

LIVING THE LIFE OF JOY!

**A Study in the Book of Philippians**

**By**

**Ronald G. Christian**

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# L I V I N G   T H E   L I F E   O F   J O Y !

## A Study in the Book of Philippians

Introduction	In Everything Give Thanks!.....	i
Chapter 1	Affectionate Partnership In the Gospel (1:1-8).....	5
Chapter 2	Getting the Best Out of the Worst! (1:12-18).....	14
Chapter 3	"I Can't Help But Win!" (1:19-26).....	23
Chapter 4	Life's Combat For The Truth (1:27-30).....	33
Chapter 5	The Practice of Humility (2:1-4).....	42
Chapter 6	Perfection In Humility (2:5-11).....	49
Chapter 7	The Secret of Contentment (2:12-18).....	58
Chapter 8	The Proof of Humility - Service (2:19-30).....	65
Chapter 9	Destructive Perversions of Faith (3:1-2; 4-6; 18-19).....	72
Chapter 10	Delightful Participation In Faith (3:1-11).....	85
Chapter 11	Diligent Performance of Faith (3:12-17).....	97
Chapter 12	Perfection Through Faith (3:20-21).....	108
Chapter 13	Power for Positive Living: Love and Unity (4:1-3).....	117
Chapter 14	Power for Positive Living: Rejoicing Evermore (4:4).....	127
Chapter 15	Power for Positive Living: Gracious Gentleness (4:5).....	135
Chapter 16	Power for Positive Living: Calm Peacefulness (4:6-7).....	146
Chapter 17	Power for Positive Living: Positivity (4:8-9).....	157
Chapter 18	Power for Positive Living: Gratefully Content (4:10-20)....	172



**IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS!  
INTRODUCTION**

TEXT: "Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."  
(Philippians 4:6)

INTRODUCTION: It is quite easy to worry. There is enough in our world to cause us to worry. Great energy is expended in worrying, and great damage is done to ourselves when we worry.

Paul's advise is for us to change our worry energy into prayer energy! Someone said, "Why pray when you can worry!" Of course, this statement is trying to get our attention. Paul is saying, "Why worry when you can pray!"

What kind of praying is an antidote against worry? Paul says, "With thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God!"

Thanksgiving is the key to happiness and release from worry! What gets your attention, gets you. So, if you center your mind on things that worry you, you will become worry-worn and sad and despairing and worn out! But if you center your mind on the things that you are grateful for, then your worry will soon pass and praise will replace your worry! Try it. It works.

"Count your many blessings,  
Name them one by one,  
And it will surprise you  
What the Lord hath done!"

Paul was in prison and could have worried about a lot of things - things like his own dismal future, or the needs of the many churches he had organized. But instead of centering his mind of worrying, he centered his mind on praise and thanksgiving. It is not the circumstances in your life which make the difference; it is your reaction to your circumstances that makes all the difference in the world.

PROPOSITION: Let us look at the Book of Philippians and look at what Paul was grateful for. The things for which Paul was thankful, we too can be thankful. Let's take some time today to count our blessings, naming them one by one!

1. Philippians 1:1-11 Thankful for continuing Partnership with fellow Believers in the Gospel

Paul cherished his fellow Christians who were his partners in the Gospel. You too can be most thankful for your partners in the faith! Partnership produces fellowship and fellowship breeds deepening affection for one another in the fellowship.

Paul and the Philippians were common partners and recipients of God's grace. Their affection one for the other grew out of the fact that they both had received the great gift of salvation from the same source - the heart of God. What draws people together more closely - regardless of their individual interests - than the fact of their brotherhood in Christ? They who are aware that they share the same gift from the same source, share the same affection. That affection grows.

Be thankful that you are not alone in the Christian life!

IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS!  
INTRODUCTION

2. Philippians 1:12-14 Thankful for God's Providence during Trials

Be thankful that God providently watches over you, and can use you to witness regardless of your circumstance. Paul's imprisonment became Paul's opportunity for unprecedented witnessing to unlikely persons - Roman guards! His prison became his pulpit! His captive audience was Roman soldiers who were chained to Paul's wrists all day long! Paul recognized that God providently allowed him to be in Roman custody in order that he might boldly preach the Gospel to Gentile pagans!

His preaching in prison resulted in advancing the Gospel (v.12), and in inspiring timid believers to witness (v.13,14).

Be thankful that God can use any of your experiences - good or bad - to advance the cause of Christ and to encourage the lives of other Christians! Be thankful that God can enable you to get the best out of the worst! If Paul's prison experience resulted in Roman pagans being converted, in timid Christians being encouraged, and in the Gospel message being spread, what do you suppose your "prison" experiences could result in? Look up and be thankful for God's providence during trials.

3. Philippians 1:15-18 Thankful for the Gospel's Proclamation amidst rivalry

There were those in Paul's day who were jealous of Paul's success in the ministry. Jealousy is terrible. There were other preachers who wanted to take advantage of Paul's prison confinement. Perhaps with Paul now in prison, they could get more attention, and Paul less attention!

But how does Paul react? "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in that I rejoice." (v.18)

Paul was so big-hearted that he was not concerned in his own reputation or success. As long as Christ was being preached, the power of God was being released, which power could change lives! Paul overlooked the rivalries and centered his attention on Christ.

We too, in an age of unfortunate rivalries within the total church of Christ between different branches of Christianity, must keep our focus on the Unifying and Powerful Christ, not on our petty differences. We must "major on the Major" - Christ - and we must "minor in the minors" - our individual doctrinal differences. The success of one branch of Christianity must be seen as the success of all the branches of Christianity. When one part of the body of Christ suffers, we must realize that the entire body suffers. There is no place for carnal strife between Christians. Let's maintain the distinctive parts, but let us love all the parts and rejoice with those parts who rejoice and weep with those parts that weep.

Yes, there are differences in the parts. For instance, there are the Fundamentalists who are exclusive and who believe that only the King James' Bible should be used in the churches. There are the Dispensationalists who believe that all of Scripture and history must be divided into eras of time, with strong views on the millennium. They tend to judge others who don't believe in strict millennial viewpoints. There are the Conservatives who are known for their stand against worldliness and separation from worldly practices and dress. They tend to judge others who don't agree on their standards for dress, entertainment, etc. There are the Non-denominational churches who tend to look down on the main-line denominational churches. Some go so far as to

## IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS! INTRODUCTION

say that denominationalism is anti-Biblical! There are the Calvanistic churches who tend to judge anyone who does not believe in the doctrine, popularly known as "once-saved-always-saved". There are the Wesleyan-Arminians who strongly teach the holiness doctrine of entire sanctification and the second work of grace. They tend to judge churches that don't emphasize this important doctrine. There are the Pentecostals who emphasize the gift of tongues before the experience of being filled with the Spirit can be claimed! There are the Charismatics who emphasize the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially miracles, healings, and tongues. Some charismatics go so far as to teach that all Christians are meant to be healed. Say they, if you are not healed it only means that you don't have sufficient faith to be healed or that you have unconfessed sin in your life. Thus, an "absolutism" position on healing leads to bondage in the lives of many Christians!

But, in spite of all the differences of belief and emphasis between the various branches of Christianity, we must, like Paul, rejoice that God's Gospel is being proclaimed. Proclaimed in spite of differences, competition, and even rivalry! This is not to say that the rivalry is right or that needless divisions in the church can be justified. It is to say that there is reason to rejoice and be thankful that the Gospel of Christ's saving power is being proclaimed and that lives are being changed! God honors the truth about Christ and His saving power, regardless of who proclaims it and in spite of the spirit in which it is proclaimed. Regardless of the character of the ones who open the floodgates, the water can heal the parched soil!

Be thankful with Paul, and look beyond the differences between the churches to the Christ of the church! Can you say: "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in that I rejoice."

#### 4. Philippians 1:19-26 Thankful for the Promise of a fruitful life on Earth and the Prospects of a glorious life in heaven

Remember, you are a winner however you look at it - to live is Christ and Christian service; to die is Christ and heaven's greater glory! So, Christians can be thankful for a hopeful future. To serve Christ is to be a winner. No way can you lose when you're loving Christ and loving others. You can be thankful for a life on Earth that is meaningful and fulfilling and fruitful. You can be thankful for a life with God in heaven after you die!

#### 5. Philippians 1:27-30 Thankful for Perseverance amidst Persecution

Those who live for God will suffer some form of persecution! No doubt about it! But you can be thankful for the possibility of steadfastness and confidence in the midst of persecution from opponents. The Christian need not be afraid of his opponents. The Christian is to be united with fellow Christians, striving together to spread the good news of Christ and His salvation.

**IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS!  
INTRODUCTION**

6. Philippians 2:1-11 Thankful for Christ's Participation in human redemption

Be thankful for the fact that Jesus emptied Himself. Notes Barclay, "The Greek is the verb kenoun which means literally to empty. It can be used of removing things from a container, until there is nothing left. Here Paul uses the most vivid possible word to make clear the sacrifice of the Incarnation. The glory of divinity Jesus gave up willingly in order to become man. He emptied himself of His deity to take upon himself His humanity." (Daily Study Bible; Philippians; pg.36)

Without Christ's humiliation and death, there could be no human redemption. So, give thanks for Christ's emptying of Himself to become a man.

7. Philippians 2:12-13 Thankful for your Personal Potential for greatness through God's Grace

I want you to try to guess who the following description describes. "I can truly say, and in saying it I magnify the infinite grace of God as bestowed upon him, that I have seen few persons whose minds were spiritually darker than was his when he came into my Sunday school class; and I think the committee of the Mount Vernon Church seldom met an applicant for membership more unlikely ever to become a Christian of clear and decided views of gospel truth, still less to fill any extended sphere of public usefulness."

That is a description written by Edward Kimball, describing D.L. Moody, whom Kimball won to Christ!

As a boy, D.L. Moody attended a meeting and heard someone say "It remains to be seen what God can do if He can find a man who will completely surrender to Him!" Moody determined to be that man!

God can take a most ordinary person and make him into a most extraordinary person by divine grace!

Be thankful for what God can do in and through you! How exciting to know that the beginning, the process, and the end of salvation is of God. God is the Initiator, Worker, and the Completer of man's salvation. God is at work in you and intends to complete in you the divine work that He has begun in you!

8. Philippians 2:14-18 Thankful for the Possibility of Purity in the midst of a Perverse generation

The possibilities of God's grace should always cause us to rejoice and be thankful! Even though you are born in sin and even though you have many times chosen to sin, the grace of God that saves is greater than the sin of man that condemns!

The God who is holy has called you to be holy, and the God who calls you to be holy will make you holy! In contrast to the world's perverse and impure behavior (v.15), you can be wholesome and pure! You can never be faultless (i.e., without mistakes), but you can be blameless (i.e., without impurity and deception). You can be innocent in the midst of a guilt-ridden society! You can be sincere and pure in motive and desires! Your sole motive can be to please God! You can fulfill the purpose for which you were created, fitting into the will of God for your life!

"Purity is to will one thing", said Kierkegaard. You can be so single-minded in your love and loyalty to God, that you too can even rejoice if you are required, like Paul, to "pour out" your own life upon the altar of sacrifice to God!

**IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS!  
INTRODUCTION**

9. Philippians 2:19-30 Thankful for the Practical Service of fellow workers

Just as Paul's heart abounded with thanksgiving for his personal and loyal friends and fellow workers, so your heart has reason to rejoice when your fellow workers demonstrate loyalty and faithfulness!

Timothy was interested in the well-being of others. He was not self-absorbed or self-centered. He looked after other people's interests, not merely his own interests! No one is more faithful to Paul during Paul's hardship than Timothy! "But you know how Timothy has proved his worth, working with me for the gospel like a son with his father." (2:22)

I am very grateful for my co-laborers in the church - the Sunday school teachers, the Timothy workers, the Trustees, the stewards and several others!

Be thankful for friends and supporters in your life. Thank God for those like Timothy and Epaphroditus! They are God's rare gifts to you!

10. Philippians 3:1-11 Thankful for Personal Participation by faith in the powerful person of Christ

Be thankful that you can know Christ by faith. You do not have to achieve your salvation by your own works of righteousness! You are saved by grace, not by your own works. It is not your racial heritage or your religious performance that can save you, but commitment to Christ as your personal and only Saviour!

Count everything else as loss! Abandon any hope for salvation outside of Christ! Know that when you gain Christ, you gain everything - even resurrection from the dead! Death has no power over you when you place your entire faith in Jesus, for Jesus is Life! Jesus has broken the power of sin and destroyed death! Put your faith in the resurrected Lord, and spend your life in gratitude and thanksgiving!

11. Philippians 3:12-21 Thankful for the Heavenly Prize of Perfect redemption through Christ Jesus

Be thankful that your knowledge of God (3:10) will be complete at the time of your bodily resurrection (3:11,21).

Be thankful that your spiritual race in life leads to a glorious goal - heavenly fellowship with the Father through the resurrection! Total redemption means not only salvation of our souls but resurrection of our bodies! Your lowly body will be changed to be like Christ's glorious body (3:21).

Until that time of full redemption comes, you are to keep striving to serve Christ (v.13). Keep pressing on toward the goal (v.14)! Hold true to present spiritual attainments (v.16). Don't backslide! Keep your eyes on your heavenly goal! Don't set your mind on Earthly things for you are a citizen of heaven (v.19,20). Take the way of the Cross (v.18), and not the way of self-centered indulgence and sin (v.19). If you are faithful to your Lord, you will someday attain to your heavenly goal!

**IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS!  
INTRODUCTION**

12. Philippians 4:1-7 Thankful for the Power of Prayer to protect and to provide for the trusting believer

As Christians you and I are subject to problems and perplexities externally in relationships (v.2,3), and internally in emotions (v.4-7).

Prayer and love are the answers in solving external conflicts between fellow believers, and in alleviating internal anxiety in believers' hearts.

You can be thankful that "the Lord is at hand", the Lord is near you at all times (v.5)! God's peace is able to keep your heart and mind free from conflict and anxiety! You are always to feel free to make your requests known to God, and in doing so, always be thankful. God loves you so much that He commands you to resort to prayer (which leads to peace) rather than to resort to worry (which leads to distress and trouble)!

13. Philippians 4:8-9 Thankful for the Productive Results of Positive Pondering on the Good

As a man thinks, so is he! Ponder the positive things of life and you become a productive and positive and peaceful person! As you fix your mind on the positive and model your life after positive people, you can be guaranteed of a peaceful and productive life!

Be always thankful for the opportunity to meditate on the true and honorable and just and pure and lovely thoughts of life. Be thankful for those persons in your life whose character you can admire and emulate! Be thankful for Christ-like models that surround your life!

14. Philippians 4:10-13 Thankful for God's steadfast provisions amidst changing Circumstances

One of the greatest discoveries of life is to discover that God takes care of you in times of plenty and also in times of poverty. You can be thankful that, although circumstances around you change, you are serving a changeless God. God can keep you humble during prosperity and encouraged during poverty. In plenty or in want, God is with you! You can trust God to care for you uniquely in your unique circumstance. Complacency is the temptation in times of plenty, and covetousness is the temptation in times of poverty. God will deliver you from both temptations! You can do all things in Christ Jesus (v.13). You can rejoice and be thankful to a God who always provides, regardless of your changing circumstances! You need not be a slave to circumstances. Through Christ you can master your circumstances! That's good news in an age of economic uncertainty!

15. Philippians 4:14-23 Thankful for Pleasing Presents from thoughtful Friends

Are you, like Paul, thankful for the "Philippian" friends in your life who are unusually thoughtful of your needs? Many there were who knew Paul but "no church entered into partnership in giving and receiving except (Philippians) only." (v.15) There are doubtless many who know you and me, but there are only a few in our lives who know us so well and love us so deeply to enter into partnership with us in giving and receiving in depth (v.15). Who can take the place of parents or children or close friends in your life? Will you offer

**IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS!  
INTRODUCTION**

special thanks to God for them? The love they have shown to you is both pleasing to you and is pleasing to God. Be thankful for their special gifts of love to you! The gifts they send to you are like "a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God." (v.18) Give thanks to those who love you the most (v.15) and give glory for ever and ever to God the Father (v.20)!

TO

Edgar Holmes and Josephine Humphreys,  
my Pastor and Pastor's Wife during my  
teenage years, who taught me to "cast  
my burdens on the Lord" and to live a  
life of joy, this book is affectionately  
dedicated.

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LIVING THE LIFE OF JOY!

**CHAPTER 1**

**AFFECTIONATE PARTNERSHIP  
IN THE GOSPEL**



## CHAPTER 1

SUBJECT: AFFECTIONATE PARTNERSHIP IN THE GOSPEL

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 1:1-9

TEXT: "I thank my God...for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now." (Philippians 1:3,5)

INTRODUCTION: The epistle of Philippians has been called "The Epistle of Excellent Things" and more specifically "The Epistle of Joy". The words "joy" and "rejoice" are used sixteen times in this short epistle.

### OUTLINE:

#### I. PAUL'S SALUTATION (v.1-2)

- A. From Whom (v.1a)
- B. To Whom (v.1b)
- C. Salutatory Blessing (v.2)

#### II. PAUL'S AFFECTION

- A. Motivation - Past Remembrance (v.3)
- B. Manifestation - Joyful Prayer (v.4,5)
- C. Confidence - God will make your lives fit for offering to Christ when He comes (v.6).
- D. Meaning - Not passing affection but growing affection (v.7).
- E. Type of Affection - (v.8)

### CONCLUSION:

Paul was an affectionate man but his affection was borne out of his relationship to Christ. Paul was a love-slave of Jesus Christ; a holy man separated unto total service to God and man. Paul discovered the Fatherly, forgiving love of God which Paul described as "grace". Paul experienced the reconciliation of God, the benefits of which he described in terms of "peace".

It was this kind of man who experienced real affection for the Philippian believers. Partnership in the furtherance of the Gospel, both in his past and present, caused his life to be filled with gratitude. His gratitude for them found expression in joyful prayer, and confident expectation. Paul's affection grew and grew through his partnership with the Philippians in God's grace, in increased labors, and in courageous suffering. Paul was an affectionate partner in the Gospel.

## AFFECTIONATE PARTNERSHIP IN THE GOSPEL

TEXT: "I thank my God... for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now." (Philippians 1:3, 5)

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 1:1-8

### INTRODUCTION:

The epistle of Philippians was written by Paul and is one of the greatest letters ever written. It has been called 'The Epistle of Excellent Things' for in it we find writings about some of the greatest things of life. For instance, in chapter one we find much valuable information concerning the Gospel:

- |                                   |           |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| (1) Partnership in Gospel         | (v. 3-8)  |
| (2) Purpose of the Gospel         | (v. 9-11) |
| (3) Penetration of the Gospel     | (v.12-14) |
| (4) Proclamation of the Gospel    | (v.15-18) |
| (5) Personification of the Gospel | (v.19-26) |
| (6) Power of the Gospel           | (v.27-30) |

In chapter two there is a discussion of one of the most excellent subjects known to man - the subject of Humility;

- |                            |           |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| (1) Practice of Humility   | (v. 1-4)  |
| (2) Perfection of Humility | (v. 5-11) |
| (3) Power of Humility      | (v.12-13) |
| (4) Picture of Humility    | (v.14-18) |
| (5) Proof of Humility      | (v.19-30) |

Other 'Excellent Things' in the book that can be mentioned are:

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| (1) Prayer           | (6) Future Things   |
| (2) Love             | (7) Person & Work of Jesus Christ   |
| (3) Christian Growth | (8) God's Grace   |
| (4) Providence       | (9) Christ's Coming   |
| (5) Holy Spirit      | (10) The Relationship between<br>Perfection & Imperfection in<br>a Believer's Life. |

The epistle has also been called more specifically 'The Epistle of Joy'. This is understandable for the words 'joy' and 'rejoice' are used sixteen times in this short epistle. A prime example: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice." (4:4)

Paul, a man who understood the excellent things of life and a man who was filled with the joy of his Lord, had the capacity to be a friend of friends to people. His friendship and affection was genuine and deep. Paul's letter to his Philippian friends can rightfully be called a love letter. Paul's love was not mere sentimentalism, but was a combination of deep emotional and rational love - a love and affection patterned after Christ's love.

## AFFECTIONATE PARTNERSHIP IN THE GOSPEL

### PROPOSITION:

The whole epistle is filled with the fragrance of this love and affection. Found in the very beginning lines of his letter is a wonderful picture of Paul's affection and love for his friends. Let us look at his communication of affection, and from this learn what the true meaning of affection is within the life of the Church.

### I. PAUL'S SALUTATION (v.1-2)

#### A. FROM WHOM (v.1a)

Paul called himself a servant of Jesus Christ. As such he was saying that he was a love-slave of Christ. A slave in the ancient world had no rights of his own. His will must be the will of the owner. Strict obedience was expected of him. Loyalty and service to the master was his life. So it is with a true believer. His will is Christ's will. He is sold out to God, and service and obedience to God is his way of life.

When Paul called himself a servant of God, he was calling himself the same distinguished title as that of the Old Testament prophets. Paul's distinction is found in his identification with the prophetic succession. Paul considered himself a true prophet and messenger of God.

#### B. TO WHOM (v.1b)

When Paul addressed the Philippians as Saints, he was using the same word that we get the word 'holy' from. The 'holy' man or 'saint' is defined by definition as a separated man. Separated from what? Separated from worldly practices that do not contribute to God's glory. Separated from selfish indulgence. A believer is no longer living for self but for God and others. Separated from a life of rigid legalism. Paul talks much of God's grace in contrast to law. The believer is one who is not living a life of cold and calculating law, but rather a life of warm and joyous love.

A believer is not merely separated from something, but a believer is separated to something. And that something is a Person: "To all the saints in Christ Jesus." No one can read Paul's letter without seeing how often the phrases 'in Christ', 'in Christ Jesus', 'in the Lord' occur. In the letters the phrase 'in Christ Jesus' occurs forty-eight times, 'in Christ' thirty-four times and 'in the Lord' fifty times. Clearly to be 'in Christ' was for Paul the very essence of Christianity. What did he mean? Marvin R. Vincent says that when Paul spoke of the Christian being In Christ, he meant that the Christian lives in Christ as a bird in the air, a fish in the water, the roots of a tree in the soil. (Barclay's Phil. pg. 14)

#### C. SALUTATORY BLESSING (v.2)

The combined use of 'grace' and 'peace' is most interesting. The word from which 'grace' is translated is the normal Greek greeting. The word from which 'peace' is translated is the normal Hebrew greeting.

'Grace' means charm and true charm is that delightful and beautiful quality in life which is brought about through the discovery that God's nature is Fatherly love. Charm is a product of God's love, not God's law. Law depresses; love releases. The charming person is the person who is captured by

## AFFECTIONATE PARTNERSHIP IN THE GOSPEL

God's Fatherly love. When Paul says 'Grace to you' he is saying: 'May you life be charming, beautiful, winsome, and joyful through your discovery of God's Fatherly love.'

'Peace' means not merely absence of trouble, but positively it means the presence in one's life of those elements that contribute to the total well-being of man. Paul well knew that the total well-being of man depended upon reconciliation with God. The reconciled man, negatively-speaking, is delivered from the bondage of sin, and positively-speaking, is given the abundant life and resources of God. When Paul says, 'peace to you' he could well be saying: 'May you enjoy all the abundant resources of God's life which will contribute to your total well-being, in virtue of your reconciled relationship with God.'

Grace and charm come through discovery of God's Fatherly love, and peace and well-being come through reconciliation to God. What a beautiful salutatory blessing! To wish grace and peace for a person is to wish the best that God has to offer man.

### II. PAUL'S AFFECTION

We view next a very beautiful description of true Christian affection.

#### A. MOTIVATION - PAST REMEMBRANCE (v.3)

"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you." Paul thought of all his experiences connected with the Philippian Church.

He probable thought of the circumstances connected with the founding of the Philippian Church, and we know of some of those circumstances. Look briefly at the origin of the Philippian Church (Acts 16). "It began with vision (v.9), vitality (v.11-12), a visit (v.12-13), a victory (v.14-15), and with violence (v.16-24)." (Paul Fedena; Sermon Builder; August 1970; pg. 10)

Paul's initial encounters at Philippi resulted in conversions from all classes of society;

- (1) Lydia - equivalent to merchant prince - seller of purple - upper class
- (2) Slave girl - considered a living tool - lower class
- (3) Roman jailer - member of the sturdy Roman middle-class from which the civil service was drawn. (Barclay)

Paul probably thought of the character of the church. He thought of the love of the church that gave unity amidst the various types and classes of people represented in the church. He perhaps thought of the obedient attitude of the Philippian believers. In fact Paul later in the letter writes, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence." (2:12a) Paul doubtless thought of the liberality of the Philippians, as expressed to himself as well as to others. In fact, one reason for Paul writing the letter was to express thanks for a recent gift which was sent to Paul by the Philippian Church.

It is recognized that "there had grown up between Paul and the Philippian Church a bond of friendship closer than that which existed between him and any other Church." (Barclay Phil pg.66) All the rich experiences which Paul had in the past with the Philippian Church came flooding back into Paul's mind. As Paul remembered those experiences, gratitude and affection welled up in his heart.

## AFFECTIONATE PARTNERSHIP IN THE GOSPEL

### B. MANIFESTATION - JOYFUL PRAYER (v.4,5)

Paul manifested his affection in a concrete way: "always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy." (v.4) One of the greatest things Paul felt he could do for those he loved was to pray for them. Many times in his letters he mentions to his friends that he is praying for them. Paul loved his friends, therefore he prayed for them. Paul prayed for his friends, therefore he loved them more and more. Prayer is both the manifestation of love and the quickener for love.

Paul says he mentioned them 'always in every prayer.' Paul's life was a life of prayer and because he prayed for his friends in every prayer, Paul's life can also be said to be a life of affection. Paul did not forget any; he prayed for 'all.' The attitude with which he prayed is significant; 'making my prayer with joy.' Prayer, to Paul, was not obligation or drudgery but delightful and joyful. The Philippians brought much joy to Paul's heart, and therefore to pray for them was a sheer joy.

Do you have affection for fellow believers? If so, then one great way to manifest that affection is to consistently pray for all of those believers all of the time, and pray with a spirit of delight and joy. Do you have deep affection for your fellow believers? If so, you will daily pray for them in the spirit of joy. I need the prayers of those I love. Can you say to all: "For you I am praying, I'm praying for you'?

### C. CONFIDENCE - GOD WILL MAKE YOUR LIVES FIT FOR OFFERING TO CHRIST WHEN HE COMES (v.6)

The point of this passage is debated but it appears to say this: 'The God whose grace motivated and enabled you to make an initial sacrifice to Christ, is the same God whose grace will enable you to develop a beautifully consecrated life, the quality of which will be worthy to present to Jesus Christ when He comes.' Paul saw in the lives of the Philippians some beautiful qualities which needed to be perfected and developed. Paul, out of a heart overflowing with affection, expresses great confidence in the future of the Philippians. The present qualities of love, liberality, obedience, and service will continue to deepen and mature, producing a character that will be fit to offer to Christ on that great Day of His appearance.

An element of true affection is confidence - confidence in God's grace and confidence in the person who has become the recipient of God's grace. Do you have true affection for a fellow believer? Then you have confidence in him that he will become more and more like Jesus Christ.

Paul had confidence that the experience of the Philippians would not be short-lived, but that it would deepen. He believed that time and circumstances could not destroy the spiritual life which he found operating in the lives of the Philippians. Their experience could 'stand the test of time.'

Jesus told the Parable of the Four Soils to illustrate that there would be a harvest to those laborers who would not grow weary in well-doing. He told this parable to encourage the disciples not to give up and to assure them that there would be a great harvest. Even though there would be some soils that would prove to be unfruitful, there would be one soil that would be good and that would produce a good future harvest.

Paul believed in a future harvest in the congregation at Philippi. There may be those whose lives would eventually prove to be barren or unproductive, but there were many lives which he believed would prove to be most productive. Paul believed that the work which God had begun, that He would continue until the Day of Final Redemption.

## AFFECTIONATE PARTNERSHIP IN THE GOSPEL

The Christian life is a process and thus one must have confidence that the future is bright with the prospects of God's promises being fulfilled. The best is yet to be. What appears as slow progress is working for quality growth.

Writes E. Stanley Jones: "The best that I can say about myself is that I'm a Christian-in-the-making. Not yet 'made', but only in the making at eighty-three. And I'm glad I am not 'made', for there is joy and anticipation in 'being made'. ...Every stage of being is a stage of becoming. It is open-ended...I have been ascending, am ascending, and shall forever be ascending. I believe that heaven is a place of growth, the finite forever approaching the infinite but never becoming that infinite." (Song of Ascents; pg. 17,18)

Paul was patient and expectant as he looked at the progress of the Philippian Christians. Notes E. Stanley Jones; "Knowing that Jesus accepted me with all my imperfections made it easier to accept others with all their imperfections. It saved me from 'perfectionism' in regard to myself and others. The 'perfectionists' are always tense and anxious about their own imperfections and the imperfections of others. They cannot get along with themselves or with others. They are demanding the impossible and getting the possible - with disappointment!

"Jesus was patient with and hopeful for the weak and the faltering and the sinful. And yet he did not compromise with and accommodate himself to their imperfections and sins.

"Someone asked a Negro minister, pastor of a growing and dynamic church, how he accomplished it, he replied, 'I hold a crown a few inches above my peoples' heads and watch them grow into it.'" (Ibid; 39)

### D. MEANING - NOT PASSING AFFECTION BUT GROWING AFFECTION (v.7)

Paul's affection is a growing affection, not a passing, fluctuating sentimentalism. Says Paul, "I hold you in my heart." How and why does this affection grow? "For you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel." (v.7b) Partnership produces fellowship and fellowship breeds deepening affection for one another in the fellowship.

Paul and the Philippians were common partners and recipients of God's grace. Their affection one for the other grew out of the fact that they both had received the great gift of salvation from the same source - the heart of God. What draws people together more closely - regardless of their individual interests - then the fact of their brotherhood in Christ? They who are aware that they share the same gift from the same source, share the same affection. That affection grows.

Paul and the Philippians are also partners in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. The defense of the gospel refers to defending the gospel against the enemies of Christ. One purpose of studying the Word is to know the reason for the hope that lies within you and to know how rightly to divide the Word. Those who become partners in this pursuit naturally grow in affection one for the other.

Partners in the confirmation of the Gospel are those whose mutual purpose is to edify the church through the teaching of the Word. To confirm the power of the Gospel is to see the gospel incarnated in the lives of people. Those who are partners in this pursuit grow in affection one for the other.

The meaning of affection is found not only in the partnership of grace and the partnership of work, but also in the partnership of suffering. Paul had

## AFFECTIONATE PARTNERSHIP IN THE GOSPEL

opponents and so did the Philippian Christians, but Paul reminded them in their persecutions that they had many partners and thus were members of a great and noble company. "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in Him but also suffer for his sake." (1:29) Partnership in suffering increases affection.

### E. TYPE OF AFFECTION (v.8)

Paul's affection was the deepest kind: "the affection of Christ Jesus." Paul's secret to great living was the indwelling Christ. Because Paul was totally given over to Christ - Christ's love-slave (v.1) - therefore whatever Christ willed, Paul willed. Christ will love for all men; there Paul willed love for all men. Paul's ability to love was God-inspired. Paul could love others greatly because he loved Christ greatly. Christ in a man enables that man to love the same ones that Christ loves - all men.

### CONCLUSION:

Paul was an affectionate man but his affection was borne out of his relationship to Christ. Paul was a love-slave of Jesus Christ; a holy man separated unto total service to God and man. Paul discovered the Fatherly, forgiving love of God which Paul described as 'grace.' Paul experienced the reconciliation of God, the benefits of which he described in terms of 'peace.'

It was this kind of man who experienced real affection for the Philippian believers. Partnership in the furtherance of the Gospel, both in his past and present, caused his life to be filled with gratitude. His gratitude for them found expression in joyful prayer, and confident expectation. Paul's affection grew and grew through his partnership with the Philippians in God's grace, in increased labors, and in courageous suffering. Paul was an affectionate partner in the Gospel.

## AFFECTIONATE PARTNERSHIP IN THE GOSPEL

### DISCUSSION:

1. Why is the letter of Paul to the Philippians sometimes called 'The Epistle of Excellent things? Why can the Book of Philippians rightfully be called 'a love letter'?
2. What is the basic topic that is covered in chapter one of Philippians? What is the main theme of chapter two of Philippians?
3. In terms of attitudes and actions, what are the distinguishing characteristics of a 'servant of Jesus Christ' (Phil. 1:1)?
4. When believers (like as in the case of the Philippian believers, 1:1) are called 'saints', what does this title mean, in terms of 'separation'?
5. What does it mean for a believer to be 'in Christ Jesus'?
6. When Paul says "Grace to you" and "Peace to you" (v.2), what is he really saying he desires for the Philippian believers?
7. What motivated Paul to have such unusual affection in his heart for the Philippian believers (v.3)? What characteristics in the lives of the Philippian believers did Paul likely admire and appreciate? Do you notice some of these same characteristics in the lives of believers in the church where you worship?
8. From what classes in society were converts initially made, when Paul went to minister in the city of Philippi (Acts 16)?
9. Give your interpretation of the following statement (from the chapter) "Prayer is both the manifestation of love and the quickener of love." Is it true that the greater you love a person the more you will pray for that person? (v.4,5) Should prayer for others be an 'obligation and drudgery', or should prayer be a 'delight and joy'? (Note v.4) Why is prayer, for most Christians, such a drudgery rather than a delight?
10. Give your interpretation of Philippians 1:6. What were the present qualities in the lives of the newly-converted Philippians which Paul believed would eventually be perfected with time and through growth?
11. Do you personally agree with and identify with E. Stanley Jones' statement: "The best that I can say about myself is that I'm a Christian-in-the-making."?
12. Is it possible to feel a deep affection for a fellow believer without, at the same time, expressing a great confidence in that person? Do you have confidence that God's grace is sufficient to enable your fellow believers to remain faithful to God, to 'stand the test of time and trials'? (How does your understanding of Jesus' Parable of the 'Four Soils' (Mt. 13:1-23) influence your answer to the above question?

## AFFECTIONATE PARTNERSHIP IN THE GOSPEL

13. How does the attitude of 'perfectionism' hinder one who is seeking to help faltering believers? Why is the quality of patience with people so important in the life of the Christian worker?
14. Illustrate from your own personal life the truth of the following statement (based on v.7): Partnership produces fellowship, and fellowship breeds deepening affection for one another in the fellowship." Do you agree with the following statement: "They who are aware that they share the same gift from the same source, share the same affection."
15. What does it mean to be "partners in the defense and confirmation of the Gospel" (v.7)?
16. What are three types of partnerships which fellow believers are involved in, the result of which is deepening affection for one another? What phrase (v.8) best describes the deepest kind of affection that one believer can have for another believer? Do you agree that the following statement clearly explains the reason Paul's affection for fellow believers was so great: "Paul could love others greatly because he loved Christ greatly."?



LIVING THE LIFE OF JOY!

**CHAPTER 2**

**GETTING THE BEST  
OUT OF THE WORST!**



## CHAPTER 2

SUBJECT: GETTING THE BEST OUT OF THE WORST!

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 1:12-18

TEXT: "I want you to know, brethren, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel." (Philippians 1:12)

INTRODUCTION: Can you and I say that whatever happens to us - be it good or bad - really serves to advance the gospel? Paul's imprisonment in Rome - far from being an obstacle - actually served to cut away the obstacles in order that the Gospel might advance.

OUTLINE:

- I. ROMAN PAGANS CONVERTED (v.13)
- II. TIMID CHRISTIANS ENCOURAGED (v.14)
- III. GOSPEL MESSAGE SPREAD (v.15-18)

CONCLUSION: Paul mastered his circumstances. Everything bad that came to Paul - illness, sorrow, temptation, loss, imprisonment - was turned into good. Paul was the conqueror. Of his imprisonment he wrote, "I want you to know, brethren, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the Gospel." We, too, can be masterful persons! We, too, can get the best out of the worst!

## GETTING THE BEST OUT OF THE WORST!

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 1:12-18

TEXT: "I want you to know, brethren, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel." (1:12)

### INTRODUCTION:

Can you and I say that whatever happens to us - be it good or bad - really serves to advance the gospel? "A gracious Christian lady said to another: 'I know you dislike being ill. But I find the only thing to do is to get something out of every experience that comes to me. So make your illness give you something.'" (Abundant Living; pg. 388) Can illness give you something? It can give you an appreciation of good health, and appreciation for those who help you during your illness, and a sympathy for those who endure a similar illness. Can sorrow give you something? It can draw you closer to God and let you experience, as never before, the comforting presence of God which shall in turn enable you to be a better comforter of other sorrowing people. Can financial loss give you something? It can give you a better realization of the perishability and unreliability of material things and make you value the permanent and eternal possessions of life more. Can temptation give you something? By resisting the Devil and finding victory over temptation, you can come out a stronger and more mature Christian. Can loneliness give you something? It can give you time to pray and learn to cultivate a sense of God's constant abiding presence, and it can give you opportunity to meditate without the distractions which being in a group brings.

Can an undeserved imprisonment give you something? Paul answers that question very well. Paul was taken captive, in Jerusalem, because he was preaching the Gospel of Christ. An appeal was made to the Roman Emperor. Finally Paul was taken to Rome, but he waited two years before he was able to see the Emperor. What was Paul's condition during this period of waiting? It was not the severest type of imprisonment such as being put in a dungeon nor was it the mildest such as being "out on bail." Rather, "it was the middle form, in which the prisoner would have something to say about his abode but, wherever, would have to submit to being guarded day and night by the military." (Proclaiming the N.T. by Rees; pg. 24)

How did Paul use his experience of imprisonment? He got the best out of the worst! Few things could be worse for Paul than imprisoning him - Paul the Frontiersman for the Gospel - Paul the great Missionary Traveller! One might think that imprisonment would mean the end to Paul's missionary endeavors. Not so for Paul. Instead, his imprisonment gave him a new opportunity, a new sphere of activity. Says Paul, "I want you to know, brethren, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel." (1:12) "The word that Paul uses for the advancement, the furtherance of the gospel is a vivid word...This is the word which is specially used for the progress of an army or an expedition... It is the verb which is used for cutting away the trees and the undergrowth, and removing the barriers which would hinder the progress of an army; it is the word which is used for clearing away the obstacles which would hinder an advance." (Bar. Philippians; pg. 24,25)

## GETTING THE BEST OUT OF THE WORST!

PROPOSITION: Let us see how Paul's imprisonment - far from being an obstacle - actually served to cut away the obstacles in order that the Gospel might advance. Paul used what appeared to be the worst - his imprisonment - to serve the best - the advancement of the Gospel. Paul's imprisonment resulted in three things:

- (1) Roman pagans converted
- (2) Timid Christians encouraged
- (3) Gospel message spread.

### I. ROMAN PAGANS CONVERTED (v.13)

What is the Praetorian Guard of which Paul speaks in verse 12? "The Praetorian Guard were the Imperial Guard of Rome. they had been instituted by Augustus, and they were a body of ten thousand picked troops... They served for twelve, and later sixteen years. At the end of their term they received the citizenship and a grant of more than 250 pounds. In the end they became very nearly the Emperor's private bodyguard...It was to the Prefect of Praetorian Guard, to their commanding officer, that Paul was handed over when he arrived in Rome." (Bar. Phil.;pg.26) Paul was chained by his wrist to a prison guard constantly, and of course there was a regular rotation of guardsmen who guarded Paul. What an opportunity Paul had to witness to these guards! Doubtless, as the long hours of each day passed, Paul go into long discussions with the guards about Jesus Christ. Many guards soon learned the reason for Paul's imprisonment. Although we don't know for sure, it is entirely possible that some of the prison guard - the 'cream of the crop' of the Roman army - found Christ as Saviour. We do know from Phil. 4:22 that there were saints in Caesar's household. Perhaps some of these choice guardsmen spread the message of the Gospel to the very household of Caesar!

Far from the Gospel being hindered through Paul's imprisonment, it was spread among a group of Roman soldiers which may never have been reached with the Gospel if Paul had not been imprisoned for his faith. As one put it, Paul's bonds destroyed the barriers to the Gospel!

This same experience has been repeated many times over. Jacob DeShazer became a prisoner in a Japanese prison during World War II. As a non-Christian at first, he was deeply embittered and hateful to the Japanese. He got ahold of a Bible one day which in turn got ahold of him, and Jacob DeShazer was marvelously converted. His whole attitude towards the Japanese was changed and instead of expressing hate, he expressed great love for the prison guards. The prison guards noticed such a change in his behavior, that they inquired into the reason for this drastic change. Jacob DeShazer's difficult imprisonment led to his own conversion which in turn opened a door of opportunity for presenting the Gospel to the very ones who imprisoned him!

### II. TIMID CHRISTIANS ENCOURAGED (v.14)

Paul speaks of another result of his imprisonment: "Then, it means that most of our brothers, somehow taking fresh heart in the Lord from the very fact that I am a prisoner for Christ's sake, have shown far more courage in boldly proclaiming the Word of God." (v.14) To see Paul's spirit which remained undampened by his imprisonment, gave a new boost to the courage of Paul's friends. "If Paul can be so bold of his adverse circumstances, should not we be bold to speak up for Christ in circumstances that are not nearly as bad?" they reasoned.

## GETTING THE BEST OUT OF THE WORST!

That same type of reasoning should apply to us as we look at fellow Christians in other parts of the world who are undergoing difficult experiences and yet remaining courageous and speaking boldly for Christ. Should not we speak up for Christ with equal boldness in a country where there is no threat to our lives for speaking out or convictions? The unashamed witness of the Underground Christians in Communist lands should inspire us to witness more boldly.

Think of the courageous missionaries who have given their lives for the Gospel. Some of you doubtless read of the five missionaries to the Auca Indians of Ecuador, all of whom were martyred by the Aucas while they attempted to reach them with the Gospel. One of the wives wrote, "Each of us (wives) knew when we married our husbands that there would never be any question about who came first - God and His work held first place in each life." (Through Gates of Splendor; pg.175) Immediately upon hearing of the death of her missionary husband, one of the missionary wives wrote these words in her diary, "Tonight the Captain told us of his finding four bodies in the river. One had tee-shirt and blue-jeans. Roj was the only one who wore them..."

God gave me this verse two days ago, Psalms 48:14, 'For this God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our Guide even unto death.' As I came face to face with the news of Roj's death, my heart was filled with praise. He was worthy of his homegoing. Help me, Lord, to be both Mummy and daddy. 'To know wisdom and instruction...' Tonight Beth prayed for daddy in Heaven, and asked me if daddy would come down from Heaven to get a letter she wanted to write him.. I said, 'He can't come down. He's with Jesus. She said, 'But Jesus can help him come down, and God will take his hand so he won't slip.' I wrote a letter to the mission family, trying to explain the peace I have. I want to be free of self pity. It is a tool of Satan to rot away a life. I am sure that this is the perfect will of God." (Ibid; 235,236)

If the wives of martyred missionaries can have such courage and gratitude, should not we, whose sacrifices are not nearly as great, be able to live with gratitude and take on new courage?

