

These 4 Empowering Exhortations Hold the Secret to Lasting Joy

Philippians is one of the prison epistles of Paul, and as a prisoner, he did not know whether he would live or die. At such a time, a person would write what is of upper most importance to a congregation that he planted at great cost.

In the first chapter, Paul is at pains to encourage the Philippians to know that his imprisonment has been for the good of the kingdom and that the gospel has spread by his witness from prison. The second chapter presents the example of the Messiah, who left His Father's throne, suffered and died in the most painful humiliation and, then, was exalted in his resurrection and ascension. So we are to show the same humility and be willing to lay down our lives that we may be raised like Him to everlasting life. Chapter 3 warns against false teachers, affirming that our goal is to know Him, the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, which leads to everlasting life.

However, the closing exhortations are remarkable for their clarity and power. If we do the four things commanded in Chapter 4, our lives will be revolutionized in the most wonderful way. First, we are to rejoice always (v. 4). This is not accomplished by not being anxious but, instead, by making all our requests known to God and entering into that peace of God that passes all understanding (v. 6).

Secondly, we are to discipline our minds (v. 8). We are to think of whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable—virtuous and worthy of praise. This discipline of thinking is the key to walking in faith, peace and joy. A person whose mind is always filled with good things is a

person of attracting faith and optimism.

Thirdly, we are to follow good leaders. In this case, Paul puts forth his own example. People do need leaders to follow to the extent that they follow the Messiah. Paul says we are to follow him as he follows the Messiah. We need good leadership examples to grow (v. 9).

Fourth and finally, we are to be content (v. 11-13, v. 19). This contentment is through trusting in the Messiah and knowing that we are in the will of God. We will be content in all circumstances, whether being entertained by the rich or sitting in a jail cell. We can to all things through the Messiah (v. 13). Great holy ones who have been imprisoned have testified to this great contentment, and Paul is indeed testifying from such a situation. When you are content and generous, God abundantly supplies (v. 19)

May we all obey the Scriptures in these four things: to rejoice always, to discipline our thinking, to follow the teaching and example of good leaders and, finally, to be content in all things. {eo}

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