

Finding Joy

A study of Paul's Letter to the Philippians

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1- Finding Joy in Other's SalvationPhilippians 1:1-11

Php 1:1-11 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: 2 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, 5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; 6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: 7 Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. 8 For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. 9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; 10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; 11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

We live in a world that pursues pleasure and happiness like a blind hog trying to find the proverbial acorn. The joke says even a blind hog stumbles on one at times. The world stumbles on a bit of happiness at times as well. The birth of a child, the wedding of two lives and others things bring a season of joy.

By contrast, those who walk with God can have the joy of the Lord in their lives constantly and daily. Christ spoke in *John 15* about joy in obedience to God. *John 15:11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*

Peter speaking of believers trials of the faith said in *1 Peter 1:8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*

James Ryle recorded in *Rylisms*, commenting on *Psa 34:5, They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed*, said the following about joy and the grace of God. It is entitled *The Clan of the Radiant Face*.

God created us with faces that have the unique ability of reflecting to others the things that we cherish deepest in our hearts. Whatever holds your affections, and arouses your highest admiration; whatever it is that has captured your attention and become the focus of your desires — it will be seen on your face.

Some people love money, and their faces are marred with greed and avarice. Others drool after sex, and walk about with faces reddened by lust. Other love only themselves and cast forth a countenance of arrogance and contempt for others. And on and on it goes, for our world is filled with many, many faces.

But then there is the Clan of the Radiant Face. These are those who love the Lord Jesus — truly, deeply, and fully. Their faces shine with His favor and blessing. They give off light in every dark place, and are attractive to all things good and noble. The Lord beautifies the meek with salvation, and fills their face with life and gladness.

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Yet, even for them, there are times when something else catches their eye and they drift away their gaze from Jesus to other things. Then their faces slowly dim, as a dullness clouds their once radiant countenance. Perhaps you may be in such a drifted state even now, and remember fonder days when the light of the Lord was shed upon your way. All you need do is turn back your face to Him — He will take care of the rest.

Let your identity come from how much the Lord loves you, rather than fixing your attention on how much the Lord is using you, or blessing you. For even these things, when they catch our eye, will become clouds that shade our faces from His glory.

You know the old song — "Turn your eyes upon Jesus; look full in His wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace."

So, what are you looking at? It's written all over your face.

I have entitled the series we are beginning in Philippians, *Finding Joy*. We will explore this great book and find things that we can find joy in, over, with when, by and being. This will, I am confident, allow us to reflect the joy of Christ with our countenance and lift the world by helping them find joy in Christ as well. It will allow us to join the clan of the radiant face. Paul's great admonishment in **Php 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice**. This speaks volumes when we realize that Paul was in prison when writing.

I- Philippians in the Book of Acts:

To begin to understand whom Paul is addressing in historical context of this letter

we need to explore some of the individuals briefly that he encountered before being led by the Holy Spirit of God to pen the letter.

Philippi was the first point in Europe that the gospel was preached. The call for help that propelled the gospel to Europe is found in **Act 16:9-10 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. 10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them**. Paul arrived in a city that residence were citizens of Rome. (See Acts 16:20) A city that was prosperous because it was on the trade route from east to west.

A few days after arriving in the city of Philippi, Paul has his first converts. **Act 16:13-15 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. 14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. 15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us**.

Problems arose when Paul and Silas, on their way to the synagogue to pray, drove a demon out of a young girl. This led to an uproar from her master because he used her for gain in divination. Paul and Silas are brought before the magistrate and placed and they were placed in prison.

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This lead to what we might call the first midnight concert. *Act 16:25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.* The earth quaked and the doors of the prison flew open. The jailor was at the point of taking his own life when Paul cried out to him. We know the story well recorded in *Act 16:29-34 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, 30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. 32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. 34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.*

They departed the city soon afterwards. The letter which we now undertake to study is written to these dear friends. The letter is almost void of any censoring of the church. Paul is writing to his friends in a personal tenderhearted way.

II- Greeting of Grace and Peace:

Paul begins the letter with a customary greeting. *Php 1:1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: 2 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Timothy was with Paul for some unknown reason while Paul was prisoner in Rome. Paul attached his name in greeting at the beginning of the letter. Timothy was known by the

church at Philippi, being with Paul from the founding on the bank of the river.

III- Finding Joy in Other's Salvation:

Paul most certainly had been kept informed about the growth of the church at Philippi. He had lead many of them to the Lord and nothing caused more joy in a life than being allowed by God to lead someone to Christ. Paul was thankful for their faith and their participation with him in the spread of the gospel.

Php 1:3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, 5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;

There are many over the years of my ministry that I cherish their salvations. Paul spoke of his confidence in God keeping those believers as well.

*Php 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: Paul was certainly confident in the Philippians but we see this was born of a confidence that God would complete the work began in them. Paul would say later to Timothy in *2 Timothy 4:7-8 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.**

Beloved we can find joy in others salvation and the keeping power of God of them in their salvation.

Php 1:7 Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the

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gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. 8 For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

Paul held their salvation and hope tenderly in his heart.

IV- Prayer for the Church:

Paul next offers a pray in *Php 1:9* *And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; 10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; 11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.*

Let us notice a few things from this prayer. First, Paul prayed that their love would abound and grow. The *Holman Christian Standard Bible* translates *Philippians 1:9-10* *And I pray this: that your love will keep on growing in knowledge and every kind of discernment, 10 so that you can determine what really matters and can be pure and blameless in the day of Christ.* Joy in others salvation comes when those we love that are saved grow and make decisions about their life based on the message of the Word of God. When someone is saved there is a battle that begins within about which framework of thinking will take precedence in their life. We have been indoctrinated by the world to think like a nature man about things. When we are saved we must learn to think with spiritual eyes and see with a worldview of a Christian and not as we formally did as lost men. This takes knowledge of the Word of God and discernment from the Holy Spirit. Paul

admonished Corinthian church because they had not grown. *1 Corinthians 3:1-3* *And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. 2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. 3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?*

From what worldview are you making decision? Sadly many never grow and continue to make decisions based on a temporal and not an eternal one.

Paul also prayed those in whom he was rejoicing over their salvation that they might be filled with fruits of righteousness so that God would be glorified. Beloved we do not live our life as we can so others can put us on a pedestal but that God will be glorified. Jesus said in *John 15:8* *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.* He had just explained the fact we must never forget that He is the vine and we the branches and we must abide in Him to produce this fruit. These fruits are right acts, thoughts, and words. They spring forth from the salvation that resided in the heart. We certainly can find joy in the salvation of others when we see these fruits. We can also rejoice when we hear of a lost man being saved after all Jesus said, *"I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. Luke 15:7 NASB*

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2- Finding Joy over the Spread of the Gospel.....Philippians 1:12-18

Php 1:12-18 *But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; 13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; 14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. 15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: 16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: 17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. 18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.*

What would you be willing to give for the propagation of the gospel? If you knew by giving your life, or that if events unfolded that led to your death, the gospel would be preached to the nation for say one hour, one day or a week would you be excited about being used this way by the Lord?

I often think of the events that took place in December of 2006. On Mount Hood three experienced climbers, Kelly James, James "Mikko" Cooke and Brian Hall were lost and a massive search and rescue effort was launched. During the following couple of weeks the drama unfolded. There was hope, hope dashed, bad weather, a cell phone call to Karen James by her husband. This last call would ultimately lead to them locating his body in a snow cave a week after the drama began. The other two have never been found.

The nation watched, captivated by the drama unfolding. The families came together and spoke through their pastor. One theme that constantly was brought out during this week or so was the fact that these men were believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and that the family, while holding out hope of rescue, also knew they would meet them again in heaven, based on their faith in Christ. I was amazed during this how the big new channels would

cut to the news conferences repeatedly in which the gospel was presented to the world by the spokespersons of the families.

