

Bible Month at Home

27th September 2026 - Rachel Mitchell

Philippians chapter 4



Today we conclude our exploration of Paul's letter to the Philippians. We have heard about Paul's troubles, but also of the joy he found in Christ and in the news from Philippi. We have heard his encouragement to build our lives on the example of Christ and to keep pressing on faithfully, right to the end.

As we look at his final words, we are reminded that we do not live in isolation but with others and with Christ. With Him we are to build his new kingdom of love, grace and joy. Now, as we begin today, we return to one of Paul's key instructions in his letter:

Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice!

STF 335: Rejoice, the Lord is King

**Rejoice, the Lord is King!
Your Lord and King adore;
mortals, give thanks, and sing,
and triumph evermore:**

*Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;
rejoice! Again I say: rejoice!*

**Jesus the Saviour reigns,
the God of truth and love;
when He had purged our stains,
he took His seat above: *Lift up....***

**His kingdom cannot fail,
he rules o'er earth and heaven;
the keys of death and hell
are to our Jesus given: *Lift up...***

**He sits at God's right hand
till all His foes submit,
and bow to his command,
and fall beneath his feet: *Lift up...***

Charles Wesley (1707-88)

We pray:

O God, who is our beginning and our destination,
today we hear the call to rejoice in You.

While there are many things in which we may find JOY, it is only **in You** that we have the promise of being made citizens in your new eternal kingdom of light and love, which reaches from heaven to earth, and will one day renew all we see and know. In you we rejoice today.

We rejoice in who you are. We rejoice in your goodness and faithfulness; your steadfastness and your sovereignty; and your eternal unwavering love which goes on and on, unmoved and undiluted by all that changes around us. Love, which never runs out.

We rejoice in all you have done: for your works of creation seen in the world around us; for your works of salvation which we see so clearly in Jesus; and for your care of each of us revealed through the ongoing presence of your Holy Spirit; and for the prayers we have seen answered in our own lives too.

We rejoice in your forgiveness of our waywardness. We come to you today knowing that we are your 'not yet perfected' children; that we come to you only by your grace and mercy and not by any goodness of our own. As we take a moment to let this reality permeate through us today, we ask you to speak into our hearts, Lord. Remind us of our need of your forgiveness and raise our eyes and hearts to you; for you are the 'One True God' in whom we find healing and redemption, the One in whom we rejoice today.

Lord, may our hearts never forget what it is to rejoice in you. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer....

We read: Philippians 4 verses 1-9

Reflect

I wonder what advice you might give, or have already given to the people around you - and what this advice says about you? Often, we find that the advice we give reflects not only our experiences in life, but also our concern for others too.

Here, Paul wants his final advice to this church, which he so loves, to be encouraging. Yet this advice is also firmly rooted in his experience of what it is to live in Christ. His encouragement to both them and us is to:

- Remain steadfast in your faith
- Do not let differences divide you
- Rejoice always, *in the Lord*
- Show gentleness (compassion?) to all
- Do not be anxious about anything
- Pray in every situation, *with thankfulness!*
- Allow God's peace to guard your heart
- Align yourself with all that is pure and lovely
- Live by the teaching you have (from me, Paul)

It's quite a list isn't it? It's the sort of list we can easily gloss over, yet each point is worthy of our attention and consideration.

Often, when I read a list like this, I am drawn to one or two points and focus on them as I pray, knowing that tomorrow I may be drawn to others. I wonder which ones have captured your attention? Do you need to pray for God's help with these today?

Some we may find especially hard in our current situation. That's where we need God's grace with us, helping us and encouraging us. For instance, it can be hard to rejoice in difficult circumstances. Yet with God's help we can rejoice '*in Christ*' as we did in our prayers. This can have the power to lift us above the things that weigh us down. Maybe Paul has seen in his own life how, in the '*doing*', we can be changed.

