

Paul's Letter to
the Christians at Philippi

Philippians

The joy-filled Perspective of the Christian
life

Joy

Outpouring and Overflowing

From the Pulpit Ministry of Christ E Free Church
April-July 2018

Jesus Christ

Our Highest Calling

Our Greatest Purpose

Our Soul's Source and Joy

And Our All-Consuming Passion

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Philippians

*The Proper Joyful
Christian Perspective*

Chapter

4

“The Future Perspective”



“We are never more Christ-like than when we demonstrate a Surrendered Christian Perspective, through an attitude of person humility, in following Jesus’ example of serving others in our lives, our relationships and in our ministries.”



Introduction

The book of Philippians, is without a doubt focused on the Proper Joy-filled Christian perspective. All of the Christian life, can be faced with a spirit of confidence and an attitude of joy, not so much focused on our experience or surroundings, but on God's purpose for each of us, in every circumstance.

Again, the Joy of the Lord is our Strength, and if the devil can steal our joy, then he will strip us of our strength, in our spiritual maturity and in our ministry for Jesus Christ.

“Blessed are the Peace Makers”

Series Title: *“The Book of Philippians: The Proper Joy-filled Christian Perspective”*

Date : Nov.4, 2018

Chapter 1: The **FOCUSED** Joy-Filled Perspective: We do not focus so much on our circumstances, but on Gods’ purpose in our circumstances.

Chp. 2 * The **SURRENDERED** Joy-Filled Perspective: We are never more Christ-like than when we demonstrate a Surrendered Christian Perspective, through an attitude of person humility, in following Jesus in our lives, relationships and ministries.

Chp. 3 * The **ETERNAL** Joy-Filled Perspective: The Christian life is one of tremendous eternal hope, not concerned with what we may lay aside, but rejoicing in what we have already gained, and presently posses.

Chp.4 * The **FUTURE** Joy-Filled Christian Perspective: Focus of this chapter is; “So How will I now live, by what I know?”

* “When Christ becomes our Everything, then Christ Changes Everything”. When Jesus comes into a life, His intent is never to leave us the same.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine we are all in an airplane, at 10,000 feet; the door is open and we are ready to go skydiving. Imagine “Joe” goes running out the door screaming “Geronimo”. Then “Betty” immediately follows. Then “Havier” jumps out. Then Bob and then Carol go. Its your turn, and you are feeling a little apprehensive. So you turn to you instructor as ask; “Shouldn’t I have a parachute or something?”

Your instructor replies; “Good question! Lets discuss that on the way down.” As he pushes you out the door. Sounds a little silly right? That’s something you need to have figured out, before you need it. And these lessons on strained church family relationships

are things we need to have figured out, before we need them, or before strained relations arise.

-When Christians have disagreements and experience strained church family relationships; whose side is God on?

-When both parties pray; whose prayer is God obligated to answer?

Paul has been addressing **The importance of Peace in church family relationships (4:1-2)**

He specifically addresses strained relations between Euodia and Syntyche, urging them to agree, and everyone in the church to *stand firm*.

* Paul writes this letter to his church family in Philippi. And this would have been circulated to all the Christians there or to the entire church. And at some point in the circulation and reading of this letter, Euodia and Synteche would have read their names. That may have gotten their attention that this is serious business.

4:1-2 (1) Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. (2) *I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord.*

This was Paul's way of saying; "Can't we all just, get along?"

So this is a topic seldom addressed in the church, but desperately needed. When it is addressed, it is often addressed in an attempt to repair strained relationships, rather than preventing them. This is something we need to have figured out, before we need it next time.

So under the Lordship of Jesus Christ we must be willing to Fight for Peace in the church.

Jesus said: "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God. (Mat. 5: 9). Paul urges the church family to look

ahead with a future perspective and work together in restoring peace.

A Plea to the church to fight for peace

4:3-4 (3) Yes, I ask you also, true companion, **HELP** these women, *who have labored* side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. (4) *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.*

Paraphrased: “Always Fight for joy in the Lord; again I say, ‘fight for joy in the Lord!’ Don’t willingly surrender anything to the enemy. Because, the battle for joy is the battle for peace. And the battle for peace is the battle for *you*.”

i.) The Church is to take the initiative to help (v3)

“I Ask you to **Help** these women...”: “**Help**” literally refers to **seize**; to grab hold of together. This was a plea for the co-laborers there in the church to join in the fight for joy and for peace. It is something that must be purposefully and aggressively engaged in. It is a fight for peace and it won’t happen by accident.

v.3) Labored= with; wrestled Get that? At one point, these were not just co-workers, but co-**warriors** in the work of the Lord. They were fighting the good fight for joy, for peace, for the gospel and for the faith. So what happened? What were the differences? What caused the division?

We’re not told. Only that they were at one point, fighting the good fight together. But now they are not. Along the way, the only thing we can assume is that something came up. Or unresolved issues began to build up. And things continued to simmer. Issues continued to go unresolved until some *thing* or *someone* blew up, or perhaps just gave up fighting the good fight for peace.

Perhaps they may have given up, but Paul urges them to fight for their family relationships. **“Fight for peace. Fight for the Joy of the Lord; and again I say fight for Joy.”**

So this is a plea for...

ii) The Church to Intervene for the sake of Peace (v4

** Jesus urged His disciples to fight for peace in their relationships.*

Mat 18:15-18 ESV "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. (16) But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. (17) If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. (18) Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

This is the 2nd reference to “the church” in the New Testament. The first reference was in Matt. 16:18 where Jesus promises: “I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.” Then here the church is mentioned as a corporate mediating group for the sake of peace. “Tell it to the church”. Let the church hear the offenses and offer their input.

Mat. 18:15 | God’s word commands us to deal with our strained church family relationship problems. We are commanded to go to the person or persons who have wronged us or offended us and attempt to talk to them, not to return fire; not to spread gossip, but to make amends, in an attempt to resolve offenses and to express forgiveness, in order to reconcile the strained relationships.

What was private, is addressed privately. But what became public needed to be dealt with publically. ***It was crucial to the life of the***

church.

AND We are commanded – if the person with whom we are attempting to be reconciled to, refuses, then we are to go to another 2 or 3 people with the intent of getting help. “I thought we were to keep our mouths shut and not gossip?” This is not gossip, if it is done Biblically. Remember, Gossip is not gossip because of content, but typically because of intent. Talk about it with someone you trust. Go to 2 or 3 mature Christians, to share your concerns and seek their help and input in mediating.

The tendency is to do nothing. Fear may cause us to keep quiet and let them work things out for themselves or not. But this kind of unresolved issues is like a ticking time bomb. It is already ticking. The question is, are we willing to take the effort to attempt to disarm it before it goes off? There may be a lot at stake.

AND if we are not able to find reconciliation with 2 or 3 others helping us – anyone know what the next step is? We take it to the church family as a whole. Some are thinking: “You must be kidding!”

(1) This sure does sound like a lot of work. You are correct. It is!

(2) This sounds like this whole process could actually blow up and possibly make things worse. That is also correct, but it is not the process that makes things worse, but the unwillingness of one or both of the offended parties to work out their strained church family relationships, in a Biblical manner that honors God and seeks the restoration of the strained relationship.

Too many Christians don’t really know how to go about resolving strained church relationships. Some do know, but choose not to pursue reconciliation as Scripture instructs us. Perhaps because it is such a difficult, painful and often nasty procedure to go through and is similar to 1 Cor.6 when Christians were busy suing one another.

Don't take one another to the secular courts, but take it to the *church* court. That is the admonition from Scripture; let the church mediate for unresolved, strained relationship issues. This is a plea to the church, to do their part in restoring strained family relations, for the sake of peace, and the restoration of Joy.

Lesson #1: Church divisions are serious business to God. Everyone's feelings and input are important and need to be considered.

Lesson #2: Reconciled relationships are serious commands to the church.

Php 4:3 ESV Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, **who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.**

Are those of the family of God, with whom we have labored together for Christ; are they, are we together, not worth fighting the enemy for the sake of our spiritual joy and our church family peace? Are those whose names are written in the book of life and who are our spiritual family; are these relationships not worth sacrificing our preferences, and reconciling our differences for the sake of family peace and harmony?

* Strained Church relationships are worth pursuing in order to be reconciled or restored. The Church that reconciles together, grows together. The church that refuses to address this in a Biblical manner, will quite likely deteriorate together. In Ephesians, Paul states: "Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil."^[Eph.4:26-27]

Paul makes that statement in the context of the marriage relationship. But it can also be applied to Church family relationship issues.

Growing In Peace (v5-7)

So it is the church's responsibility to fight for peace, not just one person's. We are expected to be growing in peace, which is a purposeful process. Within the church family, peace is everybody's responsibility. And as we fight for peace, we grow in peace.

When we experience the joy of the Lord, we are more inclined to enjoy peaceful church family relationships. And when we are experiencing peaceful church family relationships, we are more inclined to experience the overflowing and outpouring joy of the Lord in our lives, our ministries and in our relationships.

Rom 12:16-19 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be prideful, but associate with the humble. Never be wise in your own sight. (17) Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. (18) **If possible, so far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.** (19) Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

"as far as it depends on you", indicates Christians taking the initiative to seek peace.

"Fight for peace. and again I say Fight for Peace." Brothers and sisters: One day we will all be gloriously resurrected and will spend eternity together with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As we fight for peace and joy, are we not able to defer to God, the proper action to be taken for our church as a whole?

Paul reminds us that in eternity, we will be with other believers, with whom we disagreed; people who rubbed us the wrong way and people who we rubbed the wrong way. These Christians were part of our spiritual family on earth; they will also be part of our eternal family in heaven.

But until then... Let us do our part to love one another NOW. Let us forgive one another as the need arises, NOW. Let us live at peace, respecting one another NOW.

Eph 4:1-6 ESV I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, (2) with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, (3) ***eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*** (4) There is ***one body*** and one Spirit-- just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call-- (5) one Lord, one faith, one baptism, (6) one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

“Eager to maintain” refers to energetically being assertive in pursuing, seeking or making peace.

“One body” = As Christians, we have 1 Father and we are of 1 body, ***the family of God.*** “Can’t we all just get along!” As true believers in Jesus Christ, we are all brothers and sisters in the family of God. We are 1 family, with 1 Father. Let us live together in loving peace, to please Him and honor one another.

When we experience the joy of the Lord, we are more inclined to enjoy peaceful church family relationships. And when we are enjoying peaceful church family relationships, we are far more inclined to experience the overflowing and outpouring joy of the Lord in our lives, our ministries and in our relationships.

CONCLUSION:

If you find yourself involved in strained church relationships, here are some helpful guidelines.

(1) Pray about the problem. Pray for those you have a problem with. Don’t pray regarding whether God wants you to leave or to stay. Pray that God would change your heart and give you the

courage to be a positive peacemaking influence in this time of troubled relations.

(2) Attempt to resolve things peacefully with the other person(s).

i.) Lovingly share the offense or the problem with the individual

ii.) Determine how serious this issue really is.

- Is it an issue of :
 - Personal preferences?
 - Room of personal compromise?
 - Personality quirks
 - Relational Disrespect of abuse?
 - Ministry challenges or concerns?
 - Anger or unforgiveness:

(3) Take your concern or offense to others whom you trust to be fair, wise and non-judgmental. Perhaps the elders, a pastor, or a mature Christian 3rd party.

Rom 12:17-18 ESV Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. (18) If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

This is important that we do what is within our own power to keep the peace or make the peace. Sometimes it may not be within your power to work things out. But we have to try to do it God's way.

(4) Be mature enough to seek out the offended party and attempt to be reconciled and experience mutual forgiveness.

For Christians, this is a most difficult process to address, and the sad thing is, too often Christian relations are not restored.



