

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

I Found Joy

PART

13

TITLE

I Found Joy In Contentment

SCRIPTURE

Philippians 4:10-23



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Well, it is great to see all of you and if you're new with us here, we're glad that you've joined us. I hope that your time here is encouraging. It is great to see all of you as we have sung, we want to look at God's word now and we believe that's exactly what it is. It's God's word. So if you have a Bible, if you want to turn with me to the fourth chapter of Philippians and we're going to end our series here by actually looking at verses 10 through the end of the letter. when we read this, I think it's very important though for you and I to grasp the significance of what it is that we're reading, because we hear all kinds of things. We hear all kinds of words every single day of our life, but when we read these words, you have to understand these are the words of God.

God is the one who has spoken these words and he has given us the Bible, which is a clear, accurate revelation of who he is and who we are, where we came from, where we're going, and how to live while we're here. And so it's a word that has such power. And so if you don't have a Bible, there's lots of Bibles in the chairs near you. I would love for you to look there with us. And if you don't have one at home, please take that home as a gift. But we really are thrilled that you are here. This last series, or this last sermon in the series called I Found Joy is the secret of contentment. That we find joy in being content, which really is a miracle. Most of us in the room can recall the meal scene in the movie Oliver Twist.

Now if you have not read it or if you've not seen it, there's an orphan boy and he's nameless and he's dropped off at this rank orphanage as a little guy and all of a sudden he grows up, at the age of 10 he has to go out and basically work a job in a factory and he comes back to the orphanage where he gets dinner and then he gets to go to bed. Well, one night, basically what takes place is hopelessness and hunger and injustice of life, they all kind of ignite his courage and he does something that was very clear, was a no-no, and that is that he stands up at his seat and he takes his empty bowl that he's already eaten yet he's still hungry and he walks up and when he walks up the entire room full of children, they all hush. They can't believe that he's actually doing this. And he approaches this really well fed overseer of the food in the orphanage, holds his bowl up to him and says, "Please, sir, I want some more."

It's a startling scene, because it deals with human need, it deals with injustice, it deals with the brokenness of our world. We all know that's not how God intended life to be lived. We don't read about that in Genesis. His plan for us, and yet it's interesting, if you think about it, that the honest cry of an orphan's hungry belly has become the heart cry of an affluent nations hungry soul. Everywhere we look, we see people saying, "More please. More security, please. More money, please. More authority, please. More time, more vacation, more whatever." We all want more, because we believe that more is the answer to the problem of our heart. The longings of a heart to be content for our soul to be put at rest, we assume that it's a quantity issue, but let me ask you a question. What if we find out, what if you could find out that actually the longings of your heart have nothing to do with the quantity of whatever commodity is that you think would be, if you just had enough of that, it would just turn the tide in your heart and you would be at rest?

What if it was not a quantity issue? What if it was a person? What if there's only one person who can give your soul rest? And that's what we want to look at because that's what Paul looks at. So before we do that though, I want to pray for us, okay? Father in heaven, as we open up your word now, and as we read these amazing words at the end of this letter that was written in a prison, would you help us to be attracted to the attitude of a content heart? Would you help us to long for this, to want this? Would you help us to see what it requires, what grace is needed in our life? And would you help us then to look to you and say, "God, give me that grace. Give me that growth. Give me that depth of relationship and peace in my heart as I relate to your son Jesus Christ." Would you speak through weakness and would you do a great work in our lives? Now we pray in Jesus name. Amen.

So Philippians chapter four, starting in verse 10 says, "I rejoiced in the Lord greatly and now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low and I know to abound in any and every circumstance. I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance, and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. 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. Even in Thessalonica, you sent me help for my needs once and again. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. 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. And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches and glory in Christ Jesus, to our God and father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Greet every Saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, be with your spirit." Now, every single one of us know the privilege and the joy and the happiness that comes from watching somebody that we love open up a gift that we sacrifice to give knowing they're going to love it. This letter is written with that experience being removed. Let me explain. Paul 10 years before he wrote this letter, he was in a city called Philippi, and there's no church there and there's no believers there. There's no light there. It's just people looking for hope and contentment. And Paul comes in and he begins to tell people about Jesus Christ and many believe, and they form a church just like this, as a church where people come and they gather and they hear more about Christ and what he's done to be encouraged to be able to go back into their city, just like we go into Raleigh in order to share the good news with other people.

