

# (Youth Bible School 2007) Christ Is the Believer's Life

by John D. Martin

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*The Book of Philippians teaches us how to maintain joy in spite of life's challenges by relating everything to Christ and responding to Him in a way that pleases Him.*

**Duration:** 1:01:30

**Scripture:** Psalm 34:5, Matthew 6:33, John 10:10

**Topics:** "Christian Joy", "Christ Centered"

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## Description

In this sermon, the apostle Paul addresses four things in life that steal people's joy: circumstances, people, things, and anxiety. He emphasizes the importance of putting these things into perspective and proportion in relation to Christ. Paul provides practical and specific instructions on how to maintain joy through all of life and be always rejoicing. He highlights that Christ is the believer's life and encourages believers to find their joy and fulfillment in Him.

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## Transcript

Hello, this is Brother Denny. Welcome to Charity Ministries. Our desire is that your life would be blessed and changed by this message.

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These messages are offered to all without charge by the free will offerings of God's people. A special thank you to all who support this ministry. Greetings.

I just realized a few moments ago that it's been three, four years since I was here. 2003, I think, was the last time, and I directed the chorus that time. And I guess I taught the Book of John, the Gospel of John, the year before that.

So it's good to be back. I was reminiscing a little bit. Our first Bible school was in 1991.

How many of you have been born since that? Oh, you were all born before 1991. Well, you were all in diapers probably at that time. Anyway, I think there were 70.

To give you a little bit of an idea of the history of Charity Bible School, I think there were 70 people here that first year. I think there were 150 the next year, and then it went from there. And it's been delightful to see all of you folks come out this year for Bible school.

We're going to be studying the Book of Philippians. And, of course, if you look at the top of this song, it says, I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. That's the scripture text that I chose for this song in my hymnal.

And I guess I would describe the Book of Philippians as the nuts and bolts of the abundant life. It's a very positive book, and I thought this song would go well. So, we're not going to take a lot of time each day.

Let's just sing verses 1 and 3. By the end of verse 1, you'll have the hang of it, and then we'll sing verse 3. So, deeper and deeper before Thee I bow, Pour Thy abundance of grace on me now, Master in meekness before Thee I fall, Lord, in my life Thou shalt be all in all. Deeper and deeper, deeper in Thee, Not of this world shall satisfy me. Down at Thy feet I do cast myself, Christ be my life and my full reward.

Verse 3. Deeper and deeper, then higher above, Seek I, Lord Jesus, for Thy gracious love. Only the way of the cross will be crowned, Only in meekness true joy will be found. Deeper and deeper, deeper in Thee, Not of this world shall satisfy me.

Down at Thy feet I do cast myself, Christ be my life and my full reward. Shall we bow our heads for prayer? Father, we thank You that You have designed us to respond to every aspect of Christ's mind, to every aspect of Christ's heart, to every aspect of Christ's spirit. We thank You, Lord, that You made us with these capacities.

And, Lord, we pray this week, help us to understand how to respond in a way that these capacities can be maximized in Your grace, not frustrated in our experience. Lord, I pray that every person would leave this Bible school not only charged up for the next week, but, Lord, with some good foundational concepts of life that will see them through to the very end. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Thinking about coming here to Bible school, there were two verses that were sort of going through my mind. I was thinking how the Apostle Paul spoke to the Romans in his book, in the first chapter, verses 11 and 12, where he said, I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift.

But this is the part that excites me. To the end, ye may be established. That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith of both you and me.

I wanted to become a part of your life. I wanted to be able to do something this week that would establish you, or let's say it this way, to cooperate with God so that God could establish you and that all of you could successfully go through life to the very end. So, you know, there are a lot of people in this world that start out.

In fact, it would be interesting to know what percentage of people start out in the Christian life and lose out. I don't know if I ever saw a percentage. I do know that a man by the name of Scanzoni wrote a book years ago called No Faith to Lose, in which he interviewed several thousand college students and tried to find out what their faith had consisted of that they had lost.

And he came to the conclusion that they had no faith to lose. And so I think there are a lot of people that make a start and never really learn to appropriate faith in Jesus. And so that's what we want to talk about this week out of this book of Philippians.

If there was ever a person who was passionately committed to Christ and showed us how that works its way out in every situation of life, it was Paul. And he gives us many secrets in this book. A couple of years ago I read the book *Second Touch* by Keith Miller.

I think that's an author nobody reads anymore. His books are probably all out of print. But he gave an incident in there that caught my imagination.

He said that he was a football fan. And by the way, I hope none of you are. But the Apostle Paul drew lessons from the games even though he didn't attend them.

And so I think we have the license to do that too. But this particular man was interested in football. And he noticed the tremendous motivation that football players have in playing the game as if each minute is the last minute and they're giving it all they've got the whole way to the end.

