

SEEKING A MIND OF JOY (THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS)

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Lesson Three: Joyful Victory In The Midst Of Worldly Things (Chapter 3)

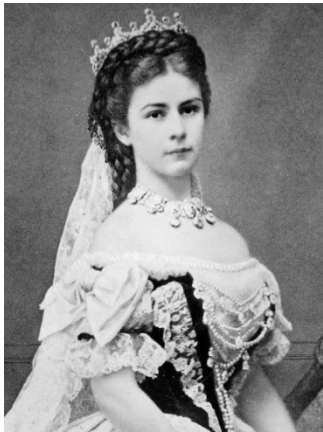
Once again, we are commanded to "rejoice" (Philippians 3:1). Paul has shown us how to rejoice when circumstances go against us (chapter 1), and how to be joyful when others in the Church irritate and abuse us (chapter 2). Now he instructs us how to survive the problem of worldliness.

It is difficult to identify which of the four thieves of the Christian's joy is most threatening, but perhaps many would say that the reason why joy is missing in their lives is because they lack worldly things (possessions). There is often a recipe for joy which will give greater joy: 📖 "IF only no wrinkles, a newer car...a larger house...a better paying job...a position in society with more acclaim...more stylish clothing...ad nauseam."

📖 Ecclesiastes 5:10, "He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity"...Ecclesiastes 10:19, "money is the answer to everything."

There are numerous illustrations of people sacrificing joy for the vanities of worldly things!

📖 **The beauty secrets of Empress Elizabeth of Austria (Sissi)?** Sissi was one of the most beautiful women of her time – and she knew it. Keeping her figure and her face free from wrinkles became an obsession for her. She couldn't stand the thought of growing old or what her pregnancies were doing to her body.



Empress Sissi was so proud of her tiny, 50cm waist, she went to great lengths to keep it that way. She hardly ate anything all day and exercised a lot. Walking was a common exercise for women at the time, but Sissi took it to the extreme. Her walks could last up to 10 hours!

She also spent hours on the saddle. She was also obsessed with gymnastics. She was a skincare fanatic who jumped from one lotion to the other. Some of these recipes were a bit gross...She applied raw veal on her skin at night. Sometimes, she also used a cream with lard, marshmallow roots and ground slugs. At night, she'd sleep with clothes soaked in vinegar above her lips – she was convinced it helped her stay slim. Empress Elizabeth had long, luscious, chestnut brown hair that almost reached the floor. It was her pride and glory and she spent two to three hours a day taking care of it! Afterwards, she'd collect any straight hair from the comb and cloth and counted. If too many had broken off, Sissi would get upset.

The loss of joy from her vanity over "things" is aptly captured in this comment:


📖 *"Ah, the horror of growing old, to feel the hand of Time laid upon one's body, to watch the skin wrinkling, to awake and fear the morning light, and to know that one is no longer desirable! Life without beauty would be worthless to me."*

Diamond Rio, "Stuff" (A song released in May 2000 is the first single from the album *One More Day*. The song reached #36 on the Billboard Hot Country Singles & Tracks chart. The song was written by Kelly Garrett and Tim Owens.)

*Catalogs fillin' up the mailbox
Home shopping on the cable box*

*And www dot
 Oh, there's no escape
 Delivery truck coming up 'round the bend
 Beep, beep, beep, just backing in
 Sign here and here and here again
 'Cause it's no money down no payments till
 Your whole place is cram packed filed with
 It's getting late but it's alright
 The get-it-all mart opened up all night
 You can catch it all with a quick swipe
 It's easier everyday
 Suv's and mini vans
 Parading 'round in caravans
 Toting off more than their tires can stand
 'Cause it's no money down no payments till
 Every square inch of the whole world's filled with
 Drag it in, pack it in
 The man with the most
 He just wins more
 Chorus:
 Stuff (stuff) stack it on, stack it up, stack it on up
 (Stuff) never gonna ever get enough (stuff)
 Oh, it's treasure till it's mine then it ain't worth a dime
 It's stuff (stuff) spreading like weeds
 Dragging me under in an endless sea of stuff
 (Stuff) There ain't no end
 Got to get a bigger place so I can move in
 More stuff, Never get enough Stuff (stuff)...*

Our Lord cautioned against this in the Parable of the Sower. "(T)he worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful" (Mark 4:17-19).

Philippians 3 offers  Inspiration's counsel how the Christian can survive the temptation of worldly possessions (covetousness).

1. Eleven times in Philippians (7 in chapter three) Paul refers to "things."
2. The quest for "things" (health & beauty, accomplishments, positions, wealth, etc.) robs many of true joy.

