

Philippians

Steroids For a Servant's Soul

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Back when we started dating in 1974, our favorite Bible verse was Philippians 4:4. Ever since then, truly, always, joy in the Lord has been our strength. Words could not express our joy in serving Christ's body at Faith Fellowship Church

And it's been such a joy to work on this Philippians study. We owe a joyful debt of gratitude to Carol Pumm for her dutiful proofreading and editing of the homework assignments.

Enjoy!

~Bob and Ruth Froese



Philippians

Teachers Edition

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1. The Church at Philippi



Philippians

Although written from prison, Paul's theme is joy, a word he chose to use sixteen times in the letter to the Philippians.

1. The Writing

A. Background

- ✍ This letter to the Philippians was written by Paul, together with Timothy (Philippians 1:1).
- ✍ Paul's fourth visit to Jerusalem ended in imprisonment there. From prison, he appealed to Caesar and was taken to Rome (Acts 21-28).
- ✍ While waiting under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:30), he wrote Ephesians, Philemon, Colossians and Philippians.
- ✍ Although Paul spent two years imprisoned in Rome (Philippians 1:7, 13, 14), he did not consider it a waste of time (Philippians 1:12-14).
- ✍ He expected to be released (Philippians 2:24 and Philemon 22), but he wrote with a sense of imminent death (Philippians 2:17, 4:22).

B. Time and Location of Writing

- ✍ It appears Paul wrote near the end of his imprisonment, pending the determination of his case—either life or death (Philippians 1:20).
- ✍ Time period is between 60-62 A.D., just decades after the founding of the church (Acts 2).

C. Philippi

- ✍ Philippi in Macedonia received its name from Philip II of Macedon (father of Alexander the Great). Today, the city of Kavalla, Greece sits 10 miles south east of its location.



- ✍ The Christian church at Philippi was actually the first church founded by the Apostle Paul in Europe, an event historically dated with his second missionary journey, approximately 50 AD.
- ✍ Paul apparently visited Philippi twice during his third missionary journey, once at the beginning (2 Corinthians 8:1-5), and again near the end (Acts 20:6).
- ✍ About 4-5 years after his last visit to Philippi, while a prisoner in Rome, Paul received a delegation from the Philippian church. They had heard of Paul's imprisonment, and send a contribution towards his needs during incarceration.
- ✍ The Philippians had generously supported Paul in the past (4:15-16), and had also contributed abundantly to the needy church at Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8:1-4)..

Faith with no effort, is no faith at all.

D. Why did Paul write?

- ✍ Paul was basically a church-planter. He calls himself an apostle not building on another's foundation (Romans 15:20). He wrote for these reasons:
 - ✍ To say thank you for the Philippians' loving concern for him and for their financial aid to him (Philippians 4:10-19).
 - ✍ To express his hope of seeing them soon (Philippians 2:24).
 - ✍ To inform them of Epaphroditus' health (their messenger to him), and defend him against possible criticism that he had not completed his task (Philippians 2:25-30).
 - ✍ To tell them about his welfare and inform them of how the gospel was spreading even though he was in prison (Philippians 1:21).
- ✍ Two key themes emerge from the letter to the Philippians:
 - ✍ Christ is the source of joy. Paul is not embittered or upset by his imprisonment. Rather the letter rings with his personal experience of joy that triumphs over suffering (Philippians 1:12-29, 3:1, 4:4).
 - ✍ The idea of being "in Christ" (Philippians 1:21, 3:1). Paul stresses union with Christ.

2. The Church

A. This is the only letter where Paul does not find it necessary to mention the ministry and authority given him by Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:1a).

- ✍ The Philippian church recognized and respected Paul as an apostle, sent by Jesus Christ.
- ✍ Paul introduces himself together with Timothy, as servants of the Lord.

B. Paul recognizes the Church's character as:

- ✍ "saints in Christ" (Philippians 1:1)
- ✍ Concerned about the spread of the gospel (Philippians 1:5)
- ✍ In need of living worthy of the gospel (Philippians 1:27)
- ✍ People who must possess and express the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5)
- ✍ Possessing the faith of the gospel, the mind of Christ, and the supply of the Spirit (Phil. 1:19).
- ✍ The avenue for believers to make spiritual progress (Philippians 1:25).
- ✍ The forum for the gospel to advance in a crooked and depraved generation (Phil 2:15)

C. Paul addresses the Church's needs

- ✍ They are being threatened by adversaries. Paul's imprisonment evidences persecution.
- ✍ Paul addresses the infiltration of wrong teaching (Philippians 3:2). They might have been invaded by a divisive perfectionist influence (Phil 3:4, 13-15), resulting in the need for unity.
- ✍ Paul teaches regarding how to help when faced with argument between two women (Philippians 4:2-3).


Steroids for Your Soul: Lessons learned by the church at Philippi

There is joy from God that is greater than our trials

God gives us joy that is greater than our trouble. Study how Paul experienced joy during tough times. Read the passages below and write down his troubles:

 Acts 16:22 _____

 Acts 16:23 _____

 Acts 16:24 _____

Read Acts 16:25. How did Paul and his friend respond? _____

The joy of the Lord surpasses all human common sense & gives us contentment. What difficulty have you lately encountered? _____

How did you respond? _____


But how does one come to know the joy of God?


Mary was having a tough day and had stretched herself out on the couch to do a bit of what she thought to be well-deserved complaining and self-pitying. She moaned to her mom and brother, "Nobody loves me . . . the whole world hates me!" Her brother, busily occupied playing a game hardly looked up at her and passed on this encouraging word, "That's not true, Mary. Some people don't even know you."


Paul saw himself as a prisoner of Jesus Christ not Rome, so therefore it was a cause to rejoice! The joy of God does not have anything to do with circumstances, rather "the joy of the Lord is my strength."

Unity in the midst of adversity

Who attended church services in Philippi?

 A business woman from Thyatira, named Lydia, known as a seller of purple cloth (Acts 16:12-14).

 A young girl who had worked as a slave for a fortune teller while she was demon possessed (Acts 16:16-18).

 A converted jailer, who had lived with his weapon at the ready in case of recalcitrant prisoners (Acts 16:27-34).

How in the world could these three get along? Because of one love and one joy. Who is the love and joy proven to unite the most unlikely people? _____

"The amazing thing about the whole joy of Christianity is it's something you can't find, it's something that has to find you. Once we submit ourselves to God, the things of God chase us down like dogs, and you can't escape them. We can stifle the Spirit, we can even thwart the work of God in our own lives. We can choose to nourish that which should be crucified and ignore that which should be nourished, but God 'aint' done with any of us."


~Rich Mullins
<http://www.kidbrothers.net/articles/ccmdec93.html>


"The legs feel nothing in the stocks when the heart is in heaven."


~Tertullian (160-220AD)

Read 1 John 1:5-7. List the elements leading toward unity. _____

God never intended for us to act uniform, rather to be unified in diversity.

 Read Acts 16:15. How did Lydia show love for Christ? _____

 Read Acts 16:33-34. How did the jailer show love for Christ? _____

 After Paul and Silas were released from prison, what did they do? _____

List ways we can love Christ amid our differences. _____

When you are a believer, you have a desire to be with God's people. The church at Philippi had been in fellowship (partnership) with Paul in the defense & confirmation of the gospel. That is what bound them together as one. Paul fervently desired this practice to continue whether he was spared or not.


The nature of true conversion is joy and compassion for others

Christians can be marked by "unquenchable optimism."

Unquenchable = unable to be extinguished, terminated, destroyed

Optimism = an orientation by which the most favorable interpretation is attributed to actions and events, to anticipate the best possible outcome

Read Matthew 11:28-30. What does Jesus Christ give to the believer? _____

 The greatest joy is knowing that I have a Father who loves me, and that He doesn't love me in a passive way. In fact He loves me so much that He sent Christ to take away the guilt of my sin, that is a real thing, that really did happen. If I will experience joy in this life, it will be when I let other people know that there is a God who loves them, and He has taken away the sin that separates them, through the blood of His Son.

The mark of an authentic Christian is "unquenchable optimism."

~Ray Stedman (Authentic Christianity)

2 Servants not Sleepyheads



Philippians

“Resolved, never, henceforward, till I die, to act as if I were any way my own, but entirely and altogether God’s.”

~Jonathan Edwards

I’m thankful to a godly biology professor at Liberty University from whom I learned something that has guided the philosophy of our church. He taught his students that if you teach the challenges of men, you will end up with volunteers, but if you preach the commandments of God you will end up with bondservants (slaves).

1. Letter writers

A. Paul describes himself and Timothy as bondservants of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:1a)

- ✍ “Duolos” - properly translated = slave.
- ✍ Paul and Timothy think of themselves as slaves with no independence or rights of their own, but belonging to Jesus Christ, who has purchased (or redeemed) them.
- ✍ They have volitionally enrolled in His service.
- ✍ A bondservant was a willing slave who was happily and loyally linked to his master. We struggle with this concept today, perhaps because of the negative connotations attached to the idea of slavery. As a result, people use the term servant rather than slave.
- ✍ In our narcissistic self-centeredness, we can flip it in our minds so that we think Christ is the slave and we are the master. Who is the master when we decide to volunteer for service? Who is the master when we serve as a slave?

2. Letter recipients

A. Saints in Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:1b)

- ✍ Saints are those who have had a divine work in the heart. They are no longer spiritually dead, but alive by virtue of being united with Jesus Christ.
 - ✍ Saints is always in the plural
- ✍ Hagios = “holy ones” set apart from the world by purification from sin and consecration to God. Saints (hagios) refers to all genuine believers, not those who are merely baptized while living, or canonized after dying.
- ✍ There is no sainthood outside the life of Christ, only through faith “in” His death and resurrection (1 Corinthians 6:11).
 - ✍ There are two kinds of people—those “in” Christ Jesus, and those outside of Christ Jesus.

B. Bishops/Elders/Shepherds/Overseers (Philippians 1:1c)

- ✍ Bishops = those who watch over the spiritual life of the congregation, who preach and teach the word of God, and see that the work is done correctly.
 - ✍ Paul instructs Timothy to appoint elders in every city (Titus 1:5)
 - ✍ Paul and Barnabus appointed elders in every church they visited (Acts 14:23)

✍ The main responsibility of the Shepherd/Pastor is handling the Word of God by preaching and teaching the Word of God (1 Timothy 4:6-16, especially 15-16).

C. Deacons (Philippians 1:1d)

✍ Deacons = through the dust.

✍ They work so hard to provide relief for the poor and needy that they leave a trail of dust (remember the cartoon character “Roadrunner” = beep beep zoom).

3. The standard early Christian greeting (Philippians 1:2)

A. Grace

✍ Grace (Greek greeting) = unmerited, undeserved favor of God (4:23)

✍ None of us can allow ourselves to think or say, “I must be living right.” NO! It’s grace. In His kindness, God provides daily grace for whatever we encounter. He gives grace even though we don’t deserve it.

✍ There are two kinds of people groups—those who understand grace know that they stand in God’s favor only by His grace, and those who do not understand grace and so try to earn His favor.

B. Peace

✍ Peace (Hebrew greeting) = unalterable standing with God (Romans 5:1-2)

✍ Peace is not a feeling from our inner disposition, but a result of our standing with God, that removes God’s wrath from us.

✍ Because of His grace, we have peace. Grace precedes peace.

✍ Peace comes from obedience—ordered harmony with God results in God’s positive blessing of well being. When we are obedient, “all is well” despite the most dire circumstance.

C. Grace and peace are always followed by “from”

✍ From = There is a supplier of this joint grace and peace.

✍ God our Father—the fountain. God our Father = OT Father of Israel, NT Father of Christ into which family believers are adopted (Romans 8:15-17).

✍ Jesus Christ—the stream in which grace flows.

✍ Lord = Kurios = refers to the exalted position of Christ, Deity of Christ

D. The core of Christianity

✍ In 1:1-2, Jesus Christ is mentioned three times. He is the core of Christianity, the key, foundation, everything revolves around Him. The Lord Jesus Christ is the focus and message of Paul’s letter.

✍ Is He the foundation of your life? Does everything in your life revolve around Him?

Steroids for Your Soul: Servants not Sleepyheads

Philippians 11-2

Grace alone

Grace is opposed to any method of trying to earn or in any way merit spiritual blessings by means of human works of any kind. Have you come to the place where your good works mean nothing without Jesus Christ as the only righteousness?

✍ We must be "in" Christ. (Greek = circle with a dot in center)

✍ Write a personal definition of what it means for you to be "in" Christ: _____

Peace is the fruit of grace

✍ Peace with God is followed by.....

Peace within and.....

Peace between believers.

When God ordered Jonah to preach in Nineveh, Jonah rebelled. He jumped on a ship going the opposite direction. We might expect God to bring deep personal conviction on Jonah, so he would be troubled in his soul and repent, but no, Jonah went into the cabin of the ship and went to sleep. God sent a great wind on the sea, causing a mighty storm that tossed the ship to and fro, helpless on gigantic waves. While Jonah slept, the sailors worked desperately to survive the storm. They adjusted the sails; they threw their cargo overboard, which meant the profit from the voyage was lost; and they prayed every man to his god. The storm persisted (Jonah 1:1-5).

Read Jonah 1:6. Who awakened Jonah, and what did he tell Jonah to do? _____

The captain and his crew were acting more righteous at this point than God's man. When Jonah proved to be in no condition to call on his God, what did the captain and crew do (Jonah 1:7)?

Casting lots may have been a heathen practice, but God used it to expose Jonah's rebellion.

When the sailors pled with Jonah to reveal his identity, what was his answer (John 1:8-9)?

The men wanted Jonah to repent, but he was not yet ready to do so. What happened to the storm (John 1:11)? _____

When the sailors pled with Jonah to reveal his identity, what was his answer (John 1:8-9)?

Jonah suggested they throw him into the sea so they would not be destroyed with him, but the sailors said no. They desperately attempted to row the ship to shore, but they could not. Their futile attempts at peace were unsuccessful. What are some of the ways you attempt to arrive at peace without surrender to God's will and repentance for your rebellion? _____

We are surrounded by programs based on psychological foundations to correct problems caused by the disobedience and apostasy of God's people. They will not work.

You know how the story goes. Finally, with great reluctance and fear, what did the sailors do (Jonah 1:15)? _____


What happened to the storm? _____

Jonah went on to the next area of chastening that the Lord had prepared for him, while the sailors were impacted by the storm and the peace that obedience brought. What was the response of the sailors (Jonah 1:16)? _____

Without Jonah's obedience, the sailors would not have feared God.

The church is foundationally important

The church is God's present day vehicle to show His glory. The temptation for us, like Jonah, is to find an excuse to be upset with the church. We all know of folks who have run in a different direction, like Jonah.

 Read Acts 20:28. What is the price God paid for His church? _____

The core of Christianity is Christ

Read Matthew 5:3. Thanks to the perpetrated lie of "self-esteem" needs, brokenness is the virtue missing from the church today. We are CBSers (Committed Broken Servants) for this reason—without brokenness we do not know Jesus Christ, and we will not see the kingdom of Heaven. Are you poor in spirit? _____ If you said yes, what is the basis for your answer? _____

Read Matthew 7:21-23. Would Jesus Christ say that He knows you or would He tell you the story he told in Luke 18:9-14? _____

What sin have you repented of today, so that you can walk in forgiveness and relationship with Christ as your Lord? _____

What are the things you don't want to do, in which you are called to obey? _____

"Do we give sufficient attention to the theme of gaining Christ? It is our joy and privilege to know Him as God's unspeakable gift, but none knew this more fully than the apostle Paul. But was he satisfied with this knowledge? Or was Paul's soul-consuming desire, at all possible cost, to gain Christ; and thus to know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings? Oh that Christ may be so known by us as a 'living, bright reality' that our one desire—our one absorbing heart-passion may be that we personally gain Christ—that we personally know Him as the apostle longed to do."

~Hudson Taylor

3. Six Attitudes of Serving Saints



Philippians 1:3-8

SIX ATTITUDES OF SERVING BELIEVERS

1. The attitude of a thankful heart

A. Gratitude is a good attitude (Philippians 1:3)

- ✍ Paul was not only grateful for the church at Philippi, he was also joyful on account of it.
- ✍ "every remembrance" = whenever he thought of it, his heart was gladdened and he gave thanks to God.

2. The attitude of prayer

A. Paul models intercession for fellow believers (Philippians 1:4a)

- ✍ Prayer = a petition for, a request made on behalf of someone else.

3. The attitude of joy

A. With all joy (Philippians 1:4b)

- ✍ Joy (*chara*) = an inner gladness, a deep seated pleasure.
 - ✍ Joy is divine. It is not circumstantial happiness.
 - ✍ At the same time, joy is a choice. Paul clearly commands rejoicing in the Lord (Philippians 4:4)

B. Joy when life is tough

- ✍ Paul is in prison for spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ, yet his heart is filled with joy.
- ✍ Joy is the element of the Christian life which focuses on future reward.
 - ✍ Once a believer tastes joy in the Lord, pleasures and persecutions fade. Joy creates faithfulness, and keeps the believer faithful.

4. The attitude of fellowship

A. What was so distinctive about Philippi? (Philippians 1:5)

- ✍ Fellowship = joint partnership in the gospel
 - ✍ Fellowship is not simply sharing in the blessings the gospel gives, it is sharing in the service which the gospel deserves.
- ✍ The church at Philippi had stood with Paul as he preached the gospel.
- ✍ Now they were energetic in the cause of the gospel.

"Conscience is that faculty in me which attaches itself to the highest that I know, and tells me what the highest I know demands that I do."

~Oswald Chambers

5. The attitude of confidence in God's salvation

A. Confident assurance (Philippians 1:6)

- ✍️ Genuine believers who know God personally are confident and assured, like the Philippians.
 - ✍️ The reason for their confidence was the “good work” God had begun and would finish in their lives and hearts.

6. The attitude of partnership (Philippians 1:7-8)

A. Paul's sense toward the church at Philippi

- ✍️ “it is right for me to think this of you” (2:2, 2:5, 3:15, 4:10)
 - ✍️ Paul's Christ-like affection was intertwined with harmonious like-mindedness.

B. Paul has good reasons for his affection towards the Philippian church. Look at all the ways in which they had jointly participated with him in the gospel:

- ✍️ Partners in the heart
 - ✍️ Heart = seat of thoughts and actions, involves tenderness
- ✍️ Partners in suffering
 - ✍️ “inasmuch as both in my chains.”
 - ✍️ They sympathized with Paul in his imprisonment.
 - ✍️ They encouraged Paul during his imprisonment through Epaphroditus's services (2:25, 4:10) and through monetary support (4:16).
- ✍️ Partners in the gospel
 - ✍️ “Defending and confirming”
 - ✍️ Paul uses these two legal terms, referring to the trial in which he had given testimony of the gospel.
 - ✍️ The church supported him not only in prayer, but also in demonstrating the truth and power of the gospel by their character of living, clearing the gospel from the false charges of the world.
- ✍️ Partners in grace
 - ✍️ “You all are partakers with me of grace”
 - ✍️ God gives grace in response to humility (1 Peter 5:5-6).
 - ✍️ A Christian needs grace to respond to the circumstances God brings into his/her life—without grace there is no joy.
- ✍️ Partners with Christ
 - ✍️ Paul literally refers to the internal organ “I love you with all my guts”
 - ✍️ Paul doesn't lose sight of the fact that he is a slave of Jesus Christ, and that the good news is Jesus Christ.
 - ✍️ We need Christ Himself, His love, His crucified life, His Spirit filled life, His victorious life.

Have you noticed how much praying for revival has been going on of late - and how little revival has resulted? I believe the problem is that we have been trying to substitute praying for obeying, and it simply will not work. To pray for revival while ignoring the plain precept laid down in Scripture is to waste a lot of words and get nothing for our trouble. Prayer will become effective when we stop using it as a substitute for obedience.”

~A W Tozer

Steroids for Your Soul: Attitudes Adjustments


Philippians 13-8


"Fellowship is no conflict, no confusion, but continuance. A continuing fellowship is a prayer fellowship. Today a very narrow concept of fellowship prevails. If we attend the same church, recite the same creed, say the same prayers, eat at the same church supper, and socialize with the same crowd, we call this Christian fellowship. But is it? For years I have watched all of these things going on among professing Christians where there was often little conception of true fellowship in the gospel. Among Christians there may be difficulties & disappointments along the way, but never a disruption where there is prayer fellowship."


~Lehman Strauss


Pray rather than ponder

Don't just think about someone, pray for them. Read the following passages and write down what they teach you about praying for others:

-  Ephesians 1:16-19 _____

-  Philippians 1:3-11 _____

-  Colossians 1:12 _____





-  Compare Ephesians 1:16, Philippians 1:3, and Colossians 1:12. What is Paul's attitude as he prays? _____

We must not go through life independently—there is always someone we can pray for. We're only lonely in the world if we expect perfect friends!

Is my heart joyful because of assurance of salvation?



The world's joy is not complete. There is a haunting awareness that some situation can arise to disturb it, to keep it from being full and assuring. Joy in the Lord, on the other hand, increases with trials. Joy in the Lord is based on assurance of salvation.

In order to have assurance of salvation, you need to:

-  Recognize Christ's death for you on the cross.
-  Recognize your death in Him on the cross.
-  Appropriate by faith the fact of your old man's death.
-  Yield the members of your body to God.

The great need of the church is true partnership with Christ

Christian believers have spiritual union (fellowship) for two main reasons:

-  They have experienced the same salvation, the salvation of God.
-  They have embraced the same faith.

✍ Read 2 Timothy 2:20-26. How is the servant of the Lord described? _____

God IS at work in the hearts of believers

✍ Read John 3:8. How do you know the Spirit is at work in a believer's life?

✍ Read 1 Peter 1:22-23. Since you have been born again, what is different about you in relationship to others? _____

Keep the eternal perspective

Read Philippians 1:6b, 10b. What common phrase do you see in these verses? _____

When will the work God is doing in the believer be completed? _____

The good work God is doing is incomplete as long as we live on earth. Read Philippians 3:20-21. When will we finally be completely subject to God? _____

Do you ever become discouraged by the struggle with sin in your life? Do you get frustrated by sin in the lives of your spouse, even your children? That means you do not have the eternal perspective. Quiet your heart to trust God for the work He will do. His Word is sure.

So great salvation

Read Philippians 2:15-16.

✍ How does Paul describe the people among whom the believers at Philippi were living?

✍ As children of God, how are they to live amongst those people? _____

Read Philippians 3:21 and Jude 24-25.

✍ When Jesus Christ returns with all glory and power, He will make His believing subjects completely like Himself in character and in body. If we long for that day, what will be true about us on this day? _____

✍ Read Philippians 1:10-11. Until the day of Christ's return, how are we to live? _____

"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen."

Jude24-25

4. Focus of the Fully Faithful



Philippians 1:9-14

THE FOCUS OF MATURING LOVE

1. Right thinking about love never focuses on feelings (Philippians 1:9).

A. The focus and force of growing love

- ✍ The focus of love is knowledge=total understanding. If we truly love someone, we want to know them!
- ✍ The force of love is discernment=intelligence. If we truly love someone, we want to learn about them! We gain insight so that we can please them.

B. Abound still more and more

- ✍ Abound = be in excess, enough and to spare.

2. Growing love approves the things that are excellent (Philippians 1:10).

A. The difference between right and wrong

- ✍ It's not enough to simply know the difference, but to approve the excellent.

B. As love grows, excellence grows

- ✍ The more we love the Lord the more we desire to bring glory to Him, by choosing what is excellent (best).
- ✍ The more we love each other, the more we will choose what is excellent for each other (never what might cause someone to stumble).

3. Growing love is sincere (pure in motive) (Philippians 1:10).

A. Pure in motive

- ✍ Sincere = to sift about in a sieve in order to make pure, uncontaminated, untainted, unpolluted.
- ✍ Until when? Until the day of Christ, when He returns.

B. Focus on Christ

- ✍ Only a growing love will keep our focus on Christ. If we do not love Him, we will not look to Him (self righteousness=boredom).
- ✍ If we do love Him, we will keep our eyes fastened on Him, longing to see and be with Him (Matthew 22:37-38). Only pure, sincere love will keep us waiting for His return

- ✍ Read 1 Timothy 1:3-5

- ✍ A pure heart refers to motivation
- ✍ A good conscience refers to no un-confessed sin.
- ✍ A sincere faith is not a masquerade. It looks the same on both sides of any door.

"We are heralds assigned to preach a message, not salesmen charged to market a product."

~R.A. Mohler

4. Growing love is without offense (blameless) (Philippians 1:10).

A. Faultless, to keep others from stumbling

- ✍ Choose what is excellent for the sake of others:
 - ✍ To keep from causing a brother to stumble (1 John 2:10)
 - ✍ To offer up to the Lord the very best (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

5. The result of growing love (Philippians 1:11).

A. Internal focus

- ✍ The believer's heart is focused upon the Lord Jesus Christ and His righteousness.

B. External evidence

- ✍ The evidence of growing love in the Christian is righteousness.
 - ✍ When an individual is saved, God imputes the righteousness of Christ onto him/her, declares him/her righteous (Galatians 2:16).
 - ✍ Righteousness keeps the heart from being wounded and losing its focus.

THE FOCUS OF MATURING WITNESS

1. A Christian witness must have right motives (Philippians 1:12-14)

A. The motives are either a focus on the message or the messenger (grace or works)

- ✍ The motives of a person can be seen by how well they handle the things that happen to them. A Christian witness takes the high road, lives above their circumstances.
- ✍ How can I tell if my motives are sincere? A mature witness joyfully shares the gospel regardless of circumstances.

B. Paul was in the midst of dark circumstances

- ✍ Completely innocent of the charges, he faced a trial of the supreme court of Rome, and Nero the Roman Emperor.

C. Paul was a prisoner "in Christ"

- ✍ Paul saw himself as a prisoner for Jesus Christ. He did not see himself as a victim, but as a conqueror for Christ (Acts 28:20). It is not the absence of problems, but the presence of the Lord that makes you strong.
- ✍ In Ephesians 6:19-20 Paul calls himself an "ambassador in chains"
 - ✍ Halusis = small length of chain that bound a prisoner to the wrist of a guard. Paul was bound to a Roman guard for over two years.

D. Paul used his dark circumstances to spread the gospel

- ✍ Furtherance (prokope) = to make headway in spite of obstacles.
- ✍ Paul had intimate contact with the future leaders of Rome, chained night and day to one of the elite Praetorian guard—the brightest and strongest young soldiers who had been hand picked to protect the Emperor.
- ✍ He shared the gospel so faithfully that it spread to "all the rest."

Corrie ten Boom in The Hiding Place relates an incident that taught her always to be thankful. She and her sister, Betsy, had just been transferred to the worst German prison camp they had seen yet, Ravensbruck. On entering the barracks, they found them extremely overcrowded and flea-infested. That morning, their Scripture reading in 1 Thessalonians had reminded them to rejoice always, pray constantly, and give thanks in all circumstances. Betsy told Corrie to stop and thank the Lord for every detail of their new living quarters. Corrie at first flatly refused to give thanks for the fleas, but Betsy persisted, and Corrie finally succumbed to her pleadings. During the months spent at that camp, they were surprised to find how openly they could hold Bible study and prayer meetings without guard interference. It was not until several months later that they learned the reason the guards would not enter the barracks was because of the fleas.


The deeper the darkness, and the sterner the circumstances, the more opportunity there is for the triumph of faith.

Steroids for Your Soul: Servants Focus on the Church


Philippians 19-14

"In Christ" love abounds more and more


Abounding love is rooted in Christ.

 Read Colossians 2:6-8. What will those rooted in Christ beware of? _____


Abounding love is prayerfully dependent on Christ.

 Read Proverbs 3:5-6. If we trust Christ, we will be skeptical of our own thoughts. What understandings or thoughts have you stopped leaning on, so that you can better love?


Abounding love grows in the knowledge of Christ.

 Read 2 Timothy 2:15. What word is used to describe the manner in which we pursue our understanding of God's Word? _____
Does that describe your growth in the knowledge of Christ? _____

Abounding love grows in discernment of Christ-likeness.


 Read 1 John 1:7. What is the result of walking in the light as Christ is in the light? _____

Abounding love bears the fruits of righteousness by Christ.

 Read Galatians 5:22. By what power is Christ-like fruit evidenced? _____

"In Christ" our witness grows

Paul speaks more about the gospel than himself.

 Read 2 Corinthians 11:21-28. Paul endured many trials, but this is the only time he speaks of them, and only to defend the validity of his apostleship. List the trials he endured:

"The preached word of God comes down to energize, packs power that moves and sustains our hearts obedience."

~Dale Ralph Davis

A witness for Christ speaks God's Word.

✍ Read 2 Timothy 2:9. What can never happen to God's Word? _____

A witness for Christ is energized by God's Word.

✍ When we preach God's Word we not only speak authoritatively, but we also speak energetically. 1 Thess 2:13 "For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works (*energeo*) in you who believe." Do you devote time to being energized by God's Word?

A witness for Christ lives above circumstances

- ✍ We must never let our circumstances defeat our testimony and witness for Christ, no matter what—accident, failure, financial strain or loss, loss of loved ones, rejection, age, abuse, poverty.
- ✍ If we have failed, we must repent and get back to the task of witnessing.
- ✍ Read Philippians 1:12-14. Throughout Paul's unjust imprisonment, he did not grumble and complain or question God. Why not? What did he consider more important than his comfort and safety? _____

A witness for Christ uses the circumstances to witness to the saving power of Christ

- ✍ Read John 3:30. What did the first witness for Christ recognize? _____

- ✍ If we are living for Christ, we must know that God is in control of our lives, and that He will strengthen us to bear whatever circumstances fall upon us.

Whining is never a witness for Christ

- ✍ Do I whine or witness? Am I aware that others are watching to see how I respond to the difficult situations in my life? Read Matthew 11:28-30. What is the solution to being weary and burdened down? _____

A witness for Christ conquers circumstances by dependent faith in Jesus Christ

- ✍ Read Hebrews 4:16. Where is help for time of need found? _____

A witness for Christ does not allow difficult circumstances to discourage others, but uses them to encourage others.

- ✍ Read 1 Peter 4:12-13. What is our attitude when we get to share with Christ in suffering? _____

- ✍ Paul's dynamic witness made a strong impact upon all those around him. His strong witness, despite his terrible circumstances, stirred many believers to become much more confident in their own witnessing, no matter their circumstances.

'One thing you cannot bury with a good man-his influence. They have not buried Daniel yet; his influence is as great today as ever it was. Do you tell me that Joseph is dead? His influence still lives and will continue to live on and on. You may bury the frail tenement of clay that a good man lives in, but you cannot get rid of his influence and example. Paul was never more powerful than he is today.'

~D. L. Moody

"Do we give sufficient attention to the theme of gaining Christ? It is our joy and privilege to know Him as God's unspeakable gift, but none knew this more fully than the apostle Paul. But was he satisfied with this knowledge? Or was Paul's soul-consuming desire, at all possible cost, to gain Christ; and thus to know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings? Oh that Christ may be so known by us as a 'living, bright reality' that our one desire-our one absorbing heart-passion may be that we personally gain Christ-that we personally know Him as the apostle longed to do."

~Hudson Taylor



5. Daring Defenders



Philippians 1:15-20

“The outstanding feature of spiritual awakening has been the profound consciousness of the Presence and holiness of God.”

~Henry Blackaby

“How in the world can the hurt produce hope? Simply: Lean into the Lord and His heart absorbs the hurt and the hope of forever with Him, this is what heals. Even when we’ve buried pain deep, refused to expose it, and the gnawing about wears us through, us with no hope for the fruit — there’s a Gardner and there’s a miracle and there’s redemption in the barren places.”

~Anne Voskamp

UNDENIABLE DEFENDERS

1. Whose side are you really on? (Philippians 1:15-16)

A. Why do people malign those who labor for the cause of Christ? Motivation holds the answer.

- ✍ The strange experience of Paul—detractors who maligned his leadership—is often and tragically repeated among believers in the church today.
- ✍ Subcultures, parachurch ministries, and personal passions abound within professed Christianity. Today, often the mission of the ministry becomes more important than the cause of Christ.

B. Whose cause is it?

- ✍ Do I fight for His cause or my cause? Has a subculture become more important than the cause of Christ?
- ✍ A mature witness holds no personal jealousy, nor desire for credit or prestige.

