

**PHILIPPIANS 2:17-30**  
**EXAMPLES OF JOY IN HUMILITY!**

Please turn in your Bibles to Philippians chapter 2 as we continue our in-depth study of Paul's letter to the church in Philippi.

As we have seen, this is a letter that is filled with the joy of the Lord seen in the lives of Paul and others.

Last time we looked at Jesus and His example to us of humility and the joy that was seen as He humbled Himself for us.

Almighty God, the creator of heaven and earth, became flesh for a world that was at war with Him. He not only became flesh, but He emptied Himself of some of His Godly attributes in the Incarnation, went to the cross of Calvary to pay for our sins, died, was buried and rose from the grave on the third day.

He finished the work and for us to receive that forgiveness of sin we must humble ourselves before Him, admit we are a sinner in need of a Savior and ask Jesus to be Lord and Savior of our lives!

The problem for many today, and even for us at times, is we refuse to listen to what God is saying, we think we know better, and, in that pride, we lose that joy we had in the Lord.

Rebellion against what God has said does not bring joy. It may bring some happiness for a time, but it is short-lived, and, in the end, you lose.

Let me share this example with you about someone who felt she knew better than the experts and, in the end, it almost cost her everything!

At this zoo there was born this baby gorilla. Kind of cute for a gorilla and this woman loved this baby gorilla.

She would come often and just sit by the window staring at this baby gorilla and the baby gorilla stared at her.

Over time this baby gorilla grew up and yet, as often as she visited the zoo, which was a lot, she would sit there and just gaze into the eyes of this gorilla and the gorilla stared at her.

Again, she just loved this gorilla.

One day the staff saw what she was doing and told her not to stare at the gorilla because you were challenging him to a fight when you do.

She heard what they were saying and said something to the effect, ***“Oh, not this gorilla. He and I have a bond together and it is a stare of love!”***

So she kept on doing it in spite of what she was told, the warning that they gave to her.

One day there were a few teenagers that began to tease this gorilla. They were throwing things at it and the gorilla was getting very mad. Not a good idea to make a gorilla mad!

Finally, the gorilla had it and he was able to break out of his enclosure, but he did not attack these teenagers who were teasing him.

He started walking around the zoo looking for something or someone! He was looking for this woman!

Finally, he had found her and no, not a happy ending. He did not love this woman who stared at him but attacked her and almost killed her! He came after her because of her challenging him just like the zookeepers warned her. He sought her out to accept this challenge!

I know, you are thinking, ***“How in the world is he going to apply this to our lesson?”***

It is simple. Just as these experts at the zoo knew the danger of doing this, they knew what they were talking about, our God knows what He is talking about and He wants us to understand that true **JOY** is not based on outward circumstances, but an inward reality. And that inward reality is knowing Him and resting in Him and obeying Him.

When we don't, when we don't listen to the expert, God, we lose out on that joy and we are headed for disaster because like this gorilla, the Devil will hunt you down and get you to focus on yourself and in that you will never find true satisfaction, true joy. You will always be looking for more!

This morning, we are going to be looking at three examples of joy that are seen in humility.

I have even called this study – ***EXAMPLES OF JOY IN HUMILITY!***

And I have broken down the verses we will be looking at into the following main points.

They are,

***PAUL'S EXAMPLE – PHILIPPIANS 2:17-18***

***TIMOTHY'S EXAMPLE – PHILIPPIANS 2:19-24***

***EPAPHRODITUS'S EXAMPLE – PHILIPPIANS 2:25-30***

Three different men that were experiencing different things in their lives and yet, their lives were filled with joy.

And let's face it, we do live in a world that is looking for this joy and yet, they just can't seem to find it because they are looking in all the wrong places.

Let me show you what I mean.

