

# Running the Race: Joy in Endurance

## A Study in Paul's Letter to Philippi

### Philippians 4:4b–23

First Church of Squantum • July 10, 2017

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#### I. Welcome and Introductions

II. **Teaser:** What's the best thing to happen to you in the past week?

#### III. Prayer

#### IV. Introduction to Philippians

##### A. Philippi

1. City in modern-day Greece (the Roman province of Macedonia)
2. Named after King Philip II, Alexander the Great's dad.

##### B. Paul

1. Passionate for God—initially persecutes Christians, then Jesus appears to him
2. Great starter—helps found or encourage new churches mostly in Mediterranean
3. Great letter writer—wants to stay in touch with the churches, to help them grow, inside and out

##### C. Christians in Philippi

1. Paul's vision of a Macedonian man and founding of church (Acts 16 on flip-side)
2. Lydia the God-fearer (successful business woman, not a Jew, but lives like one)
3. Not large enough Jewish population to have a synagogue (takes 10 men)
4. Experienced persecution

#### V. Things to Watch for

- A. Connections between enduring and joy!
- B. Connections between first and last sections
- C. What are the sources of Paul's joy?

#### VI. Notes on Philippians 4:4b–23

**Rejoice!** Connected with the words for joy and gift.

**gentleness.** also reasonableness, forbearance.

**supplication.** things we lay before the Lord in prayer; entreaty or begging.

**peace.** Also verse 9. Paul's idea of peace comes from the Hebrew word, *shalom*, which is more than an absence of conflict, but the presence of wholeness and justice. *Shalom* is still the word that Jews use to greet and say good bye to each other!

**surpasses.** also exceeds, excels, transcends.

**understanding.** also mind, thought.

**true.** honest, genuine, authentic.

**honorable.** reverent, serious, holy.

**lovely.** dear, tender.

**excellence.** Not just prize-winning, but moral excellence is in view here.

**lovely.** dear, tender.

**renewed.** flourished or revive; sprout anew.

***I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.*** or *I seek the profit that accrues to your account.*

## **VII. Questions for Discussion**

- A. There are hints in this section that there might be conflict in the church. What is Paul's best advice on how to address it as a faithful community? How does Paul suggest this? What do these ideas suggest about how we might be involved in our fellowship or community?
- B. What are the actions that lead to "the peace that surpasses understanding"? Which of these is the easiest for you? Which of these hardest? How do you think peace guards our hearts and minds?
- C. In verses 8 and 9, Paul suggests things to think about. Do you think Paul connects these with peace in the earlier verses? Or are they a separate subject? If connected, how?
- D. What do you think about Paul's approach to having and not in verses 10–12? Is it realistic? Is there a down-side to Paul's approach? What are the hardest pieces of materialism ("stuffness") for you to let go of?
- E. Verse 13 seems to go in a different direction from the verses that come before. Is it really a different direction? How does this verse shed light on the verses that immediately precede it?

## **VIII. Conclusions**

- Peace! Our heart's desire and yet so elusive. How is peace connected to love?
- How do we have peace in a world that is so full of fear?
- Facing our craving for materialism and control.
- Filling our lives with what is best by God's standards.
- The possibilities of knowing Christ — "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!"

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**Next Time for Bible Study: September 11, the Monday after Labor Day!**

**Thanks for an amazing year of Bible study!**