"Things" are to be enjoyed but not idolized (1 Timothy 6:17, "Instruct...not to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy").

We must have the proper view of "things" if we are going to share joy!
3. The key concept helping us overcome the attractions of earthly goods is the term "count."
 - a. The basic idea is to evaluate, assess, and judge between two options.
 - b. The reason why many lose joy to things today is because they do not "count" the values which control decisions and directions (verses 7, 8, 13). Note: "count" is from the Greek ἡγεομαι (hēgeomai) hayg-eh'-om-ahee. This is a term that is often used to designate a leader's command. The figurative use in Philippians refers to a commanding decision that leads all decisions.

- c. As you make decisions about worldly things (stuff), 🕊️ stop and look at the commanding motive for obtaining the “thing.”
4. As the Christian evaluates and judges the true worth of worldly possessions he will come to a monumental decision (verse 8)—most “things” are worthless. They are a “loss”. The Greek term refers to that which causes suffering and damage (ζημία, zēmia). An often ignored point...some of the “things” most desired will result in disaster. Paul said that it was not worth the loss of his joy to have the negatives that “things” bring!
5. Consider the reasoning of Paul and why he chose the values of Christ over the values of the world.

🕊️ You must DECIDE to be Joyful! (Philippians 3:1-11)

This basic step requires you to ascertain the true values in this world. What is really most valuable to you? Make a list of your daily actions; 🕊️ what consumes your priorities of time and energy.

God has given you a limited amount of time on earth. Your mortality is a very inconvenient and inescapable fact.

1. 🕊️ What are you doing with the limited time God has given you on earth?
2. The parable of the talents highlights this fact. How sad that many take the precious limited time that God has given and “bury” it under worldly cares. They have exchanged the significant opportunity for the trivial selfishness.

The Christian must DECIDE to seize God’s opportunities and find joy:

1. 🕊️ Decide what things only give the appearance of joy (verses 1-6).

There are things that people pursue but these never result in true and lasting joy (verse 3). These promise joy but lie; they never deliver; only an illusion:

- a. Association with others focused on “things” are detrimental to the Lord's Church (verse 2). Paul's repeated "Beware" tells us to avoid and be careful around such members.
- b. 🕊️ Confidence in the "flesh" (verse 3). Throughout this letter the "flesh" stands for trust in Self. These are arrogant and elitist. They only live for the “perpendicular pronoun”!
- c. 🕊️ Racial and regional heritage (verse 5). Pride in one's heritage is not wrong until it leads one to become arrogant and blinded (Acts 17:26). No one is better than anyone else because of their background!
- d. 🕊️ Mechanical religion (v. 5). Paul was a Pharisee and carefully observed every minute detail of the Law. But such never gives joy in life!
- e. 🕊️ Education (verse 5). Many today place great emphasis on educational achievements but neglect the basic purpose of living. Education by itself will never bring true joy—many are educated into ignorance.
- f. 🕊️ Morality (verse 6). Paul was "blameless." Yet morality by itself is never enough (Isaiah 64:6, “And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment”). To be sure a person who lives a moral life will be happier than the immoral, but if all one is trusting for joy is morality alone he will never find joy!
- g. 🕊️ Zeal (verse 6). Zeal is commanded in the Bible, but it can be misdirected (Romans 10:1-2, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. For I testify about them that

they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge"). Zeal must be directed if it is to provide a passport to paradise. Paul was zealous, but he lacked true joy until his zeal was guided by God's Will.

Some of the most miserable people I know trust in worldly things for joy. Your joy DOES NOT depend on the external, the physical, the "things" of this world! The "world is passing away" (1 Corinthians 7:21; 1 John 2:17). There must be more and Paul proceeds to tell us what that is.

2. 🕊️ Decide what will result in true joy (verses 7-11).

What will give us true joy? The answer is stated in verses 7-8. All of the things which the world counts as great, Paul gave up financial stability, physical comfort, and reputation. WHY? Because of the 🕊️ superiority of Christ Jesus (verse 8)!

Why does this decision bring joy into our lives?

- a. Because it alone provides true knowledge (verse 8). This is more than an intellectual awareness. True knowledge of Christ will result in joy!

Years ago many Christians obeyed the gospel and were added to the Lord. But all these years, they have been at a beginner's start. They have known Christ, but have not come to fully know Him. Instead of rising in the morning and getting into the Scriptures for a new deposit for their soul's resources, they hurriedly eat breakfast and rush to work, totally unprepared to face the problems of the day. Little or no time is spent in prayer to solicit God's guidance and strength. They are too busy to spend time with Him. He is crowded out of their lives. To be sure this is why they suffer so many defeats.