We are told,

Men have pursued joy in every avenue imaginable. Some have successfully found it while others have not. Perhaps it would be easier to describe where joy cannot be found:

- *Not in Unbelief* — Voltaire was an infidel of the most pronounced type. He wrote: ***“I wish I had never been born.”***
- *Not in Pleasure* — Lord Byron lived a life of pleasure if anyone did. He wrote: ***“The worm, the canker, and grief are mine alone.”***
- *Not in Money* — Jay Gould, the American millionaire, had plenty of that. When dying, he said: ***“I suppose I am the most miserable man on earth.”***
- *Not in Position and Fame* — Lord Beaconsfield enjoyed more than his share of both. He wrote: ***“Youth is a mistake; manhood a struggle; old age a regret.”***
- *Not in Military Glory* — Alexander the Great conquered the known world in his day. Having done so, he wept in his tent, before he said, ***“There are no more worlds to conquer.”***
- Where then is real joy found? — the answer is simple, in ***Christ alone.***

- The Bible Friend, Turning Point, May 1993

How sad their lives were, even though they had so much. Yes, the problem was unbelief, but there was all that pleasure, money, position and fame, military glory and they died looking for that joy. Here’s the thing, nothing else but the Lord will bring that joy into your life!

Remember what David wrote in Psalm 16:11, **“You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”**

David makes it very clear. He is saying that as we come before the Lord, as we spend time with Him, we will find a **“fullness of joy”** and that word **“fullness”** speaks of satisfaction.

Maybe Mick Jagger can’t find no satisfaction, and yes, he tried, he tired, but He just couldn’t get no satisfaction in life apart from Jesus Christ!

That is what we will be looking at this morning, examples of three men who were filled with the joy of the Lord in spite of what they were going through. In humility they found joy!

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Philippians chapter 2 beginning in verse 17 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word and look at this subject –

***EXAMPLES OF JOY IN HUMILITY!***

**PHILIPPIANS 2**

**VERSES 17-18**

We looked at the ultimate example of joy in humility when we looked at the example that Jesus gave to us.

But that is not something we could do or attain. He alone is God and He alone could do what He did for us.

I think Paul's point of giving us the example of Jesus is to show that if our Lord and Savior was willing to do that for us, we need to be able to lay our lives down for others.

Now, so we don't lose hope of never attaining this humility, we see – ***PAUL'S EXAMPLE!***

And yes, Paul was a godly man, he was used greatly by God. But don't forget that he was just a man and thus, he was like you and me!

That is why he is showing us his life as an example of something we can do.

Think about young kids playing basketball. The official height of a basketball net is 10 feet. Which, when you are young, maybe six years old let's say, it is an impossible task to throw that ball up that high!

So what we have today are basketball nets that we can lower to a height that can be attainable for a six year old child.

Yes, the 10-foot net impossible, but the lower one, very possible.

I think that is what we see here. The standard, the perfection is Jesus but here are examples of men that have lowered the bar and made it attainable for us and Paul uses his life as an example!

As Paul speaks of his life, he tells us that it is a living sacrifice unto God and at this point, awaiting his time before Ceaser Nero to hear his case, he was not sure if this race was over, if he was going to be put to death for his faith, or if he would live on and continue the work of Christ.

But, in either case, Paul's joy was not going to change!

How can he say that?

He could be put to death!

He could have been imprisoned for the rest of his life!

Things could be very bad for Paul and yet, how can he say, "**I am glad and rejoice with you all**"?

Because his joy was based upon a constant, the Lord and thus, no matter what would come down the pike, Paul could rejoice!

His heart was that of a servant and to see people grow in the Lord and for people to come to the faith was his work.

But trust, having something that is a constant truth is fading from our lives. We don't know what marriage is today. We don't know what a man or woman is today. We don't know this, and we don't know that and thus, we are a world that is lost in space, you might say.

Let me show you what I mean.

We are told,

Trust is an essential elixir for public life and neighborly relations, and when Americans think about trust these days, they worry.

Two-thirds of adults think other Americans have little or no confidence in the federal government. Majorities believe the public's confidence in the U.S. government and in each other is shrinking, and most believe a shortage of trust in government and in other citizens makes it harder to solve some of the nation's key problems.