Well, Paul was so burdened by the cities, the number of cities in that region who had no access to the gospel, that he leaves this church and while he leaves, they send him a little gift, some support to help him with his missionary work. Well, 10 years pass and Paul's insistence to continue to preach the gospel now has landed him in a prison in Rome. 800 miles away in Philippi, they hear that he's in prison.

And so their mercy and their love for him begins to stir, and so they take up an offering and they send the offering with a man, his name is Epaphroditus. They said, “We want you to walk this to Rome 800 miles away,” because he’s in need in prison. He needs a meal. He needs resources to be able to stay alive. And Paul receives that and he’s so overwhelmed with Thanksgiving that he writes him a thank you letter. But here’s the deal, the people in Philippi knew when they scraped together out of their own poverty resources to send him a gift that they would miss out on the joy of seeing him open it.

And so here in this last section, what he does is he seeks to tell them to describe that moment for them so that they can experience some of his pleasure so that they can feel the joy of his pleasure. And in doing so, he seeks to teach them and us a secret, the last secret that I want you to see about a joy filled life, and it’s this. This is the thesis of the sermon. A content heart that becomes a generous heart will be a joyful heart. A heart that is put at rest, it’s content. So content that it’s able even to give to other people who are in need. A content heart that becomes a generous heart will be a heart that is full of joy. That’s what I hope that you understand and hear in that is that if you are here, and I know you are. You want joy. You want joy. I want you to know you need them to understand what it takes to become content within your heart and to become generous within your heart. And so let’s work through three points that really form out that thesis, that a content heart becomes a generous heart and that generous heart will become a joyful heart.

The first thing is this, is that joy motivates us then to learn the secret of contentment. I’ve said this many times, that if joy could actually put on flesh and blood, stand next to us as a really good friend, hold up the Bible and point our own eyes to specific words in this passage that would most emphasize and grow joy within our heart, joy would point to the word content in verse 11, when Paul says, “I have learned in any situation to be content,” and the word that he uses there for content is fascinating. It’s also the word for satisfied, or to have enough. You know what it’s like to have enough. Next Thursday when you have maybe a meal and you’re going to say, you know what? I’ve had enough. I’m satisfied. You look at this little guy right here, right? And he’s in nice little home. He’s had a good meal. He’s tired. He fell asleep right in his bowl. This is what it looks like to be content, to have enough, but here’s the deal. Paul is not in an air conditioned room falling asleep in a bowl. Paul is in prison, and inside this prison, Paul has written four letters that find themselves a home in the New Testament, and yet we’re told that his wrist is chained to another soldier.

And what that means is that every time he formed a letter with his hand, he heard the clank of the iron. There was discomfort in writing Philippians. He’s uncertain if he’s going to get out. He’s lonely, he’s deprived of so many different comforts in his life, and yet he says, “I want you to know I am so satisfied. I’ve had enough. I have so much in my heart that I just have to rejoice.” It’s a remarkable thing that he says, and then he says something more remarkable. A verse later, he says, “In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret.” This is not a personality trait to be content. This is not a temperament. This is not a skill assessment. This is something that is learned and this is what he learned. It’s twofold. First is that contentment does not come from what we have. I know you believe if you had more of something, you’d be happier. And the fact is that God is clearly created within the things of this earth capacity for us to enjoy them.

There's pleasure in food, there's pleasure in beauty, there's pleasure in the mountains and the beach. There's pleasure in relationships. There is pleasure there, but that's not where we find contentment. That's not where we find that our heart feels full.

Contentment does not come from what we have. We believe it is. That's why we spend so much of our time comparing. Say, "Well, that person, look where they got to go on vacation. Look what they drive, and look what they get to do and look what they have." And so then we start to covet. We think, if I had what they drove and I had where they lived and I had where they got to go, if I had the people that they have in their life, in my life, I would be happy. And so comparison always moves to coveting, which is the opposite of contentment. But think about this. If quantity was the key to our contentment, then why would he have to learn contentment in what he calls plenty, abundance and abounding. You see what he's saying? If those weren't there and he says, "You know what? I had to learn contentment in poverty and in hunger," we'd go, yeah, I get it. But that makes it a whole lot of sense. If you just had a little bit more food, if you had a little bit more money, if you had just a little bit more security than you'd feel a little bit better about yourself.

