

## Philippians, the Joy of the Christian

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#### Introduction

“The joy of the LORD is your strength!” Just about everyone who has ever named the name of Christ has read that passage of Scripture, found in Nehemiah 8:10. Yet, very few of us realize the full meaning of this verse. Have you ever stopped to count the number of Christians who seemingly have no joy, or very little at best? Such is the state of Christianity today that there seems to be a lack of joy in the church. There is a great need for teaching on this subject and that is the goal of this series of lessons. No study of so short a nature can possibly cover the topic of joy, but we will in ten studies, attempt to go through the epistle to the church at Philippi. This one book, more than any other in the New Testament, teaches us the great principles concerning joy. It is for this reason that the book of Philippians is such a dynamic part of the life of every Christian, or should be. We begin our lessons with the secret of joy, as found in the first two verses of the book.

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## Lesson 1 the Secret of Joy

Scripture reading—Philippians 1:1, 2

If you were to ask the average person on the street what he or she wanted most out of life, you would probably hear many different responses. Most assuredly, one of those responses would be to have joy in their lives. It is a sad fact that many people have little or no joy in their day to day lives. What is even sadder is the fact that there is an answer available to all that many do not avail themselves of. That answer, which we choose to call, “the Secret of Joy,” can be found in the first two verses of the Apostle Paul’s writings to the church at Philippi. We will, in this lesson, examine these two verses and look at the concepts found in them. Our desire is that, by studying these principles, the reader will be able to understand where joy can truly be found. Let us begin.

### Paul and Timothy, the SERVANTS of Jesus Christ

There is a principle of joy found in the statement above that is often overlooked or not understood. The great apostle Paul, who was referred to in one instance as, “He who turned the world upside down,” calls himself a simple servant. There is much to say on serving. We will, however, limit our discussion of this aspect of Christianity to one point. That point can best be summed up by saying that anyone who is to find true joy in life must have a right concept of his or her own station in life. We, like Paul, are merely servants. That is a difficult concept for some to grasp. There are those in the kingdom of God who desire power and authority over others. This desire is not Scriptural. The concept of serving is Scriptural.

Those who would desire to be leaders in the church of the living God must be extremely diligent to follow the commandments of the LORD as found in Matthew 18. The greatest in the kingdom of heaven is that one who is willing to humble himself. We could say much more along this line of humility, but we will simply say, for now, that there can be no joy in our lives until we understand our position as servants of God. We will speak more of servants later on in our studies.

### Grace be unto you

We find in this short statement, one of the great principles of finding true joy and happiness. Knowing that God has made His grace available to us leads us to a condition where joy can manifest itself in our lives. What do we mean by this? Let us take a few moments to define grace and attempt to place it in its proper perspective in our lives and find out.

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What is grace? Many have asked that same question and have arrived at different answers. The most common definition of grace is that it is God's unmerited (undeserved) favor. This definition is quite evidently, a good one. Grace can well be defined as the free, unmerited favor of God. Does not the Scripture teach us that God causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust as well? Is it not true that He causes the sun to shine on the evil as well as the godly? If this is not unwarranted favor and love, what could be? Such undeserved favor is beyond the ability of mankind to understand. But there is more to grace than just unmerited favor and love. Let us look at three more aspects of grace.

There is yet a second definition that we can apply to the concept of grace. Grace is also a state of reconciliation to God. God has shown His grace to mankind by sending His Son to die on the cross of Calvary. We did not deserve such an action, yet this was done freely by God and His Son, Jesus Christ. This is also beyond the ability of man to grasp. The Scripture tells us, quite plainly, in Ephesians 2:8 that we are saved by His \_\_\_\_\_. Again, such an action is free and beyond merit by mankind. What an awesome God we serve!

Grace can also be defined as that Divine influence that acts in man to restrain him from sin. How often have we been faced with situations where sin presented itself to us? Many times we have simply said that we would not yield. What gives man this strength to shun the very appearance of sin? It is the Holy Spirit, acting through the grace of God, which causes us to say "NO!" In writing to the church at Rome, Paul states in Romans 5:20, 21 that where \_\_\_\_\_ abounded, \_\_\_\_\_ did much more abound. Sin once reigned unto death, but now it is His \_\_\_\_\_ that reigns through \_\_\_\_\_ unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our LORD. Simply stated, it is His GRACE that rules as we yield ourselves in righteousness to Him!

The fourth aspect of grace we can see in our lives is that grace brings spiritual instruction, improvement and edification. Grace teaches, builds us up, and causes us to grow in the things of God. Turn with us to 2 Corinthians 12:1-10. We have here a familiar passage of Scripture. Paul had prayed three times concerning a physical ailment that was buffeting him. Notice what God's final reply is to him. Verse 9 states that "My \_\_\_\_\_ is sufficient for thee." God was saying to Paul that Paul's weakness would be the point through which His strength would be revealed! This would only be done through His GRACE!

There is one more Scripture that speaks of grace which should be studied. Titus 2:11-14 is the anthem of God's grace in the New Testament. Time will not permit us to go into a detailed study of this

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great passage of Scripture. But we have ALREADY studied it in some detail in the above paragraphs. This passage of Scripture merely takes the four points we have already looked at and carries them to new heights of glory. God's grace has appeared to all, and teaches us what we should have as our priorities, and why these are so important in our lives.

One might ask, at this point, what does grace have to do with joy? The answer is that when we have a proper understanding of God's grace and its place in our lives, we can then see how much God loves us and is concerned enough about us to make EVERY provision for ALL our needs! Joy is a natural outpouring of the heart that has come to know the intimacy of God's grace. Let us now continue with the second key to true joy.

### And peace

There is a second principle of joy stated in Philippians 1:2. It is one of peace. We will attempt to answer the question of what is peace and see how it relates to joy. Let us begin by defining peace.

The usual dictionary definition of peace is an absence of war, or conflict. This is partially true. Another definition is one of serenity or calm. This is also true, yet both are insufficient to describe what peace really is in a Scriptural concept. The Greek word for peace is *εἰρήνη*, pronounced as I-RAY-NAY. It comes from the root verb, *εἶρω*, pronounced as I-ROW. This word literally means to join together, or to glue. While this may not have much bearing on what the world considers to be peace, its application in the spiritual realm is astounding. Peace comes when we understand that we literally been joined together with God through the atoning death of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:14 states that He is our \_\_\_\_\_, for he has made us \_\_\_\_\_ and has broken down the \_\_\_\_\_ that separated us from God. In short, Jesus is the glue that joins us to an Almighty God! When we understand this principle, we can begin to experience the peace of God in our lives!

What does this peace of God have to do with our joy? The answer to that question should be fairly obvious. In order to have the joy the LORD desires us to have, we must have the peace of God working in our hearts and lives. We said earlier that joy is a natural outpouring of the heart that has come to know God's grace intimately. Joy is also a natural consequence of the heart that has come to know God's peace in an intimate fashion. Grace and peace must be present in order for the joy of the LORD to be a working part of our lives. There can be no joy without them.