- b. Because there is 🕊️ true righteousness (verse 9). Joy results when one realizes he is justified in Christ Jesus (Romans 4:1-8). There is a great joy and happiness in salvation!
- c. Because there is 🕊️ fellowship with Christ (verses 10-11). This assures eternal joy and happiness.

🕊️ You must RUN the race with joy! (Philippians 3:12-16)

The metaphorical figure used is the attitude of an athlete in a foot race (Hebrews 12:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 9:24; 2 Timothy 2:5).

We are involved in a footrace and MUST finish the course. We are tempted to become satisfied with our progress and position and consequently relent in our efforts to publish the gospel message.

When you run the Christian race according to the principles of this passage, you will triumphantly assert: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

Here is HOW you can run the Christian race and find joy in doing so.

1. Run toward the RIGHT GOAL (verse 12, 14).

Too many awaken each morning and run toward toward goals of the world instead of toward God. When you set out your to-do list for each day, what priorities does God's work have in the list? Two terms are used:

- a. Holiness (1 Thessalonians 4-7). We have been called to holy living and must diligently strive toward such every day! We are God's to please Him!
- b. Usefulness (John 15:16). Certainly one has overlooked an extremely important point if he professes to follow Christ but is not useful to his Master!

Second Timothy 2:21, "he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work."

2. 🕊️ Run with three REALIZATIONS (verses 12, 13a).

- a. Realize that you are not perfect (verse 12, 13a).
- b. Realize that you must press on (verse 12). Intensity; overextending; never relax!

Psalm 119:30-32, "I have chosen the faithful way; I have placed Your ordinances before me. I cling to Your testimonies...I shall run the way of Your commandments."

- c. Realize that Christ expects you to go on (verse 12)!

Your race is not lost from sight (Hebrews 12:1, 2). You do not run by yourself (Psalms 46:1; Ephesians 6:10; Philippians 4:1, 13, 19). You will disappoint God if you quit the race (Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 3:10, 17).

3. 🕊️ Run the race after making THREE DECISIONS (verse 13).

- a. 🕊️ Decide about PRIORITIES (verse 13) "This one thing I do." Joy comes from you following a singular objective (Nehemiah 6:3; James 1:8).
- b. 🕊️ Decide to FORGET (verse 13). "Forget" is not a failure of remembering, but understanding that the past has no bearing on our present outlook or conduct. We are not to be governed by the past!
- c. 🕊️ Decide to STRETCH FORWARD (verse 13). The runner strains every muscle to cross the finish line first.

4. 🕊️ Run the race with the proper ATTITUDES (verses 14-16).

- a. 🕊️ A resolve to go forward regardless of the cost (verse 14).
- b. 🕊️ A determined effort to mold our thinking as it should be (verse 15).
- c. 🕊️ A desire to obey and change if necessary (verse 15b). A strict adherence to the rules (1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Timothy 2:5).
- d. 🕊️ A steadfastness in daily living; never retreating from the marked path we tread (verse 16). Our failure to do means we lose what we already have gained!

Here is HOW you can run the race the WRONG way and lose joy.

1. 🕊️ Paul shows us the WRONG WAY to walk (verses 18-19).

Paul is very specific in stating how one can walk in the wrong way. This involves a deliberate choice of rejecting God's will, just as walking in the right way involves a deliberate choice of accepting God's will (Acts 13:44-48).

- a. *One who walks in the wrong way* makes their belly a god to them (verse 19; Romans 16:18, "For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting").

This refers to one who is concerned only with pleasing himself. His goal in life is to satisfy only himself. He is guided only by that which satisfies and pleases him!

This "god" may be a multitude of things. It is whatever is first in one's thoughts and life; that which you most want to do. It is anything habitually occupying the mind and actions.

This trait violates a number of texts which emphasize the need to deny ourselves of things that are wrong and things which become barriers to our service (1 John 2:15; Romans 14:17; Galatians 5:24; 6:14; 1 Peter 2:11).

Have you put aside Christ and His Church for some personal desire thus making your belly your "god"?

- b. ☞ *One who walks in the wrong way* will glory in their shame (v. 19).

They glory in that which should cause them to be ashamed! (Romans 1:32).

I have heard people boast about doing things which should never even been spoken about! They gloried in fornication, how much alcohol they drank, of money gained by gambling, fighting, and other shameful acts. Then there are others who boast how many hours they have spent in social media but then excuse their Bible reading and spiritual study by saying they are just "too tired" and cannot concentrate!