But this is what he says. He goes, "You know what? I've known affluence. I've known freedom. I've known authority, I've known power, I've known prestige. I've had money in the bank and yet I still had to learn contentment, because my heart was still empty." Contentment does not come from what we have. Contentment comes from whom we have. Psalm 73 is a stunning passage in the Old Testament that looked forward to the day when we could have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. And this is what the Psalmist says. He says, "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength in my heart and my portion forever." Now for the crew who is on these slides, if you just leave that one up there just for a moment, okay? Let's just work through these different phrases, because this is a remarkable thing to say if you mean it. This is what he says, first, "Whom have I in heaven but you?" This is a prayer to God. He says, "God whom have I in heaven, but you?" Now can you actually pray this?

Let me ask you this, if you could live in heaven forever, without any sin, any injustice, any wars, any strife, with all your favorite people, all your favorite things, all your favorite, everything, and you could live there forever, could you be happy there if Jesus wasn't there? You see, if you answer the question, yes, there's a good chance that you have actually missed out on the entirety of Christianity. Jesus is the only treasure of the redeemed. He is the only thing in heaven that we're looking for. He is the only person in heaven that is going to satisfy us forever. Here's another way to say it. Jesus is what makes heaven heaven. It's Jesus. Do you love Jesus? Does Jesus satisfy your soul? If your heart is full of Jesus, it's empty of envy, it's empty of discontentment. It's all about Jesus and then he goes, now look, "And there's nothing on earth that I desire besides you." What do you want right now? I would be so much happier if I had a different watch. I'd be so much happier if I had what? Fill in the blank. I would be so much happier if I.

The Psalmist says this, “I have nothing on this earth that I want.” What a stunning thing to say. And then he says, “My flesh and heart may fail.” What does that mean? I’m going to die. I’m going to get weak. I’m going to get frail, “But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” Every one of us have been to a meal where they bring out all the dishes at the same time, what everyone ordered and you sort of look around, ooh, that looks really nice over there. I like that. Ooh man, that looks fantastic as well. And then you look down at yours and there’s that moment of reckoning, did I choose wisely, right? This is what I get. That’s what they get. And this is what the Psalmist is asking us. It’s a life question. If Jesus is your portion, are you okay with that? If these other people have other things, have another item, another vacation house, another toy, another whatever, and all you have is Jesus, do you recognize you have enough to be happy?

Our portion forever. If you ... For six months after college, I spent some time in Zimbabwe, Africa, a remarkable experience, but it was a lonely experience, and it was a strange experience in that I only brought a Bible, because I couldn’t take a whole lot, and you think of it, there’s no TV, there’s no phone. And so all the time that you have, you and I have where we think, oh, we’re so busy, but we spent all this time on things that really add up to nothing, well, none of those things were there, and so it was such a moment of revelation to me, of I have literally nothing to distract me. And I became very lonely and I began to actually compare my life when I was there to some of my friends who had already started their masters degree and who had already started their career, and I started asking the question, am I ... I’m going to get behind.

It was a fascinating experience to where I really went through about two weeks where I was really lonely and I really thought, what am I doing here? I’m wasting six months of critical time. So I went to my friend, his name is Barry, and I said, “Barry,” I said, “Have you ever experienced something like this?” I said, “This is pretty new to me. I never felt these things.” And he encouraged me to read a book while I was there by Corrie ten Boom, who survived the Holocaust, and the theme or the idea, there was one sentence in what she wrote, which was perplexing to me and encouraging to me and it was this. She said, “You’ll never know Jesus is all you need until Jesus is all you have.” And at that moment, I still had months left and I thought, you know what? I have unusual experience here that I can spend these months in one, two ways. I can find a way to get home, or I can see what a life would actually be like if I spent hours in the Bible every, and in prayer every day.

And what became a season of loneliness actually now becomes a marker that ... It became so ingrained, it was such a strong, pounding imprint upon my heart that even today when I feel a lack of contentment, I don’t think I need to go to the mall. I think I need to get alone with the Bible, because Jesus is going to meet me there. It’s the most powerful thing, and I encourage you to learn that. It has totally changed my life. This is what he means when he says, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” You understand that, right? He’s not talking about athletics there. He’s not talking about baking or any kind of skill, I’m going to make this sale because Jesus ... No, the primary miracle and life is not that you can win a race or sell a commodity. The primary miracle in life is that your heart can actually find rest.

