

Growing in Joy and Peace – Teaching Notes

(Philippians 4:2-14; 8/22/10)

Introduction: A key idea in this lesson is that Paul urges Christian living – unity, positive focus, and contentment. Prayerfully, we will be challenged to work on our unity, positive focus, and contentment.

Body:

Read Philippians 4:2-3

I. Joy and Peace in Unity. Paul wants Eu-o'-di-as and Syn'-ty-che, two note worthy ladies among the Philippian believers, to be of the same mind. He wants an unnamed mediator to help the ladies to get along. He doesn't name all who have worked with him, but he notes that their names will be in the book of life.

Applications –

- **Sameness of mind.** Notice in vss. 3-4 that two prominent women are urged to work on being of the same mind and an unnamed "true yokefellow" is urged to help them. No matter how strong our discipleship, we can expect to have some differences and disagreements in the church. However, our discipleship should grow strong enough that we are willing to work out an agreement or a "sameness of mind." If we cannot do it by ourselves then we should seek the help of a mediator. Where there is unity, there is strength. However, where there is conflict and disharmony, there is weakness. *Let's work on developing a sameness of mind.* This will call for developing our knowledge, dedication to action, disclosure of how we think and feel, and dedication to resolving necessary concerns.

- **God's book of life.** Notice in vs. 3 the mention of the book of life. Paul doesn't name all of his fellow workers, but he acknowledges that their names are in the book of life, which is a reference to them being saved and being known by the Lord. There are those who behave as if they want to be acknowledged by people as much as, if not more than, they are acknowledged by God. *Let's keep our minds focused on pleasing God.* Whatever people do to acknowledge us is nice but nowhere near the importance of making sure we are living a life that is pleasing to God. This calls for making sure we are saved by our faith in Jesus' death payment for our sins and then our striving to live lives of loving God, ourselves, and others.

Read Philippians 4:4-9

II. Joy and Peace in Behavior. Paul wants his readers to rejoice in the Lord. He wants them to live right, in light of Jesus' expected soon return. He wants them to have peace of mind and to keep their minds of godly things.

Applications –

- **Focus on the positive.** Notice in vss. 4-8 Paul's emphasis on controlling our emotions, hearts, and or minds. The matter of rejoicing is urged, no matter what unhappy circumstances may be faced (i.e., the Philippians were facing persecution and Paul was in jail for being a minister of the gospel). The matter of not being careful or not being anxious or not worrying about anything is possible by focusing one's mind on the positives. Paul gives a nice list, in the text. *Let's work on focusing on the positive, instead of worrying about the negatives, in our lives.* This is much easier said than done; however, it should be our goal. If we spend more time thinking about positives and rejoicing about how good God has been and will be, instead of focusing on

negativity, especially the kind that we cannot change, then our lives will experience so much more peace and joy.

- **Live right.** Notice in vss. 5, 9 that Paul urges the readers to be doers of the word and his example, specifically in the area of being gentle and kind to one another. The Bible is not for simply our information. It is for our instruction. A key instruction in the Bible is to love one another, which includes moderation or gentleness or kindness. If our claim to be a Christian doesn't move us to demonstrate love and gentleness towards other believers then our claim is suspect. *Let's work on channeling our energies towards gentleness and kindness towards other believers.* Simply stuff like smiling, greeting one another, and remembering names are steps in the right direction. Comforting one another in times of trouble and celebrating special days like birthdays are even further along this line of thought.

Read Philippians 4:10-14

III. Joy and Peace in Sharing. Paul is thankful for the support that the readers had supplied to him. He talks about how he has learned to be content, no matter if he has much or little. He does remind them that there is a blessing in supporting his ministry.

Applications –

- **Showing appreciation.** Notice in vss. 10, 14 that Paul is thankful for the support that those he minister to had provided. From Paul, we learn that whenever anyone does anything kind to you, you ought to say "Thank you." Sometimes we take the kindness of people for granted. From the Philippian believers, we learn that if God has placed someone in your life who is blessing you then you ought to do your part to show your appreciation. For Pastors this includes generous compensation and may also include demonstrations of love at anniversaries, birthdays, and Christmas. But this idea is not only for Pastors, but applies to lay teachers, ministry managers, spouses, parents, and even friends. Too many people wait until death to tell people how much they love the deceased. *Let's work on showing appreciation.*

- **Contentment.** Notice in vss. 11-13 that Paul talks about contentment. He had arrived at a place where no matter how much or how little he had, he was content in the Lord. There are too many who cannot be content, unless they have money in both pockets or unless a certain amount of people are living up to their expectations or unless something else is "right." *Let's learn how to find contentment in the Lord.* Rarely will this life live up to our expectations. But when we build our contentment on the Lord, instead of our expectations of people or circumstances, then we can enjoy our journey, in spite of unmet expectations. This is much easier said than done, but it should be a goal of every disciple. Prayerfully study, obedience, Christian support, and the resolve to simply do it will help us in this area.

Conclusion: Let's work on unity, positive focus, and contentment. God has much for those who obey His will.