And he said he had the impression that if the coach told them to tackle the Greyhound bus sitting along the curb, eight people would take off to tackle the bus. That's how motivated they were and how devoted they were to the coach. And so he decided to go to visit the coach and ask him, what is the secret? Because he knew that he had very few people in his church with that kind of motivation for Jesus.

And so he thought, well maybe I can learn something from football. And so he went to the coach and he asked the coach, what is the secret of this tremendous motivation that persists the whole way through to the end of the game? Day after day after day in the practices and in the games that are played. And the coach said, well, he was rather shocked by the coach's response.

The coach said, well, you must understand that football is basically a spiritual game in which two teams are playing against each other. And for all intents and purposes, they are physically equal. It's not going to be the physical superiority of the one or the other that's going to win the game.

Everybody playing that game understands that the game will be won by the team that gives the most unremitting commitment to every moment of the game. And he said, if you will watch carefully, you will find that the players are paying very little attention to those stupid people in the bleachers who are called fans. By the way, fan means fanatic.

And anyway, he said, you'll notice they don't pay much attention to those people. You'll find their eyes are riveted on the coach because they know that those people, most of them sitting in the bleachers, don't know the finer points of football. And they won't know whether the play they made was really a good play or not, but the coach will.

And they watch him because they know he knows the game and they live for his approval. And Monday morning they will replay this game on video and they'll stop it after every play. And the coach will say that was a tremendous play or that was lousy.

And they live, they have the coach commend them on every move they make in the game. What a lesson. What a lesson.

These players were unconsciously playing, or consciously I should say, the game to a different audience than what most people think they were. They were not playing it for those people in the bleachers. They were playing it only for the coach.

That's who they were playing the whole game for. And there's a tremendous analogy here for victorious, joyful, Christian experience. Those players loved the game because of the way it operated and the success and the joy of pleasing the coach.

Well, you know, the Bible says Christ is our captain. For it became him for whom are all things and by whom are all things and bringing many sons into glory to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering. And the great Christians of all time have been what they were because they have learned to play all of life to Christ.

And that's the great secret of this book. It's the great secret of always rejoicing. If you want to know a little bit how this works, suppose I'm having a conversation or you're having a conversation.

I could be part of it too. You know how conversations start to maybe deteriorate sometimes and maybe you get talking about people or things that really aren't appropriate or not very appropriate to talk about. Conversations can go that way pretty quickly sometimes.

And suppose out of the corner of your eye you see Brother Dean Taylor walking up to the edge of the conversation. It's amazing how that conversation all of a sudden becomes what it should be without anybody saying anything. The problem is we do not practice the presence of Christ.

That's the problem. We are not conscious that he's standing at the edge of every conversation. He's observing every action.

And the people who have made a success of Christianity are playing every part of the game, life if you please, to please him. And to have him say, I highly approve of what you've said and what you've done. Now there have been people that have done that.

How many of you have ever read the book Practicing the Presence of Christ by Brother Lawrence? I guess it's, I'd be surprised if it's not on the book stand back there where they're selling books. If you've never read it, it's just a little book. You can read it probably in an hour or two.

This man was just a cook in a kitchen of a monastery. And he learned, and this won't happen without conscious effort, he learned how to practice the presence of Christ in every situation. And so the theme of this book actually is the conscious awareness of Christ in every aspect of life.

That's really sort of the, it's not the main theme, but it's an underlying theme of this whole book. The conscious awareness of Christ in every aspect of the life. Because you see, most of us look at our circumstance, or look at our, let me get this right.

Most of us look at Christ through our circumstances. We're looking at our circumstances and we respond to Christ depending on what the circumstances are. The apostle Paul did it the opposite way.

He looked at his circumstances through Christ. And he responded to the circumstances on the basis of what he understood Christ would think and feel and say about those circumstances. And we're going to see as we go through the lesson today, that makes a tremendous difference.

Now, let's do a little survey of this book before we get started. Denny said we're going to do this in five lessons. Actually, they told me to do it in four and they want me to talk about something else on Friday.

So we have to hurry. Alright, in this book we have the apostle Paul addressing the four things in life that steal people's joy. Because they cannot somehow put those into perspective and proportion in relation to Christ.

And Paul gives us very practical and very specific instruction as to how to relate these four things to Christ and maintain our joy through all of life. And be always rejoicing. Because that is God's purpose for us.

Jesus said, I came to you that you might have my joy fulfilled in you and that your joy might be full. And the apostle John, when he wrote 1 John, says these things have been written unto you that your joy might be full. And Jesus said, in this world you shall have tribulation.

But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. I honestly believe that Jesus and I believe Paul were unusually joyful, cheerful people. And that's one of the reasons why they attracted people to them.