This has caused me to think a lot about what I would give for the gospel to be preached in such an unordinary way to the world. If these men were aware of this being the result of their situation, would they have willingly entered into the same situation knowing the outcome? Another question that rises is, "is it too much for God to ask someone to suffer for the gospel?"

I- Advancement of the Gospel:

Php 1:12 *But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel...*

What were some of the things that had happened to Paul? I am glad you asked. We have his personal testimony of the suffering he did for the gospel in **2 Corinthians 11:23-27 NASB** *Are they [Paul called them false apostles] servants of Christ?--I speak as if insane--I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. 24 Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was*

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shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. 26 I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; 27 I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

Well I guess that answers the question of God asking us to suffer for the gospel. The Philippians were well aware of the suffering the Apostle endured. Paul tells them not to worry because God had used it to advance the gospel cause. The word translated furtherance in KJV is translated in other bibles as advancement, progress, helped, served among others. The idea is that the gospel spread more because of Paul's suffering.

II- Gospel in the Palace:

The Holy Spirit had told Paul that he was going to Rome. *Act 23:11 And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.* He was not told how he would get there. He went as a prisoner of Rome because he appealed to Caesar. *Acts 25:11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.*

When Paul arrived in Rome he was not kept with the other prisoners but was kept chained to a soldier.

Php 1:13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places... The gospel was preached and taught in the presence of these guards of Caesar. The

Jewish leaders came and heard what he had to say as well. The Gospel went into areas that never would have been penetrated if not for the fact that Paul was a prisoner. God opened the door behind the walls of prison. *Acts 28:30* tells us that Paul would spend two years under house arrest preaching and teaching.

III- Backfires in Boldness:

Php 1:14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

The Message translates *Phil 1:12 I want to report to you, friends, that my imprisonment here has had the opposite of its intended effect. Instead of being squelched, the Message has actually prospered.*

The early church prospered in spite of the persecution. The more the persecution the stronger the witness and the resolved they became. Satan would like to have silenced the witness and killed the church before it got going but the more he fought against it the stronger it became. *Acts 5* records when Peter and the others were persecuted and forbidden to preach about Jesus. They were called before the council and put in prison. The angel of the Lord released them. The council then said in *Acts 5:40-41 And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.* Still the gospel spread.

Paul is saying to the Philippians that men have been emboldened, encouraged and heartened by his suffering. They saw what he endured and were willing to suffer as well.

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Again the question, what are we willing to endure for the gospel.

IV- Motivation for Preaching Christ:

What motivates someone to teach and preach? Some men have preached a perversion of the gospel because of various reasons. For instance in the modern era a man named Charles Taz Russell taught a gospel without Christ being divine and hell being omitted.

“C. T. Russell...spent most of his early years in Pittsburgh and Allegheny, Pennsylvania... At an early age he rejected the doctrine of eternal torment, probably because of the severe indoctrination he had received as a Congregationalist, and as a result of this act entered upon a long and varied career of denunciation aimed at “Organized Religions.” (*The Kingdom of the Cults (Revised)* Copyright © 1965, 1977, 1985, 1997 The Estate of Walter Martin. Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1997, Parsons Technology, Inc., PO Box 100, Hiawatha, Iowa.)

Notice the reasons Paul said the gospel was being preached in ***Php 1:15 Some indeed preach Christ even of (1) envy and strife; and some also of (2) good will: 16 The one preach Christ of (3) contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: 17 But the other of (4) love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.***

Some were preaching Christ for the wrong reason. Some were preaching Christ for the right reason. Some were teaching other versions of the gospel. Remember what Paul said to the Galatians churches. ***Gal 1:8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.***

The ones who were preaching for the wrong reasons were attempting to bring Paul down a notch so to speak. Paul had trouble with the group known as the Judaizers, those who claimed you had to convert to Judaism in order to be saved, his entire ministry. They questioned his authority and his apostleship while trying to bring others under bondage of the law.

Those who preached the gospel from love knew Paul was set to defend the gospel of grace and grace alone even with his life.

V-Finding Joy Over the Spread of the Gospel:

Php 1:18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

Any exposure to the gospel for whatever reason is better than none. Even if the Word of God is only reach. Paul found joy in the fact that the gospel was being spread, not always ideally. AT Roberson wrote, “*Paul sees clearly through the pious pretence of these Judaizers and rejoices that people get some knowledge of Christ. Some Christ is better than no Christ.*”

Beloved, we can rejoice and find joy in the spread of the gospel. We can rejoice that men and women have been willing to pay the price, however great the price, that the gospel would be preached and the good news of Christ would be taught.

I am reminded what God said about His word. ***Isa 55:11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.***

Beloved let us rejoice in the spread of the gospel.....***and again I say rejoice. Phil 4:4***

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3- Finding Joy with Purpose of Life Philippians 1:19-26

Php 1:19-26 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. 21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. 23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: 24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. 25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; 26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

The joke about the hippies in the 60's was that they were off in the woods trying to find themselves. Some say that in a lifetime we will all change careers two or three times. Others say that it is hard to track how often people change careers. Regardless, most of us want to engage in meaningful occupations and endeavors. We want to find ourselves, so to speak. We want our lives to count for something.

Having said that, if I asked you what your purpose in life is what would you say? What is your passion in life? What makes you want to get up and get you energized for a new day? I think Paul would tell us that when we find our purpose in life in God we find ultimate fulfillment and thus joy.

I- Suffering Led to Purpose:

We talked last time about the suffering that Paul had endured for the sake of the gospel. Like a fire that tempers steel, or the heat of the oven that hardens and make clay usable the fire of persecution and troubles makes us useful for the kingdom sake.

Php 1:19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Paul knew that all the suffering was leading to God purpose in his life. The early church is the ultimate example of this. Notice *Act 8:1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.* The suffering led to the purpose that became the passion of the life of these early believers, the spread of the gospel. *Act 8:4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.*

One of the things that suffering or persecution causes us to do is to take a long look at what is most important in our lives. An illness may turn our hearts toward the things that we have neglected. God uses suffering to help us find a focus on our life's purpose many times.

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II- Exhalation of Christ:

Php 1:20 *According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.*

Peter said it like this: **1 Peter 4:11** *If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

We should live our lives with such a fervor that when it comes time to die that we can say we left nothing on the table. I have heard it asked, are we spending our life on earth or investing it in eternity. One of the great purposes of life is that Christ would receive the glory from our lives.

We should also set our goal to bring glory to Christ even in our passing. After all when a loved one passes or when we pass from this life we have a great promise in Christ of life eternal.

Arthur Brisbane once pictured a crowd of grieving caterpillars carrying the corpse of a cocoon to its final resting place. The poor, distressed caterpillars, clad in black raiment, were weeping, and all the while the beautiful butterfly fluttered happily above the muck and mire of earth, forever freed from its earthly shell. Needless to say, Brisbane had the average orthodox funeral in mind and sought to convey the idea that when our loved ones pass, it is foolish to remember only the cocoon and concentrate our attention on the

remains, while forgetting the bright butterfly.

So we can look to glorify Christ in both life and death.

III- The Ultimate Purpose:

So if we as Christians are to find our ultimate purpose in life what is it. May I suggest it is as we have talked to glorify Christ. Notice what Paul said in **Php 1:21** *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

Paul understood that if his life were to be over then if he would just continue to experience Christ. The gain here is a word that means cashing in the interest. The investment Paul was making was in the next world not this one. AT Robertson in *Word Pictures in the New Testament* said, "To die...is to cash in both principal and interest and so to have more of Christ than when living. So Paul faces death with independence and calm courage."

Php 1:22 *But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. 23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.*

Do you have a desire to be with Christ. Sure life is good on this earth but life with Christ in heaven is even better. Have you noticed how we hold on to life in this world. I have often wondered why. Perhaps it is that this is the only existence we have known. Or perhaps the fear of death. If we begin to look at life and death from the eternal point of view, it might bring us joy.