From God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ

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We now come to the final principle we will study in this lesson. Grace and peace must come from God, who is our Father, and from Jesus Christ, who is the Lord. In order to have joy operating in our lives, we must know that He is God, our Father. As Father, He is capable of all that is good and loving, for that is His very nature. "Father" is a special term, reserved only for those who have come into a blood and legal relationship with Him. Such is the case in the natural as well as in the spiritual realm. Only those who have come into a blood and legal relationship with Him can call Him, "Father." Our Father will do for us everything that His grace and peace allow Him to do for us. A knowledge of this reality brings about joy in our lives. A second fact found in the heading of this paragraph is that Jesus Christ is THE Lord! Scripture teaches us God has placed EVERYTHING under his feet, that is, under subjection to Him. The very forces of darkness are aware of this fact, and tremble because of it. We should also be aware of the reality of His lordship over our lives and everything having to do with our lives. NOTHING can approach us without having gone through God and His Son, Jesus Christ, first! Understanding these principles brings about a life that is joyful and full.

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## Philippians, the Joy of the Christian

### LESSON 2 THE JOY OF INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Scripture reading—Philippians 1:3-11

A few years ago, we used to sing a little song entitled, “JOY.” It was sung to the tune of “Jingle Bells,” and went, “J-O-Y, J-O-Y, Tell you what it means. Jesus first, yourself last and others in between.” It is this thought that will be the subject of our second lesson. The Apostle Paul speaks of thanksgiving and prayer in the next section of Philippians, that section being chapter 1, verses 3-11. We will look at this particular passage of the Word with the thought of intercession in mind, and see how praying for the needs of others causes our needs to take on their proper perspective. Let us begin with a key element of prayer, and yet, one that is often forgotten.

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you

Verse three of Philippians 1, shows its rightful meaning when read in one of the newer English translations of the New Testament. The NIV says, “I thank my God every time I remember you.” What a beautiful expression of the love of Jesus Christ abounding in the heart of a believer! “Every time I think about you, I thank God!” There is, contained in this thought, a concept every one of us should come to understand. OURS IS A BODY MINISTRY! None of us can function without the support and ministries of those who comprise the rest of the body. We are very dependent on each other, and should recognize our need for the rest of the body. When we are aware of our need of others, we have a tendency to want to pray for the needs of the body also. Part of this praying should be thanking God for those who minister to us in any fashion. When was the last time you thanked God for a musician, Sunday school teacher, or someone else with the God-given responsibility of ministry? This should be a regular part of our prayer life, yet often it is not even found in our petitions to our God. We should make every effort to find time to thank God for those who are placed in any position of ministry.

Prayer for those in ministry was not Paul’s main thought, though, in this statement. Paul was actually thanking God for **every believer** in the Philippian church, for the epistle was addressed to the entire congregation, not just the leadership. The same prayer process for those in ministry should be our guiding principle for every single believer!

Why is intercessory prayer so important, and what does it have to do with joy in my life? The answer to those two questions can be found rather simply. First of all, intercessory prayer is needful, for it draws the body of Christ closer together. Who can pray for the needs of someone else, and not feel compassion for that individual for whom they are praying?

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Intercessory prayer is also needful for other reasons. First, it causes us to realize we are not the only ones with problems. Secondly, when we begin to pray for the needs of others we, often times, come to realize our own problems are miniscule in comparison to the needs of others. We may have a financial obligation, for instance, coming due and don't have the means to take care of it. This is definitely a need God needs to address, and He will take care of the need. But what is that in comparison to, let's say, a brother in the mid-east who has a "contract" on his life put out BY HIS OWN FAMILY, simply because he has become a Christian? We can soon see the fact that our difficulties are nothing in comparison to the needs of others.

What does all this have to do with personal joy, then? When we begin to pray for the needs of others, we foster an atmosphere in our own lives where joy can be brought forth in abundance. As Saint Francis of Assisi once said, "For it is in giving that we receive." This is true of joy as well as finances. When we learn to give of ourselves in prayer and thanksgiving for others, we can begin to see our own needs met. This attitude will definitely bring about joy in our own lives. My own thoughts on praying and being thankful for others can be summed up by the following:

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In all my prayers for you, I always pray with joy

The Apostle Paul makes the statement, in verse four of our passage that every time he prayed for the Philippian church, it was always with \_\_\_\_\_. What was the source of this joy? Paul's joy lay in the fact that he considered the Philippian church to be a partner with him in the spreading of the gospel. He could thank God with joy for those who helped him in the spread of the gospel. Is the same attitude needed in today's believer? Without a doubt, it is! We must come to the place where we realize the importance of praying for our partners in the gospel. When we do so, we are able, like Paul to pray with joy.

Being confident

There are many people in this world who seem to have an air of confidence about themselves. Confidence in oneself is a trait just about everyone would like to have. Yet, what does the Word say about confidence? Here we find the apostle displays confidence, not in himself, but in the fact God is



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able to \_\_\_\_\_ in us what He has \_\_\_\_\_. This confidence in God's ability to bring about what He has promised us built up joy in the heart of the apostle. When we come to understand the fact God is more than able to keep our brothers and sisters whom we have prayed for, we see joy welling up in our hearts. There is yet a second source of joy in this brief statement. We also see joy welling up in our lives when we come to understand God is also able to complete in US what He desires.

And this is my prayer

What is the ultimate purpose behind intercessory prayer? Paul makes the statement, in verse 9, his prayer would be that our love for each other might \_\_\_\_\_ more and more in \_\_\_\_\_ and depth of insight. In the previous lesson, we spoke briefly on how peace and joy were related. In this lesson, we will focus on love and joy.

We again return to the thought of a body ministry. How will the world recognize that we are the church of the living God, and not some relative of the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster (actually exists and recognized by the state of California)? Jesus said in John 13:35, that all men would know us as His disciples because we would have \_\_\_\_\_ one for another. This love that passes all knowledge is the tie binding us together as His disciples. When we allow that love to bind us together as one in Him, our joy can truly begin to flow. As we pray for the love of God to be manifested in ourselves, our brothers and sisters we will begin to see joy develop in our lives like we have never even imagined. Let us pray with a fervent heart, in full assurance of faith that God would begin to show His love through us, that our joy may be full.

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## Philippians, the Joy of the Christian

### LESSON 3 THE JOY OF SUFFERING

Scripture reading—Philippians 1:12-30

We have already stated in our lessons that the book of Philippians is the epistle of joy, written for the church. It, more than any other book in the Bible, teaches us of joy. Yet, we now come to a section that, at first, seems to have nothing to do with joy. Paul uses the remainder of chapter 1 to tell of his SUFFERINGS for the gospel. Suffering and joy seem to be at opposite ends of the spectrum, yet, here we will make a statement that will take the rest of our study to explain. SUFFERING AND JOY ARE RELATED! How is this possible? When we understand the true reasons for suffering, we will be able to have the joy God desires us to have in our lives.

Before venturing any further, let us come to some sort of definition of suffering. For the purpose of our lesson, we will say that suffering is anything that we must bear or go through of an unpleasant nature. It may be the death of a loved one, a financial crisis, or persecution brought on by our stand for Christ, among other things. These trials of life can come from three different areas. Let us, very briefly, look at these three and learn a little more of our trials.

Some suffering can be attributed to the sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden. The Word states in Romans 5:17-19, sin entered the world through his disobedience to God's command not to partake of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Some of the things we go through in our lives are a result of this original sin and the curse it has brought upon mankind. Some of our trials are also brought upon by OUR disobedience to His Word. A large portion of our problems would fit into this category. We could spend much time on both these thoughts but we will only concern ourselves with the third area of suffering, that is, those things in life that are allowed to come our way by a loving God who desires us to have His joy. Let us now look at a few verses in the rest of chapter 1, and see how they relate suffering to joy.