“The Peace and Power of Prayerful Surrender”

Series Title: *“The Book of Philippians: The Proper Joy-filled Christian Perspective”*

Date: Nov.11, 2018

Text: Phil. 4:5-7

Chapter 1: The ***FOCUSED*** Joy-Filled Perspective: We do not focus so much on our circumstances, but on Gods’ purpose in our circumstances.

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Chp.4 * The ***FUTURE*** Joy-Filled Christian Perspective: Focus of this chapter is; “So How will I now live, by what I know?”

INTRODUCTION

So I was raking leaves and mowing my lawn yesterday, when a man drove by me, his eyes locked onto my eyes; he pulled over and stopped and came running toward me. “I need help”, he said out of breath. What kind of help do you need? I asked. “I need to find a church.” Now people don’t ask me that question every day, so I perked up. “Sir do you need salvation?” I asked. He chuckled and said, “I need to get to a wedding.”

“So what is the name of the church?” I asked. “I don’t know”, he replied. “What is the address?” Again he replied, “I don’t know”. At this point I realized this fellow really was in trouble. He did not know how to get to where he needed to be.

Thankfully, while he was talking to me, someone pulled up to his car and honked their horn. Evidently it was someone else from the wedding party. He thanked me for my time, got into his car and followed the group down the road.

This man didn't know where he was. He didn't know where he was going. And he didn't know how to get to where he needed to be. I have found that many people who experience strained relationships, also don't know what to do or where they need to be in the relationship. Nor do they know what steps to take in order to get to where they would like to be in the relationship.

In this portion of Philippians, Paul's perspective is on the Future; What they must do and how they must live together at peace. Last week we learned some Biblical principles on how to make things right with the other person. Today, Paul helps us learn how to make things right in our own heart. This is not about peace with others, but about peace within our own hearts.

LIFE WITH CHRIST IN MIND

(v5-7)

* Within the church family, peace is everybody's responsibility. In vs.1-3, Paul has addressed strained relations within the church family and even specifically names 2 people who are having problems getting along peacefully.

He urges the church...

4:5 (5) Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is at near;

Gentleness = appropriate or reasonable Christian behavior; having a humble attitude; being fair minded, without offense; without provocation, living at peace with one another in the church.

This is directly related to the Church family, facing strained church

family relationships, while striving to live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It is also in the immediate context of this strained relationship between these 2 women.

“Let your gentleness be known to everyone” – This is in regard to the reputation of reconciliation. It is about being characterized by the Character of the Lord Jesus, both outside, as well as inside the church.

v.5) **Lord at hand**; This is how we should live with Christ in mind. At the end of chapter 3, Paul refers to the return of Christ when he will change us in to His glorious likeness. But here, “Near”, seems to be a reference to His abiding presence is in our midst. I’m not thinking this is necessarily another reference to the return of Christ, but a reference to the present awareness of the Lord’s presence in the church, specifically His presence in the midst of this present contentious situation, and His readiness to help, mend and restore our relationships if we are willing to submit to Him.

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, *there am I among them.*” (Matthew 18:20 ESV)

This Matthew 18 passage is directly related to strained Christian relations. Also in Revelation chapter 1 & 2, John refers to Jesus standing *in the midst* of the 7 churches and *walking in their midst*. Perhaps this is similarly what Paul is presenting. God is aware. He is with us, in our midst. God knows the issues and the offenses and the problems, and the tempers and the hurts. And He is pleased when we fight for joy and fight for peace in our strained family relations. And please remember this is not referring to fighting against one another, but the opposite. It is fighting *for* one another; against the enemy who wants to divide us and destroy us. “the thief comes to steal, kill and to destroy”.(Jn.10:10)

This is not merely living with the return of Christ in mind, but

living as though He is already in our midst. Remembering the Lord is present in this situation. Let us acknowledge His presence. Let us allow ourselves to be led by the Lord and influenced by His Lordship. That means fighting for peace within the church family.

i.) The presence of Anxiety in troubled Ministry (v6

* May I point out, that this popular verse is also, in the immediate context and is directly related to the Church family, facing strained church family relationships, while striving to live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Strained church family relations cause disunity, stress and anxiety in the church and can certainly lead to destructive divisions if allowed to go unaddressed. When Satan steals our joy; and when conflict steals our peace, then anxiety flourishes within the family, like mold on a loaf of bread. It quickly spreads from one slice to the other until the whole loaf is moldy. Everyone is affected and everyone must be willing to work toward forgiveness.

4:5 (5) Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; **(6) do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.** (7) And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁵**Let your gentleness** be exemplified in all our relational dealings.

⁶**Let your Anxiety**, stress and worry be cast upon the Lord. As Christians, we tend to think that when we have relational challenges, that God is obviously on my side. “Cast all your care upon Him for He cares for you” AND He also cares for the one with whom you have conflict.

1Pe 5:6-7 ESV Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may lift you up,

(7) casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

Stress and worry can keep our minds so clogged and clouded and so focused on the negative aspects of life, that we lose track of reality. Because we all know that worry is not based in reality. Worry is focused on the “what ifs”. Worry focuses our minds on the worst possibilities that could go wrong. Or it is the stress from past experiences that have hurt or grieved us. These are our emotional memories and they often leave us with emotional illnesses. And emotional illness need a remedy. And Dr. Paul writes us a prescription for this emotional pain and illness of anxiety.

Phil.4:6 “do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”

He tells us to not be anxious, but rather be prayerful. Our minds are key here. We must thoughtfully focus on filling our minds and focusing our thoughts on right things, and taking right steps to make things right.

Let Prayer be your first priority; your first plan of action⁷; I Have personally found it difficult to hold grudges against those for whom I pray. When we pray, we are spending a session with our “Wonderful Counselor”^[Is.9:6] Taking time to cast all our cares or anxieties or stresses, or anger, or offenses, or disappointments, or frustrations or worries upon Him for Him to carry and for Him to deal with.

Emotional pain, stress, grief, hurt or resentment are things that will eat us alive, little by little, until it consumes us. It is an inner illness and we need the remedy that Paul prescribes. Will we take it? Many don’t or perhaps won’t.

“Fighting for peace” means regularly “casting our cares upon the

Lord”, knowing that “HE knows, HE cares and HE answers Prayers”. This is the remedy to be begin to be free from this emotional illness of anxiety; and not just once, but regularly and faithfully until we are healed and our joy and our peace are restored.

Along with that he prescribes Gratitude

Let Thankfulness characterize your attitude, rather than criticism. I have also found it more natural to complain about things, than to pray about things. Thanks Giving is like a flame thrower on the ice cube of hurt and offenses. Thankfulness can melt away anger, anxiety and unforgiveness associated with strained relationships. Euodia may read this and respond, “Well you don’t know what she said to me.” Syntyche may read this and reply, “Oh, you don’t know how she treated me.” No, but try giving thanks for her. Let thankfulness melt away the hurt and offenses and the resentment of things said and done. Allow thanksgiving to bring back the joy of the Lord and His unsurpassable peace between you both, and within your own spirit.

Thanks Giving for what exactly? Remember these two ladies had their names written in the book of life.^[4:4] They also served side by side with Paul in the ministry of the gospel in Philippi. At one time, they were very close friends and coworkers. They could give thanks for the loving heart of compassion the one had for those lost and outside the family of God. They might give thanks for the patience and encouragement they once provided for one another in the face of difficult and discouraging times in the ministry. They may even be able to be thankful for what God has allowed them to learn from one another, in the time they spent serving Christ in the trenches together for the kingdom of heaven.

Here, the responsibility for peace is shifted from the person who did the offending, to the person who has been offended. Now the focus is not on making things right with the other person, but in

making things right in your own heart and perhaps even between you and God.

Let your Requests Not be: “Lord teach that person a lesson. Lord Change that person.” But let our request be focused ¹on your own heart and personal need to be changed, and then ²for the blessing of those with whom you differ.

What God is sovereignly able to work out Biblically, He is also able to work out practically, relationally in any given situation or relationship.

Personal responsibility...

Mat 5:22-24 ESV But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire. (23) So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, (24) leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

If in prayer or devotions, or during worship; you remember that somebody has an issue with you; it is your responsibility to take the initiative to go to that person and attempt to make things right with them. Then come back to worship.

Anger; Offenses; Unforgiveness; resentment hinders your relationship with God and will affect not only your personal worship, but I believe it affects the overall church worship experience. It is just a spirit that seems to keep the Holy Spirit at bay, until relationships are made right and strife is properly addressed.

ii.) the Promise of Peace in proper relationships (v7

* Prayer has to go both ways. Lord make things right in the life of those who offended me. And Lord, show me how to make things right in the life of the person I have offended. We may be quick to pray that God changes the person who hurt you and to bless you.

What if we completely reversed that usual way of praying. What if we prayed “Lord bless the person who offended me; and please change my heart as needed.

A Great Sinner’s prayer for Christians...

Psa 139:23-24 ESV Search *me*, O God, and know *my* heart! Try me and know *my* thoughts! (24) And see if there be any grievous way in *me*, and lead *me* in the way everlasting!

Pray first for the other person; give thanks for the other person; bless the other person. Pray first for God to work in your heart.

And THEN....

4:7 (7) And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Peace of God = in the midst of his church, with the presence of Jesus very real and very near.

Surpasses understanding = His Supernatural workings, accomplishing what our own human efforts could not accomplish because our conflict was in the way.

The Peace of God will guard our hearts and minds. And here we realize the greatest battle may not be between 2 people. Perhaps the greatest battle may be in our own individual hearts and minds, in our own thoughts and emotions toward another.

Gods Peace will Guard our heart and mind in Christ = Gods peace will become an impenetrable fortress from the attacks of the evil

one, from affecting our mind; thoughts; perspective; attitudes and treatment of one another. Let us keep in mind, that through these spiritual battles, there is the promise of stable mental health.

Fighting for peace and dealing with strained church family relationships, I believe, opens the windows of heaven and removes any obstacle from God pouring out His blessing upon His people, corporately or individually. Failing to fight for peace may reveal that our own personal, unstable mental health is of our own doing.

CONCLUSION:

If you find yourself involved in strained church relationships, here are some helpful guidelines.

(1) Pray about the problem. Pray for those you have a problem with. Don't pray regarding whether God wants you to leave or to stay. Pray that God would change your heart and give you the courage to be a positive, forgiving, peacemaking influence in this time of troubled relations.

(2) Attempt to resolve things peacefully with the other person(s).

i.) Lovingly share the offense or the problem

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- Is it an issue of :
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This is important that we do what is within our own power to keep the peace or make the peace. Sometimes it may not be within your power to work things out. But we must strive to try to do it God's way.

(4) Be mature enough to seek out the offended party and attempt to be reconciled and experience mutual forgiveness.

Let us be mature enough to work toward resolving our issues

Let us work together toward Reconciling relationships.

Let us fight hard for peace in the church, to please God and save further trouble, to mend and to maintain these very important spiritual relationships we have in Christ.

The Power of God in Prayerful Surrender

The promise is that we may experience restored relationships. We may honor God and receive His blessing. We may experience stable, peaceful and even joyful mental health as we seek to work through strain relations for the good of the church and the glory of God.



“Being Thankful for Stable Mental Health”

Series Title: “The Book of Philippians: The Proper Joy-filled Christian Perspective”

Date: Nov.18, 2018

Text: Phil. 4:8-9

ThanksGiving

Chapter 1: The ***FOCUSED*** Joy-Filled Perspective: We do not focus so much on our circumstances, but on Gods’ purpose in our circumstances.