IV- Why Does God Leave Us Here?

Someone said it this way, "What heavenly good are you on earth." Are we

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just taking up space and spending our days, breathing up the oxygen waiting to die.

The person who finds his place in the work and kingdom of God will find the fulfillment in life. I will even go so far to state that if we do not find God's purpose for our lives we will never experience the fullest joy that God has for us.

Php 1:24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

Paul understood that the reason God left him here was not for himself but for others.

In some ways this can be related to the reason God gives us spiritual gifts. He gives spiritual gifts for the benefit of others not the one who receives them.

Ephesians 4:11-13 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

Many times the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives us is one that causes us to have to give of ourselves to others. For instance the gift of teaching. Is it for the teacher, I would hesitate to say that because the teacher must give their time and energy to prepare and be committed to teaching. The gift is for the ultimate benefit of others.

Do you know what the Holy Spirit has equipped you to do? Have you taken the time to seek the face of God to understand

what He wants to do through you? The ultimate joy will be found in doing what God has called you to do.

Php 1:25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; 26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

We see one last thought in closing this section. Paul realized that his joy was comingled with others.

Are you living your life in such a way that it brings joy to others?

Bruce Larson, *Luke*, p. 43 tells the following story.

A conference at a Presbyterian church in Omaha. People were given helium filled balloons and told to release them at some point in the service when they felt like expressing the joy in their hearts. Since they were Presbyterians, they weren't free to say "Hallelujah, Praise the Lord." All through the service balloons ascended, but when it was over 1/3 of the balloons were unreleased. Let your balloon go.

We will find joy when we find our purpose in life. For Paul it was helping others live our the faith and grow. I have a feeling that this is also the purpose for us as well. Let us let our balloon of life go begin a new purpose in Christ. After all we are here for God's use not our own.

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4- *Finding Joy When Other Live Out the Faith**Philippians 1:27-2:4*

Philippians 1:27-2:4 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; 28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. 29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; 30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me. 2:1 If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, 2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. 4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

One of those silly questions that people often wonder about is why there are interstates in Hawaii. You cannot go from one state to another, i.e. interstate, from Hawaii. This may seem silly but it is as foreign to the Bible that we as Christian should isolate ourselves from others and live on our island and not be connected to others as interstates in Hawaii.

One thing that brings great joy to our lives is our connections with others. It is a lonely world when we are not connected. Most of our big cities have millions of strangers living close geographically but millions of miles apart socially. Many are attracted to towns and communities where people speak to them.

The church is certainly a place intended to be where emotional, social and other needs are understood and met by other believers. What greater joy for a believer than to find others walking with God and living out their faith.

I- Encouragement in Walk:

Philippians 1:27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ... It is true that most of us who have been in church do not need to be taught something new we only need to be reminded to practice what we have already been taught. Paul reminded them to live out the faith that they possessed.

Barnes Notes discussing the meaning of conversation says the following:

It undoubtedly implies that, as citizens, we should act, in all the duties which that relation involves - in maintaining the laws, in submission to authority, in the choice of rulers, etc., as well as in other relations - on the principles of the gospel; for the believer is bound to perform every duty on Christian principles. But the direction here should not be confined to that. It doubtless includes our conduct in all relations in life, and refers to our deportment in general; not merely as citizens of the state, but as members of the church, and

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in all other relations. In our manner of speech, our plans of living, our dealings with others, our conduct and walk in the church and out of it - all should be done as becomes the gospel. The direction, therefore, in this place, is to be understood of everything pertaining to conduct.

Paul went on to say that he longed to hear that they were walking in such a manner... *that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel...* Striving together means working in unison to produce energetic individuals for the gospels sake.

II- Strength in Numbers:

Ecclesiastes 4:12 NASB And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.

Beloved one thing that will always remain constant in our lives is our need of others. We all need encouragement and kind words. There is strength in numbers. Paul you will remember was encouraged by others and encouraged others by his endurance of suffering for Christ sake.

Philippians 1:28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. 29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; 30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

One benefit when we stand together is to not go the wrong direction with our lives as we try to minister to the world. We need to

be in contact with the world as we seek to bring them to Christ but need each other to remind us to be separate and call each other into accountability.

I found a little light hearted thought provoker that ask what kind of Christian we are that illustrated how we need each other at the same time challenging us to be the right kind of believer.

What Kind Are You?

Some Christians are like wheelbarrows, not good unless pushed.

Some are like canoes, they have to be paddled.

Some are like kites, if you don't keep a string on them, they fly away.

Some are like kittens, they are more contented when petted.

Some are like balloons, full of wind and likely to blow up unless handled carefully.

Some are like trailers, no good unless pulled.

Some are like buzzards, they "get wind" of a foul smell and come quickly.

Some are filled with the Holy Spirit, and thank God for these!

Beloved we need each other...we need each other to push, keep us from flying away, pet us..well you get the idea.

III- When "IF" Is Certain:

AT Robertson in his *Word Pictures* says, "Paul uses four conditions in this verse, all of the first class, assuming the condition to be true." Or as I put it, when "if" is certain.

Philippians 2:1 If there be therefore any consolation [*encouragement] in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies [*affection and compassion].

*NASB translation interlaced.

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Paul is exhorting them to, as *Vincent's Word Studies* says, "...show yourselves to be true citizens of God's kingdom by your humility and unity of spirit."

We might say because these things are certain we should be living our lives in accordance with God's will and word.

IV- Finding Joy When Other Live Out the Faith:

The great joy that Paul is talking about here is that these Philippians are living out the faith. He continues to exhort them to oneness is purpose.

Philippians 2:2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded... What would cause the joy to be real? Notice ...having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Now this is one mind in Christ. Many churches find themselves in one mind of become the best social club they can be or one mind in become the place they can always get their needs met and not ever reaching out past themselves. May I say the one mind we need to have is the mind of Christ. What was His mind? To reach the lost and bring them into fellowship with God. If we do not have this one mind, we do not have the mind of Christ.

A rich man decided to take up fishing. He bought the most expensive equipment and bait, but he caught nothing. He passed by a farmboy who had an old stick and a rusty hook but had caught a big string of fish. "How did you manage to catch so many, when I couldn't catch a single one?" he asked. "Oh," said the boy, "I try to keep out of sight so the fish won't see me. Perhaps you show yourself too much."

Philippians 2:3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other

better than themselves. 4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Now this is certainly a cause of harmony or of disharmony when others thing more of themselves than of others.

Paul tells us to esteem others better than ourselves here. In *Rom 12:3* he says, *For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*

Let me leave us with a of list of how not to be. I know this focuses on the negative side of life but I think we all need to be reminded of these things so we can live our lives in Christ and bring joy to others as we live our lives in the faith.

Nine Great Ideas: All Mine!

1. My idea of visitation: everybody come to see me.
2. My idea of sympathy: everybody suffering with me.
3. My idea of a sinner: the man for whom I have a great dislike.
4. My idea of a meek man: the man who yields to me.
5. My idea of a contentious man: the man who takes issue with me.
6. My idea of a wise man: the man who listens to me.
7. My idea of unity: everybody agreeing with me.
8. My idea of cooperation: everybody working with me.
9. My idea of a good sermon: one that fits and hits everybody but me.

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5- *Finding Joy* by Being like Christ *Philippians 2:5-11*

Php 2:5-11 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Many times it is true that we become like those that we idolize or the ones who are our heroes. Years ago when Michael Jordan was the hero of many little boys there was a commercial who's jingle was, "Like Mike, I want to be like Mike."

When asked who our hero is what would be our answer? Would it be some star of Hollywood fame or some sports personality? Many might name their parents or some godly mentor as their hero's. Would we think of Christ as our hero? I believe that God would have us to consider at this time that we can find joy when we make Christ our model to live by.