Now I want you to know

We now turn our attention to a pair of verses in chapter 1 that will shed much light on the reasons people suffer. The first of these is verse 12. At this point, let us quote this verse out of the NIV translation with the hope that the thoughts of the apostle might be clear to us today. The Word says, "Now I want you to know brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel." There are two great scriptural truths contained in this one verse, and we will study both briefly.

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The first truth concerns knowledge of the reasons for suffering. Paul knew in his heart why he was allowed by God to go through these trials of life. That knowledge caused a concern in his heart for those brethren who also needed to know the same things. Paul was full of the joy of the LORD all through his trials, and he desired others to have the same joy he possessed. What could have caused the apostle to have this joy throughout his times of suffering? PAUL UNDERSTOOD THE TWO REASONS STATED IN THE WORD TO EXPLAIN THE CAUSES OF TRUE SUFFERING! We will look at both of these thoughts and see just why we are allowed to face the trials of life, and then try to relate these trials to true joy.

What has happened to me has served to ADVANCE the gospel

One of the two reasons that we, as Christians, are faced with trials is the principle stated just above. God, in His infinite wisdom, causes things to come against us in order to advance His kingdom. Many of our trials and tribulations are designed specifically to help others in their walk with Him. This advancement of the kingdom can occur in two ways. One of those ways is through association. We face suffering in order to help others through the same trials. 1 Corinthians 10:13 states the temptations (trials, tribulations and sufferings) are \_\_\_\_\_ to man. To put it another way, ANY suffering, temptation, trial, or test we go through has already been experienced by others. It is not easy for us to console someone who has lost a close loved one unless we have also shared in the same loss. God allows the sufferings and trials of this life to come our way in order that we might minister to someone else who is facing or has to face the same trial. Can you think of a time in your life when you were able to minister to someone directly because you had gone through the same trial?

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God also allows us to face suffering so others can be helped through our victories. These people can take heart when they view our lives and see that we have also come through great trials and suffering. Whatever we may think as we face tribulation, there is always someone else who faces more than we do. The suffering we face often helps others who are going through a different type of suffering to come through in victory. Can you think of a time when someone came to you and told you that you were an inspiration to them because you had stood through a trial and encouraged them to stand also?

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What has happened to me will turn out for my DELIVERANCE.

We now turn our attention to verse 19. There is another reason, already implied in this lesson, the LORD allows trials and sufferings to come our way. That reason is PERSONAL GROWTH! 2 Peter 3:18 states it is the desire of our LORD that we would \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ and in the \_\_\_\_\_ of Him. Growth is not possible without resistance. We grow as we face trials and tribulations that come our way. In other words,

### **THERE CAN BE NO VICTORY WITHOUT A BATTLE!**

We can see this principle throughout the Word of God. Time and time again, God has allowed His children to face suffering in order to bring them to the place of maturity He desires for them. In 2 Chronicles 32:21, the Scripture says that God \_\_\_\_\_ him (Hezekiah), to \_\_\_\_\_ him, that he (Hezekiah, not God,) might \_\_\_\_\_ all that was in his \_\_\_\_\_. The LORD also used Paul's thorn in the flesh to bring him to the place where he could know God's grace was more than sufficient for all things. Personal growth is, indeed, an important reason for suffering in our lives.

Let us, for a brief moment, look into the mechanics of suffering, and how it can bring us to a place of great joy. Again, the Scriptures are our source to explain just how joy can be obtained in and through our trials and suffering. Let us turn our attention to Romans 5 and see just how this happens.

#### Romans 5:3-5 (King James Version)

And not only so, but we \_\_\_\_\_ in tribulations also: knowing that \_\_\_\_\_ worketh \_\_\_\_\_; and \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_; and \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. And \_\_\_\_\_ maketh not \_\_\_\_\_.

#### Romans 5:3-5 (New International Version)

Not only so, but we also \_\_\_\_\_ in our \_\_\_\_\_, because we know that \_\_\_\_\_ produces \_\_\_\_\_;

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\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_; and \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_. And hope does not \_\_\_\_\_ us.

We find, in Romans 5:3-5, the operation of suffering in our lives and the mechanics of suffering leading to joy. Notice the apostle says we can rejoice in our sufferings. How is this possible? The rest of the passage clearly states how. First of all, our suffering should produce perseverance. This endurance, if you will, simply means staying under the load. It is God's desire that we do not give up when we face trials, but that we continue to bear the load to the very end.

This endurance then produces character. The Greek word for this idea comes from the root word δοκιμος (pronounced as DOE-KEY-MOS), is one that was used to refer to the actual worth of coins. Citing from Donald Barnhouse's commentary on this idea, "In the ancient world there was no banking system as we know it today, and no paper money. All money was made from metal, **heated** until liquid, **poured** into molds and allowed to cool. When the coins were cooled, it was **necessary to smooth off the uneven edges**. The coins were comparatively soft and of course many people shaved them closely. In one century, more than eighty laws were passed in Athens, to stop the practice of shaving down the coins then in circulation. But some money changers were men of integrity, who would accept no counterfeit money. They were men of honor who put only genuine full weighted money into circulation. Such men were called "dokimos" or "approved". (Donald Barnhouse) "

A coin could be assayed, that is, a determination was made as to how much gold or silver was actually in the coin. The amount of precious metal determined the worth of the coin. If the level of gold or silver was high enough, the coin was then acceptable as currency. The same thought process can be applied to our character. Suffering causes us to stay under the load, thus producing WORTH! After we have successfully come through a trial, we are able to see our worth to Him and to others.

As we see our worth to Him, we begin to see hope grow in our lives. The Greek word ελπις, pronounced as EL-PIS, means to anticipate with pleasure, or joy. It is possible to have joy in our sufferings and trials, when we come to know how much we are really worth to our LORD. Knowing our true worth leads to a joyful heart and mind. This is how suffering brings about true joy.

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### LESSON 4 THE JOY OF HUMILITY

Scripture reading—Philippians 2:1-11 (New International Version)

(1) If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from His love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion (2) then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. (3) Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. (4) Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. (5) Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: (6) who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped (7) but made himself nothing, taking on the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. (8) And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! (9) Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above name (10) that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, (11) and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The subject of this lesson, like the previous one, is a topic often misunderstood. Much has been said about humility, some Scriptural, some not. The purpose of this lesson will be to apply the Biblical principle of lowliness of mind to Paul's writings on joy. We will begin our study by defining humility in its natural and Scriptural context and then focus our efforts on two principles of humility as found in the first eleven verses of chapter 2. We begin with a definition of humility.

Humility, according to Webster's Dictionary is "An absence of pride, or self-exultation." In this context the term is nothing more than simple modesty. Yet the biblical meaning is much deeper than mere modesty. Humility is the grace given by God, spoken of in Romans 12:3, that allows us not to think of ourselves more \_\_\_\_\_ than we ought to, but to think \_\_\_\_\_. It gives us a right view of our station in life by causing us to realize three concepts. First, we have no merit in God's sight. Secondly, humility does not cause us to have a self-depressing view of ourselves and, thirdly, we must prefer our brethren to ourselves in honor. We will briefly examine these three aspects of humility to see these points in our Scriptural passage.

A humble spirit, first of all, causes us to realize we have absolutely no right or merit in God's presence. The Word clearly teaches us in Romans 3:23 that we have all \_\_\_\_\_ and come short of His \_\_\_\_\_. The Scripture also states, in 1 Corinthians 1:29, no \_\_\_\_\_ shall \_\_\_\_\_ in His presence. If we take a right view of these two passages, along



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with many others, we come to the conclusion that ALL is given to us by His GRACE! This includes humility. God's grace is all-sufficient.

