

Philippians

The Four Attitudes That Maintain Your Joy

Chapter 1

(1) The Single Mind (Phil. 1) “A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8). Or, to use the old Latin proverb:

“When the pilot does not know what port he is heading for, no wind is the right wind.” The reason many Christians are upset by circumstances is because they do not cultivate the single mind. Paul expresses this attitude of single-hearted devotion to Christ thus: “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (1:21).

In chapter 1, Paul discusses his difficult circumstances and faces them honestly. But his circumstances cannot rob him of his joy because he is not living to enjoy circumstances; he is living to serve Jesus Christ. He is a man with purpose: “but one thing I do” (3:13). He does not look at circumstances in and of themselves, but rather in relationship to Jesus Christ. He is not the prisoner of Rome; he is the “the prisoner of Jesus Christ” (Eph. 3:1). The chains he wears are “my bonds in Christ” (Phil. 1:13). He is not facing a civil trial; he is “set for the defense of the gospel” (1:17). He did not look at Christ through his circumstances; rather, he looked at his circumstances through Christ—and this changed everything.

When a Christian is single-minded, he is concerned about the *fellowship of the gospel* (1:1-11), the *furtherance of the gospel* (1:12-26), and the *faith of the gospel* (1:27-30). Paul rejoiced in his difficult circumstances because they helped to strengthen his fellowship with other Christians, gave him the opportunity to lead others to Christ, and enabled him to defend the gospel before the courts of Rome. When you have the single mind, your circumstances works *for* you and not *against* you.

The Submissive Mind (chapter 2)

This chapter focuses on *people*, and the key verse says, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves” (3). In chapter 1, Paul puts Christ first. In this chapter, he puts others second. Which means he puts himself last! The reason people aggravate us so much is usually because we do not have our own way. If we go through life putting *ourselves* first, and others go through life putting *themselves* first, then at many points there are going to be terrific battles.

The Christian with a submissive mind does not expect others to serve them; he serves others. He considers the good of others to be more important than his own plans and desires. In chapter 2 we find three wonderful examples of the submissive mind.

1. Jesus Christ (2:1-11)

(5-8) Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

2. Paul (2:12-18)

(17-18) But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

3. Timothy (19-24)

(20-22) I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare, for everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. But you know Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served me in the work of the gospel.

Jesus, Paul, and Timothy are great examples of living out the submissive mind, “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 14:11).

The Spiritual Mind (chapter 3)

Eleven times in this chapter you find Paul using the *things*. He points out that most people “mind earthly things” (19) their destiny is destruction, and their God is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. The person with the spiritual mind looks at the things of this world from heaven’s point of view—and what a difference that makes!

In Philippians 3, Paul gives us his spiritual biography: his past (1-11), we already have met Paul “the Pharisee” who discovered new life when he met Jesus Christ. His present (12-16), Paul “the athlete” with his spiritual vigor, forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, “I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus”. And his future (17-21), Paul “the alien” having his citizenship in heaven and looking for the coming of Jesus Christ. In each of these experiences, Paul was exercising the *spiritual mind*; he was looking at things on earth from God’s point of view. As a result, he was not upset by things behind him, around him, or before him—*things* did not rob him of his joy.

The quest for *things* is robbing people of joy, and this included Christian people. We want to possess things, and then we discover that things possess us. The only way to victory and joy is to have the spiritual mind and to look at things from God’s point of view. Like Paul, we must be accountable for the right values, athletes with the right vigor, and aliens with the right vision. “I count... I press... I look” are the verbs that describe the person with the spiritual mind.

*This study is from Warren Wiersbe’s book Be Joyful

Chapter 4

The Secure Mind (Phil. 4)

Worry is actually wrong thinking (the mind) and wrong feeling (the heart) about circumstances, people, and things. So if we have a single mind, the submissive mind, and the spiritual mind, we should not have too much trouble with worry. All we need is something to guard the heart and mind so worry will not enter. Paul describes the secure mind: “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (v.7). That word *keep* is a military term; it means “stand guard, garrison.” (Paul was chained to a soldier during this time).

Chapter 4 describes the spiritual resources the believer has in Christ: God’s peace (4:1-9), God’s power (4:10-13), and God’s provision (4:14-23). With resources like these, why should we worry? We have the peace of God to guard us (v.7) and the peace of God to guide us (v.9). The peace of God comes to us when we practice right praying (6-7), right thinking (8), and right living (9). This is God’s secret for victory over all worry.

1. Only true believers in Christ can experience the fullness of joy. What does “fullness of Joy” mean to you?
2. What circumstances in your everyday life rob you of your Christian joy?
3. Do you find it hard to be submissive to other people? Why or why not?
4. Do you think most Christians today put as much determination into their Christian race as they do their jobs? Their leisure activities?