Should it not likewise be a source of encouragement to us, who grow so timid at times, to know that we are a part of a great and world-wide company of Christ's followers who are accomplishing great things for God in the world? We are not alone. There are millions who serve our same Christ. Should it not be a source of encouragement to us to know that Evangelism is advancing even in the high places? Many of the respected members of congress and high and influential officials are turning to Christ. Men of such noble Christian character as Norman Vincent Peals have appeared at the Presidential Prayer Breakfasts. Billy Graham has also spoken. Thousands are being reached with the Gospel through crusades, literature, T.V., and radio.

To show how our nation has felt the impact of the Gospel in an increasing way during the last few years, I quote from a man (Merv Rosell) who has closely followed the progress of the Billy Graham crusades. "During the New York City Crusade, Billy Graham urged me to remain (as his personal guest) for the Yankee Stadium Rally. I've known him since his youth, when first I had preached in his home church in Charlotte, North Carolina. Those were the days when evangelism was frowned upon and education was slated to 'save the world'. In those years a thousand was an amazing crowd and 'decisions' were counted in the dozens. Now, here I sat, next to the Vice President of the United States, watching the largest evangelistic assembly in American history crowded into Yankee Stadium to hear this sincere, humble and dedicated North Carolinian preacher proclaim the same simple Gospel truths his father believed a generation before him! By television and radio, all of the nation observed the

## GETTING THE BEST OUT OF THE WORST!

thousands who stood to acclaim Christ as Redeemer and Lord. My heart wept softly in the knowledge that, here and now, I could see and feel the NATIONAL IMPACT of the Gospel of Grace which two decades before had seemed so 'completely ridiculous' to my friends! God had again 'chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise...that no flesh should glory in his presence.'" (Shoe-Leather Faith; No.208)

Conservative evangelical Christianity is on the March! There are far more evangelical, Bible-believing radio and T.V. programs than liberal religious programs. Evangelical literature in the form of books and tracts is being spread by the millions and millions. Bible translations into new dialects are continuing to reach thousands of pagans in the far-flung reaches of the world. Truly, Christianity is on the march. Are you a part of the great onward march?

Paul's imprisonment encouraged Paul's timid Christian friends and caused them to declare the Gospel message more boldly. There are many factors today that should encourage faint-hearted Christians:

- (1) The great courage and success of the persecuted Underground Church in Communist lands.
- (2) The total commitments of missionaries, some of whom have joyfully laid down their lives for the Gospel.
- (3) The great advance of Evangelism through crusades, literature, T.V., and radio, reaching even the high places of government, etc.

Let us take new courage and be more bold in our proclamation of the Gospel of Christ.

### III. GOSPEL MESSAGE SPREAD (v.15-18)

As a result of Paul's imprisonment, the Gospel message was proclaimed with greater vigor than ever before. True, the motive of those who proclaimed it was mixed - some pure and some questionable - but at least the message was being spread. Says Paul, "I know that some are preaching Christ out of jealousy, in order to annoy me, but some are preaching out of their love for me. For they know that God has set me here in prison to defend our right to preach the Gospel. The motive of the former questionable - they preach in a partisan spirit, hoping to make my chains even more galling than they would otherwise be. But what does it matter? However they may look at it, the fact remains that Christ is being preached, whether sincerely or not, and that fact makes me very happy." (v.15-18)

The result of the imprisonment? Some sincerely, out of love for Paul, increased their efforts to spread the Gospel which was so dear to Paul. Others, whose motives in spreading the Gospel were mixed and hard to understand, appear to have increased their efforts to spread the Gospel hoping in the process to rob Paul of some of this popularity and take it to themselves. Jealousy seems to be their motive in spreading the Gospel. Paul realizing this, remained unruffled and actually rejoiced that they were increasing their labor at spreading the message, although their motives were wrong. Paul determined to let God judge the motives. All that Paul was interested in was the spread of the Gospel! God's word is powerful, even when preached from wrong motives. God is sovereign and will never let His Word return void unto Himself.

## GETTING THE BEST OUT OF THE WORST!

### CONCLUSION:

Paul mastered his circumstances. Everything bad that came to Paul - illness, sorrow, temptation, loss, imprisonment - was turned into good. Paul was the conqueror. Of his imprisonment he wrote, "I want you to know, brethren, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the Gospel." The Gospel was advanced since:

- (1) Roman pagans were converted,
- (2) Timid Christians were encouraged,
- (3) Gospel message was spread.

Be a masterful man. Get the best out of the worst!

## GETTING THE BEST OUT OF THE WORST!

### DISCUSSION:

1. Is it possible, through God's transforming grace, for you, as a believer, to derive some good out of every experience that you have in life? Can you illustrate, from your own personal life, how God enabled you to derive some good out of some rather painful episode which you have experienced? According to the chapter, how can illness, sorrow, financial loss, temptation, and loneliness be turned into beneficial and helpful experiences?
2. In what ways did God use Paul's prison experience in Rome for Paul's own good, for the good of others, and for God's glory? (Note Phil. 1:12-14) Can you think of times in your own life when God used what seemed to you as a 'prison experience' to bring glory to God and good to others or to yourself? (Meditate on the following statement: "When life hands me a 'lemon', I will learn to turn it into 'lemonade'.")
3. According to Philippians 4:22, there were 'saints' in Caesar's household. Do you think it is possible (or even likely) that Paul's prison experience in Rome was used by God to spread the Good News of the Gospel to 'Caesar's Household'? How?
4. How did Paul's bonds of imprisonment result in actually destroying the barriers to the Gospel?
5. How was Paul's prison experience used by the Lord to help embolden timid believers? Do you believe that one of the greatest needs in our world today is for the rising up of emboldened and courageous leaders (like Paul) whose fearless stand for truth will encourage weak and timid believers to take their stand for Christ and for righteousness? (Note Romans 1:16) Do you identify with the following stanzas?

"Rise up, O men of God!  
His Kingdom tarries long;  
Bring in the day of brotherhood  
And end the night of wrong."

"Dare to be a Daniel,  
Dare to stand alone,  
Dare to have a purpose firm,  
Dare to make it known!"

How should the unashamed and bold witness of the persecuted Underground Church in Communist lands inspire us (American believers) to witness more boldly? (Read Daniel 3).

6. How should the fact that each of us believers is a part of a world-wide company of believers, help motivate us to be more bold in our witness for Jesus?
7. What evidence can you point to that indicates that more and more people in 'high places' are turning to Christ (members in 'Caesar's Household)?

## GETTING THE BEST OUT OF THE WORST!

8. How is the magnanimous spirit of Paul revealed in his evaluation of the ministry of other preachers whose motives in preaching were questionable (Note Phil. 1:15-18)? What should be the proper attitudes among fellow preachers toward each other, when the ministries of these preachers are similar or identical? Is there evidence to indicate that far too many preachers (or Christian workers) are competitive instead of complementary (and complimentary) in their relationships to each other, as regards to Christian ministry? To what extent can God honor the ministries of jealous-ridden and competitively-oriented ministers?
9. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "God's Word is powerful, even when preached from wrong motives. God is sovereign and will never let His Word return void unto Himself."
10. Share from your personal experience (or from your observation of others) how you have learned to be a masterful person, how you have learned (through God's grace) to 'get the best out of the worst'.

LIVING THE LIFE OF JOY!

**CHAPTER 3**

**"I CAN'T HELP BUT WIN!"**



## CHAPTER 3

SUBJECT: "I CAN'T HELP BUT WIN!"

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 1:19-26

TEXT: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21)

INTRODUCTION: When Paul declared, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," he was in reality saying, "Life on this earth is good and life lived in heaven is even better. I have won both ways. In prison or out of prison, in life or death, Christ is all-sufficient, and in that I greatly rejoice. I am a winner any way you look at it." So the alternatives are not bitter alternatives but sweet alternatives.

### OUTLINE:

- I. DEEP DESIRE - "THAT I SHOULD HONOR CHRIST" (v.19,20)
  - A. By Confidence in God's Sovereignty
  - B. By Courage in Sacrificial Living
- II. DIFFICULT DILEMMA (v.21-23)
  - A. One Good Experience is Continuing to Live for Christ on Earth.
  - B. A Greater Experience is Departing This Life to Enjoy Christ's Closer Presence.
- III. DEFINITE DECISION (v.24-26)
  - A. Reasons For Decision
    1. Condition of God's Workers
    2. Conviction of God's Will
  - B. Result of Decision
    1. Rejoicing by workers because Paul will abide right beside them.
    2. Rejoicing by Paul because of his sense of worthwhileness.

CONCLUSION: Paul's supreme desire in life was to honor Christ, whether by life or by death. Paul's love for Christ was so great that he desired to depart and to be with Christ. Christ showed Paul that he was needed by his friends, and that to continue to live on Earth would bring greater glory to Christ at that present time. Paul "put duty before desire; responsibility before rest; service before satisfaction; help before heaven! It is possible to be so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good! Not so with Paul." (Paul Fedena)

Paul was a winner, however you look at it, because he had Christ and Christ had him. Paul was a masterful man because he was mastered by Christ. For to live was Christ (a glorious life) and to die was gain (gaining all of heaven - a more glorious life)!

## "I CAN'T HELP BUT WIN!"

TEXT: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 1:19-26

### INTRODUCTION:

When Paul declared, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," he was in reality saying, "As a Christian, I can't help but win!" Paul was saying, "Life lived on this earth is good and life lived in heaven is even better. I have won both ways. In prison or out of prison, in life or death, Christ is all-sufficient, and in that I greatly rejoice. I am a winner any way you look at it." So the alternatives are not bitter alternatives but sweet alternatives.

Paul Rees points out how different Paul's attitude towards life and death is, in comparison to the attitudes expressed by other men. Some would seek to choose between a dull existence on earth or (as they think) no existence after death. There is no alternative between existence and non-existence as some think. "Your Pauls, moved by utterly different considerations, are not found trying to weigh two sets of bitters against one another, but two sets of sweets. Life here, this side of death, is good; life there, on the other side of death, is better." (Proclaiming The N.T.; Paul Rees; pg.33)

### PROPOSITION:

Paul declared that life lived for Christ is a winning life, however you look at it. Let's look more carefully at Paul's reasons for coming to this conclusion.

#### I. DEEP DESIRE - "THAT I SHOULD HONOR CHRIST" (v.19,20)

Paul declares that it is his "eager expectation and hope that...Christ will be honored in my body." (v.20) The word from which we translate 'eager expectation' is such an unusual word that it may have been coined by Paul himself. It "means the eager, concentrated, intense look, which turns its gaze away from everything else to fix it on the one object of its desire." (Bar. Phil.;pg.32) The one object of Paul's desire was to please Jesus and to honor Him. This was Paul's life passion. How does Paul show that this desire is his all-consuming desire? There are two ways he shows this.

##### A. BY CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

Paul says (in KJV): "I know this will turn to my salvation." Paul is expressing confidence in God's salvation and the meaning of 'salvation' in this context means 'general well-being'. Paul is saying that he has such confidence in the power and goodness of God that what is presently happening to him, will turn out for the total good of his own soul. Paul does not doubt the goodness of God but firmly believes that all things worked together for God's glory and for his own good.

This confidence in God's sovereignty was strengthened and maintained through the prayers of his friends (v.19). Paul, during his difficult imprisonment, felt the wonderful support which the prayers of his friends gave

## "I CAN'T HELP BUT WIN!"

him, and this support kept him from doubting the goodness of God. This confidence in God's sovereignty was also maintained by the "help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." The visible presence of Jesus was not Paul's to enjoy, but the vital presence of Jesus through the Holy Spirit was very real to Paul, and it was this vital, indwelling presence of Jesus which help Paul steady during the trials of life and which gave Paul great confidence in God's goodness.

How can we maintain confidence in God's sovereignty during hard times and thus bring honor to Christ? The same way Paul did: "through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (v.19).

Paul's desire was that he should "not be at all ashamed" (v.20a) By this, Paul meant that he did not want to be found as a "deluded herald, a misguided enthusiast whose faith and witness have been shown to be false." (Ibid; pg.26) Because of the confidence which Paul had in God's sovereignty, he knew that he would not be deluded, shamed, or found false.

### B. BY COURAGE IN SACRIFICIAL LIVING

Paul further says that it is his earnest expectation and hope "that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death." (v.20) As Ellicott notes, Paul is saying, "My body will be the theatre in which Christ's glory is displayed." (Bar. Phil.;pg.32)

When Paul was using 'body', he was not thinking only of the fleshly house for his soul. He was thinking of his body's mind. As we have just seen, the attitude of Paul's mind was the attitude of confidence. "As a man thinketh so is he." Paul thought confidently and positively, therefore Paul was a confident and positive man. This brought honor to Christ.

When Paul sought to glorify Christ in his body, he sought to do it through his body's organ of speech - the tongue. When Paul spoke of boldness ("full courage" - v.20 RSV), he was thinking of fearlessly speaking out for Christ. J.B. Lightfoot writes, "The right of free speech is the badge, the privilege, of the servant of Christ," (Bar. Phil.;pg.32) The persecuted apostles of Christ in the book of Acts said that they could not help but speak what they had heard and seen. They had heard the voice of God and seen the glory of Christ, and felt compelled to share their experience with others. So it was with Paul. Paul, as God's servant, spoke with no lesser authority than the authority of God.

Paul realized that speaking out for Christ and manifesting Christ-like attitudes might mean physical death for him. This did not bother Paul however, for his one all-consuming desire was to honor Christ even if that meant physical death. It was his desire (eager expectation) to honor Christ in his body "whether by life or death." (v.20b)

Paul's deep desire was to honor Christ, and Paul did this in two ways:

- (1) By expressing confidence in God's sovereignty,
- (2) By expressing courage in sacrificial living.

The reason for Paul's desire to honor Christ was obviously Paul's great love for Christ. Paradoxically, this same great love which was expressed in terms of confidence and courage, was the same great love which presented Paul with a difficult dilemma!

## "I CAN'T HELP BUT WIN!"

### II. DIFFICULT DILEMMA (v.21-23)

Says Paul, in light of his great love for Christ, "For to me to love is Christ, and to die is gain. If it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labor, for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ for that is far better." (Phil. 1:21-23)

Paul is saying that he would, for his own sake, like to depart from this life and be with Christ in heaven but for the sake of his dear friends he would like to remain with them and help them. The difficult dilemma is not between two bitter experiences, but rather between two good experiences.

#### A. ONE GOOD EXPERIENCE IS CONTINUING TO LIVE FOR CHRIST ON EARTH.

Paul says, "For me to live is Christ." Christ was everything to Paul. Paul would no more think of living without Christ than a bird would think of living without the open air, or than a fish would think of living without water. Christ, to Paul, was the synonym to life. Without Christ there could be no life - only existence. Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." Paul enjoyed Christ's abundant life. Paul had no bitterness or despair because of his hardships - only rejoicing and sweetness.

Paul enjoyed sweet fellowship. To Paul, Christ was the originator of that fellowship, brought into being through the reconciling grace of God. Paul was "in Christ", therefore he enjoyed the constant abiding fellowship of Christ. Death would not sever him from that fellowship but only perfect that fellowship by ushering Paul into the nearer presence of Jesus.

Paul enjoyed fruitful labor. "If it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me." (v.22) Paul loved his work, for God gave success to his endeavors and thus gave Paul a deep sense of satisfaction and worthwhileness in life. One of the greatest rewards in Christian living is the satisfaction that comes from work well done for God.

Paul enjoyed life because of God's imparted strength. Paul confessed that he himself was weak, but that God gave him an all-sufficient strength to meet every challenge. Far from having a sense of futility in the face of overwhelming responsibilities, Paul confidently declared, "I can do all things in him who strengthens me." (Phil. 4:13)

Paul's desire to depart this life was not because he did not enjoy earthly living. Paul loved life, for life to Him was Christ. Every fiber in Paul's being was alive with the thrill of living for Christ. As one wrote,

"Heaven above is softer blue,  
Earth around is sweeter green;  
Something lives in every hue,  
Christless eyes have never seen;  
Birds with gladder songs o'er flow,  
Flowers with deeper beauties shine,  
Since I know, as now I know,  
I am His, and He is mine." (Bar. Heb.;pg.57)

## "I CAN'T HELP BUT WIN!"

### B. A GREATER EXPERIENCE IS DEPARTING THIS LIFE TO ENJOY CHRIST'S CLOSER PRESENCE.

Says Paul, "My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better." (v.23) The word for 'depart' is "the word for striking camp, loosening the tent ropes, pulling up the tent pins and going on. Death is moving on." (Barclay's Philippians; pg.34) Paul says that he is ready to move on from this stage of action to the most glorious stage of action which is heaven. He is ready to strike camp. Like the popular song, "I don't need this house no longer, I don't need this house no more, I'm getting' ready to meet the Lord." Paul was anxious to meet his Lord.

Paul loved his present life, but knew that to live with Christ in heaven was even greater. In heaven there would be no disappointments, no hardships, no physical afflictions, no death or sorrow. In heaven there would be knowledge of Christ by sight instead of knowledge of Christ by faith, as on earth.

I remember hearing of one older Christian man (Byron Broadbrooks) - a happy, sweet, and humble Christian man - tell of an experience in which he was knocked off an electricity pole by a bolt of electricity. He was knocked to the ground and obviously knocked out. He tells of a most beautiful vision of heaven which he experienced as he lay knocked out. He says that he saw an innumerable company of white-robed saints, all of whom were exceedingly happy. All seemed to be enjoying the glory of heaven. When this Christian man regained consciousness, he said that he was keenly disappointed to find that his heavenly vision was replaced by the reality of earthly surroundings. Before this experience, he said that he rather shunned the fact of death, but he said since this experience that he has actually longed for the time when death shall release him into the nearer presence of God. This same man remained happy and supremely enjoyed life following that vision. But he longed for heaven. He, like Paul, was "hard pressed between the two." (v.23)

### III. DEFINITE DECISION (v.24-26)

In the midst of the difficult dilemma which was brought about because of Paul's desire to go to heaven, experienced simultaneously with Paul's desire to remain on earth to strengthen his friends, Paul finally reached a definite decision. let us note the reasons and results of that decision.

#### A. REASONS FOR DECISION

##### 1. Condition of God's Workers

Says Paul, "But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.:" (v.24) Paul makes his decision and solves his dilemma on the basis of his careful consideration of the needs of his friends. Paul realizes how much his friends need him - his presence, his example, his wise counsel. Paul is needed as an inspiration to growth and as a source of joy in the development of their Christian lives.

J.H. Jowett commented on this verse one time: "To have helped somebody a few steps along the heavenly road, to have infused a little more holy courage into their spirits, to have given a more exuberant swing to their stride - these services abundantly justify a delay in the journey, and will assure for us a more glorious welcome in our Father's house." (Proclaiming the N.T.;pg.33)

## "I CAN'T HELP BUT WIN!"

### 2. Conviction of God's Will

Paul goes on, "Convinced of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith." (v.25) Says Paul Fedena, "Confidence suggests settled conviction. Know suggests assurance of God's Will." (The Sermon Builder; Oct. 1970; pg.28)

Conviction of God's will many times comes by sensing the need of conditions around you. My call to the ministry was largely in the form of increasingly feeling a sense of urgency to meet the pressing needs around me with the power of Christ's Gospel which had become very real to me. Observation of surrounding conditions oftentimes leads to a conviction that God wants you to do something about it. This was true of Amos. Amos the prophet observed the sins of big city living in a northern city of Israel and was horrified. It was then that he received God's message and call in life. Said Amos, "The Lord God has spoken, who can but prophesy?" (Amos 3:8)

David Wilderson observed the terrible conditions of teenagers who had been hooked by drugs and, seeing the conditions, he was deeply convicted that doing something about the drug problem was God's will for him. the results of his labors have been marvellous.

Paul the Apostle wanted to depart to be with Christ in heaven, but he observed the needs of his fellow Christians and decided that it was God's will for him to remain on earth to help them. God witnessed to him that this was a right decision and Paul could then say "I know that I shall remain and continue with you all.: (v.25)

#### B. RESULT OF DECISION

The result of Paul's decision was mutual rejoicing between Paul and his friends.

##### 1. Rejoicing by workers because Paul will abide right beside them.

When Paul said that he was convinced that he would remain on earth, he meant that he would remain for a specific purpose. The word Paul uses means "to wait alongside of," that is, to be always a companionable helper who would be ready to help at all times. Paul never believed in letting himself be "laid on the shelf" to mark time until the end came. Rather, Paul's purpose in remaining on earth was to be of help to as many as possible, right down to the end of his earthly life. God's will in letting Paul remain longer on earth would bring great joy and help to Paul's friends.

##### 2. Rejoicing by Paul because of his sense of worthwhileness.

Everyone wants to feel he is needed in life. When one concludes that he is just "laid on a shelf" to mark time until the end comes, then he has lost the will to live, and satisfaction in living is gone. Satisfaction and joy come by feeling that you are useful and helpful to someone. Says Paul to his friends, "So you can look forward to making much of me as your minister in Christ when I come to see you again!" (v.26) Paul loved to minister. If the ones to whom Paul ministered, looked up to him and affectionately claimed him as their minister, then Paul would consider it worthwhile to remain on earth instead of to depart and be with Christ.

## "I CAN'T HELP BUT WIN!"

### CONCLUSION:

Paul's supreme desire in life was to honor Christ, whether by life or by death. Paul's love for Christ was so great that he desired to depart and to be with Christ. Christ showed Paul that he was needed by his friends, and that to continue to live on earth would bring greater glory to Christ at that present time. Paul "put duty before desire; responsibility before rest; service before satisfaction; help before heaven! It is possible to be so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good! Not so with Paul." (Paul Fedena in Sermon Builder; Oct. 1970; pg.28)

Paul was a winner, however you look at it, because he had Christ and Christ had him. Paul was a masterful man because he was mastered by Christ. For to live was Christ (a glorious life) and to die was gain (gaining all of heaven - a more glorious life)!

## "I CAN'T HELP BUT WIN!"

### DISCUSSION:

1. Regarding alternatives, what are the two sets of 'sweets' which believers know that they choose between, in contrast to the two sets of 'bitters' which non-believers suppose that they choose between (as described by Paul Rees in the introduction to the chapter)? Why can it be said that Christians are 'double winners'?
2. What was Paul's 'life passion', as described in Philippians 1:19,20?
3. How is Paul's confidence in God's sovereignty expressed in Phil. 1:19, and from what two sources does Paul believe his confidence in God's sovereignty will be bolstered? How can modern-day believers maintain confidence in God's sovereignty during hard times, and thus bring glory to God?
4. According to Phil. 1:20a, what is the result of maintaining confidence in God's sovereignty?
5. In what ways did Paul seek to glorify Christ 'in his body'(Phil.1:20)? As applied to modern-day believers, what do you think it means to honor Christ by expressing courage in sacrificial living?
6. In what way did Paul's great love for Christ present Paul with a 'difficult dilemma' (Phil. 1:21-23)?
7. In what specific ways was Paul's love for this earthly life 'in Christ' manifested and demonstrated? Can you personally describe your relationship with Christ as an 'abundant life'? If so, what specifically makes your life 'in Christ' here on earth 'abundant' and 'thrilling'?
8. According to Phil. 1:23, which of the two 'sweet' alternatives was the best alternative for Paul? Why? Which of the two alternatives did Paul become convinced was the will of God presently for him? Why? (Note Philippians 1:24)
9. What makes fellowship with Christ in heaven infinitely greater than the intimate fellowship which a true believer experiences with Christ here on earth?
10. Share your personal reactions to J.W. Jowett's commentary on Philippians 1:24 - "To have helped somebody a few steps along the heavenly road, to have infused a little more holy courage into their spirits, to have given a more exuberant swing to their stride - these services abundantly justify a delay in the journey, and will assure for us a more glorious welcome in our Father's house."  
Is it important for believers (like yourself) to sacrifice personal desires in order to better meet the needs of fellow believers? Can you share from your own life (or from your observation of the lives of 'saintly' people around you) how specifically personal desires

## "I CAN'T HELP BUT WIN!"

were sacrificed for the benefit of helping or encouraging other believers? Do you as a believer, have as one of your primary goals in life, the serving of your fellow Christians in such a way that they will experience greater growth and joy in their faith? (Note Philippians 1:25)

11. What does God often use to bring 'conviction' to the hearts of Christians regarding God's divine will for them? Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Observation of surrounding conditions oftentimes leads to a conviction that God wants you to do something about it." Can you share illustrations from Biblical or contemporary life that validate the truth of this statement?
12. What mutual benefits did Paul and his friends receive as a result of Paul's settled conviction that God wanted him to remain longer on earth rather than God choosing that he should immediately die and go to heaven?
13. What verses in Philippians, chapter one, indicate that Paul never believed in letting himself be "laid on a shelf" to simply mark time until the end came? Is it Biblically justifiable for modern-day believers to 'retire' and (after retirement) to be 'laid-back' and 'passive' and 'inactive' as regards 'Christian Service'? Do you agree with the following statement: "Satisfaction and joy come by feeling that you are useful and helpful to someone." What can local churches do today to make 'retirement years' for believers more productive and meaningful?
14. Tell specific ways in which the truths of the following statement might better be applied to your own personal life: "Paul put duty before desire; responsibility before rest; service before satisfaction help before heaven! It is possible to be so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good! Not so with Paul."



LIVING THE LIFE OF JOY!

**CHAPTER 4**

**LIFE'S COMBAT  
FOR THE TRUTH**



## CHAPTER 4

SUBJECT: LIFE'S COMBAT FOR THE TRUTH

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 1:27-30

TEXT: "Battling with a single mind for the faith of the Gospel." (v.27)

INTRODUCTION: The Gospel is powerful because it is true. Something based on falsehood may appear strong, but it is only an appearance. Falsehood is impotent and powerless to bring about good. That only is powerful which can produce moral change, and it is only the Gospel - the Good News - which can produce the change. Because it is a basic fact that falsehood is in the world, in opposition to truth, the contender for Truth must constantly combat falsehood. This involves a life and death struggle, but because of Christ, the Truth will prevail.

### OUTLINE:

- I. LIVING IN THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL (v.27a)
- II. BATTLING FOR THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL (v.27b-28)
- III. SUFFERING FOR THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL (v.29-30)

CONCLUSION: Paul says, "Combat for the Truth of the Gospel." Combat falsehood by a godly, steadfast, and faithful life - a life that is worthy of membership in Christ's Kingdom. Just as you live worthy lives as citizens of Rome, so likewise, on a far higher level, live worthy lives as citizens of God's Kingdom.

Not only by your lives but by your words, battle for the Truth. ("Battling with a single mind" is expressed by unity in words.) Battle against falsehood and defend the Truth. Defend the Truth against popular systems of falsehood in your day - Humanism, Liberalism, Syncretism, Universalism, Cultism.

This battle for truth will lead to suffering, but glory in your suffering, for you are doing it for Christ. The combat for the truth is worthy of your all, for the Gospel of Truth is powerful and will triumph!

## LIFE'S COMBAT FOR THE TRUTH

TEXT: "Battling with a single mind for the faith of the Gospel."

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 1:27-30

### INTRODUCTION:

In the first chapter of Philippians we have discussion of the various aspects of the Gospel. In the first part (1:1-8) we saw the factors which make beautiful Partnership in the Gospel. We next (1:9-11) looked at the Purpose of The Gospel. After that we noted the Proclamation of the gospel. Fourth, we looked at the Personification of the Gospel, and today we look at the Power of the Gospel.

Wherein is found the power of the Gospel? The Gospel is powerful because it is true. Something based on falsehood may appear strong, but it is only an appearance. Falsehood is impotent and powerless to bring about good. That only is powerful which can produce moral change, and it is only the Gospel - the Good News - which can produce the change. The Gospel is Good News because it is true to Reality. Nothing is truer to Reality than the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

### PROPOSITION:

Because it is a basic fact that falsehood is in the world, in opposition to truth, the contender for Truth must constantly combat falsehood. This involves a life and death struggle, but because of Christ, the Truth will prevail.

#### I. LIVING IN THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL (v.27a)

Verse 27 says in the KJV: "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ." The word 'conversation' means far more than mere speech. It comes from a Latin word which means 'to behave oneself'. (Barclay's Philippians; pg.36) 'Conversation' means 'one's total behavior', actions as well as speech. RSV translates this verse as such: "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ."

The meaning of this is very interesting. The word which Paul uses for 'to behave oneself' is 'to be a citizen'. The Philippians were Roman citizens since the city of Philippi was a Roman colony, and "Roman colonies were little bits of Rome planted throughout the world." (Barclay's Philippians; pg.36) Citizens in these scattered Roman colonies were very proud that they were Roman citizens, even though some lived many miles from Rome. Paul is saying something like this: "Just as you are very conscious and proud of your Roman citizenship, (though far from Rome) and thus seek always to live worthy of your Roman citizenship, so in like manner recognize and be proud of your citizenship in God's Kingdom (regardless of where you live), and always live worthy of this citizenship."

The Philippians acted like Romans regardless of who they were with. Paul is saying that believers should act like Christ, regardless of who they are with. He says that Christians are to be steadfast in godly living, at all times - when they are with fellow believers and when they are not with believers, when they are praised for their faith and when they are persecuted

## LIFE'S COMBAT FOR THE TRUTH

for their faith, when Paul is with them to support them and watch over them, and when Paul is absent from them. "But whatever happens, make sure that your everyday life is worthy of the gospel of Christ. So that whether I do come and see you, or merely hear about you from a distance, I may know that you are standing fast in a united spirit." (Philippians 1:27a; Phillips)

Nothing less than constant faithfulness in service to God, man, and the church is worthy of the Gospel of Christ. This faithfulness, Paul is saying, must not depend upon his physical presence with them. Some people are quite faithful, for instance, in Church attendance out of a sense of obligation or because of the verbal or silent pressure of their preacher or teacher. Paul says that he wants them to be as faithful when he is gone as they are faithful when he is present with them. In other words, Paul is asking them to be faithful and steadfast in service because of a heart filled with love and because of the motivation of the indwelling Spirit. Such a faithfulness does not depend upon external pressure, but depends solely upon internal desire and an inner will which is surrendered to please God.

Paul is talking about 'everyday living' which is worthy of citizenship in God's Kingdom. It is not how we act at Church that best represents our faith, but how we act while carrying out the daily routine tasks. How we act and react in the presence of non-believers, and the type of attitudes we display while with those that we know best, are both good tests to determine whether or not our lives are worthy of citizenship in God's Kingdom.

### II. BATTLING FOR THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL (v.27b-28)

Paul goes on to say that those who are citizens of the Kingdom are those who are "with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel." (RSV) Phillips' translation interestingly puts it: "battling with a single mind for the faith of the gospel." (v.27b)

Paul's choice of emphasizing the living of the truth before his emphasis upon battling for the truth, seems to be significant. It is possible to know the arguments of orthodox theology and enjoy arguing fine points in religion and theology. But unless one is living the truth, verbal battling for the truth is a farce and totally unconvincing to the unbeliever. Says many unbelievers "Show me a real Christian and I will become one." One of the most effective ways to spread the Gospel and defend its validity is by living a sweet, honest, and joyous life consistently before one's daily associates. Paul makes this clear, and only speaks about battling for the truth after he has spoken about living the truth.

Paul does speak about "battling with a single mind" and considers this important. Paul battles against paganism in the city of Philippi. Remember how he led the soothsaying slave girl to Christ which resulted in great turmoil and his immediate imprisonment? (Acts 16) On other occasions, Paul battled against legalism, materialism, false philosophies and doctrines.

What are the battles that we should, in mind and voice, be untied in? We too, as Paul and the Philippian believers, must combat for the truth against falsehood.

Christians must battle against humanism, and let me describe what the humanist is. The humanist has been defined as one "whose belief consists of faith in man and devotion to human well-being." (September 11, 1970 in Christianity Today; pg.5) Harold Lindsell well describes the characteristics of a humanist: "Faith in man is substituted for faith in God. For the

## LIFE'S COMBAT FOR THE TRUTH

humanist there are no biblical absolutes. He will not concede that some things are objectively and forever true. He is a relativist as well as an anti-supernaturalist, and he stands on shifting sands at all times. He has no Gospel to proclaim, nor does he know man as a sinner in need of redemption. He slips easily into the role of social engineer." It is true that faith without works is dead. It is also true that works without faith in Christ are dead. Religious liberalism is more interested in describing what it does not believe, than it is in describing what it does believe.

Religious liberalism, then, is another enemy of the true Christian. Liberalism is essentially a system of denials - denial of Christ's deity, denial of Christ's vicarious atonement, denial of Christ's bodily resurrection, denial of Christ's virgin birth. Listen to the results of a survey (conducted in the late 1960's) on some important questions of the Christian faith. The degree of liberalism in many Churches today is shown by the following percentages: When asked if they believed the "Scriptures are inspired and inerrant Word of God not only in matters of faith but also in historical, geographical, and other secular matters," the following said they did not believe: 87% of the Methodists, 95% of the Episcopalians, 88% of the Presbyterians, 67% of the American Baptists, and 77% of the American Lutherans. The following said 'No' in answering the question whether "Adam and Eve were individual historical persons": 82% of the Methodists, 97% of the Episcopalians, 84% of the Presbyterians, 55% of the American Baptists, and 51% of the American Lutherans. The following said that they did not "believe that the virgin birth of Jesus was a biological miracle": 60% of the Methodists, 44% of the Episcopalians, 49% of the Presbyterians, 34% of the American Baptists, and 19% of the American Lutherans. The following agreed with the idea that "Hell does not refer to a special location after death, but to the experience of self-estrangement, guilt, and meaninglessness in this life": 58% of the Methodists, 60% of the Episcopalians, 54% of the Presbyterians, 35% of the American Baptists, and 22% of the American Lutherans. (Ibid; pg.5)

Christians must battle against syncretism. "The syncretist believes that conflicting beliefs can be reconciled and that a union of the good to be found in all the ethnic religions is possible and desirable." (Ibid; pg.6) Jesus made it very clear that there is but one true God and only one mediator between God and man - Christ Jesus. (I Timothy 2:5) There is salvation in only one name - the name of Christ. "In no one else can salvation be found. For in all the world no other name has been given to men but this, and it is by this name that we must be saved!" (Acts 4:12; Phillips) Jesus made it clear that He is the door to God and that anyone trying to approach God in any other way is blind.

Christians must battle against Universalism, "a doctrine that teaches, that all men everywhere will be saved. This sweeping affirmation abolishes hell and brings into the presence of God those who have died denying Jesus Christ, and included even the apparently unrepentant murderers of millions, Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin. According to the universalist, men do not need to be reconciled to God; they have already been reconciled. They do not need to be regenerated in order to be 'in Christ'. They are 'in Christ' now and need only to be told what is already true." (Ibid; pg.6) It is a doctrine that is pleasing to believe and many have adopted it. Expression of this belief is found in people who say, "God is a good and merciful God. Surely He wouldn't send anyone to hell. It doesn't seem plausible that God would even allow a hell to exist. All will surely be saved in the end." Jesus denied

## LIFE'S COMBAT FOR THE TRUTH

universalism when He spoke frankly and sadly, and with great warning, about the horrors of hell. He talked about brimstone and fire in hell and spoke about eternal torment and separation from God. He warned people over and over to escape this terrible place of punishment, and to accept Christ who would give eternal life to as many as would really believe.

Christians must battle against cultism, or the spread of false religions and doctrines. We are warned against the spread of falsehood. John said, "Don't trust every spirit, dear friends of mine, but test them to discover whether they come from God or not, for the world is full of false prophets. You can test them in this simple way: every spirit that acknowledges the fact that Jesus Christ actually became man, comes from God, but the spirit which denies this fact does not come from God. The latter comes from the anti-christ, which you were warned would come and which is already in the world." (I John 4:1-3) Those who deny the Incarnation (those who say that Jesus was merely a man) are classified as anti-christ. Beware of them, for there are many such deniers in the world. Battle against them and warn people against their trap!

Paul warned us against cultism - false teaching and teachers. Said, he, "For the time is coming when men will not tolerate wholesome teaching. they will want something to tickle their own fancies, and they will pander to their own desires. They will no longer listen to the truth, but will wander off after man-made fictions.: (II Timothy 4:3,4; Phillips)

These then are the main enemies which the Christian is to battle against in defending the Truth of the Gospel: Humanism, Liberalism, Syncretism, Universalism, Cultism. We must fight the good fight of faith. If we remain steadfast in faithful living and continue to battle against falsehood in any form, we shall surely conquer!

Paul tells the Philippians not only to be united in godly living and united in the battle against falsehood, but he also tells them to be united in courage. As Phillips puts it: "The very fact that they are your enemies is plain proof that they are lost to God, while the fact that you have such men as enemies is plain proof that you yourselves are being saved by God." (1:28 Phillips) He tells them to be "not frightened in anything by your opponents," or as Phillips' translates it "not caring two straws for your enemies." Paul, of course, cared for the souls of his enemies and sought for their salvation. Paul means for the Philippians to be fearless - completely calm and totally undaunted and courageous - in the face of their enemies' threats and actions.

### III. SUFFERING FOR THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL (v.29-30)

After such courageous talk, Paul appears to make a sudden and unexpected switch in his main line of thought. Paul has been talking about victory and triumph of believers, and suddenly he introduces the topic of suffering! "You are given, in this battle, the privilege not merely of believing in Christ but also of suffering for his sake. It is now your turn to take part in that battle you once saw me engaged in, and which, in point of fact, I am still fighting." (v.29-30)

Paul is frankly acknowledging that this battle for Truth against falsehood may lead to suffering. What battle doesn't involve suffering? But glory is found even in suffering, for the suffering is for Truth. Belief in Christ leads to action, and active battle for Christ leads to suffering. (v.29) But that suffering is noble - noble because it is for Christ.

## LIFE'S COMBAT FOR THE TRUTH

Paul reminded them that unity in steadfastness, unity in battle, and unity in courage, would now lead to unity in suffering. Paul encouraged them by reminding them that the conflict which they were now engaged in was the same type of conflict that he was engaged in while at Philippi. Then Paul adds, "I am still fighting" (while in a Roman prison).

Conflict is inevitable when battling for the Truth. When Paul was instrumental in the conversion of the slave girl in Philippi, he caused much chaos and confusion. Why? Simply because he was attacking one of the strongholds of Satan! Paul's action resulted in imprisonment and cruel beating. Paul met his "opponents without so much as a tremor" (Philippians 1:28a NEB) While in prison at midnight, "Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God." (Acts 16:25)

When Jesus' enemies could not refute his teachings and conduct, they sought to kill him. That is what the workers of iniquity do; when they can't 'win out' by verbal argumentation, they desire to 'win out' by physical might. The messenger of Truth may be silenced, but Truth itself can never be silenced.

"One of the most famous of all the martyrs was Polycarp, the aged bishop of Smyrna. The mob dragged him to the tribunal of the Roman magistrate. He was given the inevitable choice - sacrifice to the godhead of Caesar or die. 'Eighty-six years,' came the immortal reply, 'I have served Christ, and He has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?' So they brought him to the stake, and he prayed his last prayer: 'O Lord God Almighty, the Father of Thy well-beloved and ever-blessed Son, by whom we have received knowledge of Thee...I thank Thee that thou hast graciously thought me worthy of this day and of this hour.' Here was the supreme opportunity to demonstrate his loyalty to Jesus Christ."

The suffering which the Christian may endure in the battle against falsehood may not be physical. It may be mental suffering - cold rejection from a group, shameful belittling, hateful expressions, falsification of character, verbal threats, or denunciations, etc. Jesus reminded His followers to rejoice when they were persecuted, for great would be their reward in heaven.

### CONCLUSION:

Paul says, "Combat for the Truth of the Gospel." Combat falsehood by a godly, steadfast, and faithful life - a life that is worthy of membership in Christ's Kingdom. Just as you live worthy lives as citizens of Rome, so likewise, on a far higher level, live worthy lives as citizens of God's Kingdom.

Not only by your lives but by your words, battle for the Truth. ("Battling with a single mind" is expressed by unity in words). Battle against falsehood and defend the Truth. Defend the Truth against the popular systems of falsehood in your day - Humanism, Liberalism, Syncretism, Universalism, Cultism.

This battle for truth will lead to suffering, but glory in your suffering, for you are doing it for Christ. the combat for truth is worthy of your all, for the Gospel of Truth is powerful and will triumph!

## LIFE'S COMBAT FOR THE TRUTH

### DISCUSSION:

1. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements:  
"The Gospel is powerful because it is true."  
"The Gospel is Good News because it is true to Reality."  
"Nothing is truer to Reality than the Gospel of Jesus Christ."
2. Describe the meaning of the phrase: "conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ", in terms of its Roman background.
3. Why does Paul consider a consistent Christ-like life-style, regardless of a believer's circumstances and environment, so important?
4. What is the only adequate motivation for steadfastness and faithfulness in Christian living and service? Why is the motivation to faithfulness, based on external pressure, so unreliable?
5. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "How we react in the presence of non-believers, and the type of attitudes we display while with those that we know best, are both good tests to determine whether or not our lives are worthy of citizenship in God's Kingdom."
6. Why do you think Paul chose to talk about the importance of 'living' the Truth of the Gospel (Phil. 1:27a), before he talked about 'battling' for the Truth of the Gospel (Phil. 1:27b)? Is it possible for one to be intellectually familiar with the truths of orthodox doctrine without, at the same time, to be living the life of an orthodox faith? Why or why not?
7. What are some of the spiritual and intellectual 'battlefronts' that we, as fellow believers, should together be fighting on?
8. How would you describe the philosophy of 'secular humanism'?
9. What is meant by 'religious liberalism'? In what ways are 'secular humanism' and 'religious liberalism' philosophically similar? What are the fundamental Christian doctrines (truths), the denial of which would make one a 'religious liberal'?
10. What does 'syncretism' basically teach? Why does the excessive toleration of the 'syncretist' pose as a great threat to Christian faith?
11. What do those who believe in 'universalism' declare regarding mankind's reconciliation to God? Tell what you, as a believer in God's Word (Bible), would say to a person who assertively declares to you: "God is a good and a merciful God. Surely He wouldn't send anyone to hell. It doesn't seem plausible that God would even allow a hell to exist. All will surely be saved in the end."

## LIFE'S COMBAT FOR THE TRUTH

12. According to I John 4:1-3, what objective test must all religious leaders 'pass' in order to be considered 'sound', rather than 'cultic' in doctrine?
13. Paul tells the Philippians, not only to be united in godly living and united in their battle against falsehood, but to be united also in what other way? (Note Philippians 1:28).
14. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Belief in Christ leads to action, and active battle for Christ leads to suffering." Do you agree with the following statement: "Conflict is inevitable when battling for the Truth!"
15. If believers, corporately speaking, are called to be united in steadfast living for Christ (1:27), and are called to battle courageously for the truth of the Gospel (1:28), is it not expected that Christians corporately will suffer unitedly for their truthful and godly 'stand' (1:29)? How has the Church, both historically and in recent times, suffered corporately because of its position on important moral and spiritual issues?
16. Give an illustration from Paul's life that demonstrates his courage fearlessness in the face of persecution for his faith. (Note Acts 16)
17. Give examples from ancient or from modern history that illustrates the truth of the following statement: "The messenger of Truth may be silenced, but Truth itself can never be silenced."
18. What are some of the forms of suffering which modern-day believers experience, as a result of their courageous 'stand' for righteousness and justice and integrity? What should the attitude of a believer be when he experiences suffering for his faith in Jesus? (Note Matthew 5:11,12)

LIVING THE LIFE OF JOY!