An attitude of lowliness also causes us to see ourselves in a proper perspective. Humility does not lead us to a depressed condition of mind but, rather, leads us to see we are, indeed, the SONS (and DAUGHTERS) of the Most High God. It is important for us as children of God, to see ourselves AS HE SEES US! We have been elevated to sit with Him in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. We are not accidents of nature or of some cosmic fluke. We are the children of God, brought to this state by His GRACE! When we see ourselves in this light, humility becomes an act of worship flowing spontaneously from a heart of love. This is the true nature of humility.

We now come to the heart of our lesson, point number three. Having a right understanding of biblical humility causes us, according to Romans 12:10, to \_\_\_\_\_ one another in \_\_\_\_\_. Humility brings about that servant attitude that we spoke briefly of in lesson 1. This type of lowliness of mind is not something we put on because it is required of us. Rather, it is a trait that flows from the heart that has established itself in God's grace and has a right perspective of its place in God. We don't serve others because we have to, but we serve because SERVING IS PART OF OUR NEW NATURE!

We will now look at the first eleven verses of Philippians 2, and attempt to glean some truths along the lines of our new servant nature. We will use this passage as found in the NIV translation. We will also, for the sake of clarification, break up this passage into two sections. Our first point of study will be taken from the first four verses. We begin with verse one.

The Apostle Paul begins chapter 2 by listing five things that should be found in the mind-set of every Christian. Why do we mention attitude when speaking of a servant nature? It is simply because ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING! We shall look into this statement a little later on in our study. For now, we will simply make the statement. Notice now the five. In one verse, Paul speaks of ENCOURAGEMENT, COMFORT, FELLOWSHIP, TENDERNESS AND COMPASSION. Notice also how he speaks of these five qualities in different relationships. If we are encouraged by our union with Christ, have any comfort in His love, if we have any fellowship with His Spirit and if we have any tenderness and compassion, then we are to fulfil verse 2. Paul desires his joy to be completed through the church being of the same ATTITUDE as he was. That attitude was to have the same love he had, and to be united in SPIRIT AND

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PURPOSE! It is equally important to have, not only the SPIRIT OF SERVING, but also to have the PURPOSE TO SERVE!

The next two verses of chapter 2 bring out humility in its purest form. Nothing we do is to be done out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. There are those who desire power in the kingdom of heaven. There are those who think the kingdom cannot survive without them. Both of these views are distorted. We cannot afford to have a desire to uplift ourselves in the kingdom of God, knowing that, he who exalts himself shall be brought down. We are to consider others above our own desires. . When we do these things, we are truly fulfilling the law of love as found in Galatians 5:13 and 6:10. We should, in the words of verse four of our study, look out for the interest of others above our own.

If we look at the life of our LORD, as recorded in the gospels, we can gain enormous insight into the proper attitude of a servant. In Luke 2:41-50, we find the very first recorded words of our LORD. When asked why He had caused His mother such grief of mind, the LORD replied, in verse 49, that He had to be about His \_\_\_\_\_. Some eighteen years later, we find Him at a well in Sychar. After ministering to the woman, the disciples returned. Jesus tells them, in John 4:34 that His \_\_\_\_\_ was to do the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ His \_\_\_\_\_. A third example of His servant nature can be seen on the night before He was crucified. He prayed in the garden for the Father's \_\_\_\_\_ to be done. All through His life, His desire was to do God's will. That will was to MINISTER TO OTHERS who were in need. We should have the same desire as He did.

We come now to another point of study. Let us devote a few sentences to the servant nature and its implications in our lives. Verse 6 of Philippians 2 tells us of Jesus that He was, in very \_\_\_\_\_, God. But if we look at verse 7, we see something very beautiful. Jesus made Himself nothing, taking on the very \_\_\_\_\_ of a \_\_\_\_\_. The Greek word used here, μορφή, is pronounced as MORE-PHAY. It is the root word for our English, metamorphosis. In its true meaning, it denotes an INTERNAL transformation expressed as an outward sign. It denotes that servant nature which is OF THE HEART. This servant nature possessed by our LORD is the same one we should have.

We now come to the conclusion of our lesson. We will attempt, in a few short statements, to see how humility is related to joy. Stated simply, joy comes from a right understanding of who and what we are in Christ. We are servants of Him who loved us. As those who know what serving is truly about, we can find joy that comes from knowing Him and serving Him and others out of a true heart.



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### LESSON 5 THE JOY OF SHINING

Scriptural reading—Philippians 2:12-18

We now come to lesson five in our study of the book of Philippians. In this study we will concern ourselves with what we will call, “The Joy of Shining.” There are three or four points we will attempt to cover in this topic, all concerned with our being EXAMPLES to the world. There is much ground to cover, so let us begin our study with verse 12 and 13.

#### THE SOURCE OF LIGHT

There is a Scripture, Matthew 5:14, we will use as a springboard to begin our study. Jesus told His disciples they were the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_. That passage is as vital today as it was then. We are the light of this present world, and we must shine as lights to the world. But before we can shine forth there is a principle we must understand. That tenet can be found in verses 12 and 13 of our lesson. Notice the Word says we are to \_\_\_\_\_ out our own \_\_\_\_\_.

Many people misunderstand what this verse says. Our salvation is freely given to us by God, and there is nothing we can do to add to it. There is, however, a part we must play in our salvation. This part is what verse 12 speaks of. We are not saved by works, but works will follow those who are saved. The works are the EFFECT of our salvation, not the CAUSE! We are, in essence to do good works so those around us might see and believe, and also to one day complete what God has called us to do.

How is this possible? Many people also do not understand the reason we are able to shine as lights. For some, being an example is a great struggle. But the Word does tell us how to shine by giving us the SOURCE of our shining. Notice what the Word says in verse 13 of our study. For it is \_\_\_\_\_ which \_\_\_\_\_ in you both to \_\_\_\_\_ and to do His \_\_\_\_\_. What is this verse saying? It is telling us God does two things in order to see Matthew 5:14 fulfilled in our lives. Let us briefly look at both.

The first part of verse 13 tells us God works in us. The Greek word, ενεγεω, pronounced as EN-ER-GAY-O, is the source of our English word energy. God ENERGIZES in us the ability to do two things, among others. He, first of all, gives us the WILL to perform His good pleasure. It is nothing more than God’s GRACE which causes us to have the desire to do His will. God does not stop here! He not only gives us the desire to do His will, but also provides the DETERMINATION, for the Word says He works in us both to WILL and to DO! We must come to the realization it is His GRACE that gives us the desire and

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ability to perform His works. We could have so much joy in our lives if we could only understand this principle! We struggle so often and try to do things on our own instead of allowing the grace of God to do the work by His Spirit. Time will not permit us to go any further in this trend of thought, so let us look briefly at our command to shine.

### SHINE LIKE STARS

Have you ever met a professional complainer? Well, we can thank God there are no actual professionals in this area. Yet it seems as though there are some talented amateurs, even in the church. The Word tells us, in verse 14, we are to do all things without \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. The NIV translation states we are to do everything without COMPLAINING and ARGUING! This is not always easy, but it is always POSSIBLE. God gives the grace for such things. We are to do these so we might SHINE LIKE STARS IN THE UNIVERSE! Have you ever compared yourself to a star in heaven? Well, this is just what the apostle does and rightly so. We are to be compared with the stars of heaven, for we serve the same purpose spiritually as they do naturally. Let us look at what stars do, and see why we deserve to be compared with them.