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INTRODUCTION

The Effects of stress on your body; HealthLine.com /MayoClinic

- (1) Headaches (2) Heartburn (3) Rapid Breathing
- (4) Risk of Heart Attack (5) Pounding heart
- (6) Fertility Problems (7) Tense Muscles (8) Stomach ache
- (9) High Blood Pressure (10) High Blood Sugar
- (11) Insomnia (12) Increased sadness / Depression
- (13) Fatigue (14) Anxiety (15) Irritability / anger
- (16) Overeating (17) Drug & Alcohol abuse
- (18) Increased tobacco use (19) Social Withdrawal
- (20) Bowell and/or digestive problems: “Distress in the Lower Tract”

So, imagine you discover a poor, cold skunk outside, living under your shed. You feel really sorry for the skunk, so you invite the skunk to come inside and take up residence in your house until the weather warms up.

Before long, you realize that your house is taking on a prominent aroma of the skunk, which you allowed to occupy your living room. **Question:** What do you need to do? **Answer:** ***Kick the skunk out!***

Now imagine you allow anger, anxiety, fear, discouragement, sadness or despair to take up residence in your mind. Before long, you realize your life is becoming characterized by the thoughts you allow to occupy your mind. **Question:** What do we need to do? **Answer:** ***Kick those stinking thoughts out!***

Thanks Giving means a Thankful heart that expresses thankfulness and reflects an inner peace, mental stability, spiritual victory, or relational peace or personal joy. The book of Philippians is like a Christian psychology book, which addresses our thinking process, and our life perspective or worldview.

There is no switch you turn on for good mental health, but a long term process of fighting for the joy of the Lord and for relational and mental peace. Secular mental health looks within – *to self*. Christian mental health looks above - *to God*. God is our Great Physician and our “Wonderful Counselor”.(Is.9:6)

Our last lesson was on dealing with anxiety, worry, depression and stress.

*** Dealing with personal Anxiety in troubled circumstances (v6**

4:6-7 (6) do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (7) And the peace of God, which surpasses

all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Being anxious is Dr. Paul's diagnosis of our problem. His prescription is prayer, characterized with thanks giving. His prognosis is God's peace, surrounding and protecting our heart, and our minds; emotional and mental, health and stability.

We don't have a problem taking a pill for a headache or for high blood pressure; or maybe even a sedative. Why not take a minute at every meal to thank God for something He has given, or some way God has been involved in our life? This is not a magical formula but it is a powerful promise of how God can work when we allow him to rule our minds and thoughts.

v.7) Peace of God; in the midst of his church, with the presence of Jesus very real and very near.

Surpasses understanding: His Supernatural workings, accomplishing what our own human efforts and secular psychology could not accomplish because our conflict was in the way.

And as God gives the Prescription, He also gives the Promise that...

The Peace of God will guard our hearts and minds. And here we realize that the greatest battle may not be between 2 people. Perhaps the greatest battle may be in our own individual hearts and minds, in our own thoughts and emotions toward another.

Gods Peace will Guard our heart and mind in Christ = Gods peace will become an impenetrable fortress from the attacks of the evil one, from affecting our mind; thoughts; perspective; attitudes and treatment of one another. The promise is that God's deliverance from anxiety will begin to characterize your mental health. And isn't that what we would prefer?

Nurturing a heart of gratitude and thankfulness is about striving for stable mental health. Fighting for peace and dealing with strained church family relationships, I believe, opens the windows of heaven and removes any obstacle from God pouring out His blessing upon His people.

Php 4:8-9 ESV Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (9) What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me--practice these things, and the **God** of peace will be with you.

The emphasis is not merely “peace”, but the God of peace will be with you, or will be working in our anxious heart and troubled situation, bringing peace through our giving of thanks. What a difference a change of mind can make. Be thankful to God. Being thankful is a choice. It is a purposeful focusing of our thoughts that that which is good.

THE DISCIPLINED CHRISTIAN MIND (4:8)

* The Proper joy-filled Christian perspective is crucial in every area of the Christian life.

What if I told you, you could experience stable mental health; characterized with Joy to overcome sadness, Peace to overcome anxiety and Hope to overcome despair. Would you want it? Most would probably say, “YES”.

Now what if I told you, there is no switch or shortcut, but it will take work and will be a long-term, possibly a life-long struggle, but you will experience it. Would you want to fight for it? Sadly, many would not. Things that don’t come easily, are too often things we fail to pursue.

You might say, “Well if God really wanted me to have those things, He would make it easier to get.” I would say, “If you really wanted it, you would be willing to fight for it, no matter how long it might take.”

WE often view the qualities of hope, peace and joy like vegetables in a garden. We would like it if we could just go to the store and buy it off the shelf, but if it meant plowing my own garden, sowing my own seed, watering, fertilizing and weeding the garden, then waiting a month or two, we might say, “Never mind. I’ve lost interest”

Mental, emotion, physical or Spiritual stability and health doesn’t happen automatically, probably doesn’t happen accidentally and it certainly doesn’t happen overnight. Proper health today, is dependent upon the proper understanding of diet, intake, & exercise. I would say that applies to emotional health, physical health, certainly spiritual health, and even mental health.

What you do or don’t do today, will affect your mental health and Christian perspective, not only tomorrow but for years to come.

Our Greatest Problem is self, not others (4:8

* We have the ability to positively affect our own mental health and I believe it can begin with thanks giving to God.

Php 4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble;, whatever is right; , whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things

- **Paul Gives us DIRECTION of THOUGHT.**

What we think about, affects the whole of our mental health and stability. What we know and understand, affects what we believe to be true; which affects our attitudes and perspective; which affects our choices and actions. Paul indicates that it starts in our

mind, or our thinking process. These are thoughts we allow to occupy our minds, like allowing a skunk to occupy our living room.

We allow our thoughts to dwell on things that worry us. We think about people that anger us; situations that agitate us. For most of us, our thought life is completely undisciplined and out of control. I am not talking about “mind control” but I am talking about controlling our mind. I’m talking about developing a discipline of filling our mind and focusing our thoughts on positive, productive things; things that honor God.

Building blocks of a solid mental foundation

- Paul Give us **INSTRUCTION for PRACTICE** for things to focus on minds on.

¹**TRUE**; unconcealed, true, true in fact, worthy of credit, truthful; w/o falsehood or deceit. Whatever is True, give thanks to God for that. Think on these things.

²**NOBLE**; honorable; grave, serious, dignified. Whatever is honorable to God, then thank God for that. Too often we allow our minds to focus on things that God calls abomination and then wonder why God doesn’t bless us, or why our spiritual growth is dry or dead and why our mental state is, perhaps, unstable.

³**RIGHT**; just; especially in the eyes of God; righteous; approved by God. Whatever is just or righteous we should be able to recognize and to thank God for that. Those things we should think about and seek to put into practice.

⁴**PURE**; free from ceremonial defilement, holy, sacred; pure either ethically, or ritually, ceremonially; chaste. This is that which is not tainted with worldly things. Whatever is pure, then give thanks to God. In music, in lifestyle, in TV, in speech and attitudes –

whatever is to be considered pure, we should be able to rejoice in that and to appropriately give thanks to God for that.

Direct your thoughts toward that which is...

⁵**LOVELY**; pleasing; agreeable; extending toward"; properly, worthy of personal affection; dearly prized, i.e. worth the effort to have and embrace. Whatever things are pleasing to God, proper for a Christian or in keeping with the character of Jesus; Give thanks to God for that as we observe that in the culture or in persons around us.

⁶**ADMIRABLE**; well reported of; spoken in a kindly spirit, laudable, or of good reputation.

⁷**EXCELLENCE**; moral goodness; virtue; goodness; a gracious act; uprightness; seeking to put sin to death.

⁸**PRAISE**; Commendable; praise worthy; approval. Disclaimer: we can't really do this while watching many TV programs or going to most movies.

This points us to Paul's Direction of Thought...

v.8) "Think on these things". Allow these kinds of thoughts to occupy our minds and fill our thoughts; stabilize your mental health and govern your choices.

I personally think **THANKFULNESS** to be absolutely key in fighting for joy, and experiencing mental health and stability.

Thank God for... Fill your mind with... Focus your thoughts on... the things you have to Thank God for. Thank God for every single good thing that is part of your life. People, Experiences and provisions are things we can begin thanking God for.

THANKFULNESS demonstrates that our satisfaction with life and our relationship with God is not dependent upon our circumstances, or whether or not, we feel God is fair or unfair.

Thankfulness also demonstrates that we don't allow the negative aspects or experiences of life, to negate or occlude the good things we have from God.

THANKFULNESS does not allow the stinking skunk of anxiety to occupy our thoughts or take up residence in the living room of our minds. Think long and hard about how good God has been to you. Focus your thinking on the many ways God has helped you and blessed you. Think about the things you don't have and problems you don't have; illness you don't have; troubles you don't have.

Your car won't Start? Thank God that your roof doesn't leak. You are late for an important appointment? Thank God you don't have cancer. Have a difficult co-worker? Thank God you're not married to him or her.

I saw a cartoon: a man and a woman are in an office and they are arguing. The woman says, "if you were my husband, I'd poison your coffee." The man replies, "If you were my wife, I'd drink it." There is always something we can find to thank God for in all situations.

Strive to develop the discipline of being thankful. Allow Christ to fill your life, and gradually God will begin to renew your heart with Thanksgiving. Instead of criticism, negative and complaining, Thankfulness can begin to spill over into the lives of those around you.

"The Disciplined Christian Mind" considers God's DIRECTION for THOUGHT.

Now we consider ...

THE OBEDIENT CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR (4:9A)

* from thinking to implementing; allow these qualities you think about to characterize your life.

What we think about, affects the whole of our mental health and stability. What we know and understand, affects what we believe to be true; which affects our attitudes and perspective; which affects our choices and actions. It starts in our mind, our thinking process.

- Now Paul offers **INSTRUCTION for PRACTICE**.

Php 4:8-9 ESV Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (9) **What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me--practice these things,** and the God of peace will be with you.

“Practice these things”. What have we learned from Paul, that we can begin to implement? I’d say let’s begin with learning to Give Thanks. We can start by...

Obeying God’s Direction for Mental Health

* Think on these things. Practice them regularly. Strive towards developing a disciplined Christian mind. Strive toward thinking God honoring thoughts. Strive to practicing the giving of thanks in all situations.

Thinking that has value must transition into action.

To know but not act, renders the knowledge worthless. We must answer: How can I act differently? How can I choose differently? How can I treat others differently?

OUR ULTIMATE CHRISTIAN SOURCE (4:9b)

* What can we hope to achieve by considering Paul’s advice and doing things God’s way?

- **Paul offers us a CONDITION of PROMISE.**

Practice these things or do these things. Take action to implement these. Strive to develop these mental traits and practices. So very, very much of Christian time is spent taking in Biblical information, like solid sermons, Christian radio programming; even seminars, conferences and in depth Bible studies. But how little we seem to actually put into practice.

What Jesus has, He brings into the lives of those who believe in Him. Jesus is Joy and Peace and Love. When Jesus comes into your life, He doesn't so much give us those blessings, He brings them. If we have Jesus Christ in our life, then we have access to His Joy, His Peace and His love.

I will add this: that when Jesus becomes part of your life; and when His peace, and joy and love begin to fill your life; the byproduct will be a growing attitude of gratitude; and a heart filled with thankfulness.

I have attempted to help people in the past, to do what Scripture says in order to please God. When your life pleases God, Thankfulness is a byproduct. I have helped some people understand from Scripture how their life can be filled with all those positive things and have had some ask me: "You mean I have to do all that?" No. Only if you want the good things that God has to give you. Only if you genuinely desire the very best that God has for you.

Like wanting a great education but refusing to go to school. Like wanting a high paying job but complaining for having to go through the proper training. Like wanting a slim, trim body, but refusing to eat healthy and exercising. Like wanting to be able to play basket like Michael Jordan but refusing to practice.

Too often people want what God has to offer, but they would prefer to leave God out of the equation and just get His gifts. It doesn't work like that. They want these qualities now. They don't

realize that it is the process that eventually results in the desired product.