Whether you have a whole lot or a little, you can know contentment. He says, "This is the miracle." So let me encourage you, run to Jesus Christ and trust him with your life. Friends, in particular, those in this room who have never trusted Christ, I'm so thankful that you're here and I pray that you'd look at these words within the scriptures and it just causes you to think, I want to be, I want to have that kind of contentment. Let me tell you how you have it. Jesus Christ created us in such a way that our soul only finds its rest when we're near God, and I want you to know that you will be restless until you draw near to him. Proverbs chapter 18 says it this way, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower and the righteous man runs to it and is safe. A rich man's wealth is his strong city and like a high wall and his imagination." When we feel empty, when we feel at risk, we all find a tower to run to, whether it's money or whether it's the bottle or whether it's sex or relationship or my job or sports, something. We all run to a tower that promises to be strong and promises to protect and promises to defend that it looks so big and helpful. He says, "But every single tower in the world, save one, is imaginary."

The only one is Jesus Christ himself. I tell you, it's true. Some of you, you've said that you've walked with the Lord for years and yet you feel so empty, and the only thing you have is a memory of trusting Christ 10 years ago. It is a relationship. He is waiting for you today. He wants to spend with you today. Every tower is imaginary but one, and you think about what Jesus Christ did. He put himself in the most discontented state imaginable so that we could be content forever. He left heaven and all the riches of heaven. He chose poverty. He could have chosen any family to be born in. He chose two poor teenagers. He chose to be crowned with thorns. He chose to allow himself to be condemned. He chose to allow himself to be crucified on a cross, but then he rose from the dead and when he rose, he promised to draw near to all who would draw near to him. How do you draw near to him? If the tower is there and you're here, how do I run to this tower?

The Bible describes this in different words. It's a sequence. It's really all happening at the exact same time. It's one thing, but the first thing is there's a recognition that all of these other towers that I'm leaning on, including my own good works, they're insufficient, so I can't rely on this anymore, so as to admit your need. I need that tower. Second, it's to lean on that tower. Literally to move to that ... To believe in that tower, to say, "I am believing in Jesus Christ. I am trusting in his righteousness. I'm trusting in his death and his resurrection." And then to move into that tower, it's the name of the Lord, it's all of his strength and character, what you're saying is the Lord's character is to me, my now guide. He ... I'm confessing he was Lord. I'm confessing, I love this tower. I love being here. I want to stay here and so I'm going to let him be my guide.

And for those of us who have never done that, I beg you today to trust Christ as your savior. Right now. You just prayed to him. You say, "Christ, I admit that I cannot save myself. I believe in you. I confess you as Lord," and the Bible says he'll fill your heart with himself and in filling you with himself, he gives you contentment within your heart. And for those of us who have trusted Christ and you know Christ, let me encourage you, every time that your heart begins to grind just a little bit like it's just not quite at rest, there's just a little lack of contentment within my heart, let me encourage you to do something very specific, and that is to run every single day to those intersections where Jesus is waiting for you. He's waiting in the pages of scripture.

He's waiting when you pray. He's waiting when you come to a community of other believers that are talking about Jesus Christ and reminding one another about his promises for life. This is where Jesus meets us again and again and again and again and sets our heart at rest again and again and again. And so joy motivates us to learn the secret of contentment. Well, what does contentment then do? Number two, contentment enables us to pursue the pleasure of generosity. The pleasure of generosity. You see, when Paul first left Philippi, "The church," he says, "Repeatedly sent help for his needs." In fact, it says in verse 16, "Even in Thessalonica," which was one of the next cities that he went to, he says, "You sent help for my needs once and again," and this even startled Paul. You see, during this time he wrote another church, a church in a city called Corinth.

In the second letter that he wrote to them that we have in the Bible, in chapter eight this is what he says of these people in Philippi. He says, you know what, "In a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity." And so even Paul's amazed and surprised when it was actually happening, that this church in Philippi that was so impoverished would be so generous with what they have so that other people could hear the gospel of Christ. And then all of a sudden there was a gap, and he talks about it in verse 10. He says, "You've revived your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity." We don't know how long that gap was, and we don't know why there was a gap. We don't know if it's because ... And there's no cell phones.

