***Self-Pity - PH83-01
Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 4:4***

We are studying "Happiness is your Duty," section number 6, based on Philippians 4:4. We have found that one of the primary causes of the feeling of depression is anger. We have found, however, that anger may be godly, or it may be ungodly. Anger in itself is not a sin. Ungodly anger is anger which has degenerated into bitterness, resentment and hatred. Ungodly anger does produce personal depression and this unhappiness. Christians are told in the Bible to be angry, but they are told not to sin in the process of being angry. This means not to let godly anger against evil degenerate into a vengeance-seeking wrath kind of anger. Christians are not to let the day end, the Bible says, without resolving this problem of anger.

So we read in Ephesians 4:26," "Be angry;" that is, with that "orge" kind of anger we talked about which rises up in indignation, but is a settled kind of attitude toward evil. "And do not sin" in the process. Then it says, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath. The word "wrath" there is that other word we looked at, "parorgismos," which means an anger that is expressing bitterness, indignation, and resentment – that anger which seeks revenge.

So the wrath that we are not to let the sun set upon is the wrath that has degenerated into bitterness. Angry: yes. Bitter and vengeful: no. Sinful anger will express itself in two ways: by blowing up; or, by clamming up instead of solving the point of the anger. Godly anger is solution-oriented, but ungodly anger is inevitably problem-oriented.

**Rights**

There is a cause for ungodly anger that pretty well summarizes the source of this particular kind of indignation on our part. That source can be summed up in one word. It is the word "rights." The source, basically, of anger of the ungodly type within us is the matter of personal rights. Sinful anger is always the product of the attitude that one's rights are being invaded. Temper is simply anger demanding what is viewed as a right which is being threatened. The rights demanded may even be legitimate ones. They may be legitimate claims such as the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. But we can have an attitude toward these legitimate claims which is such as to convert them into anger.

How are we going to resolve this? This business of what you've got coming to you is deep-seated in every one of us. Perhaps it's especially strong in the fact that, by the grace of God, we live under the free enterprise system. The free enterprise system is based upon the biblical concept that a man should work and earn, and he should be permitted to enjoy the fruits of his labor. Therefore, we have that innate sense in this land of ours that what we earn, we should have a right to have a voice in; to use as we choose; and, that that's part of our freedom. So we have a natural inclination to view certain things as our rights and as our legitimate claims. When somebody threatens those, we think we have a perfect justification for reacting against him.

**Privileges**

Ungodly anger can be eliminated in a very simple way, and that is by recognizing that all that we have is due to the grace of God. The apostle Paul said, "I am what I am by the grace of God." So what claims do you have? What rights do you have? Whatever you have, it is the result of the grace of God. Therefore, what you have is something that is a gift which God has given you. It is a privilege which you do not deserve.

When you talk about rights, and when you talk about claims that are properly and legitimately yours, if you are a spiritual-oriented Christian, and if you're thinking straight, you will recognize that what you are calling "rights" and what you are calling "your legitimate claims" are simply gifts from God. They are privileges, for this reason: that as fallen sinners, we have fallen short of the absolute righteousness of God, which God demands of those who are going to heaven.

Remember, nobody can enter heaven unless he has the absolute righteousness of Jesus Christ. We who have fallen short of that standard, therefore, deserve only one thing, and that is the lake of fire. That's what we have a right to. That's what we have a legitimate claim upon – eternity in the lake of fire. When you want to talk about rights; when you want to get up in arms about what is your right; and, when you want to get angry when your rights are being threatened, just remember that there's only one thing you deserve with God, and that is to be sent to hell for all eternity. That is your only legitimate right. That is the thing that you legitimately deserve.

Everything else we possess in life that we enjoy, and that provide necessities for us, are privileges. These are gifts which God has given us. They are not rights that we have some ground to demand. Only God has the right to exercise control, therefore, over these gifts and privileges that He has given us. Only God has the right to decide what is going to happen to the things that He gave us to begin with.

That's why it's very ludicrous for people to be standing up and to be popping off in their anger over what they consider to be a threat to what they claim is a right, because all you have is a gift, and only God has the right to make decisions concerning whether you have that gift or whether you don't have it; or, whether you have that privilege or whether you don't have it.

