**Philippians**

**“Living in the Clouds”**

1. **Introduction: 1:1-8**
2. **Greetings: 1:1-2**
3. **Thanksgiving: 1:3-8**
4. **Statement of Purpose: 1:9-11**

**“Four attitudes of a Heavenly Mind”**

1. **“That your love may abound still more”**
2. **“That you may approve the things that are excellent”**
3. **“That you may be sincere and without offense”**
4. **“That you be filled with the fruits of righteousness”**
5. **Main Teaching: 1:12-4:19**
6. **1:12-30 *Joy in spite of circumstances***
7. **1:12-26 Lemonade out of lemons**
8. **1:27-30 Blessings from buffetings**
9. **2:1-30 *Joy in spite of people***
10. **2:1-11 Example of Jesus**
11. **2:12-18 Example of Paul**
12. **2:19-24 Example of Timothy**
13. **2:25-30 Example of Epaphroditus**
14. **3:1-21 *Joy in spite of things***
15. **3:1-11 Past**
16. **3:12-16 Present**
17. **3:17-21 Future**
18. **4:1-19 *Joy in spite of anxiety***
19. **4:1-9 God’s peace**
20. **4:10-13 God’s power**
21. **4:14-19 God’s provision**
22. **Closing: 4:20-23 Glory, Greeting and Grace**

**Philippians**

**“Living above the Clouds”**

**I. Introduction: 1:1-8**

**1:1-8**

**“Introduction”**

**I. Intro.**

**II. Vs. 1-2 Greetings**

**III. Vs. 3-8 Thanksgiving**

**I. Intro.**

Christianity is to be a joy filled experience and this is what Paul points out in Philippians. In these four chapters the words joy and rejoicing appear 19 times. What makes this all the more remarkable is that while writing this letter Paul is in Rome chained between two guards awaiting trial not knowing if it will be put to death for his faith. This letter serves as a testimony not only of Paul but of what the Christian life can be as Paul points out 4 truths about Joy that serves as an outline to this book:

1. **1:12-30 *Joy in spite of circumstances***
2. **2:1-30 *Joy in spite of people***
3. **3:1-21 *Joy in spite of things***
4. **4:1-19 *Joy in spite of anxiety***

15 times Paul writes about thinking and 10 times about remembering and what this tells us is that joy that is *not affected by circumstances, people, things or anxiety.* It has more to do with the head than it does with the heart. Paul’s joy wasn’t based upon how he felt but rather on how he thought! The truth is your attitude does affect your altitude as what he you think affects what you feel! Proverbs 23:7 reminds us of this truth as we read “*For as he thinks in his heart, so is he*.”

**II. Vs. 1-2 Greetings**

Vs. 1 Ancient letter writing had an advantage over today in that the sender put their name at the beginning of the letter instead of the end. That way you could just look at the top of the letter to see if you wanted to read it or file it! Apparently Timothy was with Paul in Rome.

* In Christ was the source of the saints lives
* In Philippi was the place where they lived

What we will be as citizens in Ravalli County will be determined by who we are in Christ, as it is who we are in Christ that must influence who we are as citizens and never the other way around. There are for things that can govern a Christian’s life:

* 1. What we were apart from Christ
  2. What we are in Christ
  3. What we are with Christ, as we live our lives under His power and influence
  4. What we shall be when we are face to face with Christ

In is a mistaken notion of some to think that “***saints***” refers to a class of people who have met a standard of the Church that can only be obtained after their exit from this life. Paul was not writing a letter to dead people but to saved sinners who he identifies as “*set apart ones*”. The church was established 11 years earlier upon Paul’s 2nd missionary journey, the first to be established on the continent of Europe. The letter is addressed to three groups:

* **All the saints in Christ Jesus**: All Christians are saints, but only in Christ Jesus
* **The bishops**: This is in a general sense and speaks of those with leadership positions
* **The deacons**: This speaks of those who have a recognized position of service

To these three groups Paul gives the familiar greeting of grace and peace that only comes to us from God the Father and God the Son. One of the interesting things to consider in studying New Testament letters is not only the occasion of the letter but a deeper question of, “*Why did Paul establish a church in Philippi in the first place?*” Was the establishing of Churches happenstance? Was it mystically led by the Spirit? Or was there a more thought out plan in planting a fellowship? In most cases it appears that there was a divine strategy in where these fellowships sprung up. In every area where we have a letter written we see that these cities were hubs, their importance was not just in and of themselves but also for the region. In fact geographically many of these places are still centers of transportation and commerce. Philippi had three claims of distinction that made its choice to plant a church natural.

1. It was in an area where there had been established *(as far back as the Phoenicians*) gold and silver mines. Because of this, even at this time frame when mining had dwindled Philippi, it still remained a great commercial center of the ancient world.
2. The city had been founded by the father of Alexander the Great and bore his name Philip. Philip in 386 B.C. took it over because it was the most strategic site in all of Europe. Geographically Philippi lies at a pass between hills that divide Europe from Asia (East from West). As such the city was the only road dividing these areas.
3. Roman Colonies were Roman outposts of civilization and military significance. The Romans would send out parties of 300 veteran soldiers who had been granted citizenship with their families to establish a colony. They would establish a connection with the Roman road by which supplies and reinforcements could be quickly sent from one colony to another. The colony would with great pride be a place where language, culture and customs would be observed.

It is no surprise that the Holy Spirit led Paul to Philippi to plant a church on his 2nd missionary journey around the year of 52 A.D. In Acts 16 we have the story of how Paul was led to Phillip by a vision from a man from Macedonia and his appeal to come help them. So Paul sailed from Troas in Asia Minor and landed at Neapolis in Europe. Acts 16 is a fascinating account of the work of the Holy Spirit as we see that the ***church’s foundation centered around three very different and diverse people***.

1. **Lydia**: Who by her name and occupation we know here to be Asiatic and wealthy as she was merchant in the purple one of the most costly substances in the entire ancient world.
2. **Demon possessed slave girl**: She was a Greek and as a slave would have represented the lowest class and in fact would legally not even been recognized as a person and instead would have simply been a “*living tool*”.
3. **Philippian Jailer**: He would have been a Roman Citizen and represented the middle class from which all civil services were drawn.

What this reveals is that the gospel was impacting all of society ill respective of class, ethnicity and culture.

Vs. 2 ***Grace and peace are the two elements that make up the atmosphere of the Christian***. If we are to breathe His life in this hostile environment then we will need a steady supply of these two ingredients. Grace is all God's wisdom and power---constantly available to someone who is utterly undeserving. All the richness, might and wisdom of the person of God continually available to us, even though we are constantly aware we don't deserve Him at all. Peace is the inevitable result of the activity of grace. ***The Christian is unique in the world because of our ability to breathe the unending rich mixture of God’s grace and peace which enables us not to become discontents and dissatisfied with what this world brings us.*** We can if we chose to “breathe deeply” the breath of life and function in pure joy!

**III. Vs. 3-8 Thanksgiving**

Vs. 3-8 No Christian lives life alone, we are members of a family and are in great need of each other. There are those that profess faith in Christ but want nothing to do with their brothers and sisters but I’m a bit suspicious of their profession because the Bible says that one of the unmistakable signs that we are born again is that we love the brethren. Paul thanked God for them all of them even those in verses 15-16 who hoped to add more time to Paul’s sentence. He was thankful for their continued partnership with him in the gospel. Paul was able to see ***three dimensionally***:

* Not just as a person was
* Not just as a person is
* But all the way to where person will be when God is finished with them!

***Oh how the body of Christ could use more folks that can see three dimensionally***! Paul’s confidence was not placed in the person but in the person of Christ. You can take an unfinished portrait and try to see what it will look like and find that it’s hard to imagine it being finished. But your confidence in its completion is not in the portrait but rather in the artist who began the work and will see it today of its completion. God’s work in humanity it threefold:

* The work He does *for* us—salvation
* The work He does *in* us—sanctification
* The work He does *through* us—service

A woman came into the pastor’s office for marriage counseling and said, “*There seems to be friction in our home and I really don't know what the trouble is.*” The pastor replied, “*Well friction is caused by one of two things” and he picked up two blocks of wood from his desk to illustrate it. “If one block is moving and one is standing still, there's friction. Or, if both are moving but in opposite directions, there's friction. Now, which is it*?”

**Philippians**

**“Living above the Clouds”**

**II. Statement of Purpose: 1:9-11**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:12-30 “*Joy in spite of circumstances*”**

**1:9-18**

**“A recipe for JOY: *Chains, critics and crisis*”**

**I. Intro.**

**II. Vs. 9-11 Attitudes of a heavenly mind**

**III. Vs. 12-18 Secrets of joy in spite of circumstances**

**I. Intro.**

Ever wonder the reason of why Lion Tamer’s carry a stool when they go into a cage with lions? Lion tamers will tell you that it is stool and not the whip or pistol that is the most important tool of the trainer. The trainer holds the stool by the back and thrusts the legs toward the face of the Lion. And the Lion can’t focus on all four legs at once so a kind of paralysis overwhelms the Lion, and it becomes weak, and disabled because its attention is fragmented. Nothing can rob us faster from JOY, then circumstances. We live In a day when so many things vie for our attention that we can experience a paralysis not unlike the lion staring at the four legs of the stool. That my friend is what circumstances can do in the life of the believer. For the next few weeks we will look at how we can combat the “***stool of circumstances***”. Throughout this letter it is apparent that the Philippian believers demonstrated their love for Paul as he acknowledges it, yet Paul didn’t hesitate to pray that their love would abound still more and more*.* In the words of Dionne Warwick,“*What the world needs now is love, sweet love. It's the only thing that there's just too little of!*”

**II. Vs. 9-11 Attitudes of a heavenly mind**

Vs. 9-11 Paul doesn’t mention our witness in terms of what we say to others but rather how we treat others. Paul says, “***I pray that your LOVE may abound more and more***”. One of the fall outs of living under our government is the misconception that LOVE is the government’s job, some branch of bureaucracy that will take care of love in action. The Old Testament High Priest wore a special garment called an “*ephod*”, over his heart. On the ephod were 12 stones with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel engraved one on each jewel. Each “jewel” that the High Priest wore over his heart in love was to remind him how God saw each tribe as he prayed for them and served them in the temple. Paul had that same heart towards the Church as he carried God’s people in prayer before the throne of God. This prayer was specific as it is a prayer for their ***continual maturity*** in Christ. Everything began with love but Paul is careful to define love as “***knowledgeable***” and “***discerning***”.

1. **Knowledge**: Biblical love doesn’t check the head at the door and just follow the heart! There is nothing loving about “***sanctified stupidity***” even though a person may mean well! ***It is never enough that our heart is in if our head can’t go along as well***! There is need to investigate, check out the situation, think through how love can have a lasting impact on the situation. We have a saying here when it deals with our heart and that is “***Not a hand out but a hand up***!”
2. **Discernment**: Biblical love also utilizes discernment as there is a time to help folks and a time that we ought not help them. The church is always in need of discernment as helping a prodigal to early can assure that he spends too much time in the pig pin eating slop and there is nothing loving about that.

**Love that is abounding more and more in knowledge and discernment will result in four things**:

1. ***It will approve of things excellent***: It will have the proper priority on things as it will approve the things that matter most not spending time on trivial pursuits. Life can get way out of focus real quick when we put the wrong emphasis on things. When love is not exercised in knowledge and discernment we will love the wrong things and lose perspective.
2. ***It will be sincere and without offence***: The word “*sincere*” means without wax and comes from the marble sculpture trade as the Greeks abounded in stone statues’. Some artists attempting to hide the flaws applied a little bee’s wax mixed with ground stone. So when an artist wanted to prove that the statue was without flaw he would place it in the sun proving that it was “*sincere*” or **without wax**. That is what Paul says that love in knowledge and discernment is “***SON tested***”.
3. ***It will be continually filled with the fruits of righteousness***: In Galatians 5:22 LOVE is described in 8 characteristics “*joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*”. Love that is abounding more and more in knowledge and discernment will not be achieved by effort but rather by growth in character.
4. ***It will be to the glory and praise of God***: Finally, Love that is abounding more and more in knowledge and discernment will be to the glory and praise of God. God isn’t looking at the activities you do He is looking for your character present when you do those activities! Are you doing them to get noticed? Is what’s behind the activity your reputation and glory or is your concern His reputation and glory?