2. The real dividing line is over love (Philippians 1:16-17).

A. Filling the gap or fulfilling a goal

- ✍ Some were filling the gap created by Paul’s imprisonment, out of love for him and love for the gospel. They were motivated by good will and a desire to encourage Paul in his suffering.
- ✍ Others were jealous, and their preaching was motivated by selfishness. Their desire was for praise for themselves. Their unworthy motivation only affected themselves.
- ✍ Servants of Christ need courage and love — love that is willing to cooperate with others whom God may be using more.

B. Two groups that preach Christ

<u>PRO-CHRIST AND PRO-PAUL</u>	<u>PRO-CHRIST AND ANTI-PAUL</u>
Good will (v.15)	Envy (v. 15) 1 Timothy 6:3-5
In love (v. 17)	Strife-rivalry, dissension, arguments (vs. 15)
Knowing—understanding God’s purpose (v.17)	Selfish ambition (v.16)
In truth (v. 18)	Not sincerely—they loved their own reputation more (v. 16)
Encouraging their members to show love for Paul by visiting and supporting Him in the ministry of proclaiming Christ.	Pretense (v. 18)

- ✍ Christ addressed the behavior of the group in the right side column in Matthew 23:13-14.
- ✍ Paul repeatedly encountered this envious behavior (1 Thessalonians 2:5).

C. The root of Paul's distress

- ✍ Those unjustly criticizing and accusing Paul thought they would aggravate him and increase his distress. Jealousy results in unbelievable cruelty.
- ✍ However, Paul's distress was not rooted in the way he was being treated, whether by his captives or his detractors. Paul's distress was over harm to the cause of Christ.

3. Paul's response (Philippians 1:18).

A. When it's the right message from the wrong motive, who cares, as long as Christ's name is proclaimed.

- ✍ Paul volitionally chooses to rejoice, knowing God will use even the wrongly motivated. The message matters more than the messenger!
 - ✍ These preachers were genuine preachers, ministers in and around the metropolis of Rome. Paul agreed with the content of their preaching.
- ✍ But to the wrong message, Paul responds harshly and attacks (Philippians 3:2).
 - ✍ He did not write off his enemies unless they were enemies of the cross (Galatians 5:1-2).

UNQUENCHABLE OPTIMISTS

1. A Christian's attitude is joyful assurance of a happy ending (Philippians 1:19-20)

A. Let Paul's statement serve as a test for genuineness and a measure for quality of Christians in this feelings-oriented age.

- ✍ Paul's rejoicing does not disappear when his thoughts move from the known past to the unknown future. Rather, he becomes even more joyful!
- ✍ God had turned his captivity into an avenue for the furtherance of the gospel.

B. What Paul thinking of something greater than his release from prison when he used the word deliverance?

- ✍ Deliverance/salvation (soteria) = Even greater than his release from prison would be steps forward in his own salvation, such as its consummation in glory.
- ✍ Follow Paul's train of thought
 - ✍ Vs. 12-18—He longs for the advance of the gospel he serves
 - ✍ Vs. 18—He looks forward to the advance of the eternal salvation it bestows. At this point he is thinking of himself, but will later reference the Philippians (v 25).

2. Expectantly seeking and expressing the hope of God's presence defends the gospel.

A. God's presence

- ✍ God is omniscient.
 - ✍ Omniscient = present everywhere at the same time.
 - ✍ However, His manifest presence, when He chooses to visit His people and show them His glory, is a fleeting occasion.
- ✍ God is not impressed with externals, He looks at our heart's attitude.
 - ✍ The place where we can experience God's presence is when we recognize fully who and what we are in our sinfulness, and exalt God in His holiness (Isaiah 57:15).

"See the Teacher playing with the children, hear Him baffle doctors of the law, look at the people gathering to go with Him, those who see the vision that He saw; This is why a man as Holy as He had to die alone on Calvary, it was the only way that we could ever see the 'Heaven in His eyes.'"

~Rich Mullins


"You defend the Gospel like you defend a lion, you just let it loose."


~C. H. Spurgeon


Steroids for Your Soul: Daring Defenders


Selfless humility


Like Paul, we must evidence selfless humility for the purpose of inter-relational harmony.

 Read Philippians 2:3. How are we to esteem others? _____

 If your enemy is to be viewed as better than you, how will you think and talk about him or her? _____

 Read Psalms 119:165. What is the result of obedient selfless humility in obedience to God's Word? _____
Does peace characterize your inner man? Does nothing cause you to stumble?

 Read Luke 9:23. List three ways you are called to deny yourself in order to follow Christ: _____


 Read Proverbs 6:16-19. God hates each of the seven things listed in this passage, but the seventh is an abomination to Him. What is it that God hates the most? _____

Guard against jealousy


Many Christian workers are jealous and envious. Before God, assess yourself to see if you identify with any of these causes for jealousy:

- Another person receives favorable attention from various social circles.
- Another person receives the support and loyalty of believers.
- Another person receives attention within the church.
- Another person gains a position of leadership within the church.

We must always remember we are all ministers and servants if we have been truly called by Christ to preach and teach His gospel. Each one has his/her call, and no matter the call, the road is always difficult. Therefore we must support each other!

 Read 2 Corinthians 4:5. What is our job? _____

The Lord does not require big ministries and big names and big followers from us all. What He requires is faithfulness.

 Read Jeremiah 3:15. What is the promise of God for His people? _____

Philippians 1:15-20

"Maturing faith is faith which deepens and grows as we live our Christian life. It is not just knowledge, but knowledge acted upon. It is not just belief, but belief lived out, practiced. Only he who believes is obedient; only he who is obedient believes; are you willing to give up your popularity and be despised by men?"

~Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The prayers of the saints

God's sovereignty includes the prayers of His people.

✍ Read James 5:16. This verse gives a clue as to why Paul prayed for the church at Philippi, and longed for them to pray for him. What happens when God's people pray? _____

✍ Read 2 Corinthians 1:5, 8-11. Why does Paul entreat the Corinthians for the favor of many prayers? _____

✍ Read the following passages, and write down Paul's request.

✍ Romans 15:30-31 _____

✍ Ephesians 6:18-19 _____

✍ 1 Thessalonians 5:25 _____

✍ 2 Thessalonians 3:1 _____

Those in ministry need the encouragement of praying fellow believers. Let a pastor know that you are holding him up in prayer this week.

Expectantly seek God's presence

In Philippians 1:20, Paul uses a Greek word for earnest expectation that refers to stretching his neck. It makes us think of a hockey game, where fans are watching the best forward for their team on a clear break-away toward the net. The crowd rises to their feet, every eye intent on the break-out player and the little black puck he is stick-handling. Their hope is fixed on the glorious moment when the puck crosses the goal line. Our would-be scorer probably has a 50-50 chance of scoring (depending on who the goalie is). Are we waiting and watching eagerly for the glory that is sure? The glory of but one moment in the presence of God.

✍ Read Psalm 84:10. What was the attitude of the sons of Korah? What did they want more than anything else? _____

In Numbers 16, Korah was involved in a rebellion against the authority of Moses. Moses called upon God, and the earth swallowed up Korah and his allies. The heritage of the sons of Korah in light of what happened to their ancestor was to humbly and carefully approach God. The sons of Korah stated, "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness." The "tents of wickedness" referred to were probably not so much dens of fleshly pleasure as they were havens of the apathetic who saw no need to meet with God. A doorkeeper in the house of God was certainly not considered a key player; but there was such desire to be where God touched down, that they would serve in the most mundane ways to be in the right place at the right time.

✍ Read Isaiah 57:15. God is not impressed with what we look like or what we do externally. What does God want from us? _____

Seek God expectantly in humility and repentance.

- Am I seeking Him in humility, with a contrite heart?
- Am I patiently waiting on Him with a right heart attitude?
- Do I truly desire His manifest presence?

A farmer was continually optimistic, seldom discouraged or blue. He had a neighbor who was just the opposite. Grim and gloomy, he faced each new morning with a heavy sigh. The happy optimistic farmer would see the sun coming up and shout over the roar of the tractor, "Look at that beautiful sun and the clear sky!" With a frown, the negative neighbor would reply, "Yeah, it'll probably scorch the crops!" When clouds would gather and much-needed rain would start to fall, our positive friend would smile across the fence, "Ain't this great - God is giving our corn a drink today." Again, the same negative response, "Uh-huh- but if it doesn't stop 'fore long a flood'll wash everything away." One day the optimist decided to put his pessimistic neighbor to the maximum test. He bought the smartest bird dog he could find, trained him to do impossible feats to astound anyone. He invited the pessimist to go duck hunting, and they sat in the boat, hidden in the duck blind. In came the ducks. Both men fired and several ducks fell into the water. "Go get 'em!" ordered the owner with a gleam in his eye. The dog leaped out of the boat, walked on the water, and picked up the birds one by one. "What do you think of that?" Unsmiling, the pessimist answered, "He can't swim, can he."

~Chuck Swindoll



6. Homesick for Heaven



Philippians 121-24

“All of us, by our very natures, are lovers of self more than lovers of God, and lovers of sin more than lovers of righteousness. True gospel preaching exposes the wickedness of this self-orientation and calls its hearers to radical conversion. To be truly saved means to be radically converted, or to be totally devoted to denying oneself and following Jesus Christ.”

~Richard Owen Roberts
(www.internationalawakening.org)

A DWELLER ON THE THRESHOLD

1. Life, death, and Jesus Christ

A. What is important to you? What are your priorities?

✍ Sports? Music? Achievement? Possessions? Home? People? Relationships?

B. Two great elements of a Christian’s life:

✍ The great commitment in life and death—to follow Jesus Christ.

✍ The great dilemma—to live on earth and serve others, or to depart and be with Christ in heaven.

2. Option 1—Life (Philippians 1:21)

A. Life in Christ was real life to Paul

✍ For to me to live is Christ = written in the emphatic infinitive, ongoing tense that includes the demands and duties of daily living in a kaleidoscope of circumstances.

✍ Paul had been radically converted. Christ wasn’t just an add-on or accessory.

✍ Christ was his reason for living, focus for living, strength for living (Luke 9:23).

✍ Paul presented his body as a living sacrifice to Christ (Galatians 2:20).

✍ Therefore Paul consciously relates himself to Christ in all of life’s situations and experiences (Colossians 3:4, John 1:4).

B. Purpose and Ministry

✍ Purpose—He loves Christ so much that he loves His cause (1:22-23). Paul’s living would mean fruitful labor on behalf of Christ. Do you want to live because you want to serve Christ?

✍ Ministry—He loves Christ so much that he loves His people (1:24). Paul committed himself to reach and minister to as many people as possible. Are you committed to working for love and justice?

3. Option 2—Death (Philippians 1:21, 23)

A. Paul knew the Person Who could save him and give him an eternal world.

✍ To die is gain = written in the infinitive, aorist tense, a one-time event with all its ongoing circumstances, by which Paul would enter into eternal fellowship with Christ.

✍ Concepts of life after death vary, from the one who believes in nothing more than that he will fertilize the ground, to the one who believes in a happy hunting ground in the sky.

✍ Human based theology of the afterlife always depicts it as good (ie. “rest in peace” on tombstones.) Human based reasoning is dangerous.

✍ Truth + lie = lie. Any system of thought without the Bible as its foundation is fraught with error and eventual destruction. God is the Creator and ruler of everything (Psalm 103:19).

B. Two Cold Hard Facts lead Paul to write Philippians 1:23.

✍ If his life on earth ends, he is with Christ serving him in Heaven.

- ✍ Christ saves people from sin, death, and judgment (John 5:24).
- ✍ Christ made it possible for men and women to live forever with God in a new heaven and earth (2 Peter 3:13).
- ✍ Depart = as in breaking camp, loosening the ropes of the tent, packing up and moving on to a new location. When a believer departs this life, he is not ceasing to exit, he is simply breaking loose into a new campsite, a perfect campsite.

✍ If he stays on earth, he serves Christ with his life.

- ✍ Christ commands Christians to store up treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21).

A WIN-WIN SITUATION CAUGHT BETWEEN TWO GREAT DESIRES

1. To live a life of fruitful service for the Lord Jesus Christ

A. Life is a beautiful gift, a stewardship given to us by God.

- ✍ Stewardship demands an eventual accounting, a responsibility.
- ✍ The accounting will not be on our terms (Hebrews 10:31).

2. To depart and go on to be with Christ is far better

A. Yet what he shall choose he cannot tell

✍ This phrase is used 24 times in the Bible, meaning "I do not know right now but in the future I will."

B. What does it mean to be hard-pressed?

✍ To be hard pressed is like walking through a narrow gorge, or as in a movie when the walls move in.

- ✍ Luke describes the hard press of the crowds on Jesus (Luke 8:45).
- ✍ Jesus warned us of the hard press of enemies (Luke 19:43).

✍ Why do the conflicting pressure press so hard on Paul?

- ✍ Paul's dilemma was created because of the reality and glory of Christ to him. There was no uncertainty as to which was better for him personally.
- ✍ In 1:23, he clearly states that dying would be far, far better.

C. Realities of death

✍ Physical death would take him home. He would be with Christ, at the moment of death. Every opposition and limitation would be laid aside, face to face with Christ in heaven.

✍ Some years earlier, Paul had explained the Christian's mindset regarding death, to the church at Corinth (2 Corinthians 5:1-10).

- ✍ There is no sleeping of the soul after death, and no purgatory between death and heaven.
- ✍ Life is one time around, there are no second chances (Hebrews 9:27).

✍ This means there is no recovery, or rescue after death. When we breathe our last breath, our eternity is sealed.

David Brainerd said to Jonathan Edwards: "I do not go to heaven to be advanced but to give honor to God. It is no matter where I shall be stationed in heaven, whether I have a high or low seat there, but to live and please and glorify God, fully devoted to Him."

"Any notion of being unconscious or asleep until the resurrection day is excluded as a possibility, for Paul had already written to the Christians at Corinth about the believer and death."

~H. R. Jones

Steroids for Your Soul: Homesick for Heaven

Philippians 1:21-24

Only the Word is the answer to rightly reading the world, because The Word has nail-scarred hands that cup our face close, wipe away the tears running down, has eyes to look deep into our brimming ache, and whisper, "I know. I know."

~Ann Voskamp (One Thousand Gifts)

What are you preoccupied with?

Is Christ truly what you treasure? Is He your passion? What does life mean to you? Why are you living? What is your great purpose in life? What garners your devotion? Remember lips will lie, lives won't.

- Are you living for money, possessions?
- Are you living for comfort? Are you in search of the proverbial "easy street?"
- Are you living for a position? What happens when you are edged out, removed, demoted, transferred, by-passed?
- Are you living for family? What happens when there is death, sickness, crisis?
- Are you living for recognition, honor, popularity?
- Are you living for recreation, gratification, sensuality?

What receives your devotion? Are you truly devoted to Christ throughout your day? When Christ is your life, your life will be marked by unlimited service and devotion to your King.

✍ Read Matthew 5:41. The first mile is duty, what is the second mile? _____

God only accepts the righteousness of Jesus Christ into His heaven. We enter into the righteousness of Christ by trusting in Christ's finished work on the cross. Christ saves us to change us for God's glory.

✍ Read 2 Corinthians 5:9. What is Paul's other longing, besides being in heaven? _____

✍ Read Romans 8:29. God orchestrates all circumstances that those who love Him may achieve one goal. What is it? _____

A Christians' longing and preoccupation is to please God and become conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

- If you are bored by those goals, you haven't grasped the person and beauty of Christ. There is no devotion without radical conversion.
- If you are bitter towards the church, you have your eyes on people rather than Christ.
- If you are discouraged or depressed, you are not living for a cause any higher than yourself.

Do you live like you have a supreme hope?

As a Biblical counseling church, we minister to many people who are paralyzed by an uncertainty about the future, who insist on thinking “what if,” and who are in the habit of ruminating on what may go wrong in their lives. They then react physically as if all their speculating were true.

How can we bring God’s role in our lives to bear? How can we show hopeless people the hope of God? Hope in the Bible is not an empty wish, it is a confident expectation because God has always fulfilled His promises. When we hope, we long for the future that God promises, but we are patient to wait on His timing. You see, hope is a perspective that sees today’s trial in the light of eternity’s glory. Hope is about how to look at the future

✍ Read 2 Corinthians 5:8. What is our preferred “place to be”? _____

✍ Read Revelation 7:15-17. List five truths regarding the glorious experience of believers in eternity: _____

✍ Read 2 Corinthians 5:7. How do believers walk? _____

In what ways does your life prove you have a sure hope: _____

✍ Read 1 Corinthians 13:12 and 1 Corinthians 8:3. What will it be like when we see Christ?

God is a loving Father to His children, even in a time of trial. Nothing can thwart Him from re-purposing everything into His good purposes. Never view God as capricious, sadistic, or mean. God always has the welfare of His children firmly in mind. He calls us to faith in His goodness, that nothing in our lives isn’t first tested by His love for us.

Answer these three questions:

- Have I submitted my life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ?*
- Is my understanding of life after death based on Scripture or the world’s view?*
- Am I a good steward of the life God has given me?*



7. SPIRITUAL PROGRESS FOR JOY



Philippians 1:25-26

As human beings, we are all part of the universe and we all have a theology. Most people are average; that is, they fall somewhere between atheism and full faith. The world considers both of these extreme beliefs and attempts to posture themselves in an area of acceptability with peers, culture, and personal tradition. It is unfortunate that their life with God and resultant lifestyle have little to do with their declarations of God and more to do with their concepts of men. Our lifestyle reflects our theology, evidence that we believe what we do, not necessarily what we say. God's desire is that we come to full faith.

"You cannot go with God and stay where you are."

~Henry Blackaby

GLORY—WHERE WE STOP AND GOD BEGINS

1. God's desire is that we come to full faith

A. God's first commandment reveals that He is God alone (Exodus 20:3)

✍ His glory will not be shared.

B. We need an insatiable desire for godliness = progress and joy in the faith (Matthew 5:6)

✍ The Bible cuts straight across our self protection and self glory.

✍ In order to give God glory by our progress and joy in the faith, we must come to grips with God's requirements of us (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

✍ Paul speaks of the advance of the gospel in the sure belief that the Philippians would be glad to hear of it.

✍ He was not preaching comfortable theology, or vague doctrines that led to speculation. His desire for God's glory rose above his self-protection and self-glory.

C. What should the church at Philippi expect from Paul? (Philippians 1:25-26)

✍ They should expect his personal return to be a big benefit to them.

✍ If Paul remained on earth, it would be for the good of others before his own personal good.

2. Seven points of preaching/teaching (Richard Owen Roberts, www.internationalawakening.org)

A. Our preaching/teaching must be Christ centered.

✍ Gospel preaching exposes the wickedness of self absorption, and calls its hearers to radical conversion through Christ (1 Corinthians 1:11-13).

✍ Man centered preaching cannot result in conversion. It leaves people overloaded on self-love and clamoring for acceptance, when they truly need repentance (Malachi 2:17).

B. Our preaching/teaching must be Spirit filled.

✍ This does not refer to wonderful oration, or even sound exegesis, but rather to the power that comes only through the Holy Spirit's conviction, and cuts to the very heart of men, women, and children who have ears to hear (1 Corinthians 2:4-5, John 4:24).

C. Our preaching/teaching must be Biblical.

✍ Preachers are all in danger of telling people what they want to hear, driven by a wide variety of motives—money, crowds, appearance of easier circumstances.

✍ Preachers who are called by men may sensibly give those who called what they want, but if a preacher is called by God, how can he dare to speak less than all the truth of God? (2 Timothy 4:1-5, 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

✍ People who are peacekeepers rather than peacemakers adhere to this adage: "Don't preach doctrine, it divides." Of course doctrine divides, that's its intent.

✍ The direct result of non-Biblical preaching/teaching is that millions of persons believe they are Christians as a result of something they have done.

✍ Another result of non-Biblical preaching/teaching is that professing Christians live their lives in contradiction to God's Word, thus hindering revival (Joshua 1:8-9).

D. Our preaching/teaching must be Christ exalting.

✍ Paul refers to Christ over fifty times in his letter.

✍ Our focus must be on bringing the unrepentant to a broken and contrite state (Philippians 2:9-11, Psalm 51:17).

✍ Do we long for the joy of seeing people radically affected by the truth of God? (3 John 4)

E. Our preaching/teaching must be authoritative.

✍ Note the authority with which Christ conducted His ministry (Matthew 7:29).

✍ Can a self-called man preach with the same authority as a God-called preacher?

✍ If our confidence in Scripture is shaken by personal doubts, will we preach with the authority of one whose heart/soul/mind is dominated by conviction concerning the accuracy, authority, and sufficiency of Scripture?

✍ If our conscience condemns us for secret sin, can we preach with the authority of one clean before God? (1 John 3:21-22)

F. Our preaching/teaching must be powerful.

✍ We must freshly seek Holy Spirit power in connection with every opportunity of service (Acts 1:8).

G. Our preaching/teaching must be for true healing

✍ Many have been pronounced healed who are still dying of sin (Jeremiah 6:13-15a, Matthew 9:12-13).

✍ It is a major infraction of God's ways when we preach grace and mercy without wrath. Can we preach grace to one who has never felt the misery of their sin in the face of an Almighty Holy God?

✍ Salvation apart from obedience to God's Word is unknown in Scripture (Psalm 111:110).

3. Sheep need a Shepherd

A. Without right preaching, the crowds were harassed and helpless.

✍ One day three young girls walked our little West Highland White Terrier. Each girl took hold of part of the leash, and each tugged at the dog in different directions. Although that dog was no favorite of mine, at that rare moment, I felt sorry for her.

✍ Similarly, without right preaching, we will be tugged at by every opinion of man (Matthew 9:36).

B. Ask yourself these three questions:

✍ Do you dare to be a Daniel?

✍ Are you prepared to face the den of lions unafraid?

✍ Are you willing to stand for Christ, even if you are all alone?

"Whatever happened to the fearless preachers whose fiery denunciations of sin and awesome warnings of impending doom used to grip the land? Are we too advanced a culture to be affected by the prophets of God or are the men who think themselves called of God too timid to tell the truth?"

~Richard Roberts
(www.inplainsight.org)

"Some people do not like to hear much of repentance; but I think it is so necessary that if I should die in the pulpit, I would desire to die preaching repentance, and if out of the pulpit I would desire to die practicing it."

~Mathew Henry

"To teach is to inform! To preach is to move! I heard all kinds of teaching in America but I was never moved from where I am to where I ought to be!There appears to be tens-of-thousands of churches throughout the world where you can become better informed about a huge variety of issues, religious and otherwise, but where you will never be moved from where you are to where you ought to be. Granted, every sermon ought to convey information, but it will do much more than that if it is true preaching!"


~Richard Roberts
(www.inplainsight.org)


Steroids for Your Soul: Spiritual Progress for Joy


Philippians 125-26


Your Progress and Joy in the Faith


Can you progress in the faith without joy? Read the following passages and write down what they teach about joy for Christians:


 Deuteronomy 28:47-48 _____


 Psalm 16:11 _____


 Psalm 32:11 _____

 Psalm 43:4 _____

 Psalm 90:14 _____

 Psalm 100:2 _____

 Matthew 25:21 _____

 Luke 10:20 _____

“God is glorified not only by His glory’s being seen, but by its being rejoiced in. When those that see it delight in it, God is more glorified than if they only see it.”

~Jonathan Edwards (The End for Which God Created the World)

“If Christ’s honor is our passion, the pursuit of pleasure in Him is our duty.”

~John Piper (The Dangerous Duty of Delight)

✍ John 15:10-11 _____

✍ 1 Peter 1:8 _____

Perhaps you've been obeying Christ, but out of duty rather than joy. If so, today is the day to confess the sin of joylessness. Ask God to grant you repentance that includes the joy of obedience. Then, without waiting for your feelings to change, keep doing what you know to be your duty. This is not hypocrisy. It is admitting to God that He is right while you are obeying Him. It is evidence that you are putting your faith in the facts of God's words, rather than putting your faith in your feelings.

Joy Rules out Self-pity

Those who understand the joy of suffering realize that no matter how difficult the trial, self-pity is out of the picture.

✍ 1 Peter 4:13. When we get a chance to suffer like Jesus, what is our response? _____

We may not be called to suffer all the way to the cross. However, we may be called to other forms of suffering.

- We may be called to suffer while a husband or wife rages and reviles us.
- We may be called to suffer by an employer's excessive demands.
- We may be called to suffer when a family member turns against us.
- We may be called to suffer through a painful terminal illness.

Will you suffer like Christ? Will you rejoice?

✍ Read Matthew 5:11-12. What did Jesus say would be the result of suffering for Him and in His name? _____

What command does He give us regarding our feelings during times of suffering? _____

Will you trust what Jesus promised? Will you suffer for the joy of it? Will you do what is right because it gives you joy?

Serving together makes us happy. Obedience brings joy. Realizing this takes the pride out of obeying, for there's no pride in doing something because it will make you happy. Doing something good for someone for the purpose of joy is a humbling thing to do—you are making the most of joy in God for this moment. So humble yourself and take advantage of the joy available for you!

What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

~Westminster Catechism

"Boasting is the voice of pride in the heart of the strong. Self-pity is the voice of pride in the heart of the weak. Boasting sounds self-sufficient. Self-pity sounds self-sacrificing...self-pity doesn't look like pride because it appears to be so needy. But the need arises from a wounded ego. ...People don't feel self-pity when suffering is accepted for the sake of joy."

~John Piper



8. The Conduct of Christians



Philippians 127-30

At a large Seminary in the USA, students were exiting the classroom where they had just been taught the passage from Luke 10 regarding "The Good Samaritan." Unbeknownst to them, a test was about to be performed. A fellow-student feigned injury, accompanied by wounds oozing blood (ketchup) and the whole nine yards. Each one of the more than twenty students stopped to observe, but then continued to hustle to their next class. Proving one of the main nemesis of the Church, 'You can have an intellectual understanding without it affecting your life'.

Do you know anybody who is just living for the day they can retire and take it easy? Recent studies have been conducted by the insurance industry concerning retired military officers and businessmen who were looking forward to retiring and relaxing after 30 years of hard work. The results indicated that "just kicking back in retirement" leads to a funeral in 4 to 7 years.

WHATEVER HAPPENS, BELIEVERS NEED TO LIVE WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

1. Christian conduct and heavenly citizenship (Philippians 1:27).

A. Live in a manner worthy of heaven (Philippians 3:20).

- ✍ "Conduct" = an imperative, a command regarding the way life is conducted.
- ✍ "Worthy" = to correspond to, be suitable.
- ✍ To live in a manner worthy means to line up life with God's revealed truth (Ephesians 4:1, 1 Thessalonians 2:12).

B. Citizens are related to each other

- ✍ Aloof people violate every "one-another" of the New Testament.

2. Standing fast (Philippians 1:27)

A. Paul calls for Christians who are willing to stand fast in the midst of opposition (Ephesians 4:1-6, John 17:21-23).

- ✍ "Persevere" = to refuse to yield or conform to this world.
- ✍ "Stand fast in one spirit" = steadfast resistance and zealous activity in Christ, in reference to unity, regardless of danger or opposition.
- ✍ No one is intended to live the Christian life alone. We are to serve together.
 - ✍ During the Battle of Bull Run, things looked lost for the South. The Confederates were in retreat, except at Henry House Hill, where a group of Virginians held formation. General Barnard Bee saw them and shouted, "Look! There is Jackson standing like a stone wall! Rally behind the Virginians." The Southerners amassed for a counterattack. After that, General Thomas J. Jackson was forever after known as "Stonewall" Jackson. How about you, will you be a "stonewall" Christian?

3. Honoring the Gospel (Philippians 1:27)

A. With one mind striving together

- ✍ "Team effort" = to cooperate vigorously in one effort implies unity of the same purpose, pulling on the rope in the same direction (Philippians 4:3, 2 Timothy 2:5).
 - ✍ During WW II, the enemy conducted experiments to find the most effective type of punishment for eliciting information from prisoners. They found that solitary confinement was the most effective. After a few days of solitary confinement, most men would tell all. That is why we need fellowship, without it we too become easy prey for temptation and abandonment of our values.
- ✍ The concept of "spiritual pals" provides a means of mutual accountability.

- ✍ Being accountable to another person for our attitudes and actions provides additional incentive and motivation to walk in obedience to God's Word.
- ✍ Accountability is particularly important in the context of deliverance from fleshly lusts, impure lifestyles, and irresponsible conduct. Once exposed before the church, you will incur tremendous attack and temptation to re-involve yourself in the same behavior and thought patterns.

B. The unifying factor is the “cause of Christ,” for the faith of the gospel.

- ✍ Unity must have a purpose, a focus on a common cause.
- ✍ The cause of Christ refers to a cluster of connected truths about Christ, which comprise and express the gospel (Galatians 1:7, 1 Timothy 1:11, 6:20, Jude 3).
- ✍ Before we can strive, we must believe in the One who is the substance of the gospel. We must believe in who Jesus Christ is, and what He has done in the saving purpose of God the Father.
- ✍ By His death, Christ dealt effectively with sin and death, by His resurrection He brings new life. Because of the good news of Christ's atoning sacrifice and triumphant resurrection, Christians are to be zealous for the faith of the gospel (Revelation 2:1-7).
- ✍ We must be discerning regarding those who bring wrong doctrine dressed up in Christian terminology (Matthew 7:15, Acts 20:28-30, Jude 4, 1 Timothy 6:20).

C. The strength factor is the power of Christ

- ✍ We strive in the power of Christ (1 Peter 4:11).
- ✍ Be careful when someone tells you of striving too hard, or talks about the possibility of burnout. This can only occur when we are laboring on our own power rather than the power of the Holy Spirit!
 - ✍ When I played for the Philadelphia Flyers in the 80's, we were not allowed to use the word 'tired.' Our coach taught us that tired was a state of mind, and if you told yourself you were tired, you would respond in such a manner. Then I was traded to the NY Rangers. To my dismay, the word "tired" was a regular part of the vocabulary in the locker room during intermission. Needless to say, the Flyers enjoyed great success, especially in third periods, while the Rangers often lost leads in the final frame.
 - ✍ You can talk yourself into feeling tired. Stop it, you strive in the power of Christ.

4. Suffering

A. Courage and fearlessness in the face of suffering (Philippians 1:28-29)

- ✍ Persecution is a sign of the persecutor's destruction or perdition (1:28b).
- ✍ Persecution is a sign of the salvation of the one being persecuted (1:28c).
- ✍ Persecution is a privilege (1:29).
 - ✍ Peter and John rejoiced to be found faithful to suffer for Christ (Acts 5:41).

B. Paul left a dynamic example in bearing persecution (Philippians 1:30)

- ✍ Paul never forgot that Jesus gave him the privilege of suffering for Him (Acts 9:15-16).
- ✍ Paul makes it clear that suffering for Christ is one of the immeasurable blessings gained in Christ (Philippians 3:7-10).
- ✍ We often have a backward view of suffering, as if it is something bad.
 - ✍ In fact, we are commanded to exult in suffering (Romans 5:3-5).
 - ✍ Count suffering joy and view it as a gift (James 1:2-4).

"The gospel is the church's most precious possession and sacred trust, how is she to act worthily of it? Stand firm!"

~H. R. Jones

Steroids for Your Soul: The Conduct of Christians


Philippians 127-30


The Importance of Integrity


If Christians do not walk in spiritual integrity, they damage the credibility of the gospel in the eyes of the world. When unbelievers look at church and do not see the holiness, purity, and virtue God teaches in His Word, there appears to be no reason to believe the gospel. The world is repulsed by the church when:

- Pastors are unfaithful, and then carry on in a position of leadership.
- Church members lie, steal, cheat, gossip, stir up strife.
- Churches seem to care less about sin in their midst.

Those who believe the gospel evidence it by their changed lives.

 Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. What is the gospel? _____

 Read Romans 1:16. What attribute of God does the gospel reveal? _____

 Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. What is true about those who believe the gospel? _____

The Danger of Destruction

The superslide to destruction:

- Disappointment begins with unfulfilled expectations we have placed on others.
- Disillusionment with God’s workers, God’s ways, and God’s Word follows disappointment.
- Discrediting sets in when we find fault and then verbalize it to others.
- Discouragement is already in place when we worry and find ourselves disheartened.
- Disobedience has set in at this point—direct rebellion against God.
- Depression follows due to the guilt of our irresponsibility and disobedience.
- Despair is behind the question, “What’s the use of trying?”
- Defeat evidences itself when we give up, we quit.
- Destruction, whether we are aware of it or not, is the enemy’s goal in our lives.