This principle is enunciated for us in Job 1:21, when Job said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." You couldn't put it more exactly. I care not what you have that you esteem; that you value; that you enjoy; and, that is an enrichment of your life. It is because the Lord God gave it to you. You have it as a gift. It is a privilege. It is not a right. It is not a thing that you can claim under any ground whatsoever. Therefore, if God gives it to you, blessed be the name of the Lord. And if God takes it away from you, blessed be the name of the Lord.

When you get to that point, you have taken a major stride toward controlling anger in your life. When you get to that point of being able to share Job's attitude, you will be a happy person. I'll guarantee you that until you do, you're going to be plagued with unhappiness. You're going to be plagued with depression. Job's wife did not get the hang of that. Jobs wife was a rebellious, resistant woman. In spite of the fact of what her husband tried to explain to her and teach her, she was part of the feminist movement. So her mouth was constantly making declaratory statements instead of interrogatory questions. She was not a teachable woman – asking questions to learn. She was always sounding off.

One of the most splendid things that she had to say was in Job 2:9-10. This is one of the earliest policy statements of the feminist movement. Then said his wife unto him, "Do you still retain your integrity? Curse God and die. But, he said unto her, you speak as one of the foolish women speak. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil. In all this, Job did not sin with his lips." Every time I read this verse, I want to stand up and cheer and clap and shout, "Hooray for Job." Would to God there were more men through the centuries such as he, while being pried and poked and aggravated and prodded by this woman with her human viewpoint.

She said, "Job, you're a dummy. Spit in God's face and curse Him for what He's done to us. Then go ahead and let Him kill you." Job says, "You are stupid. You are dumb." But he restrained himself from saying too much, and he just call her a foolish woman. He said, "Are we only going to be thanking God for everything good?" He was a rich man. I mean, he was really rich, as the ancient world goes. He was even rich as this world goes today. It's hard for us to conceive of the vast amount of wealth that Job had, and he lost it all, including his seven children.

That's the context upon which this woman is speaking, and the context upon which Job is responding to her. Why? Because Job knew that all that wealth was not a right. It was a privilege that God had given him to use as unto the Lord's glory. All those children he enjoyed so thoroughly were not a right, and he had no claims upon them. They were a privilege which God had given him. When God gave him to enjoy those things, blessed be the name of the Lord. When God decided it was time to take it away, Job didn't know why. He didn't know what was going on behind the scenes with this confrontation between God and Satan. But Job knew that if the Lord did it, he thanked God for what He was doing, right in the midst of his tears over the loss of his children, and right in the midst of his grief over what had happened to so much that he once enjoyed.

The apostle Paul knew the same principle. He also knew that what are commonly viewed as rights are simply privileges, and they are to be used as God the Holy Spirit leads us to use them. So we have in 1 Corinthians 9:4-6 this declaration on the part of the apostle Paul: "Have we no right to eat and to drink? Have we no right to lead about a sister, or a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord and Cephas? Or I only, and Barnabas, have we no right to forbear working. Paul says, "Yes, there are certain privileges. There are certain rights which we have like anybody else. There are certain claims which we may make like everyone else." But in verse 12, he says, "If others be partakers of this right over you, aren't we rather. Nevertheless, we have not used this right, but bear all things lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ."

Paul is saying, "We have certain rights." He's particularly referring to the fact that it would have been legitimate for them (Paul, Barnabas, and his other associates) to have been sustained in material things by these people to whom he ministered, and by these people to whom he was opening (of all things) vast eternal riches. They were giving him a few dollars to take a vacation with; to eat some food with; to keep clothes on his back; and, to keep his operation of missionary enterprise going. But he was giving them that which they would have returns on for all eternity. There never would be a time in their eternal existence when they would not be able to look back to the apostle Paul and say, "This, which I now enjoy is because of him." Whereas anything they gave him was going to be very temporal. While it was critical and important at the time, it nevertheless was short-lived.

The apostle Paul says, in spite of all that, and that these things are important to us here in time, because of the status of the Corinthian Christians and because of their depth of criminality, he said, "We didn't exercise any of these privileges that God has given us." We didn't exercise and demand any of these rights. We just bypass them all.

In 1 Corinthians 9:18-19, he says, "What is my reward then? Verily, that when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, and that I abuse not my right in the gospel to be sustained materially by my preaching." In other words, he took nothing. He would not accept returns materially from these people: "For though I am free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all that I may gain the more."