As a result, many think it is necessary to clean up the trust environment: 68% say it is very important to repair the public's level of confidence in the federal government, and 58% say the same about improving confidence in fellow Americans.

Moreover, some see fading trust as a sign of cultural sickness and national decline.

Some also tie it to what they perceive to be increased loneliness and excessive individualism.

About half of Americans (49%) link the decline in interpersonal trust to a belief that people are not as reliable as they used to be.

Many ascribe shrinking trust to a political culture they believe is broken and spawns suspicion, even cynicism, about the ability of others to distinguish fact from fiction.

In a comment typical of the views expressed by many people of different political leanings, ages and educational backgrounds, one participant in a new Pew Research Center survey said: ***“Many people no longer think the federal government can actually be a force for good or change in their lives. This kind of apathy and disengagement will lead to an even worse and less representative government.”***

Another addressed the issue of fading interpersonal trust: ***“As a democracy founded on the principle of E Pluribus Unum [Out of many, one], the fact that we are divided and can’t trust sound facts means we have lost our confidence in each other.”***

*Why Americans’ trust in each other has deteriorated in the past 20 years:* Some 71% think that interpersonal trust has declined.

Those who take this position were asked why, eliciting a laundry list of societal and political problems: 11% believe Americans on the whole have become more lazy, greedy and dishonest.

Some 16% of respondents make a connection between what they think is poor government performance – especially gridlock in Washington – and the toll it has taken on their fellow citizens’ hearts.

About one-in-ten of these respondents say they blame the news media and its focus on divisive and sensational coverage.

***“Cultural shift away from close-knit communities. Viewing everything through hyperpartisan political lenses. Lost the art of compromise. Empathy as well as generally attempting to understand and to help each other are all at disturbingly low levels. People are quick to attack and to vilify others, even without clear proof, solely on the basis of accusations or along partisan lines.”***

- <https://bit.ly/3zgbREg>

Let me ask you this.

Did Paul trust the Roman government?

Was the Roman government a godly government?



The answer to both those questions is – ***NO!***

The Roman government was wicked, perverted, immoral, and I can go on and on. And what the government was doing so were many of the people.

And yet, Paul does not focus on any of that. He does not focus on the persecution he was facing. Keep in mind that yes, he was under house arrest there in Rome, but he was chained to a soldier twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. He was never alone!

Remember how he saw this difficult situation back in Philippians 1:12-14, **“But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”**

Instead of focusing on the bad situation that he was in, he focused on what the Lord was doing!

Yes, he was there in Rome under house arrest awaiting his trial before Ceaser Nero. Yes, he was chained to guards all the time.

But the guards were being saved. Paul did have a captive audience, they were chained to Paul and had to listen to Paul.

And I am sure that Paul shared the Gospel with them, prayed for them, prayed for those who came to see him, and shared the Word of God with those who came to see him, and these guards were getting saved one by one!

Not only that, but by his example, by what God was doing through Paul there in Rome, it was strengthening the faith of other Christians and it gave them the boldness to speak forth the Word of God and now they could do it without fear because they saw what God did through Paul and they believed God would do no less through them!

***“But pastor Joe, I go through difficult times, and I don’t see the Lord doing anything, not even close to what happened here with Paul!”***

I do understand that. The problem for us is that we look at the situation and we become overwhelmed. And then, instead of looking at what God is doing, we are focused on the bad and we lose that joy of the Lord!

I am not saying we will see instantly what God is doing. It may take some time. But do you really think that God forgot about you?

God is not in heaven saying, ***“What did I have to do? Wasn’t there someone who needed Me? I just can’t remember. I think his name was Joe, but what was I going to do with him?”***

We laugh at that because it is so outrageous.

God never leaves us; He never forgets us, and He is always working in us so that He can work through us!

I want to share this with you, a very difficult situation that my friend and his family in Russia are going through.