**III. Vs. 12-18 Secrets of joy in spite of circumstances**

Vs. 12-14 Paul wanted to go to Rome as a ***preacher*** but God sent him to Rome as a ***prisoner***! The record of the things that “*happened*” to Paul are found in Acts chapters 21-28 and begin with an illegal arrest and end up with a ship wreck on the Island of Malta all before being chained between to guards. God has a different way in sending missionaries to reach the world doesn’t He? Perhaps you feel your circumstance is “*unfair*”, maybe you feel that your life has been destroyed as you’ve washed up on the beach in Montana. Perhaps your circumstances feel a bit like being chained between to smelly guards. Take joy my friend it sounds like God has called you to be a missionary to liberate people. *To most folks, your circumstances may look a lot like failure but if your goal is using those circumstances to set others free then you can count it all JOY as you fall into various trials!* I’m **not** saying these circumstances are ideal for you but they are ideal for God and that is what will bring you joy! The word “*furtherance*” in verse 12 in the Greek is a military term that refers to an army of engineers who go before the troops to open the way into new territory. ***Paul is saying that his circumstances weren’t holding him back they were preparing a way of advancement***! God uses ***strange tools to blaze new trails***: ***Chains, critics and crisis***! The chains that the enemies of the gospel thought would **bind**, Paul were the very chains that God used to **release** Paul to preach the gospel! **Four truths for JOY in spite of circumstances, two of which we will look at this morning**:

1. **Vs. 12-14 God is able to work even when it looks to us that He can’t**: Here in this section Paul gives an example of what he was speaking about as the circumstances that Paul found himself in didn’t rip him off of joy even though others used it to advance their own reputations. Consider this truth with regards to Paul:

* God used a **sling** in the hand of David
* God used a **pitcher** in the hand of Gideon
* God used a **shepherds staff** in the hand of Moses

But with Paul, God used **chains** on his hands! It is never the instrument; it’s always in whose hands it is in! ***Have you ever considered the fact that your circumstances are custom made by God to be keys to unlock hearts that find themselves behind bars like yours***? That illness, that tough marriage, the hard time you get at work; all of it designed by God to further enable you to set people free and lead them into the land of JOY! Paul’s plan was to go to Rome; God’s plan was better chain Rome to Paul! Our ***obstacles*** are only God’s ***opportunities***! Even though our immediate hour doesn't bring relief, we have confidence that even those things that seem to be against us and God, are in reality working out the purposes of God. **Paul’s chains granted him three things according to verses 12-14**:

* ***Contact* to the lost (verse 13)**
* ***Courage* for the saved (verse 14)**
* ***Communication* to the world**

Because of those chains Paul was led to write letters and those letters are the ones that have impacted enumerable people since the time he wrote them. The churches that Paul established have long ago been reunited with him in glory but the truths that he wrote about are still transforming lives. From this we learn that with God, “*Adversity means advancement!*”

1. **Vs. 15-18 Competition causes rejoicing**: In the corporate world it is difficult to rejoice when your competitor is doing well but in the gospel we can have JOY in the midst of circumstances even when others success seems to be our failure. There were some that were jealous of Paul’s success and were glad that he was imprisoned so that they could be recognized as important. The word “*selfish ambition*” is a political term that means to canvass a precinct, knocking on doors, shaking hands and kissing babies in order to win votes. Some preachers, Paul said, proclaimed Christ as a way of gaining a reputation, ensuring your vote to attend their Church and increase their own influence. **But Paul said, that this didn’t bother him as even this God could use. Friend, in spite of the tool God can still use it to fix hearts and rebuild lives**!

**The secret is this**: *W****hen you have the single mind, you look on your circumstances as God-given opportunities for the furtherance of the Gospel; and you rejoice at what God is going to do instead of complaining about what God did not do****.* It is not “*God giving me what I desire, but my attitude in accepting what God sends*!”

**Philippians**

**“Living above the Clouds”**

**II. Statement of Purpose: 1:9-11**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:12-30 “*Joy in spite of circumstances*”**

**1:19-30**

**“Winning while we lose”**

**I. Intro.**

**II. Vs. 19-26 Further truths for JOY in spite of circumstances**

**III. Vs. 27-30 Writing your gospel a chapter a day**

**I. Intro.**

Paul found the secret of a life of joy that cannot be ripped off from adverse circumstances: **He had resolved the single issue that precludes us form having JOY in spite of circumstances: “*Whose life was he living for*”**? The famed missionary and 1924 Olympic runner Eric Liddell (*of the movie Chariots of Fire*) faced a crisis of faith when his 100 yard race was scheduled on Sunday and he was slated to give the Sunday message in Parris (*the site of the 24 Olympics*) his message that Sunday was from Isaiah 40 to mount up wings as Eaglesis tect the. Liddell had prepared for this race for years but choose the gospel and forfeited the race to fellow Brit the Jewish Harold Abrahms who had never beat Liddell. Abrahms won the gold medal. Liddell was graciously given the opportunity to compete for the 400 yard dash after fellow countrymen and college friend of Abrahams gave up his spot in the race. Eric Liddell was not favored in this race yet miraculously won the gold. ***Because of his actions Liddell won the race twice, once by forfeiture and other by running***.

**II. Vs. 19-26 Further truths for JOY in spite of circumstances**

Vs. 19-20 Having stated in verses 12-13 that his imprisonment was in the Lord’s hand Paul makes a statement similar to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego to King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 3:17-18 where they told the king that the Lord was able to deliver them out of the fiery furnace and that either way God would be delivering them out of the Kings hands. The Philippians in Acts 16 had witnessed Paul’s Houdini like escapes from death yet were being told that even if the circumstances don’t allow for Paul’s escape it doesn’t mean that God has let him down. ***God’s glory isn’t limited upon our winning it rests completely upon His winning***. Last week we began looking at four truths for our JOY in spite of circumstances. The first two were:

* 1. Vs. 12-14 ***Our obstacles in God’s hands are His opportunities***: God is able to work even when it looks to us as though He can’t.
  2. Vs. 15-18 ***Our competitions are cause for God’s completions***: It doesn’t matter who scores the points as long as your team wins!

The third mark is found right here in verses 19-20

* 1. Vs. 19-20 ***Our testing produces God’s triumphs***: One of the amazing things about these two verses in light of Paul’s present circumstances is the ***extreme confidence*** he expresses. Look at the words he uses: This “***WILL*** turn out, my ***EARNEST EXPECTATION***, in ***NOTHING***, ***AS ALWAYS, SO NOW***.” Paul is 100% certain even though he has been under house arrest or prison for over 2 years there is no indication of impatience instead only ***optimistic confidence***. Paul says, “*I know this will turn out for my deliverance.*” These testing circumstances didn’t hold the key to his joy, as all of these things weren’t in Nero’s hands they were in the Lord’s hands and as such victory was certain. Paul’s confidence was not focused upon the outcome turning out according to his plan, as he says “*whether in this life or by death*”. Paul’s confidence was because of two things he mentions in verse 19:
     1. ***Intercessory prayer***: The words “*through your*” as it relates to the Philippian’s prayer is a word where we get our English word chorus. When a Greek city was going to put on a festival there was a need for a large sum of money to pay for the singers and dancers and that donation was usually a lavish gift; that is the word here. Paul’s confidence was not based upon his dwindling supply but rather upon the generous and lavish gift of prayer that has placed upon him. He knew the power of prayer and knew that he was not left fighting this battle alone. Prayer is the weapon that can bring down every stronghold and every thought into captivity.
     2. ***Supply of the Holy Spirit***: Paul had the inexhaustible resources of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will never say, “*Hum, never saw that one coming and I have no idea how to deal with this*!” ***There can be no uncertain circumstance when the Holy Spirit has unlimited power and resources***. That means that even though we may assess the situation as a loss, the Holy Spirit will cause it to be a win.

Vs. 21-26 ***Our passing ensures our profit***: There is no greater verse that capsulizes the Christian hope then these words in verse 21 “*To live is Christ, and to die is gain.*” These words of Paul are not the words of a man so depressed with living here on earth that his only hope is heaven. Paul says in verse 23 that life held such a pleasure in his heart that even with the prospect of being in the presence of Jesus in eternity, it was hard for him if he had the choice to choose where he would go. As Christian we do not long for heaven to escape and avoid life, no we love life and only long for the exit when we have finished our race! ***If you are a runner you won’t win many races if your only motivation is the finish line, you must love running as well as the finish line***! Saints’, ***what constitutes real living for you***? What circumstances have to happen before you say, “***Now that’s living***!” Here is a test you can take to determine what real living to you. Put what you think constitutes real living in this phrase: “***For me, to live is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_***”! Can you fill in the blank with?

“For to me to live is *money* and to die is *to leave it all behind.*”

“For to me to live is *popularity* and to die is *to be forgotten.*”

“For to me to live is *power* and to die is *to lose it all.*”

The truth about our Christian faith is that heaven begins here on earth! Looking at the first chapter of this letter it is no wonder Paul had JOY in spite of his circumstances as he says:

* Vs. 13 ***Because of his chains Jesus was known***
* Vs. 18 ***Because of his critics Jesus was preached***
* Vs. 20 ***Because of his crisis Jesus was magnified***

Saints, when our goal is Jesus and not ourselves then success will always happen ill regardless of chains, critics and crisis! **Paul had resolved the single issue that precludes us form having JOY in spite of circumstances, whose life was he living for**? How can a mere person ever magnify Jesus? The stars are much larger than the telescope yet it is the job of the telescope to magnify the stars by bringing them closer. To the world Jesus is small and unimportant but that’s because they are at such a distance from Him. It is the believer’s responsibility to allow their life to be the lens by which they can look through and see that Jesus is much closer and larger than the unbeliever realized.

The word “***depart***” in verse 23 was used in a variety of ways in the Greek:

* It was used for soldiers who took down their tent and moved on.
* It was used of sailors who loosed a ship from its moorings to set sail.
* It was used in the slave trade of setting a prisoner free.
* It was used of farmers to unyoke the oxen so they could be loosed from their burdens.

When we combine all four of those uses of the Greek work we get a glimpse of what it means for the believer to depart from this life to go to heaven. We will take down our temporary tent and move to our permanent home. We will finally set sail and no longer be tied to this earth. We will finally be set free from the bars of this life. We will no longer be harnessed to the burdens of this life able to graze and wonder upon endless hills. Dear ones nothing can steal your joy if you possess the single mind that is verse 21 “*For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*.”

**III. Vs. 27-30 Writing your gospel a chapter a day**

Vs. 27 The Christian life is not a playground; it’s a battleground! “*What you believe determines how you behave*.” ***Each and every local church is but one generation away from extinction***! How can we ensure that this won’t be our case? “*Let your conduct be worthy of the gospel*”, Paul says. The greatest weapon the Church has daily against its enemies is **not** the *powerful preacher*, or the *popular pastor*. No, it is the consistent changed lives of believers! ***The Church is God’s colony of heaven here on earth*** so our conduct ought to represent that in two ways:

1. ***Stand fast in one Spirit***: As a colony of heaven we must always see our connection to and dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Whenever we have a have something driving us apart we have One greater pulling together. We are not separate we are united in the Holy Spirit and God cannot and is not divided.
2. ***With one mind strive together for the faith of the gospel***: Second there can only be one thing that can divide the body and that is when someone departs from the essentials of the faith. If it is not essential to faith in Christ work together only if the issue is fundamental to a relationship with God through Jesus are we not to work with our brothers and sisters.