Paul knew that what he had, even what he needed (the very necessities of life), were a privilege from God. These were things that God at some time could tell him, "Paul, I want you to bypass it. I don't want you to accept anything from these people. I don't want you to receive their gratuities no matter what they may offer you."

So Paul maintained personal happiness by the fact that he understood that everything he had was the result of the grace of God. There was nothing that he had a right to demand. We're going to see a little more of this as we get to the latter part of Philippians 4. We're coming to this. Let's just look ahead a moment in Philippians 4:11-13. Paul could make this very dramatic and splendid statement: "Not that I speak in respect of want, for I have learned that in whatever state I am, in this to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere, and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

That is the epitome of a spiritual Christian, declaring the understanding that Job declared to us in the Old Testament: "The Lord has given. The Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. I don't have any rights. I don't have any privileges. All I've got is gifts from God. He gave them to me. It is His right, and His right alone, to determine what happens with what He has given me."

Therefore, you and I don't have any ground for anger. Anger, inevitably, of the ungodly type springs from the fact that some kind of a right, whether it's to a material thing; to a reputation; to a recognition; or, something else is being denied us. So we rise up in indignation. How many fracases do you have in local churches because you have Christians who haven't matured enough to the point where they understand this principle? So they're squabbling with each other because of who's being recognized; whose will is being imposed; whose way is being accepted; and, whose way is being rejected. It's shameful; it's disgraceful; it's cheap; it's dirty; and, it's low. When you grow up as a believer, you recognize that you have no ground for anger because of the fact that you think you have any rights. So what is there to get mad about?

Again, we are helped in understanding this if we remember the principle of 1 Thessalonians 5:18 to be thankful in all things. We are to be thankful for whatever God does with our privileges. So whatever God does with your health, you thank Him it. What gives you the right to think that you have the right to good health? You don't have the right to that. We have one right – to the lake of fire. If God gives you good health, then thank Him for it. If He gives you a good marriage, then thank Him for it. If he gives you a bad marriage, should we curse Him and die? No. If He gives you a bad marriage, you thank Him for it. That's kind of hard, isn't it? That's because you think you have a right to have a good marriage.

You have possessions. You thank Him for them. If He takes them way, you thank Him for it. If He takes away your time, you thank Him for it. If He takes away your children, you thank Him for your children. If your children disappoint you, you thank Him for it. If He botches up your career and your ambitions, you thank Him for it. If He strikes your reputation, and you suffer so unjustly (as the apostle Paul did so often), you thank Him for it. When He takes your money away, you thank Him for it. When He makes it impossible for you to realize and fulfill your plans that you have for your life, you thank Him for it. Whatever it is, they're all privileges and they're all gifts, and you are thankful for each of them. "The Lord has given. The Lord takes away." There is no ground for anger.

**Duty**

However, lest somebody should now get carried away with the zeal of the moment, and with the passion of my preaching and the inspiration of my words, I must warn you that there is a difference between rights and duty. I know that some of you kids in Berean Christian Academy have been sitting here, and you've been drinking this in. I know that you're just the kind that are ready to say, "Now I have given my right to good grades to the Lord, so I'm not going to study hard anymore." You have confused your rights with your duty. It is your duty to study hard and make good grades. The rights or the privileges of good grades are indeed up to the Lord, but it is your duty to apply yourself.

Some of you parents may say, "This comes to me as a great relief to hear what you have said. I am now going to give my right to my children to God. Therefore, I won't discipline them or train them anymore. I'm washing my hands of them. Lord, you take charge of them." Or you may say, "I'm going to give up my right to money, so I'm not going to work anymore for my necessities. I'm going to look to the food stamp program." There are plenty of people in this country who have given up their right to work, and they have readily received this gratuitous bounty of the government. No, there's a difference between your rights and your duties. While we recognize that everything we have comes as a gift from God, that does not free us of certain duties. The scriptural principle is that you deal with the things that are your responsibilities, and you perform them as unto the Lord.