Which of the above steps holds the greatest potential to trip you up spiritually? _____

Can you see yourself on any step of the superslide right now? _____

How did you get there? _____

How can you protect yourself from getting on this superslide? _____

If you find yourself on the superslide to destruction, immediately humble yourself and cry out to God. Read Psalm 107:6,13,19,28. When we cry out to the Lord in our trouble, what will He do? _____

Spiritual growth is not instantaneous, it is a process. It is not something that you have attained, but rather the direction in which you are headed. Our problem is that we want growth without growing pains.

The Sanctification of Suffering

Remember that suffering is one of the greatest tools in God's hand to perfect the image of Christ in us. In suffering we find out how much we need Jesus, and through that process, faith, obedience and love grow in our lives. Purification is facilitated by heat, thus God provides the heat to purify our lives and deepen our commitment to obedience. You can be certain that the enemy will challenge the commitments you have made, the only question is how you will respond to difficulty and suffering.

Perhaps you ask the same question as Amy Carmichael:

But these strange ashes, Lord, this nothingness, this baffling sense of loss?

Let yourself feel Christ's answer:


*So was the anguish of my stripping less upon the torturing cross?
Was I not brought into the dust of death and turned to ashes by the vehement breath of
Calvary's fire?*

Come to the end of yourself. Taste joy of Christ and desire nothing more than following Him:

*O son, beloved, this thy heart's desire,
this and no other follows the fall of Consuming Fire on thy burnt offering,
Go on and taste the joy afar, joy like no other.
Come now and follow me.*

 Read Hebrews 12:1-2. Why did Christ offer Himself as a sacrifice by Calvary's fire? _____

 Read Romans 12:1-2. Have you offered yourself as a living sacrifice? _____

 Read Luke 9:23. If you would follow Christ today, what cross must you take up? _____

"There is, perhaps, nothing that smells more like sulphur than legalism."

~R. C. Sproul

You will never regret giving yourself for the cause of the church that preaches the gospel of Christ.



9. Christ in His Servants



Philippians 2:1

Cal Thomas, in an article in World Magazine entitled "We're All Victims Now," wrote of a 56 year old man from New York who sued four leading fast food chains for contributing to his obesity, heart attacks and other health problems. The man's attorney stated that fast food creates a de facto addiction, or "craving," among those who eat it, and that fast-food eateries should list ingredients on their menus. He accused the fast food eateries of direct deception in not telling people the food they digested is detrimental to their health, although the four chains under attack, McDonalds, Burger King, Wendy's, and Kentucky Fried Chicken, have provided nutritional information including calorie and fat content for their meals since 1990 when Congress passed the Nutrition Labeling and Education Act. In addition to calorie packed food, all four chains also serve salads and other non-fattening foods. Mr Thomas notes, "Isn't anyone responsible for anything anymore? Apparently not. We're all victims now and anything bad that happens to us ("bad" being a relative term with shifting meanings and escalating damage rewards) is someone else's fault."

THEREFORE IF

1. "Therefore" looks back and "if" looks forward (Philippians 2:1)

A. The basis and result of unity.

- ✍ "Therefore" establishes a close connection with the immediately preceding verses regarding the unity of the church (1:27b) and the lifestyle necessary to be of service for the gospel (1:27a).
 - ✍ The basis for getting along with each other is what God has already done for us!
- ✍ "If" = Paul notes "if there is any..." regarding four divine realities to which we must give serious thought. Notice there are no verbs.
 - ✍ If we are devoted followers of Jesus Christ, these realities strike a blow to our conscience. Our response cannot be a fit of temporary emotion, rather we need heartfelt obedience to the following truths:
 - ✍ If...consolation in Christ. Are you consoled in Christ or do you seek consolation elsewhere?
 - ✍ If...comfort of love. Do you give others comfort by your love, or do you look to others for comfort?
 - ✍ If...fellowship in the Spirit. Are you faithful in fellowship, or do you find reasons to remove yourself from fellowship?
 - ✍ If...affection and mercy. Do affection and mercy characterize your thoughts, or are you critical and harsh?

B. Paul's central request (Philippians 1:2)

- ✍ Paul's joy will be fulfilled when the church at Philippi is like-minded. He expresses his desire that they cause him to be glad by their harmonious unity.
 - ✍ Paul imitates Christ in this desire (John 17:21).
 - ✍ Do you long for the joy that comes from unity in the body?

FOUR TRAITS OF CHRIST THAT HIS SERVANTS MUST IMITATE IN ORDER FOR UNITY TO EXIST

1. The Trait of Consolation/Encouragement (Philippians 2:1a)

A. Lordship of Christ

- ✍ This trait is found "in Christ." The very beat of Christ's Spirit is to encourage, comfort, and strengthen believers to be one in spirit, and busy about His ministry of His body.
- ✍ Never has Christ promoted nor does He ever desire murmuring, grumbling, disturbances, or weakening of the unity within His church.
- ✍ The Spirit of Christ is to take the disturbed or upset person, and to comfort, encourage and strengthen him in God.

2. The Trait of Comfort of Love (Philippians 2:1b)

A. Whose love is being referred to? Christ is the ultimate source of love (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

- ✍ The love of Christ stirs a person to endeavor to keep the unity with other believers.
- ✍ Agape love is the love of the mind, reason, and will. It is selfless and sacrificial love.
- ✍ This love goes so far that it loves a person even if he does not deserve to be loved, even a person who is utterly unworthy of being loved.

B. Love of Christ

- ✍ The answer to unity is this—the Lord’s Spirit of love flowing through us to each other (John 13:34-35).
- ✍ However, the cross makes murderers of us all. Truly, we carry the nails in our own pockets. We are all guilty.
- ✍ Our problem is not self-esteem, self-justification, self-righteousness, or self-sufficiency, but guilt. All these stand in the way of communion with Christ, because they lead to bitterness, anger, and strife (Romans 12:9).
- ✍ When we walk in confession of our guilt, the comfort of love flows freely as God grants repentance(1 John 1:7).

3. The Trait of Fellowship in the Spirit (Philippians 2:1c, Corinthians 13:14)

A. Once a person trusts Christ Jesus as Lord, God’s Spirit does two significant things:

- ✍ The Holy Spirit enters the believer’s heart and life to comfort, guide, teach, equip, and use him as a witness for Christ (Romans 8:9).
- ✍ The mind of the Holy Spirit is set upon unity and fellowship, all centered around Jesus Christ and His mission.
- ✍ The Holy Spirit creates a spiritual bond between the new believer and other believers.
 - ✍ He melts and molds the heart of the believer to the hearts of other believers.
 - ✍ He attaches all their lives together and they become one in life and purpose (a body).
 - ✍ They have a joint life sharing their blessings, needs, and gifts together—all focused upon their Lord and His purpose (1 John 1:7)..

4. The Trait of Compassion (Philippians 2:1d, Philippians 1:8)

A. God’s affection and mercy to us in Christ Jesus

- ✍ Compassion is the reality of God’s great kindness to us, the trait that stirred Christ to reach out for us.
- ✍ We are to let the compassion of Christ flow both in us and through us.
- ✍ His compassion will comfort us when we differ and are disturbed (Hebrews 4:15-16).
- ✍ His compassion will stir us to reach out in compassion when others differ and become disturbed (Romans 15:1).
- ✍ The compassion of Jesus Christ flowing in and through us maintains the unity in the church. It will keep our minds together, focused upon the needs of a world that must be reached and ministered to in compassion (Galatians 6:2).

“Faith is not a once-done act, but a continuous gaze at the heart of a Triune God.”

~A. W. Tozer

“The fellowship of the Spirit is, therefore, a participation in Christ & His benefits which the Spirit creates and continues. This is not only individual but corporate. The church begins to come into the picture at this point.”

~H. R. Jones


Steroids for Your Soul: Christ in His Servants


Philippians 2:1

Encouragement in Christ


Encouragement gives assistance by putting courage into through walking alongside in what is needed— comfort, counsel, or exhortation. The Greek word for encouragement is *paraklesis*, which is similar to the Greek word Jesus uses for the Holy Spirit, our Helper, or *parakleton*. Our most important source of encouragement in Christ, comes directly from His Holy Spirit, who unifies believers with Christ.


Ephesians 5:32 speaks of the union the believer has with Christ via the church. Our encouragement in union with Christ by His Spirit is described as:


 Full but difficult to understand. Read John 1:16 and Ecclesiastes 11:5. What do you find hardest to understand about the fullness of union with Christ? _____

 Read 1 Corinthians 6:17 and John 3:8. Although the eye cannot see the union with Christ, it is real. What evidences of this union can you cite in your life? _____


In Christ, we cannot rely on capabilities, for He is our competency and our completeness.


 Read 1 Peter 1:8. How is the joy that flows from union with Christ described in this verse? _____

 Read Hosea 2:19 and 1 Thessalonians 4:17. How long does union with Christ last? _____

 Read Revelation 19:6-10 and Malachi 1:2. Does any earthly husband love like Christ? _____
Read Isaiah 61:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:21. What is the robe with which Christ covers His bride? _____

In the face of the world’s unkindness, believers are encouraged.

 Read Psalm 55:3. How can those in union with Christ expect to be treated? _____

 Read Isaiah 49:5 and Isaiah 25:8. What is strengthens and comforts those unified with Christ? _____

Our world is redefining the meaning of “taking responsibility.” Senator Robert Torricelli, in a Senate-floor speech apologizing and taking “full personal responsibility” after an ethics committee rebuke for accepting expensive gifts for himself, his sister, a former girlfriend, and an employee, said: “I never compromised the struggle to make the lives of the people I love better.”

Whether you appropriate the life of Christ is found somewhere in how you reply to this question: ‘Am I stunned at others sin, or shocked at the grace given me?’

Comfort of Love

The Greek word for comfort is *paramuthion*, which implies speaking closely to someone for their consolation and solace. Both comfort of love and encouragement involve genuine, helpful, concerned love.

✍ Read Romans 5:5. What does the Lord show to believers? _____ How can you in turn show that to a fellow believer? Give a specific example. _____

✍ Read 2 Corinthians 5:13-14. How did Paul act because of Christ's love for him? _____

How have you acted insanely loving towards someone because of Christ's love? If not, to whom do you need to pour out love when it appears insane to others because of how that person treats you? _____

As you love others with Christ's love, you will be comforted.

Fellowship of the Spirit

The Greek word for fellowship is *koinonia*, which talks about affiliation or alliance, along with joint participation. The fellowship is assured by the Holy Spirit.

✍ Read 1 Corinthians 6:19. Every believer is a _____ of the Holy Spirit.

✍ Read Acts 1:8, Romans 15:19. The Holy Spirit gives believers _____ by which they perform the ministry of the gospel of Christ

✍ Read Romans 12:6-8. The Holy Spirit gives the believer _____ by which, in fellowship, the body of Christ is built up.

✍ Read Galatians 5:22-23. The Holy Spirit bears _____ in the believer's life which marks the interaction of fellowship.

✍ Read Ephesians 4:29-30. When Christians don't speak to build up the body by the grace of God, the Holy Spirit is _____.

✍ Read 1 Thessalonians 5:19. The work of the Holy Spirit can be _____.

✍ Read Ephesians 4:3. Whose unity must we fellowship together to work to preserve? _____

Affection and Mercy

The Greek word for affection is *splanchna*, which is a reference to the bowels, used to describe intense emotion. We are to have a deep, personal longing for each other.

✍ Read Philippians 1:8. what did the affection of Christ stir up in Paul for the Philippian church? _____

The Greek word for mercy is *oiktirmos*. It is often translated compassion.

✍ Read Romans 12:1. By the mercies of God, what are we to present to Him? _____

"Unless we consistently speak praise, we consistently speak poison... Unless we make it a habit to give thanks, we habitually give our family grief... Unless we are intentional about giving God glory throughout the day, our days unintentionally give way to grumbling... It's in praising the Savior in all things that we are saved from discouragement in all things.."

~Ann Voskamp



10. Pride vs. Humility



Philippians 2:2-4

A missionary who served in a region in Africa that had known seasons of true revival reported that whenever he would mention the name of any Christian, the national believers would ask him one question. They did not ask if the individual is a committed Christian. They did not ask if he is a knowledgeable Christian. They did not even ask if he is a hardworking Christian. Rather, they wanted to know, "Is he a broken Christian?"

"Pride is the greatest of all evils that beset us, and of all our enemies it is pride which dies the slowest and hardest."

~J. H. Darby

"Proud people focus on the failures of others and can readily point out those faults. Broken people are more conscious of their own spiritual need than of anyone else's."

~Nancy Leigh DeMoss

AM I A PROUD OR A BROKEN (HUMBLE) PERSON?

1. Concern for Another's Joy (Philippians 2:2)

A. Paul's joy in Christ would be fulfilled by one thing only—the unity of the church.

- ✍ The only thing that brings joy to a church is unity in Christ. Unity is impossible without the same love being shared.
 - ✍ God's love creates oneness of soul, outlook, and purpose.
 - ✍ This love is what brought the Son of God from heaven to earth for a torturous death, with the purpose of joy (Hebrews 12:2).
 - ✍ The joy of unity based on God's love characterizes every true Christian and every true church (John 15:9-12).
- ✍ The joy of unity is disturbed by:
 - ✍ Criticism (Ephesians 4:19, Matthew 7:1-5)
 - ✍ Dissatisfaction (Deuteronomy 5:21, Hebrews 13:5)
 - ✍ Grumbling (Exodus 17:1-7)
 - ✍ Murmurings (Numbers 14:27)
 - ✍ Cliques (Acts 2:40-44, Ephesians 4:16)
 - ✍ Rather, we are to worship, plan, organize, program, build, staff, finance, minister, and ultimately serve in the joy of Christ.
- ✍ The only way we can have joy of unity is found in Philippians 2:2
 - ✍ Like-mindedness
 - ✍ Having the same love
 - ✍ Being of one accord
 - ✍ Being of one mind

2. Humility or Lowliness of Mind (Philippians 2:3)

A. Two enemies of unity that threaten a strong, active church

- ✍ Selfish ambition
- ✍ Conceit
- ✍ Paul responds with, "Let nothing be done."

B. Some people are going to have a "selfish ambition"

- ✍ Selfish ambition shows up in an attitude of rivalry.

- ✍ They are not broken believers, but give in to: jealousy, envy, desire for position, desire for recognition, opposition, loving flattery, forming cliques, a divide and conquer mentality.
 - ✍ These individuals pursue their goals at others expense.
 - ✍ If they do not get their way or what they want, they strive against the church and/or individual sheep.
 - ✍ The result is disunity and divisiveness, one of the most terrible crimes within Christ's body (Matthew 15:8-9).

C. Some people are going to seek glory within the body = "conceit"

- ✍ Some people just want attention, whether negative or positive.
 - ✍ They are not broken believers, but give in to: their desire for attention, seek recognition, position, flattery, praise, honor.
 - ✍ They want people to seek their advice, counsel and opinion—calling attention to themselves.
- ✍ The only way a church can remain strong and be blessed by God is for its people to walk in a spirit of humility.
- ✍ Christ taught over and over that a humble spirit is necessary for salvation (Matthew 18:3-4).

2. Controlling self-interest, curbing concentration upon oneself (Philippians 2:4)

A. Be considerate of others, by the power and leading of the Holy Spirit

- ✍ Broken followers of Christ concentrate upon Christ and His ministry to people.
 - ✍ They focus on reaching a lost world with the glorious gospel of salvation, rather than focus on self.
- ✍ We are commanded over and over in Scripture to benefit one another (Titus 3:8).
 - ✍ We evidence consideration of others by: visiting, ministering, sharing, feeding, clothing, transporting, listening, planning, teaching.
 - ✍ We take our eyes and attention off of our trial and put it on the benefit of another.
- ✍ Humility reaches its heights when we lose our lives in the cause of Christ and the welfare of others.
 - ✍ God blesses those who bless their enemies (Matthew 25:31-45, 1 Peter 3:8-12).

B. Some people struggle

- ✍ They focus on wants, being neglected, being overlooked, not being recognized or given the position.

C. Humble courtesy toward others requires courage

- ✍ It takes courage to become Christ-centered and people-centered, to give ourselves to the cause of Christ and others (Psalm 51:17, 2 Chronicles 7:13-15).

"The gospel is the church's most precious possession and sacred trust, how is she to act worthily of it? Stand firm!"

~H. R. Jones

Humility is the grace that when you know you have it you've lost it.

Steroids for Your Soul: Pride vs. Humility

Philippians 22-4


One of the great joys I have known was a precious friendship with a man named Leslie Lawrence. Due to the loss of both kidneys, Leslie attended dialysis three times each week. He never complained, and never spoke a bitter word in any of our conversations. The last time he attended A.Men, in the drag of winter's end, he wore a bright yellow shirt that made him look like he was on his way to Hawaii. It was a shirt he knew would earn him an extra dose of teasing, and I did not disappoint him. He did take a trip that week, but to a place much better than Hawaii. After the funeral, his wife Nurline told me that he had searched high and low for that shirt, finally retrieving it from her rag bin. In the middle of his suffering, he was determined to bring smiles to our faces. I learned many deep lessons from Leslie Lawrence. For one thing, God used him to teach me to ask this question: Do I focus on my pain or His grace?

Warnings to a Strong Church

The Philippians church was a strong church, which couldn't be accused of stagnancy or complacency, not in the hearts, minds, or hands of the people. However, because of this, danger lurked—differences of opinion, vision, desires, emphasis, and interests. The point is, the more strength and activity a church has, because more minds and bodies are serving, the more attention must be given to unity. Paul knew this, and so he taught the Philippian church to be on guard and protect itself against disunity and division.

The charge of Philippians 2:2 is like-mindedness. Be just like Christ, allow His life to be lived out in us—console, comfort, encourage, exhort, and strengthen each other in unanimity of spirit and purpose.

The Tale of Two Church Leaders


 Read 3 John 9-11. What attitude characterized Diotrephes? _____

Diotrephes put himself first by not recognizing the authority that God had put in place. In what way did Diotrephes' wicked speech evidence his pride? _____

 Read 3 John 12. What characterized Demetrius? There is no way to fake humility. _____

The Tale of Two Young Men

Rich Young Ruler

 Read Mark 10:17-22. How did the young man in this passage approach Jesus? _____

The rich young ruler came with a high opinion of what he "had done." He thought he was deserving.

✍️ Jesus loved him. What did Jesus call him to do? _____

He did not respond in humble obedience, without a change of heart. **He came arrogantly, and left sadly.**

Prodigal Son

✍️ Read Luke 15:11-24. After an introspective journey, he returned undeservedly, considering himself not worthy because of what he'd done. What was his father's response?

He left arrogantly, came back broken, and lived joyfully!

Broken men and women have nothing to protect and nothing to lose

Pride says, "I don't need God."

✍️ Read Ezekiel 16:49. What attitudes were evident in Sodom? _____

✍️ Read Proverbs 6:16-19. What does God think about pride or haughtiness? _____

Brokenness says, "I can't make it without God."

✍️ Read Matthew 5:3. Who is blessed and will inherit heaven? _____

Brokenness requires an honest evaluation of oneself, taking off the mask, and confessing that I am indeed a sinner.



11 Christ's Humiliation



Philippians 2:5-8

"Humility towards men will be the only sufficient proof that our humility before God is real."

~Andrew Murray

"Jesus calls His disciples to be humble so that they can serve one another. He used the example of His own willingness to humble Himself and become a servant in order to redeem man, to encourage His disciples to be humble."

~Carl Wilson
"With Christ in the School of Disciple Building"

THE HUMILIATION OF CHRIST

1. Kenosis Passage = Christ's emptying of Himself (Philippians 2:5-8)

A. This passage is one of the greatest and most influential writings of all time

- ✍ Philippians 2:5-11 is a doctrinal and devotional psalm of praise about the Lord Jesus Christ, a "theological diamond that perhaps sparkles brighter than any other in Scripture" (John MacArthur).

2. Jesus Christ's Humility (Philippians 2:5)

A. The center stone of Christianity

- ✍ The attitudes and actions to which the Philippians have been exhorted in Phil. 2:1-4, exactly describes the way Jesus Christ Himself lived. He is the supreme Example of humility.
- ✍ The only way any of us can deal humbly with the problems of this world and our own sinfulness is to allow the mind of Christ to flood our thoughts.
 - ✍ Let Christ's humility and lowliness surge through your mind.
 - ✍ It was His attitude that led Him to be willing to come to earth to die, to empty Himself, to humble Himself. Christ saw the cross from the vast scope of eternity.
- ✍ The world teaches humility as forced submission, Christ taught it as a virtue to be sought.
 - ✍ Willingness to be humble is a response of the heart and not simply the brain.
 - ✍ Willingness to be humble is charitable and not just cerebral.

3. Jesus Christ's Deity (Philippians 2:6)

A. Master—being in the form of God

- ✍ "Being" = continuing existence underlying all that is subsequently described
- ✍ "In the form" (morphé) = inner nature, essential character, distinctive attributes-pre-existence of the One who became a man, pre-incarnate Christ who possessed what constitutes deity in its fullness

B. Two Characteristics of Christ

- ✍ "Equal with God" = Refers to what is necessarily involved in sharing the "morphé" or "inner nature" of Deity. Christ is of the very nature of God!
 - ✍ He who possessed equality with God from all eternity, by virtue of His being in the very nature God, did not think He was detracting from God's glory by claiming equality with Him.
 - ✍ He was not self-regarding, not pre-occupied with who He was.
- ✍ "Did not consider" = We see Christ esteeming others and not Himself.
- ✍ "it robbery" = Refers to an action of seizing or carrying off by force.

✍ Jesus already possessed equality with God, which He didn't hang on to with force. Christ did not think about His Deity in a self-centered way, but with supreme humility.

4. Jesus Christ's Condescension (Philippians 2:7)

A. From Master to Servant

✍ Jesus Christ was not self regarding, although He knew who He was and all He possessed — "I Am."

✍ He made Himself of no reputation, emptied Himself. This self-emptying involved not a laying aside and leaving of something, but rather a taking to His Divine self of something which He never had or was before, that is, a human nature.

B. Form of God and likeness of man

✍ Try to imagine the distance between Deity and humanity, sovereignty and slavery. Christ physically spanned that incredible distance, while in the form of God.

✍ "Form" = Refers to what is immediately recognizable to the human eye, the pre-existent Christ became fully human.

✍ No one who met Jesus every doubted his humanity or his masculinity, it was His Deity they failed to see.

✍ "Likeness" = Refers to His birth and unique conception "conceived of the Holy Spirit, and born of the virgin Mary."

✍ His resulting humanity was real and finite like ours, but without sin (sin was also not part of the humanness created in Genesis).

5. Jesus Christ's Death (Philippians 2:8)

A. Changed His appearance from God to man

✍ One glance at His appearance declared Him to be fully and truly human with a physical body and all its needs and emotions (1 John 1:1).

✍ Servant-hood and humanness are both true of the same Being who had been fully and gloriously Divine before His incarnation, and remained so during and after it.

B. Humility and obedience

✍ Servant-hood was the hallmark of the earthly life of the man Jesus Christ. He resolved whole-heartedly to become a servant and to become a man, so we have God-Man in the status of servant.

✍ Jesus Christ involved Himself in the same living/dying process Paul describes in Philippians 1:20-26. He became a human in order to become capable of being obedient unto death.

✍ Humanity did not gain salvation just because of the union of human nature with the Divine in the person of Jesus Christ. His perfect obedience was required for our salvation.

✍ This distinguishes Jesus from all other so-called saviors, the One True God from all other false gods.

✍ His humbling Himself and becoming obedient to the point of death presents a vital perspective on the obedience of Jesus Christ.

✍ "Not My will but Thine be done" summed up His life.

✍ Christ learned about obedience by the things He suffered (Hebrews 5:7-9).

✍ Christ's obedience did not just include humanity but also humility. It did not just include death, but also execution.

"It [the likeness of man] was thus different from both the animal and one presumes, from the angelic, but it was not incompatible with divine!"

~H. R. Jones

Steroids for Your Soul: Christ's Humiliation

Philippians 2:5-8

In the Christian story God descends to re-ascend. He comes down; down from the heights of absolute being into time and space, down into humanity....But He goes down to come up again and bring the whole ruined world up with Him. One has the picture of a strong man stooping lower and lower to get himself underneath some great complicated burden. He must stoop in order to life, he must almost disappear under the load before he incredibly straightens his back and marches off with the whole mass swaying on his shoulders..."

~C.S.Lewis in "Miracles" (New York: MacMillan, 1947, 115).

My first year playing for the New York Rangers, a sports psychologist was brought in to work with the team. He introduced himself and then instructed the team that each player was to sit alone in the locker room with a walkman on, listening to wave music, just before going out to begin the game. After the first period we were down 6-0. Similarly, this worlds philosophy is putting us to sleep.

Let Christ's humiliation teach us that self esteem needs is a worldly concept which must be destroyed and our thoughts taken captive to obedience of Jesus Christ! He is the one we are to imitate, not the founders and followers of psychological concepts.

Four things we learn from Christ's emptying Himself

Jesus Christ emptied Himself of His glory.

✍ He strong armed away from the worship of saints and angels in Heaven, and replaced it with unbelief, denial, false accusation, reviling, spitting, and persecution of sinful mankind. Glimpses of His glory are seen in His miracles, words, and attitudes. Read Luke 9:31-32 and 2 Peter 1:16-18. Write down who experienced small manifestations of His glory, and what it was like. _____

Jesus Christ emptied Himself of His Divine authority.

✍ Read John 5:30. What was true about Jesus while He was on earth? _____

Read Matthew 28:18. What is the extent of Christ's authority? _____

Jesus Christ emptied Himself of His heavenly riches.

✍ Read 2 Corinthians 8:9. Why did Christ give up His eternal riches? _____

Jesus Christ emptied Himself of His relationship with the Father.

✍ Although every single thing Christ did or said on earth was to please the Father, he emptied Himself of that relationship all the way to being forsaken by Him. Knowing that His beloved Father's holiness meant He could never be around sin, read 2 Corinthians 5:21. Why did He empty Himself to the point of separation from the Father? _____

Read Matthew 27:46. What was His cry at the horrific alienation from the Father? _____

What was unique about the death Jesus died on Golgatha?

To the Romans: Crucifixion was the method of capital punishment usually reserved for the lowest of the low (no Roman citizen could be crucified). To die on a cross was to be despised and rejected of men. By order of Pontius Pilate, two despised criminals were put to death with Jesus Christ our Savior, all three were crucified alive.

✍ How did Christ's death on the cross fulfill Isaiah 53:3? _____

✍ How did Christ's death on the cross fulfill Psalm 22:6? _____

To the Jews: Crucifixion was far worse. Stoning was the usual form of capital punishment. Corpses hanging on a tree indicated that the death which had been inflicted was death under the curse of God. Jesus therefore was rejected and accursed by God, which they considered far worse than all that human beings could inflict.

✍ By whom was Jesus stricken according to Isaiah 53:4? _____

✍ What pleased the Lord in Isaiah 53:10? _____

Death on a cross meant being rejected and abhorred, abused by men and accursed by God. When we watch the Passion of the Christ, we find it staggering that One who was still in the form of God gave Himself up to such treatment. For Him to do so with reference to God, and for God to treat Him in such a way is beyond words. The Lord whom we are to serve came to serve us. The Lord whom we are to love came to love us.

It is this attitude of Jesus Christ that we are not to merely admire or meditate on but rather also to copy and flesh out in self-sacrificial living.



12 Christ's Exaltation



Philippians 2:9-11

Those living for themselves will not be able to live the Christian life.

"Since the whole passage speaks of triumph and conquest as well as universal rule, to conceive of the idea of such sovereignty being unrecognized is quite alien to the context."

~H. R. Jones

THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST

1. Kenosis Passage, Part II = God exalting Christ (Philippians 2:9-11)

A. Christianity is a paradox, to gain your life you must lose your life.

- ✍ To understand grace you must realize your sin.
- ✍ Apart from understanding Philippians 2:1-11, you will not walk in an attitude of gratitude, but rather you will live in a state of contention with others, constantly arguing, critically judging other's sin.
- ✍ Contention is pride. Christ models and demands humility.

2. The Response of God to Jesus Christ's Humiliation (Philippians 2:9-11)

A. "Therefore" connects God's response of exaltation to Christ's humiliation.

- ✍ The exaltation described in these verses (2:9-11) corresponds to the humiliation of 2:6-8 "even death of the cross."
- ✍ The most abject humiliation resulted in the highest subsequent reward. The degree of the exaltation is in proportion to the humiliation (Isaiah 53:12).
- ✍ Christ humbled Himself in obedience to the Father, and because He was faithful in being humble, God rewarded Him by exalting Him ever so highly.
 - ✍ God will reward and exalt believers who walk as Christ walked, humbly before God and man.

2. The Reality of Jesus Christ's Exaltation (Philippians 2:9-10)

A. Heights to depths to heights

- ✍ Paul could not write about the humiliation of Christ without being moved to speak about His exaltation.

B. What's in a Name?

- ✍ How high has God the Father rewarded and exalted Christ? God has highly honored Christ by giving Him a Name above every Name.
 - ✍ It is to a Name, not a place, that Jesus Messiah is exalted. What is the Name?
- ✍ Vs. 10—Suggests that name is Jesus (His birth name). Its meaning reveals the purpose He was to accomplish, namely, to save His people from their sins (referring to the humiliation of vs 6-8).
- ✍ Vs. 11—Gives us the name which relates to His exaltation. "Lord" was translated by Greek speaking Jews of Christ's day as Jehovah.
 - ✍ Jehovah is the "name which is above every name" (Isaiah 42:8).
 - ✍ A universal supremacy that belongs to Deity alone is attributed to Jesus (Isaiah 45:23-35).

THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST

1. God has given Jesus Christ supreme power and authority

A. Every knee—in heaven, on earth, under the earth

- ✍ All beings other than Deity will acknowledge and bow before Jesus Christ as Lord—angels, humans, and demons.
- ✍ There will be no unsuppressed rebellion in hell. All will spend eternity bowing at the Name of Jesus.

2. God has given Christ supreme worship

A. Every tongue—confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:11)

- ✍ The Greek word for Lord is *kurios* = carries with it the meaning of master, owner.
- ✍ Those under His Lordship bend the knee to and confess that He is Lord, both of which denote worship in the Old Testament.
- ✍ When Jesus is called Lord, it means He is:
 - ✍ Master and Owner
 - ✍ King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16).
 - ✍ The only True God
 - ✍ Jehovah, Adonai, God Himself
- ✍ Jesus Christ already possesses full authority and title, but it has not yet been manifested to mankind.
 - ✍ Why has it not yet been manifested? Because in patient mercy, Christ continues to call sinful man to Himself (1 Timothy 1:16).
 - ✍ Jesus presently sits at the right hand of the Father (1 Corinthians 15:27-28).

B. If all worship, does that mean all will be saved?

- ✍ No! We must flee sentimental, unbiblical ideas that deny the wrath of God for sin. Those who refuse to recognize and receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord are destined for hell.
- ✍ At the same time, we may not deny what these verses teach—that all will worship. So, how do we understand Philippians 2:10-11, which talk about everyone bowing and confessing?
- ✍ Isaiah 45:23-25 gives a clue.
 - ✍ Vs. 23—Jehovah God determines submissive allegiance of all to Himself, throughout all nations.
 - ✍ Vs. 24-25—Two groups are referred to who bow before Him.
 1. Those who come justified by faith, and are accepted and glorified.
 2. Those who come incensed, and are put to shame.
 - ✍ There is recognition by some and adoration by others. When it's all been said and done, God is either your Judge or your Savior (Revelation 5 and 6).
- ✍ Those gathered before the judgment seat of Christ will be unable to do anything other than bow in recognition that Jesus is who God has declared Him to be!
- ✍ This recognition that Jesus is who God declared Him to be does not mainly have to do with the realization of our own eternal horror or delight. Rather it has everything to do with the glory of God the Father.