**CHAPTER 5**

**THE PRACTICE OF HUMILITY**



## CHAPTER 5

SUBJECT: THE PRACTICE OF HUMILITY

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 2:1-4

TEXT: "In humility count others better than yourselves." (v.3)

INTRODUCTION: What is the cure for disunity? The cure is humility. Humble Christians are cooperative Christians and cooperative Christians are united Christians. It is important to understand the motivation for humility and the marks of humility.

OUTLINE:

### I. MOTIVATION FOR HUMILITY

- A. "Experience of Christ's Encouragement and Love"
- B. Fellowship of His Spirit Which Means Kindness and Deep Sympathy.

### II. MEANING OF HUMILITY

- A. Having the Same Mind
- B. Having the Same Love
- C. Having Mutual Preference for One Another
- D. Having Mutual Interest in One Another's Affairs

CONCLUSION: How can a person be humble? Only through the in-dwelling Christ who stirs and thrills the heart, and only through the fellowship of the Spirit who gives sympathy and kindness to the believer.

Such a humble man is most winsome, for he possesses characteristics that ennoble others: Love and concern for others which brings unity to the Christian group, preference for his fellow Christians (a true servant, like as Christ), genuine interest in the affairs and needs of his fellow brothers. The practicing Christian is the man who is practicing humility.

## THE PRACTICE OF HUMILITY

SCRIPTURE: Phillipians 2:1-4

TEXT: "In humility count others better than yourselves."

### INTRODUCTION:

"The church at Philippi was very near and dear to the heart of Paul. The Church at Philippi was a healthy church., sound in doctrine and vigorous in action. But this Church had one major danger of every healthy Church. It is when people are really in their own plans and their own schemes, that they are apt to get up against each other. The greater their enthusiasm, the greater danger that they may collide. (Barclay's Phillipians; pg.38)

In the second chapter of Phillipians, we find the subject of humility clearly expounded:

- (1) Practice of humility (1-4) - Surrender;
- (2) Perfection in humility (5-11) - Substitution;
- (3) Power in humility (12-13) - Salvation;
- (4) Picture of humility (14-18) - Sacrifice;
- (5) Proof of humility (19-30) - Service.

### PROPOSITION:

What is the cure for disunity? The cure is humility. Humble Christians are cooperative Christians and cooperative Christians are united Christians. It is important to understand the motivation for humility and the marks of humility.

#### I. MOTIVATION FOR HUMILITY

Phillipians 2:1 tells us the motivation for humility. Let us read this in a modern translation to better understand the meaning: "Now if your experience of Christ's encouragement and love means anything to you, if you have known something of the fellowship of his Spirit, and all that it means in kindness and deep sympathy."... (Phillips) Two phrases express the motivation for humility.

##### A. "EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST'S ENCOURAGEMENT AND LOVE" - (Phillips)

Christians common experience of the indwelling Christ ought to stir the hearts of all to greater love and understanding, which results in unity in a group amidst diversity of ideas. "Christian love is that unconquered benevolence and good-will which will never know bitterness, and which will never seek anything but the good of others." (Ibid;41) This highest of all kinds of love is God-imparted and is an exercise of the will of man. It is not the kind of love that we know when we speak of 'falling into love'. Rather it is the kind of love that loves the unlovely and even the hateful. If experience of Christ gives this kind of love for unbelievers, should not experience of Christ surely give love for fellow Christians? Christ's love and encouragement within the heart will surely give motivation for humble acceptance one of another, creating strong unity in the Christian fellowship.

## THE PRACTICE OF HUMILITY

### B. FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SPIRIT WHICH MEANS KINDNESS AND DEEP SYMPATHY

The Spirit is the person of the Trinity which sheds abroad God's love in the heart of the believer. The Spirit binds men together and gives a sense of unity. He reveals God's will and enables men to live a life of love which is the life of God. The indwelling Spirit creates an atmosphere of deep sympathy within the heart which expresses itself outwardly in acts of kindness. One of the greatest motivations for humility is the fellowship of God's Spirit.

"Gracious Spirit, dwell with me;  
I myself would gracious be;  
And with words that help and heal  
Would thy life in mine reveal;  
And with actions bold and meek  
Would for Christ my Savior speak."

## II. MEANING OF HUMILITY

The Scriptures often times exhort man to be humble, but the question before us now is 'What does it mean to be humble, especially as it relates to the Christian fellowship?'

### A. HAVING THE SAME MIND

Wrote Paul, "Complete my joy by being of the same mind." Jesus prayed to His Father for His disciples "that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." (John 17:21) As one says in comment to this verse, "We cannot expect the world to believe that the Father sent the Son, that Jesus' claims are true, and that Christianity is true, unless the world sees some reality of the oneness of true Christians." (Christianity Today; September 11, 1970; pg.8)

Oneness among Christians excludes bickering over doctrine and practice, which always leads to disunity. The world which sees a fighting church pronounces a judgment of rejection upon the Church. Oneness among Christians does not mean oneness of organization or oneness of denominational differences. True oneness is oneness of spirit, oneness of purpose, oneness of love.

### B. HAVING THE SAME LOVE

This is another characteristic of humility, and is very similar to having the same mind. Said Jesus, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me; and as I said unto the Jews, Wither I go ye cannot come; so now I say to you. A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

That which convinces unbelievers of the reality of Christianity, more than anything else, is the exercise of love between fellow Christians. The mark of a Christian is brotherly love. We may at times fail in our love one for

## THE PRACTICE OF HUMILITY

another as Christians, and still be Christian. However as far as the world is concerned, "If I do not have the love I should have toward all other true Christians, the world has the right to make the judgment that I am not a Christian." (Ibid; pg.7)

One characteristic of humility is brotherly love expressed between Christians. "The observable and practical love among true Christians that the world has a right to be able to observe in our day certainly should cut without reservation across such lines as language, nationalities, national frontiers, younger and older, colors of skin, particular locality, dress, short or long hair among whites and African and non-African hairdos among blacks, the wearing of shoes and the non-wearing of shoes, cultural differentiations and the more traditional and less traditional forms of worship." (Ibid; pg.8)

### C. HAVING MUTUAL PREFERENCE FOR ONE ANOTHER

The Scripture says, "Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves." (v.3)

Selfishness or selfish ambition is the opposite of humility, and selfish ambition always destroys unity in a Christian group. When people seek to advance themselves rather than the group, then disruption takes place.

Conceit or personal vanity and seeking for personal prestige always destroys the unity of a group. When people seek for personal attention and personal honor, and when they display self before the group, then group harmony and solidarity is destroyed. The truly great men of the Church, far from having self-display as their aim, have instead had self-obliteration as their aim. "Carey was one of the greatest missionaries and certainly one of the greatest linguists the world has ever seen. He translated at least parts of the Bible into no fewer than thirty-four Indian languages. He began life as a cobbler. When he came to India he was regarded with dislike and contempt. Once at a dinner party a snob, with the idea of humiliating him, said in a tone that everyone could hear, 'I suppose, Mr. Carey, you once worked as a shoe-maker.' 'No, your lordship', answered Carey, 'not a shoe-maker, only a cobbler.' He did not even claim to make shoes - only mend them. No one likes the 'important' person. Man 'dressed in a little brief authority' can be a sorry sight." (Barclay's Corinthians; pg.134,135)

### H. HAVING MUTUAL INTEREST IN ONE ANOTHER'S AFFAIRS

This is another characteristic of true humility. The R.S.V. says, "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." Phillips puts it like this, "None of you should think only of his own affairs, but each should learn to see things from other people's point of view." (v.4) Do we seek to see things from other people's viewpoint, or are we so self-preoccupied and close-minded that we are determined to live a life to ourselves, caring little or nothing about other people's viewpoints or interests? Can we humble ourselves, as it were, to get into the skins of other people in order that we might understand them better? If we are self-sustained financially, are we willing to walk in the shoes of the man who can never make 'ends meet'? If we are a white man, are we willing to try to view conditions as a black man sees them? As members of the Western culture, are we willing to try to understand the actions of men of other and different cultures? If we are young are we willing to see things from the viewpoint of the older

## THE PRACTICE OF HUMILITY

generation, or visa versa? If we dress one particular way, are we willing to try to understand viewpoints of others who dress differently? A wonderful characteristic of humility is open-mindedness and ability to listen, observe, and learn from others. We need not agree with all we observe or hear, but the least we can do as humble Christians is to try to understand why other men 'tick' as they do, why they act and react as they do. If the Christian should be open-minded and interested in the way the world thinks and views things, how much more should the humble Christian be open-minded and vitally interested in the affairs and viewpoints of his fellow Christian brothers?

One of the things which destroys Christian unity is concentration on self. "If a man is for ever concerned first and foremost with his own interests, then he is bound to collide with others. If for any man life is a competition whose prizes he must win, if he for ever regards life as a struggle to overcome, to surpass, and to conquer others, then he will always think of other human beings as enemies, or at least as opponents who must be pushed out of the way. Concentration on self inevitable means elimination of others; and the object of life becomes, not to help others up, but to push them down." (Barclay's Phil; pg.40) Never forget, "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."

### CONCLUSION:

How can man be humble? Only through the indwelling Christ who stirs and thrills the heart, and only through the fellowship of the Spirit who gives sympathy and kindness to the believer.

Such a humble man is most winsome, for he possesses characteristics that ennoble others: Love and concern for others which brings unity to the Christian group, preference for his fellow Christians (a true servant, like as Christ), genuine interest in the affairs and needs of his fellow brothers. The practicing Christian is the man who is practicing humility.

## THE PRACTICE OF HUMILITY

### DISCUSSION:

1. What great asset among the Philippian believers did Paul realize could become an occasion for a great problem? (In other words, "What is the major danger of every healthy Church?")
2. List the five main divisions of Philippians, chapter Two, in terms of the general theme of humility.
3. What is the 'cure' for disunity among believers within a local church?
4. How does the mutual experience of the indwelling Christ in the lives of sincere believers result in maintaining unity in a group amidst a great diversity of ideas expressed within a group?
5. Describe the characteristic of 'Christian (agape) love', and contrast this love with other types of love.
6. Why can it be said that one of the greatest motivations for humility is the fellowship of God's Holy Spirit within the lives of sincere believers?
7. What, to you, does 'oneness among Christians' really mean? What does it not mean?
8. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "We cannot expect the world to believe that the Father sent the Son, that Jesus' claims are true, and that Christianity is true, unless the world sees some reality of the oneness of true Christians." (Note John 17:21)
9. What convinces unbelievers of the reality of Christ and Christianity more than anything else?
10. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "If I do not have the love that I should have toward all other true Christians, then the world has the right to make the judgment that I am not a Christian." (Note John 13:34-35)
11. What are some of the practical results of Christian love when it is genuinely expressed between Christians who differ from each other culturally, religiously, economically, and racially? Is love always the practical manifestation of humility? Can there be genuine humility without the manifestation of love? Is Christian love the 'answer' to the problems of prejudice, divisiveness, competitiveness, and hostility which too often are seen even among professing Christians?
12. Is it a manifestation of true Christian love to consider others better than yourself, or is such an attitude an evidence of low self-esteem? (Note Philippians 2:3). What is the difference between wholesome 'self-love' and destructive 'self-centered' love? What is one of the universal characteristics of all truly great spiritual leaders?
13. Why can it be said that conceit and personal vanity always destroys the unity of a group?

LIVING THE LIFE OF JOY!

**CHAPTER 6**

**PERFECTION IN HUMILITY**



## CHAPTER 6

SUBJECT: PERFECTION IN HUMILITY

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 2:5-11

TEXT: "Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus." (v.5)

INTRODUCTION: Paul called upon his friends to take a good look at Jesus the Master whose entire life was a life of humility. Said Paul, "Let Christ Jesus be your example as to what your attitude should be." (Philippians 2:5, Phillips)

If the mind or attitude of Christ is to be our attitude or mind, then it is very important to understand something about the mind or attitude of Christ. By looking at those exemplary actions and attitudes of Jesus, we may learn what real humility means.

### OUTLINE:

- I. THE DIVINITY OF JESUS
- II. THE MANHOOD OF JESUS
- III. THE HUMILITY OF JESUS
- IV. THE EXALTATION OF JESUS

CONCLUSION: What is the mind of Christ? It is the attitude which expresses itself in self-emptying servanthood, humility, obedience, sympathy, and sacrifice. The life which does not seek honor, receives honor. The life which is focused on service rather than upon happiness, receives happiness which is beyond measure. "Whoever humbles himself (like Christ), will be exalted."

## PERFECTION IN HUMILITY

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 2:5-11

TEXT: "Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus."  
(Philippians 2:5)

### INTRODUCTION:

One of Paul's purposes in writing the letter to the Philippians was to exhort them to live unitedly and harmoniously, in the spirit of humility. Paul encouraged them to "stand firm in one spirit" (1:27). Wrote Paul to his Philippian friends, "Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind." (2:2)

As a further motivation to practice humility which always leads to united living, Paul called upon his friends to take a good look at Jesus the Master whose entire life was a life of humility. Said Paul, "Let Christ Jesus be your example as to what your attitude should be." (2:5 Phillips)

### PROPOSITION:

If the mind or attitude of Christ is to be our attitude or mind, then it is very important to understand something about the mind or attitude of Christ. Philippians 2:5-11 vividly reveals the actions and attitudes of Jesus. By looking at those exemplary actions and attitudes of Jesus, we may learn what real humility means.

#### I. THE DIVINITY OF JESUS

In speaking of Jesus, verse 6 says, "who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped."

There are two Greek words for the English word 'form'. "Morphe is the essential form of something, which never alters; schema is the outward form which changes from time to time and from circumstance to circumstance. For instance, the essential morphe of any human being is manhood; the fact of his manhood is constant, and never changes; but a person's schema, his outward form will be continually changing. A baby, a child, a boy, a youth, a man of middle age, and old man always have the morphe of manhood, but the outward schema changes all the time." (Barclay's Philippians; pg.44)

The word that Paul uses for describing Jesus' form is morphe. Jesus is in the form of God, that is Jesus has the unchangeable nature, character, and essence of divinity. Regardless of how much he changed outwardly while a human being, Jesus maintained His essential and inherent deity.

"Thought it not robbery to be equal with God", can better be translated as, "did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped." It appears to mean that Jesus did not jealously hug or cling to the glory, majesty, peace, and joy of heaven which God the Father enjoyed, but gave up this right of equality with the Father to come to a sin-cursed earth. Jesus let go of the glory of heaven although it was His right to have it.

## PERFECTION IN HUMILITY

This verse clearly shows the essential divinity of Jesus which was His even during the outward changing forms of His earthly existence. It teaches that this diving Son was willing to give up the glory of heaven, although that glory equally belong to Him as it did to the Father.

"Out of the Ivory Palaces  
Into a world of woe  
Only His great Eternal Love  
Could make my Savior Go."

"Thou didst leave Thy throne and Thy kingly crown,  
When Thou camest to earth for me;  
But in Bethlehem's home there was found no room  
For Thy holy nativity.

"Heaven's arches rang when the angels sang,  
Proclaiming Thy royal degree,  
But in lowly birth didst Thou come to earth,  
And in great humility."

Philippians 2:5 -

To have the mind of Christ is to have a life of self-emptying, being willing to give up our rights and privileges at times, simply to care for someone else. Jesus gave up the glory of heaven to come to a sin-cursed earth. To have the mind of Christ may mean that we must give up a personal ambition in order to serve a higher cause. Self-emptying means self-surrender of self-abandonment to God.

"Tho' the way seemed straight and narrow,  
All I claimed was swept away;  
My ambitions, plans, and wishes,  
At my feet in ashes lay."

## II. THE MANHOOD OF JESUS

Jesus, the eternally divine Son, did not grasp onto the glory of heaven, "but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men." (v.7) He who is most concerned about his reputation, guards and depends upon himself, and certainly does not empty himself. But Jesus made Himself of no reputation - did not guard or defend himself from coming to earth. Rather, He emptied Himself of all heaven's glory and became a man.

Jesus took the 'form' of a servant. The word for 'form' is morphe which means the essential form of something. What this means as it applies to Jesus is this: Jesus, the eternally divine one joined with that essential divinity, essential humanity. He was not human only, for he retained true divinity in the Incarnation, but He was human truly. Divine Sonship and human servanthood were combined in a personal living synthesis. Jesus was truly God and truly man. Jesus was genuinely man but His manhood did not fully express his essential self-hood which was the self-hood of divinity.

Jesus came in the likeness of men. That is, Jesus was not only divine but genuinely human with real human traits and feelings. Jesus experienced real human emotions such as love, hate, anger, sorrow, and humor. Jesus experienced

## PERFECTION IN HUMILITY

the threat of temptation. This is brought out clearly in Hebrews 2:16-18: "For surely it is not with angels that he is concerned but with the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted."

To have the mind of Christ is to have the mind of sympathy for others who suffer and for others who undergo hard temptations. Christ's human life was a life of understanding and involvement, and so must our life be, if we have the mind of Christ.

### III. THE HUMILITY OF JESUS

Jesus took the form of a servant. Servanthood means humble abandonment to the needs of others. Jesus went about doing good - feeding the hungry, healing the sick, lifting up the depressed. Jesus had no ulterior motives in His service, like many do today who perform service to fellowmen. There is a difference between rendering service and being a servant. As one said, "It is damnably easy to dole out service; it is not so easy to be a servant." (Proclaiming N.T. Rees; pg.46) Jesus went beyond the mere rendering of service; He was a servant. And so must Jesus' followers be. Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet left Jesus' followers an example to follow. To have the mind of Christ is to live a life of genuine servanthood. The really worthwhile life is the life of genuine service.

#### LIFE'S WORTHWHILE

by Hattie Holms Humphreys

If memory takes me to a happy place -  
Where hearts are warmed by love and grace;  
If I gladden the heart of a lonely child -  
Life's worthwhile!

If I'm less vexing, but rather bless,  
And ever willing a wrong to confess -  
If I can earn a forgiving smile -  
Life's worthwhile!

If I, in my day, some happiness bring,  
And can see God's hand in everything,  
If His favors I take in humble style -  
Life's worthwhile!

If I'm fit to live with myself,  
Through the years,  
And can buffet sorrows, too deep for tears,  
If I'm ready to go, o'er life's last mile -  
Life's worthwhile!

## PERFECTION IN HUMILITY

Verse 8 further describes Jesus' humility: "And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross." The word for 'form' this time is schema which means the 'form which alters'. Applied to Jesus in this context, it means that Jesus' earthly existence was not a permanent form but rather a passing, changing form. Jesus came to earth from heaven and he would return someday to heaven.

"Many years ago, when the Duke of Windsor was the Prince of Wales, he one day left Buckingham Palace, journeyed west into the coal mining country, put on a miner's cap, and went down into the dingy tunnels to see for himself the conditions in which men toiled in a difficult and dangerous branch of British industry. As a member of the royal family he was as much a prince in the coal mine as he was when he lived in the palace in London. But, while his essential equality with royalty was unchanged, there was no longer an equality of experience. He had consented to enter into experiences that never came to him amid the elegancies and immunities of the palace." ( Proclaiming N.T. Rees; pg.44)

Just as the Prince in the story carried marks of his coal mining experience with him back to the palace, so Jesus who returned to heaven carries marks of humanity upon Him forever. He has become eternally identified with mankind in some strange way, because of His incarnation experience.

In Jesus' earthly human form, "He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross." Jesus' humility is supremely revealed in His life of explicit obedience to His Father. Jesus, of all persons, was most free and yet He was most obedient. This is significant. "The modern mind...mistakes license for liberty and fetterlessness for freedom." (Ibid; pg.48) Jesus taught, through his life of obedience that freedom comes through restraint, discipline, and obedience. What is true freedom? "It does not mean freedom from restraint to follow our desires, but freedom from the tyranny of futile desires to follow what is really good." (The Meaning of Paul For Today; by C.H. Dodd; pg.136) That which is really good is God's will, and to obey that will is to be liberated - free! Surrender to God leads to true personal freedom.

To have the mind of Christ then is to live a life of obedience - not obedience to my futile desires but obedience to what is really good - God's will.

Jesus' obedience took him to a cross - the cruelest of all human instruments of torture. What does this mean to us? Death perhaps, but not likely. Following the example of Christ's obedience may mean several things. "If this means loss, we are not to complain. It meant that for Him. If this means wagging tongues and the twisting of our manners and motives into something other than they really are, we are not to be panicked. It was so with Him. If this means that the chapter of sacrificial love has no happy ending (by any test that Mr. Worldly Wiseman would put upon it), we shall not be dismayed. His story ended ( or so His enemies thought) in a Roman crucifixion.

### IV. THE EXALTATION OF JESUS

"Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (9-11)

## PERFECTION IN HUMILITY

God bestowed on Jesus a new name. "One of the common biblical ideas is the giving of a new name to mark a new and definite stage in a man's life." (Example; Abram to Abraham, Jacob to Israel) (Barclay's Philippians; pg.48)

What is the name which best marks the stage of Jesus' exaltation, following His ascension? It is the name of 'Lord'. 'Lord' means supreme Ruler, King of Kings, Master and Owner of all of life. That title alone belongs to Jesus, for He alone is Supreme, the Master and Owner of life. The day will come when every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. Is Jesus Your Lord?

There is even an application here for Jesus' followers. Said Jesus, "He who is greatest among you shall be your servant; whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." (Matthew 23:12) "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." (I Peter 5:6)

### CONCLUSION:

What is the mind of Christ? It is the attitude which expresses itself in self-emptying servanthood, humility, obedience, sympathy, and sacrifice. The life which does not seek honor, received honor. The life which is focused on service rather than upon happiness, receives happiness which is beyond measure. "Whoever humbles himself (like Christ), will be exalted."

## PERFECTION IN HUMILITY

### DISCUSSION:

1. What was one of Paul's purposes in writing the letter to the Philippians according to Philippians 1:27 and 2:2?
2. What is one of the greatest motivations for practicing humility in the life of a believer, according to Philippians 2:5?
3. What are the two Greek words for the English word 'form', and what is the distinction between these two words?
4. Even though Jesus, as a human being, outwardly changed during His earthly existence, what was there about Jesus that did not change?
5. Explain your understanding of the following phrase from Philippians 2:6 - "did not consider equality with God something to be grasped."
6. What (according to Philippians 2:5) does it mean for a believer to "have the mind of Christ" or to have the same attitude which Christ had?
7. What does it mean to you that Jesus took the very 'form' or 'nature' of a servant (Phil. 2:7)? Do you believe the following statements accurately and clearly describe the relationship between Jesus' deity and Jesus' humanity? - "Jesus was not human only, for he retained true divinity in the Incarnation, but He was human truly. Divine Sonship and human servanthood were combined in a personal living synthesis. Jesus was truly God and truly man."
8. Describe ways in which Jesus' true humanity was manifested. In what way did Jesus identify with the human race, according to Hebrews 2:16-18? Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement; "To have the mind of Christ is to have the mind of sympathy for others who suffer and for others who undergo hard temptations."
9. Share your definition of servanthood which is patterned after the servanthood of Jesus Christ. What is the difference between 'rendering service' and 'being a servant'?
10. How was Jesus' humility supremely revealed during His earthly existence according to Philippians 2:8?
11. Why can it be said that Jesus' sacrificial life and His substitutionary death revealed both total obedience and yet total freedom?
12. How would you define true freedom? Do you agree with the following statement? - "That which is really good is God's will, and to obey that will is to be liberated - free!"
13. Following the example of Christ's obedience may mean several things. Name some of those things.

## PERFECTION IN HUMILITY

14. From the Biblical viewpoint, what does the giving of a new name to a person signify? What is the name which best marks the stage of Jesus' exaltation, following His death and resurrection, and what does this 'new name' mean?
15. If Jesus truly exercises 'lordship' in your life, what changes (in attitude and in behavior and in priorities) might likely take place in your own personal life?
16. What is your basic orientation in life, 'happiness' or 'service'? Do you agree with the following statement? - "The life which is focused on service rather than upon happiness, receives happiness which is beyond measure."  
(Note Matthew 6:33)

LIVING THE LIFE OF JOY!

**CHAPTER 7**

**THE SECRET  
OF CONTENTMENT**



## CHAPTER 7

SUBJECT: THE SECRET OF CONTENTMENT

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 2:12-18

TEXT: "There is great gain in godliness with contentment." (I Timothy 6:6)

INTRODUCTION: Our text says that godliness leads to contentment and such a life has great gain. Contentment is a by-product of godliness and not a trait to be sought within itself. To find contentment, one must live a godly life. There is great gain in godliness - to God, to self, to the world of men. God gains a soul for his kingdom, self gains contentment, the world gains an example.

No man can find a lasting contentment outside of a personal relationship with God, which relationship may be described in terms of a cooperative salvation. Salvation is both of God and of man. Permanent contentment is a natural outgrowth of this cooperative relationship, and is the trait that marks the winsome person and the winning person.

### OUTLINE:

- I. PRINCIPLE OF CONTENTMENT (v.14) - Perfect Truth In God.
- II. POWER OF CONTENTMENT (v.12-13) - Salvation as Cooperative Endeavor.
- III. PURPOSE OF CONTENTMENT (v.15-16) - Witness By Character and Word.
- IV. PEACE OF CONTENTMENT (v. 17-18) - Rejoicing In Face of Death.

CONCLUSION: The contented life is the life of perfect trust in God. This perfect trust in God is described in terms of salvation - a cooperative endeavor between God and man. God initiates faith in man, but man must obediently respond to that faith and consistently work with God to accomplish his salvation. The natural outgrowth of this cooperative endeavor is contentment - a characteristic that has great appeal to a distraught world. The scope of this contentment is seen in its peace in the face of changing circumstances, and in its peace in the face of impending death.

## THE SECRET OF CONTENTMENT

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 2:12-18 (Revised Standard Version)

TEXT: "There is great gain in godliness with contentment." (I Timothy 6:6)

### INTRODUCTION:

Our text says that godliness leads to contentment and such a life has great gain. Contentment is a by-product of godliness and not a trait to be sought within itself. To find contentment, one must live a godly life. There is great gain in godliness - to God, to self, to the world of men. God gains a soul for his Kingdom, self gains contentment, the world gains an example.

### PROPOSITION:

No man can find a lasting contentment outside of a personal relationship with God, which relationship may be described in terms of a cooperative salvation. Salvation is both of God and of man. Permanent contentment is a natural outgrowth of this cooperative relationship, and is the trait that marks the winsome person and the winning person.

#### I. PRINCIPLE OF CONTENTMENT (verse 14) - Perfect Trust In God.

Paul tells in one short phrase (which has two parts) what the essence or principle of Christian contentment is.

"Do all things without grumbling." This word is used in special connection with the rebellious children of Israel who were led by Moses across the wilderness. "And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness." (Exodus 16:2) Rather than accept their circumstances, they bitterly complained and grumbled. Such grumbling issued forth from a heart of unbelief, and just as godliness brings contentment, so unbelief brings destruction. "Now I desire to remind you... that he who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe." (Jude, verse 5)

"Do all things without questioning." A life that has an absence of grumbling is a life that has an absence of questioning. Paul is not condemning a quest for intellectual understanding of God's will and purposes. Paul himself was an intellectual giant who questioned and questioned again the mystery of God's will, hidden in ages past but revealed marvelously to Paul. The principle of contentment excludes, however, any moral doubting of God's purposes or person. The life of contentment is the life of perfect trust in God's love, wisdom, and power. Confidence in God's power means no questioning of God's ability to bring to pass what is best for the believer. The man who does not question God's person or providences is the truly contented man, and molds his circumstances instead of his circumstances molding him.

It is one thing to know the principle of contentment, and another to know the power to realize such contentment. To this subject we must now turn.

#### II. POWER OF CONTENTMENT (verses 12,13) - Salvation As Cooperative Endeavor

The secret of realizing true contentment is found in the word 'Salvation'. Salvation is a cooperative endeavor between God and man.

Declares Paul, "God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his

## THE SECRET OF CONTENTMENT

good pleasure." (v.13) The beginning, process, and the end of salvation is of God. He is the Initiator, Worker, and Completer of man's salvation. God is at work in man, ever before man makes a move toward God ('prevenient grace' - the grace that goes before, persuading and stimulating a desire for God.) God is at work in man, imparting both desire and strength to do God's will.

Salvation is also dependent upon man's response. Paul exhorts the Philippian believers to cooperate with God for the salvation of their souls. "Work out your own salvation (v.12) with fear and trembling." Paul reminds these Christians that obedience and earnest effort, born out of deep reverential fear of God, are essential ingredients in their final salvation. Fear of God comes from a recognition of God's power and person, and issues forth in a constant guarding against disobedience and slothfulness. Contentment is the atmosphere of the obedient, God-centered heart.

### III. PURPOSE OF CONTENTMENT (verses 15-16) - Witness By Character and Word

The work of God in the human heart, accompanied by man's obedient cooperation (v.12,13), results in Christ-like character - the kind of character that influences the present crooked and perverse generation (v.15). What is Christ-like character? It is the character which is described by three words, all found in verse 15.

Blameless - term describing the Christian in relationship to the world. Like as the world could not find blame in Jesus, so the world cannot find blame in a Christ-like character. In contrast to the world's crooked character (v.15), the Christian's character is straight and upright. In contrast to the world's perverse and impure behavior (v.15), the Christian's character is wholesome and pure.

Innocent - term describing internal heart condition of the Christian. A Christian is sincere and pure in motive and desires. He is unmixed, unadulterated, and single-minded in purpose. "Purity is to will one thing," said Kierkegaard. The Christian's sole motive is to please God. The literal meaning of the word 'sincere' in Greek means 'sun-tested'. Among the ancients, the hypocritical sculptors at times filled the cracks of blemished stone with wax and painted over the wax to make the sculptured piece look perfect. Of course, when the sun shone on the painted wax, the paint peeled and the wax melted, only to expose the unguineness of the work. The Christian is to be genuine, without pretence or insincerity.

Unblemished - term describing the Christian in relationship to God. As the Old Testament sacrifice was required by God to be unspotted and without blemish, so the life and character and sacrifice of the Christian is to be of the very best caliber. The Christian is a specimen of maturing humanity. A mature man is a man who fulfills the purpose for which he was created (just like a perfect glove is one that perfectly fulfills the purpose for which it was made - fitting snugly and comfortably on a hand). Thus a perfect man (Matthew 5:48) is one who is fulfilling the purpose for which he was made - fulfilling and fitting into the will of God. Such a man passes the scrutiny of God and is an unblemished man.

Thus, the blameless, innocent, and unblemished man is the truly contented man, whose witness in the world is effective. Contentment is for a purpose - to show a contrast to the world's darkness ("Shine as lights" [v.15] - character and silent witness of Christian), and to show a contrast to the world's ignorance and distraction ("Holding fast the word of life" [v.16] - message and verbal witness of the Christian).

## THE SECRET OF CONTENTMENT

### IV. PEACE OF CONTENTMENT (verses 17-18) -- Rejoicing In Face of Death

The contentment which God gives to the human heart is not subject to changing circumstances. It abides amidst the changes and chances of life, whether life brings plenty or poverty, honor or dishonor (Phil. 4:10-13). This contentment releases one from all fears and gives peace, in life or in death (Phil. 1:19-26).

The scope of this contentment is shown by Paul's peace and rejoicing even in the face of possible death (Philippians 2:17-18). Says Paul, "Even if I am to be poured a libation upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all." (2:17) 'Libation' was a very common heathen sacrifice in the form of a cup of wine which was poured out as an offering to the gods. Just as a libation was poured out to the gods, so in an immeasurably greater way the lives of the Philippian Christians were being poured out on God's altar of sacrificial and faithful living.

Paul, who was in prison awaiting possible death for his faith, goes on to say that he would greatly rejoice if God asked him to 'pour out' his own life upon the altar of sacrifice to God. Paul rejoices in the prospect of dying for Christ, which sacrificial death would be as a libation poured upon the present living sacrifice of the Philippians. Paul is not regretful but rejoicing, and asks others to rejoice in this prospect with him. "Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me." (2:18)

### CONCLUSION:

The contented life is the life of perfect trust in God. This perfect trust in God is described in terms of salvation - a cooperative endeavor between God and man. God initiates faith in man, but man must obediently respond to that faith and consistently work with God to accomplish his salvation. The natural outgrowth of this cooperative endeavor is contentment - a characteristic that has great appeal to a distraught world. The scope of this contentment is seen in its peace in the face of changing circumstances, and in its peace in the face of impending death.

## THE SECRET OF CONTENTMENT

### DISCUSSION:

1. Why can it be said that contentment is a 'by-product', rather than a trait that should be sought as a main goal in life?
2. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "No man can find a lasting contentment outside of a personal relationship with God, which relationship may be described in terms of a cooperative salvation."
3. What two phrases (from Philippians 2:14) describe the essence or the principle of true contentment?
4. When Paul exhorted the Philippian believers to "do all things without grumbling", what illustration from past Jewish history did Paul refer to in order to demonstrate the tragic consequences of grumbling? What condition of heart exists that results in a life of grumbling against God?
5. When Paul told the Philippian believers that there was to be no 'questioning' or 'arguing', what did he mean? (Note Phil. 2:14)
6. If a life of contentment is based on confidence and trust in God, what specific characteristics of God's character does a believer consider as totally trustworthy?
7. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The man who does not question God's person or providences is the truly contented man, and such a person molds his circumstances instead of his circumstances molding him."
8. Is man's salvation solely accomplished by God, or is there evidence (from Scripture and from personal experience) that salvation is a cooperative endeavor between God and man? Does man have a part in his ultimate salvation, or is salvation the sole result of God's sovereign will and power?
9. What is meant by 'prevenient grace'? Do you agree that God is the Initiator, Worker, and Completer of man's salvation? What part does man's response play in the final salvation of a person? (Note Phil. 2:12)
10. What practically and specifically does it mean to you personally "to work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (2:12)? What is the difference between 'reverential respect' and 'terrorizing fear', in terms of motivation for obedience to God?
11. How is Christ-like character initially obtained and progressively developed in the life of a person?
12. What three words describe the life of a Christ-like person, in terms of the believer's relationship to the world, to himself, and to God?
13. In terms of behavior, what does it mean for a believer to be 'blameless'?

## THE SECRET OF CONTENTMENT

14. What does it mean for a believer to be 'sincere' or 'pure' or 'innocent'? What is the literal meaning of the word 'sincere', and what is the interesting picture behind the meaning of this word?
15. What does it mean for a believer to be 'unblemished' in his relationship to God, and what Old Testament picture is behind the meaning of this word?
16. What is meant, according to Scripture, by a 'perfect' or a 'mature' man (Matthew 5:48)?
17. In what ways can a Christ-like person - a contented believer - have a powerful impact on an unbelieving world? (Note Philippians 2:15-16)
18. What is meant by the statement: "The contentment which God gives to the human heart is not subject to changing circumstances."?
19. What attitude, in the face of death, did Paul demonstrate which showed the amazing scope of God's contentment in his life? Based on Paul's statement in Philippians 2:17, what is the secret for finding deliverance from the terrorizing fear of physical death?
20. Share your interpretation of Philippians 2:17, in terms of the Philippians' present service and Paul's anticipated sacrifice of his life.

LIVING THE LIFE OF JOY!

**CHAPTER 8**

**THE PROOF  
OF HUMILITY - SERVICE**



## CHAPTER 8

SUBJECT: THE PROOF OF HUMILITY - SERVICE

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 2:19-30

INTRODUCTION: The proof of the theology of Paul was in its workability and applicability in daily living. Paul did not stop with mere words, ideas, and programs, but Paul's main concern was with people. His ministry was a person-centered, not a philosophy-centered, ministry. Paul gives much room in his letters to people - their strengths, weaknesses, needs, contributions, friendship.

The proof of humility is service. It is easy to talk about humility but true humility will express itself in action - the action of service. Let us see how humility expressed itself in action in the lives of Paul's two friends - Timothy and Epaphroditus.

### OUTLINE:

- I. TIMOTHY
  - A. Interested in Well-being of Others.
  - B. Tested and Proven Worker.
- II. EPAPHRODITUS
  - A. The Activities of Epaphroditus
  - B. The Traits of Epaphroditus

CONCLUSION: The proof of humility is seen in service to God and to one's fellow men. Timothy served his fellow men humbly by maintaining a heart-felt concern and interest in the well-being of others. Timothy unselfishly served Paul, never seeking self-glory or selfish advantage. As Paul's personal representative, he was careful never to distort Paul's message. Paul thought so much of him that he called him his son - denoting warmth, obedience, and companionship. "Timothy is the patron saint of all those who are content with the second place, so long as they can serve." (Barclay)

Epaphroditus was a man of faithful and humble service, as seen in terms used to describe his relationship to Paul: brother, fellow worker, fellow soldier, messenger (apostle-elite), servant (one who gives freely, not expecting anything in return). His humility is further seen in his affection, in his concern not to needlessly burden others, in his character which made him most beloved by Paul and the Philippians, and by his willingness to gamble his life to serve Paul and to serve Christ.

## THE PROOF OF HUMILITY - SERVICE

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 2:19-30

### INTRODUCTION:

Paul was not an 'armchair theologian', that is, one who confined himself to a room to study theories and theological abstractions and speculations. Paul's theology was a theology of action. The 'proof of the pudding' is in the tasting. The proof of the theology of Paul was in its workability and applicability in daily living. Paul did not stop with mere words, ideas, and programs, but Paul's main concern was with people. His ministry was a person-centered, not a philosophy-centered, ministry. Paul's letters reveal this emphasis. Paul gives much room in his letter to people -- their strengths, weaknesses, needs, contributions, friendship.

The last part of the second chapter of Philippians, is given to Paul's description of two of his friends -- Timothy and Epaphroditus.

We have seen a common theme running throughout the second chapter of Philippians, and that theme is humility. Paul exhorted the Philippians to practice humility which would lead to a unified church (v.1-4). Paul pointed the Philippians to the greatest of all examples of humility -- the perfect humility of Jesus (v.14-18). Paul now concretely show the proof of humility by pointing to the lives of two of his dear friends -- Timothy and Epaphroditus (v.19-30).

### PROPOSITION:

The proof of humility is service. It is easy to talk about humility but true humility will express itself in action - the action of service. Let us see how humility expressed itself in action in the lives of Paul's two friends.

#### I. TIMOTHY

Perhaps there was no one closer to Paul than Timothy. We know few details about Timothy, but all we do know is highly complimentary. Timothy was probably brought up, trained, and educated in Greek ways. He has a very godly mother and grandmother who early in his life taught him the Scriptures. Upon meeting Timothy on his second missionary journey, Paul immediately saw in Timothy qualities and abilities that could wonderfully be used in service to Jesus Christ. From that time on, they were very close together and spent much time together, travelling, working, preaching, and writing. Timothy was even with Paul in prison in Rome.

Notice the descriptions which Paul gives of Timothy.

#### A. INTERESTED IN WELL-BEING OF OTHERS.

"I have no one like him, who will be genuinely anxious for your welfare. They all look after their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ." (2:20,21) Timothy was not self-absorbed in his own interests but took a genuine interest in the needs, troubles, and successes of other people. He was not self-centered but other-centered. People were important to him; in fact, people were the most important thing of all to Timothy. Because Timothy was saturated with the Scripture it is no wonder that Timothy valued human personality and needs so highly. The Scripture says that individuals are of

## THE PROOF OF HUMILITY - SERVICE

infinite importance to God. Man carries in his being part of God - the very image of God; therefore, he who would value the highest thing in life must value the human being. Man has intrinsic value in virtue of his special creation.

Paul earlier had written these words in this letter: "You must look to each other's interest and not merely to your own." (2:4 NEB) In Timothy, that statement took on flesh and blood. Paul earlier reminded us that Jesus Himself put aside His own interests and left the glory of heaven to seek and to save the lost of earth.

Paul was saddened that so many others had become pre-occupied in their own selfish pursuits and had forgotten the interests of Christ and the interests of their fellow men. Said one man, "A pagan is one whose activities do not go beyond his own selfish interest." (Rosell; No.251)

### B. TESTED AND PROVEN WORKER

"But you know how Timothy has proved his worth, working with me for the gospel like a son with his father." (2:22; Phillips)

Timothy's character remained solid amidst the test of time and the trials of circumstances. He remained steadfast during persecution and loss. None was more faithful to Paul during hardship than Timothy. Timothy learned to preach the Word 'in season and out of season' - when it was popular to preach and when it was not popular to preach. It may have been hard for Timothy personally to preach at times. It appears that Timothy may have been a naturally timid person, for Paul wrote these words to Timothy: "Hence I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control." (II Timothy 1:6,7 RSV) Timothy's worth was established by the strength of character that was his as a result of the hardships which he endured for the Gospel.

The worth of Timothy's character and the proof of his humility are seen in Paul's further description of Timothy: "Working with me for the gospel like a son with his father." (v.22b) What is the ideal relationship between father and son? Warm, obedient companionship. When Paul could not go to one of the churches himself, he sent Timothy as his personal representative. Paul thought of and trusted Timothy as he would if he were his own son. "The great use of Timothy was that Timothy was a man who could be sent anywhere, and who was always willing to go. In the hands of Timothy a message was as safe as if Paul had delivered it himself." (Barclay's Philippians; pg.59,60)

## II. EPAPHRODITUS

In the last portion of chapter two, Paul speaks in some detail of Epaphroditus, the special messenger who was sent to Paul at Rome from the Philippian Church. While at Rome serving Paul during Paul's imprisonment, Epaphroditus became very ill, perhaps with the dreaded Roman fever. He almost died from his illness, but God spared him. Now, out of necessity, Epaphroditus must return to Philippi. Paul was concerned that the Philippian church would kindly receive him back, and Paul wanted to make sure that none would blame Epaphroditus for being weak or cowardly. Paul, who himself was facing the possibility of death of Rome, was not so concerned about his own problems that he could not take time to think about saving a friend from embarrassment. So Paul defends the character and activities of Epaphroditus.

## THE PROOF OF HUMILITY - SERVICE

### A. THE ACTIVITIES OF EPAPHRODITUS

Paul calls Epaphroditus his fellow brother, showing his oneness of fellowship and sympathy. He was one who could feel for Paul and who expressed warm sympathy and love and understanding during Paul's difficult prison experience.

Paul calls Epaphroditus his fellow worker. He knew what it was to work long hours for the cause of the Gospel and for the help of Paul. He never shunned responsibility and labor. He was one with Paul in work.

Paul calls Epaphroditus his fellow soldier. Epaphroditus was not only one with Paul in sympathy and in work but also in battle for the truth and in danger. He knew the truth and fearlessly defended and proclaimed the truth.

Epaphroditus was not only fellow brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but he was the messenger and minister to Paul's need. The meaning of 'messenger' is 'apostle' - one of the very spiritually elite of the faith. The word for minister is 'servant' and has a special meaning. "In the ancient days in the Greek cities there were men who, because they loved their city so much, out of their own resources and at their own expense undertook certain great civic duties. (Examples: defray the expenses of an embassy, pay costs of putting on a great Greek drama, pay cost of a great athlete who would represent the city, pay a crew to serve in the navy of the state.) (Barclay's Philippians; pg.62) The word which is used to describe such a man is applied to Epaphroditus. Epaphroditus is one who gives of his very self in service to Paul, with no expectation of receiving anything in return. His service is borne out of love for Paul. Such service has no ulterior motives attached to it. That is the real proof of humility - service borne out of love.