His twenty-one-year-old son, Sergey, newly married, is on a ventilator or breathing machine, they think he has botulism. I can’t even imagine. And his son died from this!

And this is how he closed his prayer request. With all that was going on with his son, he wrote, ***“There are other troubling things that have happened in our life in the past week. I suppose God is about to do something good.”***

Wow, that is the perspective to have. I am not saying that it is easy, it is not. But to rest in the Lord and look for the good that will come out of a bad or difficult situation!

Difficult times have come, we may be in them right now, or they are coming. And Peter warned us of this very thing, because we are not alone in this.

In I Peter 4:12-13 Peter wrote, **“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.”**

When Peter wrote this letter Nero’s persecution against Christians was growing and he was burning Christians alive at the stake and Peter is warning them not to be surprised because what is happening in Rome is spreading throughout the Roman Empire!

Thus, instead of sorrow, rejoice in these things knowing that you are suffering for your faith just as the Lord did.

Now that is hard, how do we do that?

Paul tells us in Hebrews 12:2-4, **“looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.”**

What was the joy that was set before Jesus?

That joy was knowing that He was going to be received back to glory with the Father, but first came death!

Jesus said in John 17:4-5, **“I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.”**

All the shame, all the pain, all the mocking’s and beatings He laid aside because He saw the end results - seated in glory once again as the work He was sent to do was finished.

Thus, our joy in the midst of these fiery trials is to be identified with our Lord and to understand we will be raised in glory one day to be with Him!

Now think about Christianity in America. We tend to look at persecution as strange and abnormal, and yet, in the first century church persecution was considered normal, and it was odd if Christians were not persecuted for their faith!

In fact, the words *“suffer”*, *“suffered”* and *“suffering”* are used a total of twenty-one times in this Epistle of Peter’s.

Remember what Jesus said in John 15:18-19, **“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”**

So don’t think it strange or abnormal to be persecuted for your faith in Christ!

Paul, in Romans 8:18, gives us this perspective of things as he tells us, **“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”**

That is what Paul was doing!

Look at the picture that Paul is painting for us. He says, **“... if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice ...”** Philippians 2:17.

What does he mean by that?

We see in the Old Testament that the drink offering was poured out on the sacrifice and the reason it was is simple. It would soften and season the meat.

What is obvious but we don't tend to think much about it, but when the drink offering was poured out on the meat, it was no longer seen.

In other words, it was absorbed into the meat!

So what is the point?

The point is this and I love it. The only one who appreciated its taste was the one who ate the sacrifice!

Paul's point is that the Philippians were the sacrifice and thus, he was the seasoning and poured out his life upon them.

He was the steak sauce or the meat tenderizer you might say. And Paul willingly poured out his life into the Philippians and he was not seeking any recognition, awards, anything at all.

One writer gave us this perspective of service and joy. He wrote,

Unfortunately, many believers experience joy in much the same way as the world does.

When circumstances are favorable, they are happy; but when circumstances are unfavorable, they are sad and sometimes resentful.

The only things that bring them joy are those that promote their own interests and welfare.

But when believers seek to do the Father's will and please Him, they view sacrifice for Him with joy.

The reason many believers know little about Paul's kind of joy is that they know little about his kind of sacrifice.

It is difficult for self-centered, worldly believers to understand how missionaries can live for years under primitive, demanding, and often dangerous conditions yet still maintain their joy. Through it all they rejoice, because, like Paul and the Philippians, they offer their lives as a continual sacrifice to God.

They have learned that the greater the sacrifice, the greater the joy. They have the same attitude as Peter and the other apostles who, after being flogged and ordered *“not to speak in the name of Jesus, . . . went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name”* (Acts 5:40-41).

Selfless service for Christ is a sacrifice only in the sense of being an offering to God. It is never a sacrifice in the sense of being a loss.

A believer can sacrifice nothing for the Lord that is not replaced with something infinitely more valuable and gratifying

- John MacArthur, Philippians 2

How true that is and this service, this sacrifice needs to be done with the right heart. As we spend time with people is that the kind of influence we have upon them?