**Self-Pity**

We come to the second key feature. The number one cause of depression, and thus of unhappiness, is anger. The second basic one seems to have a mounting effect, perhaps even more so than anger. As you progress in depression from the place where you are discouraged, to where you go more severely into the stage of despondency, and then into that utter stage of despair, one of the things you will discover is that this quality has this effect. It opens up like a cornucopia and gets worse as you get down to the despair angle. That is self-pity. That is the second most prominent (and maybe the most prominent) reason for depression.

Immediately, his majesty the devil has been whispering in your ear and saying, "Aren't you glad to find out that it's self-pity? That's no problem for you, is it, buddy?" And he is seeking to comfort you that you do not feel sorry for yourself. That's what self-pity means – feeling sorry for yourself. Just think it over for a minute. Most people will immediately deny this. Yet, they should look back and say, "Now here's a point in time when I really felt depressed." If they could remember their thinking before they became depressed, they would discover to their horror how regularly they were guilty of feeling sorry for themselves in some respect. That's the thing that triggered the depression.

We resist this idea that we are feeling sorry for ourselves because it's too humiliating to admit. There are not many of us who are going to stand up next Sunday night when we have the Lord's Supper, and we have our period of testimony meeting, and say, "I've discovered this week that I am just shot-through with self-pity. I just feel so sorry for myself that if I'm sitting at a ballgame, and I see the catcher go out to talk to the pitcher, I know they're talking about me. I'm just overwhelmed with this pity that I have for myself." You're not going to stand up and tell us that, because that's kind of embarrassing. It's kind of humiliating. And there is no need to tell us that, and it's rightly so that you should not.

However, self-pity is a problem that almost everybody on some occasion (some more, and some less) are plagued with. It is usually revealed outwardly by verbalizing our mistreatments, whether they're real or supposed. A person who is shot-through with self-pity is usually verbalizing his grievances. He is very vocal about his grievances.

You cannot free yourself from the unhappiness of depression if you refuse to admit that you're guilty of self-pity. If you will frankly examine your mental attitudes, you'll discover that there are many times when this is exactly what you're doing. You're feeling sorry for yourself. Why should you feel sorry for yourself? Well, because something has happened to you. Something has come into your life. It's brought you a certain unhappiness.

However, God has given us a very important basic Bible doctrine principle concerning the things that come into our lives, which in itself removes any ground for self-pity. That's in 1 Corinthians 10:13, where we read, "No temptation (or tension or trial) has taken you, but such as is common to man. But God is faithful, who will not permit you to be tempted above that you are able, but will, with the temptation, also make the way to escape, that you may be able to bear it." The principle of the Word of God says that no trial comes into the life of a Christian greater than you are able to cope with, or greater than you have the capacity to cope with.

In 2 Corinthians 12:9, "The apostle Paul said, "And he said unto me, 'My grace is sufficient for you." This is again God's statement that whatever comes, His grace is big enough to meet the need. So whatever happens, we don't really ever have a ground for self-pity. Instead, whatever happens, James 1:2-3 tells us that we should count it all joy: "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing this, that the testing of your faith works patience. We can count these very trials as joy in something for which we're thankful for, because we know they're being used by God to refine us.

Self-pity produces depression because it flows from the obsession of self-love. When you are preoccupied with self, you will express it in self-pity. Any time you find yourself feeling sorry for yourself, you know in that moment that you are not preoccupied with the Lord Jesus Christ. Your eyes not centered on Him. You, at that moment, are not deeply in love with the Son of God, but you're deeply in love with yourself. If the mental attitude of self-pity is not abandoned, the degree of depression and unhappiness will grow. As you go from discouragement through despondency to despair, the self-pity will grow until it just consumes you.

**The Effects of Self-Pity**

Here are the effects of self-pity. Your anger over some mistreatment opens the door to self-pity, which then triggers the depression, and the loss of your inner happiness. One of the results of self-pity is that you cannot organize your life. You blame other people for the fact that you cannot get it all together in your own life. Self-pity causes a depression with the effect of zapping your creative energies. Your potential is lost. You lose sight of your priorities. You pursue the cob instead of the corn, because you've just lost sight of your priorities. Self-pity is a major step toward spiritual insanity. Remember that we say that you go in depression from discouragement to despondency to despair. And when we're talking about despair there, we're talking about psychotics. We're talking about people who have lost touch with reality. You do that spiritually. That's what's so dangerous about depression. That's what's so dangerous about self-pity, because self-pity keeps moving you toward the despair category where you go spiritually insane. Therefore, you are actually pursuing secondary pseudo objects instead of the real thing.