Our first point of consideration is that STARS GIVE DIRECTION! Have you ever looked out on a clear, starry night and wondered at the constellations? If you have, you are not alone. Man has done the same thing for 6,000 years. He learned a long time ago that some patterns of stars (we call them constellations) and individual stars could be used to direct him in his journeys. It is awesome to find Polaris, the North Star, and know that it has pointed out the North Pole for the last 6,000 years. We can always use it to find true north. There are other stars and group of stars that can be used to find other stars and earthly directions. We can locate Orion's belt and follow this line of stars in an easterly direction to find the brightest star in the heavens, Sirius the Dog Star. If we travel in the opposite direction along Orion's belt we come to the constellation Taurus, the bull, and its brightest star, Aldebaran. Continuing a little further, we come to the Pleiades, also known as the seven sisters. What are we trying to say through all this astronomy lesson? Our point is this. Stars are used by man to point him in the right direction. Do we even need to state the spiritual lesson here? Shouldn't we shine as stars in the heaven in order to point man in the right direction? Praise God, we'd better!

Stars do not merely give direction, they also INDICATE THE SEASONS! Genesis 1:14 states in the NIV translation, the stars serve as signs to MARK THE SEASONS! It is a known fact that early man was well advanced in the science of astronomy. Man could view the heavens and depend on certain stars to

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rise at certain times in the year. Endowed with this knowledge, he knew when to plant, when to reap, when to hold certain festivals and much more. In our role as stars, we are to serve the same function. We are to indicate the season. The season we are to declare is the COMING OF THE LORD! The Word says we can know the season of our LORD's return. We should, right now, be living proof to others that he is ready to return for His harvest. What an awesome responsibility!

There is yet a third function of stars, perhaps, the most important. One of the great passages of Scripture is Psalms 19. The LORD uses the first six verses of this tremendous passage of Scripture to illustrate a single point, our third function. The Word says, in verse 1, the \_\_\_\_\_ declare the \_\_\_\_\_ of God. Our main role as stars is to DECLARE HIS GLORY! How is this done? We are to shine in the same manner as stars do to display His glory. Stars are an orderly display of a God who is the GOD OF ORDER! Sometimes it seems as if the entire world has gone completely insane. All we have to do in order to believe this is read a newspaper, surf the internet, or watch the evening news. With all the crime and hatred in this world, is order even possible? **YES!** God is order, and the heavens declare that order by separating light from darkness! (Genesis 1:14 again)

### AS YOU HOLD OUT THE WORD OF LIFE

We now come to a verse that is translated in two, slightly different ways. The first part of verse 16 contains a Greek word, επιχοντες, pronounced as EP-EK-KON-TAYS, which is translated in the KJV as "Holding forth," and translated as "Holding on to," in the NIV. Both are equally valid translations. We must shine as stars in the universe by doing both of these. First of all, we must HOLD ON TO the Word of Life. In order for us to be those shining stars He has called us to be, we must be blameless and pure, children of God without spot in the midst of a crooked and depraved generation. We do this by holding on to His Word. This is very easy to do, for He has already provided the **GRACE** necessary to do so.

We must also HOLD OUT, or offer, the Word of Life to that same generation that does not know Him. This is the crux of Matthew 5:16, where Jesus said we must allow our \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ before men, that they might see our \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ our \_\_\_\_\_, which is in heaven. What an awesome RESPONSIBILITY! But yet, at the same time, it is such an awesome OPPORTUNITY! We are stars, and it is up to us to offer the world the same source of light as we have in our lives.

We again, raise the same question we have raised in our other lessons. What does all this have to do with joy? Again, the answer should be fairly obvious. Paul uses the last two verses of our passage



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### LESSON 6 THE JOY OF FELLOWSHIP

Scriptural reading—Philippians 2:19-30

It is time to begin the sixth lesson in our study on the book of Philippians. The topic of this lesson will be fellowship. We will, by His grace, attempt to take the remainder of chapter 2 and cover a few principles of fellowship. Let us begin with verse 19.

#### TIMOTHY

“I hope in the Lord Jesus Christ to send Timothy to you soon.” With this statement, Paul begins our passage of study. Much can be said concerning Timothy, but we limit our discussion of him to those things relevant to our study. Let us, first of all, look at his upbringing, and then examine his worth to the church. In so doing, we will attempt to lay down Scriptural tenets as to who our fellowship should be with and why we need that time of communion with others. Let us begin with what we know about his family.

The Scriptures tell us little of Timothy’s family. We learn from Acts 16:1 of his parents. Timothy’s father was a \_\_\_\_\_ and his mother, a \_\_\_\_\_ who was also a \_\_\_\_\_. We find, also, in 2 Timothy 1:5 his faith was first in \_\_\_\_\_, his \_\_\_\_\_ and then in \_\_\_\_\_, his mother. Those of us who have known the Scriptures since youth can be very thankful for the influence of a godly parent or grandparent. Timothy’s life was such that, as a young man, he learned of God from a grandmother and mother both well versed in the Word. It is true his father was not a Jew. We know nothing else of the man. Whatever influence he may have had on his son is irrelevant to our study. Let us, for now, leave his family history and look at his influence on the church at Philippi.

We learn from the Word Timothy was very concerned about the church at Philippi. Paul writes in verse 20 of our passage Timothy had a genuine interest in their welfare. This was one of the reasons the apostle was going to try to send the young evangelist to the church. Timothy’s attitude was not of that found in verse 21. His was not to seek his own thing, as so many people did and still do. He was concerned with the well-being of the body. His genuine desire was to minister to the congregation the things of God.

We will now briefly leave Timothy and look at the second man Paul was sending to the church. We will use the same format with him as we did with Timothy. After we have viewed these two points,



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we will link both men with principles of fellowship we feel are important to the body of Christ. Let's turn our attention to Epaphroditus.

### EPAPHRODITUS

Paul uses verses 25-30 of our text to speak of our second brother, Epaphroditus. We will briefly look at his background and then study the reasons Paul sent him to Philippi, in order to set forth our tenets of study. Let's examine his background. In studying the personal history of this young man, we run into a serious problem. The Word tells us ABSOLUTELY NOTHING of his natural family. Tradition does not help either, for nothing more is known of this man of God. Factually, he is mentioned 3 times in our epistle AND THAT'S IT! Yet, it is possible to glean some truth about the man simply by looking at his name. The name is of Greek origin, so it would be safe to assume his parents, or at least one parent, were Greek. The meaning of his name also tells us something of his family. Epaphroditus is a name taken from two Greek words that, together, mean, "Devoted to, or belonging to Aphrodite." Aphrodite was, in Greek mythology, the goddess of beauty, love and sex. She was everything to the Greeks Asherah was to the Canaanite religions. Many vile practices were associated with her worship. In all probability, young Epaphroditus was dedicated to her, much as children are dedicated to the Lord today. Needless to say, his upbringing was the polar opposite of Timothy's. At some point in his life, he was introduced to the Savior. He was a Gentile convert.