Do we tenderize and add flavor even when no one may notice or recognize what we are doing except God.

Or do we irritate people, leave a sour taste in their lives when we leave?

That is something we have to think about.

I can honestly say that ministry is a piece of cake if it weren't for people!

We are told in Proverbs 14:4, **“Where no oxen are, the trough is clean; But much increase comes by the strength of an ox.”**

In other words, if there are no oxen in the barns the stables will be clean!

But if there are no oxen in the stables you will not have a bountiful harvest.

What in the world is Solomon talking about?

He is saying that to have any type of meaningful results in your life it is going to take the investment of your time, it will take work, and it may even get messy.

We need to take those steps of faith and see what the Lord will do even if it gets messy. Remember, the harvest will be bountiful! Too often people want everything in order, perfect and to do that you aren't doing anything.

Don't miss out on what God is doing, even if it is a little messy!

Let's face it, all of our lives are messy, that is not the issue.

The issue is this. Again, are we adding flavor to people's lives as we share the love of God with them? Are we tenderizing their lives, helping them to be more sensitive to the Lord and the direction of the Holy Spirit?

Paul loved them and as much as he had to deal with issues there in Philippi, he continued to pour out his life as a drink offering to them!

And notice what it brought upon his life – ***JOY!***

He humbled himself before the brethren and was filled with joy!

He tells them, “**... I am glad and rejoice with you all.**”

And he does not end there. He is encouraging them by saying, “**For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.**” Philippians 2:18.

May we learn from – ***PAUL'S EXAMPLE!***

Now, as we read on in Philippians 2:19-24 Paul is going to give to us the example of Timothy, a humble man of God – ***TIMOTHY'S EXAMPLE!***

VERSES 19-24

If you remember, Timothy grew up, probably in Lystra in the province of Galatia, which is part of modern-day Turkey.

His mother was Jewish, and her name was Eunice, who was a believer, and his father was Greek, and he was an unbeliever.

He had a believing grandmother named Lois.

Timothy was converted to the faith, we are told, in II Timothy 1:3-5, probably on Paul's second missionary journey because in Acts 16:1-4 Paul saw Timothy as one he could clearly use in service to the Lord.

And notice what Paul says of Timothy, that Timothy is "**like-minded.**"

What does he mean by that?

First of all, Paul said in Philippians 2:5, "**Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.**"

They shared the mind of Christ, their love for the Lord and also for the people, like the Philippian believers and thus, Paul is going to send Timothy back to Philippi to see how they are doing, to bring back word so he may be encouraged by the report of their unity through humility, their growth in the Lord, as they put on the mind of Christ.

There were those that were only serving for themselves, what they could get out of it, through selfish motives, but not Timothy, he went wherever he was needed, did whatever was needed all for the glory of God. Timothy proved himself, he stood the test.

How great it is to have people who are like-minded, working together for the kingdom of God, it truly is a blessing!



What ends up happening, many times, is people are not like-minded, but they are out there for themselves, trying to make a name for themselves and when they don't get what they want, they just move on and try to make it somewhere else!

That is what Paul says in Philippians 2:21 about how others were focused on themselves. He wrote, "**For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.**"

That was not Timothy. He was focused on the Lord just as Paul and that meant that their focus was not on them, but on Jesus and ministering to others!

Yes, Paul could not be with them in Philippi, but Timothy could and again, because they were like-minded, Paul knew that sending Timothy to them would be a tremendous blessing!

Make no mistake about it, as you read this, you can see that Paul's desire was to go to Philippi and minister to the believers there.

The problem for Paul, as we have seen, was that he was in prison. So, if he couldn't go, he was going to send Timothy as his representative because they were like-minded. He had confidence in Timothy, and, like I have said, he knew the believers in Philippi would be blessed when he arrived. Timothy truly had a spirit of humility that flowed from his life.

And look at the example that Timothy has for us.

He was a trusted man of God.