I- Mind of Christ:

Php 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

We touched just a bit on the mind of Christ in our last session. The NASB renders this verse as "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus."

Barnes Notes says, "The principle in the case is, that we are to make the Lord Jesus our model, and are in all respects to frame our lives, as far as possible, in accordance with this great example."

I often think of the battlefield of spiritual warfare that seems to so often be where the

battle is fought that being in our minds. Jesus told us in *Mar 12:30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.* Now we can certainly state that Christ loved the Father perfectly as They were One.

Speaking of the warfare of the mind Paul stated in *Rom 7:23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*

I have discovered that many times the flesh get in our way of having the mind of Christ. We must continually bring our flesh under the control of the Christ like mind or as it says in *Rom 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

When we can bring our mind under the subjection of the Holy Spirit of God, I submit that we will find the joy of the Lord. This runs contrary to popular opinion which says that we must look out for ourselves and place great emphasis on defending our rights and promoting our status in life. The worlds

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way of thinking is in some ways like the story of the fox and wolf.

It seems a fox was peering into a well from which people drew water by lowering an empty bucket, and pulling up the full one that was at the bottom. By accident the fox fell into the empty bucket and found itself at the bottom of the well. It made a lot of noise trying to get out. A wolf, hearing the noise, looked down and said to the fox, "What are you doing, my friend?" "I'm catching fish," was the sly answer; "Come down to help me." "How can I?" asked the wolf. "Jump into that bucket up there and you'll be down here in a moment." The foolish wolf obeyed, and because it was heavier than the fox it went down and the fox came up and started to run away. "Are you leaving me down here?" cried the wolf. But the fox answered slyly, "That's the way of the world, my friend; when one goes up, the other goes down."

A scary thought is what if Christ had only looked out for Himself. He would have never left heaven.

II- Equal With God:

As difficult as it is for us to imagine eternity in the future it is equally difficult for our finite minds to envision or even comprehend eternity in the past. Both are true but beyond our understanding.

When we begin to ponder this however we need to go back to the first verse chronologically in the Bible. ***Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.***

Christ is eternal just as the Father is eternal. Paul states in ***Php 2:6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:***

Williams New Testament translates ***Philippians 2:6 Though He was existing in the nature of God, He did not think His being on an equality with God a thing to be selfishly grasped.***

Christ, who was God from eternity past, was equal with God because He is part of the one true God. The term "form" of God is the Greek word *Morphe*. Robertson Word Pictures says it "means the essential attributes as shown in the form. In his preincarnate state Christ possessed the attributes of God and so appeared to those in heaven who saw him. Here is a clear statement by Paul of the deity of Christ."

After Jesus declared that He is the way, truth and the life and the only access to the Father notice the exchange He had with Philip. ***John 14:7-9 If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. 8 Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. 9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?***

Beloved Christ was equal with God but did not boast about it. He did not feel like He had to hold onto it at all cost because that was Who He was.

III- The God Man:

How can a man be God and still be a man has been one of the tough questions that has been asked. Many men have claimed to be God and set themselves up as gods but that does not make it so. We have already seen that Christ existed as God from eternity past.

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Php 2:7 *But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.*

There are three items in this verse. We might say they were the steps that lead Christ from the glory of Heaven to the humility of earth. First He made Himself of no reputation. The HCSB says, **“He emptied Himself...”** There has been a lot of debate over the Christian era about the meaning of this. What did He empty Himself of? Some claim in error I feel that He set aside His Godhood. I think there could be an argument made from Scripture that He set aside His full glory or we might call it prestige as God.

The second thing is He who had been worshipped by the angels from their creation now takes on the form of a servant, a slave. He did not come as a king in some palace with servants but the lowest position of humility. And then we see He became the God man. All man at the same time He was all God. John wrote in **Joh 1:18** *No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*

IV- Mind of Obedience:

Did Christ have to do this because He was powerless to resist. Hardly, I say. He did it in obedience to the will of the Father.

Php 2:8 *And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

Notice it says He humbled Himself. He did not have to be beaten into submission but willingly suffered for us. **Hebrews 5:8** *Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.*

This reminds me what Samuel told Saul after his disobedience by keeping the animals he was to destroy. **1 Samuel 15:22** *And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.*

It has not changed to obey is still better than sacrifice. Jesus said, **“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”** **John 14:15** Would you not agree that obedience leads to joy. Christ was obedience, when we are obedient we find joy by being like Christ.

V- The Exalted One:

Because of His obedience we see that He is the Exalted One both now and forever.

Php 2:9 *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Christ in humility and obedience brought glory to God. He submitted His will to the perfect will of God. Was Jesus will every contrary to God's. Notice **Luke 22:42** *Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.* Now quickly I must point out that Jesus was never out of the will of God. His flesh wanted relief, He wished He cup of suffering and death could be removed, but still submitted His will to the Fathers. May I submit to us that when we can get our will out of the way, that we can find joy in being like Christ in total surrender. Our problem is we keep crawling off the altar of sacrifice.

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6- Finding Joy in Those Who Go With the Gospel.....Philippians 2:12-30

Php 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. 14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings: 15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; 16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. 17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. 18 For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me. 19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. 20 For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. 21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. 22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel. 23 Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. 24 But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly. 25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. 26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. 27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. 28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. 29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: 30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

There should be little doubt in the mind of believers that have a basic understanding of the Word of God that God has given us marching orders to go into the world with the good news of Christ. We often hear about the Great Commission of *Matthew 28:19-20 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

We see there are a number of other places that going is spoken of.

Mar 16:15 ...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

Luke 24:47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and

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in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Perhaps the billboard said it best with, "What Part of Go Did You Not Understand."

I realize that we have a lot of verses to cover during our time this session. I want us to focus on the joy that came to Paul's life by those who went with the purpose of the gospel.

I- Live to Not Hinder Gospel:

Beloved we often fail to see each other as fellow pilgrims and strangers passing through this world. Most Christians are all working of living their lives as best they can for Christ.

Php 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

I do not want to get into the negative here because we are talking about finding joy. However, we must see that Paul points out that we should live our lives in a way that the gospel is not hindered.

Php 2:14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings: 15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke... Remember Christ said it this way in ***John 13:35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.***

Now notice who is watching us ***2:15... in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation...*** The reason we should strive for this unity and love is that the gospel will not be hindered.

Paul went on to say as the world watches we are to be the lighthouse. ... ***among whom ye shine as lights in the world.***

Mat 5:14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

This is not implying in anyway that the light we need to be comes from our goodness nor from within our being. Notice the following verse that makes it plain our reflective light is the light of the Lord.

Eph 5:8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

II- Going with Gospel:

We have a term that you may be familiar with, lifestyle evangelism. This is simply living our lives as a testimony to others and looking for ways to include nonbelievers in our circle of life. Paul commends and encourages them to continue to live out the gospel.

Php 2:16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. The word in the original language for holding forth according to *Vincent Word Studies*, "The verb means literally to *hold upon* or *apply*. Hence to *fix attention upon*"

This joy of them sharing Christ, or going with the gospel, with others is going to extend into eternity.

Adam Clarke sees this as follows:

An allusion, some think, to those towers which were built at the entrance of harbours, on which fires were kept during the night to direct ships into the port. Genuine Christians, by their holy lives and conversation, are the means of directing others, not only how to escape those dangers to which they are exposed on the

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tempestuous ocean of human life, but also of leading them into the haven of eternal safety and rest.

Php 2:17 *Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. 18 For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.*

III- Two Examples:

In the remaining of chapter two we have two examples of men who went with the gospel and committed their time and energy to helping spread the Good News of Christ.

First there is Timothy in verses 10-24. Paul hoped to send Timothy to them to help them with their walk in Christ and to find out how Paul could be of greater service to them.