Because people are inspired by people who can go through life and never lose their smile. Now, that's not completely realistic. We could turn to 2 Corinthians, I think it is, where Paul tells us some of his struggles.

And I think Paul struggled with this too and didn't always stay on top of it. But to an amazing degree he did. And let me tell you what the four things are.

Here they are. The first one is circumstances. I asked Dr. Hess, my family doctor, what he thought of this modern diagnosis called bipolar.

How many have ever heard of somebody being diagnosed bipolar? Honestly, when I was going through psychology at Shippensburg University, that term was not even used. And that's a new term. And every other person is bipolar.

Did you know that? Whatever your problem is, you're bipolar. And I said to Dr. Hess, I said, what do you think of this diagnosis? Dr. Hess is a German Baptist, very godly man. And he laughed and he said, John, you're bipolar and so am I. He said, when your circumstances are like you want them, you go up.

And when circumstances aren't the way you like them, you go down. That's bipolar. And most people who are diagnosed as bipolar go through their whole life up and down, up and down, because their circumstances are going up and down.

And most of our circumstances we have no control over. So that's a problem. The second one is people.

The second joy killer is people. We have to get along with certain people that aren't very get alongable. And sometimes we don't have too much control over those people.

What do you do? How do you relate to this and not lose your joy? I could give you some very interesting experiences I've had with people. Well, we're going to find that out in chapter two. We're going to talk about circumstances today, by the way.

Joy in spite of circumstances. And then tomorrow we're going to talk about joy in spite of people, if we can get along fast enough. The third thing that conditioned people's joy or the lack of it is things.

If they have the things they want, they're happy. If they don't have the things they want, they're unhappy. And we're going to look in chapter three and you can go count tonight if you want to.

How many times the word things appears in that chapter? And Paul tells us how to relate to that. The fourth thing that steals people's joy is anxiety or worry. And Paul deals with that in chapter four.

Now, really, when you stop to think about it, if you could have if you could deal with your circumstances and with all the people that pass through your experience and with things and with anxiety about the unknown future, if you could find the answer to those four things, I think you would agree with me, you could maintain your joy all of the time. And so that's why I titled this little study, Always Rejoicing, because Paul does tell us some very important basic concepts about these four aspects of life. All right, let's break the book down another way.

That's one way we can break it down. And I'm going to try to sort of combine some of this. All right, we have a fourfold picture of Christ in Philippians.

That's very helpful. The first one that I would point out is Paul teaches us in chapter one that Christ is the believer's life. Christ is the believer's life.

And the key verse, if you have a Bible, I would mark this. This is the key verse in chapter one. For to me to live is Christ.

Christ is the believer's life. Paul said, for to me to live is Christ. All right.

We go into chapter two, and the theme of chapter two is Christ is the believer's mind. And the key verse there is verse five. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

And we're going to get a good lesson as to how we should think. That's going to help us. Is that my heart? Anyway, is it? Are we OK? Or am I OK? All right.

I don't know. There might be a fire. There's out there somewhere.

All right. Christ is the believer's mind. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

Chapter two, verse five. The third chapter pictures Christ as the believer's goal. Verse ten, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection.

And finally, in chapter four, Christ is the believer's strength. I can do all things through Christ, which strengthens me. Now, here's the progression.

If Christ is truly your life. As we will try to picture today. Then he will constantly be on your mind.

Now we're in chapter two. And if he is constantly on your mind. Your desires were more and more turned to him as a goal in life.

Chapter three. Just like if you have in your mind. A concept of a beautiful landscape for the house where you live.

And you think about that. And maybe you drive past the place and you see it exactly the way you'd like it. And you think about you.

Well, guess what? It won't be too many years before I'll drive past your place and your house will be landscaped. Like that picture you had in your mind. So Christ is our life.

We find ourselves thinking. About him. In some very specific ways that we'll talk about.

And as we think about him. This becomes an objective goal in our mind, which in turn becomes our subjective experience. Because what we think that's what we are.

Somebody said you're not what you think you are, but what you think you are. And, of course, there's lots of emphasis on this in the whole New Testament. Be transformed by the spirit of your mind.

Be renewed in your minds. I mean, this is a very key part. And we'll get to that in chapter two.

And, of course, with all of that in place. We become strong in all of our experience. All right.

Now, this book is assuming that every one of you sitting here is a Christian. This is not a book to non-Christians. I'm so happy that Dean and Denny have been talking about that part of human experience.

Being lost. And how to come to faith. And all of that.

But there just isn't much of that in this book. This book is written to Christian people. In fact, one of the little phrases that runs through this book.

A little phrase that I, for years, took for granted in all of Paul's epistles. And that's the little phrase that says, In Christ. To Christ.

Unto Christ. For Christ. All those little prepositional phrases.

I think there are about a hundred. Somebody counted them. There are about 132 of them in Paul's epistles.