Self-pity not only causes you to be unable to organize your life; you lose your creative potential; and, it destroys your ability to have a sense of priorities, but it also causes you to verbalize your pity so that you alienate your family and your friends. This is one of the most common characteristics of the person who is obsessed with feeling sorry for himself. He is constantly verbalizing his grievances. His mouth, from morning to night, is expressing one grievance after another. He is constantly verbalizing offenses that he feels have been directed against him. Even when he goes to prayer, he's using prayer to nurse his self-pity. The prayer of a self-pitying person is nothing but one long whine to God. He gets before God, and he proceeds to have a good session of whining.

We have a great example of this in the Bible of a very great man. So perhaps this is God's way of pointing up to us that when people that He has greatly used in His service are prone to whining self-pity, the rest of us had better be very much on guard. Turn for a moment to Numbers 11:11, as we read about Moses. Moses is with this people that he has led out of slavery, and they have been whining. They have been shot-through with self-pity. They've been complaining constantly about what has happened to them since they have left the wonderful flesh pots of Egypt where they had garlic and leeks to eat. Here they are out in the desert, and poor Moses is being exposed to their whining and self-pity. This is what's bad about associating with people who are prone to self-pity.

Remember that we have told you that the Word of God indicates that when you find an angry man, a man who has ungodly type of anger, steer away from him and don't associate with him. Steer clear of him. The same thing is true about people who are whining. Poor Moses had this million-and-a-half of whiners out in the desert, and he couldn't very well walk off and abandon them. But that's exactly what he felt like doing. Numbers 11:11: "Moses said unto the Lord, 'Wherefore have You afflicted Your servant? And wherefore have I not found favor in Your sight, that You laid the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them that You should say unto me, carry them in your bosom as a nursing father bears the nursing child unto the land, which You did swear to give unto their fathers? From where should I have flesh to give unto all this people? For they weep unto me, saying give us flesh that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this people alone because it is too heavy for me. If You deal thus with me, kill me, I pray, out of Your hand if I have found favor in your sight, and let me not see my wretchedness.'"

That's a beautiful, whining prayer if you have ever read one. You can just see Moses standing out there talking to God and saying, "What do you mean, Lord, telling me that I have to bear all these like they were my kids. They're not my kids. They're your kids. You bear them on your bosom. What are you asking me to do this for? All they say is, 'I want something to eat.' I get up in the morning, and I walk out of my tent, and they say, 'I want leeks and garlic. We don't have any garlic – beautiful garlic. I left my garlic garden back in Egypt.' And I'm sick of it, Lord, I'm just sick of it. You can have them back. As a matter of fact, let's make a deal. You take them back, and kill me. I go to heaven and you take them." Moses thought this through. He wasn't nuts. He just knew what Paul knew: absent from the body and present with the Lord. He said, "That's better."

What had happened here is that Moses had gotten out of line with divine viewpoint with the Word of God, and the whining, self-pitying people that surrounded him had finally gotten to him, and he had absorbed their quality of self-pity. That's what's dangerous about people who are guilty of this. These people were unhappy. They were angry at God; they felt sorry for themselves; and, they were depressed. And Moses fell into the same trap. This is a mental attitude sin, and it denies the principle of Romans 8:28: "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who the called according to His purpose."

The dangerous thing about self-pity is that the first time you exercise it, it's a very rather modest thing. But you find that there's a certain pleasure in self-pity. Self-pity is pleasurable. It has terrific after effects, but at the moment that you do it, it has a certain pleasure to it. You find that when things go wrong, you meet it with a little self-pity. The next time things go wrong, you revert back to that same technique. You used it once before. Someone has said that when you do something 39 times in a row, it becomes a habit, and it becomes a pattern that you then continue to do.

What is happening with so many people is that they get into self-pity and they establish this as a habit. Therefore, it is their inevitable life response. It becomes a lifestyle. You and I can think of people who have made self-pity their way of life. They are whiners, and they're the kind of people that when you see them coming in, you want to turn around and go the other way. You know that the minute you get in their presence, and the minute they open their mouth, it's going to be nothing but whining, because self-pity is their way of life. They enjoy it, but they're terrifically unhappy people. They're depressed.