Php 2:19 *But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. 20 For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. 21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. 22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel. 23 Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. 24 But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.*

Paul simply reminded them of the things that they had observed in the faithfulness of Timothy. Did you notice the commendation that Paul gave him? What an example for us to be concerned for the spiritual state of others. By contrast Paul said others sought their own welfare.

Beloved we should rejoice as well as be challenged by the thousands of missionaries that give up careers and leave behind families to go into the world to serve Christ.

The next example was Epaphroditus, one that had originally come from their city to help Paul. Paul called him my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier.

Php 2:25 *Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. 26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. 27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. 28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. 29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: 30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.*

He had come to Rome with a gift from the Philippians to Paul. While there he had experienced sickness. The home church had heard about it and worried. As Paul sends him back home he tells them to receive him back with joy and give him honor for the work he had done on their behalf.

One of the great treasures for a church is when someone from their midst is called by God and sent forth into the harvest field. I have always been proud to represent my home church. There is great joy in our hearts when men and women go forth with the gospel both locally and beyond. Remember witnesses in *Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. Acts 1:8*

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7- *Finding Joy* by Deliverance from False Righteousness..... *Philippians 3:1-11*

Php 3:1-11 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. 2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. 3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. 4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: 5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: 10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; 11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

We often make the false assumption that if we are not in prison that we are free. Many who have dealt with prisoners who have come to know Christ as their Savior assert that freedom can be found even while incarcerated. Spiritual freedom is found in Christ and not simply not its location. Speaking of freedom Jesus said in *Joh 8:32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free... 36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

One of the great prisons that men often find themselves in is the prison of legalism and self-righteousness. The apostle Paul fought against the group known as the Judaziers all his ministry. They wanted to add works of men to the gospel of grace. The other side of legalism is self-righteousness. Self-righteousness is sitting ourselves and our goodness above others who do not measure up to our standard of holiness.

I- Warning:

Php 3:1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. Paul exhorts them to rejoice in God and in having a Savior.

...*To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.* The HCSB says, "*To write to you again about this is no trouble for me and is a protection to you.*" Paul perhaps had taught them the things he is getting ready to mention when he had been with them. He tells them that he hopes that repeating them is not offensive because it was beneficial for them.

Php 3:2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. He warns them about three things. First were dogs. No, this was not some stray running through the countryside but he was talking about those who would bring them back into bondage of the law for salvation. Peter said *2Pe 2:22* in relation to someone who has known Christ and then wished to return to

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the law, *But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.*

The second warning was evil workers. John Gill said this was, *“the same persons, who were deceitful workers, did the work of the Lord unfaithfully, walked in craftiness, and handled the word of God deceitfully, endeavoured to subvert the Gospel of Christ, and the faith of men in it...”*

The last group are called the “concision.” The HCSB says, those who mutilate the flesh. This as we see from the next verse was a reference to circumcision. Many were trusting in the rite of circumcision to make them right with God when in fact it did not. *Php 3:3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*

Now here is where the ax meets the tree. Those who are self-righteous are hold to confidence in the flesh. When a man is set free from this prison is when he can find joy in the freedom of Christ. I want to point out that we are talking about righteousness the rises to the level that men can be saved by. We all need to strive to do what is right and to be like Christ but we need to understand it is because we are saved not to get us saved.

II- Paul Credentials for Flesh Glorifying:

We see in the next few verses a resume that puts most men to shame. Paul was a man who worked at religion. He worked at doing what he could to be accepted by God.

Php 3: 4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might

trust in the flesh, I more: 5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

Not many men today can lay claim to such actions and work. However, if this righteousness is all we have it is still lacking. Paul understood that this was inadequate to be accepted by God.

III- Free From False Righteousness:

When we face a hard look in the mirror of our souls we must admit, if we are totally honest with ourselves that we fall short. Notice what Paul says about all those things he had done in the past.

Php 3:7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

Freedom from false righteousness if made possible by a new relationship with the one who gives us His righteousness. Our honor and success spiritually comes from our identity in Christ.

Allow me to relay a story to illustrate this for us.

In the town of Stepanavan, Armenia, I met a woman whom everyone called "Palasan's wife." She had her own name, of course, but townspeople called her by

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her husband's name to show her great honor. When the devastating 1988 earthquake struck Armenia, it was nearly noon, and Palasan was at work. He rushed to the elementary school where his son was a student.

The facade was already crumbling, but he entered the building and began pushing children outside to safety. After Palasan had managed to help twenty-eight children out, an aftershock hit that completely collapsed the school building and killed him.

So the people of Stepanavan honor his memory and his young widow by calling her Palasan's wife. Sometimes a person's greatest honor is not who they are but to whom they are related. The highest honor of any believer is to be called a disciple of Jesus Christ, who laid down his life for all people.

(L. Nishan Bakalian, Beirut, Lebanon. *Leadership*, Vol. 15, no. 2.)

As we get to know Christ more and more we realize that we are less righteous within ourselves and more righteous within Him. We need to be more identified with Him not only by the world but in our own heart.

IV- Paul's Request:

Have you ever been guilty of studying the Bible to know the Bible and not the Savior? I can certainly confess this.

Php 3:10 *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the*

fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; 11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

There are a lot of truths in these verses that we will leave unexplored. Paul wanted to know Christ and be found in Him with all his being. When we are free in Him we are set free to quit trying to be good and start being like Christ. Let me close this section with a thought by a professor named Robert Webber.

*Some time ago I was biking in Michigan and met another biker who, like myself, was a professor of theology. In the course of our conversation by the side of the road he said something I will never forget: "Bob, all I really want in life is for the Word fo God to take up residence inside of me and form me into Christ-likeness." I think this statement hit me hard because my seminary training in the Bible was never that personal. We were always asking "What does it say?" and seldom if ever made the step into a deep personal application of "How can that truth take up residence in me?" (Robert Webber in *The Covenant Companion* (Jan. 1990). *Christianity Today*, Vol. 34, no. 4.)*

Have you found Joy in being set free from self-righteousness and false righteousness in the flesh? Have you trusted Christ for salvation and placed you hope in Him and not self?

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8- *Finding Joy* with a Fresh Start in Christ..... *Philippians 3:12-21*

Php 3:12-21 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. 16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. 17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. 18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) 20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Have you ever wanted to erase a mistake? It seems constantly men and women that people have faith in from pastors, deacons, teachers, politicians among others are constantly doing something that is boneheaded and out of character based on their reputation and promises. This is not relegated to only public figures it in some ways touch the masses. All men and women have regrets. Has everything you have done in life been without regret? We all at times need a redo or make over, do we not? It is only those who are self-deceived that think they have arrived at full maturity spiritually and fail to see they have a ways to go.

I- Constant Fresh Starts:

One of the things that is hard to do most of the times is to take a look at ourselves honestly and openly. We have a tendency to either judge ourselves too harshly or puff ourselves up to what we are not.

Notice Paul's self-assessment. *Php 3:12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended ...*Now this is a man who is beginning to understand his own heart. He understood that he had not arrived yet where he felt he and most importantly God wanted him to be.

I concede the fact that the Scriptures talk much about the heart of men in a positive light at times. The Bible also has many warnings about the heart. Notice a couple from the Proverbs.

Pro 20:9 Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?

Pro 28:26 He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.

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Paul was honest when he confessed that he had not arrived at the point that God wanted him to be. I would say to those who do not feel they need a fresh start day by day to hear the words of Jeremiah the prophet. ***Jer 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?***

Beloved may I suggest that we all need a fresh start with God every day in our lives.

II- Focus on the Future:

Over the years, I have observed many Christians who have experienced some failure in the past that they just seem not to be able to let go of it. The enemy wants us focused on the past, and especially our failures, and not reaching toward the future. Paul was not encumbered by any such thinking. He said, in ***Php 3:13...but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.***

Now I am going to make a statement that at first may seem irrational. Let me flesh it out. ***"I have done things in the past that God does not know about."***

Notice I did not say, He never knew them, only that He does not now. Let me explain. The Bible teaches me that God's forgiveness is so complete that our sins of the past are wiped from His memory.