Such are boasting in doing things for which they should be ashamed but they "do not know even how to blush." How sad it is whenever one's conscience becomes so insensitive that life is spent glorying in shame! (2 Peter 2:9b-10; Hosea 4:7, "...I will change their glory into shame").

- c. ☞ *One who walks in the wrong way* possesses earthly attitudes and goals (v. 19).

Their value system is based upon the dollar mark. They are unable to appreciate the treasures of spiritual values (Luke 18:18-25, "he became very sad, for he was extremely rich").

Psalm 52:7, "Behold, the man who would not make God his refuge, but trusted in the abundance of his riches and was strong in his evil desire."

The attitude of living for the present and neglecting the future is wrong (Jeremiah 45:5, "...are you seeking great things for yourself? Do not seek them; for behold I am going to bring disaster on all flesh...").

2. Paul tells us the ☞ TRAGIC RESULTS of walking the wrong way.

- a. Such finds sorrow (verse 18). In an epistle filled with joy it is shocking to read of the great apostle weeping!

The one who walks in the wrong way will be a source of great agony for family, friends, and God!

Job 8:12-15, "While it is still green and not cut down, yet it withers before any other plant. So are the paths of all who forget God; and the hope of the godless will perish, whose confidence is fragile, and whose trust a spider's web. He trusts in his house, but it does not stand; he holds fast to it, but it does not endure."

- b. ☞ Such become an enemy of the cross (verse 18).
- c. ☞ Such faces destruction (verse 19). There is but one end to such a life (Romans 6:21; Hebrews 6:8; 2 Corinthians 11:15).
- d. ☞ Such must be "marked" (verse 18; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Romans 16:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:6).

☞ **The PLEA of Paul to walk in the right way (Philippians 4:1)**

The chapter division is unfortunate because it removes this grand conclusion from the body of exhortation. In view of the great contrast the readers are encouraged to stand fast in the right way!

1. Do not allow yourself to be swept away by the world's allurements recognize the end which awaits the world!
2. The right way is found only "in the Lord."
3. Surely the reasonable listener will see the need to follow inspiration's counsel on this point!

☞ **Concluding Thoughts...**

I remember a Deacon of the Elizabethtown Church of Christ (KY) asking me, "Have you ever considered why so many in this world are fighting, murdering, lying and causing so much trouble here on earth over what in heaven will be dirt? In heaven the streets are of gold! That precious metal will be on the same level as dirt and rocks are now."

A great thief of joy in your life is love of the things of THIS world! Our Lord cautioned His followers to be on guard against this.

1 John 2:15-17, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever."

Luke 10:40, "Martha was distracted." The term "distracted" is from the Greek περιπαῶ (perispāō) per-ee-spah'-o and refers to one being so burdened that the focus is only on the immediate and urgent and not upon the important. One is thus distracted from what is truly important. The etymology is interesting. This is the term from which the Latin/French "perspire" originates. One thus "perspires" over the insignificant and loses the truly valuable. As Christ pointed out in verse 42, "Only one thing is necessary." Modern verbiage counsels in regard to worldly things, "Don't sweat the small stuff!"

Mark 4:17-19—those who try to find joy in the world's riches and popularity, "have no firm root but are only temporary; when affliction or persecution arises immediately they fall away...the worries of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word."

A sobering query asks, ☞ "*WHO is master in your life?*" When you compare your involvement with worldly activities with your involvement in spiritual activities, which is revealed as your Master? Do you possess your possessions OR do they possess you? Two poignant texts frame the choices available:

- Mark 8:33, 36-37, "(Y)ou are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's...what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"
- 3 John 2, "Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers."



☞ Luke 18 and 19 present us with a shocking contrast regarding worldly things being the governing control and focus in our lives. Here is joy embraced contrasted with joy spurned.

The Rich Young Ruler (Luke 18:18-25) "went away very sad because he was extremely rich."

Zaccheus (Luke 19:1-9) "hurried and received him gladly."

John 6:27, "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life."

☞ G.F. Watts' famous picture illustrating "For he had great possessions." The artist gave this account of the painting: "I am doing a man's back—little else but his back—to explain, 'He went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.' Fancy a man turning his back on Christ rather than give away his goods. They say his back looks sorry. It is what I meant to express."

George Frederic Watts (23 February 1817, in London – 1 July 1904) was a British painter and sculptor associated with the Symbolist movement. He said "I paint ideas, not things."

☞ Next Lesson...Victorious Joy over WORRY!