***The Mastery of the Details of Life;
the Capacity to Love;
and, Inner Happiness
RO181-02***

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Please open your Bibles to Romans 15:1-6. Our subject is "The Spirit of Christ," and this is segment number three.

**Strong Christians and Weak Christians**

In the 15th chapter of the book of Romans, the apostle Paul proceeds to give further admonition to the spiritually strong Christian to help the spiritually weak Christian. For this reason, Paul has pointed out that the strong Christian is not always free to use his freedom under grace if it hurts a weaker brother spiritually. The strong Christian is to seek, in fact, to be non-offensive to the weak brother in order to help him grow up spiritually. The strong Christian is to seek to please his weak brother in a very specific way, however. He is to please him for the purpose of bringing that weak Christian into God's good for him. The desire is not to leave him as a weak Christian. We do not want to please him in his error. We do not seek to please him in his misconceptions. We seek to accommodate in order to carry him along into spiritual maturity.

The good that Paul refers to is actually a threefold good, we find in the Word of God. It begins with the good of salvation from the lake of fire. It follows with the good God's blessing in time here on earth, produced by Bible doctrine and the filling of the Holy Spirit. And it ultimately ends up in the good of eternal life in heaven, with rewards and crowns in return for divine good Christian service. The strong Christian seeks this threefold good for the weak Christian for the very specific purpose of edifying him, or building him up, into spiritual maturity, to make him a strong Christian.

**The Spiritual Maturity Structure**

The strong seek to edify the weak in terms of building what we have called the spiritual maturity structure in the soul. The spiritual maturity structure is basically the product of the teaching ministry of your right pastor-teacher. We have looked in detail at Ephesians 4:12, which lists the chain reaction of the pastor-teacher ministry, which results in a spiritual maturity structure being built in the soul of the believer.

**Equipping for the Angelic Warfare**

In Ephesians 4:12, we found that the duty of the pastor-teacher, first of all, was to equip the Christian for spiritual combat with Satan and his demons. This is what we call the angelic warfare. This equipping is done by teaching people the basic principles and doctrines of Scripture.

**Producing Divine Good Works**

If he does that, there will be something that will be a result of that equipping, and that is Christian service on the part of the individual believer producing divine good works. There's a great deal of service called Christian service that is participated in by church members, which is nothing but glorified old sin nature orgies and self-glorifications.

**The Building up of the Church**

If there is Christian Service producing divine good works, that will then be a third result, Ephesians 4:12 points up. And that is the building up spiritually of the church, the body of Christ. This will go from salvation on up through individual spiritual maturity.

**Weaknesses**

The facets of a spiritual maturity structure, which will be the product of the pastor-teacher ministry in the lives of positive believers, is listed for us in 2 Corinthians 12:10. That's where we are today. In the context of this particular passage, the apostle Paul is observing his own personal weakness, and his own personal limitations in various ways, and his desire that the power of Christ might dwell in him. He is aware of his lack of spiritual capacity, and what he desires is spiritual capacity. He, however, has learned a basic principle – that when he is on top of things; when he is an achiever; when he is a winner; and, when he is very powerful and very self-confident, he is very weak spiritually. He found that the strange thing is that when he is not all that hot on top of things, that's when God can come in and really make him strong in terms of spiritual achievement. He comes to a conclusion, therefore, that he enunciates in verse 10: "Therefore, I am content with weaknesses."

**Grace Orientation**

We looked at that word in detail. It means spiritual incapacity, requiring the grace of God to overcome. Therefore, this is a facet of maturity that we call grace orientation. This is not legalism to gain merit with God, but it is God's grace accepted in achieving things for us. The eternal security in salvation that we Christians enjoy is based upon the grace of God. When you find a Christian who is not grace oriented, you will find a Christian who thinks he can lose his salvation. You will find a Christian who thinks that he is saved by the work of Christ on the cross, but he is kept saved by his own efforts. And, of course, the logic of that escapes most reasonable people, because they very quickly sense that if you could not produce anything to be saved in the first place out of your own capacities, what makes you think that you can produce something that pleases God to keep you saved in the second place? It's a sure sign of a non-grace-oriented person.

Yet when you look out of vast religious denominations, you realize that, as a whole, they lack grace orientation. If you talk to somebody from the charismatic movement about never losing salvation, they'll go into a catatonic fit. And right away, you know that they are not grace-oriented. They know for sure that they can lose their salvation. Well, most of them act so bad that I can understand why they think that. And they're lucky that I'm not God, or they'd never get in. But, fortunately, I am not. And God's grace carries over the knuckleheads as well as everybody else.

You can talk to somebody in a powerful United Methodist church, and say, "Isn't it wonderful that Christ has met all of God's demand against us? He is propitiated. His justice is satisfied. And there's nothing more that is required. Isn't it wonderful that the Bible says that Christ only died once? He'll never die again. That means that the debt has been paid." That United Methodist would look you in the eye and say, "It has, as long as you behave yourself." They'll readily tell you that when you step out of line, you're going to be on your way to the lake of fire. And you could be so bold as to say, "Well, could you specify to me how far out I can step?" They would say, "Well, not too far." And you would say, "Well, how far is too far?" And they would say, "Well, you know – just kind of far." And pretty soon, you don't know whether you are in or out. That is the sign of a person who is not grace-oriented. That as a person who looks at himself, and he thinks that his salvation, in the first place, and in keeping it, is something that he has done. You might say, "Are you going to heaven?" He would say, "Oh, I sure hope so." Bingo. You have a non-grace-oriented person when you get that response.

So, this is a very great thing. Paul says, "My weaknesses mean that I have no capacity to achieve anything spiritual. They have to be met by a quality that God builds in me through the Word of God, and that is orientation to the grace of God. Once I have the grace of God, I breathe a sigh of relief. I can lean back and enjoy the Christian life. I know how to handle my personal sin. I know how to stand back up out of the dust and the dirt, and confess my sins. God brushes me off, and I'm on track again." The Christian life is a life of peace and relaxation. It is not a moment-by-moment life of tension.

When you have this kind of a spirit of grace orientation, you will have a forgiving and forgetting spirit toward those who abuse you. As God has, in grace, forgiven you, the grace-oriented person will not be holding something against someone else who has mistreated them.

**Insults**

The second thing Paul says that he is delighted in is: "insults." The word "insults," we pointed out, means insolence and mockery.

**A Relaxed Mental Attitude**

We indicated that this is met by a facet of maturity which we call a relaxed mental attitude. The Christian who has developed this facet of maturity will meet ignorance from others with a loving spirit devoid of retaliation. A relaxed mental attitude doesn't feel it has to hit back. You leave the abuser with the Lord rather than engaging in vindictive acts, and becoming part of that person's problem. That's not easy to do. That is not natural. Our sin nature rebels against that. It takes a quality of spiritual development through the Word of God for you to have a relaxed mental attitude that doesn't go around trying to justify (prove yourself), and straighten people out. When you see a Christian who runs around to straighten people out, you know that that's not a relaxed mental attitude person. Once you have a relaxed mental attitude, you could not care less about straightening people out about their misconceptions about you, and the things that they have said. There is simply no spirit of bitterness.

**Faith Rest**

At the heart of a relaxed mental attitude is the exercise of the principle of faith rest.

**Distresses**

We come today to the third facet. And that is the "distresses." This is the Greek word "anagke." "Anagke" means a need or desire of some kind which places you under pressure. Are you having any pressures in your life? Are you having any demands? Are you having something you can't figure out how to cope with? Paul understood what it was to be under "anagke" – under pressure, to feel like the walls are closing in on him, or to feel that he is helpless in a situation that he can do nothing about. This connotes a hardship of some kind. It includes material hardships; mental difficulties; or, emotional stresses. The areas of pressure will include money, possessions, success, prestige, popularity, status symbols, friends, sex, family, pleasure, and social life. All of these fall under this general category of pressures.

A Christian is under great pressure, for example, in knowing how to live with prosperity, or how to know how to live with his poverty. There are some Christians that, as soon as God prospers and blesses them, it just destroys them spiritually. They have never grown in spiritual maturity with this facet such that they can have vast sums of money at their command, and not have it destroy them spiritually – that they are able to handle their prosperity.

I was listening to one of the men on TV who is one of the fallen angels in Congress, describing how he came to that situation. He was saying, "Well, when I came here, pretty soon, everybody was opening doors for me; I'm getting all kinds of benefits; everybody's bowing and scraping to me, and smiling; and, everybody saying nice things to me. And pretty soon, I'm just euphoric that I can do no wrong. I can do anything, and it's OK. Before I knew it, I was breaking all the rules." What was he saying? He's probably an unbeliever. He's probably telling us that he did not have the facet of the capacity to handle prosperity. And when prosperity came, it destroyed him. There are some Christians that could be as wealthy as Cresus, maybe even as wealthy as any of the famous people of our world, and it wouldn't affect them one bit.

There are some Christians that overnight could open up one of those envelopes you get in the mail, and that Ed McMahon says, "You could be so rich so soon – this summer." And every time he says that, I rush and get my envelope out, and fill it out: "You could be so rich so soon – this summer." I love those words. I meditate on them all the time. There are some believers, though, if that were to happen to them, it would shred them. They could not take it. They could not handle it. But there are other Christians who could become: "so rich so soon – this summer," and it wouldn't phase them one bit. I guess it would open doors that they would have in God's work, just as they've been doing when they had only a little bit of money. They would keep doing it in the same way. They wouldn't be off there, suddenly living the indulgent life.

**A Mastery of the Details of Life**

Now, for you to be able to face that, you must develop this capacity to handle your prosperity. If you do not have that capacity, do not mail in your envelope. You will not win. We live under the pressures of knowing how to live with our poverty or our prosperity. A Christian needs control over his desire for things, particularly those of secondary importance. The idea is victory or mastery over these things. For this reason, we call this facet ("anagke") – how do you meet those pressures? With a mastery of the details of life. We've been describing some of those details of life, and we're talking about a command (a mastery) over them, so that you are not destroyed by them, and so that you're not wasting your life chasing secondary things, and that you are not wasting your life, investing your precious, your time, and you talents in trivial things.

This mastery of the details of life concept is referred to in Luke 12:15, where Jesus said, "Beware and be on your guard against every form of greed. For not even when one has an abundance, does his life consist of his possessions." That is a good verse. Even if you were to win the big jackpot, that is not your life. That is not where the real living now resides for you. Nothing has changed. Your life is hidden in Christ. That's where the real living is. And the Christian is warned in the Word of God to develop an orientation toward material things so that he is not destroyed by them – a mastery of the details (the things) of life.

This is also pointed out in 1 Timothy 6:6: "But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment." What for the Christian is gain? It is not those material things, but godliness. How do you get godliness? By walking in here Sunday morning and Sunday night, and being instructed in the Word of God, and then responding with a positive attitude toward that, accepting what God has said, and thereby storing that in your human spirit, for the Spirit of God, who indwells you, to use in order to guide you in your life. That's a winning combination. Without understanding the Word of God, you will never be godly. Yes, you will be able to go to a certain church services where you'll be able to hold your hands over your head (like Jackie Gleason used to do) in the middle of the service, and make a fool of yourself. You'll be able to clap away in the service like any primitive around his jungle fires does. You'll be able to roll your eyeballs upward (heavenward), and impress everybody with how badly you are. But you will not be godly. You'll be putting on a big con job that you will regret for all eternity. Without a knowledge of the Word of God, there is no godliness.

Nothing like money will keep a person from being godly. Jesus shook His head one time in His own humanity and disbelief – how hard it was for rich people to come to godliness. You said you can shove a camel through an eye of a needle easier than you can bring a person who is wealthy to be able to control that, and have a mastery of that, and maintain godliness. What Jesus was talking about was the mastery of the details of life.

**Logistical Grace**

The top priorities in a believer's life should be doctrine and Christian service. That's what the Bible says. If you don't like that, that is OK with all of us. But you should know that that's what the Bible says. Jesus pointed this out in Matthew 6:33: "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." We are all in full-time Christian service. So, when you open your eyes tomorrow morning, open them and connect your brain to your awareness of that day, to what is the purpose of God for your life in His service. You open your eyes for another day of service. Part of that service may be to earn your livelihood, but that service is ultimately dealing with human beings who need to be informed about the Word of God. Jesus says, "Seek the issues that deal with God's testimony in this world. Seek to reproduce His righteousness, which is what we're talking about here – a weak Christian who doesn't have a godly life. And all the things you need are going to be added to you." We call that logistical grace. That is a military term which means that God will give you the essentials that you need to survive on this earth in order to do the main thing that you're called to do – serving Him with divine good production.

The lack of your mastery over the details of life will result in your making those details (your possessions) your idols. There's nothing wrong in having things. There's nothing wrong in having a lot of things. Whatever God enables you to buy, that's fine, if you feel free beforehand to own it. Having things is not wrong. The problem is that when you give those things, and the accumulation of those things, top priority in your life, they become your idols. And lack of the mastery of details of life, you will find, after a while, that life becomes very boring. It causes enslavement on your part to things. And then you find yourself in a frantic search for happiness through earning more money and getting more things, and you never come to an end of it. You will find that there are kicks.

I had a lady who had a very wealthy son, and I was very close to both of them years ago. She said, "My son generally is not very happy. He is generally pretty well depressed, except," she says, "when he has put a deal together. He can sit there at his desk, and he figures, and he puts it all together, and he gets a deal, and he pulls it off, and he brings in a huge amount of income to add up to more money than we can already spend. Then he's euphoric. And after a couple of weeks, he's back down again." What was she telling me? She was telling me that she has a son who knows how to make money, who was a Christian, but who never had a mastery of the details of life. To him, the possession of things was where the kicks were. And the result was that, when he wasn't possessing or repossessing or acquiring, then he went into a funky mood, and he was depressed, and he was running around chasing for happiness. And he did. He was on a frantic chase for happiness. And as always happens, that frantic chase leads into gross evil – into evils of every imaginable kind, even though you are a Christian.

So, this is no small thing to have a mastery of the details of life. A weak Christian doesn't have it. A strong Christian understands this, and he's trying to edge the weak Christian along into having a control over things – all these things of life that are trivial and secondary, that can be made to seem so important. If you're a teenager here today, this is one thing you need in a hurry, because I'll guarantee you, that from your teenage mentality and viewpoint, and the influences of our society, there all kinds of things that you think: "Boy, they're important. This is what I got to do this summer. This is where it's at. I'd better not let this slip. This is where it is. I have to do this next."

Jesus said, "Seek first My righteousness (the things of My Kingdom), and I'm going to take care of you all the way down the line, and I'll bring you into heaven the wealthiest person you can imagine that you ever could have been.

So, you'd better think twice before you are sure that you know where it's at, and where you have to be hustling with your life at this point in time. The spiritually mature Christian, then, maintains a mastery of the details of life so that he does not waste his life on trivialities, and thus lose great potential rewards.

Matthew 10:39: "He who has found his life shall lose it. And he who has lost his life for My sake," Jesus says, "shall find it." What is He saying? You found your life in terms of using it for all those things that were trivial, but you considered important because you did not have a mastery over the things for which you should invest your life in. You have lost your life. How? You will not lose your salvation, but you will have lost the potential of rewards and storing treasures in heaven. But those of you who indeed put your life aside for God's work, and you put the Lord first, and you never, never make an economic move that cuts you or your family off from spiritual enterprises and service – you're the ones who are going to be in heaven, wealthy and rich. Those who have made it big on this earth, because they have sacrificed spiritual opportunities, are going to leave it all behind someday. And they're going to sit up in heaven, and they're going to wonder what in the world possessed them such that they thought that they just had to have that – that was so important.

The mastery of the details of life – this was not such a hard quality to possess, and to follow, and to be subject to, because God has promised that he's going to supply all we need in life for His glory, and so that we may serve Him. He has pointed that out in Philippians 4:19. And we should keep this in mind: "And My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ." Logistical grace has been promised.

We have one more verse in Hebrews 13:5-6: "Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have, for He Himself has said, 'I'll never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,' so that we confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper. I will not be afraid. What shall man do to me?'" How could you be more plain – the mastery of the details of life.

Now, you do need funds. You do need material possessions. You do need a place to live. You do need food. You do need clothing. And you will not, I trust, abuse these Scriptures and these warnings by converting this into the idea that you are going to sit on top of a mountain, waiting for God to drop this down on you. What God will drop down on you is a lot of discipline. What this means is that you are out there seeking earnestly to open doors through which he is making these provisions available. But these doors of opportunity for provisions do not become the obsessions of your life.

One of the points that Paul made in the book of 1 Thessalonians, because there were a bunch of Christians who took the principle of the mastery of the details of life, and that's exactly what they did with it. They said, "Hey, I'm going to wait upon God to drop it on me." And they quit working. They weren't even out there hustling or looking for a job. The apostle Paul says, "That's fine. Under grace, that's how it is. You don't have to work as a Christian under grace. If you don't want to work, you're free not to work. But you're also free not to eat." And Paul says, "If they won't work, don't feed them." "Oh," they said, "that's right. That makes sense." And pretty soon, there was this stomach orchestra of growling noises in the congregation, and all the freeloaders decided that this was not the way that God was leading them. And they soon learned to get out there and secure the details of life, but at the same time, to have a mastery over those details, and not to let those details and please master them. That's the point.

**Persecutions**

The apostle Paul says, "There's another thing that I appreciate because it enables me to grow in spiritual maturity." In 2 Corinthians 12:10, he says, "In addition to these distresses, those persecutions." The word "persecutions" looks like this in the Greek Bible. It's the Greek word "diogomos." This word basically means "persecution for religious reasons." Those who are true to Jesus Christ, and who are obedient to His Scriptures, will be persecuted by Satan's world. You will find that if you are a devotee of the Bible; if you are true to Scripture; and, if you quote the Bible as the guidelines for what you do, then you are going to be opposed by Satan's world system. This is truer today than ever before.

**Scoffing**

I'll tell you what I'm beginning to discover in resistance toward the Word of God – something that the apostle Peter told us was going to happen in the days just before the Lord's return. He recorded this in 2 Peter 3:1-4, and in verses 17-18. I'm finding that the reaction of people to the Word of God is scoffing. I'm getting scoffers. People are telling me how wrong I am, and they're making fun, and they're belittling the opinions of Scripture. Do you know how they're doing it? They say, "Oh, we've heard that before. We've heard you say that before. Christians have always been saying that outright." That is outright scoffing.

Notice 2 Peter 3:1: "This is now, beloved, the second letter I'm writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder." Here was a pedagogical principle (a principle of teaching) that the apostle Peter laid out for teachers. And that is, after you have taught something, let some period of time go by, and go back and hit it again. If it's important that people must know it and remember it, remind them of it, because people forget. So, Peter says, "I'm talking about things that I've once discussed with you, and I'm doing it in order to refresh your minds on these important principles."

Verse 2: "That you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandments of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles. Know this, first of all, that in the last days, mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts." Yes, I also find that people who scoff at the Word of God, and who scoff at instruction concerning where the world is moving today, also have a lot of sinful habits that they want to indulge. The lust patterns of the old sin nature are the reason they're scoffing. They don't like to hear the Word of God putting a clamp on the expressions of their sin nature.

Verse 4: "And saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? Forever, since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."

Verse 17: "You, therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard, lest being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness." Don't let the scoffer sway you from your convictions based upon the Word of God.

Verse 18: "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen." The apostle Peter says that before the Lord returns, and the closer we come to the return of Jesus Christ in the rapture, the greater will be this impact of scoffing. Unbelievers and carnal Christians are antagonistic toward spiritual Christians who are doing the Lord's work. They are antagonistic because those Christians are not wasting their lives. They'll make snide remarks against believers who are engaged in God's genuine work, because they are so uncomfortable, and because they're wasting their lives on themselves. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who calls the Christian blessed who must suffer persecution because he lives a righteous life.

You want to remember that commendation in Matthew 5:11-12: "Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely on account of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great. For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." The Bible constantly (the Lord constantly) talks about rewards, and talks about storing treasures in heaven. And one of the ways you do it is by not knuckling under to the people who make fun of you because of your biblical convictions. You know what the Bible teaches. You understand the truth. You know your ground. Do not be intimidated. Stand with the fundamentals of the Word.

**The Capacity to Love**

Such unjust treatment will tempt you as a believer to respond with hatred. The spiritually mature Christian cannot do this. Therefore, how are you to meet these persecutions; these unjust treatments; and, sufferings that you don't deserve? With the capacity to love. That's the facet now of the spiritual maturity structure that the apostle Paul is referring to here by "persecutions." He's talking about the capacity to love. This capacity is referred to in John 13:34: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another even as I have loved you, and that you also love one another."

**"Agape" Love**

This is referred to in Colossians 3:14 – the facet of the capacity to love: "And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity." Instead of responding with hatred, when you get these persecutions, you respond with mental attitude love ("agape" love), which has no ill will or bitterness toward an individual, no matter how unloving that person has been. This is a love of mental admiration; a love of veneration; and, a love of esteem. It is not an emotional love. Yes, you can love your enemies in this way. The Bible would be senseless to say, "Love your enemies" if it was saying, "Have an emotional attachment to them." But the Bible doesn't say that. The Bible is very careful to use the Greek word "agape" ("agapao" in the verb), which means "to love with the mind." This is a mental attitude where you're not filled with grudges and bitterness. It's a kind and gentle attitude: toward God; toward the person you're married to; and, toward your friends. This is the capacity to love in that three-fold direction.

This is a love which is expressed in a true loyalty. People can count on you when you have this capacity. It is the capacity to love that, again, the Word of God builds into you. When Jesus says, "If you love Me, keep My commandments," He is saying, "If you want to develop a love for Me, then you have to get to know Me. And the only way you're going to get to know Me is to learn doctrines. When you understand My commandments, you know what I think; you know what I want; you know how I act; and you'll have a capacity for loving Me. And when you have this capacity to love, which is a Holy Spirit-produced capacity, it will do something very important for you as a Christian. It will put a noose around your sin nature in a way that is very important for Christians to have under control; that is, the capacity to love will enable you to keep your expressions of love toward other people within the bounds of propriety. The capacity to love enables you to keep your expressions of love toward other people within the bonds of godly propriety.

This is totally different from a capacity to lust. You either have s capacity to love God's way, or you can have a capacity for lust Satan's way. This capacity to love is very important for Christians, so that they stay within proper bounds in their expressions toward one another. Those who lack capacity to love will respond to evil treatment with evil, and they themselves will become unhappy. Romans 12:17-21 warned us not to respond in that way. The capacity to love preserves a Christian from becoming part of another person's problem, so that indeed you are in a position to help that person. Usually a weak Christian overcomes the problem, and become part of the solution instead.

Ephesians 4:16 therefore says, "From whom the whole body being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love." Here, he is using an analogy of the body of Christ. The relations of Christians is like putting a building together. Every Christian is a building block. And what is the cement? Love? When you have the capacity to love, you're going to build people up, and you're going to be building up the structure of Christ in the body of Christ.

We'll look at one more. This is the final facet of this pentagon. This is a pentagon from which we attack Satan, and a Pentagon within which we live as defense. This is our spiritual maturity structure. We have seen that one side of that Pentagon of our defense and of our citadel (of our fortress) in Satan's world is our grace orientation. Another one is our relaxed mental attitude. The third one has been the mastery of the details of life. And then a fourth one has been the capacity to love.

**Difficulties**

There is one final side that the apostle Paul refers to in 2 Corinthians 12:10. This is the final facet of maturity. Paul says, "I am also delighted when I have not only weaknesses, insults, distresses, and persecutions, but when I have difficulties." And "difficulties" is the Greek word "stenochoria." The Greek word "stenochoria" means the condition of anguish undermining your joy. "Stenochoria" means "something that makes you unhappy," or "something that shreds your joy." It connotes being squeezed into a narrow place, actually, so that you are in distress. These are conditions of affliction and trouble in your life that rob you of happiness.

**Inner Happiness**

Now, the spiritually mature Christian has a way of meeting these tribulations of life, and he meets them with what we call "inner happiness," and thus closes the fifth side of the pentagon of your defense as a Christian – the spiritual maturity structure of your soul. And remember that we're talking about taking the weak Christian, and bringing him into this structure, so that he's not blown about with every wind of doctrine, and so that some charismatic doesn't come along with the hoopla and the emotional experience of orientation, and this poor Christian is gobbled up by it. He will have a spiritual maturity structure from which he will view this person. His heart will go out to that charismatic in pity over the nonsense and the blindness and the horror that is someday going to face those people when they come up before Christ and give an accounting for the lives they wasted, and for the misconceptions of the mind of Christ that they have propagated.

Inner happiness is something that is not natural to us. The Bible refers to this quality, for example, in John 15:11: "These things," Jesus said, "I have spoken to you (these things of doctrine) that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full." You will become happy as the result of the instruction that you receive from the Word of God. And remember that we started all this with the work of the pastor-teacher. When his job is properly done, people have a chance to be able to build up this kind of spiritual maturity in their souls.

This inner happiness is also referred to in Philippians 4:4: "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice." And if you were to read that verse in the Greek Bible, it might be a little startling to you to discover that it's in the command mood. It's in the imperative mood. God is saying, "You better be happy." He's commanding you to be happy. Now, what kind of nonsense is that, with all the things that have come into a person's life? Well, if you have the facet of inner happiness in the spiritual maturity structure in your soul, you will discover that there isn't anything that comes into your life that breaks your personal peace and joy. You're under pressure; you're under pain; and, you're under suffering, but your happiness is not affected.

This means a quality that is not dependent on people, circumstances, or things. It is only dependent upon God, upon His Word, and on the filling of the Holy Spirit. Do you see the difference? If your happiness is dependent on some other person, you're going to lose your happiness. If your happiness is dependent upon some circumstance in life; some position of status; or, some achievement, you're going to lose. And your happiness is going to go. If your happiness is dependent upon some possessions, you're always in a potential threat of losing it, and there goes your happiness. This is a happiness that God the Holy Spirit builds into our souls through the Word of God, and it's dependent on God; His word; and, the feeling of the Holy Spirit. This will carry a believer through the storms of life in peace instead of in depression. The realization that God's power and will is working in one's life is what comes to us, and nothing can stop that happiness and that working.

Philippians 4:13, says, "I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me." What a statement that is! I can do anything in life through Jesus Christ Who strengthens me. He gives me the capacity under any condition to come through.

Romans 8:28: "All things work together for good to those who are the called ones, the peace of God passes all understanding. And it is this great personal peace that brings us great personal happiness. Philippians 4:7 gives us that promise: "And the peace of God." Notice what it says: "Peace of God," not "peace with God." "Peace with God" you had back in Romans 5 with your salvation. This is the peace of God in your daily experience, which surpasses all comprehension: "Shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." It'll guard everything in your soul, and you will not be able to understand how you are so stable; how you are so at peace; and, how you are so happy when all the world is crashing down around your ears. And without it, you will be a victim. Don't depend on people; don't depend on things; and, don't depend on circumstances.

So, here is the grand spiritual maturity structure that God says, "I prepared for My Son in eternity past for His humanity." When he came to this earth, the Lord Jesus Christ develop these five facets. And as a human being, he was the greatest person that ever lived on the face of the earth. And because He had this kind of capacity of maturity, He was able to bring us all into eternal life.

In 2 Corinthians 12:10, Paul concludes his observations. Paul concludes that he is willing to suffer all these things, and to have all these facets, for the Lord's sake. For he says, "For when I am weak, then I am strong." The word "for" is the Greek word time "hotan." This means "on the occasion when." "I am weak" is the Greek word "astheneo." The word "astheneo" connotes being deficient. These are deficiencies that the old sin nature puts upon us – lacking natural capacities. Paul says, "On the occasion when I have spiritual deficiencies then." And every one of these words in the Greek Bible is a significant word, piled one right on top of another. This word "then" is a Greek word "tote," which means "at that very moment." It's not just "then" in general. It means "right then," when I am under the most intense weakness (incapacity) spiritually – when I'm really up against it.

Then he says, "Because of the spiritual maturity structure built in my soul, the weaker I am (the worse things are in life), then I suddenly discover that I am really one strong dude. Then I am strong:" "dunatos," which means "a working producing power." Then I am in a position where I'm really producing things for God. That doesn't make sense humanly. We think that when you have more notoriety; when you have more things to work with; when you have more access to people; and, when you have opportunities – all of that is what gives you an impact. God says, "No. When you don't have any of those things, I'm going to carry what you do rippling through society in such chain reactions that you'll be amazed when you stand up in heaven, and you wonder how in the world you ever did that." You'll say, "All I did was work with these few kids. All I did was talk to these few people. All I did was run this class." Yes, but God said, "Because you are operating from a spiritual maturity structure, your weakness was transformed into eternal greatness."

It means that you, as an edified believer, through doctrine and the filling of the Spirit, have erected a spiritual maturity structure in your soul, and therefore, you are a strong person. For this reason, you are in a position to meet any temptation and any testing in life, and meet it victoriously in strong. That is the promise of the Word of God. 1 Corinthians 10:13: "No temptation has overtaken you, but such as is common to man. And God is faithful, Who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation, will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it." That promise is absolutely meaningless to you if you do not have a spiritual maturity structure in your soul. The first temptation that comes along without this structure in your soul, and you will collapse. That temptation will snag you. It won't be more than you can handle. But if you have not prepared yourself to handle it, it will get you: your greed; your lust; your envy; your vindictiveness; your arrogance; and, your self-confidence. It will cut you down. Only a spiritual maturity structure (the result of the Word of God) will carry you through.

So, we are telling you today that God the Father has made every provision necessary for the church-age believer to bear up under the worst of times. In 2 Corinthians 12:9, the apostle Paul, in the Lord's response to his own point of weakness and pressure, says, "He (Jesus) has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly, therefore," Paul says, "I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

The point of all this today is simply this: go for the edified super grace life built on the spiritual maturity structure in your soul.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1988

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