



PHILIPPIANS: JOY FOR LIFE'S JOURNEY
PEACE IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES • PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23 • 6/12/2022

MAIN POINT

True peace for every circumstance can only be found in Christ.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is one thing you recently saw and thought, I want that?

Why are we often not content with just the basic necessities?

How does our culture fuel discontentment?

Our materialistic culture leads us to believe we need all the things we want. Advertisers push us to buy with the promise that an item will make us happy and bring satisfaction. We buy into this philosophy of greed and discontentment, always wanting more and never being satisfied, never knowing true peace. Peace and contentment happen when we move our focus from earthly stuff to kingdom stuff, from the temporary to the eternal.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PHILIPPIANS 4:10-14.

Who did Paul praise for the gift of the Philippians' support? What does this tell you about Paul and about his perspective on life?

Paul showed his gratitude for the Philippian Christians' generosity by expressing joy and praise to God over their gifts, which Epaphroditus delivered to him (Phil. 2:25). These gifts continued

the pattern of the Philippian church's support of Paul. He expressed joy at his renewed relationship with the church and their renewed expression of care for him and his ministry.

How does Paul's view of peace and contentment compare with the modern world's view?

Paul stated that he was content no matter what his circumstances. The word contentment Paul used in this passage is a term that describes an inner spirit of peace, freedom, and discipline, the ability to conquer circumstances and situations rather than be conquered by them. Because of his faith and trust in Christ, Paul was able to live triumphantly above changing circumstances. In order to find contentment in Christ, we must learn to trust God to meet our needs in the way He knows is best for us.

Read verse 13 again. What made Paul's contentment possible? What do you think that contentment looks like in real life?

Based on these verses, how would you describe what it means to have peace in all circumstances?

Paul knew that godliness goes hand in hand with peace and contentment, and he wanted Timothy to understand this. When we're focused on living God-honoring lives, our contentment is measured by what God is doing in us rather than what we have. In order to understand true peace, we have to reject the notion that it has anything to do with outward circumstances of life, such as accumulating material possessions or finding earthly success.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PHILIPPIANS 4:15-23.

What was Paul's motive for thanking the Philippians for their partnership in his ministry (vv. 15-16)? What does a person's endurance in giving say about his or her understanding of peace and contentment?

Paul reminded the Philippians that they were the only church in the area that shared with him in the financial support of his ministry. The words Paul used for giving and receiving were terms from the world of business and commerce. They described the making or receiving of payments on loans or debts. The Philippians entered into a relationship with Paul in the matter of underwriting his ministry. His words were intended not only to express his gratitude but also to encourage them.

At the same time, Paul assured his readers that he was not looking for financial support from the churches. Rather, he was interested in their spiritual development. In this verse, Paul continued

using the language of the commercial or business world. He assured the Philippians that their earthly monetary investment in his ministry would produce spiritual dividends for them.

Read Matthew 6:19-21. How do Jesus' words help you better understand what Paul meant by the church's "account"? What types of "credits" do you think he was talking about?

How do you define treasures on earth? How do they compare with heavenly treasures?

Why is it so difficult for us to focus on our heavenly treasures? What is one way your life would look differently if you focused less on the things of the world this week?

Do you ever struggle to trust the truth in Philippians 4:19? Why or why not?

How does a believer draw on God's unlimited resources in daily life (v. 19)?

In the pursuit of peace, why is it important for us to know and believe that God provides for us?

Paul assured his Philippian friends that God was well able to take care of all of their needs. Notice that Paul did not say that God would take care of their wants or desires. The New Testament nowhere suggests that all of our desires will be met because of our commitment to God in Christ. God will supply all of His people's needs through His own riches in glory. God has an abundant supply, and He can take care of our needs in a glorious manner through Jesus Christ.

From verse 23, what was Paul's greatest hope for the Philippian believers? What would you say is your greatest hope for life?

Paul concluded his letter to the church at Philippi by praying for God's grace to mark their spirits. Another way of saying it is that he wanted them to know and experience God's peace in all circumstances. What we hope and pray reflects where our hearts are in relationship to the Lord.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

We have seen that peace doesn't come from something, but from someone. How might this realization change the way you pursue peace?

What outside force is most likely to upset your peace? What can you ask God to change in you so that peace is possible, even in the face of those forces?

Why do you think it is necessary to be intentional about peace and contentment? How can you do that this week?

PRAYER

Close in prayer thanking God that He provides peace no matter our circumstances.