You may actually have cause for self-pity. You may be rejected; you may be betrayed; you may have a deplorable job; you may have a disloyal mate; you may have some physical impairment; or, you may find yourself isolated from love that everybody needs. But whatever it is, there is no justifiable ground for a Christian to fall into the trap of self-pity. *Self-pity is sin.* Like any other sin, it takes you out of the inner circle of temporal fellowship. When you're out of that inner circle of temporal fellowship, you're in trouble.

So victory comes through the strength that Jesus Christ can give us through the Word of God in order to meet this problem. A little later, we're going to learn in Philippians 4:13, that Paul is saying, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." And that's exactly what we can do. So there is nothing for which we can really pity ourselves. The thankful person is not a person who feels sorry for himself.

So you will notice that Paul said in Philippians 4:6, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God (or the happiness) which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. So if we turn with thanksgiving to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our strength, and remembering that the battle is the Lord's, whatever it is in your life, you will be preserved from the temptation of self-pity. Self-pity is something that's hard to give up because it's a defense mechanism. We use it to cover up the fact that we're doing things for which we are rightly condemned. So we use this in order to defend ourselves against something that we're doing. This can only be stopped by changing our mental attitude.

**Dealing with Self-Pity**

So let's look at it: divine viewpoint principles for dealing with self-pity:

1. **Admit it**

First of all, you have to admit that self-pity has been established in your life as a habit pattern. Look the thing over and examine yourself. Be ready to say, "Yes, that's right. I keep feeling sorry for myself; I keep verbalizing it; I keep offending my family; I keep offending my friends; and, I keep driving people away from me because I verbalize my self-pity." It's a learned behavior pattern, however. Remember that. It's a way you fell into meeting disagreeable situations. So once you admit that you're a slave to a learned behavior pattern, you will remember that you can also unlearn it. All learned behavior patterns can be unlearned. You are not prone to self-pity because you're an animal with an instinct. You're prone to self-pity because you've developed this as a learned behavior pattern. So you can unlearn it. So first of all, admit that self-pity has become a habit with you.

1. **Self-Pity is a Sin**

Secondly, recognize that self-pity is a sin. As a sin, it grieves the Holy Spirit, and causes you to lose your temporal fellowship with God the Father. You are a carnal Christian. In that status, you lack the power of the Holy Spirit to meet the crises of your life, so you fall even more deeply into self-pity, and thus more deeply into depression. What's the way out? I think, you know. Confess the sin; declare your self-pity; re-establish the functioning of the Holy Spirit in your life; and, then maintain that filling of the Spirit of God.

1. **A Spiritual Maturity Structure**

Then develop a spiritual maturity structure in the soul through Bible doctrine, so that you'll produce stability when trial and suffering comes to you, and you won't have to revert to self-pity. People, by nature, do not have the personal character to avoid pitying themselves. It takes a spiritual maturity in your soul, which is the character of Jesus Christ built in you, to enable you to meet the crises; the sufferings; and, the trials of your life without feeling sorry for yourself. But mature spiritual Christians are able to take the things that come to them in stride, without whining. You don't build a spiritual maturity structure except by daily feeding upon the Word of God, so you maintain your forward progress.

As a matter of fact, some counselors make the practice of telling people who are plagued with depression to take the book of Philippians and just read it over and over again. The reason they do that is because this splendid little book was written to explain and preserve happiness. It is a book of rich context, as we have found, with vast areas of divine viewpoint principles. Many people can testify to the fact that just reading the book of Philippians has oriented them to God's thinking, and thus to happiness in their own souls.

1. **Thank God**

Next, thank God for the tensions of life which are used by Him to advance your spiritual maturity. Ingrates always revert back to self-pity. Gratitude will release you from the enslavement to self-pity, and will enable you to praise God in all things. Thankful Christians are the only ones that can be happy Christians.

1. **Prayer**

If you're going to whip self-pity, you're going to have to maintain the communication of prayer so that you bring all things to the Lord, and you leave them there. The things for which you would feel sorry for yourself, you bring to the Lord, and you leave them there. If you neglect prayer, that in itself will do you in.