"Hey Paul, where are you at now? Oh, I'm in Corinth now." He's just out there in the world, so maybe he was inaccessible to him or maybe their poverty became such to where they literally couldn't give anything away, because they're trying to feed their kids. We don't know why, but now we know that they hear that something has happened to him, they take up an offering, they send it, and he says that your concerned for me has been revived. And the word revived is the same word it means to sprout. And so this is the picture of verse 10. He says, "For all these years, it's kind of felt like winter. Not that there was a problem. I knew that you were concerned for me, but there was really no vegetation. There was ... But now all of a sudden you're concerned for me, it's like the signs of spring. It's encouraging to me. It's helpful to me. It's overwhelming to me." And then he says, "I know you missed out on the opportunity of seeing my face when I first saw it, so let me tell you how I interpreted that moment." He goes, the first thing, verse 19, I'm sorry, verse 18 he says, "It was like a fragrant offering."

It was like a vanilla candle when you walk in, or like chocolate chip cookies in the oven or like warm baked bread. It was so pleasant. It was so appealing. Not only that, it was a sacrifice. He says, "I know it was a sacrifice. I know that you're impoverished." He says, "You know what? Here's the deal, I felt it all the way in Rome. I felt it Leave your fingers. I know that you looked around and you saw needs all around you. I know you saw those needs and have those needs and yet you still gave to me. And I know that was a sacrifice and I felt that sacrifice on your behalf. I'm so thankful." And he says it was pleasing to God. He says, "I felt God's pleasure in you." And the reason is because this kind of generosity can only spring from a content heart, and so he's saying, you must be full. You must be satisfied to be able to give like this. And then he says, "You know what? Our God, he's going to supply all of your needs."

Now let me just say something real quick, because this passage right here has been exploited for ... By so many people.

This is one of the primary passages for the prosperity gospel. This is what people will say. They'll say, "You see, I'm like Paul. I have a ministry. And if you'll sow into this ministry, just like the Philippians sowed into Paul, if you'll send your faith seed and let me buy another jet, your crops will grow, and your cancer will go away, and you'll get a raise, in the name of Jesus." These men and women are thieves and they turn Jesus into their butler who shuttle the hopes of the poor into their greedy mouth. Everyone in the story of Philippians would spit on the ground if they knew that their generosity and their poverty was being used to exploit the poor. Paul didn't take the offering and buy a boat. He bought dinner so he could stay alive. And the Philippians were all poor and they all died poor. So you have to ask the question, what is the riches? What is the genuine riches of Christianity that's been offered to us in Jesus?

We're told in the third chapter of Galatians, verse 14 it says, "In Christ Jesus, the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles so that we might receive the promised spirit through faith." Now this is a passage that prosperity gospel preachers will use, but instead of the comma in the second half of the sentence, they'll put a period there. And this is what they'll do. They'll say, "You know what? The Bible says that everyone who trusts Jesus Christ becomes the spiritual descendant of Abraham." Well, if you don't know the story, God came to a man named Abraham who is worshiping rocks, because he didn't know who God was. And he says, "Why don't you get up? I'm God. That's not God." He gets up and he goes, "I'm going to bless you." And part of the blessing was material. He says, "I'm going to bless you, and with that blessing, you're going to be a blessing to the nations. In fact, there's going to be somebody that's going to come from your line. They will be the savior of the world, they will bless all the families of the world."

And so you get to the New Testament. Jesus is the one. He comes, he dies, he rises again and Galatians says, "Everybody who trust in Jesus Christ becomes a spiritual descendant of Abraham inheriting the promise that God gave to him." Prosperity gospel say bam. Period. See? We're supposed to be rich like Abraham, and God says, "Oh, you are rich, but it's not like what you think." What is the riches? What are our riches? He says, "So that we might receive the promised spirit through faith." Do you see? What's the blessing of Christ? It's not money. It's the Holy spirit. It's being born again. We get Jesus. You see, when we enjoy Jesus as our ultimate treasure, our heart finds contentment, and then we become so free to experience the incomparable pleasure of sharing what we have with people who are in need, just like Abraham. And so let's reinforce our contentment by pursuing generosity. I want you to know that five minutes after you die, you will know exactly how you should have lived. But the kindness of the Lord allows it that because he gave us his word, we don't have to wait to find out how we should live.

You see, Acts 20, verse 35 says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." I know some of you may be feeling poor right now, but you know what? There's somebody that you can be generous towards. You don't have to give a whole lot to be generous. You just have to give what you have, or a portion of what you have to be generous. So let me encourage you to make a strike on your greed by being generous to someone in need. The third thing is generosity allows us to experience the joy of ministry partnership. You see, in verse 14 he says, "It was kind of you to share my trouble," and then he says in verse 15, he says, "No church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving." It's interesting the word share is the same word for partner. And this is what the gospel does. This is what generosity does.

