***The Fulfillment of Paul's Joy, No. 1 - PH35-01  
  
Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 2:1-4***

Please open the Word of Truth to Philippians 2. The apostle Paul turns now to the subject which is the major theme of this book, and that is the subject of happiness. In these first two verses, the apostle calls upon the Philippians to do something which will complete his own joy and his own happiness.

**Suffering**

As we've already found out, all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ experience suffering in this life. Some suffering is deserved as the consequence of our breaking Bible doctrine life principles. Any time the Bible offers us a principle for living and we ignore that principle and violate it, there are consequences. Any time the Bible lays out a principle for a living and we are obedient to it, there are also consequences. These are good. This is true whether you are a believer or an unbeliever.

**Deserved Suffering**

So some suffering is deserved because we have broken these principles. However, a great deal of suffering on the part of believers is not deserved, but it is the direct result of the fact that there is an angelic warfare going on with Satan and his demons on one side in opposition and in direct attack of the living God on the other side. We ourselves are caught in the middle because we are the objects and the target of this attack since Satan cannot get at the Lord directly now, seated as He is at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. However, all suffering can be turned to blessing. This is very important to remember.

If we are guilty of sin, and it has not been confessed, then that sin draws the judgment and the discipline of God. For that sin, we do suffer discipline. But once we have recognized that we have been in error, once we name the sin to God and declare it to be sin, that is no longer an issue of discipline. It now becomes a source of blessing. If you and I would remember that, we could go through some very intense suffering as the result of something we did, yet that suffering would be in the form of blessing, for God would be shaping our spiritual perceptions. He would be forming our spiritual outlook. He would be refining our total being as the result of that experience. So remember that the technique of the confession of sin is a very precious technique. Once it has been exercised, God is no longer bringing discipline upon His children. He is now free to exercise the love that He wants to exercise.

Our response to the angelic warfare directly affects our personal happiness. This response, however, is a matter of our mental attitude. How we think will determine how we act. A Christian's mental attitude is based on his knowledge of doctrine and his positive response to it. If we are Christians who do not know doctrine, we will have a certain mental attitude. If we are Christians who know doctrine, but we buck it and are negative to it, we will have another kind of mental attitude. Each will bear its fruit in our lives.

Satan and his demons, I can guarantee you, never let up. They never let go. They never ease off. So neither can we in the intake of the Word of God and in the use of the tactic of prayer. We have to use our defenses; we have to keep our guard up; we have to constantly be recharging our spiritual batteries; and, we have to constantly be replenishing our intake of the Word of God.

**Undeserved Suffering**

Philippians 2:1-2 deal with this matter of our mental attitude. The mental attitudes here are particularly of Christians in a local congregation who are facing the angelic attack. In verse 1, Paul makes an observation: "If there be any consolation in Christ; if any comfort of love; if any fellowship of the spirit; if any tender mercies and compassion." Here he is referring, first of all, to the matter of Christians under undeserved suffering. You remember that in Philippians 1:29, these people were told that, "It is given to them in behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake."

The source of this suffering, Paul said, is going to be the same source, the same angelic conflict that is the source of suffering to the apostle Paul himself. We have the expression "having the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me." So in other words, the apostle Paul, in the context at the close of Philippians 1, has pointed out that he is in the angelic warfare, and he is suffering undeservedly as the result of that warfare. He then points out that the Philippian Christians who have gone on with the Lord in spiritual maturity are also going to be the objects of suffering in this angelic conflict.

The armor of God and the sword of the Word of God and prayer are provided, therefore, to the believers. We have gone over that in detail. The attacks will come in a variety of ways--some of them obvious, and some of them subtle. But the attacks will come. However, a believer can meet the trials, the temptations, and the pressures that Satan brings without having to go through the agonies of a series of spiritual defeats.

Remember that there is one purpose in all the suffering that Satan brings against you which you do not deserve--suffering which you have not brought upon your own head. There is one purpose in all of this, and that is to get you to respond to that undeserved suffering in such a way that you incur deserved suffering. What Satan wants you to do is to react in such a way to the suffering you do not deserve so that you will deserve discipline from God. Where you may have been experiencing the suffering of the angelic conflict under God's blessing, you react to it in a certain way that now removes God's blessing, which is what the devil wants to do, and brings in God's discipline, which Satan is most eager to see imposed upon you. So the purpose of all this is to prevent you from continuing in God's blessing.

