

IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH
SERIES: STAND ALONE SERMON
TITLE: JOY IN CONTENTMENT AND GENEROSITY
SCRIPTURE: PHILIPPIANS 4:10-20
DATE: SEPT 14, 2025

INTRODUCTION

Paul had a special relationship with the Philippians. He traveled there on his second missionary journey after he received a vision of a Macedonian man urging him to come (Acts 16:9). In Philippi he met Lydia and the “Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul” (Acts 16:14). Also in Philippi, Paul and Silas were placed in prison because officials in the city perceived they had started a riot. Oddly enough, the only thing they did was to cast out a demon from a girl (Acts 16:16-24). Nevertheless, God miraculously freed them from prison and gave them favor with a jailor named Jason, who came to believe in Jesus. In the end, they were honorably ushered out of the city by the same officials who threw them in prison (Acts 16:37-40).

As Paul writes this letter, he is in prison (like in Rome). Despite his separation from the Philippians, he expressed deep concern for them—and notably, they shared the same concern for him. Their concern wasn't just emotional; it was tangible. They sent a man Epaphroditus who endangered his life with a financial gift for Paul (Phil. 2:25-30; 4:18). In many ways, Paul's letter is to express thanks to the Philippians for their partnership with him in the gospel (Phil. 1:3-4).

A noticeable and major theme in the letter is joy.

- Phil. 1:3-4: “I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer *with joy...*”
- Phil. 1:18: “What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, *Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes I will rejoice...*”
- Phil. 1:25: “Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for *your progress and joy in the faith.*”
- Phil. 2:1-2: “So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, *complete my joy* by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.”

- Phil. 2:17-18: “Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, *I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.*”
- Phil. 2:27-29: “Speaking of a fellow servant of the gospel named Epaphroditus Paul says, “Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I am the more eager to send him, therefore, *that you may rejoice at seeing him again*, and that I may be less anxious, so receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men.”
- Phil. 3:1: “Finally, my brothers, *rejoice in the Lord.*”
- Phil. 3:7-8: “But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.”
- Phil. 4:1: “Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, *my joy and crown*, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.”
- Phil. 4:4: “*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.*”

As we look at the last section of the letter to the Philippians, Paul continues his them of joy.

Text

Philippians 4:10-13

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.

Explanation

Joy and Contentment

Paul says, “*I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me.*” He saw this not as a casual act, but as a renewed, purposeful

effort on their part. Their support wasn't new; they had helped him before. The word "revived" implies this was not their first act of generosity.

While Paul is clearly thankful, he is careful to clarify: he is not rejoicing because he was discontent without the gift. In fact, despite his imprisonment, Paul was content. He had learned to be at peace in every circumstance—whether in abundance or in need. He even calls contentment a “secret.”

That secret, Paul explains, is drawing strength from Christ: “*I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*” This verse is often quoted in the context of overcoming big challenges, but in its original context, it refers to being content regardless of circumstances—even in lack or hardship.

Elsewhere, Scripture reinforces this idea:

- Deuteronomy 8:3: “Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.”
- Matthew 6:31–33: “Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ... But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

Paul’s message is clear: with God’s strength, we can prioritize His kingdom above our own needs.

Clarifying “All Things”

The phrase “*all things*” must be understood in its context. It does not mean success in anything you try. Rather, it means you can endure all things *for the sake of God’s kingdom*. There is no circumstance that prevents you from serving or glorifying God.

We must be careful not to misapply this verse to situations unrelated to God's purposes. For example:

- It does not promise a win in sports, but it does promise you can honor Christ whether you win or lose.
- It does not ensure healing for a sick family member, but it does promise God’s strength to endure and glorify Him regardless of the outcome.
- It does not guarantee that you’ll only succeed in your career, but it does promise you can work mightily unto the Lord no matter what.

Discussion Questions:

- When you are in need, who do you rely on first—yourself, family, or friends?
- How well do you receive help? Are you quick to accept or quick to refuse assistance?
- Do you ever want to help but feel unsure how?
- Do you think contentment leads to joy, or does joy lead to contentment?
- How would you currently describe yourself: in abundance or in need?
- Paul described how he “learned” contentment. How do you think a person “learns” contentment?

Text:

Philippians 4:14–20

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.

Explanation

Joy and Generosity

Paul continues by expressing gratitude for the Philippians’ ongoing support—even during his time in Thessalonica. They didn’t just help once; they supported him repeatedly.

Paul clarifies that he is not seeking their gifts for selfish reasons. Rather, he seeks the *fruit*—the spiritual reward—that increases to their credit. Their generosity would bring them spiritual blessings, and Paul wants that for them.

Paul was deeply committed to gospel partnership. He didn't want to do it alone. He wanted others to share in the joy and eternal reward of the mission. Just as God would reward Paul for his missionary work, He would also reward those who supported that work.

He describes their gifts as a “*fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.*” This means:

1. Their giving was worship. Just like Old Testament sacrifices, their gift was an act of worship.
2. Their giving was sacrificial. Paul makes it clear in 2 Corinthians 8:1–5 that the Philippians gave even out of poverty:
“...In a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity... they gave according to their means, and beyond their means... begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part...”

Their giving wasn't out of surplus; it was a costly expression of their joy in God.

Discussion Questions:

- Do you consider yourself a generous person?
- When you give, do you do so cheerfully or reluctantly?
- When you receive a gift, are you more grateful for the gift or for the giver?
- Does receiving make you want to give more, or make you want to receive more?
- Do you think there is a correlation between joy and generosity? What about contentment and generosity?
- How would you define “*riches in glory in Christ Jesus*”?
- When you think of riches, do you think more about material wealth or about God's glory?

Conclusions/ Applications

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| TRUE JOY IS MARKED BY CONTENTMENT AND GENEROSITY |
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Joy, contentment, and generosity go hand in hand. When you are content with what you have, and trust God to supply your needs, you are free to give cheerfully. It's hard to be joyful when you are clinging tightly to your possessions. A beautiful expression of joy is to go without—and give generously.

Many Christians assume they must focus on themselves before they can serve God. We can all think: “I’ll serve once my needs are met.” But Paul seemed to believe the opposite: *“I will serve God whether my needs appear met or not, because I can do all things through Him who gives me strength.”*