The specially elite in faith (apostle and messenger) is the one who abandons himself in unselfish service to his fellow men. Epaphroditus was elite, not because he was aloof, but because he was intimately and lovingly involved in caring for another.

### B. THE TRAITS OF EPAPHRODITUS

Paul expresses the attitude of Epaphroditus toward the Philippians: "he has been longing for you all." Epaphroditus, a man of intense, deep, and tender feelings, was very homesick for his friends. He wanted to be of service to Paul, but his illness and the anxiety which it caused Paul and the Philippian friends, caused Epaphroditus to long for home, family, and friends. "He has been homesick for you, and was worried because he know that you had heard that he was ill." Epaphroditus was concerned not to burden others unnecessarily.

Epaphroditus was dearly beloved by his friends. Said Paul, "Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious." (Philippians 2:27,28)

The anxiety that Paul felt over Epaphroditus' sickness, and the rejoicing that his presence would bring the Philippians, were both evidence that Epaphroditus was very dearly beloved.

Epaphroditus was deserving of highest honor. "Honor such men, for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his live to complete your service

## THE PROOF OF HUMILITY - SERVICE

to me." (v.29,30) How did he risk his life? In his identification with Paul's troubles and Paul's prison ministry of the Gospel, Epaphroditus risked becoming identified and involved in Paul's trial and charge.

The word for 'risked' is 'gambled'. It means that he recklessly risked or gambled his life for the sake of Christ. He was a courageous and brave man, willing to risk his very own life while he conscientiously and unselfishly served Paul.

"In the days of the Early Church there was an association of men and women called the parabolani, the gamblers. It was their aim and object to visit the prisoners and the sick, especially those who were ill with dangerous and infectious diseases. In A.D. 252 a plague broke out in Carthage; the heathen threw out the bodies of their dead, and fled in terror. Cyprian, the Christian bishop, gathered his congregation together and set them to burying the dead and nursing the sick in that plague-stricken city; and by doing so they saved the city, at the risk of their lives, from destruction and desolation. There should be in the Christian an almost reckless courage which is ready to gamble with it's life to serve Christ and to serve men." (Barclay's Phil.; pg.62,63)

### CONCLUSION:

The proof of humility is seen in service to God and one's fellow men. Timothy served his fellow men humbly by maintaining a heart-felt concern and interest in the well-being of others. Timothy unselfishly served Paul, never seeking self-glory or selfish advantage. As Paul's personal representative, he was careful never to distort Paul's message. Paul thought so much of him that he called him his son - denoting warmth, obedience, and companionship. "Timothy is the patron saint of all those who are quite content with the second place, so long as they can serve." (Barclay's Philippians; pg.60)

Epaphroditus was a man of faithful and humble service, as seen in the terms used to describe his relationship to Paul: Brother, fellow worker, fellow soldier, messenger (apostle-elite), servant (one who gives freely, not expecting anything in return). His humility is further seen in his affection, in his concern not to needlessly burden others, in his character which made him most beloved by Paul and the Philippians, and by his willingness to gamble his life to serve Paul and to serve Christ.

## THE PROOF OF HUMILITY - SERVICE

### DISCUSSION:

1. What is meant by the statement: "Paul's theology was a theology of action."
2. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "It is easy to talk about humility but true humility will express itself in action - the action of service."
3. From the study of 2 Timothy 1:3-7, what can be learned about Timothy's background, religious training, and temperament?
4. What characteristic in the life of Timothy was so commendable, and from what source did Timothy likely learn those values that made his personality so attractive?
5. What is your reaction to the following statement: "A pagan is one whose activities do not go beyond his own selfish interest."?
6. How is the steadfastness of Timothy's character described by Paul, and what were ways in which this steadfastness was manifested in Timothy's relationships to Paul?
7. What traits in Timothy's character motivated Paul to warmly address Timothy as his 'son'?
8. How, in the face of Paul's impending death, is the selflessness of Paul manifested in his concern for Epaphroditus?
9. What are Paul's descriptions of Epaphroditus which reveal Paul's deep love for Epaphroditus?
10. What is the significance of the term 'messenger' as this title was used by Paul to describe Epaphroditus, and what is the Greek background for this term?
11. In light of his personality temperament and his present difficult circumstances, why did Epaphroditus long to see his fellow believers at Philippi?
12. For what reason did Paul tell the Philippian church that Epaphroditus should be given special honor and recognition by the Philippian believers (Philippians 2:29,30)?
13. When Paul spoke about Epaphroditus 'risking' his life, what did he mean? What is the Greek background behind the use of the word 'risk'?
14. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "There should be in the Christian an almost reckless courage which is ready to gamble with its life to serve Christ and to serve men."
15. Why is Timothy called "the patron saint of all those who are quite content with second place"?

LIVING THE LIFE OF JOY!

**CHAPTER 9**

**DESTRUCTIVE PERVERSIONS  
OF FAITH**



## CHAPTER 9

SUBJECT: DESTRUCTIVE PERVERSIONS OF FAITH

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 3:1-2; 4-6; 18-19

TEXT: "That I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ - the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith."  
(Philippians 3:9)

INTRODUCTION: To exercise a sound faith means that one must avoid the perversions of faith, namely legalism and antinomianism.

### OUTLINE:

#### I. THE WAY OF LEGALISM ('Living By Rules') (v.2)

##### A. Paul's Derision of Legalism

1. Paul called these Jews 'Dogs'.
2. Paul called these Jews 'Evil Workers'.
3. Paul called these Jews 'Mutilators of the Flesh'.

##### B. Paul's Description of Legalism

1. The way of legalism is the way of futility because of its exclusive focus on Externalism.
2. The way of legalism is the way of futility because of its emphasis on Traditionalism.

#### II. THE WAY OF ANTINOMIANISM ('Living Without Rules')

##### A. Definition of Antinomianism

##### B. Description of Antinomianism

1. Antinomians are Enemies of the Cross of Christ (v.18)
2. Antinomians are self-indulgent.
3. Antinomians are earthly-minded, instead of heavenly-minded.
4. The future of antinomians is eternal loss.

CONCLUSION: The way of legalism and the way of antinomianism are both perversions of true faith. We can't be saved by works, but it is also true to say that a saving faith is a working faith. Faith without works is dead. The faith that saves is the faith that not only imputes a man as righteous, but it is also a faith that imparts the righteousness of Christ to the repentant sinner. We are saved by grace, through faith, for good works (Ephesians 2:8-10).

The way of faith (in contrast to the way of legalism and the way of antinomianism) is the way of love. Wrote Paul, "Pay all your debts except the debt of love for others - never finish paying that! For if you love them, you will be obeying all of God's laws, fulfilling all his requirements."  
(Romans 13:8, Living Bible)

## DESTRUCTIVE PERVERSIONS OF FAITH

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TEXT: "That I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ - the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith."  
(Philippians 3:9)

### INTRODUCTION:

A good shepherd has many good qualities - one of which is guarding his sheep against the wolves. Paul was filled with joy as he thought of his beloved people in the church at Philippi, but, while joy was the predominant emphasis in his love letter to the Philippian believers, there is also a note of concern and caution that can be felt when one carefully reads the Book of Philippians. Paul was a man of love whose joy and delight in the Philippians is perhaps unmatched. But Paul was also a man whose mind could be troubled and whose emotions could be disturbed with great anger when dangerous wolves were attempting to destroy his sheep - his friends and parishioners! In contrast to the tender mood of love and affection which is felt in chapter one and two, Paul, in the first part of chapter three, blazes out in righteous anger against false teachers who apparently had crept into the warm fellowship of the Philippian church, seeking to lead the believers astray by their perverted teachings on the subject of faith.

Paul warns, "Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh." (Philippians 3:2) This is a warning against the false teaching of legalism. Later in the chapter he writes, "For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things." (Philippians 3:18-19) This is a warning against the false teaching of antinomianism. Legalism is living by rules, and believing that by doing so, one is gaining a right standing with God. Antinomianism is living without rules, and is based on the belief that one's practice of sinning makes no difference to the all-forgiving grace of God. Legalists debase grace by mixing works with it; antinomians pervert grace by divorcing it from behavior. Both legalism and antinomianism are perversions of true faith and lead to spiritual death!

It is important to understand the delightful participation in faith (v.7-11), the diligent performance of faith (v.12-17), and the definite and ultimate perfection through faith (v.20-21), but before we look at these various dimensions of a Biblical faith, we must first take note of the destructive perversions of faith (v.1-2; 4-6; 18-19).

### PROPOSITION:

To exercise a sound faith means that one must avoid the perversions of faith, namely legalism and antinomianism.

## DESTRUCTIVE PERVERSIONS OF FAITH

### I. THE WAY OF LEGALISM ('Living By Rules') (v.2)

#### A. PAUL'S DERISION OF LEGALISM

Philippians 3:2 describes, as well as derides, the way of legalism. Those whom Paul severely derides in Philippians 3:2 are those who believed that, in order for one to be accepted by God, he must first become a Jew and accept the mark of the Jewish identity which was circumcision.

Notes Barclay, "It was the teaching of these Jews that, if a man wished to be saved he must earn credit in the sight of God by countless deeds of the law, that he must build up a credit balance in the sight of God, that he must put God in his debt by continuously carrying out these deeds of the law. Further, it was the teaching of these Jews that salvation belongs to the Jews and to no one else, and that, before God has any use for a man, the man must be circumcised and must, as it were, become a Jew." (Barclay's Philippians; pg.66)

##### 1. Paul called these Jews 'dogs'

"Paul says to them, 'In your proud self-righteousness, you call other men dogs; in your nationalistic pride in being a Jew, you call other nations dogs; it is you yourselves who are dogs, because you shamelessly pervert the gospel of Jesus Christ.'" (Ibid; pg.67)

##### 2. Paul called these Jews 'evil workers'

They were workers of evil instead of workers of good, for the acceptance by men of their ideas led to spiritual bondage, not to spiritual freedom and life. They taught that only by keeping the Old Testament laws of God could one be accepted by God. "The effect of their teaching was to take man further away from God instead of to bring men nearer to God." (Barclay; pg.68)

The way of law is the way of uncertainty. In attempting to achieve God's favor through mere human effort and attainments, there is always uncertainty as to how much more one needs to do to be accepted by God. One tends to think, "Perhaps a little more effort and work will gain God's favor and put me in good standing with God". Such attitudes of the mind and labors of the hand, lead to stress, strain, anxiety and misery. Simply recall Martin Luther's agony of soul when he tried to earn God's favor by religious labors and performance. However, in contrast to the 'Way of Law', the 'Way of Faith' is simply the acceptance of God's free forgiveness and loving favor (grace), and is not based upon human performance and achievement. It has nothing to do with seeking to appease an angry God or seeking to out balance one's bad works with good works. The way of faith leads to quiet confidence and rest in God.

The way of law is the way of fear. The way of law is the way of works. The more one focuses upon works, the more one focuses upon law. The law then becomes the focus of attention and the standard for harsh judgment. Fear becomes the motivation for behavior. Performance of good works to avoid God's judgment becomes the goal of life. However, the way of faith is the way of grace. The more one focuses upon faith, the more one focuses upon grace. God's love then becomes the focus of attention and the standard for merciful evaluation. Love becomes the motivation for behavior, not fear. Performance of good deeds to express love to God and love for man becomes the goal of life.

## DESTRUCTIVE PERVERSIONS OF FAITH

The way of law is the way of condemnation. What the law forbids, the sinful heart desires, resulting in condemnation. "It is human nature that when a thing is forbidden it has a tendency to become desirable. 'Stolen fruits are sweetest.' Law, therefore, can actually move a man to desire the very thing which it forbids. The essential complement of law is judgement, and so long as a man lives in a religion whose dominant thought is law, he cannot see himself as anything other than a condemned criminal at the bar of God's justice." (Barclay's Romans; pg.69)

### 3. Paul called these Jews 'Mutilators of the Flesh.'

These Jews who were perverting the way of Faith were legalists. They were more concerned in the symbols of religion than in the essence of religion, more concerned in rituals of religion than in the reality of a personal relationship with God. "They regarded circumcision in itself as being enough to set them apart specially for God. They regarded this merely physical badge as making them belong to God, and making everything else unnecessary...So what Paul says is, 'If you have nothing to show but circumcision of the flesh, if all you have is a physical mark, then you are not really circumcised - you are only mutilated. For real circumcision is devotion of heart and mind and thought and life to God.'" (Barclay's Phil; pg.69)

### B. PAUL'S DESCRIPTION OF LEGALISM (v.4-7)

It is interesting how Paul describes the characteristics of the legalistic life-style. He points out the features of the legalistic life-style, and shows at the same time the futility of such a life-style - by declaring his own utter failure as a rigid and legalistic Jew, before he became a Christian. "Yet if anyone ever had reason to hope that he could save himself, it would be I. If others could be saved by what they are, certainly I could! For I went through the Jewish initiation ceremony when I was eight years old, having been born into a pure-blooded Jewish home that was a branch of the old original Benjamin family. So I was a real Jew if there ever was one! What's more, I was a member of the Pharisees who demand the strictest obedience to every Jewish law and custom. And sincere? Yes, so much so that I greatly persecuted the church; and I tried to obey every Jewish rule and regulation right down to the very last point." (Philippians 3:4-7; Living Bible)

Humanly speaking, Paul, as a devout Jew, had a long list of outstanding credentials - both hereditary and religious and moral credentials - but he declares that none of his legalistic attempts to gain a right standing with God were successful. He had to count all of his human attainments as utter loss, in order that he might gain Christ!

Take a closer look at Paul's life in legalism, before he found Christ through faith alone.

### 1. The way of legalism is the way of futility because of its exclusive focus on Externalism.

Outward religious performance becomes the standard for righteousness rather than inward relationship with God. In the case of these Jews, the fact that one had received the physical mark of circumcision in the flesh proved that one was acceptable to God. There are still those today who depend on religious

## DESTRUCTIVE PERVERSIONS OF FAITH

performance to bring them acceptance by God. There are still those who believe that outward performance of religious activities and duties will bring them favor from God. Reading so many chapters in the Bible daily, or saying so many prayers, or doing so many good deeds, or knocking on so many doors (Jehovah's Witnesses), or being baptized, etc. - these activities are looked at as the MEANS to one's acceptance by God rather than as RESULTS of one's love response to God for His salvation. Legalism focuses on one's outward performance rather than upon the internal condition of one's heart.

### 2. The way of legalism is the way of futility because of its emphasis on Traditionalism.

Tradition, in and of itself, is not necessarily bad. The past is to be cherished, and lessons from the past can be beneficially applied to the present-day situations. But Paul, as a legalist before he became a Christian, trusted in his past heredity and heritage exclusively as the means by which he gained a right standing with God.

#### Advantages In His Heredity:

a. "Circumcised on the eighth day" (v.5) - "Here he stresses the fact that he had been born into the Jewish faith, and had known its privileges and had observed its ceremonies since his birth." (Barclay; pg.72)

b. "of the people of Israel" (v.5j) - "By calling himself an Israelite, Paul stressed the absolute purity of his race and his descent." (Barclay; pg.72)

c. "of the tribe of Benjamin" (v.5) - "Paul stated that he was of the tribe of Benjamin, it was a claim that he was not simply an Israelite, but he also belonged to the highest aristocracy of Israel." (Barclay; pg.73)

#### Advantages In His Heritage and personal Attainments:

d. "a Hebrew of Hebrews" (v.5) - "Paul claims, not only to be a pure-blooded Jew, but to be a Jew who still spoke the Hebrew tongue." (pg.74)

e. "in regard to the law, a Pharisee" (v.5) "It is Paul's claim that not only was he a Jew who had retained his ancestral religion, but he had also devoted his whole life to the most rigorous and unbending observance of it. No man knew better from personal experience (as a Pharisee) what Jewish religion was at its highest and most demanding peak." (pg.74)

f. "as for zeal, persecuting the church" (v.6) "It is Paul's claim that he knew Judaism at its most intense and even fanatical heat." (pg.75)

g. "as for legalistic righteousness, faultless" (v.6) "Paul claims that there was no demand of the Law which he did not fulfill. As far as the Law went, he was beyond criticism." (pg.75)

There are still those today who, in a limited degree at least, are like Paul before he became a Christian. Some depend on their birth into a Christian home as their 'passport' to heaven. Some unconsciously, if not consciously, believe that the fact that they are an American gives them a special and favorite place in God's evaluation. Because they believe in democracy and freedom and justice and equality - American ideals - they think that they are 'Christian' automatically. Some, like Paul, stress the absolute purity of

## DESTRUCTIVE PERVERSIONS OF FAITH

their race or of their special and unique descent, or of their elite aristocratic ancestry, believing that such an heredity brings them special treatment from God.

There are others who depend upon their own achievements as worthy credentials to present to God in order to earn His acceptance. Religious achievements, or moral and social achievements, or educational and cultural and professional achievements. There are those yet who mistakenly think that certain things will save them, such as morality, religion, baptism, church membership, culture, natural birth, charitable deeds, or mere sincerity.

But after Paul lists all of the credentials which he took pride in while he was striving to please God through his legalistic life-style, he declares: "But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him." (Philippians 3:7-8)

The way of legalism - i.e., the way of externalism and traditionalism and human achievement - is the way to ultimate and total loss!

### II. THE WAY OF ANTINOMIANISM ('LIVING WITHOUT RULES')

#### A. DEFINITION OF ANTINOMIANISM

If the way of legalism is a perversion of true faith, the way of Antinomianism is also a perversion of true faith. If legalism is "living by rules", Antinomianism is "living without rules". These ways are two opposite and extreme ways to live - both of which lead to eternal death!

What is the way of Antinomianism? Philippians 3:18-19 describes this futile way of life. "For I have told you often before, and I say it again now with tears in my eyes, there are many who walk along the Christian road who are really enemies of the cross of Christ. Their future is eternal loss, for their god is their appetite: they are proud of what they should be ashamed of; and all they think about is this life here on earth." (Living Bible)

Here is the same scripture in Phillips' translation: "For there are many, of whom I have told you before and tell you again now, even with tears, whose lives make them enemies of the cross of Christ. These men are heading for utter destruction - their god is their own appetite, they glory in their shame, and this world is the limit of their horizon." (Phillips)

Legalists "debase grace by mixing works with it; the (antinomians) pervert grace by divorcing it from behavior." (Paul Rees)

Legalists are those who fall into the folly and futility of salvation by works, and the antinomians are those who, on the opposite end of the continuum, fall into the folly and futility of professing a salvation which makes light of works, resulting in them ending up in a state of lawlessness and anarchy.

Antinomians are those who want liberty without restraint, privileges without responsibilities, and grace without law. "The antinomians were those who denied that there was any law at all in the Christian life. They declared that they were within the grace of God, and that, therefore, it did not matter what they did; God would forgive; they were quite safe; no further discipline and no further effort were necessary...There were those who distorted the principle of Christian liberty. They said that in Christianity all law was gone, that the Christian had perfect liberty to do what he likes. In other

## DESTRUCTIVE PERVERSIONS OF FAITH

words, they turned Christian liberty into unchristian license, and gloried in giving their lusts and passions full play. There were those who distorted the Christian doctrine of grace. They said that grace was wide enough to cover every sin and stain; that the love of God was great enough to forgive any sin; therefore, let a man sin as he liked and not worry; it would make no difference to the all-forgiving grace of God." (Barclay's Philipians; pg.83,85)

### B. DESCRIPTION OF ANTINOMIANISM

#### 1. Antinomians are Enemies of the Cross of Christ (v.18)

Antinomians don't realize the seriousness of sin and the high cost to God to forgive sins through the bloody death of Christ on the cross. Anyone who 'trades' on the mercy of God treats the cross lightly - and therefore is an enemy of the Cross of Christ!

#### 2. Antinomians are self-indulgent.

They live to gratify the desires of their flesh, with no desire to sacrifice for others or for Christ. They are very self-centered, food and pleasure are their gods! Of such people, Jude wrote, "When these men join you at the love feasts of the church, they are evil smears among you, laughing and carrying on, gorging and stuffing themselves without a thought for others." (Jude 12a)

#### 3. Antinomians are earthly-minded, instead of heavenly minded.

They have a wrong set of values. They value the material instead of the spiritual. They live only for the world of time instead of the world of eternity. They are spiritually short-sighted, and pleasure-obsessed! The accumulation of things preoccupies their sole attention!

#### 4. The future of antinomians is eternal loss.

Why? Because antinomians make light of sin and practice sinning against God. They thoughtlessly break God's laws. The Bible says, "The wages of sin is death." (Roman 6:23) Wrote Jude, "Some godless teachers have wormed their way in among you, saying that after we become Christians we can do just as we like without fear of God's punishment. The fate of such people was written long ago, for they have turned against our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ...They are not only dead, but doubly dead, for they have been pulled out roots and all, to be burned...Ahead of them is the everlasting gloom and darkness that God has prepared for them." (Jude 4,12b,13b)

Paul encountered the problem of antinomianism in Romans 6:1. Said Paul to the antinomians: "Well then, shall we keep on sinning so that God can keep on showing us more and more kindness and forgiveness?" (Romans 6:1,L.B.)

Some antinomians might be heard to say this: "If I sin, so what! I am a Christian! I am saved by grace and grace alone. The degree of my sinning in no way affects my relationship with Christ. If I once was saved, I am always saved, regardless of my sinning. Grace covers all my sins. Did not Paul write, 'Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds!'"

Such reasoning - the reasoning of an antinomian - is the reasoning of a person who wished to sin and at the same time be guaranteed safety from sin's

## DESTRUCTIVE PERVERSIONS OF FAITH

consequences. Paul tells us in Romans 6 that the reign of grace and the reign of sin are totally incompatible. To be saved by grace is to be saved from sinning! It is utterly absurd to reason as follows: "In light of God's great power to forgive, it is therefore safe - and even virtuous - to sin, for my sinning gives God a chance to exercise His great grace in forgiveness!"

Paul refutes such reasoning: "Anyone who lightly regards sin, also lightly regards the meaning of union with Christ, and lightly regards the call to holy and righteous living!" In other words, willful, habitual sinning is a perversion of God's grace! It is a tragedy to presume upon the mercy of God and to pervert the grace of God!

Paul would warn us against a trivial attitude toward sinning - the kind of attitude the antinomians have regarding sinning. Paul would urge us never to take God's grace and mercy for granted! Realize the seriousness of sin, confess it quickly, and turn from it decisively. To engage in willful, habitual sinning is a total perversion of God's grace. To practice sinning is to deny the operation of God's grace in one's life. Paul would agree with John who states that he who is presently practicing sinning is he who is not in a present state of knowing Christ. (I John 3:8)

There are antinomians who are very perverted in their thinking: "The more we sin, the more grace will abound. Sin does not matter, for God will forgive anyway. In fact, we can go further than that and say that sin is an excellent thing, because it gives the grace of God a chance to operate." The conclusion of such an argument is that sin produces the greatest thing in the world.

To use this type of antinomian reasoning is about like saying (to use a very simple illustration) that it is a good thing for basements of houses to be filled with rain water, for this give a chance for the pumps to show their power in pumping water out of basements!

Or it is like saying, "It is a good things to have an accident, for the accident gives the insurance company a chance to prove itself!"

Or it is like saying, "It is a good thing to have a serious illness, for the illness gives the doctor a chance to prove his medical skills!"

Or it is like saying, "It is a good thing to break a parent's heart, for it gives the parent opportunity to exercise his love and grace in forgiveness!"

### CONCLUSION:

So, the way of legalism and the way of antinomianism are both perversions of true faith. We can't be saved by works, but it is also true to say that a saving faith is a working faith. Faith without works is dead. The faith that saves is the faith that not only imputes a man as righteous, but it is also a faith that imparts the righteousness of Christ to the repentant sinner. We are saved by grace, through faith, for good works (Ephesians 2:8-10). Notes Bastian, "Rules do not save us nor keep us saved, but they do offer us guidance in working out our salvation in fear and trembling. However, rules must be put in their rightful place. Mature Christians know you cannot live without rules any more than a truck driver can drive a truck or a manager can operate a store without special regulations. Mature Christians also know that it is folly to try to live by rules. To do so is to court legalism. For the mature Christians it is neither a matter of living without rules nor by rules. The object is to live beyond rules. Here's what this means. Rules help in laying a good foundation for the new life. But rules set down principles which are clear applications of Christian doctrine, and these we readily internalize. They become principles by which we regulate the new life in Christ." (Belonging; pg.142; Bastian)

## DESTRUCTIVE PERVERSIONS OF FAITH

The way of faith (in contrast to the way of legalism and the way of antinomianism) is the way of love. Wrote Paul, "Pay all your debts except the debt of love for others - never finish paying that! For if you love them, you will be obeying all of God's laws, fulfilling all his requirements." (Romans 13:8, Living Bible)

## DESTRUCTIVE PERVERSIONS OF FAITH

### DISCUSSION:

1. What accounts for the sudden change in Paul's mood as seen in chapter three, as contrasted with Paul's mood in chapters one and two of the book of Philippians?
2. By way of contrast, define and describe the meaning of 'legalism' and 'antinomianism'.
3. In seeking to understand the various dimensions of Biblical faith, list (with the Scripture references) the four aspects of 'faith' as each is described in the third chapter of Philippians.
4. Of whom is Paul speaking when he warns the Philippian believers to "look out for the dogs" (Phil. 2:2)? Describe the beliefs of these heretical teachers which made them and their influence so dangerous in the early Church.  
Why do you think Paul was so bold as to choose to call these teachers 'dogs'? What is there about their teachings which justifies Paul calling them 'evil workers'?
5. Why is the way of 'law' the way of uncertainty and total frustration? Why, in contrast to the way of 'law', is the way of 'faith' the way of peace and joy?
6. Why is it true that fear becomes the motivation for behavior in the life of the person who is seeking to gain God's favor through the keeping of laws?
7. Is the performance of good works the means of gaining God's favor, or is the performance of good works the natural expression of one's love for God and for one's fellowmen?
8. Why is condemnation the inevitable consequence which comes to a person who is seeking to gain God's favor through law-keeping?
9. What was, for the legalists, the essence of religion and the mark of their spiritual distinction? Why was Paul justified to angrily call these teachers "Mutilators of the Flesh"? (Phil. 3:2)
10. What are the characteristics in the lives of those whom Paul called "the true circumcision"? (Phil. 3:3)
11. Give modern-day illustrations which demonstrate the truth of the following statement: "Legalism focuses on one's outward performance rather than upon the internal condition of one's heart."
12. List and describe Paul's 'credentials' which, from a legalistic viewpoint, made Paul perhaps the most outstanding Jew of his day.
13. What are some of the 'credentials' which people today point to which they believe makes them acceptable to God and worthy of God's special attention and rewards?

## DESTRUCTIVE PERVERSIONS OF FAITH

14. After Paul became enlightened regarding the way of faith, in contrast to the way of Law, what value did Paul place on his noteworthy accomplishments (Phil. 3:7-8)?
15. Describe in some detail the antinomian's attitude toward God's grace and towards man's sins. Discuss with other students your understanding of the following statement: "Antinomians are those who want liberty without restraint, privileges without responsibilities, freedom without discipline, action without accountability, and grace without law." Can you give modern day examples of those (persons or philosophies) who, as the antinomians in Paul's day, turn Christian liberty into unchristian license?
16. What did Paul mean when he described antinomians as "enemies of the cross of Christ"?
17. Describe what is meant when it is said that antinomians are 'self-indulgent' and 'earthly-minded'.
18. Why is the future of antinomians eternal loss?
19. Is it realistic to say that most (if not all) antinomians wish to sin and at the same time be guaranteed safety from sin's consequences, based upon their perverted understanding of God's grace? (Note Romans 6:1) Is it not a contradiction in terms (and an indication of an antinomian tendency) to talk about "sinning Christians"? What does I John 3:4-10 say about the person who both professes to be a believer and who continues to practice sinning?
20. How would you answer a person who uses the following argument to justify his practice of sinning? - "In light of God's great power to forgive, it is therefore safe - and even virtuous - to sin, for my sinning gives God a chance to exercise His great grace in forgiveness!" (Note Romans 6)
21. What should be the attitude of a sincere believer when he recognizes that he has either deliberately or carelessly committed an act or has entertained an attitude which is definitely wrong and which has incurred guilt?
22. With the use of Scriptures, and by use of common logic and illustrations, how would you refute the arguments of those persons who claim that sinning is 'an excellent thing' for sinning gives the grace of God a chance to operate?
23. Give your interpretation of the following statement: "The faith that saves is the faith that not only imputes a man as righteous, but it is also a faith that imparts the righteousness of Christ to the repentant sinner."
24. According to Ephesians 2:8-10, what is the relationship between 'grace', 'faith', and 'good works'?

## DESTRUCTIVE PERVERSIONS OF FAITH

25. If legalism (living by rules) and antinomianism (living without rules) neither reflect the proper attitude that one should have regarding rules, what attitude should a mature Christian have regarding rules? What does it mean to "live beyond rules"?
26. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The way of faith is the way of love." Why is the way of love the answer to living a successful Christian life? (Note Romans 13:8)

LIVING THE LIFE OF JOY!

**CHAPTER 10**

**DILIGENT PARTICIPATION  
IN FAITH**



## CHAPTER 10

SUBJECT: DELIGHTFUL PARTICIPATION IN FAITH

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 3:1-11

TEXT: "I consider everything as loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things."  
(Philippians 3:8)

INTRODUCTION: To be a true winner in life, one must exercise an initial saving faith and an ongoing daily faith in Jesus Christ alone.

OUTLINE:

- I. THE PRINCIPLE OF FAITH (Internal Worship of God) (v.3)
  - A. A Vital Worship
  - B. Glorifying Christ and Crucifying Self
- II. THE PRACTICE OF FAITH (Increasing Love For Christ) (v.7-11)
  - A. Gain In Christ Initially is found through total surrender of self-centeredness (v.7).
  - B. Growth In Christ Progressively is realized through total focus on the riches of knowing Christ in contrast to the poorness of the ways of the world (v.8).
  - C. Glory In Christ Constantly is enjoyed through dependence on the righteousness of Christ instead of self-righteousness.
  - D. Glorification with Christ Ultimately is found through deep, spiritual identification with the death and resurrection of Christ presently (v.10-11).

CONCLUSION: The essence of true Biblical faith means surrendering one's life totally to Christ and spending one's life worshipping and glorifying Christ alone! Seeking to know Christ daily and to appropriate His power constantly and to share His suffering courageously are all evidences that one is making genuine spiritual progress in his life! Living such a life here on earth will result in one eventually attaining to the resurrection from the dead (v.11).

Have you surrendered to Jesus Christ? Are you depending on Christ alone to save you, realizing that you are helpless to save yourself? Have you counted everything else as loss compared to the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ your Lord? Are you willing to suffer for the cause of Christ, sharing Christ's sufferings with Him? Are you daily appropriating the resurrection power of Christ to live the Christian life? Are you looking hopefully forward to the glorious day in the future when you shall attain unto the resurrection of your body from the dead? To answer these questions in the affirmative is to have a meaningful and delightful participation in 'the Faith'. If you cannot answer these questions in the affirmative, then surrender yourself to Christ today, and begin to live daily by the power of the resurrected Christ!

## DELIGHTFUL PARTICIPATION IN FAITH

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 3:1-11

TEXT: "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things."  
(Philippians 3:8)

### INTRODUCTION:

What do you value in life more than anything else? Is it your religious heritage or your achievements educationally, or your physical health, or your close family ties, or your financial wealth, or your American citizenship?

Paul had much for which to be proud and much that he highly valued. "Paul claims that from his birth he was a God-fearing, Law-observing Jew, that his lineage was as pure as Jewish lineage could be; and that he belonged to the most aristocratic tribe of the Jews (the tribe of Benjamin)...He was so loyal a Jew, he was a member of the strictest and the most self-disciplined sect of the Jews; he had had in his heart a burning zeal for what he had thought was the cause of God; and he had a record in Judaism in which no man could mark a fault." (Barclay's Philippians; pg.73,75)

After listing all of his 'gains', Paul declares that these 'gains' are now looked at as total losses compared to the gain of knowing Christ Jesus. "But all these things that I once thought very worthwhile - now I've thrown them all away so that I can put my trust and hope in Christ alone. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the priceless gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have put aside all else, counting it worth less than nothing, in order that I can have Christ, and become one with him, no longer counting on being saved by being good enough or by obeying God's laws, but by trusting Christ to save me; for God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith - counting on Christ alone." (Philippians 3:7-10 Living Bible.)

### PROPOSITION:

To be a true winner in life, one must exercise an initial saving faith and an ongoing daily faith in Jesus Christ alone.

#### I. THE PRINCIPLE OF FAITH (Internal Worship of God) (v.3)

What is the essence or principle of true faith? It is worshipping God from the heart, trusting in Jesus Christ alone to save us instead of trusting in ourselves for salvation. Paul criticized the group of people in the early church called the 'circumcision party' because they were teaching that one must conform to Jewish laws and ceremonies before one could become a Christian. They taught that, because a man had received the physical mark of circumcision in his body, he was acceptable to God. These "Judizers" (as they are called) believed that outward performance of religious activities and duties brought them favor from God. Simply because their ancestor was Abraham, these Jews believed that their entrance into heaven was automatically guaranteed.

The problem of legalism is its focus - externalism and traditionalism. In contrast to the way of legalism, the way of faith focuses on Christ alone. Wrote Paul, "For it isn't the cutting of our bodies that makes us children of God; it is worshipping him with our spirits. That is the only true 'circumcision'. We Christians glory in what Christ Jesus has done for us and realize that we are helpless to save ourselves." (Philippians 3:3, Living Bible)

## DELIGHTFUL PARTICIPATION IN FAITH

The essence or principle of faith involves three elements:

1. A vital worship
2. Glorifying Christ
3. A crucified 'self'.

### A. A VITAL WORSHIP

Paul says that the true 'circumcision' are those who worship by the Spirit of God. Worship is an attitude of the heart, not a mere act or posture of the body. God is a Spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth. To the Samaritan woman (in John 4) who wished to debate with Jesus regarding the proper place to worship, "Jesus replied, 'The time is coming, ma'am, when we will no longer be concerned about whether to worship the Father here or in Jerusalem. For it's not where we worship that counts, but how we worship - is our worship spiritual and real? Do we have the Holy Spirit's help? For God is Spirit, and we must have his help to worship as we should. The Father wants this kind of worship from us.'" (John 4:21-23, Living Bible)

### B. GLORIFYING CHRIST AND CRUCIFYING SELF

True faith is centered on Christ alone. This is not to say that it is wrong to have faith in other people, but faith in Christ is always primary, for only in Christ can salvation be both obtained and maintained. He is the only Saviour and as such holds an altogether unique place as the sole object of saving faith. The legalists (the 'circumcision party') in the early church were placing their faith in religious ceremony and ritual and in religious and personal performance. The result was glorification of man, with his achievements, rather than glorification of God. Paul wrote, "We Christians glory in what Christ Jesus has done for us and realize that we are helpless to save ourselves." (v.3, Living Bible) Men of true faith take pride in Jesus Christ alone and put no confidence in anything external (v.3, NEB).

The way of works inevitably leads to pride and boasting. "For by grace are ye saved by faith, and that not of yourselves, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9) The way of works depends upon man's performance and achievement; therefore all glory is ascribed to man alone. "Glory to man in the highest" are the words of the boasting heart, which has made human performance the object of praise.

The way of faith and grace depends upon God's working; therefore all glory is ascribed to God alone. "What have you that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?" (I Corinthians 4:7) "Abraham did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God." (Romans 4:20) Anyone, like Abraham, who believes the seemingly impossible promises of God, is a person who affirms the power and majesty of God, and thus, such a person glorifies God -- that is, gives glory to God. "Glory to God in the highest" are the words of the humble heart, which has made the mighty works of God the object of praise.

The work-oriented man is the man who bases his faith in human performance, hence pride and boasting. The grace-oriented man is the man who bases his faith in the all-powerful, all-loving God, hence humility. He submits in humility to God's power and God's performance.

## DELIGHTFUL PARTICIPATION IN FAITH

In the 'Way of Works', hope is based on what man can do for God. Hence, man's work is the focus of attention, which leads to pride and boasting. In the 'Way of Faith', hope is based on what God can do for man. Hence, God's power and love is the focus of attention, which leads to humility and worship of God.

In the 'Way of Works', rewards are based on man's calculations of earned achievements. The works-oriented person seeks to make God his debtor. In the 'Way of Faith', rewards are based on God's gifts of unearned and undeserved favor. The grace-oriented person recognizes that he is an eternal debtor to God.

### II. THE PRACTICE OF FAITH (Increasing Love For Christ) (v.7-11)

If the principle or essence of faith is internal worship of Christ, the practice of faith means both total initial surrender to Christ and daily surrender to Christ. Let us look in some detail at what is involved in practicing a true Biblical faith.

#### A. GAIN IN CHRIST INITIALLY IS FOUND THROUGH TOTAL SURRENDER OF SELF-CENTEREDNESS (v.7)

Wrote Paul, "But all these things (v.4-6) that I once thought very worthwhile - now I've thrown them all away so that I can put my trust and hope in Christ alone." (v.7) Paul declares that his 'successes' as a rigid and strict Jew have turned out to all be 'failures' in God's sight. Tradition and heritage and religious performance were declared to be of no benefit to Paul in his attempt to find a right standing with God. Personal, intellectual, social, cultural, religious achievements weigh nothing in the scales of God, as far as means to personal salvation. Morality, religion, education, baptism, church membership, culture, natural birth, racial descent, charitable deeds, or mere sincerity - none of these or anything else can merit God's favor or earn God's forgiveness. Just as Paul had to, so we too have to declare 'moral bankruptcy'.

"Could my tears forever flow,  
Could by zeal no languor know,  
These for sin could not atone:  
Thou must save, and Thou alone;  
In my hands no price I bring,  
Simply to Thy cross I cling."

(Rock of Ages, Cleft For Me)

"My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,  
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.  
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;  
All other ground is sinking sand."

(My Hope Is Built On Nothing Less)

## DELIGHTFUL PARTICIPATION IN FAITH

### B. GROWTH IN CHRIST PROGRESSIVELY IS REALIZED THROUGH TOTAL FOCUS ON THE RICHES OF KNOWING CHRIST IN CONTRAST TO THE POORNESS OF THE WAYS OF THE WORLD (v.8)

Paul is making a contrast between what he gained in the world and what he gained in Christ when he became a Christian. What he gained in the world - status, position, power, pride, religious achievements, etc. - are looked at as total losses compared to what he has found in Christ - salvation from God, the righteousness of Christ, the power of Christ's resurrection, the opportunity to share in Christ's work including the work of suffering for Christ, the hope of eternal life including the eventual resurrection of his body! (v.7-11)

How great are the riches in Christ compared to the poverty of self-righteousness. To know Christ personally is the most precious gift that a human being can enjoy! "Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the priceless gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have put aside all else, counting it worth less than nothing, in order that I can have Christ." (v.8, Living Bible)

What are you willing to give up in order to know Christ personally and intimately? In the days of the early church, when one became a Christian, he sometimes was excommunicated from his home and sometimes he lost his job and his friends. Sometimes, he even lost his life! Some have been willing to give up everything in order to know Jesus personally. There are still some countries in the world which outlaw Christianity and which severely persecute people who become Christians. Hundreds of Christians in Russia have been put in prison because of their faith in Jesus Christ.

Are you willing to give up anything in order that you, like Paul, might know Christ intimately? Some will have to give up their evil habits or separate themselves from the evil influence of ungodly friends. Some may have to surrender their resentments and bitterness against someone (which they have 'justified' for so long) before they can come to know Christ. Some may have to surrender their dishonest business practices before they can come personally to know Christ. Some who are moralists will have to surrender their personal pride in moral and religious achievements before they can know Christ personally and wonderfully. Can you say, along with Paul, "I believe nothing can happen that will outweigh the supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus as my Lord. For him I have accepted the loss of everything, and I look on everything as so much rubbish if only I can have Christ and be given a place in him." (Philippians 3:8, Jerusalem Bible)

Says Maclaren, "The world's war-cries today are two - 'Get!' 'Enjoy!' Christ's command is 'Renounce!' and in renouncing we shall realize both of these other aims, which they who pursue them only never attain."

Said Jesus, in one of His parables, "Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a pearl merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. He discovered a real bargain - a pearl of great value - and sold everything he owned to purchase it." (Matthew 13:4-6, Living Bible)

Jesus is that Pearl of great value! Are you, like Paul, willing to give up everything in order to gain Christ! If one gains the whole world of wealth and education and power and yet loses Christ and heaven, what value does the world's wealth have? No value whatever, for everything is worthless compared to the joy of knowing Christ personally!

## DELIGHTFUL PARTICIPATION IN FAITH

The paradox of the matter is this: The more one gives up for Christ, the more one gains in Christ. The way of self-surrender is the way of self-realization. Losing all, one gains all! The way of sorrow over one's sins is the way of joy unspeakable in the new knowledge of forgiveness and peace with God. Turning one's back on the blackness of his sin means that one turns his face towards the brightness of the Saviour's face! "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace!"

The way of surrender is not only the door to salvation, but the way of surrender is also the pathway to spiritual growth in Christ. Continuing daily to count everything as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ your Lord, is the condition for dynamic growth and continuing joy in Christ.

As believers who have made the initial surrender of our lives to Christ, we must continue to count everything as loss for the sake of Christ. What are you willing to give up in order to serve Christ wholeheartedly?

### C. GLORY IN CHRIST CONSTANTLY IS ENJOYED THROUGH DEPENDENCE ON THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST INSTEAD OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS. (v.9)

The object of the glory of the Christian is Christ! Why? Because Christ alone is able to give a human being right standing with God! Paul counted everything as loss, in order that he might gain Christ "and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ - the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith." (v.9, NIV) We, like Paul, can no longer count on being saved by being good enough or by obeying God's laws, but by trusting Christ to save us; for God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith - counting on Christ alone. (v.9, Living Bible)

"Eighteen centuries after Paul, another groping spirit made a similar discovery. His name was John Wesley. Unlike Paul, he had a Christian background. Like him, however, he found that a religion of rite and rote, of form without life and creed without flame, even though it bear the name 'Christian', yields no peace. Then came Aldersgate - May night in 1738 when Wesley was listening to a man read from Luther's Preface to Paul's Letter to the Romans! Let Wesley's own words tell it: 'While he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt that I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation: and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the laws of sin and death.'" (Proclaiming the New Testament by Paul Rees; pg.62)

Not only do we come into the glory of Christ's fellowship initially by faith, but we continue to enjoy the fellowship of Christ throughout our lives because we maintain faith in the living Saviour. Paul desires to "be found in Christ" (v.9). How is this possible? Through faith, exercised initially for personal conversion from sin, exercised daily for personal growth in Christ, and exercised perseveringly in order ultimately to gain heaven as our eternal home. In order for a believer "to be found in Christ" ultimately after he dies, it is essential for him to exercise faith constantly throughout his lifetime. Writes Maclaren, "A dangerous presumptuousness has sometimes led to the over-confident assertion, 'Once in Christ, always in Christ'. But Paul teaches us that that security of permanent dwelling in Him is to be for ever in this life the aim of our efforts, rather than an accomplished fact. So long as

## DELIGHTFUL PARTICIPATION IN FAITH

we are here, the possibility of falling away cannot be shut out, and there must always rise before us the question, Am I in Christ? Hence there is need for continual watchfulness, self-control, and self-distrust, and the life's aim has to be perpetual, not only because it is capable of indefinite expansion, but because our weakness is capable of deserting it. It is only when at the last we are found by Him, in Him, that we are there for ever, with all dangers of departure from Him at an end." (Exposition of Holy Scripture; Phil.; pg.334, 335)

So here is described another dimension of faith. Faith is not only a one-time act of trust which the sinner exercises in order to be saved. It is much more than that. Faith is a commitment to a person - the person of Jesus Christ, over a period of a lifetime, the result of which guarantees that the believer will "be found in Christ" after he physically dies!