And it's assumed that what he's talking about. He's talking about people who are in Christ. John says, abiding in him.

To the point where there's such an identity between you and him. That if somebody looks at you, they say, I've seen Christ. Alright? And the evidence of this.

All that we've been talking about is joy. The evidence is joy. Why? Because it's a life filled, as Paul says at the beginning of the book.

It's a life filled with grace and peace. And those are two tremendous terms. The word grace is the word charis.

In the Greek. That's the word for grace. And it literally means, and this is my homemade definition from years of contemplating everything the Bible says about this to the best of my limited ability.

Grace, as I understand it, means God making available to human beings. Finite human beings. His infinite characteristics.

Did you hear me? It's God's infinite characteristics made available to finite people. Now, not all at once. You'd be like a hundred watt light bulb that's given about 5,000 volts.

You'd blow out immediately. So God gives it to us as we need it. And as we can appropriate it.

So when you need wisdom for a certain situation, you're given all the wisdom God has for that situation. When you need power for a certain situation, you're given all the power that's in God's character for that situation. If you need to forgive somebody, you're given all the great forgiving heart of God and all the supernatural ability he has to forgive for that situation.

So that as you walk through life, you have the supernatural characteristics of God being made available to you in these little situations where you need help. These situations that are beyond you. Isn't that wonderful? And the basic idea of grace, you know what grace is, you say that person was graceful.

Well, that's the concept. The person who is experiencing what I just talked about is characterized as people look at him. The response that they give is one of delight, beauty, charm, loveliness.

I mean, look it up in Vine's little expository dictionary. All these beautiful little characteristics are a part of this word. Well, it would stand to reason that if you were experiencing God's supernatural characteristics to make you do and say and feel in every situation exactly like he would, you would be an irresistible, beautiful, charming person.

And it's interesting that the word joy is right in the same section of Strong's Concordance. This is the word for joy. They're in the same word family.

And it's interesting to me that when I looked the word joy up in Webster, this is what he said. The emotion that is evoked by well-being, success, good fortune, or the prospect of possessing what one desires. That's interesting.

It's just really related to this thing of grace. And it is the essential definition of the word peace, which is the Old Testament shalom, which means well-being, prosperity, and success in the true sense of the word. And Paul is saying that he wants these people to experience the fullness of those two things.

Grace, all of God's supernatural characteristics poured into the life for finite human experience. And peace, which would be the result of that, which is well-being, prosperity, success. Isn't that tremendous? In fact, there was a little motto that I saw years ago, and it said this.

It said that joy is the infallible evidence of the grace of God in the life. Well, we must move on. So, these are some basic concepts behind this whole idea of joy in this epistle.

And we find this word itself appearing over and over again. You will find at the top of your sheet, I've listed, that you'll find joy six times. You'll find rejoice nine times.

You'll find rejoice, and you can see there how many times you find those. I think it's about a total of 17 times. Psalm 34, 5 says, That's what Paul's going to teach us here.

And, of course, in Nehemiah it says, Now, what is the secret here? Well, let's start to get into this book. It is rather amazing that this book is about joy. Because there doesn't seem to be any apparent reason for joy at the beginning of this book.

This church in Philippi, you'll read in Acts 16, began with a beating. With Paul and Silas thrown into prison and into the stocks, fastened in the stocks, and there they sang. And you can read the story there.

Now, Paul had wanted to go to Rome as a preacher. He went there as a prisoner. That wasn't what he had in mind.

And when he got there, the believers in Rome were divided about him. There was a controversy about him. That's not a happy experience.

And some people tried to make things hard for him. We'll see as we go along. Some said that he was a lunatic.

Now, these would have been the unbelievers. Here's a man who says, There's a new king of the world has come. And this king, he's the real lord of the universe.

And he's going to bring a kingdom of justice and peace. And it's that Jew that was crucified down there in Jerusalem. This guy's a little off his rocker.

And yet, Paul overflowed with joy in the midst of all this. In fact, when I look at his experience, I think, well, what are we bellyaching about? We don't have anything nearly like he had to deal with. Alright? Well, let's talk about the single mind triumphing over circumstances.

And the theme of this is, for me, for to me to live is Christ. And it makes all the difference how you say that statement. Now, every person who calls himself a Christian, obviously, is going to put Christ on that line.

But there are other possibilities. There are people who would have to, if they knew that when they wrote the word in there, that it would have to be confirmed by their wife, or by their best friends, or the people who know them best, the people who know what gets them excited, what gets them talking. You know, there's some people who don't say anything.

You get on a certain subject, and I mean, that guy didn't think he could talk. My oh my, he can talk. But you just have to have the right subject.

Maybe it's tractors. Maybe it's motorcycles. Maybe it's money.

Maybe it's pleasure. Maybe it's fame. I mean, there are many things you could put on that line.

