**Philippians—The Joyful Letter**

**Part 7**

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**Last time we ended with talking about how faith is not measured by material possessions, but by spiritual fruit.**

**Paul had written about those who contend that “godliness is a means to financial gain” (1 Tim. 6:5). In another place he points out those who “peddle the word of God for profit” (2 Cor. 2:17).**

**The word *peddle* refers to those who “market the ministry” for personal gain. They see in the ministry a way to make big bucks. America is filled with these kinds of people. Paul says, “That’s not me. That’s not us.”**

**Now, in closing out chapter 3, the Apostle talks about our *position in Christ*:**

**3:20 “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,”**

**We are citizens of the United States. But we are also citizens of of heaven. In our heavenly country the streets are paved with gold, the walls are built of Jasper, and the gates are made of pearl.**

**It is replete with mansions constructed by Jesus Himself. The book of Revelation reveals that there is a rainbow-encircled throne, a crystal stream, foundations sparkling with gems, and the Tree of Life.**

**In our glorious heavenly country there is no sickness, pain, guilt, fear, doubt....no hospitals, prisons, or retirement homes!**

**No sobs are ever heard, no cries, no sighs; only endless praise and worship echo throughout it’s glorious streets. Thank God that He will soon make “all things new!”**

**Paul closes chapter 3 with his favorite topic—the resurrection of our bodies:**

**3:21a “who (Jesus) will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body,”**

**Along with a perfect city, we will have a perfect body—free from sin, disease, weakness, pain, and imperfection.**

**And Paul tells us how God will do all this for us:**

**3:21b “according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”**

**It is Jesus Paul speaks of as the Resurrector. He confidently affirms, “He (Jesus) is able” to raise the dead. The same Jesus that raised Lazarus, the widow’s son, and Jairus’ daughter will raise us up. Jesus promised:**

**“For it is my Father’s will that all who see his Son and believe in him should have eternal life. I will raise them up at the last day” (John 6:40 NLT).**

**What a mighty God we serve!**

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**Now as we begin chapter 4, Paul brings his attention back down to earth and talks frankly about his deep love for the church:**

**4:1 “Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.”**

**Not only does Paul love them, he longs for them. It’s almost like a man in love with a woman. Paul was not married to a woman, but he was definitely married to the church!**

**And loving them, he had a burden for them—“Stand fast in the Lord.” Stay true to the Lord. Don’t be moved away from your profession.**

**Then he turns his thoughts to some discord that existed among them, and he named names:**

**4:2 “I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.”**

**Two women in the church were at odds, and their discord had begun to affect the whole body. Our guess is that he and church leadership had given hints and perhaps skirted around the issue, but now it was time to directly address the parties involved.**

**Can you imagine a letter coming from the great Apostle Paul to be read to the entire church, and your name is on it in the form of a rebuke?**

**Every eye was on these two woman as soon as it was read. Mercifully, the mention was very brief. “Be of the same mind” was the command.**

**We will never agree on everything, but we CAN be of the same mind, walking in peaceful unity in our worship of Christ and service for Him.**

**We see that Paul immediately softens the blow so that the two women are not humiliated:**

**4:3 “And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names *are* in the Book of Life.”**

**We can sense in his words that he suspects they may need help in mending their differences. Apparently the breach was deep. So he says, “Help these women.”**

**But in rebuking them he also honors them. “Help these women who labored with me in the gospel.” These two quarreling women had labored with Paul, which he wisely mentions along with the fact that their names were “in the book of life.”**

**Godly rebuke is never designed to destroy or demoralize a person. It comes to help us be better. It protects us from the damage of going astray, and it comes in a spirit of love.**

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**Next in verse 4, Paul returns to his constant refrain of encouraging them to rejoice:**

**4:4 “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”**

**It helps to once again remind ourselves that Paul wrote this letter from a Roman prison, shackled to soldiers and unable to do what he loved best—travel from city to city and town to town to preach the gospel.**

**Paul’s answer to all of the problems of life is Jesus Christ! He believed that rejoicing in Christ Jesus would dispel discord, and overcome the negatives of life like distressing thoughts, setbacks, persecution, and tears.**