It takes people and he makes them ministry partners. This is what he said in chapter one, you remember? Verse three through five, "I thank my God, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now." And then notice what he says to them in verse 17, he says, "Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit." Now let's be very clear, we're almost done. I want to be really, really clear. There's nothing you can do to earn your way to God. You cannot stockpile enough good works in order to impress the Lord. You have to trust his son and that is the only way. But the Bible says that once we trust the son, once we trust Jesus Christ, he says that God now looks at our life and it says that one day we will be rewarded by him for everything that we did in faith and obedience to Jesus now that we know that he is our savior. Not to earn a place in the family, but because we have a place in the family.

And so the things that we do in obedience, it says, that God credits them to us as part of our rewards, so that one day when we stand before Christ, he's going to say, "For all the good that I saw that you do after trusting Christ, here's your reward." And then the Bible says that what we're going to do with what he gives us is this, "Thanks so much. Now Jesus, it's all unto you," and we're going to lay it all back down before him because it's ultimately for him. And so what does he say here? He says, "I'm seeking the fruit that increases to your credit." In other words, this is what he means. He says, "Look, when you sent me, and I went and I shared the gospel and someone believed, we led them to Christ." And God's going to credit our accounts. Did you know Providence right now that when you to Providence, there are 40 pastors that you never see, most of which you'll never see all over the world who are sharing the gospel and planting churches in villages and cities, in places that we're not allowed to go to.

And what he's saying is this, when someone comes to faith, that pastor looks at us and he says, "We led them to Christ." This is what he means. Just imagine the day you get to heaven and someone runs up to you. Thank you so much, and you're like, "Who are you?" They're like, "Well, you one day gave to a person who was going to take the gospel and they made it all the way to me. I live in Indonesia. You were living in Raleigh, and I heard the gospel and I believed, and I just want to say thank you." This is what he's saying. You see, their generosity enabled Paul to reach some pretty unreachable people. You see what he says at the end? "All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household man." I mean, can't you just see the church in Rome? They're like, how do we reach those people? How do we reach the Imperial family and I have no idea. God says, "I'll take care of this."

Let me place one of my favorites in one of their prisons.” He’s going to write a bunch of letters for the history of the church that’s going to benefit them and he’s going to share the gospel with every single person he’s chained to and they’re going to go walking around, and they’re going to say, “At the palace, I was at the prison, man this dude down there, he just keeps telling us about Jesus,” and people began to believe. Some of these people in Caesar’s household, they come down and like, “Hey, what you doing? I’m writing. Well, who you’re writing? I’m writing a church. A church,” Right? “That’s the big church, and so we’re like family with them, right? Yeah, that’s right. We’ll tell them hi.” That’s what he says. He says, “They greet you.” The unreachable became reached, and so Providence, let’s continue to leverage our resources for God’s kingdom. God has called us to introduce people to Jesus Christ and to grow them up to love and worship him. And there are people not only in Raleigh and in America, but to the ends of the earth who are in need of the gospel, so I appeal to faith in his word, and I commend you for your past and current faithfulness.

I pray to God that our study in Philippians has been helpful and next week we’re going to start a new series, it’s called, I Wonder, and the fact is, every one of us have things that we wonder about. We wonder how we’ll be remembered. We wonder why we seem to wander so much before we ever feel a sense of wonder within our life. We wonder about our flawed past. We wonder about sin. We wonder about our purpose and our future and what happens when we die? And you know what the beautiful thing about the Bible, is it tells us other people, including the people in the Christmas story, wondered about those same things. So what we’re going to do is over the month of December, in all of our services, including Christmas Eve and the various concerts, the various days and all the Sundays, we’re going to just answer some of these questions that people within our own community have. And so I would ask you to be thinking about who do you know that you might be able to tell this good news to? And who do you know that you might be able to invite?

I pray that God’s grace would be with your spirit just as Paul ended his letter. So let me pray. Father in heaven, we thank you for your kindness to us. I pray, father, that you would help us to learn this skill, this secret of contentment, and that is to be full of you. Would you help us to know and rejoice in the fact that we have you? And to recognize that in having you, we have enough. So we sing to you out of full hearts, recognizing that it’s all unto you. As we sing, would you receive it as it is, an offering of affection? Jesus, we love you. We sing to you now. We pray this in Christ’s name. Amen.



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