**Lessons from a Lockdown**

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**Day 12**

**Philippians 4:1-3**

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

*Questions for Personal Reflection:*

1. What did Paul mean when he said that the brothers and sisters were his “joy and crown?” How does this compare with my relationships with Christians?
2. Is there anyone in the church I need to be “of the same mind” with? Is there someone I need to forgive? Is there someone I need to be honest with? When will I do it?
3. How helpful have I been in building unity among my brothers and sisters in the church? What can I do more?
4. How concerned have I been with the spiritual growth of my brothers and sisters in the Lord?
5. If Paul wrote to my church and mentioned me, what would he say?

*Insight:*

Paul said that they were his joy. How do we know when Christians are our joy? We think about them often, wonder how they are doing and hope they are doing well. We become happy when they are faithful and standing firm. They are our joy when there is an excitement in meeting together and there is a longing when we are apart. Does this describe have you feel about the people in your small groups? If that is not the case, we really need to figure out why not. Perhaps one reason is that we don’t see them as God does.

 People will become our joy if we take on God’s heart toward them. - *Shiela Jones*

Paul also said they were his crown. The Greek word translated as crown referred to “a wreath or garland which was given as a prize to victors in public games.” It was a sign of victory, a proof of excellence. For Paul, Christians were his crown. As he wrote elsewhere:

You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. (2 Co 3:2-3)

In the world, we write resumes or ask for letters of recommendation so that we can get the job or get into the school that we want. In the church, our spiritual resume or letter of recommendation will be the Christians whose lives we’ve impacted. If God were to read our spiritual resume right now, what would he learn? What would our spiritual letters of recommendation say about us?

While our influence on other Christians can be unintentional, we need to deliberate in our efforts to help them grow spiritually. Whether we are leaders or not, we need to be concerned about the spiritual growth of our fellow disciples. This shows that they are our joy and our crown.

Paul pleaded with two sisters in the Lord “to be of the same mind.” First, he did not order them, he pleaded. He didn’t try to use his authority over them. He begged them. Second, he challenged them to be of the same mind. He didn’t just ask them to be stop disagreeing or to be nice to each other. He asked them to be united. Unity was so important that Paul had to deal with it in a letter addressed to the whole church. In fact, he asked that others help the sisters be united.

Even in the church, there may be conflicts. We can’t just hope that they go away, instead we have to face conflicts head on. We need to engage with one another to resolve conflicts. We need to have a plan. We need to be wise. If the people in conflict cannot resolve it themselves then fellow Christians need to help. Any form of disunity in the church must not be allowed to linger.

During this lockdown, let us focus on our joy and crown.