How important that is. Paul knew that the report he received from Timothy would be accurate. He would not change it or make it better than it was or worse than it was. He was just going to tell Paul exactly what was going on, the good, the bad and yes, even the ugly!

We too need to be men and women that people can trust. The things that we say, the things that we do, people should be able to trust us.

Let me share this with you regarding trust.

We are told,

We live in a world that encourages its citizens to trust no one but themselves, to think highly of themselves, and to promote themselves.

One has only to read modern curricula vitae or personal statements when people apply for a job or a scholarship to understand this.

Pride and arrogance are common in our modern materialistic and self-indulgent society.

There is also a growing sense of entitlement – that the world owes us things that we deserve.

Such values have also infiltrated the church. It is seen in the presumptuous confidence on church ‘stages’, and in the focus of spirituality as ‘performance’ and ‘achievements’.

It is sometimes not clear who we are really worshipping in our services. Are we worshipping ourselves, our prowess, our wealth, our popularity, our institutions – or are we worshipping the true and living God?

- <https://bit.ly/45xyGPZ>

For both Paul and Timothy, they were men who glorified the Lord in all that they did. You could trust these men!

Timothy cared for the well-being of people. He was sensitive to their needs. And how important that is when we live in a day where people seem to be more interested in themselves than in the needs of others.

Also, Paul speaks of the character of Timothy. Not that he was a character, but he knew his role and he submitted to the leadership of Paul.

He had a godly character, or the nature of Jesus flowed from his life.

Not only that, but Timothy was available. He was willing to go wherever the Lord was calling.

Lots of people love to be involved but they are busy Monday through Friday and on the weekends, they have plans.

Which means, ***“I am available whenever you need me, except those days!”***

In other words, they are not available or willing to serve. Timothy was!

Here is a wonderful example of this man named Timothy, we see – ***TIMOTHY’S***

***EXAMPLE!***

As we read on here in Philippians 2:25-30, we will see Paul move to his last example of a person who is walking in humility, and that is Epaphroditus.

And thus, we will be looking at – ***EPAPHRODITUS EXAMPLE!***

VERSES 25-30

First of all, we see that Epaphroditus was sent by the Philippians to Paul in Rome to see how he was doing, to encourage Paul and to bring him some financial assistance, a gift.

Paul tells us of this in Philippians 4:18, **“Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.”**

And look at what Paul says of this man.

He calls him – ***MY BROTHER!***

They were brothers in the Lord and this bond in Christ can even be closer than a blood line.

Well, it is a blood line. We have been born into this blood line by the blood of Jesus Christ.

But that is the kind of relationship they enjoyed!

As Christians we are part of the family of God, brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Not only that, but Paul says that he is a – ***FELLOW WORKER!***

The work that Paul is speaking of, and this man was involved with, was spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let's face it, not everyone welcomed this message, and it did not stop him. In fact, he even went to places that no one else really wanted to go because everyone needs to hear about Jesus!

He was also a – ***FELLOW SOLDIER!***

Like I have said, not everyone welcomed the Gospel message, and the world is at war with God and thus, since they can't fight against God, they fight against the messenger!

And we are seeing that more and more today. We are in a battle for the truth!

Not only that, but – ***HE CARED FOR PAUL'S NEEDS!***

If you were a prisoner, Rome did not supply you with things you may need. They had to be brought by family or friends.

Epaphroditus was a friend to Paul and took care of his needs. He saw what Paul needed and brought it to him.

But there was a problem, a big problem!

During his journey or stay with Paul, he got sick and as we have seen, he almost died.

And, without smart phones, the Internet, word still spread of the sickness of their dear friend, Epaphroditus, all the way back to Philippi.

As much as he wanted to be back home, they also wanted him home and so Paul is going to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi, probably with this letter.

What I want you to see here is that this man was so sick that he almost died and if it weren't for the mercy of God, he would have died!

Now think about that.

Why didn't Paul just name and claim a healing for this man?