### D. GLORIFICATION WITH CHRIST ULTIMATELY IS FOUND THROUGH DEEP, SPIRITUAL, IDENTIFICATION WITH THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST PRESENTLY (v.10,11)

1. He who surrenders initially to Christ in order to be saved from sin, and he who willingly abandons all in his daily life in order to grow in Christ, and he who perseveringly exercises faith throughout his lifetime to serve Christ - to such a noble soul, the power or force of Christ's resurrection will be imparted.

'To know Christ' and 'to know His resurrection power' is more than intellectual knowledge. To know Christ is to enjoy His daily intimate companionship, allowing His strength to replace our weaknesses, allowing His comfort to replace our sorrows. The power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that is available to quicken and strengthen our spiritual lives.

2. Not only does Paul want to know the power of Christ's resurrection in his life, but Paul is further concerned that he personally experiences fellowship in Christ's sufferings. "One of his (Paul's) most frequently recurring and most cherished thoughts is, that to suffer for Christ is to suffer with Christ, and in it he found and teaches us to find strength to endure, and patience to outlast any sorrows that may swoop upon us like birds of prey because we are Christians." (Maclaren; Phil.; pg.343) Maclaren further notes, "If His sufferings are ours we may be sure that ours are His. And how different they all become when we are certain of His sympathy!" (Ibid; pg.344)

3. The one who appropriates the might power of Christ - the same power that raised Christ from the dead - in the living of his Christian life, and the person who willingly identifies with Christ's sufferings as he suffers willingly for the cause of Christ - this is the person who can look forward to an ultimate resurrection of his body after he dies! Paul's future goal is that he might "attain to the resurrection from the dead." (v.11) "The ethical and spiritual resurrection in the present life finds its completion in the bodily resurrection in the future...The person who dies is the person who lived through death, and who assumes the body of the resurrection, and it is the person, not the elements which make up the personality, who is spoken of as risen from the dead. The vesture may be different, but the wearer is the same." (Ibid; pg.346,347)

## DELIGHTFUL PARTICIPATION IN FAITH

Dr. Norman Vincent Peale tells of his feeling after his mother's death. This is what he says; "I remember when my dear mother died in a little town in upstate New York. We took her body back to Ohio for burial. On the journey we had to change trains at Buffalo. I was walking down the platform and saw on a truck the shadowy outlines of a box. I walked over, almost fearing to read what was there. It said, 'Remains of Anna Peale.' That was rather a crude statement, and it might have struck me as repulsive. But the more I thought about it, the more it carried a glorious message to me: what was in that box was merely a physical form that I loved and my brothers loved and my father loved and many people loved. But my mother herself was not there. And when I walked out of the cemetery, having left her body there, these words from the Gospel of Luke rang through my mind: 'Why seek ye the living among the dead?'

When our loved ones leave us, we lay away their physical bodies, no longer needed, like coats that are worn out. But at the time of death the person is released into a heavenly body."

### CONCLUSION:

The essence of true Biblical faith means surrendering one's life totally to Christ and spending one's life worshipping and glorifying Christ alone! Seeking to know Christ daily and to appropriate His power constantly and to share His sufferings courageously are all evidences that one is making genuine spiritual progress in his life! Living such a life here on earth will result in one eventually attaining to the resurrection from the dead (v.11)

Have you surrendered to Jesus Christ? Are you depending on Christ alone to save you, realizing that you are helpless to save yourself? Have you counted everything else as loss compared to the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ your Lord? Are you willing to suffer for the cause of Christ, sharing Christ's sufferings with Him? Are you daily appropriating the resurrection power of Christ to live the Christian life? Are you looking hopefully forward to the glorious day in the future when you shall attain unto the resurrection of your body from the dead? To answer these questions in the affirmative is to have a meaningful and delightful participation in 'the Faith'. If you cannot answer these questions in the affirmative, then surrender yourself to Christ today, and begin to live daily by the power of the resurrected Christ!

## DELIGHTFUL PARTICIPATION IN FAITH

### DISCUSSION:

1. Before Paul's conversion to Christ and Christianity, what achievements and status did Paul cherish as his basis for justification with God? Why did Paul finally come to the conclusion that all of his 'gains' were 'losses'? What did Paul discover was God's way of making sinners right with Himself? (Note Philippians 3:7-10)
2. What is the essence or principle of true faith?
3. What did the 'circumcision party' in the early church teach, and why did Paul take such a strong stand against the 'party'?
4. According to Philippians 3:3, what are the three elements of true and saving faith?
5. What did Jesus mean when he told the Samaritan woman ( in John 4:21-23 ) it is not where we worship that counts but how we worship?
6. When people place their faith in religious ceremony and ritual and in religious and personal performance, rather than placing their faith in Christ alone, what is the result?
7. Does the following statement accurately describe the meaning of Biblical faith? - "Men of true faith take pride in Jesus Christ alone and put no confidence in anything external." (Note Philippians 3:3; Ephesians 2:8-9; I Corinthians 4:7; Romans 4:20)
8. What is the object of praise for the man of faith, in contrast to the object of praise for the man of works?
9. What were the achievements which Paul had, early in his life, depended on to give him a right standing with God? What are some things which people today depend on as a means of meriting God's favor and earning God's forgiveness?
10. Contrast what Paul gained in the world before he was a Christian to what he gained from Christ after his conversion.
11. Does the following statement reflect your personal testimony and 'set of values'? - "To know Christ personally is the most precious gift that a human can enjoy!" (Note Philippians 3:8 in the Living Bible)
12. What were some people, during the early days of Christianity, willing to give up in order to know Christ? How costly has it been today for some people in some countries to be true Christians? What are you willing to give up in order to know Christ personally and intimately? (Your property? Your freedom? Your family? Your physical life? Your evil habits? Your ungodly friends who are drawing you away from Christ? Your resentments and bitterness which have separated you from your fellowmen? Your dishonest business practices? Your pride in mere morality and religiosity?)  
Can you say, along with Paul, "I believe nothing can happen that will

## DELIGHTFUL PARTICIPATION IN FAITH

outweigh the supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For him I have accepted the loss of everything, and I look on everything as so much rubbish if only I can have Christ and be given a place in him." (Philippians 3:8, Jerusalem Bible)

13. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement by Maclaren, "The world's war-cries today are two - 'Get!', 'Enjoy!' Christ's command is 'Renounce!' and in renouncing we shall realize both of these other aims, which they who pursue them only never attain." Is it true that those who selfishly seek to gain all for themselves will ultimately lose all in the end? (Note Luke 9:24; Matthew 6:33) Do you agree that everyone in life is either a 'double-winner' or a 'double-loser'?
14. Explain your understanding of the following statement: "The way of self-surrender is the way of self-realization".
15. Share from your personal life some experiences which document the truth of the following statement: "Continuing daily to count everything as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ your Lord, is the condition for dynamic growth and continuing joy in Christ." What are you willing to give up in order to serve Christ wholeheartedly?
16. In order for a believer ultimately "to be found in Christ" after he dies, what must a believer do throughout his entire earthly existence? What does Maclaren (in the chapter) mean when he speaks of 'a dangerous presumptuousness' that has led some persons to over-confidently assert, "Once in Christ, always in Christ".
17. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following description of Biblical faith - the kind of faith which results in ultimate eternal salvation: "Faith is not only a one-time act of trust which the sinner exercises in order to be saved. It is much more than that. Faith is a commitment to a person - the person of Jesus Christ - over the period of a lifetime, the result of which guarantees that the believer will "be found in Christ" after he physically dies!"
18. What do you think it means "to know Christ" and "to know His resurrection power"?
19. What does Maclaren say is the motivation for believers to find strength and endurance during those times when sorrows may "swoop upon us like birds of prey"?
20. Can the following statement (by Maclaren) give you comfort during your times of sorrow and sufferings? - "If His sufferings are ours we may be sure that ours are His. And how different they all become when we are certain of His sympathy!"
21. Describe your understanding of Paul's teaching concerning the 'resurrection from the dead' (Philippians 3:11). When does a believer receive his resurrection body? What does Maclaren mean when he writes about the

## DELIGHTFUL PARTICIPATION IN FAITH

resurrection of the body: "The vesture may be different, but the wearer is the same." Do you believe (like Norman Vincent Peale believes) that at the time of physical death the believer is released into a heavenly body?

22. What are some of the evidences that a believer is making genuine spiritual progress in his life?



LIVING THE LIFE OF JOY!

**CHAPTER 11**

**DILIGENT PERFORMANCE  
OF FAITH**



## CHAPTER 11

SUBJECT: DILIGENT PERFORMANCE OF FAITH

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 3:12-17

INTRODUCTION: Is faith a gift of God to man, or is faith a response of man to God? Or is faith both a gift from God and a response of man? First and foremost, faith is a gift from God, a capability granted to man by God. God has made it possible for mankind in general and individuals in specific to call upon God for salvation. Faith is a capability or capacity with which man is born, and faith is the result of the grace or mercy of God. God has not left mankind helpless in sin. Man is capable of turning from sin to God for salvation. And this capability is granted to every human being!

But even though all humans are capable of turning to God in faith because of God's grace, all men individually will not exercise their faith capability to be saved. So, faith is a human response, involving human effort, as well as a divine gift, based on divine grace.

PROPOSITION: The diligent performance of faith includes the exercise of the believer's volition in several areas.

OUTLINE:

- I. HUMAN EFFORT - 'Pressing Toward The Future' (v.12)
  - A. Necessity of Human Effort
  - B. Goal of Human Effort
    1. To develop one's personal relationship with God (v.10)
    2. To fulfill his lifetime goal and call of seeking and saving the lost (v.10)
    3. To enjoy ultimately the final resurrection of the Body (v.11)
- II. FORGETFULNESS - 'Forgetting The Past' (v.13)
  - A. We must acknowledge the sins of the past and confess the sins of the past, if we ever expect to become a true Christian.
  - B. We must forgive ourselves of our own past failures and sins, and commit our past to God, allowing God to use the past for our present and future good.
  - C. We must not rest on the laurels of past achievements, but forget the past successes and strive ahead to reach our goal of life which is Christ-likeness.
- III. HOPE - 'Anticipate the Heavenly Prize' (v.14)
- IV. UNITY - Mature Agreement on the Basic Truths of the Faith (v.15)
- V. PERSEVERANCE - Continue to Make Progress, Just As You Have in the Past (v.16)
- VI. MODELING - Provide a Godly Example for Others to Follow (v.17)

CONCLUSION: Think of the following simple analogy: God has granted to human beings the 'gift' of physical muscles, but only man can exercise those muscles. God does not exercise the muscles for us. The capability of exercising faith is granted to all persons, but the operation (or exercise) of faith is man's responsibility.

## DILIGENT PERFORMANCE OF FAITH

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 3:12-17

### INTRODUCTION:

Is faith a gift of God to man, or is faith a response of man to God? Or is faith both a gift from God and a response of man? First and foremost, faith is a gift from God, a capability granted to man by God. God has made it possible for mankind in general and individuals in specific to call upon God for salvation. So, faith is a capability or capacity with which man is born, and faith is the result of the grace or mercy of God. God has not left mankind helplessly in sin. Man is capable of turning from sin to God for salvation. And this capability is granted to every human being!

But, even though all humans are capable of turning to God in faith because of God's grace, all men individually will not exercise their faith capability to be saved. So, faith is a human response, involving human effort, as well as a divine gift, based on divine grace.

The exercise of faith is dependent upon man's efforts, as well as upon divine enablement. The faithfulness of God cannot avail for man's faithlessness. In other words, even though God has granted mankind the gift (or capability) of faith, God cannot exercise faith for a person (as a simple example: God has granted to human beings the 'gift' of physical muscles, but only man can exercise those muscles. God does not exercise the muscles for us). The capability of exercising faith is granted to all men, but the operation (or exercise) of faith is man's responsibility.

### PROPOSITION:

The diligent performance of faith includes the exercise of the believer's volition in at least the six following areas:

- (1) Human effort (v.12);
- (2) Forgetfulness (v.13);
- (3) Hope (v.14);
- (4) Unity (v.15);
- (5) Perseverance (v.16);
- (6) Modeling (v.17).

#### I. HUMAN EFFORT -- 'PRESSING HARD TOWARD THE FUTURE' (v.12)

##### A. NECESSITY OF HUMAN EFFORT

While a believer may be perfected in one sense of the term (ie., have his heart cleansed and his motives purified, and his full devotion set on God alone), yet in another sense, he is not perfected. He has not learned all there is to know about Jesus Christ. He has not fulfilled his lifetime goal and mission and call. There is limitless possibilities for developing a more Christ-like character. "Ah, brother, our experience must be incomplete, for we have an infinite aim set before us, and there is no end to the possibilities of plunging deeper and deeper and deeper into the knowledge of Christ, and having larger and larger and larger draughts of the fullness of His life." (Maclaren; Philippians; pg.357)

## DILIGENT PERFORMANCE OF FAITH

### B. GOAL OF HUMAN EFFORT

1. To develop one's personal relationship with God (inner life of solitude, meditation, and soul-nurture (note verse 10). That we might experience the power that raised Christ (resurrection power) to strengthen us and to keep us true and faithful to Him.

2. To fulfill his lifetime goal and call of seeking and saving the lost (outward life of witnessing, preaching, healing, teaching, comforting, etc.) (v.10). "Every man is grasped by Christ for some purpose; every man is a dream of Jesus. And, therefore, every man must all his life press on so that he may grasp and realize that dream and that purpose for which Christ grasped him." (Barclay; Philippians; pg.82) Notes Maclaren, "There is all the difference between striving, however constantly, after self-improvement, by one's own effort only, and striving after it because one knows that he is therein fulfilling the purpose for which Jesus Christ drew him to Himself." (pg.356) (That we might share the suffering of Christ, as we reach out redemptively to lift up the fallen, to heal the wounded, to bear reproach for the Saviour.)

3. To enjoy ultimately the final resurrection of the Body (v.11). He who perseveres to the end of life - living life with the power of the resurrected Christ as his energy, and suffering for Christ while he reaches out in love, will finally enjoy the glory of Christ in the end.

God has chosen each of us, and called each of us, to become athletes (as it were) for Him. He has called us to run the 'race of life.' He has 'laid hold of us' for the 'marathon of life.'

When you accept His call in simple faith and turn your life over to Him initially through genuine repentance, you are looked at by God as His athlete, to run the race of life which He has designed for you to run.

But, even though the Divine Coach has called you, and even though you have initially allowed that Coach to 'lay hold on you', it is not the Coach, but it is you who must exercise supreme human effort in order that you might run the race! The Divine Coach will impart to you the inspiration you need and will impart to you the divine energy (resurrection power) that is indispensable for the race of life, but the Coach cannot run the race for you. Only you can run the race of life! Therefore, while it is true that the Christian race cannot be run without divinely-imparted energy, it is also true that the race of life demands supreme human effort if it is to be run successfully. There is no place for laziness, indolence, indifference, half-heartedness, or lukewarmness in the Christian life. The Christian life demands discipline, hard work, supreme effort, concentration - the very qualities that any good runner must possess if he is to run the race of life!

### II. FORGETFULNESS - "FORGETTING THE PAST" (v.13)

In living the Christian life, there is a wise forgetfulness and there is a foolish forgetfulness.

#### A. WE MUST ACKNOWLEDGE THE SINS OF THE PAST AND CONFESS THE SINS OF THE PAST, IF WE EVER EXPECT TO BECOME A TRUE CHRISTIAN.

We cannot suppress our guilt and shrug our shoulders and simply say, "Let by-gones be by-gones." We must not try to forget our past life with its sins,

## DILIGENT PERFORMANCE OF FAITH

if we have not confessed our past sins to Christ. Remembering the past and confessing the past will result in being forgiven of the past. This new confidence, gained as a result of our past being forgiven, will result in giving us a solid foundation upon which we can build a glorious future. As C.S. Lewis says, "We have a strange illusion that mere time cancels sin. I have heard others, and I have heard myself, recounting cruelties and falsehoods committed in boyhood as if they were no concern of the present speaker's, and even with laughter. But mere time does nothing either to the fact or to the guilt of a sin. The guilt is washed out not by time, but by repentance and the blood of Christ...In our own affairs we never doubt that the past is important. When a student fails his exams, he cannot laugh it off and proceed to the next unit of his course as though nothing had happened. When a businessman finds his debts pressing, he cannot write them off and start afresh as though nothing had happened. In every area of life we recognize that our actions have consequences and that we are responsible. We cannot cut ourselves adrift from the past."

### B. WE MUST FORGIVE OURSELVES OF OUR OWN PAST FAILURES AND SINS, AND COMMIT OUR PAST TO GOD, ALLOWING GOD TO USE THE PAST FOR OUR PRESENT AND FUTURE GOOD.

Notes Sangster, "God has forgiven you; forgive yourself. Who are you to have superior moral values to the Almighty God? Here are two things which will help you to forgive yourself:

1. Can't you see that your unwillingness to forgive yourself is a form of spiritual pride? What you are really saying, at the deep level of your mental and emotional life, is this: 'How could I ever have done that?' (Note the stress on the 'I'.) 'Me! A spiritual giant like me!...'Now look! That self-hate is doing you no good...It is like poison injected into your veins. Accept the forgiveness. (You cannot undo the past. God has forgiven it, and, if God has forgiven you, who can justly accuse you? That is the first thing: forgive yourself.)

2. Here is the second. In some mysterious way - beyond our human fathoming - God can use sin...the God who is mighty in creation is also mighty in transformation." (Daily Readings; pg.71)

### C. WE MUST NOT REST ON THE LAURELS OF PAST ACHIEVEMENTS, BUT FORGET THE PAST SUCCESSES AND STRIVE AHEAD TO REACH OUR GOAL OF LIFE WHICH IS CHRIST-LIKENESS.

Our goal, over a life-time, is to become Christ-like. Such Christ-likeness, produced through the Holy Spirit with our obedient cooperation, will result finally in getting to go to be with Christ, face to face, for all eternity! This should be the goal of every human being! "Paul is forgetting the things which are behind. That is to say, he will never glory in any of his achievements; he never uses any task that he has achieved or any deed that he has done as an excuse for relaxation in the future. In effect Paul is saying that the Christian must forget all that he has done and remember only that which he has still to do. In the Christian life there is no room for a person or a church which desires to rest upon its laurels. Then he says that he is reaching out for the things which are in front...That is the word which is used of a racer going hard for the tape. It describes him with eyes for nothing but

## DILIGENT PERFORMANCE OF FAITH

the goal. It describes him with arms almost clawing the air, with head forward, and the the body bent and angled to the goal. It describes the man who is going, as we might put it, flat out for the finish. So Paul says that in the Christian life we must forget every past achievement and we must remember only the goal which forever lies ahead." (Barclay's Philipians; pg.82)

(Illustration: of my contact recently with Campus Crusade for Christ Director, Kent Mulkey, who took 114th place out of 10,000 Boston Marathon runners. He ran 26 miles in 2 hours and 28 minutes! This represents discipline and supreme effort! But Kent had to forget the miles he had already run and concentrate on the present and future miles he had yet to run - in order to successfully complete the race.)

"Just as a winning runner forgets the opponents around or behind him and looks only at the goal, Paul forgot the past and focused on the next steps toward the goal." (Ogilvie; pg.112)

(Illustration of complimenting Dwight Horton on great sermons, and he answered me, 'I appreciate your compliments, but I have a lot of sermons yet to preach before I have completed my ministry.' His eyes were not on the past accomplishments, but his attention was fixed on present and future responsibility).

### III. HOPE - "ANTICIPATE THE HEAVENLY PRIZE."

What keeps an athlete running when he is very tired? The hope of winning the prize at the end of the race. The desire that he has to do his best, his determination to show himself that he is capable of a certain 'time', his desire not to disappoint other people - his coach, his fellow teammates, his friends and relatives in the grandstands.

There are many motivations for keeping 'hope' alive, in order that we might run the 'race of life'. Paul ran the race well because he anticipated seeing Jesus someday, at the end of the race. "I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God is calling us up to heaven because of what Christ Jesus did for us." (Philipians 3:14, Living Bible)

'It will be worth it all when we see Jesus,  
Life's trials will seem so small when we see Him!  
So bravely run the race, till we see Christ!'

The race of life is not always easy, and we are tempted to murmur and complain and despair and even to quit. But we must keep our eyes on Jesus. We must follow Jesus' example, who (although he suffered greatly) kept His hope alive and continued patiently to obey His Heavenly Father. "Since we have such a huge crowd of men of faith watching us from the grandstands, let us strip off anything that slows us down or holds us back, and especially those sins that wrap themselves to tightly around our feet and trip us up; and let us run with patience the particular race that God has set before us. Keep your eyes on Jesus, our leader and instructor. He was willing to die a shameful death on the cross because of the joy he knew would be his afterwards; and now he sits in the place of honor by the throne of God. If you want to keep from becoming fainthearted and weary, think about his patience as sinful men did such terrible things to him. After all, you have never yet struggled against sin and temptation until you sweat great drops of blood." (Hebrews 12:1-4, Living Bible)

## DILIGENT PERFORMANCE OF FAITH

### IV. UNITY - MATURE AGREEMENT ON THE BASIC TRUTHS OF THE FAITH (v.15)

"I hope all of you who are mature Christians will see eye-to-eye with me on these things, and if you disagree on some point, I believe that God will make it plain to you." (v.15, Living Bible)

"Paul is not impatient of minor differences of opinion (v.15) which are more or less inevitable in men, provided the Philippians will stick to the main road and go ahead." (Robertson; pg.208; 'Paul's Joy In Christ')

What do all mature-type believers agree on? That Jesus, the Son of God, is the one who has 'laid hold' of our lives, calling us out of sin into holiness, and that He who called us into a holy life-style is the same One who will work deep in our lives to perfect us and purify us and mature us progressively in order that we may live a truly Christ-like life.

Anyone who sees the goal of Christianity as anything other than Christ and Christ-likeness in character is not a mature Christian (to say the least). Minor differences in opinion regarding certain doctrinal differences or regarding certain behavioral practices, are to be tolerated, but the minor differences fade into the shadows when all sincere Christians are focusing their attention together on Christ and Christ's purpose of producing Christ-like character in the lives of all His followers.

### V. PERSEVERANCE - CONTINUE TO MAKE PROGRESS, JUST AS YOU HAVE IN THE PAST (v.16)

Writes Paul, "Meanwhile let us go forward on the road that has brought us to where we are." (Philippians 4:16, Jerusalem Bible)

Paul is really saying this: "We have come thus far on the way to the goal which is still ahead. What are we to do? There is but one thing to do, just go right on in the same path by which we have come thus far." (Robertson; pg.209)

Notes Robertson, "We shall die without the common details in the spiritual life. The lesson for our time is precisely this, to keep at it...It is the steady tread in the right path with the eye fixed on Christ that tells the story of final achievement." (pg.210,211)

Have you known believers who have "walked with Christ" for twenty or thirty or forty or even fifty years? What has kept them going? Why have their lives "stood the test of time"? It is because they have learned to keep their eyes on the goal of life - Christ - and they have found daily renewal and strength from the Holy Spirit as they have run the "race of life". "Keep on keeping on" is an important motto of life!

What is faith? Faith is inseparably connected with "faithfulness". God says to His persevering saints: "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life."

"There is nothing more disappointing than a runner who drops out of a race or a Christian who slacks up because he thinks he has reached the finish line. We always have a future and press on." (Ogilvie; pg.112,113)

Persevering means keeping hope even during the routine and mundane duties of everyday life. Notes Robertson, "There is monotony in work, the tedium of household cares, the grind of church services, the petty details of pastoral work, the minutiae of scholarship and all forms of Bible study, the treadmill of spiritual exercises (prayer, reading the Scriptures, singing, church

## DILIGENT PERFORMANCE OF FAITH

attendance, work for Christ), the humdrum of things like three meals a day and going to bed every night - these things tend to pall on the sensitive spirit. But we shall die if we do not eat, sleep, walk, work, breath. The lesson for our time is precisely this, to keep at it." (pg.210)

Faith is not a mere emotion of ecstasy and joy. Faith is not opposed to, but actually results in, wonderful excitement and thrill and innovations and surprises and wonders and miracles. But these are not the steady or regular results from living a life of faith.

Faith is a commitment to follow Christ - with or without emotion, with or without the "spectacular", with or without the miracles, with or without success or visible results.

An athlete who runs the marathon (26 miles) may be rather excited when he first begins the race and when he is ready to cross the finish line. There is usually a lot of drama and emotion associated with the beginning or end of a race (or a project), but there may be nothing but sheer discipline and determination during the middle of the race. Many runners give up in the middle of the "race of life" when the drama and the emotions and the applause is not experienced.

But "faith" means "faithfulness" - and faithfulness is the result of a commitment of the will, not the result of a "wave of emotion".

Someone said, "When it is hardest to pray, pray hardest." In other words, live the Christian life by commitment, not by feeling or emotion. Read your Bible and attend church and witness and praise God - whether or not you "feel" like it. Emotion is not to be minimized or depreciated. God has made us emotional beings, but faith is not based on the feelings or emotions! Faith is based on the commitment of the will!

Let us never equate spirituality with emotional expression. If we are spiritual, there will be an emotional response to God, but the emotional response will be differently expressed by different Christians, according to temperament and background. Never judge another believer, on the basis of how much he cries or how loud he shouts or how much he testifies or how high he jumps! These emotional expressions are all secondary and incidental. What is primary and essential is our personal faith-commitment to Christ. Faith will express itself emotionally, but faith is not based on the emotions. Faith is based on the total surrender of the will to Christ, resulting in a determination to follow Christ regardless of the cost involved. Faith means "faithfulness".

Said Jesus, "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life." Faith means living a righteous life, until the day we die! (Note Ezekiel 33:13)

Who are the "elect" of God? Those who persevere to the end! Faith means "faithfulness" to God, and is the result of a deep commitment of the will to God. The diligent performance of faith involves daily perseverance in faith!

### VI. MODELING - PROVIDE A GODLY EXAMPLE FOR OTHERS TO FOLLOW (v.17)

To be diligent in faith is to be so godly in your character that you are glad for others to follow your example in Christian living! Wrote Paul, "Keep on imitating me, my brothers. We have set the right example for you, so pay attention to those who follow it." (Today's English Version)

Notes Ogilvie: "If we are not so excited about what we have found that we want everyone to experience it, then we have not found very much." (pg.116)

## DILIGENT PERFORMANCE OF FAITH

You may be the best Christian whom someone knows! There are those who admire you and who imitate you! Perhaps it is your small son! It is interesting to see a small boy, on a cold winter day, in freshly fallen snow, trying to follow his father's footsteps. Each of us is to follow Christ so closely, that when others are following us, they are really following Christ.

Paul is not manifesting pride when he tells young believers to follow his example. He is open and transparent, not trying to hide his failures and weaknesses. But Paul is also confident that what he has learned by experience in following Christ is worthy of imitation by other believers who need a human, visible example to follow.

Paul is not merely saying, "Do as I say". I believe Paul wants the young believers to follow his example in several ways:

(1) Imitate Paul in surrendering everything in your life to Jesus Christ. Don't be misled by legalism or antinomianism. Beware of false teaching regarding faith.

(2) Let your desire to know Christ personally and intimately be your all-consuming desire. Imitate Paul in the quality of devotion which you have for Christ.

(3) Imitate Paul in the intensity of concentration you have in striving to fulfill your call in life and to reach your goal in life which is Christ-like character. Don't let anything sidetrack you from reaching your goal. Don't let even miscellaneous good endeavors dissipate your energy in fulfilling your primary God-given task to become like Christ and to fulfill God's plan for your life.

(4) Don't run the race of life on the basis of emotions only, but realize that faith means faithfulness - ie., faith demands a commitment of the will to follow Christ at any cost. Imitate Paul by maintaining a persevering spirit. "Keep on keeping on" for Jesus, even during the routine and mundane experiences of everyday living!

(5) Imitate Paul in humility. Don't rest on laurels of past achievements.

You, like Paul, can provide a model for someone else to follow. "Many Christians never get on with sharing their faith because of all that they know is wrong in their own lives. 'I am not worthy', we say. Of course we're not. If we ever thought we were, we would be completely unusable to our Lord. What he longs to expose to the world and have others imitate in us is our dependence on Him and the joy and love his Spirit can produce in us." (Ogilvie; pg.117)

### CONCLUSION:

1. Human Effort - "Pressing toward the future" (v.12)
2. Forgetfulness - "Forgetting the past successes" (v.13)
3. Hope - "Anticipate the heavenly prize" (v.14)
4. Unity - Mature agreement on the basic truths of faith (v.15)
5. Perseverance - Continue to make progress, just as you have in the past (v.16)
6. Modeling - provide a godly example for others to follow (v.17)

## DILIGENT PERFORMANCE OF FAITH

### DISCUSSION:

1. Is faith a gift of God to man, or is faith a response of man to God? Or is faith both a gift from God and a response of man to God?
2. As a gift of His grace to all of humanity, has God given every person the capability of turning from sin to God for salvation?
3. What evidence is there from Scripture that faith is a human response, involving human effort, as well as a divine gift, based on divine grace?
4. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements:  
"The exercise of faith is dependent upon man's efforts, as well as upon divine enablement. The faithfulness of God cannot avail for man's faithlessness. The capability of exercising faith is granted to all men, but the operation (or exercise) of faith is man's responsibility."
5. According to Philippians 3:12-17, the diligent performance of faith includes the exercise of the believer's volition in at least six different areas. List (with the Biblical references) those areas.
6. How can a believer, on one hand, be considered perfected (Matthew 5:43-48) and yet, on the other hand, be far from perfected (Philippians 3:12)?
7. What is the goal of human effort in seeking better to live the Christian life? How does striving to reach self-centered goals and striving to reach Christ-honoring goals differ, in terms of motivation and in terms of content? How can you tell if your goals are Christ-honoring or whether they are self-centered?
8. How can you describe the cooperative relationship between you (the "runner") and Christ (the "Divine Coach")? What are the qualities that the Christian (like an athlete) must have in his life, if he is successfully to run the "race of life"?
9. In living the Christian life, there is both a "wise forgetfulness" and a "foolish forgetfulness". What is meant by these two types of forgetfulness?
10. Discuss the two suggestions which Sangster gives as aids in helping you (as a believer) to forgive yourself of your past sins and mistakes.
11. What rebuke and exhortation would Paul give to the Christian (or to the church) who is resting upon "the laurels of past achievements"? (Read Philippians 3:13 in several different Bible translations).
12. What are motivations for a believer to keep his "hope" alive, as he is "running the race of life"? (Note Philippians 3:14 and Hebrews 12:1-4)
13. What are the basic and fundamental truths of Christianity which should unite all true believers? Is it possible for sincere and mature believers to differ in their interpretation of secondary Christian doctrines, and at the same time maintain their unity and fellowship as fellow believers?

## DILIGENT PERFORMANCE OF FAITH

Should Christians (or churches), who differ with one another on secondary doctrinal issues, become dogmatic in their convictions regarding those issues on which they differ? Would not the corporate witness of the church to the unsaved world be much more positive and effective, if all Christians of all denominations would focus on the primary doctrines of the Christian faith, rather than "scwabble" over secondary doctrinal issues?

14. What do you think is the "secret" to perseverance of those believers who have faithfully served Christ for several decades? (Note Philippians 3:16 and Hebrews 12:1-5)
15. What are some of the routine disciplines of the Christian life, the practice of which is indispensable for survival and growth in the Christian life?
16. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements:  
"Faith is inseparable connected with "faithfulness". Faith is not a mere emotion of ecstasy and joy. Faith is not opposed to, but actually results in, wonderful excitement and thrill and innovations and surprises and wonders and miracles. But these are not the steady or regular results from living a life of faith."
17. What is your reaction or response to the following statements:  
"Faith will express itself emotionally, but faith is not based on the emotions. Faith is based on the total surrender of the will to Christ, resulting in a determination to follow Christ regardless of the cost involved. Faith means "faithfulness".
18. In terms of the necessity of perseverance in the life of the believer, what warning does Ezekiel sound forth in Ezekiel 33:13? Does this Scripture (and other similar Scriptures) support the popular doctrine of "Once saved, always saved!"?
19. Was Paul manifesting a spirit of "pride" and "egotism" when he urges other believers to imitate him and to follow his example (Philippians 3:17)? Why or why not? Do you agree with the following statement? - "To be diligent in faith is to be so godly in your character that you are glad for others to follow your example in Christian living!"
20. List at least five qualities and characteristics in Paul's life and in his attitudes that are worthy of your imitation, as you attempt to live a more effective Christian life.
21. How would you respond to a fellow believer who shares with you that he does not feel worthy of anyone following his example as a Christian?

LIVING THE LIFE OF JOY!

**CHAPTER 12**

**PERFECTION  
THROUGH FAITH**



## CHAPTER 12

SUBJECT: PERFECTION THROUGH FAITH

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 3:20-21

INTRODUCTION: A Christian is a person who lives for two worlds, "maintaining the vertical upreach to God who has transformed him, and the horizontal outreach to men, whom he loves as never before." (Living In Two Worlds; Tenney; pg.7)

Jesus said that we are to be "in" the world but not "of" the world. As believers, we are not to run away from the world or from involvements with people in the world, but we are not to partake of the worldly, secular spirit. We are to "separate" ourselves from sin and from sinful influences, but we are not to separate ourselves from sinful peoples who are burdened and distressed and oppressed. But, while we work actively in the world of needy people, we are always to remember that we are not citizens of this world. We are citizens of heaven. Our allegiance belongs to God, not to Satan.

PROPOSITION: If we are faithful to our Lord now, we shall be rewarded hereafter. Being faithful as heavenly citizens (while dwelling on Earth), will eventually result in being given a new resurrection body in heaven. The patriotism of faith - i.e., remaining faithful to our heavenly citizenship - will result ultimately in the perfection of faith - i.e., receiving a new resurrection body!

### OUTLINE:

- I. THE PATRIOTISM OF FAITH (v.20)
- II. THE PERFECTION OF FAITH (v.20b, 21a)

CONCLUSION: The one who remains faithful to his Lord and who manifests a life that is representative of his heavenly citizenship, will someday be rewarded. What will be his reward? Christ, the King, will come to Earth and will take home His faithful child! Christ "will take these dying bodies of ours and change them into glorious bodies like his own."

Are you living like a citizen of heaven? Are you looking forward to Christ's return from heaven? Are you anticipating the receiving from Christ of a new and glorious body, like unto Christ's body?

If your daily life is not patterned after Christ's life, then come to Christ today. Repent! Confess! Surrender! Allow Christ to change your very attitudes, speech, and behavior. Let Him transform you from within! (II Corinthians 5:17)

Notes Barclay, "The only way to demonstrate that Christianity is the best of all faiths is to prove that it produces the best of all men. When we Christians prove that our Christianity makes us better workmen, truer friends, kinder men and women, then and only then are we really preaching. The important thing is not words but deeds, not oratory but life. The outside world never comes into a church to hear a sermon, but the outside world sees us every day outside the church; and it is our lives which must be the sermon to win men to Christ." (Daily Study Bible; Thessalonians; pg.234)

## PERFECTION THROUGH FAITH

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 3:20-21

### INTRODUCTION:

A Christian is a person who lives for two worlds, "maintaining the vertical up-reach to God, who has transformed him and the horizontal outreach to men, whom he loves as never before." (Living In 2 Worlds; Tenney; pg.7)

Jesus said that we are to be 'in' the world but not 'of' the world. As believers, we are not to run away from the world or from involvements with people in the world, but we are not to partake of the worldly, secular spirit. We are to 'separate' ourselves from sin and from sinful influences, but we are not to separate ourselves from sinful peoples who are burdened and distressed and oppressed.

But, while we work actively in the world of needy people, we are always to remember that we are not citizens of this world. We are citizens of heaven. Our allegiance belongs to God, not to Satan.

### PROPOSITION:

If we are faithful to our Lord now, we shall be rewarded hereafter. Being faithful as heavenly citizens (while dwelling on earth), will eventually result in being given a new resurrection body in heaven. The patriotism of faith - ie., remaining faithful to our heavenly citizenship - will result ultimately in the perfection of faith - ie., receiving a new resurrection body!

#### I. THE PATRIOTISM OF FAITH (v.20)

Paul tells the Philippian believers that their citizenship is in heaven. "Here was a picture the Philippians could understand. Philippi was a Roman colony. These Roman colonies were amazing places. Here and there at strategic military centers the Romans set down their colonies. They were not like modern colonies out in the unexplored wilds; they commanded great road centers, and passes across the hills, and routes by which the armies must march. In such places the Romans set down colonies, whose citizens were mostly soldiers who had served their time - twenty-one years - and who had been rewarded with full citizenship. Now the great characteristic of these Roman colonies was that, wherever they were, they remained fragments of Rome. No matter where they were, Roman dress was worn; Roman magistrates governed them; the Latin tongue was spoken; Roman justice was administered; Roman morals were observed. Even in the ends of the earth these colonies remained unshakably and unalterably Roman. So Paul says to the Philippians, 'Just as the Roman colonists never forget that they belong to Rome, you must never forget that you are citizens of heaven; and your conduct must match your citizenship.' Wherever the Christian is, his conduct must prove that he is a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven." (Barclay's Philippians; pg.85,86)

Regardless of who they are with and regardless of where they may be, Christians are to think and to act like citizens of heaven. Christians are not to be ashamed of their identification with Christ. Jesus said that if we, as Christians, are ashamed to be identified with Him and with His cause, then Christ will be ashamed of us some day. We are to stand up and to be counted

## PERFECTION THROUGH FAITH

among the faithful, regardless of the consequences. Because Christians are different in their attitudes, speech, and behavior, the contrast between their lives and the lives of unbelievers is so great that this contrast causes unbelievers to take offense and to persecute Christians. The pure life of the true believer in contrast to the impure life of the sinner results in the sinner feeling condemned - even when the believer says no condemnatory thing to the unbeliever.

There are those who say, "When in Rome, be as the Romans." Chameleons are animals who camouflage themselves well because they change colors to fit into their environment. Some professing Christians unfortunately do the same. When with unbelievers, they laugh at the dirty jokes of unbelievers. When with unbelievers, they use the same profane language of unbelievers. When with unbelievers, they indulge in the same practices. But Paul tells the Philippians that their citizenship is in heaven, and, therefore, they are to act like citizens of heaven, even though they are still in foreign territory on earth.

Christians are citizens of heaven. This means that, as believers, our speech is to be pure and holy and Christ-like. This means that our attitudes are to be like the attitudes of Christ - humble and caring and serving! This means that our actions are to be like those of Christ - honest and righteous and loving! Paul often reminded Christians that they were to live in a way that reflected their heavenly citizenship. What we are privately should be no different than what we are publicly. Our daily lives must be reflections of our new ownership by God.

Take a look at the daily life-styles of a believer, in terms of ethical behavior, as described by Paul in the letter to the Ephesians (4:17-32 in the Living Bible).

"We are in the world, but not of its spirit. We live under the principles, ideals, and laws of heaven. We must apply them to the life in this world. In a word we are a patch of heaven on earth to help make earth like heaven." (Robertson; "Paul's Joy In Christ"; pg.220)

Think of the three Hebrew children (in the book of Daniel, chapter three) who refused to bow before the image of Nebuchadnezer. They were in a foreign land - as captives - but they never forgot that they were Israelites - God's chosen people. They refused to succumb to the pressure of heathen influence - even if it meant that they must die for their faith. And think of Daniel, who, against the law of the land, continued to pray to his God three times a day. He was cast into the den of lions because he refused to compromise his faith in the living God! (Daniel, chapter 6)

There is a popular motto which says "I would rather be dead than Red!" One who says this means that he would rather die than to deny his loyalty to the United States and succumb to Communism. Christians too must be willing to die for their faith rather than to deny their Christ!

What are the marks of a Christian in terms of heavenly citizenship? Nothing less than Christ-like character! Wrote the apostle Peter, "Dear brothers, you are only visitors here. Since your real home is in heaven I beg you to keep away from the evil pleasures of this world; they are not for you, for they fight against your very souls...It is God's will that your good lives should silence those who foolishly condemn the Gospel without knowing what it can do for them, having never experienced its power. You are free from the law, but that doesn't mean you are free to do wrong. Live as those who are free to do only God's will at all times...Christ, who suffered for you, is your

## PERFECTION THROUGH FAITH

example. Follow in his steps: He never sinned, never told a lie, never answered back when insulted; when he suffered he did not threaten to get even; he left his case in the hands of God who always judges fairly." (I Peter 2:11,15,16,21-23 Living Bible)

### II. THE PERFECTION OF FAITH (v.20b,21a)

Says Paul to the Philippians, "When he comes back he will take these dying bodies of ours and change them into glorious bodies, like his own, using the same mighty power that he will use to conquer all else everywhere." (Philippians 3:21)

Notes Robertson, "Our renewed (re-fashioned) body will be like in essential form that of Jesus. We shall be made fit for the family of God in heaven...We shall have a spiritual body suitable for the new environment of heaven." (pg.223)

Our faith, as believers, is now - in time - ever growing. There is almost limitless possibilities for growth in the expansion of faith. E.S. Jones said one time, "The best I can say about myself is that I am a 'Christian-in-the-making'!"

The faith that grows in time will someday be perfected in eternity. Faith is forward looking. Faith is based on the hope of Christ's coming back to earth someday, to gather the saints to Himself.

Perseverance in maintaining our loyalty to Christ and in the demonstration of our heavenly citizenship is motivated by our strong hope of some day seeing the King of Kings! Wrote Paul, "Our homeland is in heaven, where our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ is; and we are looking forward to his return from there."

The certainty of the fact of Christ's coming combined with the uncertainty of the date of His coming results in the believer having a spirit of watchfulness and diligence!

Someone said, "Live your life as if this were the day that Christ were to arrive, and yet plan your life as if you had a normal lifetime to live." Be prepared at any time to meet Christ, for Christ shall come as a thief in the night (when people least expect Him)! But Jesus also said that we are to "occupy" until He comes, ie., we are to plan and to work - not sit back idly until Jesus' coming. When asked what he would do if he knew Jesus were coming back tomorrow, John Wesley answered that he would do nothing differently than what he had been doing. He would be found working faithfully at his God-given task.

When Christ comes back to Earth someday, will He find you faithfully doing your God-given task?

"There's a king and captain high,  
And he's coming by and by,  
And he'll find me hoeing cotton when he comes,  
You can hear his legions charging in the regions of the sky,  
And he'll find me hoeing cotton when he comes,  
There's a man they thrust aside,  
Who was tortured till he died,  
And he'll find me hoeing cotton when he comes.