Why We Need Hell Too

“Churchgoers take comfort: hell has all but disappeared from modern Christian theology. But this comes at a price in moral purpose and seriousness. The most famous sermon in American history was a graphic evocation of the horrors of the damned in hell. As Jonathan Edwards expanded on his subject, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” so many moans and cries rose from his proper New England congregation that the learned theologian had to pause while his listeners recoiled in fear of their fate in the life to come. This was on July 16, 1741. Such a sermon could not be preached today – not even by Billy Graham, who has eschewed (avoided) the fire-and-brimstone sermons of his youth. If the modern pulpit is any index, hell has disappeared from the modern religious imagination, and so has Edwards’s angry God. Historians tell us that hell began to fade, at least among liberal Protestants, during the 19th century. By the end of the millennium, it was a doctrine that most Christians cheerfully ignored.... Once saved, the twice born have only to worry – as Graham himself once put it – about how high a place they’ll reach in heaven. On television, celebrity preachers discourage negativity. Asked which kind of God they believe in, most Christians prefer to think of him as a friend in high places. (Apparently no one reads the Book of Job anymore). And hell, for those who think about it at all, is a place for other people. My own hunch is that the prospect of hell never deterred anyone who had not first experienced genuine fear of the Lord. But that traditional religious experience is hard to come by when God is imagined as our ‘Best Buddy’. Ultimately, we become what we love. Hell is not a ‘not place’, but a community of those who remain outside the circle of Divine Embrace. All are called to enter heaven, but it is hubris to suppose that any one of us is worthy of a free ticket.”

*~Kenneth Woodward
(Newsweek 8/12/2002).*

Steroids for Your Soul: Christ's Exaltation

Philippians 29-31

Christ's Exaltation

✍ Read Isaiah 45:22-23. How many knees does Isaiah tell us will bow? _____

Seven hundred years later, Paul explains where the knees are doing the bowing.

✍ First, the knees in heaven will bow. This group includes the redeemed saints (Hebrews 12:23) and the holy angels. Read Hebrews 1:6. What did God tell all His angels to do? _____

✍ Secondly, the knees on earth will bow. These include the redeemed and the unredeemed. Read 2 Thessalonians 1:10. What will those who have believed gladly do? _____

Those who have not believed will also bow before Christ. They will be forced to do this and it will be with terror. Read 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9. What will happen to them? _____

✍ Thirdly, the knees under the earth will bow. This group includes the unredeemed dead, fallen angels, and demons already in prison (Colossians 2:14-15, 1 Peter 3:19). Read Revelation 20:11-13. What will happen to these dead? _____

Just imagine what it must have been like for John on the Island of Patmos, when he was given a glimpse of Him who sits on the throne and the Lamb.

✍ Read Revelation 5:13 and note the locations from which honor and glory are being given.

Every creature spends eternity bending the knee to God. Our time on earth determines the location from which we will be worshipping God forever—either in heaven or in hell.

Humiliation and Exaltation

God's way up is down. Seek humiliation and God will exalt you. Make yourself nothing, embrace servant-hood, lower yourself while on earth.

✍ Read Mark 10:44-45. There's only one path to exaltation. Servanthood. List three specific ways you are privileged to be humiliated as a servant. _____

How does humility look? If we grovel in these humiliations, God is not glorified. Humility does not steal God's glory by complaining. When we complain about our humiliations, it's pride talking. Humility serves for the joy of giving God glory and praise.

The two most important days are this day and That Day.

"Christ wins. All is grace because all can transfigure. Christ wastes nothing and He repurposes our pain for His purposes and He'll use up all of creation for His glory."

~Ann Voskamp

Mary tasted the fierce disparity between humility and exaltation. Except for her angel-informed carpenter and a few outcast shepherds, everyone despised her pregnancy, her bearing the Creator of the universe. When they crushed her Son and He crashed their veil, surely the split of her heart must have felt like the cleft between heaven and hell. But, oh, the leap of her heart on the morning of the rolled away stone and the empty place where they laid Him.

Philippians 2:5-8 moans the deepest humility and suffering. Philippians 2:9-11 shouts the subsequent riotous exaltation. Joy! Glory! Name above all names!

Suffering and Christ's Supremacy

✍ It was Christ's suffering that changed the world (and we clamor for miracles). How often do we miss the chance to show Christ's supremacy because we don't respond well to troubles? Read Hebrews 12:1-3. What must our minds be fixed on if we would respond well during our times of suffering? _____

✍ Read 1 Corinthians 15:19-20. What colors the perspective of those with faith in Jesus Christ? _____

Christ's supremacy and the Father's glory

We sing, "When it's all been said and done, there is just one thing that matters, did I do my best for Him?" Actually, when it's all been said and done, Philippians 2:9-11 tells us the only thing that will matter is The Name. That every knee will bow to The Name that is above every other name. And every tongue, just imagine how it will sound, will say, "Jesus, You are Lord."

✍ Read Revelation 19:16. How is Christ's incomparable Name described in this verse? _____

Jesus Christ will be named as the ultimate sovereign authority who ranks over every other name, with the right to be obeyed as the Divine Ruler, and worshipped as the Highest Supremacy. However, we must note something about that incredible moment when every single knee is bowed, and every tongue is confessing, "Jesus, You are Lord." At that moment when God gives dominion to Jesus, and when everyone in Heaven and Hell recognizes it and worships Him, Jesus does not keep the glory. Even in this ultimate cosmic exaltation, Jesus shows us humility.

✍ Read Philippians 2:11. What will Jesus do at that amazing moment when every knee is bowing before Him and every tongue is calling Him Lord? Who will He give glory to? _____

✍ Read 1 Corinthians 15:24-28. When Jesus Christ conquers all enemies, and is given The Name and all creation bows and confesses, whom will He put Himself under? _____

God will be glorified for eternity. We love to read and think about how Jesus glorified the Father when He walked on earth. Just wait until we get to heaven where we'll get to spend eternity watching Him give glory to the Father. I pray all of us are right there together, glorifying the Father with Him.

"There are times when... silence is wiser than speech. We should be better ... if we were more alone, waiting upon God. And gathering through meditation on His Word spiritual strength for labour in his service. We ought to muse upon the things of God because we thus get the real nutriment out of them. . . ."

~ Charles Spurgeon

"Function does not equal value."

~Kimber Kaufman

"God's love is stronger than our foolish pride."

~Rich Mullins



13. Servants Work



Philippians 2:12-15

Martin Luther taught his people the term 'Pecca fortiter' translated 'sin boldly' Sin without excuse; if you're going to sin, why confuse the bargain.

This reminds me of a spring day during my childhood, walking home from school. I got too close to the center of the water filled ditch, and overflowed into my boots. I had tried to manage my walk, but got too close. It's a problem that we all engage in. We want to somehow manage our sin. And then, as I did when I got home, knowing that I would be punished for the soaker, we try to hide how we have disobeyed.

"We go to church, and lift our hands in worship, but our tongues are filled with criticism, gossip, and lies. Our wagging tongues expose the desperate condition of our thought life."

~Dan Puckett

UNITY = SIX WORKS WITH THREE IMPERATIVES

1. Obedience to three imperative opens six pathways to move the church toward unity

A. Paul gives three imperative commands in Philippians 2:12-18.

- ✍ Work out (vs. 12-13)
- ✍ Do all things (vs. 14-15)
- ✍ Be glad and rejoice (vs. 16-18)
- ✍ Today we will be studying the first imperative, "work out."

WORK OUT

1. The First Pathway toward Unity = Deliverance

A. To work out one's own salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12).

- ✍ We must examine the meaning of the verb "work" in connection with salvation. "Work" refers to the full conformity of the believer to Christ in spirit and in body (3:10, 20-21).
- ✍ "Work out" is to complete the effort, therefore Paul is saying literally "do not go halfway into salvation."
- ✍ Once God has saved a person, that person is to get busy obeying God and willingly giving up life to serve God (Luke 9:23).
- ✍ Work is not forced but a response to Divine love.

B. ...with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12).

- ✍ This refers to the awe and reverence which is appropriate for sinners in the presence of the great God who is, who speaks, and who acts (2 Corinthians 7:15).
- ✍ If we are to walk in a spirit of unity, then we must not merely glance at, but stare at our salvation. The entire scope of our life must be viewed in the perspective of the glorious salvation God has given us.

C. The gospel does not cancel out all fear of God, only that which has to do with punishment (1 John 4:8).

- ✍ The fear of God is actually true reverence, which the gospel only intensifies (Psalm 67:7).
- ✍ The fear of God, or reverence of God, includes three aspects:
 - ✍ Awe of His greatness
 - ✍ Appreciation for His mercy and love
 - ✍ Apprehension of His wrath
- ✍ We are to fear and tremble lest we disappoint the Lord.
 - ✍ He saved us, going to the ultimate limit in order to do it. In relationship with

Christ, to keep from hurting Him, for His sake, we long to please Him.

- ✍ We are to fear and tremble because we will face the judgment seat of Jesus Christ.
 - ✍ The Holy Spirit convicts us of judgment. Accountability before Christ is key.
 - ✍ Isaiah 8:13, Matthew 10:28, Acts 10:35, Titus 2:11-12, 1 Peter 1:13-21

2. The Second Pathway toward Unity = Obedience

A. To work out the stirrings of God within the heart (Philippians 2:13).

- ✍ "Works" = energon, which means to energize.
- ✍ God's Divine activity arouses, stirs, energizes the heart of the believer to do His will (1 John 3:24).
- ✍ God is giving us both the will and the power to do what pleases Him, our duty is to grab hold of these stirrings and obey.

B. God hasn't left us on our own (that's a Deistic view)

- ✍ He works within us, moving, stirring, energizing and arousing us to get up and get to it.
- ✍ God is forever working within us, never leaving us alone, working and stirring us to complete our salvation.
- ✍ However, the fullness of salvation does not come about apart from our energetic, active obedience (3:10-12).

C. We desperately need to respond according to His good pleasure

- ✍ Obedience is essential in doing another's will rather than one's own.
- ✍ Obedience is our response of worship to Divine love.

D. The dangers of not responding to His good pleasure

- ✍ It is a tragedy to ignore, neglect, and refuse to respond to the God of our salvation.
- ✍ How often do we sit or go about our own affairs instead of heeding the working and stirrings of God? Complacency and lethargy are the result.
- ✍ We become people who are affected by our surroundings rather than people who affect our surroundings.
- ✍ Just think of how much growth we lose and how often we cut the heart of God because we choose the thought processes, possession gathering, and activities of this world instead of God and His stirrings.

E. The one who works mightily in you is God.

- ✍ What believers must do is co-operate with God in order to please Him (John 14:26, Romans 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 2:12).
- ✍ How would others describe your co-operation with God:
 - ✍ Lean—Don't work out but also don't eat. Ambitious without endurance.
 - ✍ Fat—Don't work out but eat and eat and eat. Talk a good game.
 - ✍ Fit—Eat healthy and work out. The ones that have energy.

*"Not the work of a day,
but the task of a life-
time..."*

~H. R. Jones

*"Too often one gets the
impression that local
churches want to be only
hospitals and rest homes
for the saints, rather than
mighty armies equipped
for battle in the Name of
the King."*

~T. M. Moore

Steroids for Your Soul: Servants Work

Philippians 2:12-15

The Basis for Unity Among Believers

In Philippians 2:12, Paul returns to the subject of unity among believers in the church. What should we do whenever we see the word “therefore?” We should stop and see what it’s there for. So, what is the concluding concept of Philippians 2:5-11? _____

In Philippians 2:12-15, Paul will give practical advice regarding serving together in unity. The reason he needs to give this advice is because if we bow the knee to Christ and confess Him as Lord of our lives, we will want to serve in His unified body. Those who fall under the supreme rule of God during their lives on earth want to submit to His headship, as part of His body.

Nothing riles us, though, like having to submit to a higher power. We are born with a sin nature that desires to do our own thing and control our own destiny. We don’t mind submitting when it is for our benefit, but we rarely submit simply for the good and glory of another.

Read Philippians 1:20. What is the motivation for submitting to God, even to the point of suffering? _____

We obey for Christ’s sake, not for our sake. The key to walking in unity is Jesus Christ. If we are in a relationship with Him, we remain focused on the salvation of our Savior, and we “work it out.” As we co-operate with God, we work out what God works in.

There’s nothing like the peace that comes from submission to God’s authority, but there’s also nothing like the turbulence that comes from rebellion to God’s authority. God exists, He is in control, He orchestrates every event of our lives. We can resist and rebel, or we can bow and wait patiently for Him.

Once we recognize the existence of God, we must decide in our hearts whether we believe that He is a good God. Many claim to know God, but in their hearts they conclude that He is against everything they desire. They see God as a mean and cruel ogre, and justify their rebellion as a proper response.

Read Job 1:21. When God decided that Job should be tested to the extent of losing his possessions, children, and health, what was Job’s response? _____

What have you lost lately, regarding which you need to give a similar response? _____

Studies have shown that the #1 predictor of whether a child will be reckless in life is whether or not they wear their seatbelt. After learning this at a counseling class I was taking, I remember waiting in the car for my wife before going off to church. I sat anxiously watching for our youngest son Kurt to put his seatbelt on. When my wife came out and got into the car, I put my seatbelt on in preparation to drive off. In the rearview mirror I immediately noticed that our son Kurt also put his seatbelt on.

Am I setting an example of faithful obedience to Father God or am I reckless with worldliness?

Read Isaiah 64:4. God acts in mighty ways. For whom does He act? _____

Read Isaiah 64:5a. While we are waiting for God to act, what are we commanded to do?

Working Out of Unity Among Believers

Are you familiar with Ephesians 2:8-9? If so, you know that salvation is a gift from God. However, salvation is not stagnant. Just as you don't learn to swim to tread water, you don't get saved to be complacent. A saved person does not sit around doing nothing, letting the chips fall where they may. A saved person gets going!

Read Ephesians 2:10. What do those who have been saved get to work doing? _____

Religion that doesn't affect our thought life, and our speech, and our actions is not much good to anybody. King David prayed a prayer that sets the standard for working out our salvation in a way that doesn't just give lip service to God. Read Psalm 19:14. What are we to pray for as we work out our salvation? _____

Words and thoughts may seem small compared to adultery, fornication, lying, stealing, or other obvious sins. Our culture, and sadly even often our practice of religion, give license to little slips of the tongue. We say things like, "It's easier to ask forgiveness than ask permission." We'd rather seek forgiveness than live in holiness.

Read Revelation 3:1-6. There were some in Sardis who worked out their salvation with fear and trembling, who did not defile their garments. What reward are they promised in verse 5?

If you have been choosing to sin, what is the hope for you in Revelation 3:3? _____

Until the return of Jesus Christ, we have the hope of repentance. That is the message Jesus preached.

Read Mark 1:14-15, and write down the message Jesus came preaching. _____

You leave opinion on the dresser at night, but conviction crawls into bed with you...they are part of you.

You make the choice: either work out your salvation in obedience, or live boldly in sin apart from salvation.



14. Servants Do All Things...



Philippians 2:14-15

A man was bothered with continual ringing in his ears, bulging eyes, and a flushed face. Over a period of three years he went to doctor after doctor. One took out his tonsils, one his appendix, another pulled all his teeth -- he even tried the goat gland treatment in Switzerland -- all to no avail. Finally, one doctor told him there was no hope -- he had six months to live. The poor fellow quit his job, sold all his belongings and decided to live it up in the time he had left. He went to his tailor and ordered several suits and shirts. The tailor measured his neck and wrote down 16 1/2. The man corrected him: 15 1/2. The tailor measured again: 16 1/2. But the man insisted that he'd always worn a size 15 1/2. "Well, all right," said the tailor, "but don't come back here complaining to me if you have ringing ears, bulging eyes and a flushed face!"

Speak kindly of others and you will never have to whisper.

UNITY = SIX WORKS WITH THREE IMPERATIVES

1. Obedience to three imperative opens six pathways to move the church toward unity

A. Three imperatives (Philippians 2:12-18)

- ✍ Work out (vs. 12-13)
 - ✎ The first pathway = work out salvation with fear and trembling, deliverance
 - ✎ The second pathway = work out what God works in, obedience
- ✍ Today we will be studying the second imperative, "do all things" (vs. 14-15)
- ✍ Next week we will study the third imperative, "be glad and rejoice" (vs. 16-18)

DO ALL THINGS

1. The Third Pathway toward Unity = Do All Things with No Complaining or Arguing

A. Believers are commanded to do all things without complaining and arguing (Philippians 2:14).

- ✍ We can characterize sin in one word = discontentment.
- ✍ "Complain" = mutter, murmur, grumble.
 - ✎ Complaining includes quiet, soft-spoken, behind the back remarks; the kind of criticism, dissatisfaction, fault-finding, and gossip that goes on in small groups or cliques.
 - ✎ Grumbling is a disgruntled response to something that is perceived as unpleasant, inconvenient, undeserved, or disappointing.
- ✍ "Dispute" = arguments, vocal questionings, expressions of doubt.
 - ✎ The result of the above is that disputes or arguments break out into the open.
 - ✎ It begins when someone verbalizes their questions or doubts regarding a matter, implanting the seed of dispute.
- ✍ God in His sovereignty requires that believers accept every circumstance of their lives willingly and joyfully, without complaint, resentment, or dispute (Philippians 4:11-12, James 1:2-3).

B. Complaining and disputing is not to be allowed in the church.

- ✍ "Do all things without complaining or disputing."
 - ✍ Why? Conversations that allow complaining lead to dispute.

C. Complaining and disputing are never of God, ever!

- ✍ "Do all things" = nothing is left out, all things means all things.
- ✍ Complaining usually begins in a small group or an exclusive clique.
 - ✎ Those who are spiritual are not to listen, but are to correct those who complain,

so it is not allowed to fester (Galatians 6:1-2).

D. Complaining and disputing brought judgment upon the Israelites.

- ✍ The Israelites' murmurings eventually caused them to turn on God and His leaders, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Caleb (Numbers 14:2-10).
- ✍ By complaining, the Israelites rebelled against God, grieved God, tempted God, and pained God (Psalm 78:40-41).
 - ✍ Every complaint a believer makes is a complaint against God.
- ✍ God did not allow the Israelites to complain without punishment (Numbers 14:11, 22-23, 28-29, 34-37).
 - ✍ Why did the Israelites complain and receive judgment from God? To set an example for us (1 Corinthians 10:1-10).

E. The person who complains and disputes is not working at his salvation or deliverance.

- ✍ Instead, they are working at bringing judgment upon self.
- ✍ Our thought patterns seem to have a life of their own. We think shocking and embarrassing thoughts, but only as we hear the words do we realize how out of control we are.
- ✍ The tongue reveals the heart, so the place to start is the heart.

2. The Fourth Pathway toward Unity = Do all things to prove yourselves pure

A. The believer is to do all things blamelessly and innocently (Philippians 2:15a).

- ✍ "Blameless" = free from fault, above reproach
 - ✍ We are to live a pure lifestyle on either side of any door.
 - ✍ Clean, unpolluted, spotless, holy, righteous, pure before both man and God.
 - ✍ As fallen creatures, if left to ourselves, our hearts will conceive the vilest evil.
- ✍ "Harmless" = unmixed and unadulterated, innocent
 - ✍ The word includes the idea of flour or grain passing through a sieve to separate pure from impure.
 - ✍ It means our thoughts and lives are not polluted by watching, reading, or listening to worldly and immoral sexual attractions.
 - ✍ It means we are not to be given over to worldly and immoral sexual attractions.

B. The believer is to do all things without fault as lights in the world (Philippians 2:15b).

- ✍ "Without fault" = without blemish, spot, or defect. Refers to Old Testament sacrifices made to God.
 - ✍ The believer is to live and walk under the eyes and scrutiny of God.
 - ✍ We must keep in mind that our accountability is to God, not merely men.
- ✍ The character of the church leads her on a mission into a needy, crooked, and perverse world.
- ✍ We must think and meditate on proper things to establish a pattern, a grid of right thinking that is permeated by the Word of God, so that the "do all things" imperative can be obeyed.


Our minds are like radios or TV's in that they receive all kinds of signals, but as a radio or TV can be tuned to desirable input, so our minds must be tuned to take in what is proper. As you would tune the dial on the radio or TV, rejecting what you do not want and pausing on what seems good, so we must actively and volitionally reject wrong thoughts. We cannot control what might come into our minds, but we can certainly control what we dwell on.

Steroids for Your Soul: Servants Do All Things...


Philippians 2:14-15


It's like the "Horror Hall" attraction at an amusement park. You and your friends enter a dark room where occasional strobe lights dimly reveal twisted and perverted images lunging at you. Although everything in you wants to cover your ears against the screams of wickedness and evil, you're the one with a flashlight and you need to be able to shine it. There's nothing to do but walk forward, shining your light on the passageway that will lead you safely into the sunshine and other joys of the park. Unless you stay on that narrow path, you will be doomed to the horrors around you. The path is difficult to see, and has unexpected twists and turns. Without the flashlight on, you and your friends will walk into danger. Shine it you must, just as we are to "shine as lights in the world."

Do All Things Without Grumbling and Disputing

 Read Matthew 5:14. Jesus says that we are the light of the world. Where can a shining light not be hidden? _____

David, the shepherd destined to become a king, shone the light in many ways. God orchestrated his songs, psalms, and prayers to be in the Bible, for David continually expressed his love for God and for the Word of God. David did not just give lip service to God, he passionately sought personal holiness.

 Read Psalm 15:1b. Where does David want to dwell? _____
David knew that complaining or grumbling never shines from a holy hill.

 Read Psalm 15:2-5, and list ten ways David expended his energy instead of complaining or disputing: _____

To sojourn with God, we must walk with clean hands and a pure heart. We must guard against complaining and disputing, whether meditations in our hearts or words from our mouths. The results of complaining are far worse than people ever think (for complainer and for others). Complainers and disputers focus on themselves and their pain, instead of on the grace of Christ.

Complaining and disputing can take on various forms. Read the following list and check yourself for attitudes that shelter complaints and disputes.

- Do I have a teachable spirit? Or am I a know-it-all?
- Do I allow others to finish their thoughts or do I interrupt?
- Do I say things like "we used to do it this way" or "well, we've always done it that way"?

✍ Read 2 Corinthians 12:20. You will find a list of eight things we should be afraid of. List them here. _____

Hurts and divisions tear down and push people away from Christ and His church. They oppose God’s will, stymie growth, are self-centered, elevates selfish opinion, and mislead people.

If you are a true believer, remember what God does for you! The Father draws you, the Spirit woos you, the Son bears your sins and imputes His righteousness onto you. A true believer no longer has a “have to” attitude about obedience, we have a growing desire to conform to God’s image. The Holy Spirit, our personal trainer, helps the spiritual muscles inside us to work out our salvation, with gratitude and unity instead of complaining and disputing.

Do All Things Blamelessly and Purely

Our thought lives are to be pure, clean, uncontaminated, and unpolluted.

✍ Romans 16:19 commands us to be wise in what is good, and innocent in what is evil. Remember that God’s goal is the unity of the church. With that in mind, let’s consider two areas of good and evil in which to be on guard.

1. In your personal thoughts, words, and deeds, list three ways you need to work at becoming excellent at what is good: _____

2. You can’t work at excellence in what is good for others, however, you can choose to be innocent of evil. It matters whom you spend time with, and whom you listen to. Have you listened to complaining? Have you listened to gossip? Have you given ear to disputing? Have you given credibility to negativity about the church or church leadership? Then you are not innocent of evil. List three ways you need to become innocent in what is evil: _____

Now, let’s have some encouragement as we shine our lights on the narrow path.

✍ Read 2 Timothy 4:18. Who will rescue us from every evil deed? _____

✍ Read Jude 24. Who will keep us from stumbling? _____

✍ Read 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11. Who has destined us for salvation? _____
Verse 10 gives us the humbling, beautiful reason why our Lord Jesus Christ died for us. Read it, write it down, and thank Him for it. _____



15. Servants Grow Joy



Philippians 2:16-18

"Religion is not a strange or added thing, but the inspiration of the secular life, the breathing of an eternal spirit through this temporal world."

~Henry Drummond

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- ✍ Do all things (vs. 14-15)
 - ✎ The third pathway = do all things without complaining or disputing
 - ✎ The fourth pathway = do all things to prove yourself pure
- ✍ Today we will be studying the third imperative, "be glad and rejoice" (vs. 16-18)

BE GLAD AND REJOICE

1. The Fifth Pathway toward Unity = Be Glad and Rejoice in Witnessing

A. Believers witness (Philippians 2:16).

- ✍ The phrase "holding fast the word of life" begins with good news= there is a Word of Life!
- ✍ Men and women can truly live, both now and forever. The Word of Life is this fountain of youth that brings life, eternal life!
 - ✎ Good news! Be glad! Rejoice! It's as if the cure for cancer has been found! But this Word of Life not only cures the cancer, it injects the energy of everlasting life into all the cells of the body.

B. Believers must hold fast and shine the Word of Life in order for light to be brought into the world's darkness.

- ✍ It's a terrible tragedy that so many of us do not hold forth the Word of Life. We hold back, or make it a program rather than intimate personal relationship.

C. We must joyfully share the message of the glorious gospel of life.

- ✍ The Word of Life is just what it says it is: The message of life in Christ Jesus our Lord (1 Corinthians 2:1-3). This life is eternal, abundant, heavenly, and everlasting (John 10:10).
- ✍ Jesus Christ is the living and life-giving Word (revelation) of God (John 5:24, John 6:27).

D. We must joyfully live our lives in a manner worthy of the glorious gospel of life.

- ✍ Faithfulness is an important part of living in a manner worthy of the gospel. The church is to hold forth, or shine out the gospel.
- ✍ Paul's "rejoicing" is based on the Philippians' worthy and proper living,
- ✍ Paul has already ascribed God the glory for all that is done in and through them (2:13).

E. Joy and church leaders (Philippians 2:16b)

- ✍ If congregations complain, church leaders labor in vain.
- ✍ On that day when we stand before the Lord, pastors will have reason to glory if their congregations have faithfully served together without complaining (Hebrews 13:17).

2. The Sixth Pathway toward Unity = Be Glad and Rejoice in Sacrificial Labor

A. Believers are to follow Paul's example of sacrificial labor, and rejoice in doing so (Philippians 2:17-18).

- ✍ Paul had offered himself as a sacrifice to serve men. The picture is that of the sacrifices and offerings made by people to the heathen gods (Numbers 15:3-10).
- ✍ Paul had taken his body and joyfully offered it as a sacrifice and service for people.
 - ✍ Paul lived for nothing else except to speak out regarding the Word of Life to people.
 - ✍ Paul rejoiced in doing so. He had no "martyr syndrome."
 - ✍ If we feel self-pity, half-heartedness, resentment, or a lack of joy in our sacrifice, we are not on the pathway toward unity.

B. Sacrifice and service

- ✍ The two words Paul uses, "sacrifice" and "service," can be regarded as a summary of worship as connected with the tabernacle and the temple.
 - ✍ Peter talks about our spiritual sacrifice as living stones of the church (1 Peter 2:5).
 - ✍ Paul talks about the service of the Corinthians financial offerings to help another church (2 Corinthians 9:12).
- ✍ All Christians are to offer spiritual sacrifices (Romans 12:1, Hebrews 13:15-16).
- ✍ Faith is related to both sacrifice and service. Faith can be regarded as being described by the words "sacrifice" and "service" (James 2:17).
- ✍ Faith that takes on the characteristic of sacrificial service is worship of God.
 - ✍ Sacrificial service is not merely assent by submission. It is submission characterized by devotion.
- ✍ Paul was talking about the overflow of one's life to another.
 - ✍ For something to overflow, it must be full. Empty lives have nothing to offer.

C. Sacrifice and joy

- ✍ To be able to sacrificially serve together is a privilege and a cause for joy.
 - ✍ Individuals or families who consider time spent serving together in the church as "busy-ness" will not have joy.
 - ✍ Giving up the privilege of serving together in pursuit of personal interests and well-being will ultimately lead to sadness and resentment.
- ✍ Paul modeled selfless sacrificial service AND the joy that results from sacrificial service.
 - ✍ Do not consider serving together sacrificially as lost or busy time. Think of it as an offering to God that He says will result in joy.
 - ✍ Our joy can overflow—like Paul, James and Peter—if we serve sacrificially (2 Corinthians 7:4, Colossians 1:24, 1 Thessalonians 3:7-9, James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 4:13).

"When believers seek to do they Father's will and please Him, they view sacrifice for Him with joy. The reason many believers know little about Paul's kind of joy is that they know little about his kind of sacrifice."

~John MacArthur

Steroids for Your Soul: Servants Grow Joy


Philippians 2:16-18

"Allow it to be said without apology and with biblical justification that man without God is hopelessly lost. He is like a blind man in a dark room looking for a black cat that is not there. Man does not know from whence he came or whither he is headed. Man is totally bankrupt. He possesses in himself nothing of incorruptible and enduring value. His best scientific, philosophical, and educational achievements have not even identified, let alone explained or resolved, the real issues of life. With all of his astounding technological advances, he has not nudged his fellows one inch heavenward. In the words of Scripture, unsaved men are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" 2 Timothy 3:7.

~Marvin Rosenthal (Zions Fire)


Are you a Fountain Flowing with the Word of Life?

All that matters to Paul, all that brings him joy, is for Christ to be proclaimed. He's the only hope for a world reeling under the weight of the burden of sin. God the Father offered up His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ came to earth to lay down His life for us.

 We make a big deal out of zealous Christians who share their faith, but it should be as natural as breathing for us. Read 1 Peter 3:15. When do we need to be ready to talk about Jesus? _____

Life has become a spectator sport. People are less and less involved in meaningful, face-to-face interaction. We invent ourselves on the internet, where life becomes all about "me." We even broadcast the sacrifice of a temporary pleasure if it holds the prospect of an accolade. But nothing is more pathetic than those who spend all their energies on themselves. Christians are not to be sponges who soak up everything possible. We are to be fountains through whom the living water of God flows. Are your "overflowing" into the lives of others?

Problem that stops me from flowing out the Word of Life = I'm not thirsty

 Read John 7:37-38. If we are not able to be fountains of Christ's living water, what is true about us? _____


Jesus promised living water to the thirsty. If we drink of the living water in genuine belief, we become fountains of living water. Jesus was speaking of living in the power of the Holy Spirit (John 7:39). Apart from the life of God, people have no capacity to be fountains. We may spew a few things occasionally, but a fountain flows with vigor and by definition keeps on flowing. Yes, we are at the point of display, but it must be God who is seen and showers Himself on others through our lives.

Self-realization leads to emptiness. The realization of a life poured out for God leads to abundant life that overflows with joy, especially in times of suffering. When things go awry our joy level helps us understand if we are soaking up like a sponge, or pouring out like a fountain. When we don't get our way our joy level helps us understand if we are seeking God and His kingdom, or the things of the world.

If you have received the living water of Jesus Christ, are you a gushing, overflowing fountain of the love and mercy of God through Jesus Christ? _____

Problem that stops me from flowing out the Word of Life = I'm too self-gratified

Fountains that spout well are those which clear out the guck of self-centeredness and self-seeking by denying themselves.

 Read Luke 9:23. What do I seek after that I must deny? List at least one way in which you

will deny yourself today. _____

✍ Read 1 Corinthians 6:20. Because our bodies are bought with a price, what must we do with them? _____
Re-read your answer to the question that referenced Luke 9:23 and determine whether your act of denying yourself glorifies God with your body.

Problem that stops me from flowing out the Word of Life = I don't embrace suffering

Embrace suffering? That's crazy! I live my life trying to escape suffering. There's nothing wrong with that, is there? Let's look at what the Bible says.

✍ Read 2 Corinthians 12:8. We don't know what the suffering was, but Paul prayed for it to be removed. How many times? _____
He stopped eh? Then what did he do? Read 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. _____

If God wills it to continue, like He did for Paul, we embrace it as part of what's ordained for us in following Christ. If we read more passages about suffering, it appears Paul was driven to embrace suffering.

✍ Read 1 Corinthians 4:11-12. Describe some of the suffering Paul encounters _____

✍ It appears Paul took Jesus seriously in Luke 21:16-17. How did Jesus say we would be treated? _____

✍ What encouraging words did Paul use to strengthen the converts in Acts 14:22? _____

And how did he encourage the suffering believers in Thessalonica in 1 Thessalonians 3:3?

Paul seems driven to embrace suffering, doesn't he?

✍ Surely suffering isn't for everyone. Who is suffering for (2 Timothy 3:12)? _____

Fill in the blank in each of the following sentences with the word "rejoice."

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account, _____ and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven (Luke 6:22-23).

After being beaten.....they left _____ that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name (Acts 5:41).

I _____ in my sufferings for your sake.... (Colossians 1:24).

_____ when you share Christ's sufferings (1 Peter 4:13).



16. Faithful Servants



Philippians 2:19-30

There are three sorts of servants in the world: some are slaves who serve from fear; others are hirelings who serve for wages; the last are sons who serve because they love, willingly, eagerly and in humility.