It is a disciplined process of growing in your relationship with Jesus, growing in the joy He brings and growing in the peace and love He brings into our lives.

If you live your life apart from God and Jesus Christ, then you will forever live your life, void of all the good and positive blessings He has to offer you. Jesus is the Source. His grace and our striving brings the development.

Php 4:8-9 ESV Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (9) What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me--*practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*

Consider the focus of this Christian hymn.

“Count Your Blessings”

by Johnson Oatman, Jr. & Edwin O. Excell

Verse 1

When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.

Chorus

Count your blessings, name them one by one,
Count your blessings, see what God hath done!
Count your blessings, name them one by one,
Count your many blessings see what God hath done

Verse 2

Are you ever burdened with a load of care?

Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?
Count your many blessings, every doubt will fly,
And you will keep singing as the days go by.

Verse 3

So, amid the conflict whether great or small,
Do not be disheartened, God is over all;
Count your many blessings, angels will attend,
Help and comfort give you to your journey's end.

Giving thanks to God:

- (1) Focuses our mind and fills our thoughts with the person and work of Jesus Christ.
- (2) Helps keep our mind off our self and our own problems.
- (3) Allows us to consider how good things really are.
- (4) Highlights the goodness of God and declares aloud the greatness of our God.

ASSIGNMENT:

This week at Thanks Giving dinner, YOU be the one who invites everyone to share something they are thankful for. And to help us prepare for that; Today at our covered dish Turene dinner following our service; practice asking each other at your table, "What are you really thankful for this year?"

Gratitude impacts every area of our lives.

By Charles Stanley. *In Touch Ministries*

By giving us the command to always give thanks, God is not rubbing salt in a wound or calling us to set aside reason. He knows that being thankful in all circumstances has a powerful impact on every area of our Christian life. Here are ten lessons I've learned:

1. Gratitude keeps us continually aware that the Lord is close by.

Even though gratefulness doesn't come naturally in difficult circumstances, a decision to thank God for walking with us through life makes us more sensitive to His comforting presence.

2. It motivates us to look for His purpose in our circumstances.

Knowing that the Lord allows hurt and trouble for His good purposes takes the edge off the pain. Even if we don't understand why we're going through suffering, we can thank God because we know that in His time, He'll work it all for good. In the meantime, we can rest in the knowledge that He's using every hardship to transform us into the image of His Son (Rom. 8:28-29).

3. Thanksgiving helps bring our will into submission to God.

When the situation we're experiencing is the last thing we'd ever want, thanking the Lord is a giant step toward being able to follow Christ's example and say, "Not my will, but Yours be done" (Luke 22:42). Gratitude helps us acknowledge that God's will is best, even if it's hard; in that way, we are able to release our hold on what we want. Although the circumstances may remain the same, submission changes our heart.

4. It reminds us of our continual dependence upon the

Lord. Pride, adequacy, and independence evaporate whenever we're trapped in a situation that leaves us helpless and hopeless. If there's no way out, thanking God for His control over all things reminds us that He alone is our strength.

5. Thankfulness is an essential ingredient for joy. There's no way to "rejoice always" (1 Thess. 5:16) without giving thanks in everything (v. 18). That's why ungrateful people are so grumpy. Joy is an inner sense of contentment, which flows from a deep assurance that all God's purposes are good and He's in complete control of every situation. With that kind of supernatural joy, it's easy to be thankful.

6. A grateful attitude strengthens our witness to unbelievers. The world is filled with people who are angry, frustrated, and overwhelmed with the difficulties of life. But a believer with a grateful attitude is like a light shining in a dark place. The people around you will want to know why you don't grumble and complain the way everyone else does. Then you can tell them about your amazing Savior.

7. Thanking God focuses our attention on Him rather than our circumstances. The key to a grateful heart begins with understanding the Lord's character because knowing His awesome attributes motivates trust and gratitude. He knows exactly what you're going through, loves you unconditionally, and understands you perfectly. When you thank Him in tough times, He gets bigger, and the circumstances become smaller.

8. Gratitude gives us eternal perspective. The apostle Paul is an amazing example of a man who suffered extreme hardship yet remained thankful. That's because he was able to see life from God's perspective. In 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, he says our present suffering is "momentary light affliction." If you're going through a really hard time, those words may sound ridiculous. Maybe you've been dealing with pain your entire life, or a difficult trial has dragged on for decades. It hardly seems momentary or light.

But Paul is comparing our situations here on earth with what's awaiting us in eternity. For him, a 40-year stretch of pain and hardship was no match for the "eternal weight of glory" awaiting him (2 Cor. 4:17). What an amazing thought—your present pain has the potential to produce incomparable glory for you in heaven. Now that's a big reason to thank God!

9. When we're wearied by our circumstances, thanksgiving energizes us.

Most of us can handle short trials, but if they continue for a long period of time, the emotional and physical strain is exhausting. Should ongoing illness, unresolved relational problems, or continued financial pressures become more than we can bear, it's time to start thanking God because He has promised to give strength to the weary (Isaiah 40:29). He'll release His supernatural energy within us so we can patiently endure the trial and come out victorious on the other side.

10. Gratitude transforms anxiety into peace, which passes all

understanding (Phil. 4:6-7). I learned this principle through a very difficult experience. When I was feeling anxious about the situation, I discovered that complaining, getting angry, and arguing with God didn't change my circumstances. Finally, in desperation, I began thanking Him. Only then did I receive His incomprehensible peace. My situation didn't change for quite a while, but God's peace guarded my heart all the way through that trying time.

What will you choose?

The choice isn't always easy. Most of the time, we'd rather get out of difficulties than thank God through them. But have you ever considered that He may actually want you to stay in a painful situation for a time? I know this may not sound like something a loving God would ever do, but remember, His goal is to do what is best for you, not what's comfortable, convenient, and enjoyable.

The Lord's purposes for your life extend beyond your days on earth. He's working for your eternal good. Begin thanking God today, in whatever circumstance you find yourself. After all, what's the alternative—bitterness, resentment, and grumbling? God made you for something far better: eternal, sustaining joy. The transformation starts with two simple, small words offered from the heart: *thank You*.

Say them over and over. And then say them again. Your joy will be radiant—a light shining in a dark and desperate world.

<https://verticallivingministries.com/2014/11/24/10-benefits-of-giving-thanks-by-charles-f-stanley/>



“The Potential of God in Joy-Filled Contentment”

Series Title: “*The Book of Philippians: The Proper Joy-filled Christian Perspective*”

Date: Nov.25, 2018

Subject: Christian Contentment

Text: Phil. 4:10-13

Chapter 1: The **FOCUSED** Joy-Filled Perspective: We do not focus so much on our circumstances, but on Gods’ purpose in our circumstances.

Chp. 2 * The **SURRENDERED** Joy-Filled Perspective: We are never more Christ-like than when we demonstrate a Surrendered Christian Perspective, through an attitude of person humility, in following Jesus in our lives, relationships and ministries.

Chp. 3 * The **ETERNAL** Joy-Filled Perspective: The Christian life is one of tremendous eternal hope, not concerned with what we may lay aside, but rejoicing in what we have already gained, and presently posses.

Chp.4 * The **FUTURE** Joy-Filled Christian Perspective: Focus of this chapter is; “So How will I now live, by what I know?”

REVIEW:

4:6-7 (6) do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (7) And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Php 4:8-9 ESV Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (9) What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me--practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Be thankful to God.

4:7) the “peace of God” will guard...

4:9) the “God of Peace” will be with you. (1The.5:23; 2Thes.3:16

INTRODUCTION

Reference book: “Rare Jewell of Christian Contentment”, Jeremiah Burroughs

“The Potential of God in Joy-Filled Contentment”

Q: What does it take to make you content with life? In terms of things you own and money you make... What does it take for you to feel content?

Q: If, for some reason, you had to significantly downsize and get rid of half of everything you own, what would be the things you would keep? What would you feel you could live without?

REJOICING IN CHRISTIAN COMPASSION (4:10

* Here we go again! Paul addresses the topic of joy again. In this letter, Paul addresses joy more than 16 times.

Phil.4:10 (NIV) ¹⁰ **I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it.**

So Paul is in jail and the Christians in Philippi have been supporting his missionary journeys. The church wanted to share, to give and to help provide and support Paul as he spread the gospel and made disciple. And while they could probably have used those resources themselves, they were content with using their own personal resources to support Paul.

Our focus today is “contentment”. Contentment is not about having all we want; contentment is about wanting less and finding

satisfaction in what God has provided. (J. Burroughs). Therefore, contentment doesn't come from striving to get more, but in striving to surrender all that we are to God in Christ. The more Christ becomes our Everything, the more content we become with our earthly state.

Joy in the Character of Christ (v10a)

* Apart from the person of the Lord Jesus Himself; the Christ-like character, attitudes and example of Jesus exhibited in the lives of the Philippian believers is what constantly brings Joy to Paul's heart. When he focuses his mind on the memories of them, his heart is filled with Joy because of them.

After the example of Jesus, the church at Philippi was characterized with giving and sacrificing for the sake of the kingdom.

Phil.4:10 (NIV) ¹⁰ I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you **renewed** your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it.

“**Renewed**” is an agricultural reference which refers to a plant that sprouts up again. It refers to something springing back to life, following a season of being dormant. And from Paul's perspective, this is what was taking place in the lives of the church at Philippi.

Missed Opportunities (v10b)

* The Phil. Church was evidently a strong, support base of Paul on his missionary journeys. And it seems that, for a time, the Philippians were hindered, for some reason, from providing their generous and sacrificial support to Paul.

Whether due to problems on the church's end or perhaps after Paul's arrest and during his transfer to jail in Rome, they lost track of his where-about. Perhaps they could not acquire a pkg courier for their support. At some point for Paul, the interest of the

Philippians began to come back to life, as their support for him was “renewed”.

It would have been pretty easy to say; “Well, we can’t keep track of this guy, so we’re not going through any more trouble to get this support to him.” But they didn’t. Once they were able, or once the obstacle was removed, they were happy to continue their support.

When I visit our shut-ins; quite often before I leave, they will say, “Here’s my offering”, and they’ll hand me a check to bring back to the church. They have a continued concern to faithfully support their church family and ministries.

CONTENTMENT IN ALL SITUATIONS (4:11-12a)

* What would it take for you to be content in earthly things? Things that cause us discontent are often non-essentials anyway.

Paul demonstrates that he is...

Content in Christ & in his Circumstances (v11)

* Contentment is like a skill that is put into practice and developed over time.

Phil.4:11-12a (NIV) ¹¹ I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have **learned** to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty.

“**Learned**” to be content, means to grow in knowledge by *use* and *practice*, like a young man getting a hammer and saw for Christmas but no instruction on how to use them. He just picks up the tools and begins, hit and miss, trial and error, learning to use the tools to become a craftsman. Until through practice and over time, he has learned the trade by experience.

This is what Paul is referring to. He has learned to be content, through personal experience. He has learned of God’s faithfulness,

through personal experience. He has learned what are the essentials and what are the non-essentials in life and he has learned to be content, while being free of many of the amenities of this earthly life.

* Interesting how many lessons we learn best from life experiences. “Experience is the best teacher.” “School of Hard Knocks.” We learn by hearing. We learn better by watching. We learn best by doing.

Learning to be satisfied with the essentials, especially in light of Paul’s being in jail and restricted access to many of life’s comforts; in light of Paul’s missionary endeavors which necessitate him traveling light...very light. And on more than one occasion, Paul had to leave everything behind and flee for his life, on the run and ministering as he went. He has learned to be content and to be able to give thanks to God in all situations, which often go hand in hand.

Abundance and Abasement (v. 12a)

* “Whether with much or with little, I have learned to be content...”