Psa 103:12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

If you go east you will never go west. It does not say north from the south because when you cross over the pole you are going the other direction. It is not so with east and

west. It is not possible to go far enough east to ever head west. Our sins are always behind us in this analogy.

Isa 43:25 I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.

Isa 44:22 I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.

If God has so completely removed our sins, what petty selfish right do we have to allow ourselves, or the enemy, to bring them back into play in our spiritual life? Praise God that is a foundation for building joy on the future and not the past. When we have a fresh start with God it indeed is a fresh start without having to worry about Him throwing our past failures up to us.

III- Maturity Helps with Joy:

I have a thought that I often state. A man has nothing to prove but a boy constantly must prove himself to himself and he thinks others. Paul talks about being mature in Christ. He calls it perfect here but it mean mature. Mature faith produces joy beloved.

Php 3:15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. 16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

Now notice a statement that we often misstate in our lives. Have you ever said do as I say not as I do. Paul told them to do as he did and to look for others who were examples for them.

Php 3:17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. 18 (For

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many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

A mature believer should help others to mature so that they can find joy in Christ in freshness in their relationship with Him.

IV- Citizens of Heaven:

As we walk with Christ in this life we hold also to the hope of eternity. NASB says in *Hebrews 12:1-2* *Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Paul writes to the Philippians in *Php 3:20* *For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

The word translated in KJV **conversation** is found only this one time in the original Greek. It literally means our citizenship. Now this is a cause of joy for sure. We have a fresh start with God here and need the constant freshness to be added to our walk because of sin. Remember Jesus told Peter in *John 13:9-10* *Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. 10 Jesus*

saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit...

The Messages says Jesus said, "If you've had a bath in the morning, you only need your feet washed now and you're clean from head to toe. My concern, you understand, is holiness, not hygiene. So now you're clean..."

Now the source of joy is that we will have a totally new and fresh start with Christ when we close our eyes in death and cross to our real home in heaven. Let me close with an illustration of how our citizenship should be written on our lives.

While serving as a missionary in Laos, I discovered an illustration of the kingdom of God. Before the colonialists imposed national boundaries, the kings of Laos and Vietnam reached an agreement on taxation in the border areas. Those who ate short-grain rice, built their houses on stilts, and decorated them with Indian-style serpents were considered Laotians. On the other hand, those who ate long-grain rice, built their houses on the ground, and decorated them with Chinese-style dragons were considered Vietnamese. The exact location of a person's home was not what determined his or her nationality. Instead, each person belonged to the kingdom whose cultural values he or she exhibited. So it is with us: we live in the world, but as part of God's kingdom, we are to live according to his kingdom's standards and values.

(John Hess-Yoder, Portland, Oregon. Leadership, Vol. 7, no. 3.)

Have you experience a fresh start with God in salvation? Do you need a fresh start over with God? He waits...

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Touching Lives by "Exposing the Word" of God

THE PULPIT MINISTRY OF DR. EDGAR PIERCE

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9- Finding Joy in Thanksgiving ...Philippians 4:1-7

Php 4:1-7 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. 2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life. 4 Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. 5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. 6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

There are few things that makes someone happier than someone who comes to them and thanks them. To be appreciated is a universal trait of mankind. Would you not agree we all want to be wanted and needed.

Would you not agree that another thing that makes joy more abundant in our lives is when we live life with a sense of thankfulness and not one of constant dissatisfaction.

I- Joy Of Relationships:

How long has it been since you thanked God for a person that just seemed to come across your mind seemingly from nowhere.

Notice how Paul referred to the believers in Philippi. John said in *3Jn 1:4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*

Php 4:1 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved... a term of endearment if there every was one.

...and longed for... Paul was longing to be with them in person.

my joy and crown... He had told them before that he had hopes in them that his work has not been in vain. *Php 2:16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may*

rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

He here refers to them as his glory and crown, or as *Vincent's Word Studies* says, "The Philippians converts are his chaplet of victory." This refers to the crown of garland given to victors. Then he exhorts, *...so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.*

Paul was joyful over the converts he had this moved his heart to thanksgiving and then more joy.

II- Encouragement for Joy in Unity:

Paul next addresses two women in the church by name. Euodias and Syntyche. Paul named names of those who were causing disunity and sucking the joy out of the church. *Php 4:2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.*

I remind us that the first convert on the continent of Europe was a woman named Lydia of Philippi. Paul speaks here in a very personal way and used the word beseech to both of these women who apparently were at odds with each other.

He next enlists the help of another mutual friend. *Php 4:3 And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women...*

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Now notice what he says about these two and why he wants them to have unity in purpose. ...*which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life.* These women has been workers with Paul and others in the fields of harvest. Paul wanted them to settle their difference so they could again be assets in the gospel.

One of the saddest things in the heart of a church leader is to find that some in the churches they have pastored have had a falling out. It is important that while we may not always agree that we not be disagreeable. The world is watching.

III- Rejoice, Rejoice, And Rejoice:

There is a line in a song that says, "While the ages roll I'll keep on praising Him."

John in the book of the Revelation saw a scene in heaven where worship is going on. *Rev 4:8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.*

We had better get practiced up here because we will praise Him and rejoice in Him for all of eternity. Paul says it in *Php 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.*

Isa 61:10 says, *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.*

Did you notice it also said "*Always?*" Perhaps the reason we fail to always rejoice is that we have our desire on the world and not on God. I can't speak for you but if I search my heart I think this is what I will find. When we lose contentment we lose joy. Paul stated in *1Ti 6:8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.* (Also see *Phil 4:11*) We will address this more in an upcoming session.

Php 4:5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Moderation is rendered in the NASB "*gentle spirit.*" And then the great motivator is that Christ's return was imminent. If it was imminent then how much more now.

IV- Pray with Thanksgiving:

1Th 5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. In everything give thanks.

Php 4: 6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. Careful here is understood as anxious. Christ said in *Matthew 6:27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? The Message* says, "*Has anyone by fussing in front of the mirror ever gotten taller by so much as an inch?*"

When we are thankful over our relationships, settle our difference for the gospel, rejoice over everything, and pray with thanksgiving and a grateful heart then joy is sure to encamp in our deepest recesses of life. If we do this Paul gives us a blessing in *Php 4: 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

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10- *Finding Joy* by Right Thinking.....*Philippians 4:8-9*

Philippians 4:8-9 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. 9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

I- The Mind:

The mind is a funny thing....it can take us to any place on earth in a moment. It can play tricks on us and

AT Robertson says, "*We are responsible for our thoughts and can hold them to high and holy ideals.*"

Isa 26:3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

In *Matt 22:37-38* Jesus said, *...Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment.*

Men can get so far from God that they are said to be of a reprobate mind. *Rom 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;*

II- The Battlefield of the Mind:

We also see that the mind is a great battlefield for our spiritual warfare. *Rom 7:22-23 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*

We are taught that in the past our mind was against the things of God. in *Col 1:21*

And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled

We know that a carnal worldly thinking mind fights against the things of God. *Rom 8:5-7 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

That is why we must put on the armor of God and protect our mind because our enemy is not flesh and blood but spiritual. *Ephesians 6:11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood... 13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ... 17 And take the helmet of salvation ...* The helmet was protection for the head and brain area symbolic of protecting the mind.

III- Renewed Minds:

Now it stands to reason that if the fleshly carnal mind is defective that it needs to be renewed. After all there are recalls all the time on products that are defective. Certainly, the great renewal is when we

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come to Christ for salvation but I submit that we need to constantly bring our mind under subjection of the Spirit of God.

We are encouraged to constantly be renewed in our minds. **Rom 12:2** *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

We find within our text that is under consideration now these words... **think on these things. Phil 4:9** This will teach us how to have a renewed mind.