“Did Paul say this (they seek their own not the things that are of Christ Jesus) in haste As David said, “All men are liars” (Psalm 116:11)? Was there so general a corruption among ministers so early that there was not one among them who cared for the state of their people? We must not understand it so; he means the generality; all, that is, either the most, or all in comparison to Timothy. Note, seeking our own interest to the neglect of Jesus Christ is a very great sin, & very common among Christians & ministers. Many prefer their own credit, ease, and safety before truth, holiness, and duty, the things of their own pleasure and reputation before the things of Christ’s kingdom and His honor and interest in the world: but Timothy was none of these.”

~Matthew Henry

PAUL’S DEEP LOVE AND CONCERN FOR THE CHURCH

1. What Does the Church Really Need Today?

A. The Church needs:

- ✍ People who love Jesus Christ with all their heart, who want to serve Him with all their soul (Matthew 22:37-38).
 - ✍ People who seek God’s glory, praise, honor without focus on personal hurts and needs.
- B. Timothy is a dynamic example of total commitment to Jesus Christ, he served willingly and selflessly,**

2. Paul’s Mission: Send Timothy (Philippians 2:19)

A. Paul is in prison and can’t personally visit the church.

- ✍ But what can he do? Paul does the next best thing, sends his companion and co-worker.
- ✍ Why? For mutual encouragement.
- ✍ Paul mentions their state twice. He wants to know their state, and care for their state.
- ✍ The word compassion means “caring enough to act” (Jeremiah 3:15, Jeremiah 23:4).

TIMOTHY: COMPELLING FAITHFULNESS

1. Timothy: Caregiver (Philippians 2:20)

A. Paul had a kindred, brotherly spirit in caring for others.

- ✍ Paul’s compassion was unequalled. Timothy’s spirit of care for the churches came closest to Paul’s.
- ✍ Timothy cared with genuine compassion, from deep within (1 Peter 5:2).

B. Timothy was willing to selflessly deny himself, to be obsessed with the things of Christ.

- ✍ In a sweeping indictment against others, Paul says they sought their own, not the things of Christ.
- ✍ This selfish ambition is still true of believers today, including ministers (James 2:14-17).

2. Timothy: Disciple (Philippians 2:22-24)

A. Paul and Timothy - simply servants.

- ✍ Timothy was willing to be a son, a disciple tried and proven. There was a close bond between Paul and Timothy, a co-operation between them in the cause of the Lord.

B. Paul enlisted Timothy as one of his disciples and missionary partners on his second missionary journey ten years earlier (Acts 16:1-3).

- ✍ From that point on, Timothy became a dynamic minister of the Lord, a minister called to serve.

EPAPHRODITUS: NOT A QUITTER, NOT A COWARD

1. Epaphroditus: Background (Philippians 2:25)

A. A Legitimate Servant of the Lord

- ✍️ “Epaphroditus” = handsome, comely, from Aphrodite the Green goddess of love and beauty. However, Epaphroditus is not a prima-dona, rather a servant whose character can be described as one who worshipped before he worked.
- ✍️ “my brother”= the first thing Paul says about Epaphroditus does not refer to having the same earthly parents, but rather to unity of faith.
 - ✍️ It provides a perspective for considering everything else which is recorded about him since he was a Gentile and Paul was a Jew).
 - ✍️ The description “brother” points to the reality of God’s transforming grace that erases human animosity.
- ✍️ “fellow worker”= minister of the gospel. Epaphroditus was a ‘hands-on’ minister. His relationship with the Lord is one of submission, co-operation and living for Christ’s cause.
- ✍️ “fellow soldier” = spiritual warfare. Epaphroditus was a foxhole type of guy despite the danger, despite his own ill-health.

B. Apostle

- ✍️ Your messenger = “to send” = *apostollos* or messenger not the noun *apostello* used to describe the twelve apostles, but a verb describing those sent by another.
 - ✍️ Both the verb (sent by His Father) and the noun (the One sent by Another) are used in reference to Jesus (Hebrews 3:1).
- ✍️ While all apostles were sent, not all had the same sender, mission or endowment.
 - ✍️ There were those who were chosen, sent personally by the Lord Jesus Christ and with His authority.
 - ✍️ There were others who were chosen by the churches in obedience to the leading of the Spirit (Acts 13:1-3). They were sent to carry the gospel to the unbelieving world, or to bear gifts, or some other church designated task. Epaphroditus was an apostle of the church, sent to care for Paul.
- ✍️ The Apostles of Christ have no successors (Paul was the last). These men stand alone as those who laid the doctrinal foundation of Christ’s church for all time. They alone were appointed personally by Jesus Christ.

2. Epaphroditus: Devoted to Ministry

A. He did not forsake his brother, but ministered to Paul’s need (Philippians 2:25)

B. He did not forsake the church, but was dedicated (Philippians 2:26-27)

- ✍️ His return is explained by two facts in vs. 26:
 - ✍️ His longing for them.
 - ✍️ His distress over the effect the news of his illness would have had on them.

✍️ He worked hard even when he was almost dead.

C. Paul’s appeal (Philippians 2:28-30)

- ✍️ Paul says to honor a man like this, like carrying the coach off on the team’s shoulderz.
- ✍️ Why honor men like Epaphroditus? Because he threw his life away for the cause of Christ. We are to measure life by loss instead of gain.

“The Spirit-filled life is not a special, deluxe edition of Christianity. It is part and parcel of the total plan of God for His people.”

~A. W. Tozer

Larry Bird wasn’t present to accept MVP award because he was outside at the park, shooting hoops. He was clearly in love with the game rather than the fame.

Steroids for Your Soul: Faithful Servants


Philippians 2:19-30

Dr. Robertson McQuilkin has impacted the understanding of faithful love in many people's hearts. His wife, Muriel, had Alzheimer's Disease, and Dr. McQuilkin had been the president of Columbia Bible College (CBC) for 22 years when he walked away from that position to care for her. Ten years before, she had repeated a story to some friends while vacationing in Florida, which began a process of medical attention that ultimately proved she had the disease. Dr. McQuilkin suggested the CBC board begin searching for a successor, yet everyone hoped he could continue until retirement. Some wise and godly friends encouraged him to consider institutional care. They loved Muriel, but they also saw God's hand and calling upon his leadership at the school. For several years he tried to juggle the challenge by utilizing a caregiver during the day while he went to the college, but Muriel would try to follow him to school. The walk was one-half mile and she would make that trip as many as ten times a day. Sometimes while preparing her for bed, he would find blood on her feet from the incessant walks. He knew a decision had to be made. In his mind the decision was resolved 42 years prior when he vowed, "in sickness and in health, till death do us part." He walked away from a thriving ministry and many unfulfilled dreams, but there was no regret. Dr. McQuilkin said, "I don't have to care for her, I get to. If I took care of her for 40 years, I would never be out of her debt."

What a beautiful, amazing picture of loving service.

A Ministering Heart Serves

Timothy was called to serve with Paul, and served as faithfully as any. He as served willingly and sacrificially, he not only led those under his responsibility, he also contributed to the life and ministry of those who looked to his example. Timothy had served in such a way that Paul was convinced that if he were not released from prison and could not go to Philippi, Timothy would represent him well.

 Read Romans 12:15-16. List three ingredients of serving together well:

A Selfless Heart Serves

I so detest selfishness, yet why am I so blind to my selfishness? Why is it I can so easily see it in you, yet am unable to see it in me? You can say anything about anyone, yet it doesn't hurt or bother me like if you say it about me. I can recognize something in myself as sin, but unless I go further I am not going to change. Until I realize that it hurts someone else, and I value the relationship more than my own desire, I won't change. Even then I can be blinded by my own selfishness, my sin, and say 'Oh that person must be in a bad mood.' No, the reality is that I am acting sinfully, and they are responding unfavorably to my sinfulness, my selfishness.

If you haven't got any love in your heart, you have the worst kind of heart trouble.

Selflessness is putting the other person and their desires—physical, emotional, and psychological—ahead of mine. When I serve like Christ my abhorrence for their sin becomes abhorrence of my own.

Storms easily pull me into myself. When clouds snarl grey, the spiral of selfishness can feel like a retreat to safety and protection. How foolish. The more deeply rooted I am in my self-protecting safe haven, the more painful the yanking and uprooting. Timothy did not seek his own self-protection. He could be counted on to deny himself and put the care of the Philippians before his own. Timothy had not fallen into the trap that had captured so many believers and ministers (2 Corinthians 11:28). His primary concern was the message of Christ and his church.

A Biblical Christian's life cannot be defined in terms of possessions or notoriety. It is defined by sacrifice, service, and indomitable trust in the Living God. Biblical Christianity is ministry to the nondescript. People who have impacted us the most are those who have given their lives to serve people with no ability to reciprocate.

✍ Read Mark 10:44-45. Why did Jesus come to earth? _____

What are you doing in relationship with others? Are you giving or taking? Are you serving or using? _____

✍ Good health is not always the purpose of God for His servants, and sickness is not always the consequence of sin. Read Romans 15:1-2. If we are strong, what is our job? _____

Our emphasis must be on the mercy of God and how we are to minister to the plight of the needy. To whom much is given, much is expected.

A Worshipping Heart Serves

Christians are worshippers first, and then workers. We love and serve others because we love and serve our Savior.

✍ Read John 15:9-14. Mutual love for God and fellow man, and obedience to God, are not spoken of as an act of drudgery. Rather, what are they equated with? _____

Worshippers love and adore the one they worship. Obedience and mutual love are all about joy and delight in God. Epaphroditus confronts and rebukes us if we have a soft, easy-going idea about serving God. He served with zeal and passion, to the point of death (Philippians 2:25-30).

✍ In Revelation 3:14-22, Christ describes a church that lost its passionate zeal to worship God. They became insipidly lukewarm. Half-hearted passion to serve the Lord neither refreshes nor soothes, it is not the way of those who worship. We need to be hot, like the warm soothing waters that from the underground sulfur springs of Hierapolis, or cold like the refreshing waters of Colasse that streamed into the city from the snow capped mountains to the north. Read Revelation 3:19. If you have lost your zeal for serving God, what does Christ call you to do? _____

Do you have the courage to eagerly abound for Christ in service rather than sitting in lethargy of loneliness?

"If we are really going to get a concept of revival we have to get a vision of God's sorrow over sin. We have to get a concept of how, day by day, we offend God."

~Leonard Ravenhill



17. Guarded Servants



Philippians 3:1-3

"I sit in my house in Buffalo and sometimes I get so lonely it's unbelievable. Life has been so good to me. I've got a great wife, good kids, money, my own health— and I'm lonely and bored. I often wondered why so many rich people commit suicide. Money sure isn't a cure-all."

O.J. Simpson, People Magazine, Jun 12, 1978.

"Joy is the seriousness of Heaven."

~C. S. Lewis

"I've had few difficulties, many friends, great successes; I have gone from wife to wife, and from house to house, visited great countries of the world, but I am fed up with inventing devices to fill up 24 hours of the day."

~Suicide note left by Ralph Barton, Cartoonist.

IN THIS WORLD OF HUMANISTIC TEACHING, HOW CAN I GUARD MYSELF?

1. Guard yourself by Rejoicing in the Lord (Philippians 3:1-2)

A. The Church needs:

- ✍ Christians who truly care (as we have seen from Timothy and Epaphroditus) and who continually rejoice in Jesus Christ (Philippians 4:3-4).
- ✍ A person who truly loves Jesus and rejoices in the Lord will not go astray.

B. Circumstances and trials confront every believer

- ✍ Trials include: Temptations, greed, selfishness, arguments, disease, death, accidents, death.
 - ✍ No person escapes trials.
 - ✍ Yet we so easily blame trials for loss of joy. We fall to the mindset exemplified by a toddler whining, "it's everyone else keeping me from joy."

C. Refute false teaching about joy

- ✍ False teachings include: "Don't go overboard with religion, enjoy life, do what you want, it's OK to sin a little, you don't want to be radical."
- ✍ A believer must guard himself, and the first guard is joy in the Lord.
- ✍ If you are miserable, it's because you have said no to joy by saying no to God.
- ✍ Joy is not fun and games, a carefree temperament, or great circumstances.
- ✍ Joy in the heart = a happy state of mind from a heart of contentment that focuses joyfully on what God has done, is doing, and has promised.
- ✍ A joyous Christian is the greatest billboard for Christianity because joy keeps one in the presence of Christ, where nothing can separate from the Lord and His love!
- ✍ The joy of the Lord is our strength! (Nehemiah 8:10)

3. Guard yourself by Heeding what is Written in Scripture

A. Paul's repetition emphasizes the importance of Scripture for safety

- ✍ The church must do what Scripture says.
- ✍ The Philippians are not to rejoice as if there were no danger. Joy in the Lord is not blind to the existence of threatening terror.
- ✍ They are to be neither glum nor naive, but rather they are to trust and obey (Hebrews 3:12-13).
- ✍ If we fail to study Scripture and obey, we will cave in either to the trials of life or to false teaching.

4. Guard yourself by Watching Out for False Teachers (Philippians 3:2)

A. Beware of false teachers who act like dogs

- ✍ Paul was always facing false teachers who were savage in their attacks on him.
- ✍ To call them dogs was the lowest title possible, conveying contempt and ridicule (Matthew 7:6).
 - ✍ These are scavengers who seek out whomever they can consume with their false teaching.
 - ✍ They often become viscous and dangerous, ready to attack.
 - ✍ They have wrong motives, message, or emphasis, the complete opposite of 1 Timothy 1:5.

B. Beware of false teachers who are evil workers

- ✍ The world is full of people who work evil things, who oppose and persecute the righteous.
- ✍ Beware of those who teach self-righteousness, morality and religion within a rules and regulations mindset.

C. Beware of false teachers who are of the mutilation

- ✍ Paul here refers to the Judaizers.
- ✍ They committed themselves to the law of Moses, observing various ceremonies of the Jewish religion and undergoing rituals such as circumcision.
- ✍ These Judaizers mixed ritual and law with the gospel of Christ.

4. Guard yourself Knowing that you are the True Spiritual Circumcision (Philippians 3:3)

A. Christ is the true righteousness

- ✍ God has done away with physical circumcision as a sign of righteousness since Christ (Ezekiel 36:26).
- ✍ Righteousness is now of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter of rules and regulations (Galatians 5:6).
- ✍ Paul had, of course, gone against the beliefs and practices of Judaizers.
 - ✍ He had allowed people to receive Christ by grace through faith alone without undergoing the ritual of circumcision.
 - ✍ He had allowed people to follow and focus on Christ instead of the law (John 4:24).
- ✍ Believers are those who worship God as He really wishes to be worshipped, in spirit apart from the flesh
- ✍ How do most people attempt to worship God? By attending church services, tithing, giving occasional gifts, thinking of God, baptism or other rituals in the church, joining a church, etc; but these are not the basis of true worship; rather they are things that we do because we worship.


Matthew Henry, the famous Bible scholar, was once accosted by thieves and robbed of his wallet. He wrote these words in his diary: "Let me be thankful first because I was never robbed before; second, although they took my wallet, they did not take my life; third, because, although they took my all, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed."


Steroids for Your Soul: Guarded Servants


Philippians 3:1-3

How Does God Command me to Guard my Life? By Rejoicing in the Lord


Rejoicing in the Lord is God’s way to guard against the trials of life and against false teaching.

 Read Psalm 32:11. What is the source of a righteous person’s joy? _____

 Read John 15:11. Why do we have the Bible’s record of Jesus’ words? _____

 Read 1 Peter 4:12-13. Instead of being surprised by trials, what is our response supposed to be? _____


In order to be a person who obeys the Bible as the Ultimate Authority, we must rejoice in the Lord. When I rejoice in the Lord, my mind is focused on what He has done for me—my Redeemer, The Giver of Eternal Life, My Savior and Lord. Then, how can we not rejoice in thankfulness and gratitude to God! And when I rejoice, just see if the flame of the Holy Spirit does not burn hot.


 Read 2 Timothy 1:6. What did Paul tell Timothy to stir up? _____

The Greek word for “stir up” means to rekindle. “Stirring up” or “rekindling” requires personal effort. Next to the lovely stone fireplace hang a few tools to stir up the fire. You choose the poker, and stir up the fire until it bursts into flame. Now take out the poker of your memory and stir up some recollections of times when God intervened in your life and answered your prayers. Stir your mind into action to count your blessings. Add some logs of thankful praise to God, and before you know it the fire is burning brightly again.

How Does God Command me to Guard my Life? By Obeying God’s Word

No person can press on apart from heeding the Scriptures. Only as we obey the Bible (the commandments of the Lord) can we show our love and loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ.

 Read John 14:15. If I love God, what will I do? _____

 Read John 14:23-24. If I do not love God, what will I do? _____

✍ Read Matthew 22:36-37. What is the greatest commandment? _____

How Does God Command me to Guard my Life? In a Personal Relationship with Jesus

You are not on a team just because you perform the initiation rites. Back when I played for the Philadelphia Flyers, initiation rites included shaving. That wouldn't be a big deal for me today, as a matter of fact, I've chosen to shave the small amount of hair that's left to me. But back then, a certain hair style called "The Mullet" was popular, and players were very proud of their wavy locks.

I'll never forget one of the players who was shaved with me. He had a mustache. They decided to shave off one of his eyebrows, and half of his mustache—on opposite sides. How embarrassing for him! Oh, it was demeaning to be shaved. But worse, the player with the cock-eyed shave was sent to the minors in a matter of weeks. No, you are not on a team just because you follow the traditional rites, no matter what you sacrifice.

✍ Read Romans 10:3-5. A man is not saved by fleshly signs or rituals, nor by his ability to keep all the rules and regulations. Whose righteousness does a man need? _____

We need the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ. But we don't get it by religion, we get it by relationship with Him, a love relationship.

✍ Read Galatians 2:16. How is a man justified? _____

Religion without relationship only breeds self-righteousness.

How Does God Command me to Guard my Life? By Putting No Confidence in my Flesh

✍ Read Romans 7:18. How much confidence does Paul put in his flesh? _____

✍ Read Romans 8:8. How much are we able to please God in our flesh? _____

✍ In relationship with Jesus Christ our spirit is recreated in the very nature of God. We are able to deny the inner desires that drove us before we belonged to Christ. But it is never possible apart from that relationship. Read Galatians 5:17 and write down how we must walk to access that power. _____

"If we are really going to get a concept of revival we have to get a vision of God's sorrow over sin. We have to get a concept of how, day by day, we offend God."

~Leonard Ravenhill



18. Reject Self-Righteousness



Philippians 3:4-6

"If one breadcrumb in your cupboard of righteousness is your own, you are lost!"

~C. H. Spurgeon

THE BEAST OF MIXING HUMANISM AND CHRISTIANITY

1. Worldwide, Mankind Senses Need of Relationship with God

A. Mankind senses that there is a God, and also that there is something wrong between them and God.

- ✍ Sometimes they feel right, other times wrong. They want to be right with God, approved of and accepted by God when their life is over.
- ✍ They hope God will accept them, but they do not know for absolutely sure. Therefore they do what they feel will make them good enough to please their god.
 - ✎ The degree differs. One feels he needs to be extremely good, another feels moderately good is enough.
 - ✎ This kind of religion is a religion of works and self righteousness.
- ✍ But God is perfect. Not a single person is perfect. For a person to be in God's presence, it will be because God loves the person enough to accept him and transform him into a new creation that bears the imputed righteousness of Christ.
- ✍ God accepts men only through the love and grace of Jesus Christ. This is what Paul had missed. Paul had never seen the love of God for man.
- ✍ He had spent his life seeking after God, doing all the good he could to make himself acceptable to God, yet he had no peace with God.

B. Paul's personal testimony (Philippians 3:3-4)

- ✍ Paul, a Jew with a rich pedigree, had achieved the height in self-righteousness. He rejects that self-righteousness and turns to the righteousness of Jesus Christ.
- ✍ Paul lists seven privileges and achievements to show the total inadequacy of man to save himself, pointing to salvation and the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross.

2. Three Privileges of Birth (Philippians 3:5)

A. Pride of birth—birth

- ✍ Paul's circumcision on the eighth day is exactly as specified in the Old Testament (Genesis 17:12, Leviticus 12:3)
- ✍ This implies something regarding his parents belief in God and His promises, not like that of the proselytes.

B. Pride of heritage—national heritage

- ✍ He was of the nation and descent of Israel, the dignified name of the people of God.

C. Pride of social status—connections

- ✍ His connection with the illustrious and faithful tribe of Benjamin was regarded as a matter of importance (Romans 11:1, Genesis 35:16-18).
 - ✎ Benjamin was the son of Jacob's favorite wife Rachel and his only son to be born

in the land of promise (Genesis 35:16-29).

- ✎ The tribe of Benjamin remained loyal to the Davidic dynasty after the division of the kingdom (1 Kings 12:23).
- ✎ The city of Jerusalem (the temple) lay within territory that belonged to Benjamin's tribe.
- ✎ This tribe held a position of honor, mustering just behind the tribe of Joseph, when the army of Israel was drawn up in battle array (Numbers 1:36).

3. Four Achievements of Self Effort

A. Pride of faithfulness and knowledge—"a Hebrew of Hebrews" (Philippians 3:5)

- ✎ Refers to his academic work in the languages of Hebrew and Aramaic.
- ✎ Paul was a Hebrew Jew and not a Hellenistic Jew, which speaks to he and his family's faithfulness. He kept his "roots."

B. Pride of religion—"concerning the law, a Pharisee" (Philippians 3:5)

- ✎ Paul had been taught by Gamaliel, the leading Pharisee of the day, this was doubtless because his father or forbearers were Pharisees.
- ✎ According to Paul in Acts 26:5 this party was "the strictest sect of our religion."
- ✎ They were the party of law. Their name is derived from Aramaic, meaning 'to be separate' that is from all that is prohibited in the law, together with keeping all the traditions which had allegedly been deduced from the law.
- ✎ The entire life of a Pharisee was submitted to all the requirements of the law, looking back to the time of Ezra for their origin.

C. Pride of zeal—"concerning zeal, persecuting the church" (Philippians 3:6)

- ✎ Paul's persecution of the church was a manifestation of the intensity of his commitment to uphold the law at all costs. His opposition to the Christian church revealed his zeal.
- ✎ Paul had previously fought for his religion (Acts 22:3-5, Galatians 1:14).
- ✎ He spared himself no hardship and showed no mercy to the church which lived by another rule. He sought to wipe out any cause that differed from him.

D. Pride of morality—"concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Philippians 3:6)

- ✎ When Paul says he is blameless, it is not a claim to be sinless. It means that when Paul sinned, he obeyed the law and took his sacrifice to the temple.
- ✎ Paul obeyed all commandments, rituals and ceremonies just like the Scriptures said, manifesting the sincerity of his commitment to uphold the law at all costs.
- ✎ He thought he had righteousness by adhering to his own religion. He was convinced that he was offering service to God (John 16:2).
- ✎ The bottom line of his confidence before God was related to his being faultless in the light of the law. The law was his righteousness. Given the innumerable requirements that were made of him, his obedience to the law was no small attainment.
- ✎ Other examples of the self-righteous morality that Paul held to prior to meeting Jesus can be seen in:
 - ✎ The prayer of the Pharisee in Jesus' parable (Luke 18:11-12)
 - ✎ The reply of the rich young ruler when Jesus listed some of the Ten Commandments, "All these things I have kept from my youth" (Luke 18:21).

Steroids for Your Soul: Reject Self-righteousness


Philippians 3:4-6

Reject Earthly Credentials for Joy and Unity in Christ

Rich Mullins said it well: "It is the sea that makes the sailor, and the land that shapes the sea; it is the wood that makes the carpenter, the very tools of his trade; it is love that makes the lover; and the Cross that makes the saint."


We must reject birth.

Righteousness is not found in birth nor rituals and ceremonies, although sadly, many believe they are acceptable to God because they have godly parents, or a godly spouse, or even godly children. Neither is righteousness found in maintaining the religious traditions of generations past. The godliness of others will never rub off on us, or count for us, or make us acceptable to God.

 Read Proverbs 30:12. What is true about us if we think we are clean in our own eyes?


We must reject heritage and social class.


Righteousness is not found in ancestral nor present-day social superiority. Bearing the name of a godly family, being born in a "Christian" nation, or being surrounded by Christian principles carry no merit with God. Yet many feel that the people of a so-called "Christian" nation are more acceptable to God than the heathens of an idol-worshipping tribe in the depth of a jungle.


 Read 2 Corinthians 10:12. What do we lack when we compare ourselves with other people, or commend ourselves because of how we compare with others? _____

We must reject religion.

Righteousness is not found in religious status. We live in a culture that promotes acceptability to God on the basis of belonging to a particular church—perhaps an upper-class church, perhaps a wealthy church, perhaps a more dynamic church, perhaps a more active church. What a danger!

 Read Matthew 7:22-23. Many works can be done in Jesus' name, but what will He declare to them? _____

 Remember Jesus' warning to the churches in Revelation 2-3.

 The church at Ephesus was active and doctrinally sound, yet deficient in love.

- ✗ The church at Pergamos was heretical and compromising.
- ✗ The church at Thyatira was full of corruption.
- ✗ The church at Sardis was dead.
- ✗ The church at Laodicea was luke-warm and self-satisfied.

✍ Jesus commended two churches

- ✗ The church at Smyrna was poor but rich.
- ✗ The church at Philadelphia was faithful and loyal.

We must reject knowledge.

Righteousness is not found in religious faithfulness, spiritual language, or ability to speak in religious terms. It's easy to think we are acceptable to God because we are faithful in doing good, faithful in studying our Bibles and doctrines, faithful in speaking religious "jargon."

✍ Read Matthew 5:20. Not even the Pharisees were righteous. How does Jesus tell us to act in comparison with the Pharisees? _____

We must reject zeal.

Righteousness is not found in religious commitments or zeal. Paul knew all about righteous zeal that day when he stood guard over the coats of Stephen's stoners (Acts 7:58).

✍ Read Romans 10:1-4. What is the problem with having a zeal for God that is ignorant of how Christ's righteousness supercedes the law? _____

We must reject religious ritual or law.

Righteousness is not found in keeping all the rituals and ceremonies of religion. It is never found in rules and regulations, no matter how strictly they are adhered to. These things are never righteousness, their purpose is to show us how desperately we are in need of Christ's righteousness! Law can justify no man in the sight of God because no man has ever lived who never sinned (James 2:10).

✍ Read Romans 3:20. What does the law reveal? _____

Every person born of a woman (except the sinless Christ), must say what Pharaoh said, "I have sinned," and what Achan said, "I have sinned," and what King Saul said, "I have sinned," and what King David said, "I have sinned," and what the Prodigal Son said, "I have sinned."

There is only one way for God to vanish the darkness of sin, and remove the degradation of sin, and heal the disease of sin, and cleanse the defilement of sin, and abolish the death of sin, and pay the debt of sin—the redeeming work of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. He paid the debt. He died the death. He cleanses from defilement. He heals the disease. He removes the degradation. He is the life. He is the righteousness.

Nothing in your hand you bring, when fully to the cross you cling.

Just as you can know about the president and not know him, you can know a lot about godliness without being godly.

"People shield themselves from their sins by seeking salvation in education, therapy, and wealth, but the only answer to sin is Christ."

~George Carey

God does not downsize His plans to fit us, but we can downsize what He is able to do in us by how we view ourselves.



19. Servants Know the Master



Philippians 3:7-9

The gospel is a reasonable system, and it appeals to man's understanding; it is a matter of thought and consideration, and it appeals to the conscience and the reflective powers. Hence, if we do not teach men something, we may shout, "Believe, Believe! Believe!" but what are they to believe? Each exhortation requires a corresponding instruction or it will mean nothing."

~C. H. Spurgeon

"A believer is the authorized representative of a sovereign God. One who lives, not in his own power, but in the power of the Ruler whose deputy he is, and his whole duty and responsibility is to carry out that Ruler's work faithfully, to wherever he is sent."

~J. I. Packer

"Man is born with his back toward God, when he truly repents, he turns around and faces God."

~D. L. Moody

NEW HEART = REGENERATION

1. Death to Self (Philippians 3:7)

A. What brought about a complete new value system in Paul's life?

- ✍ Paul had a past, once-for-all experience with Christ when he began to count his own righteousness as loss.
- ✍ "gain" & "loss" are opposites—conversion involves a change in thinking.
 - ✍ Paul the Apostle realized his gains were really losses, because they did not include Christ. What had seemed total and utter loss, was now immeasurable gain.
 - ✍ For the sake of Christ he parted with all he had held dear, and embraced what he had previously despised.

B. This is a past experience, a once-for-all experience

- ✍ "count" = In Vs. 7, this verb is in the perfect tense, a completed act in the past (on the Damascus Road), the effects of which still continue.
- ✍ This did not mean Paul quit working hard for God, his was never a 30 year old testimony.

2. Devotion to Abide (Philippians 3:8)

A. What about Paul's present feelings?

- ✍ Paul had an on-going continuous experience with Christ. He constantly counted all things as loss and waste in order to win Christ, and never entertained second thoughts about the excellence of knowing Jesus Christ.
- ✍ "Yet indeed" = what's more. Paul's not only endorsing what he just said, he's exceeding it.
- ✍ "count" = In Vs. 8, this verb is in the present tense, to indicate his state of mind at the time of writing, some 30 years after the Damascus Road experience

B. Paul says, "I have suffered the loss of all things"

- ✍ "Have suffered" = to forfeit, to cast away.
- ✍ Paul gave up not only the religious position he had attained, but also his Roman citizenship, classical education, and other social, financial, intellectual, and political gains.
- ✍ Even more, not only were they "loss," they had become "rubbish" (manure, dung). Compared with Jesus Christ, every loss is no loss at all, and every gain is rubbish.
- ✍ He expresses the strongest revulsion to them and rejection of them when compared with the precious and peerless priceless of knowing Jesus Christ.

C. Knowing about has value, knowing has vitality

- ✍ Paul doesn't just know about Jesus, he knows Him. This knowledge isn't intellectual, it's a relationally enriching personal experience.
- ✍ Devotions = devoting your day to Jesus Christ. Is your number one priority to know God and love God? It is impossible to "burnout" when you are in love with Jesus Christ.

3. Desire to Dwell (Philippians 3:9)

A. Paul's deep desire was to be found "in Christ"

✍ Paul sought a future experience with Christ, to be always "in Christ" so that on the day he was subjected to Divine scrutiny, he would be found faithful.

B. Two kinds of righteousness contrasted

✍ Righteousness from the law.

✍ Righteousness from the law resulted from works of obedience, in which he could boast.

✍ Paul rejects this as self-righteousness.

✍ Righteousness through faith in Christ.

✍ What the New Testament calls for comes from God only through imputation.

✍ God provides the sinner with the righteousness which His law requires, on the basis of what Christ has done by His obedience.

C. This verse defines the doctrine of Justification by faith alone

✍ Upon justification, the righteousness of Christ is imputed onto the believer.

✍ Jesus Christ came to earth, born of a virgin conceived by the Holy Spirit, to break the lineage of imputed sin. He lived a sinless life and was the perfect sacrifice to fulfill every condition of God's righteousness.

✍ Jesus Christ was crucified, buried in a borrowed tomb for three days, then raised from the dead by the power/glory of God. The price of sin was paid; the judgment of God satisfied.

✍ Mankind had a way to get back to God—the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed onto man, and the sin of man imputed onto Jesus Christ.

4. Pressing on To Know Christ (Philippians 3:10)

A. To know Christ is to know the power of Christ in your life

✍ Paul mentions resurrection first, and in speaking of it he mentions suffering rather than death. Why does he connect resurrection and suffering?

✍ As broken servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit enables the sufferer to not merely cope, but to rise above the sufferings which are to be endured.

✍ The power by which believers overcome suffering belongs to God and is manifested in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (2 Corinthians 4:7-11).

B. To know Christ is to participate in His Sufferings

✍ Christ endured suffering during His earthly ministry and so will His followers.

✍ Christianity is not a way around problems, it is a way through them.

✍ We cannot separate our sufferings from the power of His resurrection (1 Peter 2:20-24, Colossians 1:24).

C. To know Christ is to be made conformable to His death

✍ To gain my life I must first lose it—communion with Christ means communion with Him in His death.

✍ It is not possible to experience Christ's power nor suffer with Him without experiencing His death, time and again.