Though the Word tells us nothing of his life, it does speak volumes concerning his ministry. The apostle thought it necessary to send him to the church. Verse 25 tells us Paul refers to him as first, a \_\_\_\_\_. Paul also refers to him, in order, as a \_\_\_\_\_ in labor, a fellow \_\_\_\_\_, and your \_\_\_\_\_. (He was one of them) He also \_\_\_\_\_ to Paul's \_\_\_\_\_. Time does not allow us to enter into a study of these great qualities. Needless to say, he was very highly thought of by the apostle, and, for this reason, was sent by Paul back to the Philippian church.

### PRACTICAL APPLICATION

We now raise the question, "What does all this have to do with fellowship, much less joy?" The answer is quite simple. Timothy and Epaphroditus represent FOUR distinct groups in the body of Christ. Let us look at all four and see how our fellowship with the body of believers is represented.

We first take up the thought of origins. Timothy represents those members of the body who come from families who have known the Lord. Every church has members who can say their parents

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and grandparents served God. This is good, but it can also be a dangerous. It is very easy to have a smug attitude if we are from this group. Religion can, and often does, come in the way of our fellowship with different member groups of the body.

By the same token, there are those in every church who have not known the Lord all their lives. They are the “Epaphrodituses” of our congregations. These are the new converts we pray so hard for. Yet, often times, the danger exists we will shun these new ones BECAUSE of their backgrounds or past lives. It is often difficult, if not impossible, for a former drug addict or a child molester to be accepted by any church. Our defense against this charge of non-fellowship is often the thought we cannot trust them. We impose barriers to fellowship God has nothing to do with. If God has forgiven someone of their past (like He has of every one of us), who are we to hold it against them? In reality, which is the greater sin, murder or rape, or an attitude of self-righteousness caused by our “Knowing God,” for so long? Every one of us has to answer that question for ourselves.

There is a second area represented by Timothy and Epaphroditus. Timothy was the minister of the two. He was the one behind the pulpit. Often times, we find ourselves wanting to associate with the ministerial section of the church and no one else. This is not wrong in itself, yet there are those who want to do it for the wrong reasons. If our desire to draw close to the pastor or some other minister is to be seen and known to “Move in high places,” we are committing an act of abomination in God’s sight. Such an attitude is not of God but of the flesh.

Epaphroditus, as far as the Word tells us, never once preached behind the pulpit. He never delivered a “Message.” Or did he? His was not the ministry of the WORK but, rather, the ministry of the WORK! He represents the workers in the church. Whatever work needs to be done in the body, the Epaphrodituses are there to take care of it. We often fail to give these individuals their just recognition. Our fellowship with those in the body who will never preach a sermon, but will work tirelessly for the sake of the gospel, must be as great as our communion with the preachers.

A brief statement is needed to sum up all we have stated about these two great men of God. There should be no “Cliques” in any body of believers. Our fellowship should be the same with ALL believers across the board. It is true that, due to differences in personalities and character, some are easier to fellowship with than others. But we should not exclude someone from a close relationship with us simply on that basis. We must commune with ALL who have called on the name of Christ, in order for our joy to be complete.



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### LESSON 7 THE JOY OF LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

Scriptural reading—Philippians 3:1-11

Our lesson now shifts to the third chapter of this joyful epistle. We will devote the next two lessons to this chapter. There is much to say on this theme of life in the Spirit, so let us begin by looking at the points we will attempt to cover.

The Apostle Paul begins our passage of Scripture by exhorting the church to \_\_\_\_\_ in the Lord. Such a statement is a fitting way to begin a study of life in the Spirit. There are many things in this world we can find joy in, but the apostle sums up the greatest joy man can know when he makes the statement he makes in verse 1. We can very easily find many Scriptures dealing with the subject of rejoicing. However, we will leave true joy alone for another two lessons and focus our attention on why this joy is possible, and what it has to do with life in the Spirit. Let us now train our crosshairs on verse 3.

The Apostle Paul makes four statements in verse three which are at the heart of what it means to have life in the Spirit. We will briefly look at these in our attempt to discover the spiritual life he speaks of. The first truth found in verse 3 is brought out very beautifully in the NIV. Paul makes the statement we are the \_\_\_\_\_. Such a statement may not seem to have any bearing in our lives today, but nothing could be farther from the truth. Circumcision was the sign of the covenant God made with Abraham 4,000 years ago. In calling the church the circumcision, Paul is stating **THE CHURCH IS AS MUCH A SPIRITUAL DESCENDANT OF ABRAHAM AS ISRAEL IS A NATURAL DESCENDANT!** In other words, **WE ARE THE SPIRITUAL HEIRS OF THE PROMISE MADE TO ABRAHAM!** That is not to say the church has replaced Israel in God's scheme, for it has not. God, in His all-knowing state, has declared the church has a rightful place in Him as the redeemed of the Lamb. It is because of our place in Him, we can refer to ourselves as the circumcision.

The Apostle then states a second principle dealing with our life in the Spirit. It is we which \_\_\_\_\_ God in the \_\_\_\_\_. Life in the Spirit entails a healthy dose of **WORSHIP!** What would spiritual life be without it? **THERE CAN BE NO LIFE WITHOUT WORSHIP TO HIM WHO IS OUR LIFE!** Worship to God **MUST** be a part of our life in the Spirit! Much more could be said about worship, yet, we must go on.

Paul then tells us in verse 3, we \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ Jesus. Another way of saying this is we rejoice in what the Lord has done, is doing, and will do in our lives. **EVERYTHING** we do, including

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rejoicing should be done IN HIM, for the Word plainly tells us, in Acts 17:28, in Him we \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_, and have our \_\_\_\_\_. EVERYTHING DONE MUST BE DONE IN HIM!

A fourth principle can also be found in verse 3 of Philippians 3. As children of God, bound to live in His Spirit, we should have no \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_. The Word clearly teaches us the Spirit and the flesh are SWORN ENEMIES! There are those who try to serve God, and live in the Spirit, yet walk in the flesh. We cannot have the life God wants us to have if we walk in the old flesh man Paul speaks of in Ephesians 4:22. We see, from this verse, the old man is \_\_\_\_\_. The Greek word is one meaning defiled, spoiled, or corrupted. Spoiled milk is good for nothing. It cannot be used to nourish the body. In fact, it will actually make the body sick. In the same manner, the flesh cannot be used to nourish the spiritual body. The Lord stated this principle so appropriately when He stated, in John 6:63, the flesh profits \_\_\_\_\_.

The Apostle Paul continues on the thought of the flesh in verses 4-6 of our passage. Here he states his qualifications in the natural realm. He was, after all, a Hebrew and a Pharisee. Yet he came to the realization these things meant nothing in the Spirit. He expounds on this thought in verses 7-11. Notice some of the things the apostle speaks of in these verses. All those things which should have profited him in the natural were counted as nothing. Paul goes on to call all these worldly qualifications as nothing more than dung. He then states the ONLY things that matter in the spiritual life. These can be found in verses 8-11. They are as follows: (1) That I may \_\_\_\_\_ Christ; (2) That I may be found \_\_\_\_\_ Him; (3) That I may \_\_\_\_\_ Him; (4) That I may know the \_\_\_\_\_ of His \_\_\_\_\_; (5) That I may know the \_\_\_\_\_ of His \_\_\_\_\_; and (6) That I might attain unto the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_. It is not possible for us to cover, in one lesson, each of these in detail. Let us, however, make a brief statement concerning each one. We begin with winning Christ.