In receiving this advice, we should remember that this is all given in the spirit of encouragement. Paul's hope is that his readers will more fully know Christ's grace and peace with them. Yet we also know that for this to happen, we need to search out His grace and peace. We do this by making Jesus the centre of all

we are and all we do. Paul's checklist is like a guide on how to do this – how to find this grace and peace.

Take a moment to re-read the list above and to give God space to speak, and then sing or pray...

STF 447: Jesus, be the centre

**Jesus, be the centre,
be my source, be my light, Jesus.**

**Jesus, be the centre,
be my hope, be my song, Jesus.**

*Be the fire in my heart, be the wind in these sails;
be the reason that I live, Jesus, Jesus.*

**Jesus, be my vision,
Be my path, be my guide, Jesus.**

Be the fire...

**Jesus, be the centre,
be my source, be my light, Jesus.**

Michael Frye © 1999 Vineyard Songs (UK/Eire)

We turn now to the final verses of Philippians:

We Read: Philippians 4 verses 10-23

Here, Paul expresses his gratitude for all the ways in which the church of Philippi has supported him. He also talks of knowing what it is to be in need and how he has learnt to find contentment in what he has. His experience has been that God has always provided for his needs and says we should be confident that he will meet our needs too.

This is followed by some final greetings and his final blessing which asks that: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen."

Reflect

Paul chooses to finish his letter with words of gratitude. He lets the generous Philippians know that he has everything he needs – and more, thanks to the gifts he received from them. He is grateful to those who have supported him and somehow there seems to be a lightness of spirit in his gratitude.

Maybe it is this gratitude that leads him to share how he has learned 'the secret' of finding real inner contentment and joy, even where he is now.

This contentment does not come from the practical gifts he has received (even though he is grateful for them). It comes from knowing he belongs to God, that he is adopted as His son, not because of what he has himself done or achieved, but by the intentional choice of God, who he knows through Christ. Coming close to Jesus humbly, as he (Paul) must in his current circumstance, and choosing to rely on Jesus for all things, is what Paul says gives him strength and is the source of his inner contentment (and joy).

Henri Nouwen says: "Joy does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy and keep choosing it. It is a choice based on the knowledge that we belong to God and have found God our refuge and our safety and that nothing can take God away from us."

Choosing joy may feel hard sometimes, but I hope that you have found that choosing Jesus is not. Paul's wish as he writes is that we may know the grace of God, always. This is the grace that we know in and through Jesus – who is our eternal hope (and destiny) and the source of our true and lasting JOY.

Let us pray

O Lord, our Hope and our source of all Joy, may we discover the truth held in the words of the psalmist who said: "Crying may last for a night, but joy comes in the morning," and may we recognise and rejoice in the new day that Jesus brings to us all.

Then, as we rejoice in Jesus, who by his grace is the source of our acceptance in your eyes, may we allow Him bring true contentment and joy to our souls.

As we pray for ourselves, we also pray for all those around us who hunger for such joy in their lives:

- We pray for all the Church across the world
- We pray for those brought low by world events or the circumstances they find themselves in
- We pray for family, friends and carers
- We pray for the people on our prayer lists
- We pray for those we no longer see

Come Lord Jesus, come.

Create in us, and those we pray for, a deeper hunger for your presence, and remind us of your love and grace, through which we may all be redeemed. Help us to trust you in all things – for you are indeed our one true source of hope and joy. **Amen.**

STF 503 Love divine, all loves excelling

**Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven, to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesu, thou art all compassion,
pure unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter every trembling heart.**

**Come, Almighty to deliver,
let us all thy life receive;
suddenly return, and never,
never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above;
pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.**

**Finish then thy new creation:
pure and spotless let us be;
let us see thy great salvation,
perfectly restored in thee:
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise!**

Charles Wesley (1707-88)

Blessing

May God the Father, by whose hand Jesus was raised from the dead, fill us with real and lasting joy and strengthen us to walk with him in his risen life;

And may the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with us and those we care for, today and forever. **Amen.**