✍ It is a hard, demanding death, a death to self, a bearing of one's own cross (Romans 15:2-3).

*Years I spent in vanity and pride,
caring not my Lord was crucified,
knowing not it was for me He died
On Calvary.*

*By God's Word at last my sin I learned,
then I trembled at the love I'd spurned,
till my guilty soul imploring
turned to Calvary.*

*Now I've given to Jesus everything,
Now I gladly own Him as my King,
Now my raptured soul can
only sing of Calvary*

*O the love that drew salvation's plan!
O the grace that brought it down to man!
O the mighty gulf that God did span
at Calvary.*

~William R. Newell (1895)

"The new cross does not slay the sinner, it merely redirects him, it shows him a jollier and a cleaner way to live. It says: Have I got a deal for you, and if you don't like it you can return it for a full refund."

~A. W. Tozer

"To know Christ and to refuse to die daily is not possible."

~H. R. Jones

Steroids for Your Soul: Servants Know the Master


Philippians 3:7-9


Tom is a typical business man. When he's with the boys he drinks and talks dirty, when he's at work he flirts with the secretaries, when he's with a customer he lies a little to win them over. His home life is tense at best. He loves weekends, because he loves sports. He goes to church on Easter, Christmas, and Mothers Day if his wife coerces him enough, which ruins his Sundays.


However, for the first time in Tom's life, he begins watching a man at his son's little league games. Through that man's life and words he is slowly, over the course of a year, drawn toward spiritual things. After several long discussions with this man, one night, while lying in bed beside his sleeping wife, under the burdening guilt realized sinfulness, he cries out to the Lord Jesus Christ to be merciful to him and to save him. He puts his trust in Christ.


Do you know what happens to Tom? His entire outlook changes, he has a completely different value system. When he goes to the bar with his buddies, he now feels strange and uncomfortable. Instead of downing his normal quota of beers, he drinks one and even that makes him feel uncomfortable. His friend starts telling a dirty joke and he walks away. He talks to the opposite sex completely differently now. His boss is upset at him because he told the truth about when an order would be ready instead of lying. He now wants to go to church, and get this he even bought himself a Bible. Believe it or not he even takes notes. He now prays for those he once despised, and even asked one of them out for lunch to get things right. His home life is radically changed, he even calls his wife during the day for no other reason than to just see how she is doing and to let her know he loves her.

Have you Heard the Call of God?

-  Read Genesis 3:9. Does God know where Adam is? Of course. It is a question of conviction. Have you heard God call you, to ask you where you are? _____

- Adam responds by remaining hidden. To remain hidden means to remain un-forgiven. Instead of confessing his sin, Adam tried to hide it.
-  Read Genesis 3:21. What did God do with Adam and Eve? _____




-  Read Isaiah 61:10. What type of clothing brings joy? If you have not asked God for this yet, now is the time. If you have, write down your experience. _____

-  Read Romans 10:9-10. What goes hand-in-hand with faith? _____

Do you Know Christ the Lord?

In Philippians 3:7-9, Paul exposes the false, superficial experiential spiritualism of today that denies absolute truth.

Although our relativistic culture hates the idea, there is absolute truth. In the true experience of knowing the Lord Jesus Christ, all else is loss. Paul refers to Jesus Christ as His Lord (Philippians 3:8). It's impossible to use the words "No" and "Lord" together. Lord is more than a title, as we might use the word "Sir." Lord means Master, Supreme Ruler. Those He rules do not say, "No, Lord." Those who receive Christ as Savior, also receive Him as Lord.

-  Read Acts 2:36. What did God the Father make Jesus Christ? _____
-  Read Romans 10:9. What is the necessary confession we must make to be saved? _____
-  Read Romans 10:13. Whose name must we call on to be saved? _____

Christianity is not Convenient

The number one problem that blocks our understanding of Christianity is *pragmatism*. *Pragmatism* means "if it works, then it's right." In pragmatism, the ends justify the means.

Pragmatic Evangelism = Half of seminary students felt that if you tell someone they will go to hell it's in poor taste. Yet a read through of 1 Corinthians makes it clear that Paul avoided successful sales techniques. Why did they want to stone Paul? He could have avoided persecution by selling a successful gospel. But he was not concerned about losing people. He did not tickle itchy ears. Since then, somewhere along the way, we've come to view God as our little servant boy.

✍ Read 2 Corinthians 9:13. Paul talks about submissive obedience that flows from the confession of the gospel of Christ. Whose glory will be seen when we live up to what we profess to believe? _____

When a person confesses to the gospel, they've clearly seen the contrast between God's holiness and personal sinfulness and need for a Savior. Confession of the gospel must be lived out continually. We need to embrace the inconvenience of the gospel every day, continually recognizing our need for Jesus Christ.

✍ Read Matthew 13:45-46. What is of surpassing worth in your life? Have you parted gladly with all you had previously gathered in order to buy one pearl whose worth exceeded all that you had? _____

Embracing the Gospel

✍ Read Romans 1:1. Today God is still being cursed and dishonored, denied and ignored, rebelled against and rejected. However, like Paul, what are we set apart for? _____

✍ Read Romans 1:16. The power of God in it's highest form is found in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Do you believe the power of God to save you, or do you doubt your salvation? Do you wonder if you are OK with God, or if your latest mental wanderings have negated the gospel's realities in your life? God does not say to us, "Technically, you're justified, but today I'm too angry at you for it to be a reality." What will your thoughts be if you truly believe the power of God for salvation? _____

✍ Read 2 Corinthians 4:3-4. What blinds us from seeing the real glories of the gospel of Christ? _____

✍ Read Acts 20:24. What is Paul's overriding desire with regards to the gospel of Christ? _____

✍ Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-15. The gospel frees us from the shattering stronghold of self-love. When we embrace the gospel, what controls us? _____
Have you understood how lovely, how glorious, how breathtaking, how enthralling this love is? Have you been lured from self-love to devotion to the gospel?

"We have made Jesus Christ, the Savior, about as cheap as a hairbrush that has His name stamped on it, God is not a product to be pushed, but a King to be obeyed, sinners do not buy Him as they would a new self-help program, instead sinners renounce themselves and embrace the Savior, Jesus is not there to fill whatever is lacking in our self-esteem, or in our self fulfillment but he is there to slay our self-confidence and to place our confidence in Him alone."

~Gregory Lewis

"Everybody, each and all, we're gonna die eventually. And its no more or less our faults, than it is our destiny. So now Lord I come to you, asking only for your grace."

And when my body lies in the ruins, of the lies that nearly ruined me, will You pick up the pieces that were pure and true, and breathe Your life into and set them free.

And when You start this world over again from scratch, will You make me anew out of the stuff that lasts, stuff that is purer than gold is, and clearer than glass could ever be. Can I be with You? Can I be with You.

~Rich Mullins



20. Press On!



Philippians 3:11-16

The test of the genuineness of a desire is not the intensity of the language which is used to express it but whether it is followed by determined, strenuous activity to bring it to fulfillment.

"The nature of Christ's salvation is woefully misrepresented by the present-day evangelist. He announces a Savior from hell rather than a Savior from sin and that is why so many are fatally deceived, for there are multitudes who wish to escape the Lake of Fire who have no desire to be delivered from their carnality and worldliness."

~A. W. Pink

"Oh, for closest communion with God, till soul and body, head, face, and heart shine with Divine brilliancy! But oh! for a holy ignorance of our shining!"

~Robert Murray M'Cheyne

ETERNAL EXPERIENCE WITH CHRIST

1. Imagine Knowing Christ on the Other Side of Death (Philippians 3:11)

A. Paul was radically born again, with a sold-out, can-do attitude = by any means

✍ "If by any means" Paul is not expressing doubt (see 1:10 and 1:23), rather humility.

✍ The attainment of hope is not within his power. Paul wasn't the one who would bring about the resurrection which he was sure would take place.

✍ However Paul used any and all means to commit himself totally for one great purpose, to arrive to the resurrection of the dead.

✍ He is sold out for the glorious day of redemption, the absolute display of Christ's power over the physical and spiritual (John 10:17-18, 11:25, Colossians 2:15).

B. Paul desired that eternal, resurrected body

✍ On the glorious day of resurrection, believers earthly bodies will be transformed and recreated into perfect eternal bodies (1 Corinthians 15:51-53).

✍ To die means gain beyond what is possible in this life—being with Christ (Romans 8:23).

✍ Resurrection is rising again, made of stuff that lasts. Death totally left behind for glory.

C. Paul eagerly anticipated eternity

✍ "From the dead" - notice he does not say "from death."

✍ Resurrection from the dead means the general resurrection at the end of time in the day of Christ.

✍ The glorious day of resurrection will launch the events that will soon bring about the new heavens and earth (Isaiah 65:17, 66:22, Revelation 21:1, 2 Peter 3:10-13).

DESIRE AND DETERMINATION IN SEEKING CHRIST-LIKENESS

1. I'm Hanging On (Philippians 3:12)

A. Spiritual Desire—not that I have attained or am already perfected

✍ Paul wants the church at Philippi to understand no one has arrived—human imperfection.

B. Attitude—but I press on

✍ The verb "press on" embraces Paul's attitude. He doesn't just think about it, or talk about it, he strives for it as a hunter. He refuses to revel in any gains in the Christian race, which would hinder him from greater gain.

C. Goal—that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

✍ Paul wants to possess what Jesus took hold of him for on the road to Damascus, and he will not cease striving until he possesses all Christ has for him.

✍ When Jesus tackled Saul of Tarsus, He won (Ephesians 1:4).

2. I'm Reaching out (Philippians 3:13)

A. Holy ambition as life's purpose

- ✍ The prize is not awarded before the race is completed, therefore we must keep looking forward and not get comfortable. Maximum effort requires concentrated focus on the goal.
- ✍ Paul won't allow himself to be satisfied with, or diverted by, the ground he has already gained, when there is more to be possessed (Colossians 1:28-29).

B. Singular focus is necessary for progress

- ✍ One goal, straightforward = spiritual striving (Hebrews 12:1-2).
- ✍ The problem is that we stop and gaze at how much **we** have accomplished.

3. I'm Looking Upward at the Prize (Philippians 3:14)

A. The race's finish line is heaven, where God rewards (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

- ✍ Paul describes the prize in relation to God by associating it with God's will, a call to partake of all the holy bliss of heaven through the gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 2:12).

4. I'm Walking Obediently (Philippians 3:15-16)

A. The shoe leather of a believer's walk

- ✍ The testimony of Paul was not for self-display nor to gain admiration, but that the following spiritual principles be lived out in the lives of the Philippian believers:
 - ✍ Devotion to Jesus Christ as a person
 - ✍ Trust in Christ's imputed righteousness before God
 - ✍ Increasing conformity to Christ's imputed righteousness, through a willingness to suffer in His company and for His cause and with His help, until glory dawns and full likeness to Him is achieved.
- ✍ Paul was acutely conscious of the danger of seeking to impress men (Galatians 1:10, 2 Corinthians 5:9).

B. Spiritual maturity

- ✍ The secret to Christian living is Christian thinking. Christians must think as Jesus did if they would live as He did.
- ✍ Spiritual maturity includes practice as well as knowledge of Divine things (Hebrews 5:11-6:1).

C. Conviction (Paul's prayer of Philippians 1:9-11)

- ✍ If anyone thinks differently than the outlook or mindset described, God will reveal to that person the inappropriateness of his or her thinking, provided that person is concerned about the main things.

D. Appeal (Philippians 3:16)

- ✍ Each of them, including Paul, needed to keep on keeping on, in harmony with the gospel rule which they all believed and had been practicing.
- ✍ Paul appeals for unity (1:27, 2:2)
 - ✍ Division is often traceable to elevating unimportant matters to the primary place and demoting what is primary.
 - ✍ Division can also be traced to an improper spirit, attitude, or mood.

*Somewhere
between the lost and the
found
We're all hanging empty
and upside down
But I'm hanging on,
though the fall may
tempt me
And I believe in the dawn,
Though I tremble in the
night.*

*Somewhere
amidst these ins and
these outs
there's a fine line of
purpose
I follow even though the
haze of despair confuses
and hurts us,
I look to see that You're
there
And I run toward Your
light.*

*Someday
Now I don't know when,
but I know that your
coming,
You're coming back again
And the earth will burn
away and the sky fill with
thundering
As it announces the day
that has finally arrived*

*Somewhere
The time is still now
while were still hanging
empty
Empty and upside down
but I'm hanging on with
all that is in me
And I'll preach His word
And I'll laugh until I fly.*

~Rich Mullins

Steroids for Your Soul: Press On!

Philippians 3:11-16


"No man knows how bad he is till he has tried very hard to be good."


~ CS Lewis (Mere Christianity)


As human beings, we may measure and applaud visible results in our lives, but God is concerned with why we do what we do. It seems that often we allow a false standard for measuring success in life, to pressure us to perform for the wrong motives. This is particularly true regarding the church, if we measure success in terms of budgets, baptisms, and buildings. It is easy to fall into the trap of working to impress people with success in money, numbers, and possessions. Motives are tricky. We struggle to be totally honest about them, even with ourselves.


Desire and Determination in Seeking Christ-likeness

Do you suppose maybe Paul was a runner? He uses the metaphor of race running the most. Read each of the following passages and write down the lesson he teaches by comparing the Christian life to running a race.

 Romans 9:16 _____

 1 Corinthians 9:24, 26 _____


 Galatians 2:2 _____

 2 Timothy 4:7 _____


Paul talks about expending strenuous effort with focused concentration in order to prove our faith, much like a runner. Here in Philippians 3:12-16, we once again see Paul using the race to prompt us in our determination.

Running the Christian Race

Once we've confessed to the gospel, we've recognized God's holiness along with our sinfulness and our need for a Savior. This confession must be lived out continually by obedience.

 Read John 10:27-28. If you are truly saved, is anyone able to take that from you?

Certainly not.

 Read 2 Timothy 4:7-8. Persevering faith is proof that a professing person possesses saving faith. Fighting the good fight and finishing the race are proof or, not reason for, Christ's saving faith. Do you still hear and heed the echoes of Jesus' voice? _____

✍ Read 2 Thessalonians 2:14. We are either growing, or we are slowing. Which is true about you? How would you know? _____

✍ Read 2 Corinthians 12:9. God desires us to recognize that it is the power and life of Jesus Christ that operates within us. Apart from the gospel we can do nothing. We are utterly dependent upon the power of the Holy Spirit to produce supernatural, eternal results in our lives. What then, is the benefit of weakness? _____

In what areas have you found yourself to be weak? _____

If you were relying on God's sufficient grace, what would others see in you? _____

✍ Read Colossians 1:29. Almost anyone can manufacture the spectacular, but only the Spirit of God can produce powerful work within us. Nothing can stop the Spirit of God from doing His work. However, two active verbs are used in this verse that describe the human effort we expend in conjunction with the Spirit. The two verbs, depending on your translation, are "toil" and "struggle." How have you faithfully toiled? _____

How have you faithfully struggled? _____

You'll not see the need to toil and struggle if you've become complacent in your faith. If you think you've reached the finish line of the race, you won't keep running hard. If you think you've reached maturity in Christ, you'll stop chasing after His righteousness. You won't welcome conviction in the form of sermons, admonitions, rebukes. You'll become hardened to your sin, blind to your weakness, and calloused to your need.

✍ Read Matthew 5:4. Who are the people assured of the kingdom of heaven? _____

In order to run the race, we must walk in confession and repentance of our sin, and run toward holiness.

"Somewhere beyond these reasons and feelings, somewhere beyond the passion and fatigue, I know your there, and Your Spirit is leading me somewhere beyond all this."

~Rich Mullins



21 Word vs World



Philippians 3:17-21

If you don't stand for anything you'll fall for everything.

John Newton, a redeemed slave trader who wrote "Amazing Grace" said, "I have ever to confess with sorrow to that I am far from what I ought to be and far from what I want to be, but far from what I once was."

TRUTH

1. Who is with Paul as He Stands for Truth? (Philippians 3:17)

A. Paul: an example of justification vs. legalism

- ✍ In 3:1-3 Paul warns about the dogs, that they are in fact legalists since they are adding something to Christ for salvation (Galatians 5:1).
- ✍ How to deal with legalism = legalists need a clear understanding of justification as Paul has taught in Philippians 3:4-9.
 - ✍ Justification = A positional state of being declared 'righteous' by an Almighty Holy God because of faith in Jesus Christ plus nothing.
- ✍ Paul clearly teaches that the doctrine of Justification is by faith, alone (Romans 3:21-5:21).

B. Continuous command: Mimic me as I follow Christ

- ✍ "Pattern" - this is the word which gives us the noun "type." It refers to something or someone who is like something or someone else.
 - ✍ Literally the word means "a mark produced by something." For Paul, his colleagues, and the true believers at Philippi, this was the gospel of Christ (1:27)
- ✍ Those who add to the gospel are enemies of the cross. Friendships with them will not lead to godliness.

2. Caution: Do not mimic enemies of the cross (Philippians 3:18-19)

A. Paul warns against those who don't seek Christ-likeness.

- ✍ Paul gives this warning by contrasting sanctification (growing in godliness) with antinomianism (against the law).
- ✍ Antinomianism says, "I am saved, now I have the liberty to live any way I want."
- ✍ How to deal with antinomianism = antinomianists need a clear Biblical understanding of sanctification as Paul has taught in Philippians 3:10-16.

- ✍ Sanctification = Positional and experiential, consisting of both faith and work. Not the popular, "Let go and let God."

- ✍ Paul clearly teaches that we are to be active in our faith (Romans 6:1—8:17). Faith without works is dead (James 2:14-26).

B. Justification and sanctification

- ✍ Without an understanding of the difference between justification and sanctification, we will have a wrong attitude about God's holiness and man's sinfulness.
- ✍ Wrong theology leads to wrong living, mimicking the wrong pattern. It's teachers are enemies of the cross, for they take away from the gospel. They are to be avoided, not imitated.

C. Truths regarding enemies of the cross:

- ✍ They face eternal destruction, torment, punishment (Matthew 25:46, 2 Thessalonians 1:9).

- ✎ The legalists deserve this for adding works to the cross.
- ✎ The antinomianists deserve this for stripping the cross of its power to change lives.

- ✎ Their god is their stomach. They serve their appetites, their desires. They bow to unrestrained sensual desires and so are condemned for not worshipping God (Jude 4).
- ✎ They boast in what disgraces them, glory in the shame of self-glory. They are proud of what Paul calls “rubbish” (Philippians 3:8)
- ✎ They evidence an earthly focus (James 4:4, 1 John 2:15).

D. Direction and desire

- ✎ What are you walking towards? (Philippians 3:18)
 - ✎ Are you drawn to those whose thoughts, values, and aims are opposed to the thoughts and aims Christ had in dying on the cross?
 - ✎ The cross of Christ exhibits self-sacrifice for the good of others, while the dominant pervasive concern of enemies of the cross is self-gratification.
- ✎ What is your desire in life? (Philippians 3:19)
 - ✎ The mind of unregenerate people leads to destruction. They worship the god of their stomach and glory in their shame.
 - ✎ Wrong worship indicates a disordered and ruinous life in which the physical and the sensual are not only enthroned, but boasted in. This is the expression of a fleshly mind, without abundant life and peace with God (Romans 8:6).

3. Citizenship: Heavenly Citizenship (Philippians 3:20)

A. Those with heavenly citizenship have a different destination.

- ✎ “citizenship” = politics. Heaven is the state to which Christians belong. What does the government of our home, heaven, do for us? It gives us confidence, even jubilation, but also responsibility regarding how we are to now live.
 - ✎ Could it be possible that belonging to the most powerful nation on earth dulls our reality of belonging to heaven?
- ✎ “eagerly wait” = same word as in 3:13—to crane the neck as an athlete eyes the finish line he is about to cross.
- ✎ We eagerly await the person who will finalize our salvation (Romans 8:18-39), the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior.

4. Ultimate Christ-likeness (Philippians 3:21)

A. The expectation of believers is transformation into Christ-likeness

- ✎ On earth, although we are growing young spiritually through the Holy Spirit, physically our bodies are perishing, subject to weakness, dishonor, and decay.
- ✎ Salvation is not merely spiritual (as Gnosticism teaches). Physically, it will encompass the body, the separation of person from body at death that is only temporary. Our new body, resurrected and renewed will have the essential form of the body of Christ’s glory, redeemed into the likeness of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:42-57).
- ✎ Believers expect Jesus Christ to come with power to subdue everything because He is Lord and every knee will bow (Philippians 2:9-11).
- ✎ Jesus Christ, Savior and Lord, will manifest His power with irresistible energy. Just as crea-

“The mind not only produces a life which is ongoing but seals a destiny which is unending.”

~Hywell Jones

“In that great and terrible day, there will be those white with shock when they find that they have depended upon a mental assent to Christianity instead of upon the miracle of new birth.”

~A. W. Tozer

We drove home from Canada one Friday night in a blinding snowstorm. A slew of emotions overtook us, including fear. Physical fatigue factored into the frowns playing on our faces. But the focus, the ache to get home overrode our feelings and our fatigue, and we kept going. We had an unselfish yearning to get home.

Steroids for Your Soul: Word vs. World

Philippians 3:17-21

"Quite obviously the key to our ministry and the solution to our mistakes is the daily surrender of our lives to Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of Lords."

~Stephen Olford


Bobby Clarke was the irrefutable leader of the wonderful Philadelphia Flyers in the 70's and early 80's. I entered the scene in 1982, when his career as a player was winding down. Dave Poulin, who was to become the captain of our team, and I were close friends. We lived in the same sub-division and drove to practice together. One memorable day in the locker room, Bob took the time to clearly teach Dave Poulin and me that when someone stands up to make a point, our reaction was important. It made a huge difference in regards to how the team would respond. Where we willing to stand with the player who made a point, or would we hang him out to dry?


There will always be people who take a stand for the positive or the negative side...which side will we choose? Paul says, don't just stay in the background, make a stand.


Areas in Which We Choose to take a Stand for Christ

Psychological Counseling or Biblical Counseling

One area in which a stand must be taken is in the area of either a psychological understanding of the human condition, or a biblical understanding of the human condition. The two are not compatible if the Bible is absolute truth. Psychological paradigms are based on the theories of a variety of well-meaning men, eager to help people. They have, however, denied that the Bible can do what it says it can.

 Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. How much can a man be equipped for by the Scriptures?

 Read 2 Peter 1:3-4. How much of what we need for life and godliness have His great and precious promises given us? _____

 Read Romans 15:4. What is the connection between the Scriptures and hope?

Either we believe in the sufficiency and authority and ability of God's Word, or we don't. Let's stand together.

Gold or God

One of the best examples of problem solving that I've ever seen took place one day after practice with the Philadelphia Flyers. Two teammates were arguing over money, rather vehemently. One said the other owed him a thousand and two hundred dollars, and the other disputed this amount, quite adamantly. Bobby Clarke overheard them arguing, pulled his checkbook out of his pocket, and turned to the one who was owed the money. He wrote a check for one thousand and two hundred dollars, handed it to the player, and then asked, "Now what's the problem?"

To me, that served as an excellent example of thinking well of gold. Sadly though, believers often are characterized by stinginess rather than generosity.

✍ Read Romans 16:17-18. What danger threatened the church? _____

✍ Read James 2:6. Since the beginning of the church, there have been wealthy people trying to control of how things are done in the church. How can wealth make it easy to be influenced towards division? _____

Read James 2:1-5. Why is it important not to show partiality? _____

✍ Read 2 Timothy 1:13. Watch out who to look up to! Are you attracted to sold-out Christians? Who are your friends? _____

✍ Read Galatians 5:13-15. We been saved in order to serve our brothers and sisters. Do you have a foxhole attitude with other Christians? Thinking back to the first story about Bob Clarke, on the previous page. Does your silence "hang a brother or sister out to dry"? Is there someone you need to serve by hanging in there with them and standing with them?

We have to choose the right battle-Jesus Christ.

We must use the right methods-the doctrine of God's Word.

We have to fight with the right attitude-Humility.



22 Chasing Down Unity



Philippians 4:1-3

"We are bidden to 'put on Christ,' to become like God, That is, whether we like it or not, God intends to give us what we need, not what we think we want. Once more, we are embarrassed by the intolerable compliment, by too much love, not too little."

~C S Lewis

"You see the Lord said 'Church, you better love, because it is a wounded world that needs a healing touch.' and He gave us a promise and He gave us a job; He'll be with us but the work is up to us, it's up to us."

~Rich Mullins

"When we walk in the Holy Spirit, it's not that He enables us to have the capacity to love, but that He pours out in our hearts the love of God. It is pathetic the number of people who are piously trying to make their poor human hearts love God!"

~Oswald Chambers

THREE FACETS THAT AFFECT THE FLOW OF LOVE WITHIN THE CHURCH

1. It is a command not an option (Philippians 4:1)

A. Sibling love

✍ "Beloved" = the richest, deepest, and most intense Greek word for love (Philippians 1;3-6).

B. Servants love

✍ "my joy and crown" = Paul's joy and reward was found in the people who followed Christ (Philippians 1:7-8, 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20).

C. Steadfast love

✍ Finish faithfully (Philippians 1:9-11, Hebrews 10:35-39).

✍ Love within the church is commanded!

✍ God is love (1 John 4:7-12).

✍ Without daily confession of sin, it is not possible to walk in His righteousness and love.

✍ Without confession of sin, you don't love God (abstract), because you won't be able to truly love others (concrete).

2. It will be challenged (Philippians 4:2)

A. Church strife

✍ Imagine the embarrassment of Euodia and Syntyche when this letter from Paul was read aloud at service.

✍ The sin is not mentioned, and sides are not taken, Paul goes right to solution. The issue is not the issue, solution is the issue.

✍ Are you part of the problem, or part of the solution? (Ephesians 4:31)

✍ Set aside your pride and anger, remember that every knee will confess and bow (Hebrews 12:12-15).

B. Church solace

✍ "be of the same mind" = not my will, but Thine (John 14:19-20, 27). If both women walked in the Lord, there would be harmony.

✍ The church had a duty to help these women.

✍ Truth can never be compromised:

✍ Paul confronted Peter (Galatians 2:11). Peter bowed to truth.

✍ John confronted Diotrephes (3 John 9-10). Diotrephes remained proud.

C. Church Savior

- ✍️ Jesus came in humility and obscurity, modeling the simplicity of obedience and faith.
 - ✍️ His miracles were mostly private, seen by few and misunderstood by most.
 - ✍️ Jesus would die a shameful death, yet His glorious resurrection by the power of God remains the most undisputed fact in history.
 - ✍️ God the Father has centered everything in Jesus (Ephesians 1:22-23, 4:1-6).
- ✍️ Although the love within the church is commanded, it will be challenged. How will we respond to the challenge? In order to love each other, our eyes must be on Jesus Christ, our Savior (John 14:6).

2. There needs to be Co-operation (Philippians 4:3)

A. Love's strength

- ✍️ "urge" = Paul pleads, begs, encourages a teammate, foxhole mentality.

B. Love's service—shared struggles

- ✍️ A consideration of the events at the beginning of the church at Philippi help us understand their experiences:
 - ✍️ After Lydia's conversion, Paul and his ministry team stayed in her home (Acts 16:13-15).
 - ✍️ For several days, a demon-possessed female fortune-teller harassed them (Acts 16:16-17).
 - ✍️ Paul cast the demon from her, which upset her masters so greatly that they had Paul and Silas arrested (Acts 16:18-21).
 - ✍️ The preachers were beaten and imprisoned (Acts 16:22-23).
 - ✍️ After an earthquake and their release from prison, the jailor was converted (Acts 16:25-34).
 - ✍️ When the authorities realized Paul was a Roman citizen, they begged him to leave Philippi (Acts 16:35-39).
 - ✍️ They met for one last gathering in Lydia's house (Acts 16:40).
 - ✍️ This may be the struggle in which Euodia and Synteche had shared with Paul, Silas, Lydia, Clement, and the rest of the body.

- ✍️ Persecution was not the problem. It only strengthens the church. On the other hand, discord results in instability.

C. Love's security—names in the Book of Life (Revelation 3:5).

- ✍️ "Book of Life" - God's register of the Redeemed (Exodus 32:32, Psalm 69:28, Daniel 12:1, Malachi 3:16-17, Luke 10:20, Revelation 3:5, 13:8, 20:12, 15:21, 27).
- ✍️ Are you heavenly minded? Or so earthly minded you're no heavenly god?

"Revival restrains the righteous anger of God, restores the conscious awareness of God, and reveals the gracious activity of God."

~Stephen Olford

Steroids for Your Soul: Chasing Down Unity

Philippians 4:1-3

I vividly recall when I was selected to play in the NHL All star game. As a member of the Philadelphia Flyers we were conditioned to think that all other hockey players, other than those who wore the black and orange, were our enemies. I realized at this event, that they weren't as evil as I had been led to believe. They loved the same game I loved, they just played in a different city. We find plenty of reasons not to love fellow believers in the church. Let's realize that we are on the same team as those who wear the sweater bearing the name of Jesus Christ.

Betty was convinced her church needed a full week of good old-fashioned revival services. After church one Sunday, she shook the pastor's hand and said, "Pastor, I know a really good evangelist who will surely bring people down the aisle. Do you want his number?"

Often we act like Betty, as if the aim of good evangelistic preaching is to get people down the aisle. But is preaching not to be aimed at the heart, exposing the truth found in the Bible, by the power of the Holy Spirit?

The reputation of the early Christians in the New Testament church was this: "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too." (Acts 17:6) The gospel of Jesus Christ didn't fit in, it was revolutionary. The Holy Spirit empowered men to preach with a fervency that changed society (Acts 2). Sadly, today the reverse could be said, "The world has turned the church upside down." When the divorce rate in the church is the same as in the world, when child abuse and pornography run rampant in the church, when adultery is partaken of by church members, what has happened to the Name of Christ?

Paul's teaching was radical. As he traveled from city to city, people were compelled to listen. If they obeyed, they experienced true freedom in Jesus Christ. Nothing has changed since then, except the name and face of the preachers. The gospel of Jesus Christ is as powerful as ever. The Word of God still pierces hard hearts, and cuts through to seeking souls and spirits. Jesus Christ is still the answer. And the true church still reflects His majestic and pure glory by loving unity.

Many God-fearing Christians recognize the puny efforts of the church today. They seek God for an outpouring of revival to sweep through His people, restoring the church to His glory. But let's be careful. If we chase every new thing, look for a program or a method, or rely on a personality to sway the masses and increase the church, we'll neglect what God has promised to bless—the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 1:13) and the unified love of the body (John 17:23-26). Have we lost faith and focus? Do we believe that the message and love of Christ is still what people need the most?

Love and Unity

Paul doesn't act as if he's the only preacher who can help people. In Philippians 4:1-3, when he addresses two women, Euodia and Synteché, who are struggling to agree in the Lord, he pulls the rest of the body in to work together toward loving unity.

Jesus said "Love our neighbor as yourself." Jesus knows our selfishness, doesn't he. He accepts it as a given. Essentially He says, "The starting point for loving others is your natural desire for your own self-safety and self-satisfaction. You want to be happy. You want success. You know all about self-love, and you do it well." In recent years, psychology has tried to tell us that we need to improve on what we already do so well, that we need to improve our self-esteem, or self-image. (Actually, those with low self-image are really the most prideful of all. Think about it. They have come to believe that what they need is for themselves and others to think more often about how wonderful they are.)

✍ Read 2 Corinthians 5:14. What controls us? _____

Often we think the love of Christ will compel us to some social-justice affirmative—such as taking care of the poor, or taking in orphans. Those are good things. But this passage tells us that first the love of Christ leads us to conclude that we are dead. We no longer live for ourselves.

✍ So, if we are to love our neighbor as ourselves, and if we are to die to ourselves, what will we do? We will pursue their happiness and their well-being, as much, Jesus said, as we pursue our own. It sounds good, but really? How will I ever have the mindset to do all the things that I do for myself, for others? Obeying the second commandment hinges on obeying the first commandment. Read Matthew 22:37-38. What is the first commandment? _____

Self-love is fulfilled in loving God! I go to God for love! He loves me by forgiving me of my sins, including my selfishness, and then I can selflessly love others with the energy and devotion I would otherwise pour into myself.

✍ Read John 15:12. What command does Jesus give regarding love within for one another within His church? _____

Before He gives the command He tells us how we'll be able to do it. Read John 15:9-10. What are we to abide in? _____

Now, compare John 15:11 with Philippians 4:4. Jesus tells us to abide in His love for joy. Paul tells the two women who need to love each other to rejoice in the Lord. There's a connection between loving unity and joy, isn't there!