In 1 Peter 5:8, we read, "Be sober. Be vigilant because your adversary the devil like a roaring lion walks about seeking whom he may devour." Then in 1 Peter 3:17, "For it is better if the will of God be so that you suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing." The Word of God says you are going to suffer. But undeserved suffering is one thing, and that is blessing. But deserved suffering is something else, and that is not a blessing. So there is such a thing as suffering which you as a believer do not have coming to you. You did not bring it upon yourself.

In 1 Peter 2:19-20, Peter says, "For this is thank worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endures grief (suffering wrongfully). For what glory is it when you are buffeted for your faults? You shall take it patiently. But if you do well and suffer for it, you take it patiently. This is acceptable with God." There is the whole point. If you deserve it, and you bear it with patience, that's no particular credit to you. That's not something in which you can take any particular satisfaction. But if the suffering is not deserved, if what you experience is just the opposite of what your faithfulness should entitle you to, and you bear that patiently, then that, God says, is a source of great blessing.

There is such a thing as undeserved suffering. You can remember the Lord's example referred to in Hebrews 12:3: "For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest you be weary and faint in your mind." John 15:25 tells us that they hated Jesus Christ without a cause. There was no reason for the suffering that the people of the Lord's day brought against Him.

So if you don't understand the reality of undeserved suffering from the angelic warfare, you will be prone to a great deal of personal depression; discouragement; disillusionment; heartache; and, self-pity. Here you're going on serving the Lord, and all you get in return for it is a big fist full of suffering. The sins of others are used by Satan to lead us into deserved suffering. It is important to be aware of that.

We often enter suffering because we have entered the consequences of the sins of other people. The sins of others around us bring pressures, trials, and sadness into our lives. This is easy enough for us to see when it comes to members of your own immediate intimate circle of friends; of family; of associates at work; and, so on. These are the people who are close to you. They do things that are negative toward these life principles. They bring sufferings upon you. Parents who are negative to some aspect of God's viewpoint bring suffering upon their innocent children. Children who grow up negligent and resistant to the divine viewpoint that their parents are teaching them will do things that then bring grief and suffering into the lives of those parents.

So you must be prepared for the fact that a great deal of suffering that comes into our lives is the result of the negative responses of other people who happen to be intimately involved in the circle of our life. Satan knows that, and Satan makes a great deal out of that. That is one of the best ways for him to move you from undeserved suffering to the category of deserved suffering. He gets the negative responses of other people to bring out negative responses from within your own soul.

Our responses to our undeserved suffering are going to determine our fellowship with the Lord. The suffering that comes from other people upon us is going to either deepen our fellowship with the Lord or it will break it. So what I am saying is that you as a believer must learn not to respond to someone who is under the control of the old sin nature, whether that is a Christian or an unbeliever. 1 Peter 2:21-23: "For even here unto were you called because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow His steps, who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judges righteously."

Now, the point of this verse is that when the Lord Jesus Christ experienced suffering as the result of the negative responses of other people to the truth, He Himself did not get involved in their old sin nature control. When you find a believer who is negative to the Word of God; somebody who is bucking perhaps the conduct and the direction of God's ministry here in this place; someone who is resistant and badmouthing spiritual leadership; someone who is a deserter to God's work, if you insist on going to that person and getting involved with discussing with him his dissatisfactions, you are making yourself a prime target for Satan to shoot you down. I'll guarantee you, almost without exception, it is his majesty the devil that has moved you to make the contact with the malcontent to discuss his dissatisfaction. Satan knows that if he can get you sympathetic enough, and if he can get you emoting and entering into that person's discontent, you will have become a victim of that person's negative volition.

Usually a person like that is negative to some portion of the Word of God. He is negative to some expression of the will of God. He is countering some movement of God Himself. Therefore this person is already in suffering which he deserves, and he is being disciplined. You are getting yourself involved with examining that person's discipline. And in the process of it, you may get very badly burned yourself. It is the point of wisdom to avoid the negative responders. This is why the Lord Jesus told his teams of evangelists that when somebody goes negative to our message, forget him. Move on. Go to the next person who is waiting for you to explain the Word, and he's going to be positive. Shake the dust of your feet off and move on. Do not get yourself involved with the old sin nature problems of other people.