Vs. 28-30 Paul gives a clue of the weapon that satan will use against the believer to disrupt unity and that is fear! *Fear of man, fear of ridicule or scorn, fear of ostracism from the group, fear of losing popularity, or even of physical torture or punishment*. The way to handle this fear is to face it at its worst and when what the worst fear can do to you only ushers in the best of what God had for you “*death loses its sting*”! Someone has well said ***when we appear before the Lord he doesn't look us over for medals, but for scars.*** Oswald Chambers said, “*God never make us wine if we object to the fingers he uses to crush us with. God does not only use his fingers, he uses someone whom we dislike, or some set of circumstances of which we have said we would never submit. If we are going to be made wine to drink, we will have to be crushed. You cannot drink grapes and grapes become wine only when they have been squeezed*.”

**Philippians**

**“Living above the Clouds”**

**B. III. Main Teaching: 2:1-30 *Joy in spite of people***

1. **2:1-11 Example of Jesus**

**2:1-11**

**“The example of Jesus”**

**I. Intro.**

**II. Vs. 1-4 Two things to counter division**

**III. Vs. 5-11 Lessons on humility from our Lord**

**I. Intro.**

Paul knew what some church workers today do not know, that there is a difference between *unity* and *uniformity.* True spiritual unity comes from within; it is a matter of the heart. Uniformity is the result of pressure from without. There can be no joy in the life of the Christian who puts himself above others. The humble person is not one who thinks less of himself; he simply does not think of himself at all! The beauty of this passage is that it asks us if we have the mind of Christ and if we do then we need to put it on display towards those that we disagree with as we practice renunciation and humiliation instead of insisting upon exaltation. That is the “*mind of Christ*” and this mind of Christ will make it impossible for people to rob you of your joy because people can’t steal what you have willing given away and no longer have! If you had Lamborghini and you gave it away, and someone comes over and tells you your car was stolen, you can smile and say, “*Your mistaken, I gave that car away, it can’t be stolen*.” ***We don’t have to fight with someone when we have willing given our rights away***!

**II. Vs. 1-4 Two things to counter division**

Vs. 1-2 As we move now to the 2nd thing that can rob us of joy “people” we see one of satan’s best weapons against the church “*division*”. Far too often the church has succumbed to this tactic of the devil by making what we differ on greater than what unites us. The real problem Paul says isn’t the person in whom you disagree; ***the real problem is that you don’t value them as much as you value yourself***! There are four reasons given by Paul as to why the church ought to operate in unity each starts with the word IF in verse 1.

* ***Consolation in Christ***: What Jesus has done for us should be all the incentive we need to live in peace and harmony with each other.
* ***Comfort of love***: Since the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts comforting us we ought to have that for each other as well.
* ***Communion of the Spirit***: We are all indwelt by the same Spirit and as such there should be nothing to divide us.
* ***Compassion and mercy***: We ought to possess a wealth of compassion and mercy as we have received such from God.

Vs. 3-4 Furthermore we can see how satan accomplishes division within the body in verse 3-4 as Paul warns against “***Selfish ambition***” and “***conceit***”. ***The recipe for division in the church always starts with these two ingredients***. Get two folks in the flesh where they are *selfishly ambitious* and *conceited* and you will soon have a war. Saints, you will never see a fight where these two things aren’t present! Ah but Paul offers for us two things that if applied personally will counteract the effect of these two things.

1. ***Lowliness of mind***: That’s another way of saying humility but Paul doesn’t just stop there he tells us ***how to apply humility*** by “*esteeming others better than our self*”. I love this prescription of Paul’s because it doesn’t deal with the symptoms of division it deals with the only real area you can change, “*yourself*”. Paul doesn’t say, “*Well start with negotiations, then move to compromise.*” Instead he says, “*Skip all of that; don’t focus on how the person is different than you, focus on treating them better than you would treat yourself*.” I suggest that when there is a division between you and someone else that you look them over real well and say to yourself, ***this person is better than me*** and I’m going to treat them that way no matter how they treat me.
2. ***Look out not only for your own interests but also for the interests of others***: Did you notice that in Paul prescription for “*selfish ambition*” and “*conceit*” that he offered the pill of humility for conceit before dealing with selfish ambition? I believe the reason for this is that we need to have humility at work against conceit before we can deal with selfish ambitions. Having taking the humility pill you can ask yourself this question and get the truth: “*How much time am I giving to my own interests and agenda and how much time am I giving to the interests of others*?” Paul doesn’t say that it is wrong to look out for your own interests; he says that you have to also consider how that will affect someone else’s interests. In doing this you will no longer be only acting selfishly you will be acting with everyone in view in a way that betters everyone not just yourself.

As noted before: ***If I consider you above me, and you consider me above you, we will have a community where everyone is looked up to, and no one is looked down on***!

**III. Vs. 5-11 Lessons on humility from our Lord**

Vs. 5-11 Impossible you say? No way I can do those two things! Paul is going to show you that no one had more to lose than Jesus. This amazing passage of how the eternal Son of God stepped out of eternity and into time is divided into three sections all with breath taking views:

1. Vs. 6 ***His renunciation***
2. Vs. 7-8 ***His humiliation***
3. Vs. 9-11 ***His exaltation***

***Paul’s view is to reveal to the Philippians that as far as humanity is concerned Jesus’ exaltation is made known through His humiliation***. The temptation we face in a passage as grandiose as this is to wrestle it from the context of the letter. The context of these words are to use Jesus as the example of how to have joy in spite of people as the church in Philippi was dealing with division because of two ladies named Euodia (*Fragrance*) and Syntyche (*Fortunate*). Paul gives to that attitude the attitude of Jesus who left the highest peak of eternal glory for the depths human despair. Jesus didn’t achieve peace by passivity and compromise that led to a truce and then a cold war. His exaltation was made visible by His humiliation. Paul says that the key is having the same mindset as Jesus that you only win by willing to lose it all! We must adapt Jesus’ mindset if we are going to quench division in the body of Christ. There are **three steps that are clear in the words and actions of Jesus in this passage**:

1. ***Vs. 6 RENUNCIATION: Jesus gave up His right to His rights***: He didn’t give up His rights as He couldn’t not give up who He is, namely God the Son. Because he was also fully man ***He willing gave up His right to enjoy those rights.*** Those rights are described for us here as being: ***Existing in the form of God, equal with God the Father in nature and essence.*** That is where humility begins, where we are ready to lay aside the right to enjoy our rights. Jesus poured out every right He had enjoyed in eternal life as God***. Jesus in humanity didn’t come to behave as God; He came to show humanity how God would act through a man, how humanity was intended to behave.*** And in this He revealed the secret of a person’s life: ***Complete dependence upon God indwelling and empowering him***. But that is only the first step: ***Of being the perfect example of humanity dependent upon God’s indwelling***. With renunciation comes the willingness to bear injury, to put up with all the insults, to accept the cost of another’s wrong’s. If this was all Jesus did in His incarnation than it would be rather cruel as it would only provide the ideal without the possible to have it come to pass.
2. ***Vs. 7-8 HUMILIATION: Jesus assumed all the hurt and rejection of the world, without complaint***: He didn’t just give up His rights to His rights; He took up all of humanities wrongs, and did so without a word or action of complaint. Jesus was the only person who ever lived who didn’t have to die, He said so, “*I lay down my life of myself, and I take it up again.*” In fact no one could take His life, yet he became obedient unto death. His whole earthly existence He lived under the shadow of misunderstanding by His parents, friends, neighbors’ and countrymen. We are told that “*He came unto His own and His own knew Him not.*” At the end of His ministry even His followers abandoned Him as one of His own followers betrayed Him turning Him over to the Romans to be stripped naked, nailed to a cross to die as the worst in society. Jesus didn’t stop at renunciation He went to humiliation going to the lowest place for every person, death on the cross where we belonged.
3. ***Vs. 9-11 EXALTATION: The third step inevitably follows the first two Jesus was given the name which is above every name***: Upon reading this verse every Jew would have known instantly what that name was. This name was so sacred it was never pronounce instead it was just referred to as the “NAME” or by the consonants after the vowels were removed YHWH. Just in case his readers weren’t getting his implication Paul says that “*every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord*”, which is the translation Jehovah into English. When someone is a Lord they have the right to everything they survey, they have sovereign authority and are the Master with everyone else at their beckon call. Paul says Jesus who had that position and willing gave up the right to those rights has won those rights in front of humanity because of His humiliation. This is why we read in Revelation 5:12 **“***Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing*!”

Now the context of Paul’s words about Jesus renunciation, humiliation and exaltation is directed towards the division in Philippi and asking them if them subscribe to this in practice towards others they had a relationship with. Does your understanding if this with regards to Jesus translate into you “***Having this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus***?”

**Philippians**

**“Living above the Clouds”**

**B. III. Main Teaching: 2:1-30 *Joy in spite of people***

**2. 2:12-18 Example of Paul**

**2:12-18**

**“The Danger of the Bible”**

**I. Intro.**

**II. Vs. 12-13 Working out by letting God work**

**III. Vs. 14-15 Working without complaining**

**IV. Vs. 16-18 Working at holding fast while being poured out**

**I. Intro.**

Mark Twain once wrote, “*Few things are harder to put up with than the annoyance of a good example.*” Paul had given us a good example in the threefold view of Christ and told us that we ought to have the same mind as He did in dealing with people who try to steal our joy. Last week we took a glorious stroll, gazing out at the vistas of Paul’s words concerning the incarnation of Jesus. We stopped first at the cliff of “***renunciation***” and looked at the utter beauty of Jesus as He laid down in eternity His right to rights. We walked further and stopped at the seemingly bottomless canyon called His “***humiliation***” and there we saw the depths that Jesus willing went without a word or action of complaint to reach the lowest person. We finally climbed to the peak called “***exaltation***” where because we could look back over the canyon of “***humiliation***” and the cliff of “***renunciation***” we could experience the fullness of Jesus’ “***exaltation***”. In the wild the African impala can leap over ten feet in the air to hurdle brush while running at full speed. Yet if you have ever gone to a zoo you will see these impressive animals behind a fence that is only four feet high. Why don’t just take a run and jump over the fence as they could do so easily? Well it seems that the impala will never jump if it can’t see where it will land. Paul has shown us, “impala’s” that over the fences of “***renunciation***” and “***humiliation***” is the wonderful ground of “***exaltation***” so in this section he tells us we need to jump!

**II. Vs. 12-13 Working out by letting God work**

Vs. 12 I suppose the views would have been far more pleasant if Paul only had you and I just look at them but that was not Paul’s purpose. No, Paul’s purpose in showing us the view was so that we could jump into it ourselves as he prefaced our walk by first stating that we were to have this same mind of Christ. ***Friend that is the danger of the Bible, if we read it in context we will be required by the work and power of the Holy Spirit to become like it***!