So the two major factors in depression are anger and self-pity. If you can deal with those two, and if you can remove them from your life (and you ought to give them major consideration) you will be well on the road to stable, permanent happiness. God has given us a means for happiness. In Philippians 4:4, we read, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say rejoice." In other words, God commands us to be happy. That's what we've been studying for several sessions now. God never commands us to do something without giving us the capacity to do it. He gives us the means for happiness through the Word of God. Remember that doctrine is the mind of Christ. If you're going to have God's mental attitudes, and that's what we're talking about, having His happiness, then you must get it through the Word of God. 1 Corinthians 2:16 says, "For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." How do we have the mind of Christ? Through doctrine.

So if you're going to have happiness, it begins with getting doctrine into your thinking. The Bible tells us that the more doctrine you have stored in your human soul and your human spirit, the more God's happiness will be possessed by you. In John 17:13, we read, "And now I come to you. These things I speak in the world that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves." What things? The things of Bible doctrine. In John 15:11, Jesus said, "These things that I've spoken unto you (the things of doctrine) that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." Whose joy? The joy of the God-Man Jesus Christ. If you want happiness, what God is saying is that He wants to share with you His perfect happiness. You get that through a mental process. You get it for getting your mind filled with God's thinking.

So the grace way of learning spiritual things is the way to happiness above externals. But you have to use it, with positive volition. The whole grace system has to be constantly used. Jeremiah 15:16: "Your words were found, and I did eat them. Your Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart. For I am called by Your name, O, Lord God of hosts." It's the Word of God that brought joy. The Word of God brought happiness.

John 13:17 declares the same principle to us in the New Testament: "If you know these things, you are happy if you do them."

So now you know, what anger does; you know what self-pity does; and, you know what triggers these things. How will you be happy? If you act upon what you know. Remember that you can find a certain amount of happiness in people, circumstances, and the details of life. But this is a happiness which is only temporary. It's passing, and it doesn't continue. The time comes when the party's over, and the depression sets in. The only happiness that you and I can enjoy on a permanent basis is the one that God gives us in grace. That's what we build into our souls through the Word of God. So the more you take in doctrine, the more you have a basis for happiness.

Most people don't even have the basis to start being happy. So what can they do? They can only have this temporary thing that happens to come from some circumstance of the moment. The lasting happiness of God gives us capacity to enjoy the things of life, and to enjoy them fully. John 10:10 says that He has come to give us this joy – to give us an abundant life. The kind of happiness we have will be reflected in our Christian service. You and I have known Christians who've been very eager to serve the Lord. They get all excited to get on the team, and then the pressures of Satan come against them, and then they start whining and complaining. This is the person who can't have it his way, so then he quits and he runs off, and he looks for something else. That preoccupation with self that even McDonald hamburgers understands. So they say, "Have it your way" and they make millions over it.

The Word of God says it's not your way. It's have it God's way. That's the way to happiness. So I've seen these hot-shot Christians over a quarter of a century who get on the team and who get all eager and hustling and running around. They just don't have the spiritual capacity to stay in the job and to be happy. They get angry; they feel sorry for themselves; and, they wash themselves out. The devil is just standing by to give you that kind of washout. He's just waiting to get you mad. He's just waiting to get you feeling sorry for yourself so that you will not apply yourself to the ministry to which God has called you. If you know God's word, and you're filled with the spirit, you're going to stay calm. Even if you find something that you think isn't the way it should be, the thing that's going to delight you as a stable Christian is that you will be watching to see how God is going to solve it. You will learn that the battle is the Lord's. You will not be angry. You'll not go around feeling sorry for yourself.

Remember that one of the greatest instigations of Satan to cause you to feel sorry for yourself is when you stand up and present and propose something for the church to do, and then they don't listen to you. That's when you go home and say, "Well, alright then. I gave you your chance." So when you were making proposals, remember whom it is you are serving. Whether God is going to use what you have suggested or not is up to Him. Don't get mad, and don't feel sorry for yourself. Christians with a spiritual maturity in their soul are tough people. They know how to be prosperous, and they know how to be unprosperous. Either way, God is going to bless them.

So your positive response to Bible doctrine will preserve you from being victimized by the twin instigators of depression and unhappiness: anger; and, self-pity. May God help you to whip those two, and to take one giant step forward that every human being needs to take toward the fulfillment of happiness in his life that God has provided for you.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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