## PERFECTION THROUGH FAITH

"He was hated and rejected,  
He was scorned and crucified,  
And he'll find me hoeing cotton when he comes,  
When he comes! When he comes!  
He'll be crowned by saints and angels when he comes,  
They'll be shouting out Hosanna! to the man that men denied,  
And I'll kneel among my cotton when he comes."  
(quoted by Barclay in Luke; pg.29)

Yes, we are to live expectantly - expecting and looking forward to Christ's return from heaven to Earth - but we are not to sit around idly until Christ's coming. Notes Barclay, "The thought that Christ will some day come, that life as we know it will end, is not a reason for stopping work; it is a reason for working all the harder and all the more faithfully. It is not hysterical and useless waiting but quiet and useful work which will be a man's passport to the Kingdom." (Barclay's I Thessalonians; pg.233)

Faith must continue to grow while waiting for the coming of the King. When the King shall come back "he will take these dying bodies of ours and change them into glorious bodies like his own." (v.21 Living Bible)

The Bible says that the practice of faith on Earth will someday give way to the perfection of faith in heaven. We shall see Christ face to face, we must be given a new body - a resurrection body which is like unto the body, for knowledge of such a glorious existence is reserved for heaven alone. But, for certain; we shall behold the Savior, we shall see and know one another, we shall have a body no longer subject to disease and death, we shall enjoy eternal health and youth, we shall serve the Lord without weariness or need of sleep, we shall enjoy the glories of a heavenly environment because of our possession of a heavenly body which is "at home" in that environment!

How can we be assured of such a future? It is because of the mighty power of a sovereign God. The power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that will be exercised in giving us a new body. The powers of evil and of hell cannot prevent this glorious experience of resurrection from taking place. The power that God exercised when He raised Christ from the dead, is "the same mighty power that he will use to conquer all else everywhere." (v.21b Living Bible)

### CONCLUSION:

We have noted both the patriotism of faith and the perfection of faith. The one who remains faithful to his Lord and who manifests a life that is representative of his heavenly citizenship, will someday be rewarded. What will be his reward? Christ, the King, will come to Earth and will take home His faithful child! Christ "will take these dying bodies of ours and change them into glorious bodies like his own."

Are you living like a citizen of heaven? Are you looking forward to Christ's return from heaven? Are you anticipating receiving from Christ a new and glorious body, like unto Christ's body?

If your daily life is not patterned after Christ's life, then come to Christ today. Repent! Confess! Surrender! Allow Christ to change your very attitudes, speech and behavior. Let Him transform you from within! "If any person be in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away and, behold, everything has become new." (II Corinthians 5:17)

## PERFECTION THROUGH FAITH

Live daily as citizens of the Kingdom. Paul is saying, "Though living in Philippi and far away from Rome, act as Roman citizens, for that is what you are!" Application: "Though living on this Earth and having to be involved with worldly pursuits and living around worldly people, act as heavenly citizens, for that is what you are!"

Notes Barclay, "The only way to demonstrate that Christianity is the best of all faiths is to prove that it produces the best of all men. When we Christians prove that our Christianity makes us better workmen, truer friends, kinder men and women, then and only then are we really preaching. The important thing is not words but deeds, not oratory but life. The outside world never comes into a church to hear a sermon, but the outside world sees us every day outside the church; and it is our lives which must be the sermon to win men for Christ." (Barclay's Thessalonians; pg.234)

## PERFECTION THROUGH FAITH

### DISCUSSION:

1. What is meant when it is said that a Christian is a person who lives for two worlds, and that a Christian is one who maintains both a vertical and a horizontal orientation in life?
2. Practically speaking, how can a believer be "in" the world, without, at the same time, being "of the world"?
3. Tell what is meant (in the chapter) by the statement: "The patriotism of faith will result ultimately in the perfection of faith."
4. When Paul tells the Philippian believers that their citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20), what picture (from the Roman world) did Paul have in mind?
5. To what extent should Christians be "different" from non-Christians? In what ways can Christians "conform" to the people around them, without, at the same time, compromising their basic Christian beliefs and distinctive life-style? Give your explanation of Romans 12:2 (as translated by J. B. Phillips): "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into it's own mold, but let God remold your minds from within." What is the "worldliness" which believers must not be involved in? (Read I John 2:15-17 and James 4:4) Do you agree with the following statement? "Because Christians are different in their attitudes, speech, and behavior, the contrast between their lives and the lives of unbelievers is so great that this contrast causes unbelievers to take offense and to persecute Christians."
6. As "citizens" of heaven, how are Christians to be distinctive in their speech, attitudes, actions, priorities, and life-style? (Read Ephesians 4:17-32) Share your interpretation of the following statement (by Robertson): "Christians are a patch of heaven on Earth to help make Earth like heaven." What specifically can Christians do to make Earth more like heaven?
7. Give illustrations from Biblical history and from contemporary times of believers who were willing to die for their faith rather than to deny their God. (Note Daniel chapters 3 and 6)
8. What are the marks of a Christian in terms of his heavenly citizenship? What does it mean for a Christian to "live as those who are free to do only God's will at all times." (Note I Peter 2:11,15,16,21-23 Living Bible)
9. What do you think the re-fashioned (resurrection) body of the believer will be like (according to Philippians 3:21)?
10. What is meant by the statement?: "Faith is forward looking."
11. What is one of the strongest motivations for a believer to maintain his loyalty to Christ and, as a "citizen" of heaven, to live a distinctive Christian life? (Note Philippians 3:21)

## PERFECTION THROUGH FAITH

12. What is your response to the following statement?: "The certainty of the fact of Christ's coming combined with the uncertainty of the date of His coming results in the believer having a spirit of watchfulness and diligence!"
13. Do you believe the following statement reflects a balanced view regarding the believer's attitude toward the Second Coming of Jesus?: "Live your life as if this were the day that Christ were to arrive, and yet plan your life as if you had a normal lifetime to live."
14. Should the thought that Christ will some day come back unexpectedly to Earth, be a legitimate reason for Christians to stop their work and sit around idly? In light of the Second Coming of Jesus (possibly soon), what should be the attitude of believers regarding their involvement in social and political reform? Considering Christ's transforming power and ability to change both individual lives and corporate structures of society, are Christians justified to be "isolationists", uninvolved in social and moral reforms in government and industry and education?
15. Even though there is a great mystery concerning heaven and our heavenly bodies, what can be said with certainty about our heavenly existence as believers? What is the basis of the believers' assurance of a glorious future in heaven?
16. What is your response to the following statements (by William Barclay)?: "The only way to demonstrate that Christianity is the best of all faiths is to prove that it produces the best of all men. The important thing is not words but deeds, not oratory but life. The outside world never comes into a church to hear a sermon, but the outside world sees us every day outside the church; and it is our lives which must be the sermon to win men for Christ."

LIVING THE LIFE OF JOY!

**CHAPTER 13**

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
LOVE AND UNITY**



## CHAPTER 13

SUBJECT: POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING - LOVE AND UNITY

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 4:1-3

TEXT: "My desire is that you should be in full agreement, loving the same things, joined together in soul, your minds set on the one thing."  
(Philippians 2:2)

PROPOSITION: There is a vital need for unity in every Christian Church. The church can only be effective and strong as it is a united and an understanding church.

OUTLINE:

### I. UNITY IS THE GREATEST CHARACTERISTIC OF THE CHURCH

- A. What is the "secret" of the church's power, persistence, and ability to perpetuate itself throughout the ages?
- B. What is love?
- C. If love is the underlying motivation for unity, what practically does love for fellow Christians mean within the context of the local church?
  1. Love means Freedom
  2. Love means Forbearance and Forgiveness
  3. Love means Humility

### II. UNITY IS THE GREATEST POWER OF THE CHURCH

- A. The internal power of the church is found in the unity within the church as it is expressed through diversity of gifts.
- B. The church's external power is understood in terms of its outreach and witness in the world, as it seeks to accomplish Christ's purpose in the world.

CONCLUSION: "Be of one mind." That is what Christians are intended to be. Unity characterized the Church of Christ as it was intended to be. Love is the underlying motivation for unity. Love will give a congregation freedom - freedom to openly express one's individuality, but freedom also to confess faults to one another. Love will give a congregation forbearance and a spirit of forgiveness, and love will also give a congregation meekness and humility. These characteristics combine to make a strong, united church.

Unity is the greatest power of the church. This power of this unity is found in the diversity of gifts, which are to be harmoniously combined to present a unified front in the eyes of a critical world. The church which is Spirit-filled is a beautiful, winsome, attractive, and influential witness to the world.

POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
LOVE AND UNITY

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 4:1-3

TEXT: "My desire is that you should be in full agreement, loving the same things, joined together in soul, your minds set on one thing." (v.2)

INTRODUCTION:

Philippians was written by Paul to the church at Philippi and is sometimes called "The Epistle of Excellent Things". One subject which Paul deals with is unity within the church. His reason for writing about this subject is described by Barclay. "The one danger which threatened the Philippians church was the danger of disunity. There is a sense in which that is the danger of every healthy church. It is when people are really in earnest, when their beliefs really matter to them, when they are eager to carry out their own plans and their own schemes, that they are apt to get up against each other. The greater their enthusiasm, the greater the danger that they may collide. It is against that danger that Paul wished to safeguard his friends." (Barclays Philippians; pg.38)

PROPOSITION:

There is a vital need for unity in every Christian church. The church can only be effective and strong as it is a united, and an understanding church. Two statements can be made:

(1) Unity is the greatest characteristic of the church.

(2) Unity is the greatest power of the church.

Let us see why these statements prove to be true.

I. UNITY IS THE GREATEST CHARACTERISTIC OF THE CHURCH.

It is the natural tendency of any other organization than the church to divide into splinter groups, each contending for its own petty standards and opinions. None other organization has stood the test of time better or maintained its original distinctives more clearly than the church. Throughout the ages it has triumphantly endured persecutions and stood strong against the threats which sought to undo it.

A. WHAT IS THE "SECRET" OF THE CHURCH'S POWER, PERSISTENCE, AND ABILITY TO PERPETUATE ITSELF THROUGHOUT THE AGES?

It has remained essentially unchanged because it is a divine institution, formed by the Son of God. The characteristic which best describes the true nature of the church is unity. Unity, however, is merely the active exercise of love. Christianity is the religion of love which expresses itself within the corporate setting of the church and which proves itself through the manifest fruits of Christian unity. To understand this greatest characteristic of the Christian church, we must seek to understand the underlying motivation of unity which is love.

B. WHAT IS LOVE?

The highest type of love is agape. Let Barclay define it. "Agape, the Christian word, really means unconquerable benevolence. It means that no

## POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING: LOVE AND UNITY

matter what a man may do to us by way of insult or injury or humiliation, we will never seek anything else but his highest good. It is therefore a feeling of the mind as much as it is of the heart; it concerns the will just as much as it does the emotions. It describes the deliberate effort - which we can only make with the help of God - never to seek anything but the best, even for those who seek the worst for us." (Barclay's Galatians; pg.54,55)

If God can enable the Christian to love his enemies, how much more should the Christian be enabled to love his Christian brethren in the church! It is love for one another within the context of the church, that will produce a strong and united church.

Is it not reasonable that Christians should love one another and thus form a united church? After all, we Christians serve the same Lord, exercise the same faith, enjoy the same fellowship, share the same suffering, resist the same temptations, march under the same flag, fight the same battle, rejoice in the same victories, run the same race, represent the same cause, sell the same product, sow the same seed, and proclaim the same message. We Christians should love one another for we are members of the same family, citizens of the same kingdom, sheep of the same fold, soldiers of the same army, and disciples of the same Master.

One cannot claim to know God if he does not love his fellowmen, for "God is love" and he that would know God must love the same ones that God loves. John wrote, "If one says, 'I love God', and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. It is this command that we have from Him, that he who loves God, loves his brother also." (I John 4:20,21; Barclay)

Every time we pray "Our Father", we should realize that this address to God acknowledges that each of us is a member of a fellowship, a family! John says, "Everyone who loves the father loves the child." (I John 5:1; Barclay) John Wesley said, "No man can have God for his father unless he has the church for his mother...God knows nothing of a solitary religion...No man every went to heaven alone; he must either find friends or make them." (Barclay's Ephesians; pg.156 and Barclay's Acts; pg.119)

The pagans looked at the Christian congregations of the early Christian church and exclaimed, "Behold, how they love one another." One astonished pagan proclaimed, "They love each other without knowing each other." (Taylor's Goodly Heritage; pg.20) It is easier to "stand fast" against temptation when one is in vital fellowship with other believers. (v.1) All for each, and each for all in the church.

### C. IF LOVE IS THE UNDERLYING MOTIVATION FOR UNITY, WHAT PRACTICALLY DOES LOVE FOR FELLOW CHRISTIANS MEAN WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE CHURCH?

#### 1. LOVE MEANS FREEDOM

Genuine love among all the members of the church, means that there will be freedom to openly and calmly express personal opinions. Genuine Christians are individualists with a unique way of looking at the church's needs, problems, and methods. Love-possessed Christians don't have to pamper one another, or treat each other with "kid gloves". Love-possessed Christians don't wear their feelings on their shoulders, ready to be knocked off and hurt by the slightest bump. Love-possessed Christians don't take personal offense by someone who merely differs in viewpoint.

## POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING: LOVE AND UNITY

Genuine love among all members of the church means that there will be freedom to confess personal faults to one another. It is not a sign of weakness to acknowledge that one is wrong. It is the oil that keeps the machinery of the church running smoothly. Misunderstandings can lead to resentment if they are not cleared up through confession. James wrote, "Confess your faults one to another." (Note Philippians 4:1)

Love means the freedom to be yourself; to accept others uncritically. To accept yourself but not reject others - even though they think differently or have different temperaments. Heal "personality clashes" quickly and reconcile relationships immediately. "The cause may have been trivial enough, for slight bickerings are easily magnified into great issues by the hypersensitive." (Robertson; pg.228) "Agree to disagree agreeably." "Be a peace-maker, not a peace-breaker. Much of the best work we do is in helping others to agree". (Robertson; pg.230) Forgiveness and forbearance are not optional - they are imperative! "A quarreling church is not a church at all, for a quarreling church is a church from which Christ has been shut out, and to which He cannot gain access. No man can be at peace with God and at variance with his fellowmen." (Barclay)

However, the Bible doesn't teach peace at any price. We are to speak the truth in love, seeking to maintain peace. As much as possible, live peaceably, without compromising the truth. Discipline was practised by Paul against one-time believers who had become deceptive in their influence, and Paul put them out of the church.

### 2. LOVE MEANS FORBEARANCE AND FORGIVENESS

Paul wrote, "Bear with one another, and, if anyone has a ground of complaint against someone else, forgive each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must forgive each other. On top of all these things, clothe yourselves with love which is the perfect bond; and let the peace of God be the decider of all things within your hearts, for it is to that peace you were called, so that you might be united in one body." (Colossians 3:13-14; Barclay)

Barclay's comment on these verses is enlightening. "Literally what Paul's says is, 'Let the peace of God be the umpire in your heart.' The verb he uses is a verb from the athletic arena; it is the word that is used of the umpire who settled things with his decision in any matter of dispute. If the peace of Jesus Christ is the umpire in any man's heart, then, when feelings clash, and when we are pulled in two directions at the same time, when Christian charity conflicts in our hearts with unchristian irritation and annoyance, the decision of Christ will keep us in the way of love, and the church will remain the one body it was meant to be." (Colossians; pg.39,40)

### 3. LOVE MEANS HUMILITY

One man has noted that the chief causes of disunity within a church are selfish ambition, personal prestige, and concentration of self. (Barclay's Philippians; pg.39,40) Humility is a trait that is cultivated in the lives of great men. It must be a quality that every Christian cultivates, if the church is to be united. To prefer others before ourselves and to acknowledge that we are wrong at times in our judgement, is necessary if unity is to be maintained in the church.

The following prayer, seasoned with irony, is appropriate to meditate upon:

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
LOVE AND UNITY**

"Lord, keep me from becoming talkative and possessed with the idea that I must express myself on every subject. Release me from the craving to straighten out everyone's affairs. Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be wrong. Make me helpful, not bossy. With my vast store of wisdom and experience, it does seem a pity not to use it all---. But thou knowest, Lord, that I want a few friends at the end. Amen."

(None of These Diseases; pg.188)

Unity is the greatest characteristic of the church. The motivation for unity is love which means freedom, forbearance, forgiveness, and humility.

**II. UNITY IS THE GREATEST POWER OF THE CHURCH**

The course of history has been influenced and actually changed by the power of the church. Wherein lies the power of the church, first internally, and secondly, externally?

**A. THE INTERNAL POWER OF THE CHURCH IS FOUND IN THE UNITY WITHIN THE CHURCH AS IT IS EXPRESSED THROUGH DIVERSITY OF GIFTS**

Paul wrote, "For just as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so, although we are many, we are one body in Christ, and we are all members of each other. Since, then, we have different gifts, according to the grace that has been given to us, let us use them in mutual service." (Barclay's Romans 12:4-6) The diversity in gifts make a powerful, unified church.

There are queens, drones, and workers among bees and ants, each of which has a specific and different function to fulfill in contributing toward a unified organization. There are different instruments in an orchestra, each cooperating to produce beautiful harmony. There are different voices within a choir, each contributing to the harmony of the unified choir. So it is in the church. There are many different gifts, none of which seeks to display itself, but rather seeks to blend itself with the whole to make a beautiful church.

**B. THE CHURCH'S EXTERNAL POWER IS UNDERSTOOD IN TERMS OF ITS OUTREACH AND WITNESS IN THE WORLD, AS IT SEEKS TO ACCOMPLISH CHRIST'S PURPOSE IN THE WORLD.**

Jesus prayed to His Father for His disciples: "Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you gave to me, that they may be one, as we are one." (John 17:11b; Barclay's)

Comments Barclay on this passage, "The world cannot be evangelized by competing churches. Jesus prayed that His disciples might be as fully one as He and the Father are one; and there is no prayer of Jesus which has been so hindered from being answered by individual Christians and by all the churches than this prayer."

Dick Sheppard, a great open air preacher who spoke to people who were outside of the church, declares that the greatest "handicap the church has is the unsatisfactory lives of professing Christians." (Barclay's Corinthians; pg.209)

## POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING: LOVE AND UNITY

To wield influence in an evil world and to tear down the strongholds of Satan, the church must be strongly united. Soldiers cannot be divided against each other and expect to win the battle.

"Like a mighty army moves the church of God;  
Brothers we are treading where the saints have trod;  
We are not divided, all one body we;  
One in hope and doctrine, Once in charity."

There is power in union. Take some common illustrations from the world of man and nature. It does not take much weight to break a small strand of wire. However, when thousands of small strands of wire are united to make huge cables, these cables are able to hold up a swinging bridge like the Royal Gorge Bridge. Strength is found through the union of the small wires.

A drop of water has not power to speak of. However, combine many drops to make a gallon of water and combine many millions of gallons and what results is a surging river which has great power to carry many tons of earth and even to wear away large rocks. Power comes through the union of many small units. Think of the grasshopper. One grasshopper is annoying but can do little damage by itself. Multiply the one grasshopper by thousands and millions and what results is a devastating pest which is able to strip entire fields and completely destroy crops. There is great power in an army of grasshoppers.

The power of the church rests in its unified front. One person is important and has vast potential, but the church's greatest success and strength rests in the group, the army of Christ. A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. We are members of God's kingdom and as such must be worthy of that membership.

Paul says the quarreling, divided church is a weak church. Such a church is like a person who attempts to climb a mountain with a broken leg. How slow and almost impossible it is to make any progress. A divided church must have her broken relationships knit in order to be strong and influential.

The quarreling church is unsightly, unbecoming, and unappealing. The schematic church is like a rent garment! The church must be united if it is to be attractive, beautiful, winsome, and effective. The early church was a united church, and, as a result, it was a fruitful church.

The church which is saturated with the Holy Spirit is a united church. Says Shoemaker, "Another great experience of the Holy Spirit is the way he brings unity and fellowship...this unity above freedom and dissent, above diversity of personalities and function...A quiet inward pressure upon people that lowers the tone of voices, stills the clamor of opinionated convictions and reminds everyone of the Higher Will that should prevail." (The Reformed Doctrine of Sanctification; pg.20)

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, self-control. (Galatians 5:22; Barclay) The world is seeking something which only the church has. Are we, the church, going to disappoint them? Will the world find in the church peace for its turmoil, joy for its misery, forgiveness for its guilt, hope for its despair, fellowship for its loneliness, love for its rejection, comfort for its sorrow, harmony for its discord?

## POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING: LOVE AND UNITY

The world has a high standard for the church, despite the world's seeming indifference to the church. The world knows if a church is complementary or competitive, saving or striving, compassionate or carnal, united or divided. If love, joy, peace are dominating a church as they should be, there is no room for clans or cliques. The world hears too much of bickering, clamoring, fighting, and quarreling. Let the church sound forth the harmonious notes of love, peace and unity. Let all discord and disharmony be eliminated, and let only the sweet music of peace and joy be heard. The world needs the Gospel. Let us not fail to live up to the high standard the world expects of us.

### CONCLUSION:

"Be of One Mind". That is what Christians are intended to be. Unity characterizes the church of Christ as it was intended to be. Love is the underlying motivation for unity. Love will give a congregation freedom - freedom to openly express one's individuality, but freedom also to confess faults to one another. Love will give a congregation forbearance and a spirit of forgiveness, and love will also give a congregation meekness and humility. These characteristics combine to make a strong, united church.

Unity is the greatest power of the church. This power of this unity is found in the diversity of gifts, which are to be harmoniously combined to present a unified front in the eyes of a critical world. The church which is Spirit-filled is a beautiful, winsome, attractive, and influential witness to the world.

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
LOVE AND UNITY**

DISCUSSION:

1. If the Philippian church was considered by Paul to be a very healthy church, then why did Paul find it necessary to warn the Philippian believers against the possibility of disunity in their local church?
2. Can you cite evidence from church history and from contemporary times that documents the following statement?: "None other organization has stood 'the test of time' better or maintained its original distinctives more clearly than the church!"
3. What is the "secret" of the church's power, persistence, and ability to perpetuate itself throughout the ages?
4. What characteristic best describes the true nature of the church?
5. How would you describe "agape" love - the highest type of love?
6. To what extent do you personally agree with the following statement?: "It is love for one another within the context of the church, that will produce a strong and united church."
7. Why is it both reasonable and Biblical that Christians should love one another, and, as a result, form a united church?
8. Share Scriptural support to document the truth of the following statement: "One cannot claim to know God if he does not love his fellowmen, for 'God is love' and he that would know God must love the same ones that God loves."
9. When one prays "Our Father", acknowledging the "Fatherhood of God", what is the pray-er also acknowledging?
10. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following decisive statements by John Wesley: "No man can have God for his father unless he has the church for his mother...God knows nothing of a solitary religion...No man ever went to heaven alone; he must either find friends or make them."
11. What phenomenon brought great amazement to the pagans in the early centuries of Christianity?
12. Have you found that it is easier for you, as a believer, to "stand fast" against temptation when you are in vital fellowship with other believers within the local church? Why or why not?
13. If love is the underlying motivation for unity, what practically does love for fellow Christians mean within the context of the local church?
14. Is it possible for two sincere believers, both of whom are committed to the unity and the peace of the local church, to hold different viewpoints and even to strongly debate with each other regarding their differing viewpoints, without at the same time destroying the unity of the

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
LOVE AND UNITY**

fellowship? What steps should be taken by fellow believers when they sense that their actions or viewpoints are resulting in divisiveness and misunderstanding within the Christian fellowship? How can a sincere believer know when he is experiencing helpful sensitiveness towards others, and when he is becoming oversensitive towards others? Give your interpretation of the following statement: "Slight bickerings are easily magnified into great issues by the hypersensitive."

15. In matters of disagreement with fellow believers within the context of the local church, what does it mean for you to "let the peace of God be the umpire in your heart"?
16. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: "Humility must be a quality that every Christian cultivates, if the church is to be united. To prefer others before ourselves and to acknowledge that we are wrong at times in our judgments, is necessary if unity is to be maintained in the church."
17. Give your interpretation of the following statement: "The internal power of the church is found in the unity within the church as it is expressed through diversity of gifts." Give examples from common life and from nature which illustrate the principle of "Unity of purpose amidst diversity of functions."
18. What is meant by the church's "external power"?
19. What prayer of Jesus does William Barclay believe has been most hindered in being answered by individual Christians and by all the churches?
20. What does Dick Sheppard believe has been the church's greatest handicap?
21. As it relates to the church, what is meant by the statement: "There is power in union." Cite examples from common life and from nature that illustrate this statement.
22. What makes a local church beautiful, winsome and effective, rather than unsightly, unbecoming, and unappealing?
23. What effect does the Holy Spirit have upon a group of strong-willed believers within the local church?
24. What does the church of Jesus Christ have uniquely to offer to the sinning and suffering persons of the world?
25. What "high standard" does the world have for the church? Are the expectations, which the world has for the church, realistic and Biblical?



LIVING THE LIFE OF JOY!

**CHAPTER 14**

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
REJOICING EVERMORE**



## CHAPTER 14

SUBJECT: POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING - REJOICING EVERMORE

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 4:4

TEXT: "Rejoice in the Lord at all times." (Philippians 4:4a)

PROPOSITION: If the Christian life means anything, it means a joyful life. It is Jesus' desire that His followers be filled with joy.

OUTLINE:

### I. REJOICE IN PRAYER

- A. Context of Prayer
- B. Context of Prayer
- C. Concept of God in Prayer

### II. REJOICE IN FELLOWSHIP

- A. Fellowship of Home
- B. Fellowship of Church
- C. Fellowship of Christ

### III. REJOICE IN SUFFERING

- A. A person should rejoice because suffering willingly for Christ shows that love conquers over hate.
- B. A person should rejoice because suffering willingly for Christ shows that one is following Christ's example.
- C. A person should rejoice because suffering willingly for Christ is confined only to this life, after which heaven's glory comes.

CONCLUSION: Christians should be the happiest people in the world, despite the external circumstances that would seek to oppress the body and depress the spirit. Paul exhorted the Philippians, "Rejoice in the Lord at all times. I will say it again - Rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4; Barclay)

Rejoice in the privileges of prayer. Prayer moves the hand of God and changes the world of men and nations. It is the Christian's joy to pray for loved ones, teachers, leaders, the needy and weak, as well as for himself.

Rejoice in the beauty of fellowship. Rejoice in the warmth of home; rejoice in the friendship of the church; rejoice in the matchless love of Christ.

Rejoice in the challenge of suffering. Suffering willingly shows that love conquers hate. Suffering courageously shows that Christ's example is worthy of following. Suffering hopefully shows that faith's eye sees heaven's rewards.

"Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice."

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
REJOICING EVERMORE**

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 4:4

TEXT: "Rejoice in the Lord at all times." (Philippians 4:4a)

INTRODUCTION:

The Christian life is a life of joy. If the Christian life means anything it means a joyful life. It is Jesus' desire that His followers be filled with joy. Jesus said to his disciples, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." (John 15:11) Said Jesus to his heavenly Father, "And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." (John 17:13)

Comments Barclay, "The Christian is the man of joy; the Christian is the laughing cavalier of Christ. A gloomy Christian is a contradiction in terms, and nothing in all religious history has done Christianity more harm than its connection with black clothes and long faces." (Barclay's John, Volume 2; pg.206,207)

PROPOSITION:

Paul exhorts Christians to 'rejoice evermore'. What should the Christian rejoice in? The Christian should rejoice in

- (1) Prayer,
- (2) Fellowship,
- (3) Suffering.

I. REJOICE IN PRAYER (Philippians 1:3,4)

A. CONTEXT OF PRAYER (Historical summary)

When we pray, we should thank God that we have the privilege of prayer. No longer does man have to pray to God through the intercession of a man as was the practice in the Old Testament. Christians are not confined to any one time or to any one place in praying to God. The Old Testament Jews went to the temple to pray, for it was there that they felt God's presence dwelt. The New Testament enlightenment is that God is a Spirit and as such saturates the Universe with His presence. Those who worship God must worship Him in Spirit and in truth. We can be thankful that we can pray to God at any time and at any place.

B. CONTENT OF PRAYER

What should be the content of our praying? "George Reindrop in his book 'No Common Task' tells how a nurse once taught a man to pray, and in doing so changed his whole life, until a dull, disgruntled and dispirited creature became a man of joy. Much of the nurse's work was done with her hands, and she used her hand as, as it were, a scheme of prayer. Each of her fingers stood for someone. Her thumb was nearest and closest and it reminded her to pray for those who were nearest and dearest to her. The second finger is used for pointing; those who teach us point to us with it when they would ask us a question; therefore her second finger stood for all her teachers in school and in the hospital. The third finger is the tallest and it stood for the V.I.P's, the leaders in every sphere of life, and in every party. The fourth finger is

## POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING: REJOICING EVERMORE

the weakest finger, as every pianist knows; and it stood for those who are weak, and in trouble, and in pain. The little finger is the smallest and the most unimportant, and to the nurse it stood for herself. That indeed is a lovely scheme of prayer." (Barclay's Philippians; pg.17)

### C. CONCEPT OF GOD IN PRAYER

What is the healthy concept of God that one should have in praying to God? To experience peace through praying, one would realize that God is loving, all-wise and all-powerful. As Barclay says, "When we pray, we must always remember three things. We must remember the love of God, which ever seeks and desires only what is best for us. We must remember the wisdom of God, which alone knows what is best for us. We must remember the power of God, which alone can bring to pass that which is best for us. He who prays with a perfect belief and trust in the love, the wisdom and the power of God will find God's peace." (Barclay's Philippians; pg.96)

One who prays much and who prays rightly is a radiant person. One who knew John Wesley well said of him, "He thought prayer to be more his business than anything else, and I have seen him come out of his closet with a serenity of face next to shining." (Power Through Prayer; pg.38)

## II. REJOICE IN FELLOWSHIP

The Christian's life is enhanced and filled with joy through fellowship. The Christian's fellowship includes his home, his church, and his God.

### A. FELLOWSHIP OF HOME

The Christian should enjoy the fellowship of his home. The home is a sweet refuge in which every member can share burdens, joys, and goals. Where love binds the family together there is joy, regardless of the external circumstances.

How meaningful and true is the song, "Happy The Home When God Is There."

"Happy the home when God is there,  
And love fills every breast;  
When one their wish, and one their prayer,  
And one their heav'nly rest."

### B. FELLOWSHIP OF CHURCH

The Christian should enjoy the fellowship of the church. The person who is looking for a perfect church will search in vain. People are imperfect and therefore every church is imperfect, for the church is the people.

The Bible says, "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near." (Hebrews 10:24,25 RSV) The Christian should desire to be with those who are like himself. In the natural world animals of like kind group together. Birds flock together, fish swim together, bees swarm together, cattle herd together, beavers work together, and ants travel together. Why should not God's highest creations, men, worship together? God has made us to fellowship, and what better place is there for us to fellowship than at God's house periodically?

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
REJOICING EVERMORE**

Why fellowship together at God's house? It is common knowledge that joint cooperation is essential in order to accomplish anything great. A campaign is won through joint effort. The campaign of Christ is planned for and carried out by the church. Each Christian in the church has the opportunity of helping others. We need the encouragement and counsel of one another. May we rejoice in the fellowship of God's people. The Psalmist said, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." (Psalms 122:1)

**III. REJOICE IN SUFFERING**

Paul was able even to rejoice in suffering. Paul was imprisoned in Rome for his faith at the time he wrote to the Philippian church. Paul knew the kind of man Nero, the Roman Emperor, was. Nero was a cruel, cunning, bloody man who hated the Christians and eventually used the Christians as scapegoats. Despite Paul's realization that he might be awaiting eventual death at the hand of Nero, he was able to live a radiant and joyful life. Wrote Paul to the Philippians, "But if my own life is to be poured out on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and I do rejoice with you all." (Philippians 2:17, Barclay) Paul was able to think of and seek to encourage the Philippians even while he was going through the trial of imprisonment.

Why should a Christian rejoice in suffering for Christ?

**A. A PERSON SHOULD REJOICE BECAUSE SUFFERING WILLINGLY FOR CHRIST SHOWS THAT LOVE CONQUERS OVER HATE.**

Barclay describes that Christian love as follows, "Christian love is that unconquered benevolence and good-will which will never know bitterness, and which will never seek anything but the good of others. This Christian love is not a mere reaction of the heart, as human love is; it is a victory of the will achieved by the help of Jesus Christ. It does not mean loving only those who love us; or those whom we like; or those who are lovable. It means an unconquerable good-will even to those who hate us; it means the power to love the people we do not like; it means the Christ-like ability to love the unlovely and the unlovable. Herein is the very essence of the Christian life; and herein is that which affects us in time and in eternity." (Philippians; pg.41)

Wurmbrand tells about one Christian who was sentenced to death by the Communists because of his faith. "Before being executed, he was allowed to see his wife. His last words to his wife were: 'You must know that I die loving those who kill me. They don't know what they do and my last request of you is to love them, too. Don't have bitterness in your heart because they kill your beloved one. We will meet in heaven.'" (Tortured For Christ; pg.25)

Wurmbrand quotes St. Macary as saying, "If a man loves all men passionately, but says only about one man that him he cannot love, the man who says this is no more a Christian because his love is not all-embracing." (Ibid; pg.34)

**B. A PERSON SHOULD REJOICE BECAUSE SUFFERING WILLINGLY FOR CHRIST SHOWS THAT ONE IS FOLLOWING CHRIST'S EXAMPLE.**

If it is a joy to be identified with a great person, how infinitely greater it is to be identified with Christ, even in his sufferings. Wrote Paul to the Philippians, "For to you has been given the privilege of doing something

## POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING: REJOICING EVERMORE

for Christ - the privilege of not only believing in Him, but also of suffering for Him." (Philippians 1:29, Barclay) Barclay notes that "in the hour of his martyrdom in the flames Polycarp prayed and said, 'I thank Thee, O Father, that Thou hast judged me worthy of this hour.'" (Barclay's Philippians; pg.18)

Wurmbrand relates an incident in a Communist prison camp that shows the substitutionary love of one who was glad to be identified with Christ in his sufferings. "One of the really great heroes of the faith was Pastor Milan Haimovici. The prisons were overcrowded and the guards did not know us by name. They called out for those who had been sentenced to get twenty-five lashes with a whip for having broken some prison rule. Innumerable times, Pastor Milan Haimovici went to get the beating in the place of somebody else. By this he won the respect of other prisoners not only for himself, but also for Christ whom he represented." (Tortured For Christ; pg.21)

### C. A PERSON SHOULD REJOICE BECAUSE SUFFERING WILLINGLY FOR CHRIST IS CONFINED ONLY TO THIS LIFE, AFTER WHICH HEAVEN'S GLORY COMES.

Paul glimpses heaven's glory and this made him homesick for his true and heavenly home. Said Paul, "For living is Christ to me, and death is gain. And yet - what if the continuance of my life in the flesh would produce more fruit for me? What I am to choose is not mine to declare. I am caught between two desires, for I have my desire to strike camp and to be with Christ, which is far better; but for your sake it is more essential for me to remain in this life." (Philippians 1:21-24) Heaven lies beyond this veil of tears, and therefore, despite the hardships of this life, the Christian can rejoice.

Rev. Wurmbrand maintained a glowing hope despite the sufferings and tortures of his ugly imprisonment. Writes Rev. Wurmbrand, "Around me were Jobs, some much more afflicted than Job had been. But I knew the end of Job's story; how he received twice as much as he had had before. I had around me men like poor Lazarus, hungry and full of uncared for boils. But I knew that angels would take them all to the bosom of Abraham. I saw them as they will be in the future. I saw in the shabby and dirty and weak martyr near me the splendidly crowned saint of tomorrow." (Ibid; pg.36)

### CONCLUSION:

Christians should be the happiest people in the world, despite the external circumstances that would seek to oppress the body and depress the spirit. Paul exhorted the Philippians, "Rejoice in the Lord at all times. I will say it again - Rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4, Barclay)

Rejoice in the privileges of prayer. Prayer moves the hand of God and changes the world of men and nations. It is the Christian's joy to pray for loved ones, teachers, leaders, the needy and weak, as well as for himself.

Rejoice in the beauty of fellowship. Rejoice in the warmth of the home; rejoice in the friendship of the church; rejoice in the matchless love of Christ.

Rejoice in the challenge of suffering. Suffering willingly shows that love conquers hate. Suffering courageously shows that Christ's example is worthy of following. Suffering hopefully shows that faith's eye sees heaven's rewards.

"Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice."

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
REJOICING EVERMORE**

DISCUSSION:

1. What evidence is there from the life of Jesus that living for God brings "Unspeakable joy"? (Note John 15:11; 17:13)
2. Why does William Barclay say that "a gloomy Christian is a contradiction in terms"?
3. In contrast to the Old Testament Jewish practice of prayer, what is the New Testament teaching regarding the practice of prayer (in terms of 'time' and 'place')?
4. Using one's own physical hand as a simple aid in learning effectively to pray, what does each finger and thumb remind one to pray for?
5. What does William Barclay say we should remember about God when we engage ourselves in prayer?
6. From your observation of 'prayer warriors', can you document the truth of the following statement? - "One who prays much and who prays rightly is a radiant person."
7. In what ways should one's home be the source of one's joy in living the Christian life?
8. Why should the church be a source of great joy for the sincere Christian? What evidence is there that God has made human beings for fellowship, and that it is impossible for a believer to be truly joyous in his personal life without the fellowship of fellow believers?
9. Besides the joy that fellow believers mutually experience as a result of fellowship within the local church, what other significant reason is there for Christians to fellowship together at God's house?
10. How is a Christian's joy different from the mere happiness which non-believers experience?
11. What did Paul mean when he spoke of a Christian 'being in Christ'?
12. What titles, given to Jesus, make a believer realize how wonderful are the resources of God, and how intimate is the relationship the believer can have with Christ?
13. Why do you think Paul was able to live so radiantly and so joyously, in spite of the fact that he was facing impending death at the hand of the cruel Roman Emperor, Nero?
14. From whence comes the strength for a Christian to love his enemies, to love the unlovely and the unloveable?

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
REJOICING EVERMORE**

15. Do you feel that the following statement by Saint Macary is an overstatement - a too harsh evaluation of the Christian life? - "If a man loves all men passionately, but says only about one man that him he cannot love, the man who says this is no more a Christian because his love is not all-embracing."
16. Why should a Christian consider it a 'privilege' to suffer for Christ? (Note Philippians 1:29; Matthew 5:11,12)
17. In what ways does the prospect of eventually living in heaven, make the sufferings of this present time on Earth more endurable?
18. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Christians should be the happiest people in the world, despite the external circumstances that would seek to oppress the body and depress the spirit."
19. Cite Scriptural evidence and evidence from personal experience and from contemporary history that documents the truth of the following statement: "Prayer moves the hand of God and changes the world of men and nations."
20. Why is it possible, as a believer, to rejoice even in the midst of suffering? What does it mean (1) to suffer willingly, (2) to suffer courageously, (3) to suffer hopefully?



LIVING THE LIFE OF JOY!

**CHAPTER 15**

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
GRACIOUS GENTLENESS**

## CHAPTER 15

SUBJECT: POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING - GRACIOUS GENTLENESS

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 4:1-13

TEXT: "Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near."  
(Philippians 4:5)

PROPOSITION: Because God is gentle and forbearing and patient with people, we too - as believers - can be gentle and gracious in our relationships with people, not contending for our rights and not contending for strict justice at the expense of showing mercy and tolerance to people.

Gracious gentleness or patience is "love stretched out" to other persons, bearing with and lovingly relating to them - including their mistakes and sins. Long-suffering or patience is a description of God's character, and reveals God's attitude toward men. Because Christ is patient, followers of Christ are also to be patient. God suffers long and is patient in His dealings with men. Believers too are to suffer long with both unregenerate sinners, and with imperfect believers.

### OUTLINE:

- I. THE MEANING OF "GRACIOUS GENTLENESS" (What Is It?)
- II. THE MOTIVATION FOR "GRACIOUS GENTLENESS" (Why Is It?)
- III. THE MANIFESTATION OF "GRACIOUS GENTLENESS" (How Is It?)
  - A. Long-suffering (Patience) Towards Sinners.
    1. Believers are to suffer wrong rather than seeking to reap vengeance upon enemies.
    2. Believers are to share in sorrows of sinners.
  - B. Long-suffering (Patience) Towards Fellow Believers.
    1. Liking People
    2. Making Allowances for People's Faults
    3. Be Tender-hearted and forgiving toward fellow believers
    4. Patiently Believe in Imperfect People

CONCLUSION: Crucifixion of self-centeredness is the answer to victory in Christ and victory in patiently relating to others.

What is your part? Simply surrendering yourself to Christ totally. That means, surrender of your body, soul, and spirit. What is God's part? Power to impart His gift of love. Romans 5:5 tells us that God sheds abroad His love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Then when God imparts His love, it is your part to allow the Spirit to express that patient love through you. That comes by walking in the Spirit (Galatians 5:25,26). Be filled with the Spirit through surrender - and the fruit of Christian patience will be exercised in your life. Patience is a quality of God's nature; let God make it a part of your nature - today!

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
GRACIOUS GENTLENESS**

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 4:1-13

TEXT: "Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near." (4:5)

INTRODUCTION:

Through the strengthening presence of Jesus Christ (Philippians 4:13), every believer can do certain things. These accomplishments are not dependent upon natural talents or upon special endowments at physical birth. Take a quick overview of some of the things which you - as a believer - can do, through Christ who strengthens you.

- (1) You can love (v.1);
- (2) You can heal (v.2,3);
- (3) You can rejoice regardless of the circumstances around you (v.4);
- (4) You can be gentle and patient and tolerant (v.5);
- (5) You can be calm because of a spirit of prayer and thanksgiving (v.6,7);
- (6) You can be positive in your thought life (v.8,9);
- (7) You can be grateful towards other people (v.10);
- (8) You can be content, regardless of your outward circumstances (v.11-13).

PROPOSITION:

Because God is gentle and forbearing and patient with people, we too - as believers - can be gentle and gracious in our relationships with people, not contending for our rights and not contending for strict justice at the expense of showing mercy and tolerance to people.

Gracious gentleness or patience is "love stretched out" to other persons, bearing with and lovingly relating to them - including their mistakes and sins. Long-suffering or patience is a description of God's character, and reveals God's attitude toward men. Because Christ is patient, followers of Christ are also to be patient. God suffers long and is patient in His dealings with men. Believers too are to suffer long with both unregenerated sinners and with imperfect believers.

We must look at the MEANING, the MOTIVATION, and the MANIFESTATION of "Gracious Gentleness".

I. THE MEANING OF "GRACIOUS GENTLENESS"

It is difficult to find an adequate English word or words which totally and accurately reflects the full meaning of the Greek word for this Christian virtue. "A man has the quality of 'epieikeia' if he knows when not to apply the strict letter of the law, if he knows when to relax justice and to introduce mercy." (Barclay's Philippians; pg.93) "The man who is 'epieikes' knows when to relax the law under the compulsion of a force that is higher and greater than law. He knows the time when to stand on his rights would unquestionably be legal, and would just as unquestionably be completely unchristian." (New Testament Words; pg.95; Barclay)

Here are some of the words that describe this quality: courtesy, leniency, gentleness, forbearance, tolerance, flexibility, patience, generosity, mercy,

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
GRACIOUS GENTLENESS**

long-suffering, consideration, conciliatory spirit, sweet reasonableness, winsomeness, not harsh or unbending or unyielding or obstinate. There are people who feel that they are so right, that, in the name of strict justice, they will not "budge an inch".