So a Christian has to learn that Satan will use the negative responses of other people to bring deserved suffering upon your own head. Therefore, avoid giving the devil opportunity to get you involved in the problems of other people which they have brought upon their own heads as the result of their discontent, which is the result of their own resistance to what God thinks. Their own mental attitude is in conflict with God's mental attitude.

Maximum suffering, I suppose, from Satan comes when the personal sins of those who are close to us violate our own volition. Perhaps you've been in the position where you have suddenly discovered that your whole way of life is being torn to shreds by somebody who happens to be associated with you in some respect. This individual is either totally disoriented to the Word of God or is resisting the Word of God. As the result of it, he is tearing up your life. He is violating and he is destroying your own freedom of choice because of his negative volition. Now, that is suffering. That is the worst and most intense kind of suffering that Satan brings. It is a fantastically clever routine because it takes a mature Christian not to crack up under that kind of invasion of his own volition as the result of somebody's negative responses to the Word of God. He gets us into the consequences of the broken fellowship of other people. Because those people happen to be close to us, we have to suffer what they have decided to do.

**Job**

For example, we have this in Job 2:9-10. Job, as you know, was going through some intense undeserved suffering. His undeserved suffering was made even more painful by the fact that his wife was negative to God. His wife was offbeat to the mind of God. She was giving him human viewpoint advice. At that point, Job could have responded to his wife in a way that would have converted the suffering that he was going through from what he did not deserve to what he deserved. In other words, he could have agreed with his wife. He could have taken her attitude toward God. In that moment, Job would have gone from undeserved suffering to deserve suffering. Why? Because he had accepted the negative mental attitude toward God of his wife. That is the point at which it is very difficult to resist the subtlety of Satan.

So we read then, "Job's wife said to him, 'Do you still retain your integrity? Curse God and die.' But he said, 'You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?' In all this Job did not sin with his lips." That's a great thing. When your wife is aggravating you and egging you on because of her negative viewpoint to do what is wrong, it is a great thing for you to be able to control your mouth, let alone the rest of you. God said, "Job in all of this did not sin." That takes a spiritual maturity; that takes capacity of soul; and, that takes time to develop.

At least be aware of the fact that it is Satan's technique to bring the most intense suffering upon you by causing the negative volition of other people to cross over and to interfere with your choices in life. So instead of the happy carefree walk with the Lord that you may now have, you may find that the negative volition of those close to you will bring grief and restrictions upon your volition and burdens upon your life which would not be there were it not for those who are associated with you who are making these decisions and these choices. So as with Job, such an imposition upon our volition is a testing which has the potential of great blessing or the potential of great discipline. Remember that temptation solicits us to do evil, but testing solicits us to experience happiness. Satan's temptation is inviting you to do evil, but God's testing is inviting you to enjoy his happiness.

**Control of the Tongue**

So undeserved suffering from Satan, if it's met in the right way, secures God's blessing. In 1 Peter 4:12-14, this suffering helps to mature the bride of Christ spiritually. It teaches us how to take it in stride and to keep moving. It makes real to us the comfort of the Lord Jesus. It is the comfort of the bride's husband in her suffering, and it trains the believer to control his tongue. This is one of the values of suffering--to control our tongues. It is easy enough for us to be cordial when we're with folks who are cordial. But when you're sitting across from someone who is vilifying you; slandering you; and, tearing you verbally to shreds, it should be able to be said of you, as it was said of Job, that you did not sin with your lips. You did not respond to that person's old sin nature control by saying, "Well, I've got an old sin nature, and let me show you how mine works." And you revile right back and give him a good nose full.

That's exactly what Satan is sitting around waiting for you to do because it does make you mad to have somebody imposing his problems on your life. You've gone along, and you've taken care of the problems in your life. You have removed the potential problem areas. You have resolved problem areas. You've dealt with your problems. And somebody else comes along, and their negative volition comes in and bunches up your life. Don't get involved with it. Neither should you respond to it when you are the object of that attack. It is suffering that trains us to control our tongues. This is directly applied in Scripture to wives in 1 Peter 3:1: "In the same manner, you wives be in subjection to your own husbands, that if any obey not the Word, they also may without the Word be won by the behavior of the wives."

