful for their renewed involvement and help, and he is filled with joy.

II. Paul’s Contentment in Every Situation, verses 11-13

As Paul celebrates the Philippian’s generous gift and their concern for him, he makes it clear that he is not in need.

He is likely living in a small dwelling chained to a Roman guard living off sparse resources and yet he says, “not that I am speaking of being in need.” On the surface his statement seems a bit delusional. “Thanks for the gift and concern but I am doing great!”

Some of you may remember the 1975 film Monty Python and The Holy Grail. There is a character called the Black Knight who refuses to let King Arthur cross a bridge, saying “none shall pass.” In the conflict, the Black Knight loses both arms and legs. Refusing to give up, he says, “tis but a scratch,” and “it’s just a flesh wound.” When clearly, he is defeated and seriously injured after all he loses both of his arms and legs. He cannot rightly see the reality of his circumstances – he is defeated.

But that is not Paul’s disposition, he is not delusional, in fact he is seeing quite clearly. Paul is well aware of his present circumstances as he writes these words in prison, chained to a Roman guard, and living on sparse resources.

How can he rejoice (be filled with peace and gladness) in his current circumstances? The answer is in verse 11, *“I have learned in whatever situation to be content.”* It is hard for me to express the significance of Paul’s statement given his current situation and all that he suffered to reach Rome. You can read about his journey to Rome in Acts 21 to the end of the chapter.

Paul has learned in whatever situation whatever circumstance to be content. He says, *“I know how to be brought low and I know how to abound.”* He is saying I know how to live in poverty. I know how to live in poor health and affliction. I know how to live in imprisonment – without freedom. And he also says, I know to live in abundance and prosperity . To have more than I need. When he says he has learned to be content, he is not reflecting back on his elite training at the feet of Gamaliel (act 22:3), the famous rabbi. No, his learning to be content came from the classroom of life and all his experiences, the good and bad.

We know this too. We learn contentment through our life experiences as well, good and bad.

When he says that he has “learned to be content”, he is saying that he accepts whatever situation the Lord places him in with peace and confidence. **Paul knows Lord is sovereign over all of life including his imprisonment in Rome.** He wrote in Ephesians 1:11, *“The Lord works **all things** according to His will.”* **It is the Lord’s will for him to be in Rome under house arrest and Paul is not just ok with it, he is rejoicing in it.** Paul had learned it is the Lord who determines his circumstances; and therefore, he can have confidence and peace (be content) in any circumstance.

He also knows that the Lord is self-sufficient, God needs nothing outside of himself. **Therefore, the self-sufficient God is the only one who can provide for His created beings.** As George Guthrie says in his commentary on Philippians,

*“This notion, of God as the one who is truly self-sufficient and the one who provides for all other beings, lies behind Paul’s understanding of the concept (to be content). It is not that the apostle is self-sufficient. Rather, he is **“God-sufficient”** and thus able to be content in his circumstances. That is why he can always say, “I have enough.”*

I believe this is King David’s thought behind the first line of Psalm 23, *“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.”* **Because the Lord is my shepherd, he provides everything I need and I lack nothing.**

Paul has learned to be content in any situation knowing it is the self-sufficient God who leads and provides for him. He has the Lord so therefore, he has everything he needs. But how is he able to live this way? How is he able to learn to be content when it is not our natural inclination to be content or reliant on someone else? By resting and trusting in the sovereignty and sufficiency of God. The secret of Paul’s contentment is found in verse 13. A familiar and often misused verse. Paul says in verse 13, *“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”*

First, let’s look at one way this verse is misunderstood and misapplied. What Paul is not saying.

Many well intended, Christ loving athletes have used this verse to call on Christ expecting him to provide extraordinary abilities in critical moments. While I applaud any athlete acknowledging Christ as Lord, Paul is not speaking about ability or performance. He is speaking of posture, a mindset, a state of being content in all circumstances. As Guthrie explains,

*“Paul speaks of God as the agent who strengthens him at a moment of need. This points not to extraordinary ability in terms of Paul’s skills but rather to his **God-infused strength** to deal with challenging moments of life.”*

Paul has learned to depend on God in challenging moments of life. And even though he is grateful for the gift of support from the Philippians, **he has learned to live without dependence on resources supplied by others. Paul’s “contentment rests in his utter dependence on God,” and it is Christ who supernaturally supplies him the strength to do so.** The young father in Teopisca understood this.