COMMENTARY

| PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23

Verses 10-13 indicate that the church at Philippi had sent Paul a financial contribution to support him. His comment about their having renewed their care for him referred to this contribution. Philippians 4:10 (as do vv. 15-16) indicates the Philippian church sent Paul monetary gifts on other occasions to support his work. Here Paul mentioned that they had sent him a gift once again. The Philippians sent this gift by the hand of Epaphroditus, one of their members (2:25,30; 4:18). Now Paul acknowledged the joy he felt because of the Philippians' concern for him.

Paul said he did not make any of these statements because of financial need on his part. He had come to such spiritual maturity that he could be content in whatever financial circumstances he found himself. The Greek word translated content means "self-sufficient." Paul drew his sufficiency from within himself. We will soon see, however, that Paul had a source of sufficiency that was different from that of unbelievers and that source was Christ in him. Paul learned how to live with a scarcity of money as well as with an abundance of money. He was content both when well-fed and when hungry. He knew how to thrive both when affluent and when poverty-stricken. To know how to suffer poverty is a sign of true greatness. Similarly, many experience affluence, but to know how to be affluent without being ruined by it is knowledge few possess.

Paul climaxed his statement by saying, I can do all things. The all things Paul referred to were not ambitions or personal goals. Paul referred to living in contentment with either affluence or poverty. Paul's secret of joy lay in developing the attitude of contentment. Paul learned to be content with what he had. As he wrote these words, Paul was under arrest, guarded by Roman soldiers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. He was awaiting trial before one of the most insane, ruthless, and cruel tyrants who ever ruled. Though imprisoned and awaiting trial for his life, Paul was content. He was content having received the gift from his friends at Philippi, but he was content before he received the gift. His personal sense of well-being did not depend on any financial or comfort considerations.

How could Paul live with such contentment? In verse 13, we see the source of Paul's joy and contentment. He said through him who strengthens me. Paul drew his sufficiency from within, but his inner source was Jesus Christ who dwelt within him. Paul did not depend on outer circumstances but on the inner reality of the indwelling Christ who filled him with strength.

Sometimes the Lord works through His redeemed people to meet human needs. Contentment did not do away with troubled circumstances (v. 14). Paul knew operating from a Roman jail cell, chained to a Roman soldier, was not operating from a position of power. He was in trouble. The present Epaphroditus brought from Philippi helped. Paul wanted the Philippians to know this and to know how commendable he considered their loving action to be.

The Philippians' gift was not unexpected. They had treated Paul this way before in the early days of his ministry in Europe (v. 15; see Acts 16:12-40). Paul described their relationship with him at that time in technical accounting terms. No other church entered into a financial partnership with him. In a sense, the Philippian letter is Paul's official receipt, acknowledging and giving credit for the church's gift to him. Paul went directly from Philippi to Thessalonica (Acts 16:12-17:1). Though we have no record of them, there the Philippians began sending him gifts (2 Cor. 8:1-9). Thus Paul acknowledged the depth and length of his relationship with the Philippian church. He also acknowledged that he had a need, even when he learned to be content.

Again the apostle revealed that the motive for his thankfulness of their partnership in his ministry was not to secure another gift (v. 17). His letter was not a fund-raising attempt. He wanted them to realize that their deeds would not go unnoticed. They have a deposit in heaven that will yield rich dividends. (See Jesus' words in Matt. 6:19-21.) Paul finds another way to show he is not writing to ask for another gift (v. 18). He retained his accounting vocabulary. The letter he sent with Epaphroditus was his receipt marked "paid in full" and more. His needs were met through the Philippians' gifts. These good deeds not only satisfied Paul but were a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. Giving to God's servant for God's work is a gift to God, a first-class offering (compare Rom. 12:1; Heb. 13:16).

Their obedience and generosity would bring God's reward, giving encouragement and expectation to the readers (v. 19). As they met all of Paul's needs (v. 16), so God would meet all their needs. God does this out of the abundance of His treasury, a glorious resource without limits. How does one draw from these unlimited resources? Through Christ Jesus. Only those in Him have access to God's account and can ask Him to meet their needs. Paul concluded the body of the letter with a doxology praising God (v. 20). The thought of God's providing our needs in Christ naturally led to praise and thanksgiving. The God of glory and honor is not far removed

from us, however. He remains our ... Father ready to bring love and resources to meet our needs. Thus, glory belongs to Him forever—into the unseen ages.