And most people who call themselves Christians, I said most, I said it on purpose, would not be able to put Jesus there, or Christ, because that isn't what gets them going. Whatever it is that gets you going, that's what you have to put on that line. And if you can't put Christ on that line, if it is not true that Jesus is the thing that gets you excited, that gets you talking, it's the thing that you think about more than anything else, it's the thing you spend your money on, your time planning for, and you feel like you've arrived once you get there.

If Jesus isn't that, then you need to listen to Brother Denny's message this morning. I'm just going to frankly tell you you're not converted. I'm just going to tell you that right now.

I will put that in. Because this is the key. And you're going to see how Paul applied this in the circumstances of his life in a most amazing way.

Because I told you that Paul saw his circumstances through Christ. It didn't matter what the circumstance was, it was viewed in the perspective of this. Because that's what he was living for.

He says in one place, Christ in us is the hope of glory. Well, what is glory? Glory is a manifestation of excellence. We talk about the glory of the sunset.

We talk about the glory of youth. It means the most perfect expression. And so Christ in us is the hope of glory.

If there's going to be any radiance, if there's going to be any excellence expressed, if there's going to be any beauty, it's Christ in us. And that's what Paul, Paul never, I shouldn't say he never did, he was human, but to an amazing degree, he kept that in his focus. And so, I want to look at some aspects of that focus that are the secret to joy.

And if you look there, I have three things listed. The fellowship of the gospel, the furtherance of the gospel, and the faith of the gospel. Let's first talk about the fellowship of the gospel.

And I'm going to read inclusively verses 3 through 11. Let's look at this. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.

Always in every prayer of mine for you all, making requests with joy for your fellowship. That word is koinonia. Partnership, however you want to translate it.

It means people who are completely involved with each other's lives. For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ. Even as it is meet, or suitable, for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart inasmuch as both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel you all are partakers of my grace.

For God is my record. How greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, that ye may approve things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere and without offense to the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.

Now, he says that one of the secrets of his joy is his fellowship with these people. Now, the word fellowship here, they tell me in the context and in the meaning of the word here, sort of carries the idea of a business partnership. He's in partnership with these Philippians.

Now, in a partnership, some people do the work, some people do the office management. I mean, people have various roles, but they all are responsible for the business proceeds and the success of that business, no matter what job they were doing. If they're the janitor and they're invested in this partnership, they share with the rest to the extent that they were involved.

Now, these people were partners with Paul. They had sent him a gift. In fact, that's one of the reasons why the book was written.

To thank them for their gift. And they didn't give a gift because they were wealthy people. They were poor.

If you turn back to Corinthians, it says... In fact, let's turn to Corinthians. 2 Corinthians 8, verses 2 to 5. He's trying to challenge the Corinthians by referring to these people. And it says, in verse 2, how that in a

great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

These people were in affliction. They were being persecuted. They were poor.

They were in poverty. But they had lots of joy. I think that's what... I mean, Paul knew the character of these people.

And that's one of the reasons he didn't want them to lose this. And that's why he's writing to them. But they were partners with Paul.

Out of their poverty and their persecution, they didn't have much to give. But they sent a man from their community over those thousands... probably around a thousand miles from Macedonia to Rome. Maybe not that far, but it was many miles.

Over mountains where there were robbers. I mean, you didn't get on a Boeing 707 and fly to Rome. I mean, this was a dangerous trip.

The peril of your life. And this poor little congregation got together the money and the finances to send a man the whole way to Rome to give Paul this gift. And Paul says, one of the joys of the gospel is the fact that we are partners.

We are not alone. We're in this together. Now, there's some people who have the idea that, well, suppose you're on a desert island somewhere and there aren't any other people around.

Well, God help you if you end up on a desert island and you don't have anybody who cares that you're there and nobody to participate and be a partner with you in the gospel. By the time you end up on that desert island, I hope there's some people around the world praying for you. I hope there's some people around the world concerned about where you are and trying to find out your welfare and maybe trying to send somebody to look for you.

And their prayers and all of their efforts are part of your experience. There are some people that have the idea that Christianity is an individual thing. I'll just be a Christian.

I'll go up on top of the mountain and worship God by myself. Well, that is not the nature of Christianity. That's like saying, I'm going to play professional baseball by myself.

That's not the nature of the game. You cannot play baseball by yourself. And this is not the nature of Christianity.

Christianity is fellowship. I don't know what I would have done when Jeffrey died on March 17th if I had not by that time and Jeffrey by that time created a huge network that was in it with us together. That was one of the joys.

And don't ask me how, but in the midst of a circumstance like that, we had lots of joy, lots of tears, mixed with lots of joy because of the prayers and the ministry. Somebody just the other week, maybe he's here, said I was inspired to write a song about Jeffrey. And he put it on a CD and did a computer simulated organ playback of his composition.