“**Content**”; sufficient; independent of external circumstances; Before, Paul has demonstrated inner joy, peace, thankfulness and contentment regarding his circumstances, specifically in light of being in jail.

Jeremiah Burroughs, “Rare Jewell of Christian Contentment”:

Many men think that when they are troubled and have not got contentment, it is because they have but a little in the world, and that if they had more, then they should be content. That is just as if a man were hungry, and to satisfy his craving stomach he should gape and hold open his mouth to take in the wind, and then should think that the reason why he is not satisfied is because he has not got enough of the wind. No, the reason is because the wind is not

suitable to a craving stomach. Yet there is really the same madness in the world: the wind which a man takes in by gaping will as soon satisfy a craving stomach ready to starve, as all the comforts in the world can satisfy a soul who knows what true happiness means. You want to be happy, and you seek after such and such comforts in the world, when true comfort and contentment is to be found in Christ and Christ alone.

If we possess Christ, then we possess all He brings with him, including His joy. Once we possess Christ as our Everything, then no comforts of this fleeting world, will ever again satisfy.

The secret is not seeking to gain more or to take in more of the things our flesh may long for, but to strive to take in more of Christ and to be more surrendered to His Spirit of Holiness and more satisfied under His Lordship.

Paul rejoices in his...

CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD & IN HIS STRENGTH

(4:12-13)

* Again, Paul connects Joy with strength in this passage.

Phil.4:10-13 (NIV) ¹⁰ I rejoiced greatly in the Lord... **I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.** ¹³ **I can do all this through him who gives me strength.**

Paul experienced abundance and he experienced need. Perhaps we all need to experience times of need, in order to remind us that we can truly be content without those things, with Christ as our Everything!

***Secret of Contentment* (4:12b)**

* I have learned the secret. The *Secret* is not something which

has been purposefully concealed, but that which must be consciously thought through and purposefully sought after.

Jeremiah Burroughs states: “Contentment is not having all we want; but simply in wanting less.” (“Rare Jewell of Christian Contentment”)

The mystery or secret involves all that Paul has been presenting up until this point. In Chp.1, the Source and focus of life and ministry is Jesus Christ. In Chp.2, We have the example of Christ in His humility. In Chp.3, the goal of all the Christian life is to be found in Jesus Christ who is our Everything. And in chp.4, the Source of hope, joy, peace and life is in Jesus Christ and Him alone.

The Secret of contentment then, is being rooted in having Jesus Christ as our Everything. Then when we have Everything, there is nothing in this earthly, temporary existence that can tempt us to be discontent for anything more.

For Paul the secret or the mystery of being content is having experienced God in times of abundance and experiencing God in times of need and realizing that experiencing God does not depend on our circumstances, but in all things, we experience God’s faithfulness and sufficiency.

1Ti 6:6-8 But godliness with contentment is great gain, (7) for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. (8) But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.

Great gain, because we find our sufficiency in Him as our Source of all things. Contentment therefore, is a satisfaction with what one has, so that we want fewer things of this life. Paul speaks to Timothy; in the context of contentment,; “Godliness is great gain: or in this context; “Godliness is the greatest gain”.

Paul expresses that...

God is Sufficient in all things (4:13)

* Q: How many of us really believe that Godliness is the greatest gain? Godliness is not what we acquire, but who we are like. It is not what we get, but what we become in Christ. It is in this context that Paul states:

Phil.4:13 (NIV) .¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Contrary to popular beliefs, v.13 does not mean, that as Christians we can do anything we put our minds to, because Jesus will cause us to succeed. It does mean, that in Christ, we can experience the very best and the very worst of life and economic levels, and remain, stable, and content; hopeful and joy-filled with Christ as our Everything.

So once again, Paul connects the joy of the Lord (v10) with our strength in the Lord.(v13) The Joy of the Lord *is* our strength.(Neh.8:10). Our Joy in the Lord, brings strength in all situations, so we can say: “I am strengthened in *all things* and in every way, in Christ who continually strengthens me.”

These are experiences, over time, which have helped Paul to learn to be content, in Christ. In v.13, “**All things**” specifically refers to being able to remain content in *every circumstance*, with Christ as our Everything. We can translate that verse like this. “I can be content in any situation, because Christ Himself, strengthens me and supplies what I need.” He is our Ability to endure. He is our Hope to stand strong. He is our Joy for motivation to serve and our Strength for ministry. And Jesus is our Contentment for this life and the next.

So we can be content and satisfied in Christ as our Everything; in any circumstance, because Jesus is our Never-Diminishing, All-Sufficient, Out-pouring and Over-flowing Source.

CONCLUSION:

- (1) What must happen in order for me to experience God's Joy?
- (2) What do I need in order to experience His contentment?

If as Christians, our joy and contentment is dependent or is found in or on anything other than Jesus Christ, then it is a false joy and a fleeting contentment. Jesus is our Source.

EXTRA Verses:

1Ti 6:9-10 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. **(10)** For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

Mat 13:22 As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

COMMUNION

Mat.26:26-28



“Kingdom Ministry through Cheerful Givers”

Series Title: “The Book of Philippians: The Proper Joy-filled Christian Perspective”

Date: January 13, 2019

Text: Phil. 4:14-19

REVIEW: Paul in jail in Rome 4:23

* partnering in Christ's Kingdom work.

* sharing in afflictions (4:14) * In beginning in Macedonia

* Needs in Macedonia. * " Joyful Givers"

Chapter 1: The **FOCUSED** Joy-Filled Perspective: We do not focus so much on our circumstances, but on Gods’ purpose in our circumstances.

Chp. 2 * The **SURRENDERED** Joy-Filled Perspective: We are never more Christ-like than when we demonstrate a Surrendered Christian Perspective, through an attitude of person humility, in following Jesus in our lives, relationships and ministries.

Chp. 3 * The **ETERNAL** Joy-Filled Perspective: The Christian life is one of tremendous eternal hope, not concerned with what we may lay aside, but rejoicing in what we have already gained, and presently possess.

Chp.4 * The **FUTURE** Joy-Filled Christian Perspective: Beyond our present acquisition of Biblical knowledge is the future reality of practically applying God’s holy Word to our earthly relationships and life circumstances. The question for this chapter is; “*So How will I now live, by what I now know?*”

INTRODUCTION

“Kingdom growth, through Kingdom Giving. “

How we donate, contribute, support or give offerings can be determined by (1) How we view what we own, AND (2) How we value that which we donate towards.

Luke 6:38 ESV give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."

* Here, God gives us His kingdom principle for kingdom growth, not for personal wealth.

It is important to understand that the Christian life is not a *payback* to God for sending His Son, or reimbursement to Jesus for the favor He has bestowed to us.

2Co 5:14-15 ESV For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; (15) and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

The love of God compels us, NOT the law of God obligates us. The Christian life is not as much about giving our money, as it is about surrendering our lives to Him. The question is not "How much do I give?" But rather, "What is God worth?" And the motive here in our living and our giving, is our loving worship of God, as our Great Source of all things.

At our Last message in Philippians we left off at 4:12-13

Php 4:12-13 ESV I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. (13) I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Jeremiah Burroughs states that "the Secret of being "content", is not having everything we want, but in wanting fewer things."

Philippians chapter 4. *This morning we begin by reflecting on ...*

PAUL'S HISTORY OF PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CHURCH OF PHILIPPI (Phil.4:14)

* Paul's partnership with the Christians there was not focused on how they benefitted him personally. He writes with appreciation but indicates the greatest blessing from their partnership, service, suffering and support, was not what he has received from them in the past, but how their gifts will benefit them in the future.(v16)
This is the Future Joy-Filled perspective.

They were...

Paul & Silas and the Christians in Philippi were Partners in Suffering

* In ministry partnerships, one person's experience is another person's experience. The servant's joy is the supporter's joy. And the worker's pain becomes the donor's pain.

Phil.4:14 Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles.

To "Share in his troubles, refers to the church's close fellowship and partnership not only in ministry together but in the struggles together. No servant of Christ should suffer alone!

1Cor. 12:26 ESV If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

If one person is in need, the other supporting person or group feels that need so personally and so heavily, as though it were their own need. They take steps or are compelled to willingly, even cheerfully to meet that need, because the one missionary's need became the need of the entire church family. The burden of the missionary, became the burden of the supporting church family.

In that relationship is a mixture of Compassion, ministry, suffering, sponsorship, grief and joys. They remembered Paul and Silas and they entered into their pain and sufferings for Christ. Paul and Silas were an extension of the church body, at a different location. So

that when Paul and Silas experienced trouble or pain, the church felt their pain and suffered along with them.

Heb 13:3 ESV Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.

I think that is a good description on the missionary and sending church family relationship.

Phil.4:14 it was good of you to share in my troubles.

Troubles would refer to persecution or pressure; affliction and anguish; that's physical distress as well as emotional and mental anguish. The heavy spiritual burden for those they were reaching with the gospel, causes a deeply felt concern for the eternal welfare of others.

What if that were my family who was being persecuted? What if that was my wife getting brutalized? What if that were my church being burned? What if those were our children, being kidnapped and sold into slavery? What if those martyred were our brothers and sisters being beheaded?

Remember: They were entering into the sufferings and trials of other Christians. They considered themselves as one with those who are suffering. One person's loneliness becomes your own personal loneliness. One person's depression becomes your own darkness of soul.

They were partners in suffering, but they were also...

Partners in support

* How we donate, contribute, support or give offerings can be determined by (1) How we view what we own, AND (2) How we value that which we donate towards.

In the past, the Christians in Philippi had also contributed

financially; sacrificially to Paul's ministry. There was evidently a break in their support or at least in Paul's reception of it, but at the time of this letter, their connection was reestablished. .

As we think of our own missionaries (our own Paul's and Silas'), we should be concerned with and in prayer for their shortages in financial support. But just as importantly as finances and sometimes even more appreciated, is our support through good communication and encouragement.

I have recently committed to increasing my own personal communication with our missionaries. That involves more quick emails letting them know that especially on Wednesdays, we are fasting and praying for them by name.

Paul' History of partnership with the church is a positive one.

PAUL'S PRESENT PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CHURCH OF PHILIPPI IS CERTAIN (Phil.4:15

* The church in Philippi had nothing to be ashamed of or to apologize for in their partnership with Paul and Silas.

Phil.4:14-17 (NIV) ¹⁴Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. ¹⁵Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, *except you only*;

From the very beginning of their partnership in ministry in Acts 16 & 17, the group of believers there, were the one, single source of consistent support in their missionary endeavors. Finances, resources, encouragement – all of the above. The church of Philippi was there for Paul and Silas.

Early on, in our own ministry as a couple, for a while it was a bit tough getting our bearings, getting established in solid supportive

and accountable missionary / church relations or missionary and mission agency relationships. We experience lots of frustrating and discouraging attempts at getting connected with organizations to partner with us.

But throughout the entire ordeal, our home church was the one source of consistent financial support and ministry encouragement. Financial support; care packages; toys for kids ministries; letters of encouragement; phone messages left on our phone machine from people we didn't know too well, reminding us that they were praying for us. Our church leaders consistently stating; "We're behind you! You can do it! You're not alone! We're with you!"

Together they were...

Partners in successful ministry (v15)

* Not only did the Philippians consider Paul & Silas's Suffering as their own, but they considered their ministry as their own.

Paul's sharing of the gospel was as important as if the church themselves were the ones directly proclaiming Christ. His and Silas' fruitful ministry, was considered as the church's own fruitful ministry.

Their testimony time may have been focused on people "they had reached for Christ", even though it was Paul making the contacts, and Silas preaching the message.

That's not lying. That is embracing each man's partnership in ministry as our very own. Their prayers played a crucial role in Paul & Silas's fruitfulness with Lydia from Thyatira and her entire family coming to Christ. Their partnership with Paul and Silas made their fruitfulness the church's fruitfulness. Paul and Silas were an extension of the church of Philippi's evangelistic endeavors. I believe this to be crucial in missionary ministry partnerships.