IV- Right Thinking:

Paul states, **Finally, brethren...Php 4:8a** as God begins to wind down his thoughts to the Philippians. He then begins to tell them where to focus their minds to have right and godly thinking.

Rev. Norman Culpepper preaching on this text entitled it "*God's recipe for your thought life.*" He made the statement, "*A negative thought is a dose of death, a positive thought is a dose of life.*" (Per Vonnie Wiggins Bible notes)

There are eight things that Paul talks about here that would do us good if we discipline our mind to focus on these.

JV McGee said concerning this section: *This has been called the briefest biography of Christ. He is the One who is "true." He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. "Whatsoever things are honest"—He is honest. "Whatsoever things are just"—He is called the Just One. "Pure"—the only pure individual who ever walked this earth was the Lord Jesus. He asked the question, "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" No one did. He also said, "... the prince*

*of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John 14:30). Satan always finds something he can hook onto in me. How about you? But there was nothing in the Lord Jesus. He was "... holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners ..." (Heb. 7:26). He was lovely which means "gracious." Virtue has to do with strength and courage. He was the One of courage, a real man. He took upon Himself our humanity. "If ... any praise"—He is the One you can praise and worship today. McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (Php 4:8). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.*

So let us set our mind on Christ as we look at these right thinking things.

1 ...whatsoever things are true, Thayer *Greek Definitions* defines this as "*loving the truth, speaking the truth, truthful.*"

2 ...whatsoever things are honest, The word "*honest*" is found only four times in the original Greek. It is translated "*grave*" the other three times in 1 Thessalonians and Titus. Adam Clarke says, "*Whatever is grave, decent, and venerable. Whatever becomes you as men, as citizens, and as Christians.*"

3 ...whatsoever things are just, NASB renders it "right." The way this often used word is translated is righteous. *People's New Testament* comments, "*Strict justice in all dealings; an upright life.*"

4 ...whatsoever things are pure, A clean heart and mind or thoughts that are pure is the idea here. *Strong's Bible Dictionary* uses words like, *innocent, modest, perfect* to define this.

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5 ...whatsoever things are lovely, Robertson's *Word Pictures* says, "pleasing, winsome" is what this means while People's New Testament says it is, "Such deeds as spring from love and inspire love in others."

6 ...whatsoever things are of good report; Remember the words of Jesus when He was Nathaniel approaching? **John 1:47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!** This was a man who was of good report. A Christians life should be one in which the world can look but find no fault in our actions.

7 ...if there be any virtue, Barnes Notes says concerning this use of virtue.

Paul did not suppose that he had given a full catalogue of the virtues which he would have cultivated. He, therefore, adds, that if there was anything else that had the nature of true virtue in it, they should be careful to cultivate that also. The Christian should be a pattern and an example of every virtue.

Remember the values of the women in **Prov 31** as she is referred to as a virtuous woman. **Pro 31:11 The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil...23 Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.... 25 Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.**

We could all learn a lesson from this passage.

8 ...and if there be any praise, The last of the list, which is in no wise exhaustive nor intended to be, is if we find anything praiseworthy in others and especially in God we should think on these. If we have our mind thinking on the good of others we have no time for our mind to entertain any negative thoughts.

I remind us again the Bible says to **...think on these things.** We will find joy in our heart, mind and being when we practice as a habit.

V- Paul as an Example:

As we end this section we see Paul holds himself forth to the Philippians as an example to follow in thought life. I am reminded that Paul was finding joy even in the midst of prison, so his testimony hold a lot of credence and his words and life are something we can take stock in.

Php 4:9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

What they had learned and received from his ministry to them. What they had heard him preach and seen in his life he tells them to emulate. He gives us a promise by the Holy Spirit of God that if we fasten our mind on the right things and make them a habit of practice then God's peace will abide within us. What greater thing to bring Joy in our lives than when the peace of God washes over our soul.

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11- *Finding Joy in Contentment in Christ*.....*Philippians 4:10-13*

Php 4:10-13 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. 11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. 12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

We have discovered that joy is ours if we will focus on the things that bring us closer to God and focus us away from ourselves. We explored joy in thanksgiving a couple of sessions back. We saw that a thankful heart will bring joy.

I- Contentment Rises with Thanksgiving:

Paul returns, or may I suggest he never left, to thanksgiving in our text. Paul commends the Philippians for reaching past themselves and ministering to his needs.

Php 4:10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

It seems to me we are living in a time in which there seems to be epidemic of “*I deserve it ism.*” When we have such a slant to our thinking and on our heart we are always going to reach out in complaints. When we think our loved ones, our co-workers, our church family and the world owes us something because of who we are then we are set up for a disappointment.

Lord, You said if I want to follow you, I will need to carry my cross every day. I want to follow, Lord.

But there are days when I'm dragging my cross, making a trail for everyone to see. There are days when I'm pushing my cross, making my own path miserable and dusty.

There are days when I'm sitting on my cross, trying to get comfortable and going nowhere. There are days when I'm giving my cross to somebody else, who already has one of his own.

Help me, Lord, to carry my cross on my shoulder. When it's up there, it leaves no room for a chip!

(2000+ Bible Illustrations E-sword)

Do not even entertain the thought that Paul is reprimanding them for past failures when he says that their care for him had flourished again. Notice that he states they lacked opportunity. In that day, you could not wire money nor send a transfer electronically. It had to go with someone who was traveling. Paul was rejoicing that God had supplied for his needs through the Philippians. The HCSB says, “...*You were, in fact, concerned about me, but lacked the opportunity to show it.*”

How many of us would have felt abandoned and that our friends were not concerned if they had not been there for a while. Paul's joy was possible because he always looked for the good and contentment rose on the wings of thanksgiving.

II- Contrast of Desire:

I still recall driving through the jungles of Panama while I was there with the army years ago. The Panama Canal zone during

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that time was a small strip of land following the canal from east to west. To get to the Jungle Operations Training Center we had to drive from one side to the other. However, there were many places where the highway left the Canal Zone and went into Panama proper. As I was driving along I saw huts that people living in that you could literally see through the sides of into the house. I made the comment that I did not see how these people could live in these homes. I never will forget the reply that the Lieutenant Colonel I was driving for said, "They have never know anything else and cannot miss what they have never had."

I think one of our problems in modern days is we have seen and had so much that nothing brings us contentment. We are bombarded with advertisements that as someone said, "Makes today's wants tomorrow's needs." Our desires are shaped by things other than then will of God for our lives.

Notice how Paul put it. In **Php 4:11** *Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. 12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.*

A large family sat around the table for breakfast one morning. As the custom was, the father returned thanks, blessing God for the food. Immediately afterward, however, as was his bad habit, he began to grumble about hard times, the poor quality of the food he was forced to eat, the way it was cooked, and much more. His little daughter interrupted him saying, "Father, do you suppose God heard what you said a little

while ago?" "Certainly," replied the father with the confident air of an instructor. "And did He hear what you said about the bacon and the coffee?" "Of course," the father replied, but not as confidently as before. Then his little girl asked him again, "Then, Father, which did God believe?"

Paul said he had learned many lessons in his life about contentment and joy. He had learned to be content in any circumstance and situation. Notice the contrast one with another here.

1- Abased – Abound The HCSB says, **"I know both how to have a little, and I know how to have a lot."** Not that I need to but I remind us that Paul was in prison at this time. Most of us feel that we have had little but if we compare what material blessing we have with the world, and might I suggest to the Apostle Paul in his day, we have a lot. There are some statements that people make that we seem to always remember. One such for me is that I have all that God can trust me with. Most of us have not figured out how to abound or have a lot. We squander it away on our desires. Remember James said in **James 4:3** *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*

2- Full – Hungry There is no doubt that many in our world are hungry for the necessity food to sustain life. Most of us do not fall in that category. Paul said he had been full and also hungry. Still it seems there is a famine in the land of plenty. No not a famine of food but of desire for God. Remember what Jesus said in **Mat 5:6** **Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.** Perhaps it is time we learn to be hungry again for the things of God.

