WEEK 06 · PHILIPPIANS 4:2-23

We are called to rejoice amidst trials by keeping our hearts and minds on Jesus, focusing on the peace, grace, and strength that come from Him.

Preface

Last week, we were taught not to put our confidence in heritage or achievements, thinking we are saved by our works, but to press on to know and conform to Christ.

This week, we will learn how to remain joyful amid continual challenges, as Paul urges believers to rejoice despite interpersonal and financial struggles by relying on the God who guards, strengthens, and provides for those in Christ Jesus.

Background: No believer is exempt from trials and challenges. In the first three chapters of the epistle, Paul describes various difficulties faced by himself and early Christians, including imprisonment and persecution (1:12-14), strife and disunity (1:15-17), self-serving interests (2:21), and those who oppose the cross of Christ (3:18). These conflicts and ungodly behaviors within the church discouraged Paul because they could lead the faith of many astray. Yet despite all the challenges, Paul urges believers to rejoice in the Lord always (4:4).

Warm-up question: Are you currently facing challenges in your life and/or in your Christian walk? What are the challenges and how have you been tackling them?

Study

Read Philippians 4:2-3 to answer the following questions.

1. What additional issue was Paul addressing, and what was his request? (4:2-3)

> Notes: He urged the two sisters in Christ to live in **harmony** and **unity**. He also asked the Philippian believers to **help resolve their conflicts**. Once again, Paul emphasized the importance of **unity**.

Read Philippians 4:4-9 to answer the following questions.

2. Despite all of the issues faced by the Philippian believers, what kind of attitude did Paul encourage them to have? Why did Paul ask them to adopt this attitude? (4:4-5)

> Notes:
> - In the original Greek, the word "**rejoice**" (4:4) is in the imperative form, indicating a command. Paul urged believers to rejoice twice, highlighting its **importance** and **their need for this reminder**, as **joy does not come naturally** during difficult times. In 4:5, Paul urged them to **let their gentleness be evident to all**. This attitude should be so **obvious** that everyone can see it.
> - Paul asked them to adopt this attitude because "**The Lord is near**". Jesus would soon return and therefore it was time to **strain toward the prize** awaiting them when Jesus returns (3:13-14).

3. What else does Paul urge believers to do in 4:6-9?

> Notes: Notice the imperative verbs used in these verses: **not be anxious** and **present your requests** to God (4:6), **think about** / **count** / **keep in mind** (4:8), and **put it into practice** (4:9)

4. What are the two things promised when we follow Paul's instructions?

> Notes: 1) **The peace of God** that transcends all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds (v.7); and 2) **God of peace being with us** (v.9). Notice the beautiful transition from **God's blessing** (peace of God) to **God Himself** (God of peace being with us) in these verses.

5. How will the actions Paul prescribed in 4:6-9 and God's promises enable us to rejoice and remain gentle amid hardships?

Read Philippians 4:10-23 to answer the following questions.

6. According to 4:10-15, what difficulty did Paul face, and how did he overcome it?

7. What is the secret (4:12) that he learned, and how did he come to learn it?

> Notes: The secret is that he can do all things—in this case, **being content**—through God who gives him strength (4:13). These verses suggest that the secret comes from his **true experience** of having plenty or being in want in worldly aspects, yet **God was always there to strengthen him**.

8. Based on 4:14-16, what did Paul affirm the Philippian church for? What was the reason for Paul's rejoicing regarding the church's generosity? (4:17-19)

> Notes: Paul affirmed the Philippian church for **sharing in his troubles** (4:14) and for their **generosity** in supporting him (4:15-16). The reason for his rejoicing was **not simply that his needs were met**, but because they were **storing up treasures in heaven** (4:17) and **offering a sacrifice that is pleasing to God** (4:18). Paul reaffirmed their generosity **with confidence in God's promise** to meet their needs (4:19).

Application

1. Of everything Paul commanded in 4:4-9, which is the most challenging to you? Why? What is something that you can do differently in light of Paul's commands?

2. Paul said, "I can do all this through him who gives me strength" (4:13). How have you experienced God giving you strength? Do you know how to seek strength from God?

3. Do you struggle with giving? How does 4:17-19 encourage you to give generously to help those God places in your life?

Optional Follow-up Exercise: Affirmations

When we are in the midst of hardships and challenges, it can be difficult to see the good and beautiful things in life. There are times when we may lose sight of God and fail to recognize the goodness He has placed in us. In this letter, Paul affirmed the Philippian believers, as well as Timothy and Epaphroditus, and genuinely rejoiced in them. This week, take time to affirm one another and recognize the positives in ourselves and others. Be sure to write down the affirmations you receive to remind you of how uniquely God has made you when you need it.

Instructions:

- Choose one person to receive affirmations. Before affirming, pray and ask God for ways to encourage them. As leaders, remember to model both giving and receiving affirmations.
- The person receiving affirmation should focus on receiving and be mindful not to deflect the affirmations.
- Continue until everyone has received an affirmation.
- End your time in prayers, praising God for one another.