Likewise, our partnership with our missionaries should be such, that the fruitfulness of TWR with the Stobbes is our own fruitfulness. The planes refurbished and sent to the mission field from JaRRs, would be like our own planes being sent for the Lord's service. As we read our missionary letters, of the many camps in Romania and Hungary through WOL, we should read and rejoice that through our partnership, WE have had much response to the gospel in "OUR" summer camps.

And our prayers have played such a crucial role and we have entered into such travailing for these ministries through prayer, that we feel and speak of them, as our very own. I personally feel that is not only right but that perspective is crucial in the missionary and sender partnership! In that way, the burden is more keenly shared and the calling more faithfully supported.

That is not taking the glory, but taking on the burden and passion of the ministry and entering into the work there together with and on behalf of those on the front lines.

So John-Mark's back problem becomes my own back problem. Bart and Rachel's low support and other missionaries, are our own personal financial challenges.

They were not only partners in successful ministry but they were ...
Partners in discouraging circumstances

"It was good of you to share in my troubles."(4:14)

* Partnerships must not stop with the positive aspects of ministry. But likewise, our partnership should be also with their hardships, their struggles, and their discouragements.

The weariness of Alex and Pam Konya from so much travelling and ministry should, in a sense, weary us as well. The depression of one of our missionary's son, should concern us as though our very own children were suffering depression. The frustration in

support raising for Angela in Greece and Bart and Rachel with the Crescent Project in Erie, should become our own frustration, as though we ourselves were running short financially and feeling the stress of deputation and raising support.

Missionaries are often hesitant to honestly share negative situations, hardships, or especially discouragements or depression on the mission fields; for fear of being viewed as failures, or perhaps un-worthy of our support.

The relationship between Paul and the church of Philippi was one that endured good and back, continued through thick and thin, and were strong together, for better or for worse. This was the relationship and the sharing of the highs, as well as the lows.

This is crucial in healthy Church & Missionary ministry partnership relationships.

- *Paul had positive history of partnership with the church*
- *Paul had Certain confidence in his partnership with the church of philippi* It was not a fair weather partnership.

PAUL HAD A JOY-FILLED RECEPTION OF THE SUPPORT FROM THE CHURCH IN PHILIPPI (4:16-17

* Meaningful missionary support is not merely that which pays the bills, but is also that which rejoices the spirit of the missionary, as it communicates value and worth as well as partnership encouragement. That kind of partnership communicates, “Hey, we are with you!”

Philippi was a sacrificially giving church (v16

* We don’t know how much the church in Philippi had. Nor do we know how much they gave. That was not what mattered. But what we do get an idea of, is how much they meant to Paul and Silas. That’s the bottom line and That’s what matters most.

Phil.4:16-17 (NIV) ¹⁶for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. ¹⁷Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account.

In the early days, or back in the day when we were in ministry in Philippi in ministry together; when Lydia's family was reached in partnership with the believers in Philippi, when the demoniac woman was reached and delivered; and when the jailer and his family were miraculously and fruitfully reached together with the gospel, and they were baptized and they became disciples of our Lord Jesus.

It was during that time Scripture states, that Paul and Silas were “turning the world upside” down for Christ. It meant that the church didn't just send one care package, and then report that on their missions report for the year. But they sent “more than once” or multiple times; or time and time again. Even when Paul was in trouble, when the reports came back of the riots he was causing in Thessalonica(Acts17:6); even then, their supportive relationship remained constant.

Paul & Silas were Joy-filled recipients of the church's support. Not only that, but the supporters themselves were joy-filled givers. Paul refers to this to the church in Corinth who also supported him on his journeys.

2Co 9:7-8 ESV (7) Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a ***cheerful giver***. (8) And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

How we give and what we value can be very clearly communicated through our giving. The church of Philippi was a joyful giving church and that joy was spread to those they supported.

Paul wanted more blessings to the church

* Not only was Paul blessed by the church, but Paul understood that the church was being blessed by their ministry partnership with Paul & Silas.

Phil.4:17 (NIV) ¹⁷ Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account.

That's how God works. In partnership ministry for Jesus Christ, both the Giver and the Recipient are blessed; both the senders and the missionaries receive.

Christians living and giving is not payback to God for who He is or what he has done for us. But our lives and our gifts are our expression of worship to God and our partnerships in ministry with His servants.

CONCLUSION

* We will all, one day, give account to God for what we have done and the attitude in which we have done these things.

2Co 5:10-11 ESV For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that **each one may receive what is due for what he has done** in the body, whether good or evil. (11) Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience.

For those who think that it does not matter how we as Christians live once we trust Christ, be assured of this; *It matters!* What we do on earth, will be reflected in what we receive in heaven.

Mat 6:19-21 ESV "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, (20) but **lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in

and steal. (21) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Q: What are you doing for Christ in this life? Moreover, **Why** are you doing what you are doing or not doing for Christ?

Q: Are you making a priority in prayer, How God may want you to be involved directly in ***Great Commission*** ministry this year?

A person can give generously and donate 1/10 of their income or even ½ their income. They can view that donation as a duty. They can even resent giving, feeling as though their sense of obligation to tithe has taken away their Christian freedom.

REMEMBER:

Our Christian living or our giving, is not a payback to God for sending His Son, nor is it a reimbursement to Jesus for the favor He has bestowed to us.

RESOLVE _____ :

(1) Resolve to be a Cheerful Giver: a cheerful giver, would be one who gives to the Lord's work, not out of obligation, but due to a heart-felt partnership or personal connection with God and with the one they are supporting.

(2) Resolve to view our missionaries' ministries as your own personal ministry. How we donate, contribute, support or give offerings can be determined by (i.) His we **view** what we own, AND (ii.) How we **value** that which we donate towards.

(3) Pray for our missionaries as though their ministry was our own. As though their families were our own; and as though their joys and sorrows are our own. And as often as we can; let them know how we feel about supporting them.

The Christian life is not so much about giving our money, as it is about surrendering our lives to God. The question is not, “How much do I give?” but rather “What is God worth to me?”

Lord for this new year, I want to be more fully surrendered to you. Show me how you want to involve me in Great Commission ministry this year.

Please keep in mind; Wednesdays are our church’s day for prayer and fasting for (1) the overall advancement of God’s kingdom work, as well as for (2) the health and growth of our own local church.



“Heaven’s Treasure Chest”

Jan. 20,27; Feb.2, 2019

TEXT: PHil. 4:14-19- (12-13) _____.

Chapter 1: The *FOCUSED* Joy-Filled Perspective: We do not focus so much on our circumstances, but on Gods’ purpose in our circumstances.

Chp. 2 * The *SURRENDERED* Joy-Filled Perspective: We are never more Christ-like than when we demonstrate a Surrendered Christian Perspective, through an attitude of person humility, in following Jesus in our lives, relationships and ministries.

Chp. 3 * The *ETERNAL* Joy-Filled Perspective: The Christian life is one of tremendous eternal hope, not concerned with what we may lay aside, but rejoicing in what we have already gained, and presently possess.

Chp.4 * The *FUTURE* Joy-Filled Christian Perspective: Beyond our present acquisition of Biblical knowledge is the future reality of practically applying God’s holy Word to our earthly relationships and life circumstances. The Focus of this chapter is; “So How will I now live, by what I now know?” ... *How can I please God?*

REVIEW:

Php 4:16-19 ESV (16) Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. (17) Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. (18) I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. (19) And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

So There is a dangerous form of religion today that liken’s God to a divine slot machine... put in a quarter or silver dollar or a token, pull the arm of the one armed bandit, and hopefully you’ll receive 100 times what you put into it. Likewise, some believe that if we give \$20 “to God”, he is somehow obligated to open heaven’s slot

machine and pour out His wealth and riches into our bank accounts. This is what is often referred to as the “prosperity gospel”. In reality, there is no gospel to it, that is no good news, other than for those to whom deceived people send their hard earned savings. It is not Biblical Christianity, but in fact is, pagan idolatry!

Giving to the Lord’s work must be: (1) motivated by love for God and love for others. Holy Scripture informs us that if we give away our possessions or even give up our lives, but don’t do so motivated by God’s love, then we gain *nothing*! (2) Secondly giving must have as its ultimate goal of bringing praise and honor and glory to God.

“The Reward which the Righteous receive...
is **Life**...” –Proverbs 10:16

Today as we focus on Treasures in Heaven, or “Heaven’s Treasure Chest”, we need to understand this. In Scripture, Our “Rewards” are to be understood in immediate context of the subject matter.

Depending on the context:

(1) Our Rewards, may refer to our eternal inheritance, which become ours upon faith in Christ, and being born again into God’s eternal family. This is what we have already gained and presently possess.

1Pet. 1:3-4 ESV (3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (4) to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, (5) who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Inheritance is that which was purchased or earned by someone and is passed on to another member of the family, typically at their

death. As Believers in Christ, these are rewards that we have already gained, and presently possess, regardless of how we live or how we serve, or fail to serve Christ. This inheritance is not based on our performance or actions during our earthly life. We receive our inheritance because Christ has earned it for us and as part of the spiritual family of God, what He has earned is passed on to us.

Or, depending on the context:

(2) Our Rewards may also, refer to that which is promised as we serve Christ, and are obediently involved in Great Commission ministry, and how we treat and care for others, as we demonstrate our love for God and for our neighbors.

2Cor. 5:9-10 (9) So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. (10) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

The topic of giving involves our Future joy-filled perspective, and seeks to answer the question: “So, as a Christian, How will I now live, by what I now know?” ... *How can I please God?*

SUPERNATURAL SUPPLY AND DEMAND (Phil.4:17-19)

* In this section Paul gives us God’s principle of “Supernatural supply and demand”. The abbreviated version of that principle is, “When We Give, God Gives”.

Some would say: “God can’t wait to bless you”. But more Biblically, God can’t wait for us to be obedient in our serving and giving so He can demonstrate His kingdom principle of Supernatural supply and demand. Supply and Demand is what our economy thrives on. But practically speaking it is reversed; more like Demand and Supply. So if there were people in our society that desired million dollar automobiles, you can be sure that there

is an organization that will gladly work to supply what is needed to meet the demand or desire from the public for million dollar cars.

But God's principle is "When we give, God gives." That is, when we give toward God's kingdom work, HE gives in return, to replenish what was given, in order that we might give even more.

Increase Your Credit (Phil.4:17)

Paul desires them to increase their treasures in heaven. He is not as interested in the support he receives from the Christians, as he is with the reward the Christians will one day receive from God for how they gave and supported Paul in his Great Commission ministry endeavors. We can positively affect our eternal rewards. These don't determine our salvation. But it does determine our reward one day in heaven, based on what we do, how we treat others, how we love God and others.(2Cor.5:10; Rev.20:11-12; Mat.24)

Php 4:16-17 NIV ¹⁶for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. ¹⁷Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be ***credited to your account.***

Paul desires *more to be credited to their account.* More of what? More eternal rewards. What is the account? The amount of treasures or rewards that are or will be awarded to you in heaven. This is their Treasures in Heaven. This is not working to get into heaven, but these are rewards giving to us in heaven, for how we lived and worked for Christ while living on earth.

Supernatural Sacrifice & Supply (4:18-19)

* Paul desires their treasures in heaven to be increased for their own sacrificial gifts and supply for his needs. For Christians to give sacrificially, it must be for a purpose greater than our own personal gain; for God's own kingdom purposes.

Php 4:18-19 NIV ¹⁸I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a [fragrant offering], an [acceptable sacrifice], pleasing to God.