There are some wives who never will learn this. They simply do not have the capacity to button up. They believe that they know the best way to deal with their husbands, who may be indeed in error and out of line with the Word of God. They believe that the way to deal with their husbands is man-to-man. And when a woman tries to deal with her husband man-to-man, she's already done in for. She lacks certain capacities to be able to meet him man-to-man. But he's usually quite happy to take her on that way because he can whip her man-to-man.

But when she uses the scriptural connotation; plays her inner beauty role; declares her point of view; then lets it lie there; and, then acts in cordiality and accommodation and waiting upon the Lord, then she discovers that she has a weapon that it is very difficult for the staunchest of male resisters to stand up against. That kind of a woman, in time, finds that she is able to win a hearing with her husband for her cause. And if her cause is right, then God will bless it, and God will bring fruition for her hopes. But if her cause is wrong, it is as well that her husband should not listen to her. But the Bible very clearly says that you win the husband without a word. That is tough--for a woman to win her husband without a word. That is pretty tough.

And yet that's part of what suffering does. It is when we are under fire that control of the tongue takes something of a resource that has been developed within us in the spiritual maturity that we built up through the Word.

**Responses to Undeserved Suffering**

So here's what your response can be to undeserved suffering. When undeserved suffering from the angelic enemy comes into your life, you may give up. You may just give up in defeatism and self-pity. You may throw your hands up and say, "What's the use?" That's what Job's wife was doing. Forget it. What's the use? This is when Christians abandon themselves to sin. This is the Christian that you've heard about that shocks you who now is completely departed from the things of God. You say, "What happened? How can this be?" This is what happened. He often has come up against undeserved suffering and his response to it was, "Oh, I've been trying to do the best I can, and here's what happens to me." He throws up his hands in defeat. He doesn't realize that when he is really doing the thing he should be doing relative to the Lord, that's when he gets the devil's attention, and that's when the undeserved suffering is going to be the most intense.

Or a second response on your part can be that you tough it out, but you're bitter and you're hostile. You're bitter toward people that you consider the source of this suffering in your life. You're hostile toward God, though you may not put it in so many words, or even dare to allow the thought to cross your mind. But you're hostile toward God that these circumstances should have befallen you. So you may simply grit your teeth, keep up a front, and try toughing it out.

A third response to undeserved suffering may be revenge toward the cause of our suffering. 1 Peter 3:9 says, "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but on the contrary, blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you should inherit a blessing." We are a people of blessing. We are people who are headed for blessing. Everything is coming up roses for us. Consequently, we are people who should be distributing blessing, not cursing; not getting even; and, not vengeance. But our response can be vengeance. This can be expressed in a variety of overt actions. It can be done verbally. Parents can attack one another to their children, which is about the crummiest thing any parent can do. It is an extremely self-defeating practice. You will also do this (attack verbally) even when the suffering is deserved by things you brought on yourself. This is one way you try to smooth over the fact that you have this coming; that is, by the verbal attacks.

Or you may take your revenge by neutralizing yourself in prayer. Of course, this is a thing that your lips can do. When your words are wrong, it will neutralize your ability to use the tactic of prayer, which, as you know, we need for survival. In 1 Peter 3:6-7, we have this applied directly to the marital relationship--the business of taking revenge, and thus neutralizing yourself in prayer. This is how many husbands and wives make themselves victims in the satanic conflict because they're incapacitated in prayer, which is the only tactic by which you can survive. The way they incapacitate themselves is through vengeance routines because of the sufferings, deserved or undeserved, that they may be going through.

1 Peter 3:6 says, "Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord, whose daughters you are as long as you do well and are not afraid of any terror. In like manner, you husbands dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor to the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered." When you engage in verbal tirades, they will strip you as a believer of your spirituality; they will strip you of your humanity; and, they will strip you of your womanliness and your manliness.

Paul, in Galatians 5:15, therefore warned the Galatians when he said, "But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed by one another." There is no end to the destruction that Satan can induce upon us when we respond to undeserved suffering with verbal tirades. Anytime somebody shoots a verbal tirade against you, that's the time for you to respond with practically total silence. When a verbal tirade comes flooding out and the sewage of the old sin nature is let loose against you, that is the time for you to receive it without countermeasures of any kind whatsoever. Your reaction is to set the record straight. God says forget it. Don't set the record straight. "'Vengeance is mine,' says the Lord. 'I will repay.'"