How many of us have ever been involved in some kind of contest? We enter these contests to WIN! No one goes into a race or game intending to lose. Can we picture the prize that awaits us at the end of the contest? Can we see THE prize waiting for us at the end of life's race? Praise GOD!

Is it our desire to be found in Him? John 15 teaches us much of what it means to be, "In Him." Time will not permit us to even enter this vast area of Scriptural teaching. Likewise, how could we possibly cover the thought of knowing Him? This, more than any other thought, should be the desire of every child of God. Once we know Him, it is a simple task to know the power contained in the resurrection and the communion of His suffering, in order to be made conformable unto His death. It then becomes a very simple matter to attain to the resurrection of the dead.



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### LESSON 8 THE JOY OF PRESSING ON

Scripture reading—Philippians 3:12-4:1

Let us begin this study with a question. Have you ever been involved in a race? Just about all of us have, at one time or another. This lesson is about such a race. Actually, it is about the greatest race ever run. That race is the contest of the Christian experience. It is extremely critical we, as children of God, understand what this contest is all about and how it should be run. We can thank God He has not left us in the dark about how to win the race, but has given us clear instructions on the method of our running. These instructions can be found within our Scripture reading mentioned above. Let us begin our study on winning the race by speaking first of the contest itself.

There are two, very important truths we must understand about the race each of us is called to run. Both of those truths can be summed up in one, brief statement. THE COURSE EACH ONE OF US RUNS HAS BEEN SPECIFICALLY AND INTENTIONALLY DEIGNED FOOR US BY GOD HIMSELF! What do we mean by this? God has called us to run a race specifically made for each one of us. No one else can run that particular course, it is ours and ours alone. The course is also intentionally made by God. Every hill, valley, trial and test we face has been allowed by God to come our way. We can find this truth in Romans 8:28. "And we \_\_\_\_\_ that \_\_\_\_\_ things work together for \_\_\_\_\_ to them who love God and are the called according to His \_\_\_\_\_." We must be aware of these two principles if we are to run the race successfully. Armed with these facts, let us examine the tactics needed to finish our individual race.

The Apostle Paul begins to give us the game plan for a successful running of the race in verse 12 of our passage. If we examine our passage of Scripture carefully, we will see the game plan for running the race consists of three different aspects. We will call these three areas that of (1) looking to the finish line, (2) looking to those who have run or are running a good race, and (3) looking to those who have quit the race. We will learn truths from all three of these areas. Let us begin with the thought of keeping our eyes focused on the finish line.

The apostle tells us, in verse 12, he was aware of the fact his race was not yet over. It would be completed at some point in time. He then gives us the strategy he planned to use in order to win his race. \_\_\_\_\_ those things which are behind and \_\_\_\_\_ to those things which are \_\_\_\_\_, he would \_\_\_\_\_ toward the mark in order to win the \_\_\_\_\_. How many modern day athletes can we think

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of who dwell in their past mistakes or glories? This living in the past may be alright in the natural realm, but it is not suitable for life in the Spirit. Our goal in the Spirit MUST be the same as Paul's. Both our past mistakes and glories must be kept in their proper perspective, that of learning experiences. We must leave the past in the past and strive for the finish line! This is where Hebrews 12:1, 2 are usually quoted, and rightly so! If we are to run AND win, we must look to Jesus!

The apostle uses verses 15-17 to cause us to realize that all who would win the race must have the same mind-set as he had. The spiritually mature individual must keep his eye on the finish line, just as Paul did if he or she is to win the race. . This brings us to our second aspect of winning the race, looking to those who have run or are running a good race. Paul continues to use himself as an example. This may seem like boasting to some, but it is actually very good spiritual advice. It is possible to win the race by keeping our eyes on those who have already run or are running a good race (remember Hebrews 12:1, 2?). Any athlete would be a fool not to learn tips and techniques from other runners who are winning races. So it is also in the realm of the Spirit. Is this not what the writer to the Hebrews had in mind when he penned chapter 11? There is nothing wrong with patterning our lives after godly men and women in order to help us run our individual race. Indeed, we would be fools not to!

The writer uses the next two verses, verse 18 and verse 19, to show us the third area we should look to in order to run a successful race. How sad it is, that we should have to look to those who have failed so that we might not. Yet there is a very valuable lesson to be learned from men like Demas, who once walked with and suffered with the apostle. Notice what the Word has to say about these. Their end, or destiny, is \_\_\_\_\_, their \_\_\_\_\_ (that which they serve) is their own \_\_\_\_\_, and their glory is in their shame. What a sad testimony! Paul even goes so far as to call them ENEMIES OF THE CROSS! What happened to these men (and women) who once knew the power of God? The Bible supplies us with the answer in verse 19. Somewhere along the way, they began to mind \_\_\_\_\_ things. THEY BECAME DISTRACTED BY SOMETHING AND TOOK THEIR EYES OFF THE FINISH LINE! It could happen to us just as easily as it did to them.

How can we possibly avoid falling into the same trap as those Paul spoke of in verses 18 and 19? Again, the Word supplies us with the answer. The apostle uses the next three verses to show us how. As we eagerly await the return of our Savior, we keep in our hearts the knowledge He will change our mortal bodies into that which will no longer be corruptible. This is the prize awaiting us at the finish line. By keeping our eyes on that finish line and the waiting prize, we will be able to complete our race and hear Him say, "WELL DONE, THOU GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT!" When we cross the finish line,





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### LESSON 9 THE TRUE JOY

Scriptural reading—Philippians 4:2-9

We begin the ninth lesson in our study of Philippians with a familiar portion of Scripture found in the Old Testament. Nehemiah 8:10 tells us the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ is our \_\_\_\_\_. Therefore, if we draw strength from joy, is it no wonder the enemy tries to keep us from being joyful? It is to our advantage to learn all we can about this joy. This is the purpose of this lesson. This study will, hopefully, teach us more on joy. This lesson will, more than any other so far, probe into the thought on keeping that joy in our lives. We begin in verse 4.

The Apostle Paul begins our study with the simple statement, “\_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_ always: and again I say \_\_\_\_\_.” There are two powerful truths contained in this one thought. We are to have joy operating in our lives continually. The Word tells us to rejoice always. Is it even possible to have joy in our hearts at all times? Yes, it is! The way to have this feeling in our hearts is the second truth in this part of verse 4. We are to rejoice in the LORD!

There are many people who go around joyful because their favorite team has won a game, or their favorite program is playing on television. There is really nothing wrong with either of these two, or any other reason to be joyful. But these are not really joy, only happiness (not the same thing). The only TRUE JOY that ever lasts is that found in Jesus Christ, and Him alone. We are to place ourselves in such a relationship with our Lord that we come to understand exactly what there is in life to be joyful about. God has done so much for each and every one of us. He continues and will continue to bless us and move in our lives. The thought of His hand resting on us must be the basis for joy in the life of every believer. Outside of Him, there CAN BE NO JOY!

Now that we have established the basis of true joy, let us look at a few of the principles the apostle gives in order for us to be able to keep that joy operating in our lives. Verse 5 tells us our \_\_\_\_\_ must be made known unto all men. Another word for moderation is gentleness. We are to show forth a gentle spirit in all our dealings with others. There is a principle found in the Word that tells us we will reap what we sow. If we sow gentleness to others, we will have that same kind attitude given back to us. We should, therefore, be gentle to all. Yet there is an even greater reason to have a gentle spirit operating in our lives. Paul states in our passage the \_\_\_\_\_ is at hand. God is always near to us, so it is to our advantage to be gentle and kind to all others.