It was a beautiful composition. It was classical actually. And I put that on and I just sat and cried and cried and cried.

It just brought back all the memories and all my hopes and dreams about Jeffrey. But they weren't unpleasant tears. They were tears of sorrow mixed with joy and gratitude and fellowship.

I mean, I couldn't describe it. It was too profound for me. But God help us if there's no partnership, if there's no fellowship.

The Apostle Paul was a great people person. There's some people who say, well, I'm just not a people person. There is no such thing in the church of God.

All of God's people are people persons. If you're not a people person, something has gone wrong with your development. Honestly.

The Apostle Paul in his epistles, I think, mentioned something like a hundred people by name. Wherever Paul was, there was a huge network of people praying for him and thinking of his welfare and making whatever contributions they could make to him. And they were partners.

And I just don't know how to tell you what you're missing and how much you're limiting your ability to face all of life's issues with joy if you have not created a network of people who are in this with you, heart to heart. My wife was given a book the other day. We were at a family reunion and there was an old man in the community who said, I want to meet John and his wife.

And he came over to meet us and he gave my wife a book. He said, here I wrote this little book, this little memories of things that happened to me in my lifetime. He said, by the way, and he turned to certain pages, he said, when you read about that sister in that article, that was you.

My wife had no idea. What it was, was he had gone out to spray for some problem in his chicken house and then he was going to turn on the fans and get the spray out of the chicken house before it affected the chickens. But he forgot to turn on the fan.

And he went out the next morning and all the chickens were dead. And he was in a real financial strait. And he thought, what am I going to do? I needed that money.

We can't survive without that money. And he said he went to the mailbox at noon and here was a check from my wife, before she was my wife, in the mail. And he went to his wife and said, we have nothing to worry about.

God knew about this before it even happened. That's why Paul is so, that's the secret of joy. It's to build a network of people and support.

Alright? It says here that God is a finisher. He's not just a beginner. He's a finisher.

And Paul said, the reason why I'm confident that He's going to finish His good work in you is because we're partners. And when I win, you win. And when you win, I win.

And we're all going to win together. That was a source of his joy. These Philippians were in this with Paul and they would receive the same reward.

Jesus taught that clearly. They would receive the same reward that he received because they were in it with him. Whether he was in prison or whether he was out of prison.

It said they were with him in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. And that's a tremendous principle and I don't want you just to walk off with that because in our remnant churches there are people who just walk off. There's a lot of individualism.

People don't realize that it is indispensable for them to pull together with their brother. They feel they can take this or leave it. They can walk off and sit in their own home and be their own church by themselves.

Well, I'm not saying that's not possible but I will tell you you're cutting out a big hunk of what is meant to be the joy of your salvation and the possibility of your final success. This is a team effort. Whether he was suffering they suffered by giving out of their poverty and out of their trials.

They added to their own difficult circumstances to relieve his. And so they were in it together. And not only were they in it with him he was in it with them.

Notice he said I yearned after you in the bowels of Jesus Christ. Now that word's a little earthy bowels but that's exactly what it means. It means your innards.

It means to care so much about somebody that it affects your digestion. I mean this wasn't just a superficial relationship. You know there are three levels of relationship.

There's a superficial relationship. You meet somebody in the store you never met and you say hi and there's warm fuzzy feelings and you go and you never see the person again. Oh, that's nice.

I mean there's nothing wrong with that. But you know there are a lot of people who never get any further than that with their brother. And then there's the friend to friend relationship.

You know he pats you on the back and you pat him on the back and you give each other things and that's nice. And that's good too. There's nothing wrong with either one of those.

But then there's what you call heart to heart relationships. And that's where you're in it together. If there's a death you're there.

The morning Jeffrey died all night. He died at 10 o'clock Saturday night. All night there were people there.

Walked in the door put their arms around us and wept with us. All night. Family, friends, church members all night.

And I said to the family on Sunday morning I said now we can do one of two things. We can sit here and stew in our own sorrow and not know what to do with it. Or we can go to church where the people who care about us are.

And it was quite a church service. But you see people don't want they want a heart to heart experience. I don't know about you but we've had people walk off our community and say and people didn't care.

What they wanted they wanted a heart to heart experience but they didn't share their hearts with us. They wanted the experience without doing it. How many know what I'm talking about? They wanted to be friend to friend or maybe even superficial.

But you didn't give us a heart to heart experience. If you're going to have a heart to heart experience then you're going to have to relate to people heart to heart like Paul did. Your bowels are going to have to yearn after them.

You're going to have to cry with them. You're going to have to rejoice with them. You're going to have to enter into their life and they into yours.

Well we're not getting along here very fast. Alright. So the first thing that really gives him joy is the fellowship of the gospel.