Why didn't Paul get out one of his sweatbands and place it on him so he could be healed?

Why didn't Paul name and claim a healing for his friend in the faith, his brother in the faith?

Because not all are healed physically – it all falls upon the sovereignty of God!

Sin has infected this world with its devastating consequences; thus, diseases and death are part of this world.

God, in His sovereignty, in His mercy can heal people at times while others are sick, and they die.

How come?

I can't tell you the reason why some wicked people are healed, and some dear saints are sick and some die, but I do know that Father knows best!

I fall back on the things I do know about God and rest in that.

Job was a righteous man and yet, God allowed his business, his family, his health to be taken away from him and it took job some 36 chapters to find out that he is not going to know all the how's and why's of God, who is all-knowing, but he learned to trust in God.

In Job 42:1-6, after the Lord rebuked Job for his behavior, questioning God, we are told, **“Then Job answered the LORD and said: ‘I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. You asked, “Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?” Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, “I will question you, and you shall answer Me.” I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes.’”**

If you are struggling with this issue for yourself or a loved one, wondering why God hasn't healed the situation, you're in the same boat as Asaph was.

In Psalm 73 we see that Asaph lost perspective of things because his eyes were focused on the situation and not upon God.

Asaph was troubled by what he saw in the wicked, how they prospered, their death was easy, they were without trouble, even in their violence, they were wealthy, they had it all and they boasted about it, they are respected, quoted and they even speak against God.

Asaph lost perspective and he was not seeing things correctly. That was not how the wicked lived, they had problems too, but Asaph did not see that.

And Asaph said, **“Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, And washed my hands in innocence. For all day long I have been plagued, And chastened every morning.”** Psalm 73:13-14.

He was overwhelmed by what he saw, he even came to the wrong conclusions about what he thought he saw, as I have said, and as they got away with so much, he who was clean was struggling.

Have you ever felt that way?

Have you ever found yourself in a situation like that, that you are serving God and yet all these things are happening to you?

Look at how wicked the political landscape has become.

We have seen how they get away with this. They get away with that. They commit crimes and there is no punishment for them.

And now you can see how easy it is to feel as Asaph felt. ***“They are getting away with murder and no one cares. Here I am Lord, I love you and yet, look at all I am going through. My hands are clean and theirs are dirty, so why are they getting away with all those crimes?”***

You know what the solution is, don't you?

If you don't, or you are struggling with all that is going on, listen carefully to what Asaph found out because his perspective was all wrong and it needed to be corrected!

Asaph tells us, **“When I thought how to understand this, It was too painful for me - Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end.”** Psalm 73:16-17.

It was not until he went back to the place of fellowship with God that he had a correct perspective of the situation and the same is true for us.

We can have feelings that are wrong, untrue and they will grow until we get into God's Word, spend time with Him and He corrects things.

You see, in the end death for the Christian is not the end of living, it is moving day as we move from these bodies of flesh, these tents, into new bodies, mansions made by the Lord for our spirit and soul to dwell in that will never get sick or fade away!

You see, perspective is everything!

But, for the unsaved, they don't get away with anything. They will spend an eternity in the Lake of Fire where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth!

And here is where we need to be careful. We need to pray for the wicked, the unsaved because the Lord did not want any to perish in Hell. That is why He became flesh and dwelt among us, so He could pay the penalty for our sins and our fellowship with the Father would be restored and we would be with Him for eternity!

Keep your heart soft as Epaphroditus did, he cared for those that no one wanted to be around! And I will show you that in a minute.

So Paul was going to send Epaphroditus home, back to Philippi, but he was not returning home a failure. And Paul wanted the Philippians to understand that.

He was willing to give his life to the Lord as a sacrifice, even to the point of death, but God had mercy on him and spared him, healed him.

Again, God intervened here and healed him. We don't see Paul doing anything, even though I am sure he prayed for this man. God, in His sovereignty, healed this man.

Thus, receive this man with joy and give him the proper recognition when he arrives!