✍ Nothing robs us of joy like bitterness. What is the problem it causes for many, according to Hebrews 12:15? _____

✍ What about me?

- Do I have bitterness to get rid of?
- Do I have hurt feelings to get over?
- Do I keep my eyes off the challenges of ministry and on Christ?
- Do I need to get busy laboring side by side in the church?
- Do I choose to co-operate as a fellow believer?
- Real Christians serve together in unified love!

"Never try to explain God until you have obeyed Him. The only bit of God we understand is the bit we have obeyed."

~Oswald Chambers

This life, therefore, is not righteousness, but growth in righteousness, not health but healing, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it; the process is not yet finished but it is going on. This is not the end, but it is the road; all does not yet gleam in glory, but all is being purified.

~Martin Luther



23. JOY



Philippians 4:4

How would you react? For 3 consecutive months, you have to work 100 per week in a filthy workplace doing excruciating hard work. The one stipulation is that you can't complain, murmur while continuing to work hard. At the end of the 3 months, you receive a yearly pension of 1 million dollars per year. How would you respond? Is the goal enough to keep you focused amid the tough times? Trials? Sweat? Dreariness?

Well what about heaven? Why do I complain? Where is my focus?

"If Christ's honor is our passion, the pursuit of pleasure in Him is our duty."

~John Piper (The Dangerous Duty of Delight)

JOY

1. Rejoice! (Philippians 4:4)

A. Paul writes from death row, "Rejoice in the Lord always..."

- ✍ If we are miserable it is because we have decided to say no to joy!
 - ✍ Joy is not a matter of temperament or of being carefree.
 - ✍ It doesn't drive out all other feelings, but it lives as a big brother among other emotions. Joy is to override feelings of disunity, such as Eudodia and Synteche evidenced.
 - ✍ Joy is similar to the peace that passes all understanding, greater than any circumstance that you may be in.

B. Background

- ✍ From Paul's previous exhortation to unity, and his attempt to correct a case of disunity between Eudodia and Synteche, he proceeds to exhort the church to maintain certain positive Christian virtues.
 - ✍ Joy is consistently the mark of a believer, and corporately of the church.
- ✍ His double emphasis may be in response to "How can we rejoice, in view of our difficulties?"
 - ✍ Their difficulties included attacks from false teachers, personality clashes among believers, persecution from the world, or threat of imminent death—all of which Paul himself was experiencing as he wrote.
 - ✍ We are not immune to sorrow nor can we be insensitive to the troubles of others, yet we count Christ our highest joy. In this way we can know inner peace and joy in every circumstance (Psalm 137:6).

- ✍ Paul has made several references to joy in this letter (2:18, 29, 3:1), underlying its importance to the Philippian church, but here in Ch. 4 he is emphatic!

THREE BONDS IN BATTLING BITTERNESS

1. First Bond in Battling Bitterness—Divine Delight (Philippians 4:4)

A. What—"Rejoice"

- ✍ "Rejoice" = Joy is a quality and not simply an emotion, grounded upon and derived from God Himself. Joy is the result of a deep fellowship between the church and Himself (John 16:22).
- ✍ Joy characterizes the Christians life on earth (1 Peter 1:8), and anticipates the joy of being with Christ forever in the kingdom of heaven (Revelation 19:7).
- ✍ Joy is promised to believers (Psalm 16:11).
- ✍ Joy accompanies the gift of the Holy Spirit to believers (Acts 13:52).

B. The Duty of Joy

- ✍ We are to maintain the joyful spirit that has characterized Paul's letter (Jeremiah 15:16).
- ✍ True joy is rooted in understanding that you are loved and forgiven.
- ✍ God's holiness + Christ's grace + my sinfulness = Joy!

C. The Deliverance of Joy (Isaiah 61:10)

- ✍ Joy is progression in the faith (1 Thessalonians 2:19).
- ✍ Joy is the outcome of suffering and sorrow for Christ's sake (Colossians 1:24).
- ✍ Joy is produced by God, not us. We choose whether to appropriate it.
- ✍ Joy is a gift of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22).
- ✍ Joy is dynamic, not static. We do not sit around waiting for joy, we find joy in pleasing and delighting in God and man.
- ✍ Joy is the result of calling to mind that the Lord is the Lord everywhere and always, both in the world and in the church.

2. Second Bond in Battling Bitterness—Divine Dependence (Philippians 4:4)

A. How—"in the Lord"

- ✍ Joy is revealed to God's children by Divine revelation (Luke 10:21).
- ✍ Joy is found by lost sheep in His arms (Luke 15:5).
- ✍ Obedience is the key to joy (John 15:11).
- ✍ Joy is God's goal for us, bestowed through His words (John 17:13).
- ✍ Christ exemplified joy that sustained Him at the cross (Hebrews 12:2).

B. Joy is interrupted by sin

- ✍ Since joy is a gift, it can be interrupted by sin. Every believer is called to the joy of Christ by walking with Him in the knowledge of His salvation.

3. Third Bond in Battling Bitterness—Divine Dedication (Philippians 4:4)

A. When—"always"

- ✍ Joy is commanded in every experience and every circumstance (James 1:2-4)..
 - ✍ Pauls' thorn in the flesh was there to educate, not hurt (2 Corinthians 12:7).
 - ✍ Jesus Christ's joy endured a night in prison, through death to the dawn of glory (Hebrews 12:2).
 - ✍ The Church at Philippi was born out of joy amid suffering (Acts 16:25).
 - ✍ Famine (Habbakkuk 3:17-18)
 - ✍ Persecution (Acts 5:41)
 - ✍ Imprisonment (Acts 16:23-25)
 - ✍ Poverty (2 Corinthians 6:10)
 - ✍ Loss of property (Hebrews 10:34)
 - ✍ Fiery trials (1 Peter 4:12-13)

B. Final exhortation— "again I say, rejoice."

- ✍ Paul is earnest about this matter, and wants the Philippians to be as well.
- ✍ Divine joy is attractive, magnetic, and powerful.

"The happiness of the creature consists in re-joicing in God, by which also God is magnified and exalted."

~Jonathan Edwards (The End for Which God Created the World)

"Whatever is needed for the child of God, he shall have, for all is theirs to further them to heaven, if it is crosses, he shall have them, if it is disgrace he shall have it for all is ours to serve our main good."

~Richard Sift, Puritan

"How sweet all at once it was for me to be rid of those fruitless joys which I had once feared to lose!...You drove them from me, you who are the true, the sovereign joy. You drove them from me and took their place, you who are sweeter than all pleasure."

~St. Augustine (Confessions)

Steroids for Your Soul: Joy

Philippians 4:4

"God threatens terrible things if we will not be happy."

~Jeremy Taylor, Puritan

"What comes to our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us....Always the most revealing thing about the Church is her idea of God, just as her most significant message is what she says about Him or leaves unsaid, for her silence is often more eloquent than her speech. She can never escape the self-disclosure of her witness concerning God."

~A. W. Tozer (The Knowledge of the Holy)

"It is a Christian duty, as you know, for everyone to be as happy as he can."

~C. S. Lewis (Sheldon Vanauken in A Severe Mercy)

Some of us are confused by the emphatic double command to rejoice. How can we command the way we feel? But Paul is really serious about joy, isn't he, the way he says it again. Joy is at the heart of real and credible Christianity.


Obviously, we need to do some more thinking about emotions. We begin by asking, "What is joy?" The word is a present imperative. Imperative means command. Present means it's a command to a continual, habitual practice. So Paul is commanding us to continually, habitually, practice joy. The word "joy" means a deep inner confidence that all is well. Now we see how it's possible to command joy. If God is in control of everything, and works everything out for our good, yes, we can be commanded to respond with joy. The Philippians' circumstances were challenging their trust that all was well, hence, Paul's double admonishment.

Joy can be described as a quality we choose rather than an emotion we produce. This character quality has a source. God is the sure, steady, and solid source of joy. The way you think about God will affect your obedience to the command to rejoice. Joy is the result of a close, vertical relationship with your Savior, Jesus Christ.

Questions about Joy


How do I lose joy?

We lose joy through hard-heartedness. Our hearts become hard when we carry un-confessed sin. If you are not joyful, consider where bitterness, lust, or discontentment have taken root in your life.

 Read Psalm 51:8. What does David want from God? _____
Now Read Psalm 51:1-7. What has preceded his request for joy? _____

When we are harboring sin, all is not well between us and God. The best we'll be able to do is muster up a phony cheerful disposition, but there'll be no joy in our hearts.

How is joy restored?

 Read Psalm 51:12. David knows that joy comes from God, and asks God to cause joy to return. Read Psalm 51:10. Confession leads to repentance. How does David describe repentance? _____

Truths about God that Lead to Joy

The Goodness of God

✍ Read Deuteronomy 26:11. What reason is given as the why the people of Israel must rejoice? _____

✍ Read Exodus 18:9. Jethro was Moses' father-in-law. Why did he rejoice? _____

✍ Read 2 Chronicles 7:10. After the temple dedication, why did Solomon rejoice? _____

The Salvation of God

✍ Read 1 Samuel 2:1. What was the source of Hannah's joy? _____

✍ Read Psalm 13:5. What was the source of David's joy? _____

Serving God leads to Joy

✍ Read Philippians 1:25-26. If God would free Paul from prison, he would minister for what reason? _____

✍ Read Deuteronomy 28:47-48. What would happen if the people did not serve God with joy? _____

"The end of the creation is that the creation might glorify God. Now what is glorifying God, but a rejoicing at that glory He has displayed?"

~Jonathan Edwards (The "Miscellanies")

"Maximum happiness, both qualitatively and quantitatively, is precisely what we are duty-bound to pursue."

~John Piper (The Dangerous Duty of Delight)

"Joy is the seriousness of Heaven."

~C. S. Lewis



24. Gentleness



Philippians 4:5

“When I judge others, I instantly impute to them every mean motive of which I would have been guilty had I been in their circumstance (Romans 2:1). In Matthew 6:15, Jesus puts the forgiveness of our trespasses on the grounds that we forgive those who trespass against us. If we do not forgive them, we simply attribute to others what we would be capable of in the way of meanness, in similar circumstances. The statement, that we only see what we bring with us, the power of seeing, is perfectly correct. If I see meanness and wrong and evil in others, let me take the self-judgment at once- that is what I would be guilty of if I were in their circumstances. The searching light of the Scriptures comes over and over again on this line, and we come to find that there is no room in the Christian for cynicism.”

~Oswald Chambers

FOUR FACTORS TO GENTLENESS

1. The Snap Count—“let”

A. Allow nothing inconsistent

- ✍ The game is on. We approach the line of scrimmage, the play has been called, and we know the snap count.
- ✍ No matter how we are treated by abusers, gentleness displays reasonableness and consistently refuses to retaliate.

2. The Play—“your gentleness”

A. Gentleness is a mark of genuine believers

- ✍ The word denotes mildness, patience, a yielding of oneself in consideration for another. It is sometimes translated “moderation” or “forbearance.”
 - ✍ It refers to reasonably seeking what is best for another rather than pushing one’s own right or opinion (2 Corinthians 10:1).
 - ✍ Gentleness considers others first in demeanor, speech, and conduct.
- ✍ An elder is to be gentle, not violent (1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 3:2).
- ✍ The concept of gentleness is closely associated with being peace-loving, with rectifying the injustices of justice (James 3:17).

B. Gentleness is a mark of spiritual strength

- ✍ Gentleness includes:
 - ✍ Charity towards others faults
 - ✍ Friendliness
 - ✍ Reasonableness
 - ✍ Generosity, good-will, magnanimity, big-heartedness
 - ✍ Leniency, graciousness, and mercy towards the failures of others
 - ✍ Not condescending, not puffed up, openly humble while silently proud
 - ✍ Brought on by a careful examining of one’s own life
 - ✍ Kind, nurturing (1 Thessalonians 2:7)
 - ✍ Not morally weak, not doctrinally “milk-toast”
- ✍ Gentleness follows:
 - ✍ Joy in the Lord. Sadness produces gloom toward others, manifesting as a hardening spirit in oneself.

✍ Gentleness leads us to:

- ✍ Careful assessment of our own affairs (speak the truth in love)
- ✍ Gracious speech
- ✍ Patience to endure injustice, humiliation, and mistreatment.

✍ The play is running, but who, if anyone, is watching? Are they paying attention, and what impact will this play have?

3. The Spectators—“be known to all men”

A. Let all men see it, even the most ungodly, that you may win them.

✍ We are to exercise patience and longsuffering even to our persecutors (Philippians 1:20, Galatians 6:1-6, Luke 6:37-42).

- ✍ Meekness and gentleness are certainly seen in Christ Jesus.
- ✍ Here is another link with His mind (2:5).
- ✍ Perhaps it was that realization which led Paul to speak about the Lord’s nearness.

B. Even enemies require gentleness

✍ Kindness is to replace vengeance (Romans 12:19-21, 1 Peter 3:9-12).

✍ Play has been called, the ball has been snapped, the audience watches alertly, but what is the big picture? Why all the fuss?

4. The Game Plan—“the Lord is at hand”

A. Why does Paul end his exhortation to be gentle with a declaration regarding the nearness of the Lord?

✍ The Lord is coming again! This is the motive to every grace (James 5:8-9).

- ✍ We will face justice. Harshness to others prematurely takes into our own hands the Lord’s exclusive prerogative of judging (1 Corinthians 4:5).
- ✍ We will see His goodness and gentleness face to face.

✍ The Lord’s Spirit supplies us with gracious aid on this day. A believer can look to the Lord to help him or her be gentle and bring good out of every situation.

B. Do you really have time to focus on other people’s sins?

- ✍ The more you see your own sin for what it is, you will be more gentle.
- ✍ Remember, you will give account of yourself.

“People who are right with God are often guilty of the most ugly characteristics and you are astounded that they do not see it; but wait; if they go on with God, slowly and surely God’s Spirit will educate them from the general principles to the particular items, until after a while they are so careful with their lives, that they prove their sanctification in the growing manifestation of the new disposition God has given them. No wonder the Book of God counsels us to be patient with ourselves and with one another!”

~Oswald Chambers

“It’s gone on long enough, the pig sty in the landscape has to go. If we expect the tourist to return to Lake Evangelicalism we are going to have to do something with the ugly ducklings. Some changes are long overdue. Somebody should have tarred and feathered the very first stingy board member, or strung up the whole squint-eyed-type committee. Whoever they were, they did us no favor by not doing so. They got their way, just look around, for years we have lived with this reputation. There are some wonderful exceptions in this big lake, but not nearly enough.”

~Chuck Swindoll

Steroids for Your Soul: Gentleness

Philippians 4:5

High school basketball gets pretty intense! I remember one of our sons' games, a close game with tight scoring, the lead going back and forth. The coach obviously knew that the team was tense and nervous, that they were missing baskets they normally made, and he wanted to encourage them to relax. His method of doing so caught my full attention all the way across the noisy, crowded gym. He knelt part way as if ready to lunge at the players, cupped both hands around his mouth, and yelled at the top of his lungs, "RELAX!!!!" Trouble was, his tone and demeanor didn't carry the message he was trying to present to his players. He hadn't taken his own advice.

Chuck Swindoll was speaking at a conference. One of the men in the congregation couldn't figure him out, so he invited Chuck Swindoll out to lunch. "You don't fit here. Something just isn't right. You have the roots of a fundamentalist but you don't sound like it. Your theology is narrow, but you're not rigid. You take God seriously, but you laugh like there is no tomorrow. You have definite convictions, but you aren't legalistic and demanding." Then he added, "Even though you believe firmly in the Bible, you're still having fun, still enjoying life, you even have some compassion."

What an indictment. Have those of us who are most conservative theologically become the most uncompassionate? When did we depart from the Biblical model, Jesus? When did we become either or? (Either conservative or compassionate.) Why not both and? (Both conservative and compassionate.) When did we decide to be more about public condemnation? When did we shift our focus from private restoration? When was the last time we prayed for gentleness?

Gentleness

Paul's first solution to Euodia and Synteche's disagreement is to instruct them to rejoice in the Lord (Philippians 4:4). Secondly, in Philippians 4:5, he tells them to be so gentle that everyone notices it. Just like the motivation for joy is the Lord, the motivation for gentleness is also the Lord.

Another word that some translations use for gentleness is reasonableness. Gentleness includes a willingness to be reasonable, or to think about what is best for everyone, not just ourselves. The opposite of gentleness is to insist on ramming my opinion at others, without regard for what the Lord says in His Word.

✍ Let's leave Euodia and Synteche for a while. We'll turn our attention to the disciples and some lessons Jesus taught them regarding gentleness. Read Luke 9:46-48. What were the disciples arguing about? _____

They certainly weren't being gentle about the intense topic of their personal greatness. Sound vaguely familiar? Anyway, Jesus' response was gentle. He said, "Here's your job. Love the children."

"I fear my own heart more than the Pope and all his cardinals."

~Martin Luther

✍ Just after that argument, they approached Him in tattle-tale childishness. They thought He should know what was going on. Another man was out there casting out demons. Apparently this man was attempting to approach the greatness they'd achieved. They said, "We forbade him because He does not follow with us." What was Christ's response? (Luke 9:50)

Jesus' response presents yet another picture of what gentleness looks like. Stop thinking you're the only one who can do anything right. Be reasonable, consider that the other person might just be working toward the same goal.

That's an important principle to remember in marriage, when you are think your spouse needs to be stopped because they're not following with you. Your spouse is not your enemy. Satan and the demons are your enemy.

✍ By all appearances, at least at that point, the gentleness lessons hadn't taken hold yet. The next thing you know, the people aren't receiving Jesus and the disciples, so they propose an extremely non-gentle solution, this one full of fire-works. "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah?" What does gentle Jesus do? (Luke 9:53-55). _____

Some translations include His rebuke. "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of, for I did not come to destroy people's lives but to save them." Their refusal to follow His example of gentleness led to a stern rebuke, that even connected them with the demons they'd so self-righteously been casting out. Christ's goal is the salvation of the lost.

✍ So Jesus teaches three lessons if we will let our gentleness be evident to all:

- We will not argue over our opinion (even if we think we are the greatest)
- We will work together
- We will not blast people who don't receive us

✍ James tells us the reason why we reject gentleness in favor of arguing and fighting is our desires. He offers a solution in James 4:2b-3. What's the solution? _____

When was the last time you prayed for gentleness? Do you have not because you ask not? Or are you praying for the wrong thing?

✍ In the struggle with gentleness, remember:

- "The Lord is at hand." When He returns, there will be a judgment to face. Is your focus on what God says at the Bema Seat, or is it on the other person's sin?
- "Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more." Meditate on the grace of God. God has treated you lovingly and graciously, even when you've blown it.
- You will receive gentleness by humbling yourself before the Lord, confessing your sin, and then enjoying the peace of joy of forgiveness.
- Be still and know that He is God. Relax.

"Mercy, what do you think the first duty of married people is—to each other I mean."

"To be always what they look." answered Mercy.

"Yes, but I mean actively: what is their first duty to do towards each other?"

"I can't answer that without thinking." replied Mercy.

"Is it not each to help the other to do the will of God?"

"I would say yes if I were sure I really meant it." said Mercy.

"You will mean it one day."

"Are you sure God will teach me?"

"I think He cares more to do that than anything else."

"More than save us?" quipped Mercy.

"What is saving but taking us out of the dark into the light? There is no salvation but to know God and grow like Him."

~George MacDonald



25. Peace



Philippians 4:6-7

"You can worry yourself to death, but not to life. Worry affects the circulatory system, the heart, the glands, the entire nervous system. I have never heard of an individual who worked themselves to death, but I have met many who have worried themselves to death."

~Charles Mayo, Mayo Clinic

Ulcers are what you get from mountain climbing over molehills.

"The beginning of anxiety is the end of faith, and the beginning of true faith is the end of anxiety."

~George Muller

Worry does not empty the day of trouble, but of strength.

Jesus said "who can add a day to his life by worry?"

THREE POINTS OF POWERFUL PRAYER

1. The Prohibition when Perplexed by a Problem (Philippians 4:6)

A. Don't entertain anxious thoughts

- ✍ "be anxious for nothing" = an imperative, a command, worry is not an option for a believer.
- ✍ Unless you successfully deal with anxiety, you'll never obtain peace.
- ✍ The command to not worry echoes Jesus' command in His first sermon (Matthew 6:25-34).

B. Joy or worry

- ✍ Joy in the Lord is always right, but anxiety is never right.
- ✍ Worriers are pulled in two directions, worry moving them far away from joy (Matthew 13:22, Luke 12:29, Luke 21:34).

B. Faith or worry

- ✍ Anxiety over needs and difficulties distracts us from faith-filled thinking.
- ✍ Worry is the antithesis and opposite of faith (Hebrews 11:6).
- ✍ Worrying evidences spiritual laziness.
 - ✍ Instead, work hard at whatever can be taken care of today, and trust God with tomorrow.

2. The Positive Alternative of Persistent Prayer (Philippians 4:6-7)

A. Pray about everything

- ✍ "but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" = put off worry, put on thankful prayer.
 - ✍ Anxiety and peace cannot co-exist in the same person.
- ✍ Praying about everything includes:
 - ✍ Adoration
 - ✍ An attitude of gratitude
 - ✍ Naming specific needs
 - ✍ Casting cares before God

B. To God

- ✍ Praying takes place in the presence of God, not in thin air (Colossians 3:17, 1 Peter 5:7).
- ✍ "be made known to God" = orient yourself to God in prayer
 - ✍ Prayer is = an orientation toward God
 - ✍ Supplication is = petitioning for needs

- ✍ Thankfulness is always the right attitude with which to approach God (Romans 1:21).
 - ✍ When calamity arises, we easily forget how good God is. Forgetfulness is the great enemy of faith.
 - ✍ The next step is ingratitude.
 - ✍ To focus on being victimized by someone or some circumstance is to forget God's goodness and benefits to us in the past (Psalm 103:1-2).
- ✍ Ungratefulness also ignores the present benefit of having a God who is worthy of the Name to pray to.
 - ✍ God the Father not only exists, but also rewards those who diligently seek Him.

C. Requests

- ✍ Give your specific petitions as if He needed information.
- ✍ God at all times hears our prayers, but there are ways we hinder our prayers from being heeded.
 - ✍ We must pray with inner faith. God doesn't heed unbelieving prayer (Acts 12:1-16, Matthew 21:12, Mark 11:23-24).
 - ✍ We must pray with attitudinal forgiveness. God doesn't heed the prayers of a resentful heart (Mark 11:25).
 - ✍ We must seek God for His will. God doesn't heed prayers from a self-centered heart (James 4:3).
 - ✍ We must not request what God forbids (John 15:7).
 - ✍ We must pray with humble hearts (Matthew 6:5-6, Luke 18:9-14).

3. The Promise of the Presence of Peace (Philippians 4:7)

A. Peace of God is different from peace with God.

- ✍ Peace with God is positional, referring to salvation by faith in Jesus Christ alone, sinners at peace with God and He with them.
 - ✍ Peace with God occurs with reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-21).

B. What is the peace of God that is referred to in Philippians 4:7?

- ✍ The peace of God is experiential, referring to the serenity that God provides as we rely on Him in faith (Hebrews 13:20-21).
- ✍ The peace of God rules over feelings and emotions in our hearts.
 - ✍ The peace of God rules when we find ourselves in circumstances which would result in uncertainty and frustration if we were not praying with thankfulness.
- ✍ The peace of God rules over thoughts in our minds.
 - ✍ The peace of God is superior to man's understanding and reasoning.
 - ✍ The peace of God makes no sense humanly speaking (Psalm 85:8).
- ✍ The peace of God calms us whether or not the petitions are answered.
- ✍ The peace of God is a guard, like a sentry keeping watch for an enemy (2 Corinthians 11:32).

If your trouble is deep-seated and long standing, try kneeling.

The way to become anxious about nothing is to be prayerful about everything.

You cannot know the peace of God, until you know the God of peace.

Steroids for Your Soul: Peace

Philippians 4:6-7

"The true man of God is heartsick, grieved at the worldliness of the Church...grieved at the toleration of sin in the Church, grieved at the prayerlessness in the Church. He is disturbed that the corporate prayer of the Church no longer pulls down the strongholds of the devil."

~Leonard Ravenhill


I had a huge scare one Saturday morning when I reached into the dresser for a favorite pair of jeans and tried to pull them on. They were way too small. I mean, way too small. How had so much girth attached itself to my body? What a relief to realize that I was trying to fit into my son's jeans. Phew! I was getting worried!


We laugh. And we all agree that peace of mind through prayer is the opposite of worry. Yet we're so ingrained in the habit of worrying, that we don't have continual and persistent prayer lives. We don't open the gift of prayer by which God guards over our hearts and minds with peace that transcends all understanding.


The only thing that prevents us from praying is us. Our own inflated sense of self-importance, the elevation of our work, our agendas—this is what keeps us from prayer. We don't pray enough because we're too busy practicing idol worship.


Three Reasons to Make Prayer a Priority


In the Bible, God's people prayed

 Write down your observations about Moses' prayer life in Exodus 8:12-13, 8:30-31, 9:33, 32:11-13, 32:31-32, Numbers 11:1-2, 14:11-20, 27:15-17. _____

 What do you notice about Samuel in 1 Samuel 12:19-23? _____









 Now does Nehemiah teach us to pray? Nehemiah 1:1-11, 2:4, 4:9. _____

 Read about Jesus' prayer life in Luke 3:21-22, Luke 24:49-51, Luke 5:16, 6:12, 9:28-29. 11:1, Hebrews 5:7. Write down what you notice. _____

 Write down your observations about the prayer lives of the early Christians and their leaders in Acts 1:14, 2:42, 3:1, 4:23-24, 6:4, 7:5-7, 8:14-15, 9:11, 10:1-2, 11:5, 12:5, 13:3, 14:23, 16:13, Colossians 4:12-13. _____









Scripture exhorts us to pray

Read the following passages and write down the exhortation to prayer

-  2 Chronicles 7:14 _____
-  Psalm 32:6 _____
-  Psalm 122:6 _____
-  Isaiah 55:6 _____
-  Matthew 5:44 _____
-  Matthew 9:38 _____
-  Romans 12:12 _____
-  1 Thessalonians 5:17 _____




The Bible promises that God answers prayer

Read the following passages and write down God's promises regarding prayer

-  Psalm 50:15 _____
-  Jeremiah 31:3 _____
-  John 16:15, 24 _____
-  Acts 4:31 _____
-  Romans 15:13 _____
-  Hebrews 4:16 _____
-  James 4:2 _____
-  1 John 3:22 _____

Pray for...

How does God want you to pray for yourself?

-  Psalm 50:15 _____
-  2 Corinthians 12:7-8 _____
-  James 5:13 _____

God wants us to pray because in prayer we express our weakness and our needy dependence on Him. We must pray in order to have victory over the devil and the world. Prayer helps us to view our success and our failure in the light of God's perspective. Prayer is our primary way of communing with God in fellowship, and God has ordained that His people are blessed when they pray.

"I fear my own heart more than the Pope and all his cardinals."

~Martin Luther

"And what does the Lord require of you for cleansing of your own leprosy? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart. Not a question of heroic feat of ascending to heaven or descending into the abyss but the laughably simple thing that a man is asked to do-to repent and trust in God's love."

~Andre Seu



26. Think Right Do Right



Philippians 4:8-9

Have you ever wondered why people walk the aisle to make some decision at some church, and then you never see hide nor hair of them again? All that occurred was a big emotional experience. For example on a lot of TV programs you hear some sad story, or see some picture of a starving child. They know you will send money to help their cause. They try to appeal to you emotionally. There must be a balance between emotions and biblical intelligence.

Jonathan Edwards' ordination service in 1784 was based on John 5:35 'John the Baptist was a burning & a shining light. His main point was that a preacher must burn and shine. There must be heat in the heart and light in the mind, and no more heat than is justified by the light. So the good preacher will make it his aim to give his hearers good reason and just ground for the emotions he is trying to stir up. Edwards did not manipulate by emotion. He treated his hearers as creatures of reason and sought to move their hearts only by giving the light of truth to their minds. Good preaching aims to enlighten the mind of the hearers with divine truth.' God used this wonderful combination to bring about the Great Awakening in New England.

SIX CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHTS

1. Thoughts In Relation to Reality (Philippians 4:8a)

A. True

- ✍ Truth refers not only to content that is true, but also to loving what is true. Hebrew word for true is amen, refers to something sure, what is clear, it cannot be hidden (Psalm 19:7-9).
- ✍ Satan attacked truth by casting doubt, then denying and distorting (Genesis 3:1-6).
 - ✍ Satan is the ultimate hypocrite. We hate hypocrisy because it adds flattery to lies, flattery we are gullible enough to accept (Proverbs 5:22).
- ✍ Truth will triumph over sin (1 John 5:20). Do we focus on the sin of others, or on truth?
- ✍ Fools define truth in the following ways:
 - ✍ "I will believe anything that defends or supports my presuppositions, no matter how absurd or false."
 - ✍ "I have stopped believing that I can be deceived...or wrong."
 - ✍ "I need what I want."
 - ✍ "I hate your sin more than mine, for it is worse."
- ✍ Joy focuses on the truth of the victory won by the blood of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:2).

B. Noble

- ✍ Noble—honorable, inspiring admiration or awe, venerable
- ✍ Are my thoughts serious towards God's Word? (Titus 2:2, 7)
- ✍ The sure and clear truth is the certainties and realities of the gospel.

2. Thoughts In Relation to Inner Moral Character (Philippians 4:8b)

A. Just

- ✍ Just—righteous in relation to divine laws
- ✍ Are we focused on the commands of God? Our minds must learn to meditate on the Word of God (Joshua 1:8-9).
- ✍ Are we just toward others (Deuteronomy 32:3-4, Micah 6:8)?

B. Pure

- ✍ Pure—sacred, clean, immaculate, pure from fault, chaste, modest, free from blemish or corruption.
- ✍ Are we pure in conduct and demeanor?

3. Thoughts In Relation to Appearance and Effect on Others (Philippians 4:8b)

A. Lovely

- ✍️ Lovely—acceptable, pleasing, two words = towards and love.
- ✍️ Lovely and pleasant in such things as gentleness, calmness, and joyfulness (1 John 4:19-21).

B. Good report

- ✍️ Admirable—of good report
- ✍️ The effect of what is heard (Philippians 2:14)

PRESCRIPTION FOR THE CHRISTIAN'S PATH TO PEACE

1. Paul is the teacher and example of the path to the peace of God (Philippians 4:7. 9)

A. First prescription to peace: Your mind = intellect

- ✍️ Learned = grasped intellectually, from formal teaching
- ✍️ Received = accepted
- ✍️ Paul had taught them Christian doctrine and modeled Christian living (shoe leather).

B. Second prescription to peace: Your heart = exemplified

- ✍️ Heard = grasped intellectually from Paul's lips, his words did not go in one ear and out the other
- ✍️ Saw = they personally observed both Paul's speech and conduct

C. Third prescription to peace: Your will = the experience of obedience

- ✍️ We must always obey. Obedience tells us we are disciples (1 John 2:3-5, John 8:31-32).
 - ✍️ Ask yourself if you obey? (Matthew 7:21-27, Matthew 12:50)
- ✍️ Excuses we give for not obeying, none of which will hold out at the Bema Seat of God.
 - ✍️ We don't think sin is so bad.
 - ✍️ "Everybody's doing it so it's OK" = existentialism
 - ✍️ "If things go well, I'll obey" = pragmatism
 - ✍️ "I have a legitimate reason in my background or biological makeup" = psychology

- ✍️ God desires obedience rather than sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22).

D. Fourth prescription to peace: God's presence = realized

- ✍️ The peace of God is the result of:
 - ✍️ Applying their lives to the intellectual teaching of Paul.
 - ✍️ Imitating the Christ-centered walk of Paul in what they actually did.

A man approached a speaker and said, "You Christians are all brainwashed." The speaker replied, "I think we are all brainwashed to a degree. The important thing is that we Christians choose what we want to wash our brains with."

"An increase in speculative knowledge in divinity is not what is so much needed by our people as something else. Men may abound in this sort of light and have no heart...Our people do not so much need to have their heads turned as to have their hearts touched, and they stand in the greatest need of that sort of preaching which has the greatest tendency to do this."