And the thing I'm trying to tell you people is don't tell me that your life isn't full of joy if you've eliminated this and for some reason have not made this a working reality in your life. This is very very important and essential that Paul talks about at great length here. Alright.

The second thing or what we notice here then in relation to this he prays for them. This is one of Paul's prayers. Or at least he tells us what he prays about.

He says he wants their love to abound. This is part of this fellowship experience. He prays that this will just get better and better and better and better.

Their love for each other. Which of course grows out of their love for God. He wants it to abound.

No limits on their love. But how? See most people think of love in terms of the heart. Paul says I want your love to abound in knowledge.

See? Most people think love is just something that has to do with feelings. No, no, no. It has to do with knowledge.

An old couple came through the receiving line when I got married. He had a cane and she had a walker and they looked pretty decrepit and pitiful. But they looked up at us and both of them had the most radiant faces and they said something very interesting.

They said you think you're in love today. It gets better and better. Now on your wedding day that's incomprehensible.

How could it get any better? Yes, it gets better. You could ask me almost any question you want to ask me about what my wife would think. About a subject that maybe I never even heard her talk about and I could pretty accurately tell you what she would think.

Because I've learned to know her. And it gets better. Uh-huh.

And... Anyway. Paul says that's what I want to have happen to you. But the problem is most people as they learn to know each other it gets worse.

And one of the reasons is because they don't have much knowledge. And I want to tell you a very important piece of knowledge. And that is you should make up your mind before you begin any relationship and especially marriage that you're going to forgive the first time something disappoints you about the other person.

Because it is going to happen. And most people are caught unprepared. And when it happens they build up resentment.

Forgiveness is the basic foundational principle of all relationships because we are human and we're all going to disappoint each other and we're all going to hurt each other. And you should make up your mind before it happens what you're going to do. Oh, there it is.

I made up my mind ahead of time. I know exactly I'm going to forgive her. Anyway.

That's one of the things you need to know. But Paul says I want you to learn to know each other and learn more and more about each other and I want you to love and I want... that's going to be the reason for your love. Okay.

Moral discernment. Love grows with moral discernment. It says that you may learn to approve things that are excellent.

Well, one of the reasons why people's love for each other doesn't work very well is because they don't put the right priorities on things. They maybe put priorities on things rather than on people or whatever. To give you an idea how this works.

Suppose we had a table up here and we had we had on it a milk bottle with a nipple and we had a big red ball and we had a thousand dollars and there's some children back there. I don't think any quite small enough for the first one. But we had let's say we had a two year old come up here and choose and he choose the milk bottle and nobody would think anything of it because he is just a two year old.

Now, if an eight year old or six year old came up here and chose the milk bottle we'd say now there's something wrong here. He would choose the ball. If we had an adult come up here and he chose the milk bottle or the ball we'd have a problem.

He's going to choose the thousand dollars. See the child doesn't know how to evaluate the thousand dollars. Of course children are getting smarter nowadays about money.

But but follow what I'm saying. We have a lot of Christians that can't relate to each other because when they walk up to a situation they choose the bottle. Or the ball.

They don't value their relationship. They don't know how to properly value their brother. Or the church.

Or their relationships or their fellowship. And so he said I want you to be able to discern and approve things that are excellent and know what should be valued and what is not important. I'll tell you some of the stuff that people fight over you could just sit down and cry.

It's three year old stuff. They haven't gotten beyond the bottle or the ball in their ability to value their brother. Or situations.

Or what's important in the church. They don't like the pastor. They say he changed my formula and I don't like him.

And he's also praying that there would be the fruit of right living in their lives. The fruit of right living. So he's praying that their love would abound.

They'd learn to evaluate things and prioritize things properly. And out of that would come the fruit of beautiful living and fellowship. I'm going to leave that.

But there's a burden on my heart. Because I hear all kinds of horror stories from all over the remnant churches. And we've been through a few ourselves.

And it's time for us to learn that if we want to have joy we're going to have to come to terms with this one. We're going to have to be able to let our love abound with knowledge and with proper judgment and priorities and all of that. Because this is an indispensable part of your joy.

The second thing we want to talk about is the fervence of the gospel. This has to do with Paul's situation. He ended up in Rome as a prisoner not a preacher.

What was his response? His response was to celebrate his circumstances. Isn't that amazing? Why did he celebrate his circumstances? Because he said the things which have happened to me logically speaking have to be for the fervence of the gospel or God would not have put me here. He said, I am set that word means providentially placed for the fervence of the gospel sitting in a hole in the wall.

I think he was in his own private hired house, but in prison. I said he saw his circumstances through Christ. He said, look, Christ is everything.

I'm here. How does Christ put, what kind of perspective does Christ put on this? This must be for the fervence of the gospel. Now you have to do that consciously.