Their giving: Notice this was God directed. Remember, the perspective for **Chapter 4**. * The **FUTURE** Joy-Filled Christian Perspective: Beyond our present acquisition of Biblical knowledge is the future reality of practically applying God's holy Word to our earthly relationships and life circumstances. The Focus of this chapter is; "So How will I now live, by what I now know?" ... *How can I please God?*

Paul says that their gifts were:

(1) A Fragrant offering; a pleasing act of worship which gets God's attention.

(2) An Acceptable Sacrifice; that which God desires and deserves and in appropriately motivated and demonstrated

(3) Both of which together, are pleasing to God. They honored God in their attitudes and their gifts and that is the goal. It is interesting that their gifts are presented as affecting God as though it were a worship service. We may think of our singing and praise time during Sunday worship as a fragrant offering or acceptable sacrifice to God. But Paul describes their attitude of personal sacrificial giving as affecting God, as we would expect a really meaningful worship service to affect Him.

(i.) (v18) Paul had no needs. Every need had been supplied. God's Supernatural Supply was fully sufficient for all God had called Paul to do. This promise of God providing all the needs of the Philippian givers, is directly related to, if not completely based upon their generous giving to Paul's ministry and their own partnership in Great Commission ministry with him.

Php 4:19 NIV ¹⁹And *my* God will meet all *your* needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus.

Circle, “my”, “your”, and “His”.

“My God will “Meet”...”: This might be translated “supply” in your version. It means to fill up; or cause to abound.

“Riches” refers to Heaven’s wealth of resources or Gods’ Glorious abundance, which is always Outpouring and Overflowing.

Here is yet another verse from Paul’s letter to the Philippians that is so often misquoted and mis-”claimed”. That which you give for the kingdom of God, and that which you lack, for His kingdom work; God will faithfully restore or supply for your continual giving toward His continued Kingdom work.

(ii.) (v19) Paul’s Supernatural confidence was that God would continue to supply... not his own needs; not “my” needs, but “your” needs, or the needs of those who were sacrificially giving for the ministry to which God had called him. God will supply all your needs, as you have distributed His resources for His work. Therefore you can trust that He will continue to provide as you continue to give and distribute His resources appropriately, for His Great Commission ministry and kingdom work.

The believers were local “distributors” of the Kingdom resources God had bestowed to them, as they re-distributed those resources in giving them to Paul in supply of his Great Commission ministry needs. That’s what true stewards of God are; we are distributors or re-distributors of God’s kingdom resources.

God is our Supernatural Source and Supplier for that which He has called us to support. And as stewards of God’s resources, it is as though we become distributors of His wealth and resources to others on earth, who are partners with God and who are in need of what God may provide through us.

And it is important to consider the context of this promise. It is in the direct context of giving to servants of the gospel or to those who are involved in Great Commission ministry. This is giving to the Lord, or to the Lord's work, and trusting that as we give, He supplies more to us, in order that we might be His redistributors.

Similarly, Paul communicated this also to the church at Corinth.

2Cor. 9:5-8 NIV ⁵So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given. ⁶Remember this: ***Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.*** ⁷Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

How we give, will determine the productivity of our kingdom impact. Give a little and we should expect to make a little kingdom impact. But give more to God's kingdom work and we can expect greater impact for His kingdom. This is not referring to giving and then receiving more from God than what was first given, but our giving and the kingdom *effect* of our giving. We give sacrificially and God replenishes supernaturally. How we give reflects how we view what we have and how we value what we give towards.

As they give to the Lord and support Paul, the assurance is that God will supply the needs of those who give and may supply even more in order for them to give even more. This is investing our interests, our efforts, our finances and even our prayers in God's Kingdom work. This is viewing our resources as God's own resources. God doesn't seem to give for the purpose of making us rich and comfortable, but to pass on His blessing and to be used of

God to help others who are also engaged in Great Commission ministry.

Paul goes on to state the ultimate goal in our giving

2Cor. 9:10-12 NIV ¹⁰Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. ¹²This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also **overflowing in many expressions of thanks** to God.

v.10) Giving to God's work: Perhaps with Paul, we may pray; "Oh God enlarge our harvest. Increase the kingdom effect of our righteous obedience and giving, as we partner with your divine, eternal kingdom purposes.

v.11) And as we give, we will Receive from God, earthly provisions and blessings, and eternal rewards. "Oh God, increase our faith that we might become more generous and more faithful in distributing your resources which you entrusted to us."

v.11-12) Here we see the ultimate goal for our giving; that being honor, praise and thanks giving to God. Our giving, our service, our love and our Great Commission participation should be done in a manner which brings honor to God, as our Source and praise to Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.

This emphasizes the kingdom principle of God's Supernatural Supply and Demand as a result of His Outpouring and Overflowing benevolence.

SACRIFICIAL GIVING; SUPERNATURAL REWARDS
(Mat.6:1-4; Lk.6:38; _____)

* Mat.6:1-4 God gives instruction and corrects our motivation. Pray in secret, for God to hear. Fast in secret, to get God's attention. Give in secret, to receive heavenly rewards. If we pray or fast or give to others to notice us, then we have our reward; that is, earthly praise and applause.

God Always Out-gives the Giver (Lk.6:38)

* Some feel they cannot afford to give to God. I feel Scripture teaches, that we cannot afford NOT to give to God. I have never met a person whom I felt had nothing to give to the Lord. Perhaps some don't because they don't give to the Lord.

Luk 6:36-38 NIV ³⁸Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

As God's joy is out-pouring and over-flowing,; that is likewise the promise of God's provisions for those who give by faith to the kingdom work of the Lord.

Life expenses, for kingdom purposes, with eternal rewards! This is in the context of loving our enemies, being gracious rather than judgmental, doing good to others, lending to others in need without expecting pay back, etc. It is referring to a generally generous attitude in living.

Couple years ago I was back in Chicago and as I was walking, I heard someone yelling, "Jeff, Hey Jeff. Jeff Wilson." I looked around and saw a fellow waving maybe half a block away. He was making his way toward me, and I finally recognized him as a pastor friend of ours. And while talking, he pulls out his wallet and gives me a \$100 bill. And he said; "George Sweeting, always said: "Never squelch a generous impulse." So I didn't.

Many might consider the guy a little far out. But He was a highly generous and sacrificial giver.

Giving is an attitude of the giver and the desire of the heart

* We spend our resources on that which we value most; whether rich or poor, that is the basic principle.

Again, God does not tell us to give \$20 so he can double that and send us \$40. God is not a slot machine. But God's Kingdom Giving principles imply that we as Christians, are like distributors of God's resources, some more or less than others.

As we give God's resources, that have been placed under our responsibility, as we give for His kingdom work, to advance the gospel, the assurance is that God will see us as faithful distributors, rather than as selfish "holders" of His resources. And the idea is that when we are giving to God's kingdom work, and expend the resources He has given for that purposes, he will replenish what we gave, in order that we might give even more.

Remember our principle from last Sunday: "How we give will be determined by (1) How we view that which we own, and (2) How we value that which we give to support.

If we view our resources as the LORD's, then we are more likely to give generously. But if we view God's resources as our own stuff, then we would be less likely to give generously or sacrificially. If we value the work less, then we would tend to give less.

God meets our sacrificial giving, with His Supernatural rewards.

TREASURES IN HEAVEN (Mat.6:16-18; 19-20)

* The Treasure Chest of Heaven. That which we desire, is that which we value. That which we value is that which we will

support.

When I finish shopping at Aldi's, I like to look for people who are just arriving and offer them my grocery cart. Now the carts are already free. You put a quarter in and you get your cart. When you are finished, you return your cart and your quarter is returned to you.

This week a lady was making her way to the grocery cart area and I intercepted her and offered her my cart. She acted amazed. "Look" she said to someone with her, "this man gave me his cart.. for free.!" It was already free. But she was ecstatic, and so thankful. I said, "God's blessings to you today, and pass the blessing on to someone else." Sometimes just a small gift means so much to someone.

Rewards & Desires (Mat.6:16-18)

** Jesus connects our Eternal rewards with the desires of our heart.*

Mat 6:19-21 NIV ¹⁹“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also..

This addresses our personal interests, our heart's desires and our participation in Great Commission ministry.

Here again is a command to positively affect our eternal rewards. These are not what we receive by simply being in God's family. That is our inheritance. This is living in a way that pleases God and receives rewards from Him in heaven, based on our deeds, obedience and life focus while on earth.

Have you thought about this at a personal level? What are you doing personally, to lay up for yourself treasures in heaven? How are you living today, in a manner that pleases God?

Rewards & an unexpected practice (Mat.16:19-20)

* In Matt. 6, Immediately preceding Christ's admonition to lay up our treasures in Heaven, Jesus connects our eternal, heavenly rewards directly with our earthly practices of **prayer and fasting**, in this life.

Mat 6:16-18 NIV ¹⁶“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will **reward** you.

Some may think; “Prayer takes too much time.” Or “Fasting is asking too much from us.” Yet Jesus directly relates prayer and fasting to our eternal rewards. Some were praying and fasting, not to get God's attention, but to get the attention of people around them. Their reward was payment for their labors of praying aloud to be heard; Fasting in order to be noticed by others around them. This was about attention, notoriety, Accolades from others over their own deep, perceived, spirituality;

“The man who does not fast, is no more on his way to heaven than the man who does not pray” *—Jonathan Wesley*

The only thing I can think of that would be worse than not praying and not fasting, would be praying and fasting out of wrong motives and that is what Jesus refers to here. And for these...their desire on earth, was to be noticed on earth for their prayer and fasting and deep spiritual maturity. Therefore their rewards are of the same level; their rewards were what they desired; that is, being noticed and admired by others in this life. They received their rewards from others. But they will be lacking when it comes to their eternal rewards in heaven from God..

Wednesday nights: We gather to get God's attention. We focus on prayer and fasting in order to get God's attention, as we petition Him ¹for the advancement of His kingdom purposes, as well as ²for the health and growth of our own church family and ministries.

Have you ever thought about this? What if what happens at this church, depended on your own personal prayer life? Would this church and ministries, be positively affected by your prayer and fasting involvement? What if your prayer and your fasting is what God wants to use to really bring a spiritual breakthrough against the frustrating barrier of spiritual darkness in much of our outreach ministries? I think about that a lot. And do you know what I believe with all my heart? I believe what happens at this church, does indeed depend on my prayer and my fasting. It is your prayer and your fasting which God desires to use toward a spiritual breakthrough in the kingdom work for which, He has called this church.

The Wednesday night group is inviting you; we are challenging you; we are urging others in the church family, to please join us in prayer and fasting on Wednesdays, if possible. And focusing on these two main prayer requests.

(1) God bless, strengthen and ¹advance your kingdom work wherever it is taking place; and ²bless our church with health, growth and spiritual fruitfulness.

(2) "Lord, HOW would you have me personally to be involved in Your **Great Commission** ministry this year?" Are you willing to pray that? And are you willing for God to answer that prayer through your own personal spiritual ministry of prayer and fasting?

We cannot repay our Lord for one trickle of sweat spent for us. We cannot reimburse him for a single drop of his blood shed for the forgiveness of our sins at Calvary. Our service is not repayment

for his gift to us, or else it wouldn't be a gift. Our service is a demonstration of our love for God and for the work of reaching our own mission field for Christ.

His Rewards to us are based more on our relationship with Him, as part of His family, through faith in Christ.

Our eternal "inheritance" has to do with our relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Our "Rewards" in Heaven, relate to our faithfulness in life, ministry and relationships, as part of his family and based on what we have done, whether good or bad.

Mat 16:27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall **reward** every man according to his works.

Our obedience, our service, our prayer, our love and our ministry as believers are demonstrations of our loving adoration and worship for who He is to us.

CONCLUSION

In Revelation as Jesus addresses the 7 churches, he gives them commendations and he gives them some condemnations. At the end he offers promised Rewards to all those who, in the end, are overcomers. And it seems to me, those promises are not special gifts or rewards for what they do, but assurance of their inheritance with him as part of the family, who remained faithful to Jesus.