The NIV translates Phil 4:13 this way, *“I can do all this (speaking to his current circumstances) through him (Christ) who gives me strength”*

Paul is saying I can endure any situation and be content in any circumstance because Christ provides me the strength to do so. I have learned this in both prosperity and poverty, good health and sickness, in danger and safety - only Christ and His Word can satisfy my soul – only Christ can give me peace and gladness in any circumstance.

Steven J. Lawson in his commentary, Philippians for you puts it this way,

“Genuine joy (and contentment) is not dictated by your changing circumstances; it is found in the unchangeable Lord.”

III. Paul's Gratitude for The Philippian's Partnership, verses 14-19

Paul is ultimately content and confident in the sovereignty and sufficiency of God, but also, he wants the Philippian church to know how grateful he is for their partnership. How they fill him with joy too because of their faithful partnership in ministry. Paul's opening words in this section are fixed on joy and gratitude for the partnership of the Philippians, and he expresses his gratitude in various ways (I will list 6):

- 1) In verse 14 he says, "it was kind of you to share in my troubles." This statement is reminiscent of his opening words to the Philippians. In chapter 1, verse 3,

*"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, **because of your partnership in the gospel** from the first day until now. ~~And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for **you are all partakers with me of grace**, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel."~~*

Paul is acknowledging their "partnership" in ministry with deep appreciation and affection just like he did in the opening verses. The Philippians were doing more than financially supporting him, **they were participating with Paul in the mission of advancing the gospel for the glory of God**. They are actively "partaking" in his life and ministry together and he is grateful for them.

- 2) In verse 15 and 16, Paul wants them to know how grateful he is for the history of their partnership, not just the immediate gift. He takes time and care to reflect on the history of their partnership. Paul planted the church in Philippi 10 years ago. They supported him when he left Macedonia. At times they supported him when no others were supporting him and Paul is grateful. We too should value the long-standing relationships we have with our mission partners and seek long term partnerships in missions.
- 3) In verse 17, Paul wants them to know they are investing wisely in the work of the Lord, and their investment is yielding a gain. Not financially, but in heaven to their credit as souls come to know the Gospel through their partnership with Paul, and as the glory of the Lord increases. He wants them to know he has joy in their gift because of the spiritual benefit to them in heaven. He wants them to know the glory the Lord will have for them because of their participation in the Lord's mission.
- 4) In verse 18, Paul wants the Philippian church to know that their gift of support has brought pleasure to God. *"the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God."* This is Old Testament sacrificial language. In Leviticus 1 and 2, Moses speaks of food sacrifices that are a pleasing aroma to the Lord. Paul acknowledges that their gift is to Lord (and to Him) and is fueled by love and devotion to the Lord - making their offering a pleasing sacrifice to the Lord. Paul benefits from their generosity (I am well supplied), the Philippians benefit from

their own generosity, and so does God. Not that God needs their gift but He is pleased with those who give generously with a posture of desiring to see the Lord glorified.

- 5) In verse 19, Paul shows gratitude to them by letting them know God will supply all their needs. He says, *“And my God supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”* Paul is pointing to their deep trust in God who is aware of their needs. And perhaps those needs have increased as a result of their sacrificial gift to the Lord for Paul’s benefit. Paul is likely reflecting on the Old Testament virtue of sharing and being generous with financial resources. Proverbs 19: 7 says, *“Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will repay him for his deed.”* In Luke 6:38 Jesus says, *“give, and it will be given to you. Good measure pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap.”* I am not talking about quid pro quo, I give something to get something, but a lifestyle of generously giving out of love for God and compassion for others. God is infinitely vast in his resources, and He is able to supply every need.
- 6) Lastly, in verse 20, Paul’s gratitude and joy in the Philippians cause him to break out in worship. He says, *“To our God and Father be glory forever and ever, Amen!”* Paul’s heart is overflowing with joy and gratitude for Christ and the generosity of the Philippian church - and it causes him to burst out in praise and worship to God. A doxology – an impromptu expression of glory to God as a conclusion to his expression of gratitude for their partnership.

