

Dead Man Living (Philippians) – Part 2

Paul's history with the church at Philippi is recounted in **Acts 16**. He made repeat visits to the Christians there during his later missionary journeys, and a relationship was forged. Years later, when he was taken to Rome as a prisoner awaiting trial before Caesar (at the end of Acts), the Philippian church sent Epaphroditus to do what he could to help the Apostle. Unfortunately, Epaphroditus suffered a near-fatal illness during the time he was in Rome; after he recovered and brought news of the church to Paul, he returned to Philippi to deliver the Apostle's letter.

You've heard the death row expression "Dead Man Walking"? Well, Paul is a **DEAD MAN LIVING**. He is on the first century equivalent of Death Row at the end of the book of Acts, under house arrest in Rome, and knowing that his only hope of freedom lies in the hands of the despotic Emperor Nero. But you would never know it by the tone of his "prison epistles" (Philippians is the last of these letters to the churches – he writes some personal letters later.) In the middle of the worst circumstances, Paul is unmistakably HAPPY. Why? Because he has learned that **the WORST circumstances are often the BEST opportunities** for God and the gospel to work!

Have you ever thought about this? PEOPLE CAN ROB US OF OUR JOY!

Paul is facing problems with people in Rome (political preachers – 1:15-18) and problems with people in Philippi. The unity of the church there is being threatened from WITHOUT (false teachers – 3:1-3) and threatened from WITHIN (fighting saints – 4:1-3). BUT HE STILL HAS JOY!

There is a difference between UNITY and UNIFORMITY. Unity comes from RESPECT WITHIN; uniformity comes from PRESSURE WITHOUT. That's why Paul opens **chapter two** by appealing to the highest possible spiritual motives. Disagreements are not solved by rules or threats; they are solved when our hearts are right with the Lord and right with each other. The basic cause of disagreement is SELFISHNESS, and the root of that is PRIDE.

THERE CAN BE NO JOY IN THE LIFE OF ANY CHRISTIAN WHO PUTS HIMSELF ABOVE OTHERS!

Chapter 1 – The secret of joy in spite of CIRCUMSTANCES is having a SINGLE MIND ("Christ first").

Chapter 2 – The secret of joy in spite of PEOPLE is having a SUBMISSIVE MIND ("others next").

HUMILITY is not someone who thinks too little of himself; humility is someone who simply does not think of himself at all! His heart is focused on God and the needs of others.

To illustrate this concept, Paul used four examples ...

- Jesus Christ, the ultimate example (2:1-11)
- Paul himself (2:12-18)
- Timothy (2:19-24)
- Epaphroditus (2:25-30)

v. 1 – "consolation" – same Greek root word as "Comforter" – basically, Paul is saying, "If you have the Holy Ghost ... act like this!"

v. 2 – "fulfill my joy" – "make my joy complete"

v. 3 – "strife" – "push for personal preference" / "vainglory" – "pursuit for personal glory" / "better" – "held above"

v. 4 – don't be obsessed with your own advantage (forget yourself!)

JESUS CHRIST

v. 5 – "mind" – "attitude"

v. 6 – "form" – "possessing the fullness of the attributes which make God God" (AMP) – that's why several of the modern Bible translations simply say ... "though he was God" (NLT), "Christ was truly God" (CEV), etc.

v. 6 – "robbery" – "something seized" – literally, anything embraced or prized

v. 6 – "equal" – "exactly the same in size, quantity, quality, character and number" – Jesus is God, and always claimed to be during His ministry!

v. 7 – "no reputation" – "emptied himself" – Jesus set aside all of His divine privileges for a season – imagine GOD coming to earth as a human being!

v. 8 – "humbled himself" – the incarnation was humbling enough, but then Jesus further humbled himself in that He did not even demand normal human rights, but subjected Himself to unjust persecution and even death

v. 9 – "wherefore" – precisely because of His unimaginable humility, Christ is worthy to be exalted above everything and everyone else

Acts 4:12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other **name** under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Colossians 3:17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the **name** of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

v. 10 – "under the earth" – the devil and his demons, and the lost

A few Scriptures about JEHOVAH that JESUS fulfills ...

Isaiah 35:4-6 Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

Job 9:8 Which along spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea.

Ezekiel 37:13 And ye shall know I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves.

Isaiah 45:22-23 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.

v. 11 – “Lord” – “authority over or ownership of people and property”

Let this attitude be in you! The mind of Christ is an attitude that says “I cannot keep my privileges for myself, I must use them for others even if it costs me a lot!” If you want to find out what someone is really like, don’t give them responsibilities, give them privileges. Do they use them for others?!

PAUL

v. 12 – Paul asks them to be even more careful to obey when he is not there

Too many Christians obey God only because of PRESSURE on the OUTSIDE, not POWER on the INSIDE (i.e. only when others are watching).

v. 12 – “work out” – NOT “work for” – a word picture of “working a field or a mine” – not salvation but sanctification – “to bring to completion”

v. 12 – “fear and trembling” – a healthy fear of offending God

v. 13 – we are responsible to work with Him, but it is the Lord’s power that produces good works in our lives (1:6)

v. 13 – “to will and to do” – God energizes our desires and our actions – God must work IN us before He can work THROUGH us; He is more interested in the WORKMAN than in the WORK

v. 14 – “murmurings” – “complaining” / “disputing” – “questioning”

v. 15 – “blameless and harmless” – blameless describes a life that cannot be criticized from WITHOUT, harmless describes a life that is pure WITHIN

1 Thessalonians 5:22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.

v. 15 – “crooked and perverse” – crooked is the word from which the English word “scoliosis” (curvature of the spine) comes from, and perverse intensifies this – “one who has strayed so far off the path they are deviant”

v. 16 – Paul didn’t want his efforts in Philippi to all be for nothing

v. 17 – Paul says “even if my lifeblood is poured out like a sacrificial offering on the altar of your faith” (i.e. I give my life to bring you the gospel), I will rejoice and I want you to rejoice too (v. 18)

TIMOTHY

v. 20 – “likeminded” – literally “one souled” (we would say “kindred spirit”)

v. 21 – sadly, all the other Christians in Rome were too preoccupied with their own concerns to help the Apostle Paul by making a trip to Philippi

v. 22 – “proof” – the Philippian church had “experience” with Timothy

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

v. 24 – Paul knew that his plans were subject to God’s approval

EPAPHRODITUS

Epaphroditus had been sent to Rome from the Philippian church to minister to Paul’s needs, but he himself had become extremely ill and almost died. Paul is now sending him back to Philippi with this letter.

v. 26 – “heaviness” – he was more concerned about their worry for him than he was about his own difficult situation (“don’t worry about me!”)

v. 28 – “carefully” – “sooner” / “sorrowful” – “concerned”

v. 29 – “reputation” – “high value”

v. 30 – “to supply your lack of service” – the Philippian church could not all be with Paul in Rome, so Epaphroditus went to the Apostle in their stead

v. 30 – “not regarding his life” – RISK – he was not content simply to CONTRIBUTE to an offering for Paul, he gave HIMSELF to take the offering

JOY COMES FROM SUBMISSION!

LET THIS MIND BE IN YOU!