Paul having given us our example to follow minces no words as to why we are still continually being ripped off by people of our joy. They must now be willing to OBEY or apply the threefold example of Christ’s mind of “***renunciation***”, “***humiliation***” and “***exaltation***”. If someone is stilling able to rip you off of your joy the problem isn’t to be found in the example of Christ’s mind it is to be found in our unwillingness to continually apply those three examples. The word “***obey***” is not a word that suggests that God has a whip in His hand to beat you into submission. Instead it is a word of practical application. Suppose you wanted to watch the Super Bowl after church so you picked up a pizza got some soda sat down in your favorite chair and waited for the game to come on. You waited 10 minutes and nothing, just a black screen; you weren’t in a panic as you knew they were just going to talk about the game. But then 30 minutes went by then 45 minutes and you just sat there eating pizza getting more and frustrated. You call the cable company, you ask others if they are watching the game and they say it’s the best one they have ever seen. Your joy is gone; you are angry until your wife walks into the room takes the remote and turns the T.V. on. That’s the word Paul uses for obey here, it’s ***a practical word that means to apply the principal so you can enjoy what God has richly provided***! Obedience is the key in maintaining joy in spite of people. Paul gives the Church in Philippi three truths about obedience as it relates to applying the threefold mind of Christ. I’m going to state them first then we will look at them together:

* **Vs. 12-13 Working out by letting God work**
* **Vs. 14-15 Working without complaining**
* **Vs. 16-18 Working at holding fast while being poured out**

If we are going to maintain joy in spite of people who are continually going to try to rip our joy away from us we are going to find that this is going to require obedience and obedience is WORK! So Paul describes what this WORK looks like:

1. ***Vs. 12-13 Working out by letting God work***: First of all, Paul ***isn’t saying*** that these Philippians need to work out their salvation by their own effort and power. Paul asks for a Christian **work**ethic **not** a *works* ethic to be promoted in his **absence**. We know this because of what Paul says in verse 13 that it is God who works in us both to will and to do for His good pleasure. What Paul is saying that they needed to begin to apply the principals that he had taught them as if he was still among them. They didn’t need Paul holding their hand any more, they needed to realize that they had the same God and the same power of the Holy Spirit enabling them to obey. They needed to start “*cutting their own meat*” to eat instead of relying on Paul to cut it for them. Ed showed me a video of a little Chinese’s boy who was no more than 4 years of age operating a big earth mover. Here was this little fellow operating this huge machine and he was so little he had to operate it standing up as he couldn’t reach the peddles. We sat there and watched and commented on our society where for the most part we have keep our youth from any application and obedience and have stunted their growth and maturity. I think the Western church has done the same thing with its members as we have made them spectators instead of participants. Paul, like a driving instructor, was moving out of the front seat of ridding with the Philippian believers and by faith entrusting them to apply what they have learned. They must now “*work that out in fear and trembling*” as they are now driving solo. The word “*salvation*” doesn’t mean our “*eternal destiny*” here it means “*rescue*”. And the phrase “*fear and trembling*” doesn’t mean terror but rather “*serious caution*”. It would be better to interpret this verse by saying that we are to work out our own rescue or solution with caution! We need to apply what we have learned in the confident expectation that in doping so God is at work through applying in His power what He has taught us! The life we “NOW LIVE” is by us no longer living for our self and by allowing Christ to live through us but it is nonetheless still a life we “NOW LIVE”. God is at work to WILL and DO for His good pleasure. In the context of applying the threefold principals of the example of Christ the first place we need to obey is the work of trusting in God’s work as we apply “***renunciation***” and “***humiliation***”. The principle Paul gives us is, “*God must work in us before He can work through us.*”

**III. Vs. 14-15 Working without complaining**

1. ***Vs. 14-15 Working without complaining*:** There is a subtle truth in our obedience that I don’t think many of us understand: “***If we are complaining about obedience then in truth we don’t believe in what we are doing***!” The first truth about obedience is: ***Its work to let God work!*** The second truth about obedience is:

* ***It’s not finished if it is not in faith!***
* ***It’s not complete if we complain***!

If our obedience is not in faith and we are complaining then we are demonstrating that we don’t really believe in what we are doing. We won’t have joy in spite of people if in our obedience we are murmuring and complaining that what we are doing will never work. Paul say’s that this kind of so called obedience is like ***a flash light without the batteries***. It looks like it should shine Joy upon our lives but there is no true light. Ah but obedience in faith will not only light our path to joy it will shine God’s light upon the darkness in which the rest of our travelers in this life must walk. Life is a choice and so is our joy, we must choose to trust God that “***exaltation***” can only come about through our, “***renunciation***” and “***humiliation***”.

**IV. Vs. 16-18 Working at holding fast while being poured out**

1. ***Vs. 16-18 Working at holding fast while being poured out*:** The last truth with regardsto what true obedience looks like is that there is a ***persistence*** with it that doesn’t just do it for a while but keeps on doing it without complaining. Notice that Paul says that ***our persistence isn’t to a procedure but rather our persistence is to a Person known as the “Word of Life”***. Dear ones with regards to our obedience we can: ***Work at letting God work*** and ***finish in faith*** but if we are not ***persistent in holding onto the Person of Christ*** we will soon let go! “*The prize only goes to those that stay in the race*”, Paul tells them. The only way we can forfeit the prize is by quitting the race. In 1:6 Paul had already told these Philippian believer’s that “*He who had begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Christ*.” The enemy’s tactic is to get us to quit, thus Paul says that our only position is to “hold fast”. In Matthew 9:20 we are introduced to women who had an issue of blood making here unclean and unable to enjoy being with people and temple life. But as Jesus made His way through the crowd she saw her opportunity to be made whole and touched the hem of His garment. That is ***what obedience looks like, we reach out and grab a hold and hang onto Jesus***. Paul doesn’t say that is going to be easy at times as there may be times when life is draining from you like wine poured upon a sacrifice before it was burnt. *Dear ones have you gone through seasons like that in your life?* There are two things you can do to maintain joy in spite of people when your joy is being poured out at the mid-day sacrifice upon those who seem to be indifferent?
   1. Well Paul has told us you ***keep a hold of the person of Christ and the more of you that is being poured out the harder you squeeze His hand!***
   2. The other thing that you can do in obedience besides clinging to the hand of Christ is to ***look outside of your circumstances to see the joy your obedient faith is producing in others.*** In Hebrews we read of Jesus that, “*for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God*”. What was the joy that was set before him? It was anticipating what His life would do in the lives of others that enabled to experience joy through the cross.

**Philippians**

**“Living above the Clouds”**

**B. III. Main Teaching: 2:1-30 *Joy in spite of people***

**3-4. 2:1-30 Examples of Timothy and Epaphroditus**

**2:19-30**

**“The tale of two men”**

**I. Intro.**

**II. Vs. 19-24 Timothy**

**III. Vs. 25-30 Epaphroditus**

**I. Intro.**

On Aug. 8, 2004, the Vietnamese community of Westminster, California, celebrated one of the kindest and bravest acts performed by a stranger on them 19 years earlier. On Nov. 13, 1985, ninety-six Vietnamese refugees despaired for their lives when the engine of the boat carrying them across the South China Sea went dead. Crammed onto the rickety boat with a tropical storm headed their way they waited for four days and watched as 50 ships passed them by ignoring their screams for rescue. The 51st ship was a South Korean fishing ship that passed by but returned 10 minutes later to save them. The captain could see the desperation of the refugees and called the 25 sailors together as it was against company policy to pick up boat people, and told them he’d take responsibility. Only years later did the refugees know what had happened to the captain. The shipping company fired him for picking up the boat people and he couldn’t find another captain’s job surviving on his savings and odd jobs. Saints we need to be like this happen in our lives today so that what we speak will be on display. Paul has given us “*How to maintain joy in spite of people*” by revealing to us the “*mind of Christ*” which is that **exaltation is only possible through renunciation and humiliation**. Then in verses 12-18 Paul gave us the reason why we still get ripped off from joy by people. It’s because we fail to understand what obedience is, so he defined it for us as being:

* **Work at letting God do the work**
* **Complete only if it is without complaining**
* **Persistence to a person not a procedure**

**II. Vs. 19-24 Timothy**

Vs. 19-24 **Timothy**: According to the book of Acts was a teenager when Paul and Barnabas met him on their first missionary trip. They had come to the city of Lystra and the city welcomed them as Greeks gods then quickly turned on Paul and stoned him and left him to die outside the city gates. But Paul got up and went back into the city and it was then that Timothy met Paul. Timothy was half Jewish and had been raised by his mother and grandmother. Paul took him under his wing and he became a surrogate father to Timothy and Paul even calls him his son in the faith. In verses 19-24 Paul identifies three qualities about Timothy in Jesus Christ that help us see what obeying the mindset of Christ will look like.

1. Vs. 20-21 ***Extraordinary***: Paul says that in Timothy that he had a man who was “*One of a kind*” as he was like minded. Apparently Timothy had been mentored not only in “***what to do***” but also in the “***way to do it***”. He had a heart that was seen in selfless care for others. He was willing to undergo ***injury without resentment*** and ***praise without pride***. ***Timothy wasn’t a volunteer, he was a servant!*** To illustrate this Paul says of Timothy in verse 21 that in comparison “***he didn’t seek his own; he sought the things which are of Christ.***” Jesus’ business was Timothy’s business as he was “***ready, willing and available***” **the trifecta of true Christian service**! That’s what the Church ought to be like, “*full of folks that ready, willing and available*”. I’m so thankful to be a part of just such a church here. Timothy was a man that didn’t head up the “***Recognize the Need Committee***” He went with sympathy to personally meet the need. Timothy was “*boots on the ground*” with a heart for Christ and His people.
2. Vs. 22 ***Experienced***: Paul says that Timothy didn’t just possess talent he had experience as well. He was a man of “proven character” as a “son with his father”. What a great illustration there are three things they shared together.
3. **Same life**: They shared the same blood of Christ and because of this they had the same resource. That is a true definition of family as Jesus’ “*blood is thicker than water.*”
4. **Same love**: Next like a father and a son they shared a mutual love for each other that is made up of “*respect, affection and trust*”.
5. **Same labor**: Finally because they shared the same life and love they also shared the same labor. They worked well together sharing responsibilities and difficulties. Timothy had proven himself many times having gone through the rollercoaster with Paul as he knew what he was getting with Timothy.
6. Vs. 23-24 ***Encouraging***: The last quality Timothy possessed was that he was an encouragement to everyone. Paul says, “*I’m going to send him to you as soon as I see how it goes with me.*” Paul didn’t want to let him go yet as he still needed him around as he was an encouragement to him. I find that there are ***two types of people those you can’t wait till they go and those you can’t wait until they come!*** Or if you will “Those that are a ***comfort*** and those that you got to ***confron***t. After this letter we believe that Paul was released and later rearrested and was during this time that Paul wrote to letters to Timothy where he says, “*Do your best to come to me before winter.*” Timothy was the kind of man that you wanted have around especially when you were down.

**III. Vs. 25-30 Epaphroditus**

Vs. 25-30 **Epaphroditus**: Was a member of the church in Philippi but it is unlikely that he was saved under Paul’s ministry as Paul never mentions that he was. Most likely he was led to Christ by someone else in that fellowship. We know very little of this man other than the fact that he was handpicked to go to Rome bearing a gift from the church to Paul while he was under house arrest awaiting his trial. Paul lists two primary characteristics of obedience in the mind of Christ that Epaphroditus possessed:

1. Vs. 25-26 ***Helpful***: Here we note in the 25th verse 5 ways in which Paul described this characteristic in Epaphroditus:

* ***Brother***: This speaks of that family life that Timothy also possessed with Paul as they shared a mutual source of life in Christ.
* ***Fellow worker***: This is a description of how they labored together in full fellowship and with a common interest.
* ***Fellow soldier***: This describes a person who shares a common loyalty and adherence to the same cause as the apostle.
* ***Messenger***: The word really is “*apostle*” and it means an ambassador, a representative of someone else.
* ***Minister***: This word is used for the word for “*priest*” and means, a sacred servant.

All these wonderful titles add up to one who is a marvelous helper, a faithful laborer with selfless concern. As an illustration of Epaphroditus helpfulness Paul offers the resent testimony of how word had gotten back to Philippi concerning Epaphroditus sickness, and his concerned was that they be anxious about him. His stress was not over his illness but rather that his illness may trouble them. That’s a far cry from most of us who expect pity when we are under the weather and are a bit put out when we don’t get special treatment.

1. Vs. 27-30 ***Reckless***: In most cases the use of this word would not indicate a spiritual trait but as we read here it fits perfectly as Epaphroditus was willing to live “recklessly” for Christ. He was willing to lay his life on the line living a holy recklessness for the cause of Christ and others. Too many in the body of Christ don’t want to be inconvenienced let alone risk anything. Here was fellow that almost dies in service to Christ and his people and was more concerned how they would respond that his own well fare. A reckless person for Christ is one that “***Has said goodbye to themselves! A person who is no longer burdened with their own burdens and cares nothing for their own cares. A person who will not serve their money or their time, because they no longer possess those things as they belong to Jesus. This person is a daredevil for souls***!” Epaphroditus had made up his mind that the need must be met and if there was no one in sight who would tackle it then he would do so himself. He was divorced from the take-it-easy, go-slow, take-care-of-yourself, attitude. Instead he had become a gambler and was ready to gamble away his life in anything that had Jesus at the beginning and at the end of it. He had a holy disregard for obstacles and difficulties, a holy contempt for loneliness, hardship and pain. His great pleasure in life was to sacrifice. He had been taught from the time he was born again that the only way to save his life was by losing it. The world could not hold a person like him and the devil was frightened by him. He treated his little pains with contempt and was not afraid he would turn up in heaven by unexpected arrival. On his calendar and agenda there were no words that said tomorrow, later or around to it. He kept no receipts for all the injustice’s he had received and so lived as if he owed everyone everything!

When Jesus Christ comes into our lives, He doesn't come to destroy our personality He comes to destroy our ego, our independent self-seeking, always must be the center of attention self. He will wage war against it, and the weapon He uses is the cross. Those hardships, trials and humiliating experiences he brings us through bring the end to our ego. He does not destroy the essential man; He indwells it, He enhances it, He glorifies it. The result is true manhood, true womanhood, attractive and beautiful and easy to live with. Man as God intended man to be becomes manifest in the world.

**Philippians**

**“Living above the Clouds”**

**III. Main Teaching: C. 3:1-21 *Joy in spite of things***

1. **3:1-11 Past**

**3:1-7**

**“Can’t get to heaven in a row boat”**

**I. Intro.**

**II. Vs. 1 The mark of spirituality**

**III. Vs. 2 The menace of religion**

**IV. Vs. 3 The measure of devotion**

**V. Vs. 4-7 The mistakes of man**

**I. Intro.**

Last week we closed the 2nd item that will attempt to rip you off from joy in Christ, ***PEOPLE***. We have already noted that Paul in the 1st chapter dealt with the first thing that will attempt to rip you off from your joy in Christ, CIRCUMSTANCES. The third category that will attempt to rip you off from you joy in Christ is, THINGS. The first ***THING*** that will rip you off from your joy in Christ may surprise you and is hidden in plain sight in the first 7 verses. These seven verses Paul warns against the “*dogs*” and “*evil workers*” the so called “*mutilation*” (verse 2) then moves to what true faith is; only to finish off with this personal autobiographical section, it is a little confusing to see what he is trying to convey as the number 1 THING that will try to rip you off of your joy in Christ. According to Paul the number 1 thing that will try to rip you off from your joy in Christ is the “thing” known as ***RELIGION***! There was a lady that was arguing with a pastor about religion verses relationship when she said. “*I think that getting to heaven is like rowing a boat*,” “*One oar is faith, and the other is works. If you use both, you get there. If you use only one, you go around in circles*.” Her pastor replied, “*There is only one thing wrong with your illustration, nobody is going to heaven in a row boat!*”

**II. Vs. 1 The mark of spirituality**

In outlining these seven verses I see four movements of two each as Paul describes two positive traits of true spirituality and two negative traits that describe religion as he alternates between the two.

* **Positive** Vs. 1 The mark of spirituality
* **Negative** Vs. 2 The menace of religion
* **Positive** Vs. 3 The measure of devotion
* **Negativ**e Vs. 4-7 The mistakes of man

**Positive** Vs. 1 **Mark of spirituality**: Starting a section with the word “*finally*” usually indicates that it is the beginning of the end. It seems as though it takes Paul along time to come to the conclusion (like man a pastor I know). But if we look the word up in the Greek we find that the word doesn’t mean in conclusion it means “*with regards to the rest of the matter*”. The answer to the problem no matter what it is that is trying to steal your joy is always “***Rejoice in the Lord***!” Paul knows that this phrase sounds a bit trite so he says, “*For me to write the same thing is not tedious, but for you it is safe*.” **Rejoice in the Lord**: Is the Christian equivalent of the Old Testament exclamation, *Hallelujah*. It is the mark of a spiritual life, a sign of the victorious Christian. The phrase is distinctively relational; in fact Paul uses it twice in this little letter here and 4:4! Paul had already defined obedience in 2:14 as without grumbling and complaining which are the signs of unbelief. Thus the sign of faith is rejoicing, “*God said it, I believe Him, time to rejoice*!” **Our rejoicing is not based upon our enjoying the difficulty, neither is it based upon God working the situation out according to our plans**. *Our rejoicing is in the reality that ill respective of our challenge God will be glorified and this difficulty will make us more like Him!* The world’s view of followers of Christ is no smile or joy. There are some Christians who are just like Eeyore of Winnie the Pooh that dismal donkey who always seems to find the cloud in the silver lining. The mark of a Christian is a smile of confidence, despite the circumstances. Not a forced one, but a genuine smile, sometimes through tears. It arises from a quiet trust, living out of our adequacy in the Lord despite living in the inadequacy of our flesh. We have within us One who is completely competent to meet every situation through us. It’s the kind of rejoicing that caused David to write the 23rd Psalm saying, “*The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want*!”

**III. Vs. 2 The menace of religion**

**Negative** Vs. 2 **Menace of external religion**: Immediately Paul switches from the true mark of spirituality (*rejoicing in the Lord*) to ***the mark of religion*** which is dwelling on external evidences as a sign of spirituality. What religion gages spiritual health on outward things such as events or rituals as being the sign that one is right with God. Such outward reliance as a sign of spiritual health will inevitably destroy joy. When we are being ripped off of joy we will turn to the outwards sign of what makes us right and complain that it’s not fair that this is happening to us because of all the things we are doing to be right with God. ***Christian joy that cannot be taken comes not from what you do to maintain spirituality but from what the Lord has done to ensure your relationship to Him***. **Paul calls these peddlers of works three things:**

* + 1. ***Dogs***: This isn’t your house pets; instead the word refers to the wild, snarling animal that sifts through the trash for its meals. Paul calls them this because they continued to “*hound*” believers to get them to leave the home of a relationship with God for the streets of religion.
    2. ***Evil workers***: They were called this because of their overzealous work in trying to get people to leave relationship for religion. The harder they worked the bigger their claim on blessings from God, so they went door to door ready to convert folks to religion.
    3. ***The mutilation***: They had a special mark called circumcision which they had picked up from the law only they made it the only sign of spirituality. Paul doesn’t use the word for circumcision instead he uses a play on words as he calls them “*flesh cutters*” referring to them as those who cut themselves making marks on their flesh that have no real meaning.

***Religion has an appeal to people because it has a show of devotion that by our own hard work and effort we have become worthy of acceptance before God***. It appeals to our egos as we can separate ourselves from the person next to us as being less worthy as we have done more to earn God’s blessings. It destroys rejoicing because we are in competition against others for that illusive prize of joy and only harder work will give us has any possibility of achieving the reward we so long for.

**IV. Vs. 3 The measure of devotion**

**Positive** Vs. 3 **Measure of true devotion**: In contrast to religions threefold description Paul offers ***three marks of the spirituality of relationship***. ***Worship is the partaking of Jesus; as we take in all of who He is and use who He is as the basis of who we are throughout the day***! Fellowship, singing praise and studying the Word can and should cause us to take in all of who He is but those things on their own aren’t worship and must never be worshipped. They are just tools to lead us into taking in more of who Jesus is so we can see who we are throughout the day. ***Religion happens when we worship the tools, the instrument, instead of the Person of Christ***! Immediately you notice that the three marks of true devotion are the **exact opposite** of the ***three traits of religion***.

1. ***Worship God in Spirit***: True devotion doesn’t glory in our activity and effort we glory in Christ’s effort and activity. True worship has only one source, one center of glory **Jesus**; He alone is who we glory in. We don’t worship in our activity, our denomination, theology or ritual.
2. ***Rejoice in Christ Jesus***: Jesus is our one and only source of joy! There is nothing in our worship that is distinctively ours that would give us some mark of privilege over someone else.
3. ***Have no confidence in the flesh***: The last trait of true worship is that we put no confidence in our self-effort. All of humanity wants to be “*special*” and looks to the flesh and effort to distinguish this. True worship isn’t about self-confidence it’s about placing all of our confidence in Christ.

**V. Vs. 4-7 The mistakes of man**

**Negative** Vs. 4-6 **Mistakes of Paul**: Here we come to this autobiographical passage where Paul uses his own history not as a badge of honor as he use to but rather as the mistakes of religion. Nothing in his background, training, talents, accomplishments, the time he spent in prayer, the number of chapters of scripture he read, the number of verses he memorized. Paul had no confidence in the power of his eloquence to persuade people or his devotion. The only one in whom Paul had confidence in was Jesus Christ. There was a time prior to his relationship with Jesus **he took pride in four things of his religion**:

1. Vs. 5a ***His ancestry***: “*Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin*”.
2. Vs. 5b ***His orthodoxy***: “*A Hebrew of Hebrews; concerning the law a Pharisee*.”
3. Vs. 6a ***His activity***: “*Concerning zeal, persecuting the church*.”
4. Vs. 6b ***His morality***: “*Concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless*.”

Vs. 7 In each and every case Paul said that this was how he felt prior to knowing Christ as he uses this in the past tense. Most folks feel as though all of these areas were changed in one day as Paul road to Damascus but I think that only one changed that day and that was with regards to his activity in persecuting the church. Looking at his own words in other letters it appears that the other four areas took time for him to understand that he had only replaced the religion of Judaism with the religion of Christianity as he was still worshipping his own effort. Paul had been confident in his flesh prior to his conversion and he had been confident in his flesh after his conversion. According to 2 Corinthian chapter 4 it wasn’t until 14 years after his conversion that he began to understand what true worship and spirituality was. In 2 Corinthians 11:30 Paul writes “*If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity.*” Then in the 12th chapter of that same letter in verse 10 he writes “*Therefore I take pleasure, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong*.” The things that caused him to be weak and dependent upon the Lord were now the things that he was most thankful for. Paul stepped out of religion and into a relationship and in so doing discovered the secret of the Christian life that only in dying to self, do you find lasting joy and peace. Paul swore off religion as worship and started worshipping only the work and effort of Jesus.

**Philippians**

**“Living above the Clouds”**

**III. Main Teaching: C. 3:1-21 *Joy in spite of things***

1. **3:1-11 Past**

**3:8-12**

**“Counting a loss a gain”**

**I. Intro.**

**II. Vs. 8 What counts**

**III. Vs. 9-12 Three things to lose if we are to gain**

**I. Intro.**

Paul has described in verses 4-7 how religion dominated his life prior to becoming a believer and even as a believer for the first 14 years. But in verse 8 ***Paul found in Christ the One that made religion obsolete so much so that the loss of everything religious was seen as a gain***. **Jesus is the missing person of everyone’s life He alone is what makes living a blessing ill respective of adverse circumstances and adversarial situations**. Saints, a good thing can become a bad thing if it keeps out the best thing! It is important to see the total message of this chapter before examining it in detail, so perhaps the following outline will be helpful.

* Vs. 8-11 Past “I count”
* Vs. 12-16 Present “I press”
* Vs. 17-21 Future “I look”

**II. Vs. 8 What counts**

Vs. 8 That little word “*indeed*” in verse 8 in the Greek, stresses the idea that “*Though, indeed, therefore, at least, doubtless*,” ***I have counted all things but loss that I might gain the surpassing worth of Christ***. Notice also that he changes verb tenses here between verses 7 and 8. In verse 7 he says, “*but whatever gain I had I counted* (**past tense**) *as loss*”. In v. 8 Paul writes “*but indeed, now, therefore, doubtless I count, am counting* (**present tense**) *everything as loss*.” In Acts chapter 9 verse 25 we are told the day that all that Paul had placed on his training, his background, his intellect, his achievements, his morality, came crashing down around him, as he was let down the wall of Damascus in a large basket. Next we are told that Paul went up to Jerusalem and was rejected of the apostles who wouldn't have anything to do with him. Neither his Jewish nor his Christian friends would take him in, and discouraged, defeated, he went to the temple for consolation and there the Lord met him and sent him home to Tarsus. We are told that for some five to seven years in Tarsus he did not minister or preach or at least there is no record of any of it occurring. All of that is summed up in verse 8 where we read “*Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.*” I know of no greater loss in human existence than the loss of our dreams and hopes because for the most part we have so much invested in them and have paid so much to indulge them. Yet with that said Paul makes this remarkable statement that the “*loss of all things*” was well worth the price for what he had gained in the “*excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.*” The use of the word “count” at the end of verse 8 ought to be rendered “*I am still* ***COUNTING***” the things lost as rubbish. The word for “rubbish” is a word that means dung not just worthless but offensive. This indicates that Paul saw the loss and gain as a process that the more he lost of the “*things*” of religion the more he gained “*excellent knowledge of Christ Jesus*.” Looking at the first century church and comparing it with the Westernized Church of today we can see that the fundamental difference between the two can best be explained in what essentially would be their practicing mission statements:

* **Modern Westernized Evangelical Church**: ***Showing the world how much WE can do for Jesus***!
* **First Century Church**: ***Demonstrating to the world how much Jesus has done for us!***

***Which of those two mission statements is religion and which one is a relationship? Which one represents your life or the life of this fellowship?*** Do these things define you or are you now defined as Paul said by the “*excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*”? In Jeremiah 2:13 God spoke through the prophet and said to Israel “*For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, And hewn themselves cisterns--broken cisterns that can hold no water.*” We cannot drink from our empty cistern of religion and at the same time drink from the inexhaustible rivers of water that flow from Christ. Are we free from our broken cisterns that cannot hold water because we will not be free to drink from the fountain of living waters until we are!

**III. Vs. 9-12 Three things to lose if we are to gain**

Paul goes on in verses 9-12 to give us three areas where the loss of religion gained him the superiority of the “*excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.*”

1. Vs. 9 ***Morality***: The phrase “*be found in Him*” is one that suggests investigation by others. Paul wasn’t concerned about passing the test as to being Holy and right because His rightness wasn’t external based upon his works but it was internal and based upon God’s work! Paul’s right standing wasn’t a list of things he didn’t do instead his morality was found in the rightness of Jesus that had positive traits expressed in, “*Love, patience, kindness, compassion, and forgiveness.*”
2. Vs. 10 ***Ministry***: Another thing that changed for Paul was **what ministry was all about**: It was no longer about doing things for God; instead ***it was about personal, experiential, relational knowledge and friendship with God***. Paul is very careful not to say that this was academic as he doesn’t say “*That I may know* ***ABOUT*** *Christ*”. Someone has well said, “*Knowing about something has* ***value****; whereas knowing relationally has* ***vitality***!” Paul is not speaking of knowledge that can be learned through a book or a casual acquaintance, he is speaking of a deep continual abiding relationship where two share experiences together. Paul says that ***in this shared experience that there were three experiences he continually walked with Jesus in that deepened their relationship. And these three areas changed how ministry operated through him:***
3. ***The power of His resurrection***: ***POWER***! **Paul’s ministry went from the power of humanity and self-effort to the power that raised Jesus from the dead.** And in this new resurrection power, Paul found a power supply that was more than adequate for every possible circumstance a person could ever encounter. This “*resurrection power*” works when all other hope is gone, and every situation has been exhausted. It was at work when Jesus lifeless body was on the cross. It was at work when his dead body was placed in that tomb and sealed for three days! It was always at work even though human despair and doubt covered it and encased it. Resurrection power turns: “***Failure into victory, sorrow into joy, and despair into hope***.” Walking with Jesus in the “*power of His resurrection*” each and every day Paul found the only power to transform life!
4. ***The fellowship of His sufferings***: ***COMPASSION***! The amazing thing about sufferings of Christ is that they were always for someone else. Paul was gaining a new compassion as he shared in those sufferings he understood the sufferings of others. Our sufferings are not for ourselves primarily they are for the benefit of others. Loving anyone always involves suffering with them, as parents we know this all too well. Paul said that walking where Jesus went in His sufferings gave him a new compassion for people that religion never did.
5. ***Being conformed to His death***: ***PURITY***! Being conformed to His death meant that Paul had come to the end of his self-pleasing life. By walking with Jesus in the area of being conformed to His death Paul’s ministry wasn’t about him it was truly about others. He wasn’t concerned with what happened to him, how he may be inconvenienced, instead his concern was about what happens to Jesus and His glory and the benefit of others. Self-living was gone and replaced by being an instrument of God’s abounding grace. All these things were not a by-product of study, hard work and effort. No they were a by-product of walking with Jesus in those three areas.
6. Vs. 11-12 ***Motive***: The last area where the loss of religion gained Paul the superiority of the “*excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*” is to be found in a change in his motives. This verse sounds as if Paul was concerned that he would not be resurrected but that is because the word for resurrected isn’t the same word used in verse 10. In fact the word for “resurrection” in verse 11 only appears this one time in all the New Testament and means a selective resurrection of believers from among all that will be raised from the dead. We know Paul isn’t afraid he won’t make the resurrection of the dead as he already wrote in Romans 8 that “*those whom Jesus justified He will also glorify*.” What Paul is saying is that ***his motivation in life has changed because his concern is no longer about himself it’s about others***! He knows that one day he will be “*perfected*”; God has begun a good work in him will see it to the day of his completion. His concern now is that he will take as many as God enables him to take with him. Paul’s pressing on was that he may lay hold of as many as Jesus had for him to lay hold of. Dear ones there is a sense that every believer has access to other people’s treasures and we have the great opportunity to distribute their winnings to them! Paul is saying, “*I want so to lay-hold of him that he might use my life as an instrument to lay hold of everything he had in mind when he arrested me on the Damascus road, hoping it might fulfill the purpose of his coming and we might all be together at the out-resurrection of the dead*.”

This all boils down to a great question we need to ask ourselves: ***What am I living for***? Though it may seem as though this is true, religion is self-centered as our concern has to do with our self. Paul discovered that the loss of religion gained him power, compassion and purity.

**Philippians**

**“Living above the Clouds”**

**III. Main Teaching: C. 3:1-21 *Joy in spite of things***

**2-3. 3:12-121 Present and future**

**3:12-21**

**“He died Climbing”**

**I. Intro.**

**II. Vs. 12-16 Five essential of winning your race**

**III. Vs. 17-21 Heavenly Citizenship**

**I. Intro.**

Last week we saw the benefits of losing one’s religion for a relationship with Jesus. That primarily dealt with the past today Paul concludes this with a look at the present and future benefits. In the final section of the 3rd chapter of Philippians it appears as though Paul sees his life from two other vantage points.

1. You will recall in verses 4-7 Paul looked back in his **past** in an autobiographical account of his life and as such it appears as though it was the “***accountant***” stage of his life as he said “***I count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus.***”
2. In this section in the **present** he sees himself secondly as an “***athlete***” (verses 12-16) as we are told in verse 14 that he “***pressed towards the goal for the prize of the upward call in Christ Jesus.***”
3. And 3rd, he sees himself in the **future** as an “***alien***” in verses 17-21 as we are told in verse 20 that his “***citizenship is in heaven***.”

**II. Vs. 12-16 Five essential of winning your race**

You may **not** think of yourself as competitive but I believe we all have some of this in us and as such ought to all desire to be “*winning Christians*” as we long to fulfill that for which we have been called. What I love about this passage is the detailed process in which Paul speaks about the day to day way to lose your religion. This “***pressing on***” of leaving behind religion has according to verse 14 a “***prize***” attached to it called the “***upward call of God in Christ Jesus***”. Did you notice that **the prize wasn’t at the end of the journey, as Paul says that the prize is the journey**? Oh saint’s what a great revelation this is to us that **the prize is the call itself and not the benefits that come from the call**. The prize isn’t heaven the prize is the journey with Jesus that will never end! That means that we don’t have to wait to start enjoying the prize we can start enjoying the prize today and each day after. In verses 12-16 Paul will give us **five essentials of winning our race in the upward call in Christ Jesus**:

1. Vs. 12-13a **Dissatisfaction**: Paul says “*Not that I’ve already attained*!” Nothing will inspire a person who is competitive more than not attaining the goal they sought after. Paul’s dissatisfaction wasn’t with his salvation it was with his sanctification as he was driven to lose more of his religion that he may gain more of Christ. Saint’s there is one thing that we can and should always covet more of… JESUS! In my book we could all use a bit more of ***sanctified dissatisfaction***! The Christian life is not a race against others it’s a race against our self as Paul stated in verse 12 that he “*May lay hold of that for which Christ has laid hold of me.*” The mark of his maturity was that he realized that he hadn’t arrived and wasn’t about to rest on his laurels.
2. Vs. 13b **Devotion**: I love the simplicity of this as Paul says, “*One thing I do*” and that one thing was to specialize in devotion to Jesus not to work on religion. One of the differences of religion verses relationship is that religions focus is multidirectional and relationship is single in nature. A river that overflows its banks makes everything a muddy mess. A river that is dammed and controlled powers a city; saints live for what matters the most.
3. Vs. 13c **Direction**: This is rather obvious if you have ever been involved in a race as you don’t want to look back, you want rather to keep looking forward. If we are going to lay hold of that which Christ has laid hold of us then we will need to be “*forgetting those things which are behind*” and it doesn’t matter if those things were positive or negative as we ought to no longer be influenced or allow those to negatively affect our race to the prize. The sin we’ve committed in the past can place us in paralysis in the present. The good we’ve done in the past can puff us up in the present with pride. That’s why it’s a good practice to forget those things which are behind! We may not be able to change the past but we sure can change the meaning of the past! Running from the regrets of the past as well as running to the distractions of the successes of the past will certainly hinder your race in the present and the future.
4. Vs. 14 **Determination**: The phrase “*I press*” carries the idea of intense endeavor and the Greeks used the word to describe a hunter pursuing his prey. A person doesn’t become a winning athlete by listening to lectures, watching “*how to videos*” they become a winner by getting into the game and being determined to win. What would Jesus’ church look like if we put as much determination in our upward call in Christ as we do our hobbies and interests? In this we must avoid both being an activist (*thinking that it is all up to us*) as well as a pacifist (*thinking that it’s all up to God and we can just kick back*). The balance is that we must realize that God works in us for His good pleasure. **Some folks I’m afraid have miss understood “*dying to self*” as they have never come back alive**!
5. Vs. 15-16 **Discipline**: In the Greek games a runner who was not disciplined and disobeyed the rules was disqualified in the competition and thus forfeited his opportunity for the prize. If you are going to gain the upward call in Christ Jesus then it will be essential that you remain disciplined in training as well as in the race set before you. The Church history is full of folks who began their race well but failed because they didn’t remain disciplined. We need to keep looking to the author and finisher of our faith until we are looking at Him face to face!

**III. Vs. 17-21 Heavenly Citizenship**

Vs. 17 In a letter that has as its theme JOY it is a bit odd to find Paul speak his weeping as his tears were on the behalf of those who had succumbed to abandoning their relationship with Christ. The truth is the Church is God’s colony of heaven here on earth. The believer must continually, daily, moment by moment make a choice to walk on with their Master and friend our stay awhile in the valley of religion. As Hebrews chapter 12 said of those Old Testament saints that we are “*surround by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race set before us*.” Paul says that we not only have a “*cloud of witnesses*” cheering us on, we also have fellow runners to run with us to we will continue to run towards the upward call in Christ Jesus. Just is in our homes so too in our churches people will imitate and pattern themselves after those that lead them both for good and bad! There will always be those who set a pattern contrary to the upward call in Christ and towards religion and the world and it is beneficial to note those who are on a different road then us with Jesus.

Vs. 18-19 Paul is not naïve he realizes that there are those “*enemies of the cross of Christ*” and I believe that he is thinking of two.

1. There those who use “***liberty as a license***” in Christ to indulge their worldly appetites. And in so doing **deny the cross of self-denial**.
2. There are those who peruse “***religion as righteousness***” and in so doing **deny the cross and the death of self-righteousness**.

The only agreement these two have is in their mutual hatred for the “*upward call in Christ Jesus*”. Yet in the end if a person choses the world or religion it will ultimately destroy them. Paul says of them that **they have three characteristics**:

* + 1. ***Whose god is their belly***: The word “*belly*” here has a broader reference to living for the pleasures of the body, mind and soul. ***They live for their fleshly appetites***. The point here is that Paul is showing that both those who have used “***liberty for license***” and those who have chosen “***religion as righteousness***” share in ***common idolatry***, albeit different gods.
    2. ***Whose glory is their shame***: ***They live to make a name for themselves***. They also both share ***misplaced priorities*** as they glory about things they should be ashamed of.
    3. ***Who set their minds on earthly things***: ***They live for that which is temporal***. Finally they share in common the ***wrong focus in life*** as neither makes their life about a relationship with Jesus and the worship of Him but rather to advance in this world and life!

Vs. 20 As you may recall Philippi was a Roman colony that prized its citizenship greatly. So Paul uses this fact that as much as they saw themselves as Romans it would be far more beneficial for them if they saw themselves as citizens of heaven. “*We have our home in heaven, and here on earth we are a colony of heaven’s citizens.*” They were not to await the emperor’s visit but the Lord’s return. In 48 B.C. Julius Caesar was declared to be “*the universal savior of mankind*.” It then became a common title for the ruling Caesar and idolatry to bestow this title to any other. It wasn’t long after the time of Paul that Christians were martyred for refusing to call Caesar Lord and savior, as they proclaimed that only Jesus is Lord and savior.

Vs. 21 The last superiority that a relationship with Jesus can accomplish that neither the pursuit of “***liberty for license***” nor “***religion as righteousness***” can ever do is our complete transformation as we will have the type of body that Jesus Himself had when He was resurrected.

In a small churchyard at a foot of one of the great mountains of the Swiss Alps lies the grave of an English mountain climber. On his tomb stone directly under his name is a three word epitaph that I pray every believer in Christ would ascribe to, “***He Died Climbing***”!

**Philippians**

**“Living above the Clouds”**

**III. Main Teaching: D. 4:1-19 *Joy in spite of anxiety***

1. **4:1-9 God’s peace**

**4:1-5**

**“Don’t Worry Be Happy”**

**I. Intro.**

**II. Vs. 1-5 People**

**I. Intro.**

Having already spoken to us about:

* Joy in spite of circumstance
* Joy in spite of people
* Joy in spite of things (religion)

Paul now tackles the fourth and final thing that can rob us of our joy in Christ, **ANXIETY**. The word for “*anxious*” means to be pulled in different directions. The English root for the word “*worry*” means to strangle. Worry and anxiety is a great thief of joy but it does little good to tell a person not to worry because for the most part anxiety as a thief is an inside job! Dr. Walter Cavert reported a survey on worry that indicated that only 8 percent of the things people worried about were legitimate matters of concern! The other 92 percent were imaginary, never happened, or involved matters over which the people had no control anyway. Worry is the interest we pay on the debt of unbelief with which we have mortgaged life! The antidote is to “*Turn your cares to prayers and your problems to praise*!” Thus the antidote to anxiety is a secure mind!

**II. Vs. 1-5 People**

Vs. 1 The use of the word “*therefore*” is a transitional word that is used to link two thoughts. ***We must run to lose our religion but we must stand fast if we are to rid our self of anxiety but both are done in a relationship with Christ***. One of the secrets of maintaining our joy in spite of anxiety is learning to stand still in your relationship while everything within you is screaming at you to RUN! The Christian life is like a cable car that is running up and down hills all day long but without any power of their own. Hidden under the street is a cable which the “Grip Man” with his levers must pull back to take hold of the cable in order to be moving. The car without the cable “stands firm” as it is the cable that is mobile. The Christian life is victoriously able to move forward as well as stand still all because invisibly it remains resting upon our cable in Jesus. Our race is gripping Jesus as we conquer the hill of religion and resting as we face the obstacles of anxiety. I believe Paul speaks of **three things that can cause the believer anxiety in our life and he gives us how our standing in Christ will deliver us from anxiety**:

* + 1. **Vs. 2-5 People**
    2. **Vs. 6-7 Personality**
    3. **Vs. 8-9 Perspective**

Vs. 2-5 **PEOPLE**: In the Church at Philippi there were two great ladies named Euodia and Syn…ty..che. We know these were special gals as their names mean “***fragrance***” and “***fortunate***”. We aren’t told what the situation was but something had happened in their relationship that caused as “*stink*” in their fragrance and made them “*less fortunate*” to be around. The fact that Paul is mentioning this suggests that the spat between these two was threating the unity of the body of Christ in Philippi. It hadn’t caused a church split yet but folks were picking sides and anxiety and tension was in the air. So Paul offers them ***two things they needed to do in order to rid themselves of the stinky odor of anxiety between people***.

1. Vs. 2-3 “***Be of the same mind in the Lord***”: If Paul only had said, “*Be of the same mind*” this passage would have been impossible as both of these ladies could have said, “*We aren’t going to see eye to eye on this subject*”. Paul isn’t suggesting compromise on our view point instead he is telling them that they need to seek unity on what they have in common instead of focusing on what they disagree on. You may be thinking that with that brother or sister in Christ you have nothing in common but that isn’t true as in Christ we always have Jesus in common. So when anxiety arises in our church relationships we must agree to get together in Christ and give our differences to Jesus. How can we accomplish this? Paul offers **three things** in verse 3:

* 1. ***Mediation***: As Paul was dictating this letter he must have turned and spoke to someone in the room as we read “*I urge you also, true companion, help these women*”. We aren’t told the identity of “*true companion*” but seeing that Paul was writing this letter to be sent back by Epaphroditus (2:25) I personally believe that it was him that Paul was speaking too when he said those words. At any rate Paul is suggesting that there was a need for “*mediation*” to come to these two ladies and get them together to settle this issue. I think that can be of great help in the body of Christ as we are to take Jesus’ side instead of picking sides of two people that should be coming together in Jesus, instead of dividing over their differences. There will be times when though we should be able to come together in Christ we will need the help of our fellow brothers and sisters.
  2. ***Service***: Next Paul reminds them that ***they had forgotten that they were serving Christ not their differences***. Division always has as its first casualty, “***service***”! Paul says to them, “*Ladies,… have you forgotten that you were involved with me and Clemet and the rest of the team in sharing the Good News about Jesus*?” When people are causing you anxiety you can bet that satan is behind it as he wants to put a halt to the work of sharing Jesus with those who need to hear about him. So he plants some division, a disagreement about something minor then feeds it in our minds until it consumes us and we stop the work of the gospel because we just can’t work with that person. In Nehemiah 6:3, Nehemiah responded to a request by Sanballat and Tobiah who were attempting to stop the work of rebuilding the wall at Jerusalem with the words, “*I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you*?” Dear ones never let something so small stop something so great!
  3. ***Big picture***: Finally notice that Paul says that all those believers who these two ladies new along with themselves are in the “***Book of Life***.” Here they were participating in division that wasn’t going to exist in heaven, ***they weren’t going to be able to avoid each other in eternity***, ***divide over some little issue while standing before the throne of God***. Paul is subtly letting them know that their anxiety over each other has blinded them to the “***bigger picture***” that Jesus has broken down all the walls that we erect to keep folks from us. So while we may be tempted to build our house of sticks and stones it won’t be going with us in heaven, so why not tear down those walls now? I can’t wait to get to heaven and see all those folks that through our church history divided and separated, together holding hands singing united in praise to Jesus. The tragic truth is many would rather wait to experience this when they could be enjoying it now!

2. Vs. 4 “***Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say rejoice***”: The 2nd thing Paul tells them to do to rid themselves of the stinky odor of anxiety between people to “*rejoice in the Lord*”. ***Joy is a choice and no one can steel your joy, only you can give it up***! Everything and everyone that comes into your life, (*even those irritating folks and unpleasant disagreements*) are allowed by the Lord to reveal something to you about your own heart and give you an opportunity to grab hold of Jesus! Notice that Paul isn’t saying that you need to “*rejoice in the situation*” or “*rejoice in the unpleasantness of disagreements*”; no he is saying that you can always “*rejoice in the Lord*”. Ok pastor what about when you get angry with this person and they continue to harass you over and over. Well remember that underneath you undergirding your life is Jesus, He is holding you together so grab hold of Him and allow Him to move you off of anger to the place of peace and joy and remain standing fast upon Him. I’m saying that ***you can’t*** but I am saying that ***Jesus can*** so take a grip and stand firm. Now notice that Paul says, “***Again I say rejoice***”! I think Paul understood that even after we do this when people are causing us anxiety that we can begin to “*slip*” back into this very quickly so we will need to be resetting ourselves back into joy. Paul doesn’t say, “***Well if rejoicing in the Lord doesn’t work try\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.***” Instead he says, “***When you begin to slip back into anxiety because of people, repeat the first step as often as needed***!”

Vs. 5 Paul gives one final exhortation to these two ladies in verse 5 by letting them know two important things:

1. “*Let your gentleness be known to all men*”: The first thing Paul wanted to remind these two was that what was going to show that they were right on an issue was NOT the force of their words but **the love in their character**. Oh how many times the Church has made this error thinking that the force of our argument is to be found in our division instead of the love that ought to be demonstrated through our actions. Saint’s any opinion, doctrine or teaching that makes Jesus greater and me less and more dependent upon Him, more loving towards all things that He loves is a right one to be passionate about!
2. “*The Lord is at hand*”: The second thing that Paul wants these two ladies to realize that they need to deal with this now not later as the Lord is at hand. Procrastination often links with pride to keep us in anxiety over people and Paul admonishes these two to deal with it now as the Lord is coming back soon!

Worry and anxiety from the time of the fall of Adam and Eve have found a home in human hearts. Anxiety is powerful to disintegrate the human life and rob us of joy in Christ. Certainly there are outside circumstances that feed our fears but we also have the Word of God that is a constant reminder for us followers of Christ to stop worrying. Though the song made popular by Bob Marley taken from the Indian mystic Meher Baba phrase “*Don’t Worry Be Happy*” seeks to lay claim on this admonishment it originated right here in Philippians as Paul not only admonishes Christians he gives them the reason why this is possible.

**Philippians**

**“Living above the Clouds”**

**III. Main Teaching: D. 4:1-19 *Joy in spite of anxiety***

1. **4:1-9 God’s peace**

**4:6-9**

**“Lost in the garden of worry”**

**I. Intro.**

**II. Vs. 6-7 Personality**

**III. Vs. 8-9 Perspective**

**I. Intro.**

Paul now tackles the fourth and final thing that can rob us of our joy in Christ, **ANXIETY**. Teaching us how to “*Turn our cares to prayers and our problems to praise*!” He speaks of **three things that can cause the believer anxiety in our life and he gives us how our standing in Christ will deliver us from anxiety**:

* + 1. **Vs. 2-5 People**
    2. **Vs. 6-7 Personality**
    3. **Vs. 8-9 Perspective**

There are over 19 million in the US with some form of anxiety and I don’t believe Paul is speaking to those that suffer from some form of mental health issue. What he is addressing is that with many a Christian we have a tendency to be preoccupied with worry and anxiety. Though most of us go through times of worry we need to see it for what it us, not trusting in God’s word. Notice that the antidote for worry and anxiety isn’t the removal of the circumstances that we think are creating the anxiety. Neither is it to become Australian and join the “*No worries club*”.

**II. Vs. 6-7 Personality**

Vs. 6 The very mention by Paul of being “*anxious for nothing*” suggests that he understands that people of a proclivity to worry and anxiety. The reason we ought to be anxious for ***nothing***, is because in ***everything*** we are making are requests known to God! **The use of the word “*everything*” by Paul suggests that there is nothing too small to God because there is nothing to God that looks BIG**! Prayer is our expression of our complete dependence upon His promises, our leaning upon His grace and power is already at work within our lives. You could say humans after the fall were born worriers! Yet with that said Paul doesn’t serve up the platitude of “*Ah just pray about it.*” Instead Paul uses three different words to illustrate right communication! Anxiety and worry are not best served by bottling them up; no they are best defeated by right communication. And **right communication has three aspects to it**:

* 1. ***Adoration***: The first thing we see in right communication is that it needs to be directed to the right person if you are going to defeat anxiety and worry. Not only does our communication need to be to the right person (God) but this word carries with it the idea of communication adoration, devotion and worship. In other words our communication to God is extremely personal and we are communicating to Him out of love knowing His greatness and willingness to hear what is troubling us. I’ve noticed something about this type of communication in my grandkids, when something has caused them to be anxious or worried they don’t come to me with a ***laundry list*** they come and throw themselves in my arms just to hold them. To Nater’s and Hani the list will come later what they need immediately is to run to Ganpee who they believe is big enough to solve their problems. I’m afraid that too often when we are consumed with worry and anxiety we run to God shouting out our needs when what we need the most is just to run into His loving arms and by still!
  2. ***Supplication***: The second aspect of our communication is **the honest sharing of our worry and anxiety.** And it carries with it the idea of continuance, keeping it up over and over. You would think this is obvious but a lot of the time ***folks spend all their time telling God what to do instead of telling God where they are at***. In Genesis 3:9 immediately after Adam and Eve disobeyed, the first question God asks them is “***Where are you***”? Folks, remember God is all knowing so the question wasn’t a hide and seek question. The question was what God wanted them to tell Him in verse 10 “*I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.*” As such our communication should not be a laundry list of what we want God to do but rather ***a time of honest confession to the question*** of, “*Where are you*?” “*Lord, I’ve hid myself in worry and covered myself with the fig leave of anxiety because I lost my job. Lord right now I’m consumed in doubt and fear and because of this I’m not able to hear your voice as I’ve become lost in the garden of worry*.” Supplication is not about human energy it’s about honest confession to “*Where are you*?” ***God doesn’t require from us the knowledge of how to fix the problem He requires from us the honesty to admit we have a problem that only He can fix***!
  3. ***Appreciation***: The final aspect of right communication is thanksgiving but it isn’t about God hearing a thank you after we have been given what we have asked for. No, ***the thank you comes before we have seen or heard the answer*** because it has already found the answer in the Lord! Again most of the time we come to the Lord with our shopping list and a stop watch and both of those have to come out towards our expectation before we offer (if we even do) a thank you. **The right communication that Paul is suggesting is long on worship, confession and thanksgiving but missing telling God what the problem is and what to do to fix it to our expectations.** The reason for this is according to Jesus in Matthew 6:8 our heavenly “*Father knows the things we need before we ask Him.*” I’m afraid that a lot of us act as if God is incompetent and forgetful as we tell Him over and over what our problem is and how we want it fixed.

Here is the great thing Paul says that we are to apply these three aspects of communication “***every time***” we are anxious or worried! We don’t have to save it for just the “***big things***” or wait until the “***little things***” have become big things instead we can communicate with God in those three things in everything that causes us worry and anxiety. This is not some sort of “*blab it grab it*” prayer that is suggesting that we should ask God for everything we want.

Vs. 7 The result of this threefold type of communication will be that the “*peace of God that surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ*.” Paul isn’t saying that you will avoid the trial or circumstance that has taken your heart and mind captive to worry and anxiety; he is saying that the “*peace of God*” will stand guard over your heart and mind so that worry and anxiety won’t be able cause paralysis. Notice that this peace isn’t based upon us understanding why we have peace and as such it is outside of our understanding the outcome. What makes this great is that we don’t have to wait for the outcome to experience the “*peace of God*” we can enjoy the peace of God right now! How is that possible you ask? Well it is because the “peace of God” is “through Jesus Christ” and not through the understanding of the outcome.

**III. Vs. 8-9 Perspective**

Vs. 8-9 Paul finishes with the third and final thing that will cause you worry and anxiety which is **a loss of perspective**. The first thing we note here that having the right perspective involves two things the:

* 1. Vs. 8 ***Right heart***: Paul says first we need to search our **heart** with regards to 8 things: True, noble, just, pure, lovely, good report, of virtue and praiseworthy. Oft times our worry and anxiety is because we have not placed our lives within those 8 things and because of it we have lost perspective on life. Refuse the negativity and chose to think about the positive relationship you have with Jesus.

1. ***True***: As Dr. Cavert pointed out a week ago 92% of our anxiety and worry is on things that aren’t true. Satan will try to rip us off of our joy in Christ by causing us to focus in on the 92% of things that aren’t true.
2. ***Noble and just***: Things that are not worthy of respect and are not right will cause us anxiety and worry. Paul is saying don’t make your focus the things that are unpleasant as they can control your heart and your head.
3. ***Pure, Lovely and of good report***: “*Pure*” means of moral purity, and “*lovely*” means beautiful and attractive where as “*good report*” means worthy of talking about. Paul is saying that when our mind is in the gutter our heart will be filled with anxiety and worry, so don’t let your heart go to those places or even engage in talking about those things.
4. ***Virtue and praiseworthy***: If something has “*virtue*” it will motivate us to do better and if it has “*praise*” it will be worthy of commending to others. Anxiety and worry will control our lives when what our heart is set on are things that don’t make us better and we can’t commend to others. 
   1. Vs. 9 ***Right head***: Then we are to meditate or **think** on those things. Paul mentions the balance between four things:
5. ***Learned and received***: Perhaps you have experienced that that it is one thing to having “***learned***” something a quite another thing to “***receive***” it and make it a part of your life. “*Facts in the head*” are not the same as “*truths in the heart*”.
6. ***Heard and saw***: James said in chapter 1 verse 22 that we must be doers of the word and not hearers only. Effective teaching isn’t just in what a person says, it’s also visible in the way they live their lives.

How do you know if you have the right perspective in having the right heart and right head? Well your well since the peace of God being with you. Conversely if you aren’t experiencing the peace of God then your perspective may be off. God’s peace is the “*umpire*” that call us out! Our faith in Christ was meant for life! When you read the words of Jesus while here on earth you never see Him speak about theology and religion, He spoke to people about living and enjoying what God attended. Jesus demonstrated the victorious life He desires to give each person. There was no sense of anxiety in Him, He wasn’t concerned about where His next meal was coming from or where He was going to lay His head. Instead He said, look My Father knows your needs before you ask, He sees every bird and we are worth more than that to Him.

**Philippians**

**“Living above the Clouds”**

**III. Main Teaching: D. 4:1-19 *Joy in spite of anxiety***

1. **4:1-9 God’s peace**

**4:6-7**

**“Lost in the garden of worry”**

**I. Intro.**

**II. Vs. 6-7 Personality**

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Paul now tackles the fourth and final thing that can rob us of our joy in Christ, **ANXIETY**. Teaching us how to “*Turn our cares to prayers and our problems to praise*!” He speaks of **three things that can cause the believer anxiety in our life and he gives us how our standing in Christ will deliver us from anxiety**:

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**Philippians**

**“Living above the Clouds”**

**III. Main Teaching: D. 4:1-19**

**IV. Closing: 4:20-23**

**4:9-23**

**“Climate Change”**

**I. Intro.**

**II. Vs. 8-9 Perspective**

**III. 10-23 What state am I in?**

**I. Intro.**

Throughout Philippians Paul has been challenging his readers not to allow anything to rip us off of our joy in Christ. At times my life has looked more like a thermometer instead of a thermostat! These two devices both work in the same arena but with very different results:

* ***Thermometers***: ***Register*** temperatures going up and down with the rise and fall of the climate.
* ***Thermostats***: ***Regulate*** the temperature by changing the surroundings to make them more enjoyable.

You and I are either going “***register***” the climate change in our life or we are in Christ going to “***regulate***” it! We don’t need to settle for the “*rise and fall*” being changed by **circumstances**, **people**, **things** or **anxiety** instead we can regulate those things setting our temperature to JOY and making the room pleasant to all. Looking at this letter and Paul’s statements we can clearly see that he was a “thermostat” as three times in this closing section he says:

* 1. 4:11 I am Content
  2. 4:13 I Can do all things
  3. 4:18 I Have all things, abound and am full

**II. Vs. 8-9 Perspective**

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You will know you have the right perspective in having the right heart and right head when you since the peace of God being with you. God’s peace is the “*umpire*” that call us out!

**III. 10-23 What state am I in?**

Vs. 10 Paul starts with some financial information as clearly this church had been supporting Paul while he had been imprisoned in Rome but something had stopped their ability to do so but it had regained so Paul praises the Lord. There was no mail service or banks and getting funds to Paul was left up to someone willing to travel on foot to Rome from Philippi and apparently no one had been able to make the trip for a while. Paul says that the circumstance created an opportunity for joy to overcome anxiety when things got tight. We must never mistake contentment with complacency. Contentment is not escape from the battle it’s peace in the midst of the battle.

Vs. 11-20 Paul says his joy was not lessoned as his wallet emptied; his peace in Christ had not diminished as his checking account was drained. ***Paul is going to give the secret of how to maintain your joy no matter what’s happing to you financially***. I think this verse might also handle our joy with regards to our geographical location as well. Paul says, “***I have learned in whatever STATE I am, to be content***!” No matter where you find yourself geographically you can maintain your joy in Christ. Such a climate change is a ***learned experience*** as Paul had to go through many a rise and fall on the thermometer before he understood that in Christ he could permanently get out of the element’s and enjoy life. There are three things about this statement “***I have learned in whatever STATE I am, to be content***!” that we need to look at:

* 1. Vs. 11 *Define what we mean by the word* “***content***”: Most folks I think would define contentment as, “***Having everything you want***” but Paul defines true contentment as “***Wanting only what you have***!” The story is told of a fellow that put a sign in his front yard with an offer of his house for free if any person could come forward and prove that they were content. A few days later a very expensive car pulled up and a well-dressed man came to the door and told the man, “*I’ve come to claim your house. I have everything I want, all the money I need and everything in life that can satisfy me. I am perfectly content!*” The wise home owner answered, “*You say your content then why do you want my house*?” Saint’s God has created us to “***Love Him and people and use things***”. But somewhere over the course of life many have reversed this to thinking that we have been created to “***Love things and use God and people***.”
  2. Vs. 12-13 *Poverty and wealth are equal trials*: Most folks would say, “*I know how to be abased and I’d like to know how to abound*!” Paul didn’t see only poverty as a trial while viewing wealth as a blessing, he saw both poverty and wealth have the ability to distort a person and their view on life. Paul goes on to say that he has learned in Christ how to deal with both of these trials of poverty and wealth as he says in verse 13 “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*” Throughout this letter Paul has said that *the secret was that He saw himself as nothing, could do nothing of his own power and* ***his sole source of joy was living in Christ’s identity and sufficiency***! The specific application of this is that he didn’t see himself as defined by poverty or wealth, he saw himself only in Christ! Paul chose to go with God and recognize that what mattered was not what he wanted for his life but what God wanted for his life. ***What God wanted was that Paul would use things to love people!***
  3. Vs. 14-20 Finally Paul address how we are supplied during our contentment: ***Paul’s perspective with regards to joy is that it doesn’t come from others meeting our need but rather from us reaching out and meeting their need.*** Jesus said, “*It is more blessed to give than to receive*.” Paul said that such loving concern for him seen in their financial sacrifice was to be added to their account and that it was a “sweet-smelling aroma” to God. The word “fruit” in verse 17 is a word that we get our English word for “interest”. Our joy is increased not by what we receive but by rather give. Furthermore in verse 18 he wants them to know that their joy has abounded further than they knew as Paul had taken their gift to him and sent it on to others so that he could have more joy. Notice in verse 19 three things about this supply of joy:
     1. ***The source of the supply***: “*My God*” not just God, but my God, which implies a personal relationship. Not God as in some cosmic force running here and there but a personal Father who is giving to his children. According to Paul this is a family matter!
     2. ***The limits of the supply***: “*All your need*” the promise is not “*all your wants*” as our wants are sometimes way beyond our needs. ***I have noticed that there are far more wants in my life then there are needs***! It was reported that at the beginning of 1900’s the average American wanted 72 things, 18 of which they regarded as necessary. By 1950, the list of American wants had grown to 496 things, 96 of which they regarded as absolute necessities. I’m not certain what that would be today but I’m guessing it would be substantially higher.
     3. ***The method of the supply:*** “by Jesus Christ” thus joy is available everywhere to everyone in Christ.

So Paul concludes this great letter by taking the pin in his own hand and writing “*the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*” Paul found that he could be content in spite of any circumstance but he could never be content in spite of Christ ill regardless of how favorable the circumstance.