The person with "gracious gentleness" is not harsh or judgmental, but he is the one who works for the good of the person, rather than for the mere maintenance of strict justice. He is committed to justice and righteousness, but he nevertheless seeks to apply justice with mercy and with love and with consideration of the persons involved. He treats others, not with strict justice according to the "letter of the law", but he treats others with mercy and understanding and tolerance, with the motivation of love and mercy. There are times (as one scholar said) when a "legal" right can become a moral wrong. Think of Jesus' treatment of the woman caught in adultery. The law (according to strict justice) would say she should be stoned. Mercy says she should be forgiven, and restored to dignity as a child of God.

As believers, we are to treat others like Jesus treats us:

- with understanding of another's background and temperament.
- giving others forgiveness for the wrongs they commit.
- giving others the "benefit of the doubt".
- with long-suffering and patience (overlooking the faults and shortcomings of others, focusing on the strengths rather than on the weaknesses in others.)

"The Lord is near" ("It is true of the continued presence of Jesus with us by the Holy Spirit [Matthew 28:20] as well as of the blessed hope of his second coming.") (Robertson; Paul's Joy In Christ; pg.235)

"The Lord is near"

- to give us companionship when lonely (Matthew 28:20)
- to give us patience with people when we are tempted to be irritable.
- to defend our case - to give us justice - when we are misused and abused or mistreated ("Vengeance is mine", saith the Lord [Romans 12])
- to give us love when we are tempted to be cold and calculating and calloused in human relationships (Romans 5:5)
- to give us perseverance and strength to work until He comes again, when we are tempted to despair and give up.

The Lord will soon come again, so why should you, as a believer, contend for all your rights here on Earth? Remember, the Lord will punish unrepentant sinners and reward faithful believers in the end. God will reveal all things and perfect justice will be rendered at the judgment. Righteousness which is unrewarded here on Earth, will be rewarded in eternity. Evil which has gone unpunished on Earth will surely be punished hereafter. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy". Treat others mercifully, kindly, tolerantly. Then you will be treated in like manner by God in eternity. If you treat others with strictest judgment and justice - according to the strict and cold "letter of the law" - then you can expect to be treated in the same way in eternity. If you treat others mercifully, you can expect to be treated mercifully in eternity.

## POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING: GRACIOUS GENTLENESS

"If we remember that life is short, and that the end comes, then we will not wish to enforce the stern justice which so often divides men; we will wish to deal with men in love, as we hope that God will deal with us. Justice is human, but 'epieikeia' is divine." (Barclay's Philippians; pg.94)

### II. THE MOTIVATION FOR "GRACIOUS GENTLENESS"

God loves even the loveless; He suffers long with even unregenerate man. Psalms 86:15 says, "But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth."

Says Psalms 103:8, "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy."

There are many examples in Scripture of God's long-suffering. God waited about 120 years before sending the flood, to allow Noah's generation to repent. I Peter 3:20 says, "The long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein a few, that is, eight souls were saved by water."

God suffered long in giving Sodom and Gomorrah opportunity to repent. Abraham bargained with God to save these cities, asking God to save these cities if only 50 could be found in them who were righteous. He kept bargaining with God until he got down to 10 persons. God said He would save the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah if only 10 righteous souls could be found. (Genesis 18)

God, in His long-suffering and patience and mercy, even spared ancient pagan Ninevah from destruction when the inhabitants repented of their sins under the powerful preaching of Jonah. "When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God repented of the evil which he had said he would do to them; and he did not do it. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. And when he prayed to the Lord and said, 'I pray thee, Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and repentest of evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take my life from me, I beseech thee, for it is better for me to die than to live.' And the Lord said, 'Do you do well to be angry?'...And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?" (Jonah 3:10; 4:1-4,11)

God suffered long with Israel's ingratitude, and for centuries God sent prophets to warn Israel and to call Israel to repentance. Moses was one who intervened with God for Israel to keep God from destroying rebellious Israel (Read Deuteronomy 9:13-21).

Romans 2:4 talks about God's great patience with sinful mankind. "Don't you realize how patient he is being with you? Or don't you care? Can't you see that he has been waiting all this time without punishing you, to give you time to turn from your sin? His kindness is meant to lead you to repentance." (Romans 2:4, Living Bible)

"If God had been a man He would have taken His hand and wiped out this world long ago; but God has that patience which bears with all our sinning and which will not cast us off." (Barclay's Galatians; pg.56)

The greatest revelation about God is that He is a God of long-suffering, a God of suffering love. Think of how nature even illustrates God's love. "A wildlife conservation officer drove past a grouse in the center of the road,

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
GRACIOUS GENTLENESS**

and he was surprised that she did not move when he swerved around her. He came back and saw in the meantime that six other cars had swerved around her, and still she did not move. When he came near, six little chicks ran out from under her wings. One of her wings was broken and her head was bloody. But she was saving others; herself she could not save. He that put the impulse into the heart of that mother grouse to save her little family at cost to herself, shall He not save His family though His head be bloody and His heart be broken?" (E. Stanley. Jones' Christian Maturity; pg.96)

**III. THE MANIFESTATION OF 'GRACIOUS GENTLENESS'**

**A. LONG-SUFFERING (PATIENCE) TOWARDS SINNERS**

Wrote James to believers, exhorting them to be patient. "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; establish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned; behold, the judge standeth before the door. Take, my brethren the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." (James 5:7-11)

**1. BELIEVERS ARE TO SUFFER WRONG RATHER THAN SEEKING TO REAP VENGEANCE UPON ENEMIES.**

Wrote Paul in I Corinthians 13:4-5: "Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong." (Living Bible)

"Chrysostom said that (patience) is the grace of the man who could revenge himself and who does not, of the man who is slow to wrath." (Barclay's Galatians; pg.55)

Wrote Peter, "For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God...Jesus did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." (I Peter 2:20,22,23)

Wrote Peter, "Dearly beloved,, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:19-21)

**2. BELIEVERS ARE TO SHARE IN SORROWS OF SINNERS.**

To be long-suffering means to suffer long with those who hurt - even with sinners! "It is the nature of love to insinuate itself into the sorrows and

## POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING: GRACIOUS GENTLENESS

sins of the loved one and to make them its own. In a home where pure love meets sin in the loved one, a cross of pain is set up, inevitably, at the junction of that pure love and that sin. All love has the doom of bleeding upon it as long as there is sin in the loved one." (Jones; Maturity; pg.95)

When Jesus' disciples were rejected in a certain Samaritan town, they wanted to call down fire from heaven to consume the inhabitants, but Jesus said that their spirit of vengeance was very wrong. Jesus suffered long with even those who rejected Him. (Note Luke 9:51-56)

Think of Jeremiah who suffered in an unbelievable manner because of persecutors among his own people who did not want "to stomach" Jeremiah's prophecies of doom and destruction of Judah. He is called the "weeping prophet" because he suffered long for his people who finally went into Babylonian captivity.

"A dramatic fable story is told of a young man who fell madly in love with a girl who hated the young man's mother. The girl laid down the hard condition that she would marry him only if he would bring the heart of his mother to her. His mad love for her got the better of him, so he killed his mother, took out her heart, wrapped it in a piece of paper, and ran with it to the girl. In his eagerness he tripped and fell, and the heart rolled out of the paper. The heart spoke and said: 'Son, I hope you haven't hurt yourself?'

"Jesus prayed, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.' That was the long-suffering God saying when they were murdering Him: 'My sons, I hope you haven't hurt yourselves.'" (Ibid; pg.98)

The fruit of the Spirit is long-suffering or patience with sinners. Said Jesus, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." (Matthew 5:43,44)

### B. LONG-SUFFERING (PATIENCE) TOWARDS FELLOW BELIEVERS

It is also important to express patience towards our fellow believers. This means several things, practically.

#### 1. LIKING PEOPLE

Said Dr. Walter C. Alvarez: "I would turn down all candidates for medical training who obviously did not like people." Certainly the same should be said about a ministerial candidate or candidate in any Christian work. We must like people in spite of what they are, and see in them what they can become.

"Will Rogers, beloved by his countrymen, said, 'I've never seen a man I didn't like.' He set himself to like, and under that attitude people became likeable. He produced what he saw. I said to a Japanese college president as I pointed to a twisted root hanging on the wall: 'You Japanese are wonderful. You see beauty in an ugly root like that.' And he replied: 'Is that root ugly?' His eye for beauty had produced beauty out of ugliness." (Ibid; pg.261)

#### 2. MAKE ALLOWANCES FOR PEOPLE'S FAULTS.

Wrote Paul, "Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Try always to be led along together by the Holy Spirit, and so be at peace with one another." (Ephesians 4:2-3, Living Bible)

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
GRACIOUS GENTLENESS**

**3. BE TENDER-HEARTED AND FORGIVING TOWARD FELLOW BELIEVERS.**

The long-suffering have no place for resentment in their lives. Wrote Paul, "Stop being mean, bad-tempered and angry. Quarreling, harsh words, and dislike of others should have no place in your lives. Instead be kind to each other, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just as God has forgiven you because you belong to Christ." (Ephesians 4:31-32)

**4. PATIENTLY BELIEVE IN IMPERFECT PEOPLE.**

There are "the 'perfectionists' who are always tense and anxious about their own imperfections and the imperfections of others...They cannot get along with themselves or with others. They are demanding the impossible and getting the possible - with disappointment!

"Jesus was patient with and hopeful for the weak and the faltering and the sinful. And yet He did not compromise with and accommodate himself to their imperfections and sins, for He held them to victory and not defeat, perfection not imperfection - and led them to it!"

E. Stanley Jones goes on, "That was what I needed; someone who would accept me with all my imperfections and yet hold me to perfection...I could be imperfect and accepted as such by my Redeemer, but I could be held to perfection by my Redeemer whose grace would be set to work at producing it. And this subsidiary note: I would treat others as Christ treats me. I would accept them as they are but expect them into expectancy, hope them into hope of being different, believe them into believing they could grow up to the crown I am holding above their heads. I would be able to live with my imperfect self without chafing and to work with imperfect colleagues without discouragement or without losing my temper." (A Song of Ascents; pg.39,40)

**CONCLUSION:**

Only they that are Christ's can experience patience toward others. The central problem of humanity is self-centeredness and self-interest. The disease of selfishness does not permit one to genuinely care for others - saints or sinners. To love others, to make allowances for others, to be tender-hearted toward others, to patiently believe in others, to exercise mercy rather than strict justice - these abilities are the abilities of the Spirit-controlled person whose heart has been purified and filled with God's love. "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the lower nature with its passions and desires." (Galatians 5:24, NEB)

Crucifixion of self-centeredness is the answer to victory in Christ and victory in patiently relating to others.

What is your part? Simply surrendering yourself to Christ totally. That means, body, soul, and spirit. Willing surrender is your part. What is God's part? Power to impart His gift of love. Romans 5:5 tells us that God sheds abroad His love in our heart by the Holy Spirit. Then when God imparts His love, it is your part to allow the Spirit to express that patient love through you. That comes by walking in the Spirit, "If we are living now by the Holy

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
GRACIOUS GENTLENESS**

Spirit's power, let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. Then we won't need to look for honors, and popularity, which lead to jealousy and hard feelings." (Galatians 5:25-26, Living Bible)

Be filled with the Spirit through surrender - and the fruit of Christian patience will be exercised in your life. Patience is a quality of God's nature; let God make it a part of your nature - today.

POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
GRACIOUS GENTLENESS

DISCUSSION:

1. According to Philippians 4:1-13, what are eight things which you, as a believer, can do, through Christ who strengthens you?
2. In terms of "practical love", how would you generally define and describe "gracious gentleness"? Who is the perfect example of "gracious gentleness" from which all believers should pattern their own lives as they seek rightly to act and to react in human relationships?
3. In terms of a proper balance between justice and mercy, explain how "gracious gentleness" operates practically in the treatment of persons.
4. Give a list of words which help make up a composite "profile" of the outstanding Christian virtue called "gracious gentleness".
5. What are the tragic results when, in the name of "strict justice", Christians refuse to "budge an inch" in their treatment of their fellow men? Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "A Christian is committed to justice and to righteousness, but he nevertheless seeks to apply justice with mercy and with love and with consideration of the persons involved. He is one who works for the good of the person, rather than for the mere maintenance of strict justice." (Cite Scriptures to document your answer.)
6. Can you think of instances when a "legal" right can become a moral wrong? (Note John 8:1-11)
7. What does it mean for you, as a believer, to treat others in the same way that Jesus treats you?
8. Give your interpretation of the phrase "The Lord is near", as recorded in Philippians 4:5b. Because life is short and because the Second Coming of Jesus is immanent, in what ways should these facts influence your attitudes and your reactions towards your fellow men who treat you unfairly and unjustly? To what extent should Christians defend their own rights in the name of justice (such as "civil disobedience" and "passive resistance" against unjust human laws), and to what extent should Christians surrender their rights to God and wait for God "to repay evil doers" and to vindicate the righteous cause of believers? (Note Psalms 37; Matthew 5:38-42; Romans 12:14,17-21). (Note passage on "passive resistance" - Acts 4:1-22).
9. Cite Scriptural references and share Biblical illustrations that demonstrate the fact that God, by nature, is "slow to anger", long-suffering, and patient with sinners.
10. Give illustrations from the world of nature that demonstrates the sacrificial, divine-like love.

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
GRACIOUS GENTLENESS**

11. What does a study of James 5:7-11 teach you regarding the importance and the benefits of exercising patience in your life?
12. Cite Scriptural support to document the truth of the following statement: "Believers are to suffer wrong rather than seeking to reap vengeance upon enemies."
13. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement by E. Stanley Jones: "It is the nature of love to insinuate itself into the sorrows and sins of the loved one and to make them its own."
14. What does a study of Luke 9:51-56 teach you regarding the proper attitude believers should have toward those who reject them?  
(Note also Luke 23:32-34; Acts 7:54-60)
15. Share from your own practical experience how you, as a believer, have learned to "like" people whom, at one time, you had no attraction for. Do you think the following piece of advice is helpful? - "If you have a hard time seeing good in a person, and you tend to focus on the faults of that person, then list in writing the good traits of that person. Then, in prayer, begin daily to thank God for that person." Tell what is meant by the statement: "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder!"
16. Why do you think it is important to make allowances for other people's faults?
17. What does a study of Ephesians 4:31-32 teach you regarding the proper attitude that you should have toward fellow believers?
18. What are the primary problems with the attitude of "the perfectionists"?
19. How did Jesus treat the weak and the faltering people around him?
20. How can you - an imperfect Christian - learn to live with yourself without discouragement, and learn to work with imperfect colleagues without losing your temper?
21. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "To love others, to make allowances for others, to be tender-hearted toward others, to patiently believe in others, to exercise mercy rather than strict justice - these abilities are the abilities of the Spirit-controlled person whose heart has been purified and filled with God's love."
22. Assuming that self-centeredness is the central problem of man, what is man's part and what is God's part in solving this central problem?



LIVING THE LIFE OF JOY!

**CHAPTER 16**

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
CALM PEACEFULNESS**

## CHAPTER 16

SUBJECT: POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING - CALM PEACEFULNESS

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 4:6,7

TEXT: "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:7)

PROPOSITION: Regardless of life's experiences, you can remain calm and relaxed and peaceful - through the enabling power of Jesus Christ who imparts peace to the human heart through the channels of praise, petition, and thanksgiving.

OUTLINE:

- I. PROBLEM OF WORRY
- II. PROVISION FOR WORRY
  - A. Prayer
  - B. Petition
  - C. Thanksgiving
- III. PROTECTION FROM WORRY

CONCLUSION: Everyone faces the problem of worry, but how you face the problem of worry will determine whether or not you will be a victim or a victor in life. Some people are being overcome with worry and all their joy in life is being sapped. Other people have learned the secret of facing and overcoming worry - through the strengthening presence of Jesus Christ (Philippians 4:3).

The prayer of praise, the prayer of petition, the prayer of thanksgiving - this is God's formula for dealing with worry. Sometimes, through prayer, God will remove the obstacles in life which have caused one to be worried, - and other times, even though one prays earnestly for the removal of obstacles, God allows the obstacles to remain, but God enables the worry-worn person to transform his worry energy into prayer energy - thus releasing one from anxiety, in spite of a fretful environment. If God does not turn the night into day, He will give a person a song to sing in the night. God will give inner peace to the soul in spite of outer turmoil in one's surroundings. "And the peace of God, which surpasses all human thought, will stand sentinel over your hearts and minds in Christ." (Philippians 4:7)

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
CALM PEACEFULNESS**

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 4:6,7

TEXT: "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:7)

INTRODUCTION:

Through the strengthening presence of Jesus Christ (Philippians 4:13), every believer can do certain things. These accomplishments are not dependent upon natural talents or upon special endowments at physical birth. Take a quick over-view of some of the things which you - as a believer - can do, through Christ who strengthens you.

- (1) You can love (v.1);
- (2) You can hear (v.2,3);
- (3) You can rejoice regardless of the circumstances around you (v.4);
- (4) You can be gentle and patient and tolerant (v.5);
- (5) You can be calm because of a spirit of prayer and thanksgiving (v.6,7);
- (6) You can be positive in your thought life (v.8,9);
- (7) You can be grateful towards other people (v.10);
- (8) You can be content, regardless of your outward circumstances (v.11,12).

PROPOSITION:

Regardless of life's experiences, you can remain calm and relaxed and peaceful - through the enabling power of Jesus Christ who imparts peace to the human heart through the channels of praise, petition, and thanksgiving.

In seeking today to learn how one can find victory over worry, we will consider three points:

- (1) problem of worry;
- (2) provision for worry;
- (3) protection from worry.

I. PROBLEM OF WORRY

The private secretary to Queen Victoria one time wrote, "Worry reigns over more human beings than any other potentate." (20 Centuries of Great Preaching; volume 5; pg.67)

Notes E. Stanley Jones, "The probabilities are that fear, worry, and anxiety are the greatest single trinity of evils a man can take into his life. He must root them out at all costs." (Abundant Living; pg.65)

What causes humans - even Christians - to worry? Much of the cause for worry is found in the fact of fretful circumstances which people find themselves in; circumstances that are outside of their control. Someone has called this the "tyranny of circumstances" (Lloyd-Jones). One may find himself in a situation where he has a lack of money, or in a set of circumstances which call for a difficult decision that will affect many people, or he may find himself in a job situation or in a marriage relationship which is causing much stress. Stress and worry are sometimes caused because of wayward children. Others feel stress and worry because of failing health. Still others are

## POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING: CALM PEACEFULNESS

inflicted with worry and anxiety as they face old age and as they dread the possibility of losing their marriage companion and perhaps finally having to go to a nursing home, thus losing most of their financial independence. There is the stress because of loneliness or disappointment. Much stress and worry is incited because of circumstances in one's external environment which seem to be outside of one's control. Some singles are worried that they may never marry and have a family. The list goes on and on.

Worry is the product of a heart that tends to panic and of a mind that runs loose with wild imaginations! There are those who tend to think that the worse will happen to them, and, as a result, they are plunged into the valley of despair and anxiety and fear and worry.

Jesus wants His people to be kept safe from worry, harassing care, nervousness, brooding anxiety. Christians can be delivered from a care-worn, fretful, worried life which takes away all joy and delight. Christians are to be people with a long view, people who plan well and work hard, but people who also throw all their energies into serving God, not wasting their energies needlessly on worry.

Fear, worry, and anxiety can even cause physical disorders. Ecclesiastes 11:10 (Moffatt) says, "Banish all worries from your mind, and keep your body from pain." "Doctors have put a tube down the nostrils of a patient into his stomach and have measured the effects of states of mind on the secretions. The secretion of hydrochloric acid often doubled during states of worrying." (Abundant Living; pg.69) Says one doctor, "Anxiety places more stress on the heart than any other stimulus, including physical exercise and fatigue...Not work, but worry makes us weary. Sleep refreshes our exhaustion from work, but not the weariness that stems from worry." (None of These Diseases; S.I. McMillan; pg.60,89)

### II. PROVISION FOR WORRY

What is God's provision for worry? God's provision - the Christian provision - is different than the mere psychological provision. Psychology - if it is "Christian" psychology - is a tool to help hurting people, but mere psychology, divorced from Christian understanding is inadequate at best and destructive at worse. Secular psychology sometimes tells people simply to quit worrying. But, apart from spiritual enablement, this is hard, if not impossible. Even if one dismisses worry from his conscious mind, that worry becomes a subconscious repression. Repressed worry in the subconscious mind can do great harm to the inner spirit, resulting in physical damage as well as mental turmoil.

If repression is inadequate, so expression is inadequate. Expressing our worry to other people is sometimes helpful, for we get the burden of worry "off of our own shoulders". Allowing someone else to help bear our burden is good, but merely verbalizing our worries to others will not necessarily solve our problems. In fact, the more we verbalize our worries to others, the more real our worries often become to us. For what gets your attention, gets you. A "mole hill" of worry can become a "mountain" of worry if all we do is verbalize our worries to others. Our impression of worry which is constantly expressed to others can lead to deep depression, and even to further worries. We create our world by our words, so the more we verbalize our worries, the more fretful our world becomes.

## POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING: CALM PEACEFULNESS

If neither repression or expression is the answer to dealing with worry, then what is the answer? The Christian provision for worry is described in Philippians 4:6, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

### A. PRAYER

Prayer is the first step toward effectively coping with worry. M.R. Vincent says, "Peace is the fruit of believing prayer." We are to pray about everything that tends to cause us worry and anxiety - regardless of how small or seemingly insignificant it is. "Cast all your care upon the Lord, for He cares for you." Notes Barclay, "As it has been beautifully put: 'There is nothing too great for God's power; and nothing too small for His fatherly care.' A child can take anything great or small, to a parent; so we can take anything to God." (Barclay's Philippians; pg.95)

But, as important as prayer is, we must be careful not to turn prayer into a method of accentuating our problems and increasing our worries. Remember this: Don't accentuate your worry by focusing on your problems in your prayers!

If you are worrying about something, be sure to share your problems in a specific and honest way with God in your prayers. God is glad to have you share your small, as well as your big, concerns with Him. However, the first thing we should do (even though it may not be easy) when we come to God with a problem, is to focus on God and His greatness, rather than to focus on our problems and our weaknesses.

In other words, worship and adore and praise God before you petition God to deal with your specific problems which are causing you to worry. Our tendency when we are burdened is to focus on our problems first and foremost in our prayers. We must instead gain a clearer view of total reality by first adoring and worshipping God. Look at the difference between a limited and distorted focus on our problems, in contrast to an expansive and more realistic view of reality, as illustrated by the two different views of reality that a person has when he looks through a pin hole in his door and when he opens the door. Some people have a pin hole view of reality (which is distorted and narrow) because they are focusing only on their problems, while others have a more realistic view of life because they open the door to a broader view of reality through the act and attitude of adoration and worship and praise. How do you "open the door" to reality in your prayers, rather than simply looking through the pin hole? By exercising your will, to praise and adore God, rather than focusing on your problems.

Worship and praise enables one to gain better perspective of reality - "to open the door". Focusing on one's problems results in reducing and distorting reality - like looking at life through a pin hole in a door!

How is a greater sense of reality and a more realistic perspective of life gained through worshipping and praising God? Worshipping God is contemplating upon the person and nature of God. To understand more about God and His nature results in better understanding reality. Worship of the great God results in reducing the size of human problems. To know that God is all-wise (i.e., He knows how to answer our prayers), gives comfort amidst our distressing problems. To know that God is all-loving (i.e., He wishes nothing but good for every human being and that He will not allow His children to shed needless tears), gives joy amidst our sorrowing troubles. To know that God is all-

## POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING: CALM PEACEFULNESS

powerful (i.e., He is able to give each person the good and right set of circumstances which will ultimately benefit each one and which can be used to produce Christ-like character), gives courage amidst our despairing circumstances.

To meditate upon the meaning of God's wisdom, love, and power, is to be delivered from the "pin hole" view of life (which is a distorted view), and is to be released into a broad and expansive view of reality. Our own problems (which seem so big) are reduced in size, in light of our new awareness that God is in perfect control of circumstances and that God is perfect in wisdom and that God loves each of us perfectly!

### B. PETITION

After we have adored and worshipped God, we are then prepared to specifically request God to remove the obstacles and to alleviate the worry from our lives. Be specific and persistent, and believe that God is able to remove the hurdles in your life. God is able to heal the body, or to give you a new job, or to give you a better environment in which to work, or a new house in which to live, or an increase in pay in your employment, or a beautiful reconciliation with a wayward child, or bring home a straying husband or wife, or give you a beautiful companion to end your singleness, or save a lost loved one and make him a member of the family of God. Or whatever is needed to drive away fear and worry from your mind and to restore joy to your heart. God, through praise and petition and thanksgiving, is able wonderfully to change situations and circumstances and conditions. God is in control of everything; therefore, He is able to speak peace to the troubled waters - to change your external environment in such a way that you can find yourself no longer worrying.

However, we must remember that praise of God and petition to God will not always, or automatically, or quickly change our external environment. But even when one's environment externally is not always changed through praise and petition, one's internal condition will always change through praise and petition and thanksgiving. The worry-worn can become the joy-filled person! Why? Because the worry-worn has learned to praise God for the person that He is (all-wise, all-loving, all-powerful) and because the worry-worn has learned to "cast all his cares and burdens on the Lord", through the prayer of petition. The view of life has changed (from pin hole focus on problems) to the more expansive view of life which comes by "opening the door" to reality by means of praise and adoration. The burdens of life are released into the hands of God who has the power to remove the obstacles in life in His own time and way. If God chooses not to actually remove the obstacles (the problems that have incited anxiety), then God will give grace to live with the problems without the problems destroying the person. Indeed, God is able even to use problems to produce stronger and more God-like character in the person who was previously worry-worn by the problems.

### C. THANKSGIVING

Not only is the prayer of adoration and the prayer of petition important but the prayer of thanksgiving is also vital as a means of conquering worry.

Thankful for what? The Bible says that believers are to be thankful in everything!

## POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING: CALM PEACEFULNESS

Thankful for God's plan of salvation. "But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners." (Romans 5:8, Living Bible)

Thankful for Christ's rulership over the world. "It is that same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in heaven, far, far above any other king or ruler or dictator or leader. Yes, his honor is far more glorious than that of anyone else either in this world or in the world to come. And God has put all things under his feet and made him the supreme Head of the church - which is his body, filled with himself, the Author and Giver of everything everywhere." (Ephesians 1:20-23, Living Bible)

Thankful for God's daily forgiveness of personal sins. "But if we are living in the light of God's presence, just as Christ does, then we have wonderful fellowship and joy with each other, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us (continually) from every sin." (I John 1:7, Living Bible)

Thankful for God's personal concern in our individual lives. "And we know that all that happens to us is working for our good if we love God and are fitting into his plans." (Romans 8:28, Living Bible)

The thankful heart is the heart that submits in humility before God, that praises God regardless of what happens in life. Gratitude keeps the channels of communication open to God, enabling God to either alter the circumstances which are the cause of worry or to give grace to the worry-worn person to conquer his worry even if the circumstances don't change!

### III. PROTECTION FROM WORRY

"And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds, in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:7)

God will garrison your heart and mind - guard it against the devastating affects of adverse circumstances. As a result of our prayers, petitions, thanksgivings, the circumstances may change or they may not change, but what is sure is this: God will guard our minds and hearts against the destructive affects of hurtful circumstances. God will make us triumph over circumstances and take us through the "rough" times without them destroying us. He will even use them in our lives, to benefit us and to produce character.

If the particular circumstance which has caused you to worry is not removed (even after you have prayed for its removal) then God will guard your heart from undue sorrow and will guard your mind from anxiety. "He will keep you absolutely safe from these things which are keeping you awake and preventing your sleep. They will be kept outside, and you will be kept in peace in spite of them." (Lloyd-Jones, Spiritual Depression; pg.269)

"Beyond Understanding" - "That peace of God, says Paul, as the Authorized Version has it, passes understanding. That does not mean that the peace of God is such a mystery that man's mind cannot understand it, although that also is true. It means that the peace of God is so precious that man's mind, with all its skill and all its knowledge and all its understanding, can never contrive to obtain by himself." (Barclay's Philippians; pg.96)

Notes Lloyd-Jones, "Recently I read of an experience told by John George Carpenter, until a few years ago the General of the Salvation Army. He tells how he and his wife had to part with their daughter, a lovely girl, of whom they were so fond and proud and who had dedicated her young life to foreign mission work in the East. Suddenly she was taken ill with typhoid fever. Of

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
CALM PEACEFULNESS**

course, they began to pray, but John Carpenter and Mrs. Carpenter somehow felt, although they could not explain it, that they could not pray for that child's recovery. They went on praying but their prayer was 'Thou canst heal her if Thou wilt'. They could get no further. They went on like that for six weeks and then this beautiful girl died. The very morning she died, John Carpenter said to Mrs. Carpenter: 'You know, I am aware of a strange and curious calm within', and Mrs. Carpenter replied and said, 'I feel exactly the same.' And she said to him: 'This must be the peace of God.' And it was the peace of God. It was the peace of God keeping the heart and mind quiet in the sense that they could not upset the person." (Lloyd-Jones; pg.271)

**CONCLUSION:**

Everyone faces the problem of worry, but how you face the problem of worry will determine whether or not you will be a victim or a victor in life. Some people are being overcome with worry and all their joy in life is being sapped. Other people have learned the secret of facing and overcoming worry - through the strengthening presence of Jesus Christ (Philippians 4:13).

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**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
CALM PEACEFULNESS**

**DISCUSSION:**

1. Give illustrations from your own life (or from the lives of fellow believers whom you have observed) of the truth of the following statement: "Regardless of life's experiences, you can remain calm and relaxed and peaceful - through the enabling power of Jesus Christ who imparts peace to the human heart through the channels of praise, petition, and thanksgiving."
2. What does E. Stanley Jones think is "the greatest single trinity of evils a man can take into his life"?
3. Give illustrations from common life which reflect what one man called the "tyranny of circumstances".
4. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Worry is the product of a heart that tends to panic and of a mind that runs loose with wild imaginations!"
5. Do you believe that it is God's will for His people to be kept safe from worry, harassing care, nervousness, and brooding anxiety? (Cite several Scriptural references where God tells His people "Fear Not".)
6. Is it possible for a believer to have the "long view" and thus plan well for the future, without, at the same time, becoming fearful and anxiety-ridden as he thinks and plans for the future? (Note Matthew 6:25-34 and James 4:13-17)
7. What evidence can you cite from the Scriptures and from modern science that indicates that fear, worry, and anxiety can even cause physical disorders?
8. Why is the method of repression and expression inadequate ways of dealing with anxieties and worries? If the secular methods of repression and expression are not adequate ways of dealing with worry, then what is the distinctively Christian provision for worry?
9. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "We create our world by our words, so the more we verbalize our worries, the more fretful our world becomes." (To what extent should a believer who is "weighed down" with worry, share his concerns with a fellow believer?)
10. Tell what is meant by the following statement: "Peace is the fruit of believing prayer".
11. Is it possible for worry, caused by difficult problems, actually to be accentuated through prayer? How? How can prayer be a help, rather than a hindrance, in solving your problems?

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
CALM PEACEFULNESS**

12. Give an illustration from your personal life which demonstrates the truth of the following statement: "Our tendency when we are burdened is to focus on our problems first and foremost in our prayers. We must instead gain a clearer view of total reality by first adoring and worshipping God." (Considering the illustration of the "pin hole" as given in the chapter, how do you "open the door" to reality in your prayers, rather than simply looking through the "pin hole"?)
13. How is a greater sense of reality and a more realistic perspective of life gained through worshipping and praising God?
14. How does contemplation upon the wisdom, the love, and the power of God help one to gain perspective and to better solve his worrisome problems?
15. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Our own problems (which seem so big) are reduced in size, in light of our new awareness that God is in perfect control of circumstances and that God is perfect in wisdom and that God loves each of us perfectly!"
16. In seeking to rid oneself of certain problems or certain worries caused by problems, what should one do after he has engaged in the prayer of praise and adoration of God?
17. Do you believe that God is able to change your external environment or solve your physical and spiritual problems in such a way that you can find yourself no longer worrying? Why does God sometimes choose not to change your external environment or to solve your personal problems? (Could it be because of "doubt" - James 1:6-8 - or could it be because God has a "higher purpose" in mind for you - II Corinthians 12:7-10?)
18. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Even though one's environment externally is not always changed through praise and petition, one's internal condition will always change through praise and petition and thanksgiving."
19. On the basis of what Biblically-based truths can you say with confidence that "The worry-worn person can become the joy-filled person!"?
20. Is it true to say that, if God chooses not to remove the problems which the believer in prayer has sought God to remove, God is able even to use the problems to produce stronger and more God-like character in the person who was previously worry-worn by his problems?
21. For what must the believer learn to thank God? (Cite Scriptural references to document your answer.)
22. In regards to those circumstances in life which are the source of much worry, how does a spirit of gratitude enable God to exercise His power to work in your personal life?

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
CALM PEACEFULNESS**

23. Share from your personal life how, as a result of your claiming the promise of Philippians 4:7, you have found peace of heart and mind, in spite of continuing troubling circumstances.
24. What is meant when the peace of God which "stands garrison" over your heart and mind, is described as peace that is "beyond understanding"? Has there ever been a time in your own personal life when, amidst a great sorrow or trouble, you experienced such a peace?
25. When facing a difficult situation that tends to cause worry and anxiety, how have you learned quickly to transform your "worry energy" into "prayer energy"? Does such a transfer involve a strong act of the will, with a consequent refusal to succumb to the fearful emotions of the heart which seek to paralyze you with worry?



LIVING THE LIFE OF JOY!

**CHAPTER 17**

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
POSITIVITY**



## CHAPTER 17

SUBJECT: POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING - POSITIVITY

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 4:1-13

TEXT: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me - put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:8,9)

PROPOSITION: The one who preoccupies himself with positive thinking is the one who practices positive actions, and this, in turn, eventually results in becoming a very positive person, through and through, in one's very being. And the rewards for positive being are great and beautiful.

OUTLINE:

### I. CONTENT OF POSITIVE THINKING

- A. True (reliable, trustworthy, dependable) in contrast to the false and deceptive things in life which appear to be reliable but which are really undependable.
- B. Noble (sacred, holy, dignified, serious) in contrast to that which is ignoble, profane, flippant, shallow, impure.
- C. Right (recognition of and accomplishment of moral duty).
- D. Pure (clean, wholesome).
- E. Lovely (winsome).
- F. Admirable (fair-speaking).

### II. PRACTICE OF POSITIVE LIVING

### III. REWARDS FOR POSITIVE BEING

- A. The qualities of positive thinking (as listed above) are declared as excellent.
- B. Positive thinkers and positive livers are praiseworthy.
- C. Positive thinkers and positive livers will enjoy the presence of the God of peace in their lives.

CONCLUSION: It is important to understand the content of positive thinking. Practice the actions of positive living and you shall eventually enjoy the benefits and the rewards for positive being!

If you are a negative thinker or a negative liver, come to the most positive person in the universe - Jesus Christ! Surrendering to Him completely, you will eventually become a truly positive person!

## POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING: POSITIVITY

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 4:1-13

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(Philippians 4:8,9)

### INTRODUCTION:

"The Power of Positive Thinking", one of the all-time best sellers, continues to be read and appreciated by thousands, even though the book was written many years ago. Why is it such a popular book? Because God has used this book to help so many people to become positive and radiant people!

The principles which Norman Vincent Peale defines and illustrates so effectively in his book were not created by him. The principles are found in God's Word - the Bible.

In Philippians 4:8-9, we find at least three important points:

- (1) Content of Positive Thinking,
- (2) Practice of Positive Living,
- (3) Rewards For Positive Being.

### PROPOSITION:

The one who preoccupies himself with positive thinking is the one who practices positive actions, and this, in turn, eventually results in becoming a very positive person, through and through, in one's very being. And the rewards for positive being are great and beautiful.

#### I. CONTENT OF POSITIVE THINKING

##### A. TRUE (RELIABLE, TRUSTWORTHY, DEPENDABLE) THINGS IN CONTRAST TO THE FALSE AND DECEPTIVE THINGS IN LIFE WHICH APPEAR TO BE RELIABLE BUT WHICH ARE REALLY UNDEPENDABLE.

There is absolute truth, revealed to mankind by God - the kind of truth that sets men free. There is also human opinion - the kind of opinions that are changeable and unreliable and false. Believers are to occupy their minds in the pursuit of God's revealed truth. "The more we are steeped in the message and life of our Lord, the more true our thinking will be. This frees us of the dicta of inherited cultural misconceptions about life." (Ogilvie; Let God Love You; pg.149,150)

Seek the truth regarding God. Let your thoughts dwell upon the person and the nature of God. God is eternal. God is everywhere present (omnipresent). God is all-knowing (omniscient). God is all-powerful (omnipotent). God is unchanging or immutable ("the same yesterday, today, and forever"). God is good and holy and just by nature. No wrong or sin can be found in God. God is merciful and loving. God does nothing which is inconsistent with love, for "God is Love".

## POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING: POSITIVITY

Seek truth regarding Jesus. Jesus is fully God and yet fully man, the perfect God-Man. Jesus is sinless, and holy. "Christ is the exact likeness of the unseen God. He existed before God made anything at all, and, in fact, Christ himself is the Creator who made everything in heaven and earth, the things we can see and the things we can't; the spirit world with its kings and kingdoms, its rulers and authorities; all were made by Christ for his own use and glory. He was before all else began and it is his power that holds everything together. He is the Head of the body made up of his people - that is, his church - which he began; and he is the Leader of all those who arise from the dead, so that he is first in everything; for God wanted all of himself to be in his Son." (Colossians 1:15-20, Living Bible)

Think often of Jesus. Meditate upon the beauty of Jesus. Study the works and the words of Jesus in the Gospels.

"Jesus, the very thought of Thee  
With sweetness fills the breast;  
But sweeter far Thy face to see,  
And in Thy presence rest.

Jesus, our only joy be Thou,  
As Thou our prize wilt be;  
Jesus, be Thou our glory now,  
And through eternity."

Seek truth regarding Man. What thoughts are reliable and what thoughts are not reliable regarding man? It is true that man is created in the image of God. Just as God is a Trinity, so man is a trinity. Man is body, mind, and spirit - and yet man is only one integrated being. Man has an eternal soul. Man is a fallen creature, born in sin. Man has a propensity or a tendency towards disobedience and rebellion, because man is born with original sin. Man is the object of God's special love, demonstrated by the fact that Jesus died on the cross for all mankind, to provide atonement for his sins. Each human being is capable of repentance, and God offers the gift of faith to every person. To those individuals who repent of sin and turn to Christ in faith, God grants total forgiveness and gives the Holy Spirit to dwell in their hearts. The Holy Spirit both forgives the sins which the sinner has committed, and cleanses the heart of the believer from the original sin with which he was born. Thus, the Holy Spirit is God's Agent to justify the sinner and to sanctify the believer. The Bible says "Unless ye repent, ye shall likewise perish." Those persons who refuse to repent of their sins and who reject Jesus Christ as their Saviour, will finally and ultimately perish. Revelations 20:15 says, "If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

The Bible says that we are to fix our minds upon those things which are true. God's truth as revealed in the Bible - truth regarding God, Man, Sin, and Jesus Christ, etc. - is to occupy our thought life. Are you seeking daily to understand the nature of God, the person of Christ, and the condition of Man? Are you seeking to understand the person and the work of the Holy Spirit? Seek truth as you study the Bible! "Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold." (Proverbs 3:13-14, NIV) Learn to meditate upon God's Word - the Bible - day and night! The Bible is true, reliable, trustworthy, dependable!

POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
POSITIVITY

B. NOBLE (SACRED, HOLY, DIGNIFIED, SERIOUS)

We are to set our minds upon that which has the dignity of holiness upon it (Barclay's) in contrast to that which is ignoble, profane, flippant, shallow, impure.

What has the dignity of holiness upon it? What in life is considered to be sacred and dignified and holy? The name of God, the Day of the Lord, the Church of our Christ, human beings who are created equally by God, marriage and the family, the Bible, and prayer.

Says Ogilvie, "For example, consider how this works in the sexual realm of our thoughts. Reverence for the sexuality of another person frees us from making someone a thing and not a person. The eroticism of our day is enjoyment without responsibility for the whole person. A woman told me that she was propositioned for an affair with no strings attached. She was prepared by years of noble thoughts about really caring for people. "I love you too much to do that", she responded and went on to explain that as much as she enjoyed her friend's attention, she could not use him in a brief encounter without the lasting care and concern of marriage. What erotic thoughts keep you from nobility in Christ?" (Let God Love You; pg.150)

C. RIGHT (RECOGNITION OF AND ACCOMPLISHMENT OF MORAL DUTY).

The mind of the Christian is set on doing what is right, regardless of the consequences to him personally. It is not pleasure first, but duty first that occupies his mind. He is not thinking of the easy way out of responsibility, but he is thinking of the right way even if this involves hardship and personal loss to himself.

There are those whose minds are occupied with getting rich quick or with indulging themselves with great pleasure.

Moral duty and righteousness is not the concern of our self-centered society which is too often more concerned in advancing personal interest than it is in meeting the needs of others.

The humanist is self-centered. His god is "self" and all of his actions are motivated by considerations of what will best advance the interest of "self".

The sensualist is self-centered. His god is "sex" and his treatment of others is motivated by his desire to gratify his own lusts, at the expense of other people. He uses others to satisfy his own selfish cravings.

The materialist is self-centered. His god is "money" and "things". He believes that life consists in the abundance of things which a man possesses. His thoughts are preoccupied with plans and plots and schemes of becoming rich. He believes that money is the most valuable thing in life. He uses others as his stepping stones to greater wealth, and many times he sacrifices integrity in order to become rich quickly. He fails to see that the value of money is determined by the use of money.

The hedonist is self-centered. His god is "pleasure". He is a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God. He pursues pleasure as an "end" within itself. All of life, to him, consists of pleasure pursuits - more delicious food, fancier trips, more thrills and new places to see, expensive clothes and cars, costly gadgets and toys, the latest in fashions - anything and everything that will give him pleasure and laughter and comfort. His philosophy is "Eat,

## POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING: POSITIVITY

drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die!" His god is his stomach - that is, he is gluttonous, self-indulgent, undisciplined, unrestrained in his pursuit of pleasures.

In contrast to an undisciplined life style, the believer is preoccupied with a sense of moral responsibility, a sense of moral duty. His mind is preoccupied with doing the right things in life, whether or not he personally stands to profit financially and whether or not he finds personal pleasure in doing the right. Recognition of and performance of moral duty is his major concern in life - not pleasure or power or material gain. Psalms 15 describes such a man very well. (Read Psalms 15.)

One of the covenant statements which persons who become members of the Free Methodist Church accept, and seek to practice, is as follows:

"I will be just in all transactions, faithful in commitments, and contract obligations with full intention to keep them."