Paul’s doxology in verse 20 reflects back to his prayer for the Philippians in chapter 1 verses 9 through 11,

“And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”

He ends his letter just as he began it. **That the end goal of the Philippian church would be to glorify (honor) God – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – glorify who they are and all they do. This creates one cohesive thought - our Joy is in the Lord and we are unified in striving for the gospel together.**

IV. Paul’s Final Greetings, verses 21-23

Paul says to *“greet”* the saints in Christ Jesus. The Greek word used is *“aspasasthe”* – a command to welcome and embrace. Paul is telling the Philippians to receive and welcome all Christians who come to them showing the same warmth and hospitality they demonstrated to him. **Extend more than just a hearty hello and handshake. Demonstrate the welcome of Christ who receives us as imperfect sinful people into His family.**

Paul says all the saints here greet you. He is saying there is a solidarity of heart and affection for the Philippians by all who are in Rome with him. Paul wants the Philippians to know that the church in Rome

has a deep love and affection for them – because of their devoted fellowship with one another. Paul and the saints in Rome have been encouraged by their example.

He makes a point to acknowledge a specific group of saints in Rome who send their love. The saints of Ceasar's household. As we studied in chapter 2, Paul recognizes that his circumstances made it possible to bring the gospel to the household of Ceasar. A reminder that his circumstances of imprisonment are making great gains for the advancement of the gospel in Rome.

Lastly, he ends his words with a blessing, "*The grace of the lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.*" He began his letter by wishing them grace and he ended it in the same way. My dear brothers and sisters, may you experience the unmerited favor of God in Jesus Christ.

What a letter. What a blessing to receive it.

In closing today, I want to leave you with a few thoughts and questions for reflection:

1. Some are called to live their lives on the front line of missions either domestically or abroad. Others may be called to support missions through giving. What is not optional is our involvement in missions. We are all partakers of grace in Christ Jesus, and we are in partnership together in advancing the gospel for His glory. I implore you to seek God about where and how you can be involved in missions, either going (long-term or short-term) or in giving.
2. Lori and I as we are aging, give a bit more attention to how we view and use the resources God has given us to steward. One thing we are always asking ourselves is how are we using our resources - not just money but also time, possessions, and gifting – for the work of advancing the gospel. We are always checking to see if we have good balance in the personal enjoyment of our resources, and generously giving to missions and ministry?
3. Our self-sufficient God provides for all partners in gospel work, for those who are giving or for those who are receiving. Do you find yourself being anxious about your resources? Whether you have enough now or in the future, and if you have enough to give for supporting gospel ministries and mission? Are we trusting in the all sufficient and sovereign God for our needs? He is all sufficient and everything we need can be found in Him.
4. Are we living as content people of God knowing He will provide everything we need? Are we trusting in the God of the 23rd Psalm? Because he is our God we lack nothing. Personally, for me this is a hard place to get to sometimes. We are always hungry and thirsty for something. Is our hunger and thirst for the righteousness of Jesus? Nothing else will satisfy our hunger or quench our thirst.
5. Do you view giving as act of worship, a sacrifice that is pleasing to God? Is your giving coming from a place of love and devotion to God and desire to bring Him glory? Jeremiah Burroughs says this in his book, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, "*When I am contented with the hand of God and am willing to be at His disposal, that comes from my love to God.*"

Brothers and sisters, these reminders and questions for reflection are just as much for me as they are for you. Oh, how I struggle with being content. But what I have learned is contentment is born out of dependence on God, and being content creates a life of gratitude and worship.

As I prepared for this sermon and personally worked through Philippians this summer – my heart overflowed with joy and gratitude for you all. We, talking about ZF, are an imperfect group of people, but in large part are a joyful people united in Christ with one mind and one spirit striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.

I like Paul want to say to you, Well done! And celebrate your partnership as we fulfill our mission of glorifying God by being and making disciples who are a community of worshippers on mission. Let us find Joy in and Christ in unity in our mission. Let us pray: