***What Paul Takes Pleasure in
Romans 9:1-5
RO129-01***

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Please turn with me this evening to the book of Romans 9. We are looking at verses 19-24. Our subject is Human Arrogance. This is segment number 4.

In Romans 9, the Apostle Paul points out that only those lost sinners get into heaven whom God has sovereignly chosen from the mass of lost humanity for that eternal life. Those who do go to heaven do so because God the Holy Spirit has led them to trust in Jesus Christ as Savior. Thus, not every Jew is automatically going to heaven, and that is Paul's point, but only those Jews are going to heaven who are chosen of God and who are led to trust in Jesus Christ. The Jews as a whole, Paul observed, have rejected their Messiah Savior Jesus Christ, and consequently, they have doomed themselves for eternity into the lake of fire.

Well, the Jews' reaction to the doctrine of election was to criticize God for holding them responsible for their rejection of Jesus Christ if God alone can enable them to trust in Jesus Christ. Now, the Apostle Paul does not actually answer that criticism. Instead, he rebukes the unsaved Jew for criticizing God's right as the sovereign God to choose those whom He desires for eternal life in His heaven.

The perfect judge, the perfect God is not subject to the examination and evaluation by fallen, sinful man. The dealings of God with sinful humanity actually reveals not His unkindness but His great glory, which means His perfect, distinctive attributes. It is the essence of God in all of His perfection that is behind the word "glory." God's glory, furthermore, has been made known to mankind in the saving of some who are totally undeserving of that salvation. Now, that is real glory.

**Vessels of Mercy**

So, this evening, we conclude this section, beginning at the second part of verse 23 and through verse 24. Paul has begun verse 23 with the words, "and that He might make known the riches of His glory." This glory that Paul is referring to here, He has particularly made known to certain individuals. He has displayed this glory upon those that are referred to here as "vessels," and that is, "containers of mercy."

The Greek word for mercy looks like this: "eleos." And this is the word in the Greek Bible which refers to the outward manifestation of pity for one who is suffering and in need of help. "Eleos" has to do with what you receive from God in your outward circumstances. "Eleos" is what you would do if somebody comes along shivering in the cold and you give them a coat. Somebody comes along, and they're starving, and you give him something to eat. You have taken care of an external problem. And God's glory is revealed to us in what He does for us in these external sufferings we have. We who are vessels of mercy are those who are called by God into the peace of His salvation and our physical preservation from the lake of fire.

Whenever the words "mercy" and "peace" occur together in the New Testament, they usually come in that order. First, you have to have the mercy of God. First, you have to have Him meeting the external problem. It may be physical. It may be of a psychological nature. But when that is met, then a person comes to repose. Then there can be peace.

So, peace with God is the result of finding, first of all, mercy from God. It is the grace of God, of course, that precedes both mercy and peace, as 1 Timothy 1:2 points out. We deserve neither the mercy of God, nor do we deserve His peace, but His grace enables us to have both. So, the vessels of mercy are these vessels which up in verse 21 he described as vessels unto honor.

God's second purpose in dealing with lost humanity is to make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy that He has chosen. And, Paul says, furthermore, that you people that have been selected to be the recipients of the tremendous glory of God He has prepared beforehand. The Greek word looks like this. Starts with the word "pro" which means "before." "Proetoimazo." "Proetoimazo" means "to decide something ahead of time, to ordain that something is going to happen beforehand." And Paul says, "Before you ever came on this earth, God said, "'I'm going to do something for that person. I'm going to prepare a tremendous, personal glory.'" And remember, the word "glory" means "perfection." It means "that which reflects what God Himself is.

And so, here, God says, "I'm going to make certain people that I choose out of the stream of lost humanity, a certain glorious destiny. God is the agent who prepares those of us who are in the elect for heaven. The non-elect prepare themselves for hell, but God prepares us for a special glory in heaven. And that's specifically what it says. It says He prepared us ahead of time unto glory. And that's the same word "doxa," which describes what God is in all His perfection. It refers to what we will be finally in the eternal life that we have in His presence. Only God can prepare us for that kind of glory. Only God can bring us into that glory. The grace of God received through the Gospel in this life results in glory in the life after death. The previous life we live on earth is a life which prepares us for glory in heaven after death.

Now, God is motivated in all He does by this desire to bring us into a position of great glory. Because when He does this, it reflects upon Himself. God says, "I'm going to exalt Myself by showing that I can take you who are sinners. And that means that you are absolute garbage in the sight of Almighty God. You don't deserve anything but exactly what you are headed for without Christ, the lake of fire. But I'm going to take you, the worst of you - you who are cultured sinners, and you who are uncouth sinners. I'm going to take all of you, and I'm going to transform you completely into the very image of Jesus Christ. You are going to have a transformation so that when I look at you I see My Son. You will be in My eyes as perfect as He is."

Now, the only way we can do that is by God providing us with an absolute righteousness that we receive as a gift. So, God's purpose is to bring glory to Himself in all that He does, because that is the right thing to do. He who has the divine perfections that God has, He alone in all the universe is worthy of glory. And everything exists, therefore, to bring glory to God. Every act of our lives as Christians is for that purpose.

Now, there's been a lot of living this past week on the part of all of us that has been anything but to the glory of God. But, here's a new week and a new orientation to remember that this is God's purpose. Before you ever came into the human race, He prepared you for a special glory, a glory which begins here in your Christian life, a glory that comes to maximum fruition when you come into His presence.

But it's important to remember that the only thing that impresses God and that glorifies Him is what He does through us. God is not impressed with all of your doing. God is not impressed with your hustling. God is not impressed with your carrying on and all your things that you do in order to bring glory to Him. He is only impressed with what the Word of God can do in your life to transform you now into the image of His Son.

Now, when that happens, then God is truly honored. And we gain, you see, from associating with God this gloriously perfect person He does not gain from associating with us. Christians share the glory of God through His provisions in Jesus Christ and through the doctrines of the Word of God which a Christian may take into His soul. That's the system, the fantastic blessings available from a sovereign, perfect God. The grace of God received in this life prepares one for the eternal glory in the life after death.

Verse 24 makes it even more specific. Now Paul is going to broaden his base. We know that in chapter 9, he's been talking about the past history of the Jews, their terrible rejection of Jesus Christ, their abandonment of their great opportunity. So now, Paul says, "Even us [all we Christians], whom He hath called." And there it is again: "kaleo." There's some people don't like to see that word in the Bible. It means that God decided to pull you out of the stream of humanity on the way to hell and to save you out of it. This word refers to the call which when God makes, the person says, "Yes."

In Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for a good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." When God called you into eternal life, then things start falling together unto your good.

Verse 30 says, "Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." When God calls, this is an effectual call that works, and we respond to it.

Who responds? He says, "Not to the Jews only." The Jews were very sure that because God promised through Abraham that they would have salvation that all of them were going to make it. And that's what Paul has been telling them. He says, "No, no. Not everybody born of the line of Abraham is a true Israelite. The true Israelite is the one who has received Jesus Christ as Savior. Those are the people who God is bringing into eternal life. So, the Jews understood that they were to have eternal life, but Paul says, "Not of the Jews only is God preparing to pour out a great glory, but also upon those who are Gentiles." Which brings in all the rest of us non-Jews. The Gentiles, like the Jews, have been called into salvation simply by God's sovereign decision.

God demonstrates His sovereignty in two ways. He demonstrates it by the wrath that He directs against those who reject Christ. He demonstrates His sovereignty by the mercy toward those who believe in Christ. The punishment of the vessels of wrath, of course, is not just to amuse God or to cause the victim's pain but is what is required by the justice of God. It is inevitable. The salvation of the vessels of mercy is designed to show God's riches toward people who do not deserve it. All deserve to be left in their lost status. It is God who makes the change. So, both Jews and Gentiles are subject to God's sovereign choice in order to enter His glory.

So now, what is this glory of God that He's preparing us for in such a tremendous way? Turn with me to James 4:6. "But He [God] giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, 'God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.'" In James 4:6, we have an amazing promise that God the Holy Spirit will provide certain Christians with a glorious level of spiritual maturity that James calls here "super, abundant grace."

The Greek word looks like this: "meizon." "Meizon" means "super abounding." It means a level of grace that is beyond the normal portion of all believers. All of you can count on logistical grace. God is going to give you what you need to function in His plan for your life. He will give you the food. He will give you the shelter. He will give you the clothing. He will make the provision in one way or another as you look to Him for that and as you move accordingly. The context of this passage in James shows that spiritual maturity level is only reached by a certain type of believer. It says, "He giveth super grace to the humble." "Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

The proud Christian does not want to come to come to church to be instructed in the Word of God. The proud Christian does not want to tie society down to operating on the principles of the Word of God. The proud Christian does not think Christian schools are important in a Christian home. The proud Christian is out there seeking status, seeking money, seeking to brush shoulders with the people who are in - the notables. He's looking for all the things that all the unsaved people are looking for. That's the proud game. The last thing on his list is learning the Word of God. It is not important to him whether He is in church or not. It is not a crucial, climactical thing that he is absent from the instruction of an opportunity to feed on the Word of God.

But there's that simple little Christian who doesn't think he's all that hot - the simple little Christian who really thinks there's something more he can learn from the Word of God. And, those of you who've been around here a long time know that there's always something more you can learn from the Word of God. We don't know it all. The humble person says, "I'm ready to listen." And God says, "What is happening is that you're developing something in your soul that will build a container so that I have something in which to pour grace that is not just ordinary grace to get you by, not your ordinary grace that everybody gets in the Christian life - but the grace that goes above and beyond. And few Christians have that. The humble believer who pursues the divine viewpoint of doctrine on a daily basis which builds a container in his soul to hold God's grace blessings.

So, what's the container? The container is a spiritual maturity structure in the soul into which God, when it is built, pour super abounding grace until, like Psalm 23:5 says, "My cup runneth over." What in the world does, "My cup runneth over," mean? What it means is that you have built in your soul a container to receive the grace of God. And you are not born into the Christian life with this container of spiritual maturity. And I'll guarantee you that when you have built this into your soul, you're off and flying. You will find yourself in a fulfillment of life and in a significance out in eternity that God had prepared you ahead of time for His great glory because He has been able to pour that glory into your soul.

Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 12:9. The Apostle Paul had been able to go into heaven upon the occasion when he was stoned to death at Lystra, and he saw what heaven was really like. Then God sent him back into his body and raised him back to life, and Paul always remembered what heaven was like. But the Lord says, "Paul, what you saw up here, you must never tell anybody. And just to be sure, when you get carried away sometime in a tremendously exciting meeting and you're preaching, and you might start telling more than you should tell, I'm going to give you this physical ailment. And when you start getting too close to the edge, I'm going to snap this thing into action, and it'll be a reminder to back off and do not tell what you saw up here."

So, in verse 9, he said, "And he said unto me [Because Paul has been saying, "Please take thing away from me. This is such a physical burden."], 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.' Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

So that, the Apostle Paul declares that he has a great joy, and depending on God's capacities in life rather than on his sin nature arrogance and self-confidence. Paul says that when he feels helpless in life, he finds that he's ready to lean on God's resources. When he can make it on his own, he doesn't thinking about the Lord. He doesn't think about praying. He doesn't think about searching out a biblical principle that applies to the situation that he's facing in life. Paul says, "Gladly, I will admit my limitations. I will cast myself on the power of Jesus Christ which rests on him like the glory of God once rested upon the Old Testament tabernacle."

**Pleasure in Infirmities**

Then, in verse 10, he proceeds to describe five basic elements that constitute this spiritual maturity structure in the soul which becomes the container for the super abundant grace of God. "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities."

The word "infirmities" looks like this in the Greek Bible; it's the Greek word "astheneia." "Astheneia" means "weakness." It refers to the Christian's incapacities in meeting the demands of life in stride. Human capacity tries to meet life under the guidance of the sin nature. Therefore, that Christian falls into legalisms to try to be spiritual. He falls into putting pressures on people to try to get them to do what's right. It is very easy for a preacher to fall into the "astheneia" weakness of putting pressures on people to get them to do the things they ought to do in a congregation.

But the Word of God says, "No, that's not the technique." What's going to solve this kind of weakness? Paul says, "It's going to be solved by developing a grace-orientation to life. You're going to learn how to function not on pressure but to live under the principle of grace. You're going to learn the principle of, "live and let live." You're going to learn the principle of letting God run His work. And you're going to learn the principle of minding your own business and taking care of your own life and making it what it should be, and leaving other people's lives to be dealt with by the Lord. So that, it is the Word of God that creates a capacity toward life that takes up the slack of our inability to meet life in stride.

A few verses. 2 Peter 3:18 refers to this. "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever." It is the responsibility of Christians to grow in the capacity of grace orientation toward life: to deal with people in grace. Yes, and even to deal with themselves in grace.

Hebrews 13:9 says, "Be not carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with foods, which have not profited them that have been occupied with them." To be occupied, to be established with the grace of God.

You know, there was a time when Roman Catholics were not able to eat meat on Friday. They could eat fish. I never figured out why fish was not flesh, but that was ok. Then, they changed the rules and said, "Ok, everybody can go to hamburgers on Friday."

I remember as a teenager standing there in the candy store in the neighborhood. And it was a Catholic neighborhood, and there were a bunch of Catholic people in there. And there was a priest, and they were talking to him. And I heard one of them say, "Father, is it all right to eat soup on Friday in which a chicken has been boiled." And I thought, even as a teenager, "That is about as dumb a question as anybody could ask." What I did not understand was that these people were trying to make it with God on the basis of something that they did so that God says, "Ok, you're good enough. Come on into heaven."

Now, the person who's oriented to grace leans back in the arms of Jesus and says, "Take it." The person who is not oriented to grace is always out there hustling, trying to make it into heaven on his own. And that's a sad thing. And that's what the writer of Hebrews means here. He says, "Don't go around with all those crazy, strange doctrines. But let your mind [and that's what he means by "the heart"] be stabilized with grace.

1 Corinthians 15:10, "But by the grace of God [Paul says] I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." And if there's ever a man who knew what it was to be grace-oriented and how to operate and function on grace, it was the Apostle Paul. He knew how to deal with all those recalcitrant, ugly Christians, as well as the aggressive, antagonistic world, and he knew how to take it in stride. Nobody ever bowled him over. Nobody ever brought him to his knees, because he left it with the Lord.

One more, 1 Thessalonians 5:18 addresses this. "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." The grace-oriented Christian knows how to thank God for whatever comes into his life. You will never be able to do that until you have developed the capacity for grace, until you've developed the capacity to stop pushing people around, to stop muscling, to stop trying to be legalistic, to stop pressurizing, and to take it to the Lord and leave it there.

**Pleasure in Reproaches**

The second thing that the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12:10, the second thing He takes pleasures in, he says, is, "reproaches." "Hubris." "Hubris" means "insults." This word connotes, "insulting mockery." 1 Thessalonians 2:2 uses this word, and it's translated, "shamefully treated."

So, you find yourself the victim of somebody's arrogance. You find yourself the victim of somebody's slander. You find yourself the victim of some injustice. You find yourself the victim of some insult. Somebody who invades your privacy. Somebody who's an ingrate who should be grateful to you. Somebody who has denied you something that really should have come to you, and they stepped in and were responsible for seeing it denied to you.

What kind of a response will you have as a Christian to insults? Christian is tempted to respond with indignation and with retaliation. His problem, at that point, is that he tends to lack "agape" love. "Agape" love is not here [pounding on chest], what we call, "in the heart." Up here, in the head. It's a bad mental attitude. Agape love is non-emotional. It is only in the head. It is a mental attitude love. And so, his response is that mental attitude hatred. But along comes Bible doctrine, and our carnal response is removed, because we developed what we may call a relaxed mental attitude in the soul.

And there are so many verses that deal with this. Let's hit a few. Ephesians 3:19. The face of insults. Paul says, "And to know the love of Christ." This "agape" love of Christ, this mental attitude, free from bitterness. "To know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Those who have this kind of a love are those who can be filled by the Spirit of God.

Ephesians 4:31-32 says, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Now, that's a relaxed mental attitude. That's an expression of an "agape" love.

Now, who are you thinking about now that says, "That dirty so-and-so. This is what he did to me. I'll never forgive him. Oh yeah, I'll forgive him, but I'll never forget." You can't do that, because God says, "When you forgive, you forget." If you don't forget, you don't forgive. We've got some people out here who like to be counselors, you know, counseling other people all the time instead of teaching them the Word so they can be their own counselors. They tell you, "Go and confess your sins to other people. Go and tell them what you did." No, the Word of God says, "It doesn't matter whether they say, 'You know, I'm sorry for what I did. I'm sorry for what I said.'" What you do is keep your nose clean with a relaxed mental attitude that doesn't carry into bitterness. And the worst they may have done, your forgiveness is automatically there.

Colossians 3:13-14 says this, "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on love ["agape"], which is the bond of perfectness." You see, that's the principle of the Word of God. Not as soon as they come and say, "I confess, I admit, I. Please give me your forgiveness."

I had a lady in Berean Church one time where she went to a clinic, and they told her to do that. And she thought of a Jewish lady at work that she had been very unkind to in some way, so she went to her and asked her, "Please forgive me for what I did. Will you forgive me?" And the Jewish lady said, "Never!" So, she said, "What'll I do now?" I said, "Well, stew in it. Why don't you follow biblical principles? Whether she forgives you or not is irrelevant. If you felt you wanted to go say, 'I'm sorry for what I did,' that's perfectly legitimate. And leave it there."

See, it's what you and the Lord are dealing with that deals with the relaxed mental attitude. Now, this makes a tremendous Christian when you can develop this quality. John 13:34 says, "'A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.'" That you have that mental attitude.

1 John 4:7 is another one we can add to that, this concept of having a relaxed mental attitude because you have the principle of "agape" love functioning. 1 John 4:7 says, "Beloved, let us ["agape"] one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."

So, you're going to be a Christian who goes somewhere? The first thing you need to develop in your container is grace orientation. The next thing you have to develop is a relaxed mental attitude. Now you're beginning to build a structure into which God can pour super abundant grace.

**Pleasure in Necessities**

The Apostle Paul says, "There's another thing." The next thing for which he says he thanks God is necessities. The Greek word looks like this: "anagke." "Anagke" means, "hardships." This word connotes a situation of need where there are pressures upon the individual. The capacity to meet the pressures of your prosperity, the capacity to meet the pressures of your poverty. Yes, Christians who are mature and who are smart know that their prosperity gives them as much pressures as does their poverty.

I've noticed that some of the people who've been the most zealous students of the Word of God and the most faithful workers at Berean Church and the people you could count on in the days of their poverty, when God made them prosperous, then they were not able to have the capacity to meet their prosperity. And it did them in. Who were going to be shedding tears at the judgment seat of Christ because they could not handle their prosperity. They never developed this particular facet of spiritual maturity. To have a priority of personal values, which seeks the things of God first and is not enslaved by the things of Satan's world.

Well, Bible doctrine solves this on our scale of values. It enables us to develop what we call a "mastery of the details of life." Luke 12:15, "And he said unto them, 'Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.'" How true, how true. A man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses. But you have to have a mastery of those detail, those elements of life for you to understand that.

1 Timothy 6:6-10 say, "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Matthew 6:33 gives a very explicit direction for developing a control over the lusts for material things. Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Hebrews 13:5-6, "Let your manner of life be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.' So that we may boldly say, 'The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.'"

Aha. Now, that takes a lot of gutsy Christians who can say, "I don't have all that much in life, and I don't have all that much for my future, but I do know doctrine, and I know that the Lord is my helper. And I do know that when I go about His business, He will add the things that I need at any point in life to survive. First of all comes the kingdom of God. And what I have is His first. Even when it leaves me stripped down. My mastery of the details of life is more important than my having overwhelming possessions."

Philippians 4:19 says, "But my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." So, the Apostle Paul says, "What you need is grace orientation. You need a relaxed mental attitude. And you need a mastery of the detail of life."

**Pleasure in Persecutions**

But we have two other sides to finish up this container. The next word that Paul says, "I'm grateful for," is what he calls, "persecutions." The Greek word is "diogmos." And this is what this means. It means "persecution." Here, it means particularly a tax against you for your religious viewpoint. But it may be persecution on even a wider capacity than that. You may have people attacking you for things that you are perfectly correct on in your attitude, but it's not a popular attitude.

Certainly, there's a lot of persecution of Christians today who don't think unborn babies should be slaughtered, who don't think that government should be interfering in areas of life that the Bible forbids government to enter into, beyond the realm for which God created government. There are many things that are not popular today because we are living in an age that has detached itself from the Word of God, and this country is on its way out of the picture as I think the Bible clearly portrays. And when it's gone, then the final moments of Satan's attempted rebellion against God will rise to its fruition. If you know anything about the Bible, if you've got any eyes to see, you can see it happening all around us today. Everything is falling into line for that great move.

So, there's persecution, and it's going to become greater for those who insist on standing by the Word of God. When you are abused, you are rejected because of your devotion to the Bible as the inerrant Word of God, as having final authority in all areas and institutions of life, that's when you'll learn what persecution is. Evil spoken of because your godliness and because of your well-doing.

This will bestir a spirit of bitterness and of hatred in the victim toward the abusers because here, we lack the other kind of love. This is the, what the Bible calls the "philos" kind of love. Now, this is emotional love. And again, we have a problem with what? We're talking about a capacity to have the right kind of attitude, what the Bible calls, "the emotion of love." And along comes the instruction in the Word of God, and it tells you how to have emotional love in the right way. It tells you how to have an emotional toward a person and keep it within the proper confines relative to that individual. It enables us to develop what we may call, "a capacity to love."

Here's what the Bible says on that. Matthew 10:37, "He that loveth [emotionally] father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." You cannot have a love for your family that is overriding your love for the Lord, which is not to say the family is neglected. But the family that is devoted to an emotional attachment to God will not neglect the family. "Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul." That is the supreme call.

John 11:3 says, "Therefore his sisters [the sisters of Lazarus] sent unto Jesus, saying, 'Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest." He whom Thou "philos." Jesus had a strong emotional attachment to this man Lazarus.

One more. Titus 3:15. Paul closes this book and says, "All that are with me greet thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. [Not just "agape," those that have a good attitude toward us, but those who really have an emotional outreach for us. Those who want to come up and hug us when they see us, because they really do feel something deep toward us.] Grace be with you all. Amen." Paul says, "All those folks back there that had this emotional attachment, say hello to them." Now, this is something that God has to develop so that it's directed in the right way. So, the Apostle Paul adds to our container the capacity to love.

**Pleasure in Distresses**

One more side to close it, in order that he may begin pouring that super grace into it. And the Apostle Paul calls this, "distresses." The Greek word is "stenochoria." "Stenochoria" is a noun which means "difficulty." This word refers to internal and external tribulations which cause us to be unhappy, things which undermine your personal happiness. Personal happiness because you have based them on people, on your possessions, on your circumstances in life. If you want to open yourself to a lot of unhappiness, just let your happiness be based upon certain things, certain people, certain circumstances in life. But again, along comes the doctrines of scripture and deals with this threat to our personal peace and happiness, because it develops within our soul inner happiness. Inner happiness which is totally detached from people and from circumstances and from things.

Now, that is not something with which you were born. It is the intake of the principles of doctrine into your mentality and the storing of them in your human spirit that gradually develops within you this kind of a happiness that's just there. So that, in the midst of the most tragic conditions of life, when everything is coming apart all around you, there is a millennium of joy in your soul. That's what this is talking about.

John 15:11 says, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." God has always been happy. The Lord Jesus Christ has always had an inner happiness. His circumstances externally were not always pleasant. They were a grief to him. But in his soul, there was always joy. And He said, "I'm ready to give you My joy." How does He do that?

He does it through the Word of God. The person who knows how to operate on the principles of scripture is going to be the happy person. John 17:13 says, "And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." John 17 is the high priestly prayer of Jesus Christ the night before He's crucified. One of the last things He says, "Father, help the people who I'm going to leave behind who are going to come into the church on the day of Pentecost. Help them to have the joy that You and I share as just a routine matter of existence."

Philippians 4:4 says, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." And this is a command. 1 John 1:4 says, "And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." What things? The whole book here full of doctrinal principles. And he proceeds to lay out these doctrinal principles. That's the thing that's going to bring you this kind of inner joy. You're not going to get it from circumstances from people, from things, but you are going to get it when you learn the Word of God. And if you catch onto that, you see, then you will know why it is so important to be here in this auditorium when the Word is being taught and not to be one of the arrogants who don't show up or they're erratics. Because we see the problems in their lives. We see them making those appalling decisions. We see them going with their ups and downs. We see them with their incapacity, and if they died tomorrow, we wouldn't miss them.

But the Christian who has spiritual maturity in his soul, he now has built a container here that God can come and honor. Because this spiritual maturity structure reflects the glory of God. That's what this is all about. The Christian who has this has what only God can have. Only God can have this kind of grace orientation. Only God can have a relaxed mental attitude, a mastery of the details of life, a capacity to love emotionally in the right way, to have an inner happiness that is stable and based on something that people cannot take away from him.

And when you go out of this life, and you cross over the other side, there's very few things you'll take with you. You'll take some of it to the grave: that good suit you're wearing, those nice shoes, and a few other things. But that's it. But this you will take with you. And if you've got a flimsy, broken-down type of maturity in your soul, that's what you're going to take out into your eternity, and it will affect your capacity to enjoy eternity directly. The spiritual maturity structure of the soul will directly affect the degree to which you can enjoy an eternity that God has prepared for you. What God calls upon us to do is to be prepared to move in the direction that He has prepared us for beforehand, to reflect His glory. He is preparing us for what we are going to be someday in heaven.

And that is the calling of the Christian every day of his life, to develop this maturity structure in his soul which reflects upon the glory of God. 1 Peter 5:10 says, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you." Because He's going to take you into heaven with that degree of glory that you permitted Him to build into your soul.

1 Corinthians 6:20, "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." Now, that's talking about now. You glorify God in your body now by developing this spiritual maturity in your soul. And in Colossians 1:27, we read, "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." This spiritual maturity structure is Christ in you reflecting that hope of glory to which we've been called and which has been promised to us."

1 Corinthians 10:31 says, "Whatever you do in life, do all to the glory of God. And this is the way it's done. It is a great thing to be chosen by the living God; it is a greater thing to respond to the glory that He's extending to the Christian who's ready to take it.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)