In fact, in Philippians 2:30, that phrase “**not regarding**” in the Greek is

***PARABOLEUOMAI***, (par-ab-oll-yoo'-om-ahee) and it literally means “*to throw away.*”

It speaks of voluntarily putting oneself in a dangerous or hazardous condition.

What is that all about?

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

Soon after the New Testament times, a group of Christians banded together in an association they called Parabolani, which means “*The Gamblers.*”

Taking Epaphroditus as their model, they visited prisoners and ministered to the sick, especially those with dangerous communicable diseases whom no one else would help. They boldly proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ wherever they went.



When the city of Carthage, on the Mediterranean coast of North Africa, suffered a severe plague in A. D. 252, the pagan inhabitants were so frightened of contagion [infection] that they refused to touch the dead bodies even to bury them.

Cyprian, bishop of the church there, led the Christians in the arduous [difficult] and dangerous task of ministering to the sick and dying and of burying the thousands of corpses.

The spiritual influence of that silent but powerful testimony on their unbelieving and formerly hostile neighbors doubtless was immeasurable.

- John MacArthur

Do you see how they were living what Paul was saying here! “**Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.**” Philippians 2:5.

I remember some years ago someone who was upset with me sent me a rather long e-mail, and it was after I was pretty sick, and this person basically said that I was working myself to death, being a martyr and not in a good way.

They were putting me down for working so hard. Sorry, that is me. I serve the Lord and I try to give my all. I am not going to do something half-heartedly for the Lord. That is not honoring Him. I give my all in what I do!

And as I was reading this e-mail and yes, it was discouraging, but all I could think of and still do think of is this man and his example, Epaphroditus, who was willing to give it his all, even if it cost him his life.

As a servant of Jesus Christ, how can we do any less?

I am not saying that we are foolish, but are we willing to lay our lives down for others?

This is a powerful chapter on humility and how that humility brought joy to those who were serving the Lord and that service to the Lord was manifested in service to others!

We have seen that as Paul opened up this chapter he spoke of humility in our service to others, to look out for others.

And the key is putting on the mind of Christ, allowing Him to guide and lead us in all that we do and all that we say!

We then looked at the example of Jesus who emptied Himself. Still 100% God and in the Incarnation, He was 100% man. He never stopped being God and I know, 200% but that is what we are told and that is what I believe. Fully God and fully man in the Incarnation!

Of Paul who was being poured out as a drink offering for the service of others.

Of Timothy who was willing to go wherever there was a need, not holding onto his own agenda.

And Epaphroditus, a man who was willing to place his life on the line in order to serve others, to work hard in the faith.

May we have unity through humility as we learn from their examples and we allow God not only to work in us, but that the work God is doing in us may be worked out of us and be manifested in our lives, the things we do for the glory of God and the edification of others!

And as we do our lives will be filled with – ***THE JOY OF THE LORD!***

**“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”** Philippians 2:5.

Remember our opening story of the woman who befriended the gorilla. And it began when this gorilla was young until he grew up to be an adult gorilla. She would visit and stare at him and he would stare at her. She thought this was a gaze of love, at least it was on her part!

But there was a danger in what she was doing and zoo officials, when they saw what she was doing, warned her not to stare at the gorilla because she was challenging him.

But she did not listen, she did not believe what they were saying, and she let her feelings, her emotions drive her!

In the end, when this gorilla escaped, he sought her, and you can see him walk around looking for someone or something. And when he found this woman, he did not give her a hug of love but attacked her and almost killed her.

He was dealing with all those years of this woman challenging him!

God has the answers for our lives. And yes, we need to look to Him to guide us, but don't challenge Him!

You will lose!

I realize that this idea of – *JOY IN HUMILITY* doesn't make sense in our world today, but God the Father knows best, and we need to listen to Him, for in Him we find that peace and joy that we are looking for!

Outside His will is death, destruction, no peace, no joy!

Remember what David said in Psalm 16:11, "**You will show me the path of life;**

**In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**"

Let us never forget that!