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There is another important principle of joy that is to our advantage to understand and study. Paul also tells us, in verse 6, that we are to be \_\_\_\_\_ for nothing. Another way of saying this is we are not to be anxious about anything. Anxiety robs men (and women) of joy. When we begin to worry about all the things that COULD happen to us, we very quickly lose whatever joy we may possess. Our Lord is gracious for, in the same verse, He gives us the key to winning the battle with worry. That truth is in ALL THINGS by \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, we are to make our requests known unto God.

What does prayer have to do with joy? When we present our concerns to God in prayer, we should be turning them over to Him for a solution. This is what the Apostle Peter meant when he wrote in 1 Peter 1:5, we are to \_\_\_\_\_ ALL our \_\_\_\_\_ on Him, for He \_\_\_\_\_ for us. As we turn over our concerns and cares to Him, we begin to realize He is MORE THAN ABLE to meet every need we present to Him.

There is an extension of this knowledge of God's power that is important in order for joy to operate in our lives. We turn over our concerns to God in prayer. We then realize He is in control, and will take care of our problems. When we realize He is in control, the \_\_\_\_\_ of God which passes ALL understanding shall \_\_\_\_\_ our \_\_\_\_\_ and our \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 7). PEACE! What a thought! Do we long for peace in our hearts? All we need in order to have that peace is an attitude of turning EVERYTHING over to God! There is a thought introduced in an earlier lesson that bears repeating now. We stated earlier joy was an extension of a heart that knows the peace of God. Isn't this the same thing we have just stated? The key, then, for joy operating in our lives is knowing that PEACE of God which is able to guard both our hearts and our minds.

There is yet another principle stated in our passage we can learn from. Paul begins verse 8 with the thought his writing on joy is drawing to a close. He then goes on to list six different things. Whatever is \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and has a good \_\_\_\_\_, if there is any virtue or praise, we are to \_\_\_\_\_ on these things. The thought process plays an important part in the Christian walk. Proverbs 23:7 teaches us as a man \_\_\_\_\_ in his heart, so is he. Our thoughts will either draw us away from the Lord, as happened to Demas, or they will draw us to the Lord, as in Paul's case. Do we want the cares of this life, or do we want the peace of God? The choice is ours. If we choose peace, then we will see the latter part of verse 9 become real in our lives. When we choose peace, we can be assured the GOD OF PEACE WILL BE WITH US!



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### THE JOY OF GIVING (AND RECEIVING)

Scripture reading—Philippians 4:10-20

Once, my younger son, Jordan decided to help a friend with an assignment. Tommy's school was collecting cans for a Thanksgiving food drive. Tommy and Jordan set out to pick up canned goods from anyone who was willing to give. The boys made an interesting discovery. Upon returning, my son told us the people who lived in the big houses gave an average of one can apiece. Those who seemed to have nothing gave an average of about three cans per home. We then explained to our son one of the great lessons in life on giving. This story brings us to our study.

The Apostle Paul covers many lessons in his epistle to the Philippian church. One of these areas is concerned with giving. There are many principles which could be mentioned on this great subject, but we are once again forced to limit our lesson. We will briefly speak on a few thoughts found in chapter four, verses 10-20. Let us begin.

Paul begins our lesson with the thought this one particular church had, at last, renewed their concern for him. He explains further by saying this concern was always there, but the opportunity was not. Paul then mentions the first truth in our study. The apostle says he is not saying this because of any need in his life, for he had learned in all things to be \_\_\_\_\_.

One of the great principles of the Christian life we must learn is that of contentment. This truth applies to the area of giving as well as all other areas of our spiritual walk. Time does not allow us to go into a detailed study of the reasons God places such an emphasis on being satisfied in Him. Paul said it best when he made the statement in verse 12 he had learned the secret of being content in any and every situation. We will, time permitting, explore the relationship between contentment and giving toward the end of our lesson. For now, let us look at the principle mentioned in verse 13.

The thirteenth verse of our passage is one often used by many Christians, yet, is not often understood correctly in the context of this passage. The Apostle says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me." What is the purpose of using this phrase in relationship to giving? The underlying reason for this thought being used here is one of knowledge. Paul recognized that contentment plays an important part in our lives. When we understand Romans 8:28 is for all of us who call on the name of the LORD, we begin to have contentment find its rightful place in our lives. God is in complete control of EVERYTHING that happens to His children and NOTHING takes Him by surprise! Armed with this knowledge, we can find true satisfaction and learn the secret of contentment. When

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we become aware of our true position in Him, we can draw from our LORD that authority that causes us to be capable of doing all things through His name.

The apostle then goes on to speak to the Philippian church about their sharing with him in his troubles. In verse 15, he makes a very interesting statement. No other church shared with him concerning \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. These two areas will take up the rest of our study. Let us briefly look at giving.

Giving is the one area more people have trouble understanding than any other aspect of the normal Christian walk. Many think the preacher is after their money every time he ministers on giving. Sometimes this is true. But the real truth of the matter is giving is not to be thought of in this manner. The apostle makes the statement, in verse 18, that hits closest to the Biblical principle of giving. He states he had received the gifts sent to him. Let us look at the latter part of this verse and see exactly how we should view giving.

Paul states the following principle, "I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an \_\_\_\_\_ of a sweet smell, a sacrifice \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ to God." Here is the true reason behind giving. **WHEN WE GIVE, WE GIVE, NOT TO MAN, BUT TO GOD! ALL OF OUR GIVING, if done in the right spirit and with the right attitude, BECOMES SOMETHING OF BEAUTY TO GOD!** Our giving should be a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice pleasing to God. Yet, so often, we give with the wrong motive. To give expecting something in return is NOT true giving. It is with this attitude that Philippians 4:19 assumes its rightful place in our lives. We do not give expecting to receive in return, but we know God WILL meet ALL of our needs as we learn to give first.

The thought of supplying our needs brings us to our last point of study. There is a second principle Paul speaks of in this passage, that of receiving. Remember back to verse 15. Paul says the church was the only one that stood by him concerning giving and receiving. We cannot spend much time on this subject, but we will look at it briefly.

We will now make a statement we will attempt to explain. **RECEIVING IS AN EXTENSION OF GIVING!** The apostle teaches on receiving in verses 16-18 of our study. The NIV gives us the thought of the following transcript. When Paul was at Thessalonica, the Philippian church sent him aid time after time. Paul was not looking for a gift, but he was looking for something else. The NIV gives the thought more emphasis than some other translations when it says the apostle was looking for what may be

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“Credited to the account” of the Philippian church. Giving actually adds credit to our account. We must be careful here, for it would be very easy to take this thought and come to the conclusion God owes us for our giving. This is not Scriptural, but the principle found in Proverbs 19:17 is. “He that has pity on those in need, \_\_\_\_\_ to the LORD; and that which he has given will God \_\_\_\_\_ him.” Can we not see the loving hand of our gracious and merciful Father on our lives as we learn to give? The thought of receiving from Him then simply becomes the extension of our giving to others.

Earlier, we made the statement we would correlate contentment with giving. We will close with that thought. When we learn to give to God by blessing others, we open up the windows of heaven and allow God, in turn, to bless us. Knowing He will repay our giving causes us to realize in our hearts GOD WILL SUPPLY ALL OUR NEEDS ACCORDING TO HIS RICHES IN GLORY BY CHRIST JESUS. The grace of our LORD be with you!