Comments Bishop Bastian on this statement: "The Christian is very much rooted in this world. Whether he is a full-fledged business person or a day laborer, he does not escape dealing in the marketplace. Transactions referred to here are exchanges of objects for money, services for money, or objects for objects. Whatever the transaction, our covenant spurs us to conduct ourselves here with the highest sense of fair play and love of neighbor." (Belonging; pg.125)

The man whose mind dwells upon those things which are "right" is the man who is duty-bound rather than pleasure-oriented. He has a keen sense of "Moral Oughtness". He constantly works at maintaining a conscience that is void of offense, a conscience that is clear because his actions are honest and his motives are righteous and his relationships are good.

### D. PURE (CLEAN, WHOLESOME)

The Christian is to think on those things which are pure, not impure. Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:27) How can a young man think pure thoughts rather than impure thoughts - particularly in a day when sexual immorality is glamorized in films, on television, in books and magazines, and on billboards? In Psalms 119 that same question is asked and answered: "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I will seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." (Psalms 119:9-11).

Wrote Paul to young Timothy, "Run from anything that gives you the evil thoughts that young men often have, but stay close to anything that makes you want to do right. Have faith and love, and enjoy the companionship of those who love the Lord and have pure hearts." (II Timothy 2:22, Living Bible)

There is no sin in having sexual feelings. There is no sin in being attracted to the opposite sex. However, there is a sin in committing mental adultery - of allowing your mind to stimulate your body to have lustful feelings!

Why do people wither and die morally? Because they wither and die mentally! Ignoble thoughts lead to ignoble lives. Lustful thinking leads to lustful living!

## POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING: POSITIVITY

"When lust hath conceived it eventually bringeth forth death!" (James 1:15) How is lust conceived? By failing to control the thought life! You cannot help it if birds fly above your head, but you are responsible if you allow birds to make nests in your hair! You cannot help it if Satan suggests evil thoughts to you, but you are responsible if you entertain evil thoughts, resulting in developing patterns of evil thinking! You are not responsible for having temptations, but you are responsible for yielding to temptations. You may not be responsible for the first look, but you are responsible for the second look! If you can go around temptation, you cannot expect God to take you through temptation. If you put yourself in the very trap of temptation, don't be surprised if you are trapped in sin! You cannot expect to "play with fire" and not be burned! You cannot engage in lustful thinking and not expect to become lustful in action. You must guard your affections, for your affections guide your life!

How do you win the sex battle in a world that is saturated with licentiousness? The victory is won in the mind. The secret to sex-control is mind-control, and the secret of mind-control is focusing one's mind on Christ! We are to "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." (II Corinthians 10:5, NIV) We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. (See Romans 12:1.)

Do you make your thoughts obedient to Christ? If you struggle with evil or lustful thoughts, don't try to fight these thoughts! To fight such thoughts is to give more attention to these thoughts. Rather than fighting evil thoughts, replace evil thoughts with pure thoughts! Fill your mind with the Scriptures! (Remember, an idle mind is the devil's workshop!) Fill your eyes with the beauty of nature! Fill your time with love projects! Seek and find good companions! (Remember, "evil company corrupts good manners".) Turn your back on evil companions!

Wrote Paul to young Timothy, "Flee youthful lusts". Christian young people (and adults, for that matter) have no business watching television programs or movies which lead to lustful thinking! Christian young people have no business flirting with sin! Discipline of desires is the price of moral freedom!

Says William Graham Cole in one of his books, "Stolen goods can be returned, or compensated for, lies can be retracted and corrected, covetousness can be overcome. Even idolatry can be undone and forgiven. But the sex act, once committed with another person cannot be undone. The interpersonal relationship has undergone a radical change, and the couple concerned can never return to where they were before. Something indelible has stamped them both." (See I Corinthians 6:18-20.)

Mastery over lust - what is the secret? "You can expel one desire only by a higher desire. Let the love of Christ be the fire that eats up these lesser loves. All the prohibitions against the wrong use of the sex urge will not save you unless the love of Christ be at the center - then the sex urge becomes marginal and right." (Abundant Living; pg.133)

### E. LOVELY (WINSOME)

"Winsome" is the best translation of all...There are those whose minds are so set on vengeance and punishment that they call forth bitterness and fear in others. There are those whose minds are so set on criticism and rebuke that they call forth resentment in others. The mind of the Christian is set on the

## POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING: POSITIVITY

lovely things - kindness, sympathy, forbearance, love - so that the Christian is a winsome person, whom to see is to love." (Barclay's Philippians; pg. 98,99)

Have you trained your mind to dwell of the positive qualities in other people rather than on their negative faults? Thinking positive thoughts about others will make you a positive person in your actions and reactions towards others, which in turn will call forth a love response in others towards you. Positive thoughts produce positive actions which, in turn, results in positive responses in the lives of others towards you. The Bible says, "To have friends, you must show yourself friendly." But how can you show yourself friendly towards others, if your thoughts regarding others are vindictive, or hostile, or indifferent, or bitter, or fearful, or critical. Your thoughts regarding others must be positive and winsome if you are able to act positively in your inter-personal relationships. You are to dwell on the fine and good things in others. (Philippians 4:8, Living Bible) When you are tempted to think critically about others and to focus on their faults, then ask the Holy Spirit to flood your mind with positive thoughts regarding others. Look for the good in others and dwell on those fine qualities in them. You do not have to be totally oblivious to the faults of others but never focus on the "warts" on others. "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." Ask God to help you see both the obvious beauty and the potential beauty in the lives of others.

Repeat, over and over, (out loud), the following:

"I am positive - not negative.  
I show approval - not disapproval.  
I give acceptance - not rejection.  
I am appreciative - not critical.  
I am edifying - not derogatory.  
I am constructive - not destructive.  
I show affection - not hostility.  
I am delightful - not unpleasant."

### F. ADMIRABLE (FAIR-SPEAKING)

Notes Barclay, "It describes the things which are fit for God to hear. There are ugly words, and false words, and impure words, and far too many of them, in the world. On the lips of the Christian, and in the mind of the Christian there will be only words which are fit for God to hear." (Barclay's Philippians; pg.99)

The words we form in our mind and speak with our lips must be those words that are honoring to God. Pray this prayer often, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer." There is a "silent listener" of every conversation. There is nothing hid from the eyes and the ears of him who is the judge of all mankind. Said Jesus, "For a man's heart determines his speech. A good man's speech reveals the rich treasures within him. An evil-hearted man is filled with venom, and his speech reveals it. And I tell you this, that you must give account on Judgement Day for every idle word you speak. Your words now reflect your fate then! Either you will be justified by them or you will be condemned." (Matthew 12:35-37, Living Bible)

What a Christian thinks and what a Christian says are to be fit for God Himself to hear! What we think and what we say must reflect the kind of people we are - believers in and lovers of Jesus Christ! There are those who say, "If

## POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING: POSITIVITY

I think bad thoughts about someone and yet never say bad words about the person, what does it matter?" But the Bible says that "as a man thinketh, so is he." We are what we think! And what you think is usually reflected on your face, and what you think is usually eventually expressed by your lips! And even if no one else knows your thoughts, God does! And God will judge us in the end for the quality of our thoughts as well as for the content of our speech!

Wrote Paul to the Ephesians, "Now your attitudes and thoughts must all be constantly changing for the better. Yes, you must be a new and different person, holy and good. Clothe yourself with this new nature...Don't use bad language. Say only what is good and helpful to those you are talking to, and what will give them a blessing...Dirty stories, foul talk and coarse jokes - these are not for you. Instead, remind each other of God's goodness and be thankful." (Ephesians 4:23-29; 5:4, Living Bible)

Never minimize the importance and significance of your thought life!

"Sow a thought, reap an action.  
Sow an action, reap a habit.  
Sow a habit, reap a character.  
Sow a character, reap a destiny!"

Your thought life finally determines your eternal destiny!

So, fix your mind upon those things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable!

"It is not the mere flash of thought like the flitting of a sparrow, but deliberate and prolonged contemplation as if one is weighing a mathematical problem. Reckon up the pros and cons of the moral values in life. Too many fail just here. They do not give Christ worthy consideration. Make your mind move in the realm of elevated thoughts. High thinking is essential to holy living." (Robertson; Paul's Joy In Christ; pg.242)

## II. PRACTICE OF POSITIVE LIVING

Positive thought must be translated into positive living. "What we think about shapes what we are and become." (Ogilvie; pg.148)

Paul practiced what he preached. He transmitted the basic body of Christian concepts to his friends at Philippi, not in some abstract or theoretical or impersonal way. The concepts of the Christian faith (and the positive ideas which composed the content of Christian teaching) were the same concepts which Paul had passed through the "grid" of his own understanding and which he had found precious in his own daily life and experience. These concepts were not merely theory; they were practical and workable. "He (Paul) tells the Philippians to copy that which they have heard and seen in himself...it remains true that personal example is an essential part of teaching. The teacher must demonstrate in action the truths which he expresses in words." (Barclay; pg.101)

We are called to transmit positive thinking into positive living. Christianity is best defined as a positive and a loving relationship with the living Christ, but there can be no positive relationship unless there is first positive thinking. For instance, it is highly unlikely, if not impossible, for a person to surrender his life to Christ if that person does not first have positive thoughts about God. If one believes that God is arbitrary or

## POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING: POSITIVITY

unpredictable or vindictive or wrathful, that person will not humbly surrender to God in love, but he will run from God in terror or rebellion! One must think positively about God if he is to surrender completely to God! Positive thinking may be an affect of positive living, as well as the cause of positive living, but positive thinking (in some measure) must always precede positive living! Christianity is more than mere positive thinking regarding God, but practical Christian living (the essence of real Christianity) is always preceded with positive thinking! An illustration of this is the story of four ministers who were sharing which translation they liked best, with the fourth minister saying he liked his mother's translation best for, said he, "She translates the Bible into life!"

The concepts of positive thinking must be translated into the practice of positive living. This involves time, patience, and practice. Young Timothy (Paul's companion in missionary work) had learned, through the example of his godly mother and grandmother, how to live a life of positive faith. Wrote Paul to Timothy, "I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother, Lois, and in your mother, Eunice, and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also." (II Timothy 1:5) The faith which Timothy lived was the same faith which was practiced by his mother and grandmother. How best do we learn the Christian faith? Not by simply reading about the Christian faith, but by observing another believer whose life is a life of positive faith. (Someday I want to write a book entitled "Understanding The Ways Of Faith" and I want to dedicate it to those positive men of great faith whom I knew in my childhood - men who were great examples of faithful living.)

Just as Eunice and Lois (mother and grandmother of Timothy) greatly personified the way of faith for Timothy, so I can say that the two persons of my childhood that best exemplified and personified positive living for me were my mother and grandmother. First my mother, and secondly my grandmother.

\*On this Mother's Day, it is proper for me to pay tribute to my beloved mother. The positive traits (listed in Philipppians 4:8) were beautifully personified in the life of my godly mother, as I was growing up in her loving presence.

My mother was true, reliable, trustworthy, and dependable, in contrast to falsehood and deception which I too often observed in others. She lived the truth and she taught the truth. She taught me the truth about God, man, sin, Jesus Christ, salvation. She judged every idea and action against the ctandards of the Bible. She taught me that there was objective, absolute truth - not subject to time and circumstances or the whims and mere opinions of men.

My mother was noble, serious-minded, and dignified, (without being somber). She was joyous and happy, with the ability to see the humorous and funny side of life. I have often seen my mother laugh so hard that she could hardly stop! But mother was filled with a "sense of the sacred". All of life and human relationships was sacred to her. She was never profane or flippant in her thoughts or in her lifestyle. She understood what had the dignity of holiness upon it - the church which she regularly attended, the Bible which she daily read, prayer which she fervently engaged in, marriage which she experienced for forty-seven years, the family to which she was devotedly committed.

Mother was a duty-bound person rather than a self-centered and self-indulgentpleasure-oriented person. She enjoyed the good and simple things of life - a clean house, a large yard, mountain pic

\* This message was first preached on Mother's Day in 1985.

## POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING: POSITIVITY

first committed to moral and domestic duties. She lived, not for herself, but for her husband and children and others whom she lovingly ministered to. One of hundreds of examples is seen when she lovingly gave herself to caring for my older brother when, as an eight year old child, he contracted the dreaded disease of polio. She tirelessly worked to bring him physical comfort (at a time when not too much was known about polio). She was committed to right thinking and duty-bound living. But I must say that she carried on her duties (and still does) with a spirit, not of drudgery, but of delight and cheerfulness!

My mother cultivated pure thoughts and sought to live a pure life. The sordid and shabby and soiled and smutty things of life were despised by my mother. She taught her children to guard against impure and evil places and persons. She knew that "evil companions corrupt good manners", and therefore, she warned us children to be careful in the selection of our friends. She exemplified a life of purity - in actions, in attitudes, and in speech.

Mother was a winsome person, one whose sweet spirit and complimentary words called forth positive and loving responses in the lives of those around her. I have heard several people tell me that they think my mother is one of the kindest and sweetest persons that they have ever known. My mother was always most careful not to entertain negative or critical or judgmental thoughts regarding others. She gave others the "benefit of the doubt" and learned to guard her tongue to say only positive and loving things about others. When she violated her own high standards regarding the saying of only positive things about others or only thinking loving thoughts about others, I have heard her say, "The Holy Spirit convicted me for thinking unkind thoughts about someone." She guarded her thought life carefully!

My mother was admirable, careful to say only those words which she felt were pleasing to God. I never heard my mother curse, even when it was apparent she was frustrated or agitated or hurt. I have often heard her pray, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer." (In fact, as a small child, this is the verse that our congregation repeated together every Sunday at the morning service). It was her desire that the words of her lips, reflecting the thoughts of her mind, would pass the scrutiny of God's inspection.

Yes, of my mother I can say that she fixed her mind on what was true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable. Her positive thinking manifested itself in positive living.

### III. REWARDS FOR POSITIVE BEING

#### A. THE QUALITIES OF POSITIVE THINKING (AS LISTED IN VERSE 8) ARE DECLARED AS EXCELLENT.

Positive thinking which manifests itself in positive living results in a positive being. When one thinks positively and lives positively, that person's very being becomes positive. There is nothing more excellent in all the world than a mind filled with positive thinking and life filled with positive actions.

The question sometimes is asked, "What is the most excellent thing in life?" There are many pleasant things in life - delicious food, a healthy body, a loving family, a creative job, intimate friends, and many other

## POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING: POSITIVITY

things. But the most excellent thing of all is to imitate the positive Christ, by filling your mind with positive thoughts and by filling your life with positive actions.

### B. POSITIVE THINKERS AND POSITIVE LIVERS ARE PRAISEWORTHY.

Positive thinkers and livers are not seeking the praise or the applause of men. The payoff for positive living is found in the person himself - for positive livers are happier, healthier, wiser, and more content in their relationship with God. Such persons are not wallowing in despair but are marching forward in hope. Such persons are not sulking in self-pity but are involved in performing acts of compassion for others.

Yes, "in a sense it is true that the Christian never thinks of the praise of men, but in another sense it is true that every good man is moved and uplifted by the praise of good men." (Barclay, pg.100)

Who are the people in your life which you feel most deserve to be praised? Is it not the positive, affirming people - the people who edify you and love you and bring out the best in you? Is it not the ones who are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable? Is it not the ones who stand guard over their minds and who control their speech, in order that their lives and lips might both be positive and contributive?

One of the most positive and affirming and loving persons in my life is my wife. Of my wife I can gladly say, "She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue...Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate." (Proverbs 31:26,30,31)

Mothers, may I ask you a question: "Are you living in such a way that someday your children will be able to rise up and call you blessed, and say that you are the most positive person they have ever known?"

What the world needs now, more than anything else, is a mighty host of positive, praying mothers!

### C. POSITIVE THINKERS AND POSITIVE LIVERS WILL ENJOY THE PRESENCE OF THE GOD OF PEACE IN THEIR LIVES.

That is, positive people will enjoy blessed fellowship with God and loving friendship with their fellow men. Jesus grew in favor with God and with man. Positive people will also grow in favor with God and in favor with others. Positive people are faithful people - faithful in their obedient response to God's commands. Positive people are winsome people - winsome in their outgoing attitudes of love and acceptance of other people. To have the "smile of God's approval" resting upon you, and to have the friendship of other positive people around you - these are the greatest rewards that can come to a person. Positive, Christ-centered people have "the God of peace" with them, and "if God be for you, who can be against you"? You have the whole universe backing your life when you have God backing your life!

The rewards for being a positive person are great. You are realizing the most excellent experience of life! You are the object of the praise and recognition of your fellow men! You have the "God of peace" with you!

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
POSITIVITY**

**CONCLUSION:**

The one who preoccupies himself with positive thinking is the one who practices positive actions and this all results in becoming a positive person, through and through, in one's very being. The rewards for positive being are great and beautiful.

So, let us understand the content of positive thinking. Let us practice the actions of positive living. Then we shall eventually enjoy the benefits and rewards for positive being!

If you are a negative thinker or a negative liver, come to the most positive person in the universe - Jesus Christ! Surrendering to Him completely, you will eventually become a truly positive person!

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
POSITIVITY**

**DISCUSSION:**

1. What are the three main points, regarding positivity in Philippians 4:8-9?
2. What is the difference between "absolute truth" and mere "human opinion"? Where is "absolute truth" found? What specific steps can you personally take to safeguard yourself against becoming influenced by the cultural misconceptions about life which you face every day?
3. What truths regarding God and Jesus Christ must you learn to meditate upon regularly?
4. What thoughts are reliable and what thoughts are not reliable regarding man?
5. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "God's truth as revealed in the Bible - truth regarding God, Man, Sin, and Jesus Christ - is to occupy our thought life."
6. What does it mean for you to set your mind upon that which has the "dignity" of holiness upon it"?
7. In what ways is it sometimes costly for a believer to be committed to "moral duty and righteousness" rather than to "selfish indulgence"?
8. Describe in what ways the humanist, the sensualist, the materialist, and the hedonist are each self-centered in their basic philosophy and lifestyle.
9. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The Christian's mind is preoccupied with doing the right things in life, whether or not he personally stands to profit financially and whether or not he finds personal pleasure in doing the right. Recognition of and performance of moral duty is his major concern in life - not pleasure or power or material gain." (How is the man, who is blessed by God, described in Psalms 15?)
10. What does it mean for a believer to work at having a "conscience void of offense"? Do you think it is important for a believer to have a keen sense of "Moral Oughtness", for a believer to guard against the tendency to become morally soft and insensitive to "right and wrong"?
11. How can a young person think pure thoughts rather than impure thoughts (Matthew 5:27) - particularly in a day when sexual immorality is glamorized in films, on television, in books and magazines, and on billboards? (Note Psalms 119:9-11; II Timothy 2:22)
12. What is the difference between having wholesome sexual feelings - being attracted to a person of the opposite sex - and indulging in unwholesome lust?

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
POSITIVITY**

13. What is the secret to winning the "sex battle" in a world that is saturated with licentiousness? Do you agree with the following statement? - "The secret to sex-control is mind-control, and the secret of mind-control is focusing one's mind of Christ!" (Note II Corinthians 10:5; Romans 12:1)
14. What helpful advice could you give to a fellow believer who is having a fierce struggle with evil or lustful thoughts? Do you agree with the following statement? - "Discipline of desire is the price of moral freedom!"
15. Why is sexual immorality considered to be such a serious sin? (Note I Corinthians 6:18-20)
16. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement by E. Stanley Jones: "All the prohibitions against the wrong use of the sex urge will not save you unless the love of Christ be at the center - then the sex urge becomes marginal and right."
17. Why is it so important for you to train your mind to dwell on the positive qualities in other people rather than on their negative faults?
18. What steps can you specifically take to help yourself, when you are tempted to think critically about others and to focus on their faults?
19. Tell how you would respond to a person who expresses the following justification for his thinking of bad thoughts about another: "If I think bad thoughts about someone and yet never say bad words about the person, what does it matter?" (Note Matthew 12:35-37; Psalms 19:14; Ephesians 4:23,29)
20. Do you, as a believer, have the ability to "make your mind move in the realm of elevated thoughts"? How?
21. Do you agree with Ogilvie's statement? - "What we think shapes what we are and become." What is your reaction to the following statement? - "Your thought life finally determines your eternal destiny!"
22. On the basis of what authority did the apostle Paul have the right to tell the Philippians to think positively and to live positively?
23. Why is it highly unlikely (and perhaps impossible) for a person to surrender himself to God unless he has positive attitudes? Do you agree with the following statement? - "One must think positively about God if he is to surrender himself completely to God!" What are the positive thoughts regarding God that form the basis and the motivation for one to make a total surrender to God?
24. What is involved in the process of translating the concepts of positive thinking into the practice of positive living?

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
POSITIVITY**

25. Do you agree with the following statement? - "Of all the excellent things of life, the most excellent of all is to imitate the positive Christ, by filling your mind with positive thoughts and by filling your life with positive actions."
26. Tell what is meant by the statement: "The payoff for positive living is found in the person himself."
27. What are the rewards for being a positive person? What is your response to the following statement? - "To have the 'smile of God's approval' resting upon you, and to have the friendship of other positive people around you - these are the greatest rewards that can come to a person!"



LIVING THE LIFE OF JOY!

**CHAPTER 18**

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
GRATEFULLY CONTENT**



## CHAPTER 18

SUBJECT: POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING - GRATEFULLY CONTENT

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 4:10-20

TEXT: "I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want." (Philippians 4:10-12)

PROPOSITION: Through the strengthening power and presence of Christ in your life, you can experience peace and joy regardless of the circumstances of your life, regardless of the "ups and downs" and the "changes and chances" of life, amidst the advances and the reverses of life.

### I. MEANING OF CONTENTMENT ("What Is Contentment?")

- A. What Contentment Is Not
- B. What Contentment Is

### II. MEASURE OF CONTENTMENT ("When Is Contentment Tested?")

- A. We can, like Paul, have contentment with or without the applause and the recognition and the praise of our fellow men.
- B. We can, like Paul, have contentment in wealth or in poverty.
- C. We can, like Paul, have contentment during success and during failure.
- D. We can, like Paul, have contentment in health or in illness.
- E. We can, like Paul, have contentment in life or in death.

### III. MEANS OF CONTENTMENT ("How Is Contentment Found?")

- A. We, like Paul, must learn to be content, amidst life's changing circumstances, through the trials and tests of life, through practicing the presence of God during difficult times.
- B. It is in the battle fields of life that the soldier of Christ most experiences the intimate companionship of Christ - and it is that companionship which Christ gives that becomes the very source of contentment.

## POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING: GRATEFULLY CONTENT

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 4:10-20

TEXT: "I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want." (Philippians 4:10-12)

### INTRODUCTION:

Through the strengthening presence of Jesus Christ (Philippians 4:13), every believer can do certain things. These accomplishments are not dependent upon natural talents or upon special endowments at physical birth. Take a quick overview of some of the things which you - as a believer - can do, through Christ who strengthens you.

- (1) You can love (v.1).
- (2) You can heal (v.2,3).
- (3) You can rejoice regardless of the circumstances around you (v.4).
- (4) You can be gentle and patient and tolerant (v.5).
- (5) You can be calm because of a spirit of prayer and thanksgiving (v.6,7).
- (6) You can be positive in your thought life (v.8,9).
- (7) You can be gratefully content regardless of your outward circumstances (v.10-20).

### PROPOSITION:

It is this last quality - contentment - that we wish to look at today. Through the strengthening power and presence of Christ in your life, regardless of the "ups and downs" and the "changes and changes" of life, amidst the advances and the reverses of life.

Today we must look at:

- (1) The Meaning of Contentment ("What Is Contentment?")
- (2) The Measure of Contentment ("When is Contentment Tested?")
- (3) The Means of Contentment ("How is Contentment Found?")

## I. THE MEANING OF CONTENTMENT ("WHAT IS CONTENTMENT?")

### A. WHAT CONTENTMENT IS NOT

When Paul said that he had learned the secret of being "content", he was not saying he had learned to sit back and lazily "let the world go by" without attempting to change the environment around him. Communism claims that "religion" is the "opium of the people", i.e., that religion drugs people and makes them satisfied with their present bondage and circumstances. But Christianity motivates people to work hard to change their environment - to relieve the suffering of the injured, to comfort the disturbed, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to free the slaves, to clean up corruption in

## POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING: GRATEFULLY CONTENT

government, to save the unborn, to legislate new laws which are more compassionate. No, Christianity does not teach one to sit back lazily and "let the world go by".

Unfortunately, there is a brand of Christianity which tends to teach believers to be satisfied with the "status quo" in society. This brand of Christianity tends to teach believers to be "content" with the presence of evil in social institutions and discourages involvement in the political processes. In reacting against the social utopias which the "liberals" have sought to build upon Earth through human reformation and human progress, evangelicals have sought to re-emphasize personal regeneration and the "spiritual" kingdom of God, with the consequent de-emphasis upon social problems. Some evangelicals have emphasized the importance of escaping "the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4), and thus well-meaning Christians have separated themselves from everything that might pollute their pure and spotless lives. There are well meaning Christians who have been taught that one of the "signs of the times" is widespread lawlessness, social disorder, and intensified evil. Such Christians somehow feel that this is an inevitability, and that, therefore, Christians can do nothing to bring about peace and order and a semblance of righteousness to society. Thus, any motivation for social reform is undercut, and Christians tend to "run to the hills" (symbolically, if not literally) to escape "the destruction of Sodom". Such people reason that, if society "in the last days" is inevitably going to "go to the dogs", then why exert so much effort in trying to redeem society? Save your energy for better things, like the cultivation of your own soul. Wait until Jesus comes back again, then the world will enjoy universal peace, and the evil human systems will be cleansed of their evil. Be content with the status quo.

This fatalistic attitude toward the world is destructive of redemptive action in society which has such widespread suffering. Christians are called to "occupy till Jesus comes", and this means aggressive and loving involvement in human institutions and systems.

Christians are to be involved in righting the wrongs and in redeeming the institutions of society. There is no place for complacency, indolence, laziness, or indifference. Christians are to have a "holy discontent". They are to have ambitions, goals, and dreams, and believers are to exercise great effort to improve the external conditions around them, to endeavor to remove the hurdles that hinder progress, to pray that God would exercise his power to change the environment. Note St. Francis of Assisi's prayer:

"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,  
Courage to change the things I can,  
And wisdom to know the difference."

"We should change what ought to be changed and can be changed for the better. What cannot be cured, has to be endured. Do it with a smiling face."  
(Paul's Joy In Christ; Robertson; pg.252)

### B. WHAT CONTENTMENT IS

What does Paul mean by "contentment"? He means that "he is independent and self-reliant and able to meet every emergency by the grace and power of Jesus Christ." (Robertson; pg.257)

Wrote Paul, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." (II Corinthians 3:5)

## POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING: GRATEFULLY CONTENT

"To put it positively, what the apostle says here is that he is not mastered or controlled by circumstances. By all means if you can improve your circumstances by fair and legitimate means, do so; but if you cannot, and if you have to remain in a trying or difficult position, do not be mastered by it, do not let it get you down, do not let it control you, do not let it determine your misery or your joy. 'You', says the apostle, 'must come into the state in which, whatever your conditions, you are not controlled by them.' That is what he affirms of himself. 'Whatever my condition or circumstance,' he says in effect. 'I am in control. I am master of the situation, I am not mastered by the situation, I am free, I am at liberty, I do not depend for my happiness upon what is happening to me. My life, my happiness, my joy and my experience are independent of the things that are going on round about me, and even of the things that may be happening to me. I would remind you again that Paul was actually in prison, probably chained to a soldier on his right hand and another on his left when he uttered these words, yet even while in that actual condition, he can say that he is independent of his circumstances. 'My life,' says Paul, 'is not controlled and determined by what is happening to me; I am in a state and condition in which I rise right above them. These things are not the determining factors in my life and experience.'" (Spiritual Depression; Lloyd-Jones; pg.280)

Even though Paul recognized and declared that his contentment was found in Christ, independent of circumstances, Paul does not fail to express deepest gratitude to his friends at Philippi who graciously gave gifts to Paul to supply Paul's material and physical needs while he was in prison. Paul does not want the Philippian believers to feel obligated to help him, for Paul knows that God is Paul's source of strength. Declares Paul in verse 13: "I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me." However, while it is true that Paul asserts his independence as the rule of his whole life in Christ, Paul is not oblivious to the generosity which the Philippians have shown to him. Paul is a man whose heart overflows with love and appreciation and gratitude towards his beloved Philippian brothers. "The Philippians had made common cause with Paul in his long imprisonment and this fact Paul would never forget." (Robertson; pg.258)

Paul did not overlook the fact that the Philippian church was "the first of the apostolic churches to rise to the full height of complete cooperation in the missionary enterprise" (Philippians 4:15,16 - Read).

Paul notes two significant things about the act of generosity on the part of the Philippian Christians: first, he notes that the gift which they sent to him at Rome through Epaphroditus, was a gift that was not only beneficial to Paul but that it was a gift that was "an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God." (v.18) This gift was dear to God because this gift demonstrated the love which the Philippians had in their heart for not only Paul but also for Christ. It was like the sweet smelling sacrifice offered up in worship to God (Genesis 8:21; Leviticus 1:9,13,17). The generosity shown to Paul by the Philippians did even more for the Philippians than it did for Paul. It is still true that the one who gives generously and gladly to others, receives more blessing and benefits than the one who receives the gift. "It is more blessed to give than it is to receive", for the act of giving is an act of worship to God which is like presenting a sweet smelling sacrifice to God!

The second thing Paul says about the Philippian Christians' act of giving is this: the one who gives gladly and generously will always have his own needs abundantly met. In other words, you can never out-give God. Look at verse 19,

## POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING: GRATEFULLY CONTENT

"And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." Notes Barclay, "Paul lays it down that no gift ever made any man poorer. The wealth of God is open to those who love God and who love their fellow men. The giver of a gift does not make himself poorer; he makes himself richer, for his own gift opens to him the gifts and the riches of God." (Barclay's Philippians; pg.106)

So, what does 'contentment' mean? Contentment means being happy in Christ regardless of happenings in one's environment. Contentment means finding fulfillment in life because of looking to Christ alone as the source of all strength. But, even though the man who is content in Christ asserts a type of wholesome independence, he never is insensitive to the generosity or kindness of others, but is instead full of gratitude for the gifts of love which others have given to him.

### II. MEASURE OF CONTENTMENT ("WHEN IS CONTENTMENT TESTED?")

Contentment is that condition of fulfillment which a God-centered man experiences because he is looking to God as the source of his strength and joy, regardless of the "changes and chances" of life, regardless of the "ups and downs" of life, amidst the advances and reverses of life! Contentment can stand the test of passing time and the test of changing circumstances!

Says Paul, "I have learned the secret of being content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or want." (Philippians 4:11,12)

We can, like Paul, have contentment with or without the applause and the recognition and the praise of our fellow men. Everyone likes to be recognized, and most of us thrive on the compliments and the praise of our peers. We have an emotional need for acceptance and recognition, and everyone needs to feel significant. However, the contented man is the man who senses the "smile of God's approval" resting upon him, and all the praises of men could never take the place of God's approval. It is not the praise or the approval of our fellow men which is the motive or the motivation of the Christian; rather, it is the approval of God which the believer seeks and it is the glory of God which is the motivation for the believer's labors. A great Christian, George Muller of Bristol, testified, "There was a day when I died - died to George Muller, his opinions, preferences, tastes, and will; died to the world, its approval or censure; died to the approval or blame of my brethren and friends; and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God." If it were the approval or praise of men that Paul relied upon to "keep him going" in the Christian life, Paul would have "thrown in the towel", for Paul suffered greatly as a result of being deeply involved in Christ's cause. Note in II Corinthians 11:23-29 what Paul went through! (READ this Scripture.) And yet, in light of such severe trials, Paul could say in Philippians 4:13, "I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me."

We can, like Paul, have contentment in wealth or in poverty. Said Paul, "I have learned the secret of contentment in every situation, whether it be a full stomach or hunger, plenty or want." (v.12, Living Bible) Notes Robertson, "Some people can stand adversity who are ruined by prosperity...Some are happy with plenty and grow bitter in spirit when want knocks at the door." (Paul's Joy In Christ; pg.253) Lloyd Ogilvie shares the

## POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING: GRATEFULLY CONTENT

following interesting comment, "I am convinced that prosperity is more difficult to handle than troublesome times. When we're up against it, we know there's no hope but in Christ. But affluence and prosperity in either spiritual or material riches can make us like an old college athletic hero who wears his letter sweater everywhere but in the shower." (Let God Love You; pg.153) Do not let riches give you false security; do not let financial reverses plunge you into despair. Remain content in God regardless of your financial condition. It is noteworthy that Joseph in the Old Testament was ruined by neither poverty and persecution nor by affluence and power. He steadfastly served God during both prosperity and poverty! We too can cope with all financial situations by the power that Christ gives us. Try to improve your financial status if you can, but remember that you are adequate in Christ regardless of the bigness or the smallness of your bank account. Remember, "it is God who will supply all your needs from his riches in glory, because of what Christ Jesus has done for us." (Philippians 4:19, Living Bible) And don't forget, "Riches are not found only in the abundance of possessions, but also in the fewness of needs."

We can, like Paul, have contentment during success and during failure. From an earthly viewpoint, Jesus was not a success. He had no higher formal education, no home to call His own. He was persecuted by His enemies and forsaken by His friends. He probably was not "becoming" in appearance. He was finally crucified between two thieves! And yet, we all know that Jesus was content - i.e., He trusted His Heavenly Father totally and He was gloriously happy regardless of the tragic happenings of His unpredictable environment. The smile of God's approval rested upon Him and He ultimately was exalted to the Father's right hand of glory!

Paul was, like Jesus, considered a failure by some - especially by his former Jewish friends. But Paul lived above the circumstances of his life and he died knowing that there was a "crown of life" awaiting him!

We can, like Paul, have contentment in health or in illness. Paul prayed three times that his physical "thorn in the flesh" would be removed from him, but God chose not to heal Paul. Said the Lord to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (II Corinthians 12:9)

If God chooses not to heal us, He will do something just as great; He will enable us not only to endure the suffering but to use the suffering for the positive good of ourselves and others. Some of God's greatest saints are "suffering saints". God will give us the strength to face even the condition of ill health.

We can, like Paul, have contentment in life or in death. There are those who live to be very old, and even in their old age they remain radiant in their faith and independently happy in their personal relationship with God! There are other believers whose illness brings them gradual or sudden death. Even those who seem to face a premature death can have contentment in Christ. We, like Paul, can say, "For me to live is Christ,, to die is gain." When Paul was facing imminent death, he could say, "My time has almost run out. Very soon now I will be on my way to heaven. I have fought long and hard for my Lord, and through it all I have kept true to him. And now the time has come for me to stop fighting and rest. In heaven a crown is waiting for me on that great day of his return." (II Timothy 4:6-8a, Living Bible)

Contentment amidst the advances and the reverses of life! With applause or without applause from men, in praise or in persecution, in wealth or in poverty, in success or in failure, in health or in illness, in life or in death!

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
GRATEFULLY CONTENT**

**III. THE MEANS OF CONTENTMENT ("HOW IS CONTENTMENT FOUND?")**

It is helpful to know essentially what contentment is. It is exciting to observe how contentment endures through the "ups and downs", the "changes and the chances" of life, amidst the advances and the reverses of life. But the question is often asked, "How can I be a contented person?" "How can I personally be a master of my situations rather than being mastered by my situations?" "How can I find happiness independent of the things that may be happening around me?"

Let's first admit that most people - even Christians - seem to be greatly influenced for good or for ill by their environmental situations. Most don't seem to live above the storm; instead, many are hurt or destroyed by the storm of bad circumstances. Few there are who are getting along happily whether they have much or little, whether they enjoy success or suffer failure, whether they have illness or abound with health, whether they are praised or whether they are persecuted, whether they abound or whether they are abased!

But, even though the number of models may be few, it is nevertheless possible for believers to be victors rather than victims, to be independently happy in their relationship with Christ regardless of life's circumstances!

How did Paul become a contented man? Paul says, "I have learned to be content." (v.11) "I have learned the secret." (v.12) Paul was not always like this. He, like us, had to learn to be content. How did Paul become a contented man? He learned contentment through life's changing experiences, through the trials and tests of life, through practicing the presence of God during difficult times. Paul the proud learned to become Paul the humble. Paul the self-sufficient learned to become Paul the Christ-sufficient. Paul the restless learned to become Paul the contented. Paul learned that he could go through the tough experiences of life and come out on top - with Christ with him every step of the way. Paul learned to look to Christ - not to his external environment - and, in Christ, Paul learned to be a victor instead of a victim of his circumstances. He learned to trust in Christ's strength alone, not in his own abilities.

In the "school of hard knocks", the saints of all the ages have learned that Christ is all-sufficient, that Christ imparts peace amidst turmoil, joy amidst sorrow, companionship during loneliness, healing during hurts. In all the changes and chances of life, the saint learns that Christ is unchanging in His faithfulness and satisfying in His fullness. In the "laboratory of life", Paul learned that contentment is a state of being, not a product of a stable environment. Paul could testify: "We stand true to the Lord whether others honor us or despise us, whether they criticize us or commend us...The world ignores us, but we are known to God; we live close to death, but here we are, still very much alive. We have been injured but kept from death. Our hearts ache, but at the same time we have the joy of the Lord. We are poor, but we give rich spiritual gifts to others. We own nothing, and yet we enjoy everything." (II Corinthians 6:8-10, Living Bible) Here is a picture of a contented man - a man who is victorious in spite of troubling circumstances, a man who found "the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives." (Philippians 4:13) Paul experienced the secret of happiness in the "ups and downs" of his life because of his vital relationship with Christ.

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
GRATEFULLY CONTENT**

**CONCLUSION:**

Life is a good teacher. Paul would have agreed that many things which happen in life seem to be unjust and unfair. So it was with Paul. Paul was unjustly treated - stoned, beaten, abused, neglected, rejected, misrepresented, slandered, and finally unlawfully executed because of his faith in Jesus! But, in spite of life's injustices, inequities, and perplexities, Paul believed that God was in charge of circumstances and that all things - good or bad circumstances - worked into a pattern for good for those who loved God (Romans 8:28). The intimate companionship of Christ made life's trials endurable, yea, even contributive to Paul's good! Because of what Christ Jesus had done for Paul, Paul was willing to do anything for Christ - even to die for His cause! Focusing on Christ - His person, His purpose, His strength - is what brought Paul contentment! It is in the battle fields of life that the soldier of Christ most experiences the intimate companionship of Christ - and it is that companionship which Christ gives that becomes the very source of contentment. If God is for us and with us, who can be against us, and if we are with Christ, how can we not be content - regardless of life's circumstances?!

**POWER FOR POSITIVE LIVING:  
GRATEFULLY CONTENT**

DISCUSSION:

1. What is the "secret" to experiencing contentment regardless of life's circumstances, amidst all the "changes and chances" of life?
2. Is a contentment-filled believer required passively to sit back and lazily "let the world go by" without attempting to change the environment around him? Why do you believe that some believers are satisfied with the "status quo" of society and have no motivation to try to correct the wrongs in society? Are the Communists justified to make their claim that "Religion is the opium of the people"?
3. Describe the fatalistic attitude of some well-meaning believers who believe that there is no hope for the redemption of society and the institutions of society.
4. Scripturally and practically, what does it mean for believers to "occupy till Jesus comes"?
5. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: "Christians are to be involved in righting the wrongs and in redeeming the institutions of society. There is no place for complacency, indolence, laziness, or indifference. Christians are to have a 'holy discontent'."
6. What does Paul mean by "contentment"?
7. What is the "secret" to you being master of circumstances rather than circumstances being the master of you? Does your happiness depend on your happenings, or is your happiness dependent only upon your relationship with God?
8. Is it possible to rely solely upon God for your resources, and at the same time express deep and humble gratitude to others around you, recognizing that most times in life God chooses to use other people as His "instruments" by which He supplies your personal needs? (Note Philippians 4:11,14) Is it true that the believer who looks most to God to supply his every need, is also the believer who expresses deepest gratitude to his fellow believers through whom God supplies his multiple needs? Is it not true that "a self-sufficient and ungrateful Christian" is a "contradiction in terms"?
9. Why did Paul consider the gift, sent to him by the Philippian church, as "a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God" (Philippians 4:18)? What makes a gift which you give to another person, especially significant and "holy"? Do you agree with the following statement? - "It is still true that the one who gives generously and gladly to others, receives more blessing and benefits than the one who receives the gift."
10. What is meant by the statement? - "You can never out-give God!" (Note Philippians 4:19)

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GRATEFULLY CONTENT**

11. Why is it possible for a believer to experience contentment even without the applause and recognition and appreciation and praise of his fellow men? If the apostle Paul would have depended on the approval and praise of his fellow men "to keep him going", do you think he would have been able to persevere to the end in the Christian life (especially in light of his great sufferings, as noted in II Corinthians 11:23-29)?
12. In what ways do you identify with the testimony of George Muller? - "There was a day when I died - died to George Muller, his opinions, preferences, tastes, and will; died to the world, its approval or censure; died to the approval or blame of my brethren and friends; and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God."
13. Is it possible to experience contentment, regardless of one's economic status? Do you believe it is more difficult to trust God during times of prosperity than during times of trouble? Why or why not? What character in the Old Testament is a good example of a man who was ruined neither by poverty and persecution nor by affluence and power?
14. Is it possible to experience contentment even during times when (from the world's viewpoint) you have failed in your endeavors, business, etc.? How can the examples of Jesus and Paul give you encouragement during times of "seeming failure"? What is God's definition of "success"? If you are "successful" from God's point of view (i.e., faithful to the best that you know, as revealed in the Bible and through the Holy Spirit), then why should you ever feel discontent?
15. Can a believer experience contentment, in spite of the fact of ill health? (II Corinthians 12:9) Does God always choose to physically heal His children? Why or why not?
16. What is the secret of experiencing contentment, even in the face of imminent death? (Note Paul's testimony in II Timothy 4:6-8.) Can you give an illustration from your life when you observed a "saint" of God who was filled with contentment, even though he knew that soon he would die (perhaps of an incurable disease)?
17. Do you think the apostle Paul was always a contented man or do you think he had gradually to learn to be content in all circumstances? (Note Philippians 4:12) What lessons do most Christians have to learn in "The School of Contentment"? Is it fair to say that another name for the "School of Contentment" is the "School of Hard Knocks"? Do you believe that most Christians quickly learn the secret of living victoriously, regardless of circumstances: "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation"? Share from your own life how you have learned to be content.
18. Can contentment as a way of life be learned in other places except in the "laboratory of life"? Why or why not? To what extent have you learned experimentally that contentment is a "state of being", not a "product of a stable environment"?

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GRATEFULLY CONTENT**

19. How does a study of II Corinthians 6:8-10 and Roman 8:28 help you to discover the secret to becoming a perpetually contented person?
  
20. Do you agree with the following statements? - "It is in the battlefields of life that the soldier of Christ most experiences the intimate companionship of Christ - and it is that companionship which Christ gives that becomes the very source of contentment. If God is for us and with us, who can be against us, and if we are with Christ, how can we not be content - regardless of life's circumstances?!"