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Touching Lives by "Exposing the Word" of God

THE PULPIT MINISTRY OF DR. EDGAR PIERCE

Finding Joy

A study of Paul's Letter to the Philippians

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Remember Christ reprimand of the church at Ephesus was, *Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Revelation 2:4* They had forgotten their first love of Christ.

3- Abound – Suffer Need Let me allow this last one to be a summary. *The Message* gives us this verse as, ***“I'm just as happy with little as with much, with much as with little. I've found the recipe for being happy whether full or hungry, hands full or hands empty.”***

III- Contentment Comes from Christ Strength:

Php 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Many times, we are discouraged by our circumstance and see the trouble not the opportunity. I know at times personally I do not find joy in contentment because I am busy looking at my problems, problems that are common to mankind.

Some years ago a man living in Wales had the misfortune of being involved in a mining accident which necessitated the amputation of his right leg. After a period in the hospital, he went to a prosthesis maker to be supplied with an artificial leg. When the appendage had been strapped to the stump, which was all that remained of the injured leg, the attendant requested that the patient get up and walk across the floor. Awkwardly, the man struggled to his feet and staggered across the room. Then, dragging himself painfully back to his chair, he slumped into it, utterly exhausted and discouraged.

"That's not how to do it," said the attendant. "Watch this!" Then he walked gracefully across the floor. "Ah," exclaimed the

patient, "It's all very easy for you because you don't have any disability."

"Oh, haven't I?" replied the attendant. "Look." Pulling up the legs of his trousers, he disclosed that he was not wearing just one artificial limb, but TWO!

Now let me make another observation about contentment coming from the strength Christ gives us. ***“Contentment is not Compliancy.”*** The word translated ***“strengtheneth”*** means as Vincent Word Studies says, ***“More literally, infuses strength into me.”***

If Christ is going to give us strength for all things would you not agree that the implications of this is that we are to use the strength supplied? In other words, we should not be compliance, as many Christians have become, and blame it on contentment.

IV- Source of Contentment and Joy:

As we close, I want to encourage us all to be content in one thing that should bring us great joy. Contentment in what Christ has done for us. We might ask, Is Jesus enough? For eternity? For now? For Salvation? May I simply quote ***2Ti 1:12 For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.***

Christ is enough for eternity because He is the keeper of our soul. He is enough today because He supplies our needs and certainly He is enough for salvation because in Him and Him alone is redemption for lost men. Yes, we can find joy when we find contentment.

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12- *Finding Joy* being the Right Kind of Church *Philippians 4:14-23*

Php 4:14-23 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. 15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. 16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. 17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. 18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God. 19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. 20 Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. 21 Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. 22 All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household. 23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Paul had in one sense declared his independence from human aid in the previous verses. He told them he had learned to do without, as you will recall. He now quickly acknowledges his appreciation for their gift to him and his ministry.

Php 4:14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

He had learned the grace of contentment and he was not saying that he was not grateful for the help in fact he was very appreciative of it. Paul understood that we all are in this together and that we as Christians do not live on an island disconnected from others.

We as believer need to understand just how dependant we are on Christ for salvation, yea all things. We also need to understand how interdependent we are upon each other. I submit to you that one of the great joy enhancers in our life is when we are in the right kind of church and serving alongside fellow saints.

No we are not always going to agree but to be the kind of Church that God uses we

need to work together with the gospel as our singleness of purpose.

I- The Giving Church:

As Paul closed this letter let us take the opportunity to see the kind of Church that Paul was commending.

Php 4:15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

The Philippian church had given to the ministry of Paul before this imprisonment in Rome. In fact, they had contributed to his ministry from the first.

To find the Macedonia background we go to *Act 17:1-10*. *Acts 17:1* says, *Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews.* Paul went to the synagogue as he did in each city. He preached for three days and many were saved. *Acts 17:5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the*

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city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. There arose such a situation that Paul and Silas were sent away. **Acts 17:10** *And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews..*

Paul here expresses that they were the only church to stand with him and support him in his effort. This, my friends is the right kind of Church, one that reaches past themselves.

Why is this important? If a church uses all it's resources on itself, first it is not doing what God called it to do and second, it is a matter of time before they began to have disputes over one getting more than another from the till. I think history shows that God blesses a church reach forth not imploding as a black hole form with no light gets out except under the cracks of the doors.

Let me give a couple of personal examples. While pastor of Cedar Grove in Kingsport I was told many times that the church struggled financially until they made a commitment to give more to the Cooperative Program and began to do missions. God then bless them and their financial funds picked up. Beloved, God does not want us to waste nor to not do what is needed but He also gives us money to use for His kingdom work and not to horde up and set on. I recall a conversation I had with a woman who called from another church. She said, "We have plenty of money because a man just died and left us \$500,000 dollars." I asked her, "What does God intend for you to do with the money?" She admitted they had not thought about what

God's purpose was for it. Would you not agree they should have.

I did some research on this church which will remain unnamed by me. In 1995 they had a great spike in their giving. It rose from under 100,000 in all previous years to almost 600,000 that year only to fall back again in ensuing years. Many would say in our churches today if we only had more money we could do more, right. Not necessarily! Their average SS has not risen above the low fifty's and was as low as 27 in 2007. Beloved, God will bless only if we use what resources He gives us for His glory not our selfishness.

I trust we will grow more and more in being a giving church. Paul commended the Philippians in **Php 4:16** *For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.*

II- Purpose of Giving:

I know we have touched on a church giving of its resources but next Paul tells them why being the giving church is such a blessing. **Php 4:17** *Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.*

He wanted them to experience the blessing of giving. You may have heard the old saying it is more blessed to give than to receive. Paul told them that it was going on their account. NO, not down at the local bank but on the records of heaven.

Now notice the language that Paul used to describe their gifts that Epaphroditus had brought. **Php 4:18** *But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.*

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These gifts were a sweet smell not to Paul but to God. This draws on the image of the sweet-smelling incense burnt on the altar as the sacrifices were offered. These gifts were also acceptable sacrifices that were well pleasing to the Master as worship.

Barnes Notes says concerning this acceptable sacrifice.

Well-pleasing to God - Because it evinced a regard for true religion. Hence, learn:

(1) that kindness done to the ministers of the gospel is regarded as an acceptable offering to God.

(2) that kindness to the servants of God in distress and want, is as well-pleasing to God as direct acts of worship.

(3) that such acts of benevolence are evidences of attachment to the cause of religion, and are proofs of genuine piety; notes, Mat 10:42.

[Mat 10:42 And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.]

I often wonder if my worship is acceptable and is a sweet fragrance to the nostrils of God.

III- Supply from Riches:

The next verse we address is often misquoted and misapplied. I say this because many times it is applied without proper content. Remember the content is that they had been a church that had given abundantly. Paul tell them that God was

going to supply their need because they had been faithful to give in worship to God.

Php 4:19 *But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

Have you ever tried to out give God. I do not think you can. The more we give away the more God supplies. I have said many times that God has cattle on a thousand hills, the Bible says this in **Ps 50:10**. The problem is men keep building fences around God's cattle.

IV- Closing Remarks:

Php 4:20 *Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. 21 Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. 22 All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household. 23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

Matthew Henry says he concludes this epistle :

- 1- With Praise to God.
- 2- With salutations to his friends at Philippi.
- 3- He sends salutations from those who were at Rome.
- 4- The apostolical benedictions, as usual.

What better thing to depart such a rich and weighty epistle with than the final verse.

Php 4:23 *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

Now that is enough to bring joy to all our hearts as we serve one another and seek to be the right kind of Church.