A better focus on our Treasures in Heaven

1Pet. 1:3-8 ESV Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (4) to **an inheritance** that is imperishable, undefiled,

and unfading, kept in heaven for you, (5) who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (6) In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, (7) so that the tested genuineness of your faith--more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire--**may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.** (8) Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.

I believe that in heaven, Our rewards will not be so focused on ourselves as we may think, but that our Rewards, for our service to Christ, will be revealed and will result in praise and glory and honor to Jesus Christ.

Heaven's Treasure Chest

Q: Look up the following Scripture verses and answer: What are these Eternal Rewards, Treasures in Heaven, or Inheritance related to? Why are they mentioned or given in each passage of scripture? Are they things we receive at salvation or are they given for faithful service to Christ?

(1) Jn.3:16

(2) Jn.14

(3) 2 Cor.5:1

(4) Col.3:23-24

(5) 1Pet.1:4

(6) 2 Tim.2:12; Rev.20:4-6

(7) Crowns:

(i) 1 Cor.9:25

(ii) 2 Tim.4:2

(iii) 1 Pet.5:4

(iv) James 1:12

Gen 15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your **reward** shall be very great."

PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

Jesus told a parable about a property owner leaves and entrusted His servants with certain responsibilities.

Mat 25:15-30 ESV To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. (16) He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. (17) So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. (18) But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. (19) Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. (20) And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' (21) His master said to him, **'Well done, good and faithful servant.'** You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. **'Enter into the joy of your master.'** (22) And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.' (23) His master said to him, **'Well done, good and faithful servant.'** You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. **'Enter into the joy of your master.'** (24) He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, (25) so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' (26) But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? (27) Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. (28) So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. (29) For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. (30) And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

I can't imagine any greater reward than that; to be affirmed by Christ Himself; that our purpose was pleasing, our motives were honoring, that our lives and service brought Him joy. Our inheritance is not about us, but about Christ. Our eternal rewards are not about us, but about the honor and glory and pleasure we brought to Him. We can never out give God! He is faithful to supply all we need, to accomplish all He has called us to do. No more! No less!



“Heaven’s Treasure Chest”

SERMON: “HEAVEN’S TREASURE CHEST” February 10, 2019

TEXT: Phil. 4:19-23 “A Final Future Focus” .

REVIEW:

Chapter 1: The *FOCUSED* Joy-Filled Perspective: We do not focus so much on our circumstances, but on Gods’ purpose in our circumstances.

Chp. 2 * The *SURRENDERED* Joy-Filled Perspective: We are never more Christ-like than when we demonstrate a Surrendered Christian Perspective, through an attitude of person humility, in following Jesus in our lives, relationships and ministries.

Chp. 3 * The *ETERNAL* Joy-Filled Perspective: The Christian life is one of tremendous eternal hope, not concerned with what we may lay aside, but rejoicing in what we have already gained, and presently possess.

Chp.4 * The *FUTURE* Joy-Filled Christian Perspective: Beyond our present acquisition of Biblical knowledge is the future reality of practically applying God’s holy Word to our earthly relationships and life circumstances. The Focus of this chapter is; “So How will I now live, by what I now know?” ... *How can I please God?*

INTRODUCTION

References In Philippians: (1) to Mind or thinking or thoughts: 18xs. (2) Joy or rejoicing: (16xs) (3) the Return of Christ: (7xs)

Heaven is a storehouse of Divine Riches for providing Supernatural earthly ministry. Heaven is also a storehouse of security for safe keeping our own Rewards, which are being stored up for us every day that we live and serve here. And while there is no limit to those riches in heaven, there are some conditional determining factors as to the accessibility of those treasures. The

determining factor is **Jesus**. He is the combination to unlock and access the Treasures of Heaven. He is the Treasure of Heaven. These riches are *in glory*, and they are *in Christ*.

Php 4:19-23 ESV (19) And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. (20) To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. (21) Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. (22) All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household. (23) The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

PAUL'S DESIRE FOR GOD'S HEAVENLY PROVISION FOR HIS CHURCH FAMILY (4:19)

* God's resources are part of who He is. When Jesus Christ comes into your life, he doesn't merely give us good things, He brings good things; it is who he is.

God's Riches in glory (v19a)

* Paul's Present Confidence in God's Future Provision

Phil.4:19 And my God will supply every need of yours according to his ***riches in glory*** in Christ Jesus.

Paul has a solid Joy-Filled Future Perspective of the Christian life. It is limited due to our human understanding; but solid and joy-filled none the less. And what he has, he wants his church to grasp as well.

Our need, is dependent upon God's riches in glory. And the Riches in glory, for us are dependent upon being "In Christ" or part of God's family, or have Christ in us with all His goodness, blessings and riches. When He comes into our lives, he brings those blessings.

Eph 1:16-19 ESV I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, (17) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, (18) having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are **the riches of his glorious** inheritance in the saints, (19) and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might

Paul's prayer is that the Ephesian church would begin to know or grasp the riches of His glorious inheritance that they have already gained and presently possess. Interestingly this can be enabled by prayer.

Eph 3:13-17 ESV So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory. (14) For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, (15) from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, (16) that according **to the riches of his glory** he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, (17) so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith--that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

God's strength and spiritual power is available according and dependent upon, the **riches of His glory**. How rich is God's glory? It is inexhaustible. So God's blessings are only limited by His own unlimited essence, character, power and inexhaustible resources.

Rom 9:22-24 ESV What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, (23) in order to make known the **riches of his glory** for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared

beforehand for glory-- (24) even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?

God's patience to those of us who were objects of his wrath and judgment for destruction is intended to make known, the riches of His glory.

Col 1:27-28 ESV To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the *riches of the glory* of this mystery, which is [Christ in you], the hope of glory. (28) Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

You in Christ. Christ in You – the hope of glory and the key to the mystery of His riches in glory. Gods' resources are part of who he is. If you have Jesus Christ, then you have all that He brings. He does not simply give us, peace, joy, and hope; He brings with him, as he comes into our lives, His peace, His hope and His Joy. HE is outpouring and overflowing, therefore His riches, blessings, are outpouring and overflowing in our lives.

In Jesus Christ

* As believers in Jesus Christ, we have every spiritual blessing that heaven possesses, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Eph 1:2-4 ESV Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with *every spiritual blessing* [in the heavenly places], (4) even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love

In Christ we have every spiritual blessing in heavenly places. Therefore we do not cease to fight for the Joy that the Lord has for each of us. Jesus is the glory and riches and blessing of heaven.

And Paul attempts to encourage the church... You think you have little? You think you are poor? You think you are powerless? You think you have little influence in your mission field or impact for God's kingdom? Think again. Just hang on. Just hand in there. Don't give up. Keep believing. Keep loving. Keep obeying. Keep reaching out.

1Co 2:9-10 But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”— (10) these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

PAUL'S FOCUS IS THE GLORY OF GOD IN ALL THINGS (Phil.4:20)

Paul's Desire for Future blessings for the Church. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.”

In joys and in blessings (v20)

* (v.20) Paul's Future Focus on God's Glory

4:20 To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen

In freedom or in prison, Paul's joy doesn't change, because the conditions of theses blessings don't change. “In Christ” in prison. IN Christ in freedom. In Christ in health or IN Christ in cancer. IN Christ with pleasure of in Christ with sufferings. In Christ doesn't change. Therefore our blessings and riches in glory don't change.

In Trials and suffering (v20)

* In good times or in bad; “In Christ” doesn't change. In all things, may Jesus Christ be praised. At all times, and may God be glorified.

PAUL EVIDENCES THE JOY OF HEAVEN'S FAMILY ON EARTH (v21-22)

By Hear-say from Paul (v21)

* The Future Heavenly Family, now on earth; fellowship of Saints

(21) Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you.

In prison, Paul has either identified believers who are there, or these are those who have been won to Christ through Paul's proclamation of Christ even while incarcerated. And there are even those there who

Paul's joy has become their joy (v22)

* Slaves, prisoners and even those belonging to the family of the ruler, which would have been Nero.

v.22) All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household

Perhaps the most infamous of Rome's emperors, Nero Claudius Caesar (37-68 A.D.) ruled Rome from 54 A.D. until his death by suicide 14 years later. He is best known for his debaucheries, political murders, persecution of Christians and a passion for music that led to the probably apocryphal rumor that Nero "fiddled" while Rome burned during the great fire of 64 A.D. (History.com)

Paul even reached the family of this ruler and persecutor of God's church.

PAUL'S DESIRE FOR PRAYER FOR HEAVEN'S BEST TO HIS CHURCH FAMILY (v23)

Heaven's benevolence is in Jesus (v23)

Paul's Desire for full future blessings for the church

Php 4:23 ESV The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Peace. Joy in Christ be within you. May You find Christ as our Source. May you experience the outpouring and overflowing grace, peace and joy that comes only from Jesus Christ filling your heart and life. These blessing from Christ cannot be taken away.

CONCLUSION

(1) Immerse self in Gods' Promises – to fail to be regularly in God's word, is to be reminded of his promises and to live in defeat.

(2) Meditate on God's Character – to be still, quiet, thinking deeply, prayerfully,

(3) Resolve to stay together and support and encourage one another- in the faith; not merely beliefs, but the practical Christian life and practice.

(4) Fight to think Biblically re: our lives, relationships and ministries – Get God's mind. Follow His ways.

(5) Pray aloud. Read Scripture aloud. Fill our minds and focus our thoughts. Let our minds engage and our ears hear the word of faith.

The fight for Joy can be a vicious battle. If the devil can steal our joy he will strip us of our strength. If ...he renders us ineffective in kingdom ministry. He can steal nothing from us that we don't first surrender to him. Therefore, we fight for Joy.

He does not simply give Joy, but He gives us something we have already gained and presently possess. No one should fight alone. Therefore, we continue to fight for Joy. Together, we continue to fight for Joy. Let the Joy of the Lord be our Strength.



Don't close this booklet yet

without considering this all important question.

Is Jesus Christ the Savior of *your* soul and the Lord of *your* life?

Every person is born guilty of sin and in need of forgiveness.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;
--Rom 3:23

Our sin is against God, therefore our forgiveness can only come
from God.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only
begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should
not perish, but have everlasting life. --John 3:16

God has appointed His Son as the payment for sins and sent Him
to die in our place.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is
eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
-- Romans 6:23

God's love is demonstrated through the sacrificial payment of
Jesus Christ in our place for our sins.

...but God shows his love for us in that while we were
still sinners, Christ died for us. ---Romans 5:8

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord
will be saved." -- Rom 10:13

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his
name, he gave the right to become children of God,
- John 1:12

Before you close this book, why not be absolutely certain that you
are truly a citizen of God's eternal kingdom and loving family?

*Trust in Jesus Christ today and receive forgiveness for your sins
and citizenship into God's family and His Kingdom.*

The ABCs

A - Admit you have sinned and are in need of a Savior.

B - Believe Jesus died in your place, and you can no way help yourself.

C - Confess your sins to God. He already knows. Also Confess Jesus as you LORD. He desires and deserves to be your Lord.

Prayer: Take time to talk to God right now and open your heart and life to His instruction and leadership.

Connect with a local Bible believing, Christ centered church.

Commit yourself to meeting regularly with other Christians who are growing in their faith.

Heb 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Act 2:41-42 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (42) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

For more information or for spiritual help, please contact us at:
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Saegertown, Pa, 16433, Ph: 814-763-2934, www.christefca.org

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your greatest purpose,
your soul's source and joy,
and your all-consuming passion.*

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May each lesson bring a growing submission, a deeper obedience and an increase of the righteous reign of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the fullness of His Spirit, in His Church and throughout our mission field.

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