What kind of sense is that for you to be trying to set the record straight? God says, "When I set it straight, boy it's going to be straight." There are some Christians who are never going to learn this. I'm aware of that. I've seen some Christians go on for years and they cannot control their mouths. They cannot keep from talking about people. They cannot keep from tearing other people down. They cannot keep from undermining and undercutting and belittling other Christians, but always with the implication that they are fine people themselves, and out here is this character who's just so awful. That character that they're talking about is as awful as they're saying. That's true. That person just doesn't have to be as awful in the same way that they're awful. The attacker has his own area of offense which he himself generally can't see. But this business of verbal tirades is a debilitating thing to our humanity and to our spirituality, and it is something that we should not respond to. If you insist on responding to suffering (true or imagined) with your mouth, I'm telling you that God is going to bring long-range grief into your life.

So you just go ahead and start talking about people. You just go ahead and start slashing away at this person and that person. You just go ahead and maybe even treat a person with the other kind of hostility of cooling him and freezing him out. You will find that God will begin to bring distress upon your life. There's apparently in the Scriptures hardly anything that brings as much discipline from God as what happens with the mouth. The Bible is just full of warnings about what we say, what we discuss, what we talk about. There's apparently hardly anything that merits the maximum discipline of God such as what we say brings upon us. And for that reason, the devil is always itching to get us to let go with a verbal tirade.

Now, if we respond with divine viewpoint, and we remain, consequently, in temporal fellowship, the result will be God's blessing upon us. 1 Peter 3:10-11 says, "For he that would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him eschew evil and do good. Let him seek peace and pursue it." 1 Peter 5:10 says, "But the God of all grace, who has called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, and settle you." Make you mature or make you stable is what he is saying. You've suffered a while, but may God, through that suffering, make you stable; make you mature; and, make you a Christian who is capable of responding to what you know you should do.

**Partners with the Lord Jesus Christ**

Above all, it is a comfort for us to remember that we are partners with the Lord Jesus Christ in this undeserved suffering. 1 Peter 4:13 says, "But rejoice in as much as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy." There is coming a time of adding up the score. Everybody who enters a football game knows that there's going to come a painful moment in time when you add up the score. There are a lot of nervous people around Dallas today because of that fact of life. There comes a time when you have to add up the score, and the goods are out there on the board. Now, that's going to happen to us as Christians. We have shared His suffering in the angelic attack which has been against us. They can't get at the Lord Jesus Christ, so they get at us. So we have suffered with Him.

We may find that we have not responded to the negative volition of other people, and thus brought deserved suffering upon ourselves. We may find that we have not entered into the malcontent's viewpoint and thus secured poison for our own frame of reference, which we may discover inadvertently that we were not strong enough ourselves to be able to take that negative frame of reference, and thus it collapsed our own loyalty and enthusiasm for God's viewpoint. However, we may find that we cannot respond with the controls of God with the Holy Spirit upon our lives, and then the suffering will be converted to deserved suffering. But if we respond with His controls, we will have happiness because we have responded to undeserved suffering in the right way to the crossing of our volition by the negative volition of other people and to the verbal tirades of other people. We will find that joy is added.

**Philippians 2:1-2**

So this is the background. This is the whole theme of suffering that has been here at the end of Philippians 1. It is on that background of the situation that believers face what Paul then begins in Philippians 2. You are in the conflict. You are under suffering. Your responses to it can be of varied kinds. They can be disastrous, or they can be a great, fantastic blessing. Satan is so subtle that he will bring it in open and in covered ways. But whatever way he brings it, how you respond is going to determine your happiness right now. In Philippians 2, he goes into the business of happiness. In these first two verses, he's talking about his own happiness. Paul says, "I have an inner happiness. I have a spiritual maturity structure in my soul. But there is something that I would like to see in the Philippians congregation which would just really top off my joy." So verses 1-2 go together. The grammar of this will help you to understand what the apostle is saying.

Verse 1 is a condition of the sentence. Verse 2 is the conclusion. In other words, verse 1 says, "If this is so." Then verse 2 says, "Then this is so." In verse 1, there are four if statements: "If there be any consolation;" "if any comfort of love;" "if any fellowship of the Spirit;" and, "if any tender mercies." These happen to be four conditional phrases. Every one of them is of the first class variety. You know that a first class "if" means that a thing is true. If, and it doesn't mean any doubt. We could translate it as "since." Or we could say, "If, and it's true." Or we could say, "In view of the fact."