If you don't do it consciously your feelings of course go the opposite direction. He consciously said to himself, this has to be for the fervence of the gospel. God would not have put me here if it wouldn't be.

That's why I'm here. So now we start thinking in terms of how we can further the gospel here because that's obviously the purpose why we're here. The fact of the matter was he was chained to a guard.

We find out that he was involved with the palace guard. If you look in 22 of chapter 4, it says Caesar's household. That's Caesar's own personal bodyguards.

Paul must have been a pretty important prisoner. They used Caesar's personal bodyguards and they chained him to those and they were chained I think six hours at a clip. So there would have been four bodyguards.

Four bodyguards throughout the day chained to Paul's wrist and that poor soul had to stand there and hear Paul preach and to hear him sing and hear him dictate his letters and hear him pray for six hours at a stretch. I'm not sure who the prisoner was. I don't think it was Paul.

The fact of the matter is some of those people got converted. Would you look at the last part of the book? You know, you always read the end of the story first. So look at chapter four, verse 22.

All the saints salute you, chiefly they who are of Caesar's household. Some of those guys got converted. Right here.

All right. So anyway, he had literally a captive audience. I mean, how could it be any better? I mean, these guys otherwise probably would have never come out of there.

They were going to go in there for six. You guys stand with me now. I got six hours.

Not only that, but he knew that since he was in prison, the other people would say, well, if Paul's in prison, what do we have to fear? Let's go out and fearlessly preach the gospel. His circumstances he saw as opportunities. He was a single minded person.

See, we're double minded. We go into these kinds of situations, and we don't see the circumstance through Christ, and we get all muddled up in the circumstance. We're trying somehow to serve Christ and relate to the circumstance without him.

It just becomes a problem. But Paul was a single minded person. Christ, when he says, for to me to live is Christ, that's what he meant.

It didn't matter what the circumstance was. The word contention here means to canvas for office. There were people out there that made a political thing out of this.

Paul's in prison. Now's our chance to get his churches and win them to us. Say bad things about Paul.

Put him down, you know, and take his place. And what's Paul say? Wonderful. Christ is preached.

Even with a bad motive, Christ is preached. Would that we had that attitude. You know, Wesley and Whitefield couldn't see eye to eye, but they plugged away, and at the end of their lives, somebody asked Wesley, do you see Whitefield? Do you think you'll see Whitefield in heaven? And Wesley said, no, I don't think I will.

He said, he'll be so near the throne and I'll be so far away, I don't think I'll see him. Would that we had that attitude, that it doesn't matter just as long as Christ is preached. Not only that, but he says, and we're going to conclude with this as just a wonderful little concluding thought.

He says, I've gotten to the end of verse 18 there. Let's look at 19. This is the one that really excites me for.

I know that this shall turn to my salvation. What's he mean there? Wasn't Paul saved? Well, the word salvation means salvage. I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer and the supply of the spirit of Christ.

Paul said to be very honest with you, this looks like a bad situation, but God is going to salvage it. It's going to turn into glory. Now, Paul had no idea how that would all happen.

But since he was looking through his circumstances through Christ, he knew that the whole thing would turn. Of course, we're looking at it now, and we know it did that Paul. When we look at this and this, this all turned into glory.

The Paul saw that ahead of time. He believed that if for him to live was Christ, then the logical conclusion was Christ was going to get glory out of this. And so this whole situation was going to turn and not be at all like it looked in the end.

It was going to be triumph and glory. I'm going to conclude with that. But these are some tremendous principles about circumstances.

You need the fellowship of your brother and sister, and the more the better and the more hard to heart they are, the better. I just have to keep coming back to our experience in this past year. We felt a tremendous strength and it wasn't our strength, but it was because there were hundreds of people.

I don't even know who they all were, who were there praying for us. And I know it was their prayers. And if we had lived our lives by ourselves, I don't know what would have happened.

We would not have had that strength and that joy in this very difficult trial we went through. And then the second thing is to be able to see your circumstances through Christ. And so you get into the circumstance and you say, look, this is for the furtherance of the gospel.

I have been providentially placed here and it's going to turn to triumph and glory. I see a man in the back of the auditorium nodding his head and knows exactly what I'm talking about. And he's been through a great trial.

Let's bow our heads for prayer. Our father, we thank you today for the supernatural grace of God. We thank you for Jesus.

We thank you that a single-minded focus on him with the support of many brothers and sisters will end in triumph and joy in the process. And Lord, I pray if there's anybody here who has a relationship that needs to be mended, I pray, Father, that they would see how serious that is. And if there's anybody here, Lord, who is focused on their circumstances and cannot see them through Christ, I pray that you would help them to get that perspective.

Help us all, Lord, not to allow our circumstances to rob us of joy. Help us to experience your grace in every situation and not to frustrate it. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Amen.

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