**He says, “Do it always! Make a practice of it. Teach yourself to be a rejoicer!”**

**This is so needed in life, because life is tough and can be grim. Sometimes burdens come that seem to crush us to the dust. Painful heartbreaks can almost make us long to leave this world. Regrets from foolish mistakes can beat us down like an invisible hammer until we groan deeply in our souls, saying with David, “My guilt overwhelms me—it is a burden too heavy to bear” (Ps 38:4).**

**The answer for Paul to all these things was “rejoice in the Lord” and do it all the time! Make the choice to rejoice!**

**Then in verse 5, the Apostle offers another nugget of godly advice:**

**4:5 “Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord *is* at hand.”**

**The word “gentleness” is translated from a Greek word meaning “yieldedness or selflessness” and refers to the willingness to, at any time, choose the Lord’s will over your own. Jesus said in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Not my will, but thine be done” (Luke 22:42).**

**Paul says, “Let men see your resolve to choose Christ over yourself in light of the fact the Lord is near.” The Christian does what he does and lives how he lives with the constant awareness that the Lord could return at any moment!**

**When you choose God’s will over your own, it testifies to the lost that God is real in your life.**

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**Next, Paul deals with the biggest joy stealer around—the thief of worry:**

**4:6a “Be anxious for nothing,”**

***Anxious* is from a word meaning “distracted, divided.” It is another word for worry. Worry divides our attention away onto something we’re afraid of. It destroys our ability to place full focus on what we should.**

**Jesus warned against worry 3 times in His Sermon on the Mount. He said “Don’t worry...about your life, about tomorrow, or about having what you need (Matt. 6:25-34).**

**The Lord slammed worry as having no value as a problem solver. In fact, it makes problems worse.**

**Worry is a learned response to the stresses of life. If you grow up around worriers, you will likely also learn to respond to stress and pressure with worry.**

**Worry is also a type of backward faith. It causes us to literally expect something bad to happen, just like Bible faith causes us to expect something good!**

**The only way to defeat worry is to learn how to UN-WORRY. Paul tells us how:**

**4:6b “but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;”**

**First, says Paul, PRAY about what you’re worried about. “Don’t worry about anything, but take everything to God in prayer.”—Phil. 4:6**

**Tell God about what’s stressing you. Pour out your heart in honesty to Him. Talk to Him about your worries. Place your cares in His hands. Ask Him to help you, strengthen you, uphold you.**

**Second, once you’ve brought it to Him, LEAVE IT THERE. Don’t give something to God only to take it back. LEAVE IT where you LEFT IT! You haven’t really cast something onto God if you soon take it back by worrying about it.**

**Third, PRAISE ABOUT IT. Paul says we should pray “with thanksgiving.” Thank and praise God for hearing you. Praise is the ultimate expression of overcoming faith. Praise says, “I believe it’s done!”**

**Next, by the Holy Spirit, Paul brings a promise for those that do these things:**

**4:7 “and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”**

**Picture a door with a fully armed guard standing on both sides. You can’t go through the door without going through them. This is what God’s peace does for us—it stands at the door of our heart and refuses to let worry and fear through!**

**I think of the popular song that goes:**

**In every life we have some trouble,**

**But when you worry you make it double,**

**So don’t worry, be happy!**

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**Paul next offers another weapon against worry—*what you think about.***

**4:8 “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—think on these things.”**

**To overcome worry we must bring our thoughts into line with God’s word. To the Corinthians, Paul wrote:**

**“For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,” (2 Cor. 10:4-5).**

**Worry is fueled by renegade thoughts that are NOT submitted to Christ. It is driven by doubt, unbelief, and fear.**

**But by the power of God’s word and His indwelling Spirit, we can learn to un-worry by training our minds to think on what is virtuous and praise-worthy.**

**Literally, we kick out bad thoughts by focusing on good thoughts!**

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**And we close with verse 9 where again Paul encourages the Philippian church to follow his example:**

**4:9 “The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”**

**They not only *heard* Paul’s teachings, they *received and practiced* them. They acted on what they’d heard.**

**Paul assures them, ‘the God of peace will be with you’ for not just hearing, but putting into practice the Word of God!**