The conditional part of the sentence grammatically is called the protasis. That's stating the condition. All of verse one is a protasis. It's declaring the condition in the form of four if statements, all of which are true. It's pretty easy to recognize these in the Greek Bible because a first class protasis always begins with the two-letter word "ei." Then it always has the indicative mood of the verb, and the verb can be in any tense. But this little particle "ei" is the word "if." "If," and then the indicative mood (the declarative statement) of the verb--that signals immediately first class condition.

The conclusion of the if statement is called the "apodosis." That's the conclusion, and this is in verse 2 in this case. That can be in any mood or in any tense. So Paul says, "If" (first class condition). The words "there be: are not in the Greek. They are just inserted. The next word is another particle in the Greek: "oun" for "therefore." "If therefore." Now this particular word, "oun," is a word that indicates a sequence. It indicates that something is coming next in order. Now, what this "therefore" refers back to is something back before us, and that's what we looked at already as we reviewed the whole concept of suffering. It is looking back to Philippians 1:27 where he calls upon the believers to hear of their affairs, "that they stand fast in one spirit with one mind."

The point of this passage is one mental outlook or one mental attitude in the congregation. One mind that, consequently, results in one series of conclusions and decisions, where there is a unity of thought and a unity of response among the Christians. That is, without a bunch of mavericks within the commendation running around because their thinking is dislocated from God's divine viewpoint for that congregation in that point in time. Furthermore, "therefore" refers back to Philippians 1:29-30 where Paul says, "Unto you it is given in behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same (angelic) conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me."

So this is what he is saying. "If therefore, in view of this suffering, these four 'if' conditions are true (and they are)." The first "if" he says is consolation. "If there is any consolation in Christ." The word "consolation" is "paraklesis." "Paraklesis" comes from two words. The first part comes from "para" which means "beside." The last part comes from "kaleo" which means "to call." So the word means "to call to one's side." Or, it is often translated "comfort." You call somebody to your side for comfort. Anytime in the Greek language we see a noun that ends in "is" as this one does, that's a signal that this is indicating an action. So this is the action of comforting. Paul is speaking of Christians being comforted. What kind of comfort is he speaking of? Well, he's speaking in terms of the "therefore"--the suffering that they're experiencing. The suffering, deserved and undeserved, which surrounds them. In view of that, their own joy and their own happiness comes under attack.

Well, these Philippians have erected a spiritual maturity structure in their souls. They have put up the five facets of spiritual maturity as a result of learning the Word of God. One of the facets was inner happiness. Here's a believer. His spiritual maturity structure has inner happiness, among other things, on the inside. Here comes suffering from the outside, and it strikes the spiritual maturity structure on the inside. It strikes the inner happiness that's already there. The result is comfort. That's what Paul is saying. If, and it is true, that suffering from the outside can strike the maturity you have on the inside, the result is happiness in the form of comfort. Now, you may not act with external hilarity, but you will be at peace in your mind. So you will be happy in the Lord's care.

But the point is that there can be a certain joy and peace and comfort because the suffering on the outside is going to strike a maturity on the inside, and the result is going to be the comfort of God upon your soul. This comfort, we are told, is in Christ. It is because we are united to the Lord Jesus Christ in union with Him. The comfort in trials and pressures cannot be found through people. It is found in Christ. An immature Christian who lacks an operational spiritual maturity structure in his soul will always seek comfort through the rinky dink words, acts, and attention of people. When he is under suffering and pressure, he wants what people can give him. There are some people who are quite willing to oblige you with that sort of pseudo comfort.

But you will discover that the mature Christian, when he is under fire, wants to be left alone. The mature Christian, when he's under pressure and suffering and fire, wants to be left alone with the Lord. There are some people who, again, cannot control their own volition. When somebody is under pressure, they want to keep barging in and imposing their volition and their attention and their human influences and comforts upon him. A fully developed spiritual maturity structure always has provision greater than any adversity of life, and that's comfort.

So what this first "if" is saying is that the Philippians do have a comfort in suffering due to the spiritual maturity and the inner happiness that that spiritual maturity contains. Now, this first verse contains three other "ifs," all of which also are true. Paul lines them up like hammer blows one after another. Since this is true; since this is true; since this is true; and, since this is true, then he makes a conclusion in verse 2 that this is what ought to be true about all of us. We shall take that up next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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