~Jonathan Edwards (Puritan)

Psychology begins by asking whether the human condition is attributable to nature or nurture, to biology or background. The Bible begins by asking whether mankind will accept his fallen state and the solution God has provided - a Savior, Jesus Christ.

Steroids for Your Soul: Think Right Do Right

Philippians 4:8-9

“John the Baptist would never get hired today. No church would touch him. He was a public relations disaster. He wore clothes made from camel’s hair, had a leather belt around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. Who would want to look at a guy like that every Sunday? His message was as rough as his dress; a no-nonsense, bare fisted challenge to repent because God was on His way. John the Baptist set himself apart for one task, to be a voice of Jesus Christ. Everything about John centered on his purpose. His dress, his diet, his actions, his demands. You don’t have to be like the world to have an impact on the world. You don’t have to be like the crowd to change the crowd. You don’t have to lower yourself down to their level to lift them up to your level. Holiness doesn’t seek to be odd. Holiness seeks to be like God.”

~Max Lucado

The Bible is addressed primarily, though not exclusively, to our understanding. That means the mind. This is difficult to communicate to a modern Christian, in what may be the most anti-intellectual period in western civilization. Notice I did not say anti-academic, anti-technological, or anti-scholarly, I said anti-intellectual. There is a strong current of apathy to the function of the mind in the Christian life, when we turn to our feelings rather than our minds to establish truth. The solution to right living is right thinking. As a man thinketh in his heart so is he.

~ R. C. Sproul

As a man thinketh, so is he

Do you remember back in Philippians 1:9-11, where Paul prayed for the church? He asked that they would have discernment to be able to approve the things that are excellent. Now, as he closes the letter, he pulls out that concept again. And, he reinforces it by saying that excellent things are the only things we are to think about. The things that are virtuous, excellent, and worthy of praise. The only things. Are you convicted?

What hooks your mind so it wanders far from the excellent wonders of God?

- Financial stresses?
- Household problems?
- Job instability? Stock market losses?
- Physical pain? Or the pain of an ailing family member? A terminal diagnosis?
- A wayward child?
- An unfaithful spouse?
- The consequences of sinful decisions?
- Frightening weather? Natural disasters?
- Accidents? Plane crashes?

Other questions to ask regarding common thought life distractions:

- Do I let garbage in?
- Do I look for the emotional high, or am I a student of Scripture?
- Do I hold onto to bitterness and begrudge others because I have an unbiblical thought pattern towards them? Do I indulge in self-pity?

Many thought processes hook our minds and pull us from what is virtuous and praiseworthy. Philippians 4:9 tells us the right things to think about. Check off which are truest of you

My thoughts focus on:

- Truths about God and His care for me
- Noble thoughts that honor God
- God’s sovereign justice, that He is always holy, righteous, and just
- Casting no doubt on God’s purity, confessing my sinful heart
- God’s loveliness, tender affection for Him
- Things that are of good reputation

My thoughts focus on:

- Negative possibilities, “what ifs”
- Things that are undignified and untrustworthy
- Things that are unfair
- Things that are impure, to gratify my own desires
- Things less than lovely that stir up ugliness in me
- Things that are of a bad reputation

The column on the left described righteous thoughts, as commanded in Philippians 4:8. The column on the right described sinful thoughts that need to be confessed and repented of.

✍ Read Hebrews 12:3. What will stop me from growing weary and losing heart? _____

✍ Read Hebrews 12:2. What are we to fix our thought on? _____

Our minds can dwell on many excellent things. There is, however, nothing so excellent and praise worthy as dwelling on the Author and Finisher of our faith. He endured the painful cross and endured shameful suffering because we would bring Him joy.

In contrast, I can think about myself and my problems. Unless I'm thinking about my difficulties and trials from God's eternal perspective, and Christ's gospel focused perspective, and the Spirit's victorious perspective, my focus is wrong.

✍ Read Matthew 6:22-23. If my focus is bad, my whole body is bad. Indulging in self-pity, or nursing bitterness and resentment are all bad eyes. How might they affect your whole body in a bad way that is full of darkness? _____

✍ Read Psalm 103:1-8. List six things to focus your thoughts on, so your soul blesses God:

✍ How many times a day do you think about how wonderful it is to be forgiven? That's what we need to do! _____

✍ Read 2 Corinthians 10:5. Am I taking every thought captive, or do I allow myself to linger in a sinful mind? _____

From Thoughts to Actions

Paul has focused in on their minds, in the context of the doctrine he'd taught them and they'd embraced. Then in Philippians 4:9, he focuses on their experience, the observation what they have witnessed both by hearing and by seeing how he lived out his life, in the power and leading of the Holy Spirit.

Nike's catch phrase, "Just do it," wasn't really anything new. Basically, that's what Paul tells them. Do it. When God says jump, do I say how high while I'm jumping?

✍ Read Luke 5:4-5. What had Jesus asked Peter to do when they'd answered "Because You say so I will do it." _____

What is He asking you to do that you might not want to, but because He says so you will do it? _____

"The sensuous Christian is the one who lives by his or her feelings rather than through his or her understanding of the Word of God. The sensuous Christian cannot be moved to serve, pray, or study unless he feels like it. His Christian life is only as effective as the intensity of his present feelings. When he experiences spiritual euphoria, he is a whirlwind of godly activity, but when he is depressed, he is spiritually incompetent. He constantly seeks new and fresh spiritual experiences and uses them to determine the Word of God. His inner feelings become the ultimate test of truth. The sensuous Christian does not need to study the revealed will of God, because he already knows the will of God by his feelings. He doesn't want to know God, he only wants to experience Him. The sensuous Christian equates child-like faith with ignorance. He thinks that when the Bible calls us to child-like faith, it means a faith without content, a faith without understanding... The sensuous Christian goes on his merry way until he encounters the pain of life (that is not so merry) and then he folds. He doesn't know that the Bible says in evil be babes, but in your thinking be mature (1 Corinthians 14:20.) He doesn't realize that Paul tells us again and again, "My beloved brethren, I would not have you be ignorant." That's the largest group of Christians – the ignorant brethren.... The sensuous Christian embraces relational theology, that most dreadful curse on Christianity where personal relationships and experience take precedent over the Word of God. If Scripture calls us to an action that may jeopardize a personal relationship then the Scripture must be compromised by the sensual Christian. The highest law of the sensual Christian is that bad feelings must be avoided at all cost."

~R. C. Sproul



26. Content or Contentious



Philippians 4:10-13

“Contentment is the way you drink all the grace out of every moment.”

~Anne Voskamp

“The settled happiness and security which we all desire God withholds from us by the very nature of the world; but joy, pleasure and merriment He has scattered broadcast. We are never safe, but we have plenty of fun, and some ecstasy. It is not hard to see why. The security we crave would teach us to rest our hearts in this world and pose an obstacle to our return to God: a few moments of happy love, a landscape, a symphony, a merry meeting with our friends, a bath or a football match, have no such tendency. Our Father refreshes us on the journey with some pleasant inns, but will not encourage us to mistake them for home.”

~C. S. Lewis

FOUR KEYS TO CONTENTMENT

1. First Key to Contentment—Be Grateful (Philippians 4:10)

A. Contentment begins with an attitude of gratitude

- ✍ In all things, God asks for our gratitude.
- ✍ Paul was immensely encouraged by their fresh outpouring of love for him.
- ✍ He realized their desire to assist him, even when they couldn't send a gift. He knew he was in their hearts, and he was grateful.
- ✍ The first step to contentment begins with gratitude.
 - ✍ Gratitude is achieved by remembering.
 - ✍ Remember in grace what you would be without grace.

2. Second Key to Contentment—Learn (Philippians 4:11-12)

A. Recognize the amazing riches you have in the Lord

- ✍ When Paul says, “Not that I speak in regard to need” he is not whining. He recognizes how rich he is in the Lord.
- ✍ Paul doesn't see his life as a bunch of accidents but as a series of appointments by which he learns. The point is emphasized because he says “I have learned” twice.
- ✍ As soon as Paul met Jesus Christ on the Damascus Road he found the source and supply of his sufficiency and strength. In the thirty years that followed he gained contentment.

B. Seek after contentment

- ✍ The Greek word translated “content” means “contained.”
 - ✍ In the “New Age” teaching of Paul's day it meant self-sufficiency or indifference to circumstances.
 - ✍ In Paul's biblical teaching, it means not only composure that rises above the circumstances, but also the ability to do so in Christ.
- ✍ When Paul used the word “content” did he mean self-sufficiency?
 - ✍ No. The context in which he learned contentment was as a disciple of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 2:6-16).
 - ✍ No. Self-sufficiency is alien to both Paul's thinking and his teaching.
- ✍ Paul applies his life to the lessons of the ups and downs that God's riches have rained on him (2 Corinthians 9:8).
 - ✍ Paul is contented with godliness, food, and clothing (1 Timothy 6:6, 8).
- ✍ Contentment is based on knowledge—the type of knowledge that manifests itself in an attitude of “I know how” during an experience (a phrase he uses twice in Phil. 4:12).

3. Third Key to Contentment—Adapt (Philippians 4:12)

A. Spiritual abundance supercedes circumstances

- ✍ Paul emphasizes his experience with both—with having less and with having more than he needs.
- ✍ Contentment does not mean an acceptance of one's lot through becoming indifferent to circumstances.
 - ✍ That would be laziness (Hebrews 13:5).

B. Life application

- ✍ Wisdom includes the skill to apply life to divine knowledge. Skills are learned.
 - ✍ Paul learned as he rose above difficult circumstances.
 - ✍ He and the Philippian church were more focused on Christ than on money and materialism.
- ✍ Integrity is developed when you recognize there are only two witnesses that really matter—God and your conscience (Proverbs 15:16).

4. Fourth key to contentment—Victory in Christ (Philippians 4:13)

A. Enabling grace

- ✍ The source of contentment for Paul and every other Christian is Christ.
- ✍ The Christian is not omni-competent, however, Christ is omni-potent.
 - ✍ We don't summon up contentment from within, we learn contentment thanks to the strengthening supply from Christ.
 - ✍ Those who have access to this supply are those whose focus is on the vertical before the horizontal.

B. Fellowship with Christ

- ✍ It was through his fellowship with Christ in every situation, that Paul mastered his circumstances with contentment.
 - ✍ This contentment was of a wholly different kind than the self-sufficiency that the sophisticated people of Paul's day sought to obtain.
 - ✍ Paul teaches that contentment is Christ-centered—sustained by surrendering and depending on Christ.
- ✍ Contentment glorifies Christ in life and death (Philippians 1:20-21).
- ✍ Contentment holds the gospel high because it is free of complaining (Philippians 2:4).

C. Questions for you

- ✍ Do you desire to achieve contentment through discovering a sufficiency in yourself, an inner strength?
 - ✍ Paul says, "NO! I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."
- ✍ Do you conquer the oppression of circumstances and experiences, whether favorable or unfavorable, in Christ?

"Has it ever occurred to you that 100 pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually bow. So 100 worshippers meeting together, each one looking away to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other than they could possibly be were they to become 'unity' conscious and turn their eyes away from God to strive for closer fellowship. Social religion is perfected when private religion is purified. The body becomes stronger as its members become healthier. The whole church of God gains when the members that compose it begin to seek a better and a higher life."

~A. W. Tozer

"What is faith in God? The leaving of your way, your objects, your self, and the taking of His and Him; the leaving of your trust in men, in money, in opinion, in character, and doing as God tells you. I can find no words strong enough to serve forth the weight of this necessity—this obedience. It is the one heresy of the church, that it has always been presenting something else than obedience as faith in Christ."

~George MacDonald

Steroids for Your Soul: Content or Contentious

Philippians 4:10-13

Someday our house will be quiet, someday we will enjoy some peace, someday we will have all the hot water we need for a shower, someday we won't have to clean up peanut butter off the table, won't have to look at half-made beds, someday we will get in the car and have more than fumes in the tank, someday we won't have to holler turn that music down, someday we won't have to replace broken windows, someday we won't trip over hockey sticks and equipment as we enter our house, someday our milk jug will actually have milk left in it. Things will be different, Ruth will be able to take some time for herself, a nice hot bath, do her nails, we'll be able to sleep in occasionally, we'll have time for ourselves, you know, to enjoy and just kick back.

Then I'll say to Ruthie, "Hey how about gettin' some of those grandchildren of ours over here and get some excitement back in this place!" The evidence is in. I still need to learn contentment. How about you? Have you ever pondered, "I only I had....." or "We just need....." or "Someday, when things are different....." I guess we all need to learn contentment.

Paul truly appreciates their help, the gift they sent with Epaphroditus. But, as any Pastor needs to do, he lets the church know they can't buy him, that he is not wholly dependent on them. Paul knows how to take advantage of an opportunity, how to get double mileage out of a situation. He not only takes the opportunity to recognize their gifts to him, but also to teach them regarding contentment. He is contented in whatever condition God allows. He's not ungrateful, nor is he covetous.

Being contented does not mean pretending the circumstances of life don't exist, or that they don't affect the body and mind. But no matter what the circumstance, Paul teaches that thankfulness is the right attitude, the attitude by which contentment is learned, and the attitude by which we adjust our lives to the knowledge of Christ and live in His strength for victory. Philippians 4:10-13 stands directly in the way of the "health and wealth" teaching that is so popular today.

Six Questions to Test your Contentment Level

1. Does my life fit the description of a contented Christian?

✍ What is the command of Philippians 4:4? _____

Do I consistently have an inner frame of good temper in my heart, evidenced by joy in the Lord, always? Do the following apply to me?

- There's a quietness in my heart.
- My spirit is framed for calmness—people would say I'm calm when things don't go my way.
- I'm gracious in my responses.
- I freely submit to the people in authority over me because I'm at God's disposal.
- I take pleasure in submitting to all my authorities, in all my circumstances.

2. Do I participate in the paradoxes that accompany Christian contentment?

✍ Read Philippians 1:19-23. What is Paul eager for? _____

- I am contented to live, yet not satisfied until I die to be with Christ.
- I subtract my desires to add contentment in God.
- I am willing to add burdens if that's what it takes to remove my discontentment.
- I see God's love in my afflictions, and am content to repurpose pain into opportunity.
- My contentment is not shaken during trials and storms, rather it grows.

3. Do I imitate Christ as He modeled and taught contentment?

✍ Read Luke 10:42. What did Christ teach is the one necessary thing? _____

✍ Read Luke 22:42. How did Christ model contentment in God's sovereignty? _____

- I am discontented only when I'm not worshipping God by my obedience.
- I deny myself the way Jesus denied Himself, even denying myself life as God wills.
- Jesus had no place to lay His head. I view the world from the vantage point of a pilgrim, a sojourner, a traveler passing through, a soldier whose allegiance is to God.
- I recognize the burden of prospering, and that to give is better than to receive. As I gain, I increase my giving rather than my comforts.
- I go about the business God would have me be about, striving always to become more Christ-like.
- I enjoy the sweetness of relationship with God in all my afflictions, considering in my loss the abundant mercies of God.

4. Do I take advantage of the benefits of contentment?

✍ Read Philippians 4:13. In how many things can we be contented through Christ's strength?

- I am guarded from covetousness by gratitude for the things I do not possess.
- My response is not to grumble or murmur, which would mark me as rebellious.
- In contentment, I am rescued from the corruption of complaining.
- I do not experience disquieting in my spirit, because I quickly confess the sin of complaining.
- I am able to expend my gifts, abilities, and energies because I am content with them.

5. Am I guilty of any of the following excuses of a discontented heart?

- "God withdraws Himself from me."
- "I don't understand why God lets this happen to me."
- "It is because of the way others treat me that I am like this."
- "My affliction is greater than others'."
- "It's just this one trial that makes it impossible for me to be content."
- "My circumstance makes me of no service to God."

6. Have I learned how to partake of the grace of contentment?

- I don't clutch and grab at what I don't have, be it things or people.
- I hold the comforts of this world in an open hand, and work to get my heart mortified to its attractions.
- I refuse to pore and meditate too long over my afflictions.
- I obey the call of God, working hard in whatever business He has me doing.
- I do not promise myself great things but rather purge myself of desires other than God's glory.
- I remember that my life will pass like a flower in the field and pour myself out for God's glory.
- I interpret God's ways as coming from a good, sovereign God, and thank Him for them all.

*There was a dachshund
once, so long
He hadn't any notion
How long it took to notify
His tail of his emotion;
And so it happened, while
his eyes
Were filled with woe and
sadness,
His little tail went wag-
ging on
Because of previous
gladness.*

*"Christian contentment is
that sweet, inward, quiet,
gracious frame of spirit,
which freely submits to
and delights in God's
wise and fatherly dis-
posal in every condition."*

~Jeremiah Burroughs



27. Ka-ching! Love & Money



Philippians 4:14-19

“For the real good of every gift it is essential, first, that the giver be in the gift -- as God always is, for He is love - and next, that the receiver know and receive the giver in the gift. Every gift of God is but a harbinger of His greatest and only sufficing gift -- that of Himself. No gift unrecognized as coming from God is at its own best: therefore many things that God would gladly give us must wait until we ask for them, that we may know whence they come “My God shall supply all your needs”. When in all gifts we find Him, then in Him shall find all things.”

~George MacDonald

You can give without loving, but you can't love without giving.

MONEY IN THE CHURCH

1. Context—Business Mentality

A. Paul uses banking terms to let the Philippians know he is not dependent on their support, but grateful all the same. Why?

- ✍ The Philippians had been business-like in their thinking regarding how to support the spread of the gospel.
 - ✎ Possibly this reflects Lydia’s influence, given that she was a successful saleswoman and the first convert in the church (Acts 16:14).
- ✍ Paul wants to stress that giving will abound.
 - ✎ Giving is not losing or giving away.
 - ✎ Giving is not writing off, but an investment.
 - ✎ The return of giving will come at a compounded rate, in heaven.

2. Five loves that Lead to Light

A. Suffering Love (Philippians 4:14)

- ✍ The Philippians had recognized Paul’s affliction, and done something about it.
- ✍ “you have done well” = literally, you have done beautifully, not only morally well but also attractively well.
- ✍ To see a need and respond promptly is a lovely deed.
- ✍ They had shared in his suffering by their act of benevolence designed to alleviate his troubles and difficulties. This spoke volumes to Paul.

B. Sharing Love (Philippians 4:15-16)

- ✍ “shared” = with fellowship, to be a partaker of in ministry
- ✍ They had partaken in ministry by way of finances. Paul depicts the situation using the language of debits and credits.
- ✍ They had first heard the gospel approximately ten years earlier, and even then their concern had been how the gospel was to be spread.
 - ✎ When Paul and his colleagues left Macedonia for Thessalonica in Acts 17, it was with the understanding that they would support him.
 - ✎ They honored that commitment more than once (Philippians 4:16).
- ✍ By sharing in Paul’s support, they probably freed Paul from the need to divide his time between supporting himself and preaching the Word.

C. Selfless Love (Philippians 4:17)

- ✍ Paul makes it very clear that he is primarily concerned that they develop the grace of giving. His major focus is not the gift itself.
- ✍ He is still using business terminology, stating that he wants fruit (interest) to abound to their account.
- ✍ Paul desired the fruit of their spiritual growth. Selfless giving is necessary for growth.

D. Sacrificial Love (Philippians 4:18)

- ✍ What is the measure for giving? God judges what we give by what we keep.
- ✍ “Full payment” = Paul indicates the effect of their gift on him in quality, not just amount.
 - ✍ He is full, his needs have been more than met.
- ✍ Paul makes it clear that God was delighted with the nature of the sacrificial offerings from the church to God.
 - ✍ Paul recognized their sacrifice and rejoiced (Philippians 4:10, 1 Chronicles 11:15-19).
- ✍ “Sweet smelling aroma” = indicates their acceptableness in God’s sight.
 - ✍ Monetary gifts that support God’s servants are fragrant sacrifices (Hebrews 13:15-16).
- ✍ God is pleased by obedient hearts.
 - ✍ Present day worship is in spirit and truth, not consecrated places and ritualistic practices. It is the sacrificial heart that is the sacrifice.

E. Savior’s Love—the riches of grace (Philippians 4:19)

- ✍ Paul assures the church that in their obedience, God who will supply their every need (Malachi 3:8-12).
 - ✍ God’s resources are infinite, both spiritual (God’s riches in glory by Christ Jesus) and physical (Psalm 50:10).
- ✍ 1st step = “according to His riches.” God’s riches are Paul’s constant theme (Ephesians 1, Colossians 1).
 - ✍ Paul does not only refer to God’s wealth, but also to God’s bounty.
 - ✍ When His people are generous toward Him, they will find that He is generous toward them (Luke 6:38).
- ✍ 2nd step = “in glory.” Notice how Paul looks to heaven to describe God’s glorious supply, not to the riches themselves.
 - ✍ The riches God supplies to needy Christians are glorious.
- ✍ 3rd step = “by Jesus Christ.” Paul indicates how the supply of God’s riches come to Christians—through the merit and mediation of Jesus Christ (John 1:16).
 - ✍ In Christ, God rewards His people far in excess of what they expend.

“The only safe rule is to give more than one can spare. In other words, if our expenditures on comforts, luxuries and amusements, etc. are up to the standard common amount with those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little. There ought to be things we should like to do but cannot do because our charities expenditure excludes them.

~C. S. Lewis

Steroids for Your Soul: Ka-ching! Love & Money

Philippians 4:14-19

A TV evangelist pleaded with his audience, "Plant a seed. Somebody out there, send in \$1,000." A poor elderly lady took out a loan and gave \$1,000. The next day she received a dollar off coupon on diapers. She rejoiced at the return coming in on her investment, wrote the TV evangelist, and he actually read her letter on the air.


Just turn on the television and soon you will hear TV evangelists working for money. They might use guilt, "If you don't give this will be the last show." Or you might hear some type of a bribe, "If you give a big amount to God, He will bless you, and by the way God's number is" These individuals are both bold and brazen, "If you don't give to me, God's work won't get done." It seems that two facts go hand in hand regarding these false teachers: immorality and greed for money.

What a contrast with Paul in Philippians 4:14-19. He stresses his joy that their gift will be of spiritual benefit to them as givers. As for himself, he has learned to live contentedly in whatever state God ordains.

Attitudes for Biblical Financial Responsibility


God owns everything, we own nothing. God entrusts us with all that we have. We must be on guard against the seduction of greed. Financial struggle is caused by a greedy heart that refuses to live contentedly where God has called us to live, in this moment of life.


Regarding debt


 Read Proverbs 6:1-5. What is a correct attitude toward debt? _____

We must develop healthy hatred toward debt. Assets gained on loans must be able to pay off loans. That means we don't use credit cards for purchases we can't pay in full by the next statement.

Regarding planning ahead

 Refusal to plan is irresponsible. Planning and saying no facilitate contentment and generosity. Read Proverbs 6:6-11. Note the contrast between laziness and hard work that prepares for time of need. What happens to the lazy person? _____

 Read James 4:13-17. What must we keep at the forefront of our minds as we plan? _____

 Read 2 Thessalonians 3:11-12. Work is always part of God's will for our lives. What is the correct response to people who do not work? _____

Regarding accumulation

✍ Jesus warned us to be on guard against covetousness. He said that life does not consist of our possessions. Then he told a story about a rich man who accumulated much. Read Luke 12:13-21. Why was the rich man a fool? _____

Regarding worry over finances

✍ Sovereign control belongs to God. He knows about your needs and cares for them. Read Luke 12:22-31. Jesus says we may not be overcome by worry over finances, and then gives a list of at least 6 reasons. List three of the reasons not to worry. _____

If you tend to worry over finances, choose one of the above as your favorite, and put a star next to it. Now, write that verse on a card, and memorize it so that you can meditate on it to put off the sin of worry. Whenever you are tempted to worry, repeat the verse ten times until Jesus' words run through your mind louder than your worry (Joshua 1:8).

Regarding contentment

✍ Read Philippians 4:10-13. What has Paul learned? _____

Contentment is a state of Christ empowered gladness or joy in the midst of today's God ordained circumstance. Contentment is not code for "giving up." It can never be used as an excuse for laziness.

✍ Read Acts 20:35. What did Paul do so that he would be able to help others? _____

Regarding generosity

✍ Read Ephesians 4:28. God commands us to work instead of steal. What is the reason for this? _____

✍ Read Proverbs 11:25. What is the result of generosity? _____

✍ Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-9. What is the correct attitude regarding generosity? _____

✍ Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-7. What act of grace does Paul exhort the church to be active in? _____

✍ Read Proverbs 19:17. What are we doing when we are generous with the poor? _____

"A contented person is pre-occupied with the well-being of others."

~John MacArthur (The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Philippians)



28. Proper Praise



Philippians 4:20-23

"It may be possible for each to think too much of his own potential glory; yet it is hardly possible for each to think too often or too deeply about that of his neighbor. The load, or weight, or burden of my neighbor's glory should be laid on my back, a load so heavy that only humility can carry it, and the backs of the proud will be broken. It is a serious thing... All day long we are, in some degree, dangerously helping each other to one or other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never met a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations – these are mortal, and their lifespan is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit – immortal horrors or everlasting splendors."

~c. s. Lewis

THREE POINTS OF PROPER PRAISE

1. Who is Being Praised? God the Father (Philippians 4:20)

A. It is God the Father who is being adored.

- ✍ Paul first mentions God's deity, then His Fatherhood.
- ✍ Since He is a person, the Father/child relationship with Him is close, tender, and personal.
 - ✍ God's children are regenerated and adopted (Romans 8).

B. To better understand God as Father, we will consider four types of fatherly relationships.

- ✍ God's Fatherhood in creation (Malachi 2:10)
 - ✍ We are created in the image of God, and given life.
 - ✍ Without the Creator-Father, there would be no mankind.
- ✍ God's Fatherhood of the people Israel (Malachi 1:6)
 - ✍ This refers to God's relationship with His covenant people, Israel.
- ✍ God's Fatherhood of His Son (John 20:17)
 - ✍ This fatherhood belongs exclusively to the Son Jesus Christ—the Son of God, the Only Begotten Son.
 - ✍ This is the relationship Christ referred to when speaking of His Father.
 - ✍ In John 20:17, Christ links adoptive and generative fatherhood so closely that we see His Fatherhood of us is because of His Fatherhood of Christ.
 - ✍ Christ's Sonship, although on a totally different level than ours, is the basis of our sonship.
- ✍ God's Fatherhood of His adopted children (John 1:12-13, Galatians 3:26)
 - ✍ This is the redeeming relationship that belongs to all believers.
 - ✍ We must view our redemption through justification—our objective (non-changeable) standing in Christ.
 - ✍ We must also view our redemption through adoption—the subjective (subject to change) regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. It is in living union with Christ that we are adopted into the family of God.
 - ✍ We partake of the divine nature when we are born into the family of God. That means we change and grow.

2. Who is Doing the Praising? Saints (Philippians 4:21-22)

A. Every Saint in Christ Jesus

- ✍ Every follower of Jesus Christ is referred to as a saint (Romans 1:7, 1 Corinthians 1:2, 14:33, 16:21, 2 Corinthians 1:1, Galatians 6:1, Ephesians 1:1, Colossians 1:2, 4:18, 2 Thessalonians 3:17, Hebrews 13:24).

- ✍️ “Saint” = set apart one, separated one, sanctified one, holy one. All believers are set apart from sin to holiness, by God’s grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- ✍️ In the common bond of loving fellowship, all Christians are on one level—brethren (Matthew 23:8-12).
 - ✍️ Three times, Paul repeats the word “greet” - a word that implies affection and equality (Philippians 4:21,22, Romans 15:7).
- ✍️ Saints are not people whom we worship, saints are people WITH whom we worship. The canonization of people as saints who are prayed to is unbiblical.

“A saint is not an ecclesiastical relic crystallized in a stained glass window, immortalized in a statue, or canonized by Rome. A saint is anyone who has come to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

~John MacArthur (The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Philippians)

2. What is God Being Praised For? Glory (Philippians 4:20, 23)

A. Old Testament

- ✍️ “glory” = weight or worthiness, used to describe wealth, splendor, or reputation.
- ✍️ The glory of Israel was not her armies, but YAHWEH.
 - ✍️ The physical revelation of God’s Being went with them out of Egypt (Exodus 24:15-18).
 - ✍️ A cloud led them through the wilderness, rested on Mt. Sinai, where Moses saw God’s glory (Exodus 3:12-23).
 - ✍️ His glory filled the tabernacle, especially during sacrifice.
- ✍️ An example of God’s glory is seen in the imagery of storm (Psalm 18, Psalm 29).

“But God has given us promise of real estate in the glory-land, and that promise comes to our hearts with such full assurance of its certainty, that we know in ourselves that we have an enduring substance there. Yes, ‘we have’ it even now. They say, ‘A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush’; but we have our bird in the bush and in the hand too. Heaven is even now our own. We have the title-deeds of it, we have the earnest of it, we have the first fruits of it.”

~C. H. Spurgeon

B. New Testament

- ✍️ “doxa” = referring to the revelation of the character and presence of God in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Paul closes the letter with a doxology.
- ✍️ Christ alone is “the brightness of His glory” (Hebrews 1:3).
- ✍️ No longer is a tabernacle required, the glory of God has pitched His tent in human flesh (John 1:14).
- ✍️ God can reveal His glory any way He chooses. To the shepherds it was at the birth of Christ, to the disciples at His transfiguration. To us it will be more fully revealed at the rapture and His millennial reign.
- ✍️ God reveals His amazing glory to us in grace that provides the salvation of human beings through Jesus Christ, and works sanctification in believers through the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:4-10).

3. How Long is Praise Appropriate? Forever (Philippians 4:23)

A. Forever and ever

- ✍️ “amen” = to be sure. Surely, God deserves all praise and will receive all praise, and Paul wants God to have it forever.
- ✍️ All the ages to come will not be enough time to exhaust the praises that belong to God!

B. Start now!

- ✍️ Everything, from dishpan hands to grease-covered overalls, can be committed to God’s use as we serve together for His praise and glory (Zechariah 14:20-21).
- ✍️ Slow down. Don’t miss the praise opportunity of this present moment, the possibility it holds to be spent in the presence of God.
- ✍️ God’s name is “I AM.” We must praise Him in our moment-by-moment existence.

Steroids for Your Soul: Proper Praise

Philippians 4:20-23

"When we get to heaven it will be, Glory be to God for ever and ever and ever. We shall not hum even a single note to ourselves for our own glory or on account of any part of the work for which we deserved credit, but we shall ascribe the whole of our salvation to infinite love and undeserved favor, and to the unceasing faithfulness and power of our gracious covenant-keeping God."


~C. H. Spurgeon

True theology generates doxology.


Do you have a mind set on God? Take a look around, right now where you're sitting, and find five things that have blue in them. Go ahead and do it. When you're thinking "blue," you find that blue jumps out at you. With a "red" mindset, you'll find that red jumps out at you. Let's say we were sitting in the sanctuary, we'd see red clothing, the red exit sign, the red on the American flag, the red pew Bibles. In like fashion, you've probably noticed that after you buy a new car, you promptly see that make of car everywhere. That's because people find what they are looking for. At times in our lives, God seems strangely absent, but the problem is not that God has disappeared. We simply lack a "God" mindset. When we develop our sensitivity, we soon begin to see his work everywhere.

In the fourth beatitude, Jesus taught "blessed are those who hunger and search for righteousness, for they shall be filled." The more you seek God, the more you will personally know God. The deeper you know God, the more you will praise Him.


Praise God to show the World His Glory


 Read 2 Corinthians 4:3-6. Have you caught a glimpse of the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ? Have you seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? Do you understand the ache to proclaim nothing about yourself, but rather as His servant, to talk about Jesus Christ the Lord? Name one person to whom you will talk about the glory of Jesus Christ today. _____

What will you say? _____

 How can we understand the incredible glory of Jesus Christ? If we compare the new covenant of the grace of Jesus Christ with the old covenant of law, the old has no glory at all. However, God gave us a picture of what it felt like to see the glory that accompanied the giving of the old covenant. Read 2 Corinthians 3:7-8 and Exodus 34:29-35. In Exodus 34:30, what was the response of the people? _____

Now read 2 Corinthians 3:9-11. Compared to the old covenant of law, describe the ministry of Christ's righteousness. _____

 Even when we suffer, or rather especially when we suffer, we respond with praise for the amazing glory of God. Read 1 Peter 4:14. When Christians are insulted for the name of Christ, what is true about us? _____

 Read Romans 15:9. In what way does this verse tell us to glorify God for His mercy? _____

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