



Ministry of the Word

*Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2016*

by Vincent Gannon

**Scripture:** Philippians 2:15-16

**Subject:** Chapter 2, Part 20 – For the sake of church leaders (The third reason)

I don't believe we understand the impact we can have both for the good and bad in the things we may or may not do. The church at Corinth was the most spiritually gifted church but was also the most problematic one. This was on account that some within the church were not saved and there were others who behaved just like them. Their hearts had been turned from the high calling in Christ Jesus. Fleshly desires disguised as spiritual wants became pervasive in the body and so trouble arose. It is certain that the devil was not far away, and so the testimony of that church and its resulting problems are known today. But why are these recorded for us and are they really relevant for 21 century believers? Please look at what Paul told this same church in the very context we have been speaking about over the past weeks. (Refer to 1 Corinthians 10:11-12 and also 2 Timothy 3:15-17).

Our behaviour does affect everyone around us, because it reflects our attitude towards the Lord (or lack of it), and also to the church and the world. We have noted both of these facts in verse 16 of Philippians 2. There is one more point in the closing words of verse 16. It is in these words we see the pastoral heart of Paul revealed. His desire was closely linked with

the behaviour of these believers. Did they understand, to the point of been convicted by the Holy Spirit, what it was to live as the Lord desires? Of course they were not perfect when they came to Christ, but was it the Lord's intention to leave them like that? Of course not! Change took place the moment they believed, and change for the better, always for the better would continue to take place.

The clay that was placed on the wheel could feel the Potter's hands, but before a finger was laid on the clay, the hands would be moist with water so that the clay could be pliable and manageable and could be formed into a vessel fit for the Master's use. Other processes take place to make it a thing of beauty and a thing of value. Paul's remarks in chapter 4 verses 8 and 9 instructs the believer as to where the mind and heart should and we know that we need to get to that point which is to be continually Christ minded. To do that, we have to swim against the current with the help of the Holy Spirit. We have to be committed in mind and heart as well as been grounded in the Scriptures. Not in a cold clinical way, but in life imparting Spirit filled joy. After all, we are not sentenced to life on earth but we are called to life in eternity with our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ. We will be presented to the Father with great joy. A joy that we have known in part while we live on earth, the fruit of the Holy Spirit. When we will enter into the presence of the Lord, we will leave the death and darkness behind and enter into the light of God for ever more to live in peace and perfection and praise all because of a glorious salvation.

We must never forget that the war is won. There are battle's still to be fought and the enemy is most dangerous when they feel they have nothing more to lose. We can't afford to be negligent and rest, we are in a race and it's not won nor finished until we have crossed the line. Remember the lovely redemption hymn the words as follows. Wrote by the well known Fanny Crosby

*"All the way my Saviour leads me: What have I to ask beside?  
Can I doubt His tender mercy, Who through life has been my Guide?  
Heavenly peace, divinest comfort,  
Here by faith in Him to dwell! For I know whate'er befall me,  
Jesus doeth all things well."*

Not some things but all things. There may be and there will be occasions when we won't understand, we won't be able to explain, we may not even know from a to z, but our song will still be *'My Jesus does all things well!'* Praise God!

Remember we are not on our own, even though there are times it might feel like that, and when you do, just like a frightened child you tuck in close to your parent. In this case it is to the greatest power and the greatest source there is, God Himself, your heavenly Father with whom you have to tuck in close to. He can defeat all our foes, calm all our fears, strengthen all our weakness, and provide for all our poverty of spirit. Don't run and try to hide under the fig leaves of this world but just draw under the shadow of His wings and you will find security.

#### FOR THE SAKE OF PASTORS

*'so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.'* (2:16)

The third reason for not complaining is for the sake of the leaders in the church, who have given their lives in ministry. Paul's pastoral heart shines through in his deep desire that the Philippians would stop grumbling and complaining, **so that in the day of Christ he will have reason to glory.** He anticipated **the day of Christ**, when he could look back and rejoice in the faithfulness of those beloved brethren. The people he served would be a source of eternal joy. It is important to note that **the day of Christ** is not synonymous with another similar term, the Day of the Lord, which focuses on the punishment of the unrepentant wicked. Paul reminded the Thessalonians,

*"You yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, 'Peace and safety!' then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labour pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape"*  
(1 Thessalonians 5:2-3; cross reference with 2 Thessalonians 2:1-8).

But **the day of Christ** will be solely for believers (cross reference with Philippians 1:6 and verse 10). Although it will also be a time of judgment, in the sense that believers will "*appear before the judgment seat of Christ*", the focus will be only on rewards, not punishment,

*"so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad"* (2 Corinthians 5:10; cross reference with 1 Corinthians 3:8; 3:13-14; 4:5).

It is time to take stock of our lives, we need to look honestly into our own hearts and do business with the Lord. I'm not speaking about saving our souls. Jesus alone took care of that but we have been saved for purpose; "*Unto good works*". In case you don't know what they are, we have been looking at them and we will go on to see them in the lives of others especially the disciples and apostles. Are we seeing them in our own lives? It's not about what others see but what does the Lord see? A prayerful heart, a faithful and obedient life, a generous and joyful spirit, a committed believer not tossed about by all and sundry teaching, a church loving person and all this without the veneer of a hypocrite?

In saying that he would **have reason to glory**, the apostle was not expressing sinful pride in his ministry or an obsession with his own importance to the kingdom or in eternal heaven. The verb *kauchaomai* (**to glory**) can have the meaning of sinful boasting, as it clearly does in James 4:16, however, it can also describe rejoicing, as it does in the present text (the King James Version reads, "may rejoice"). In Romans 5:11, the term is rendered "exult". Paul was looking forward to receiving the joy that the Lord promises to every faithful believer.

*"These things I have spoken to you," Jesus said, "so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full"* (John 15:11).

Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, which, like love, peace, patience, kindness, and the others (Galatians 5:22-23), is to be sought and cherished. John wrote his letters in part that his

*"joy may be made complete"* (1 John 1:4; cross reference with 3 John 4) and longed to be "*face to face*" with those to whom he wrote that their "*joy [would] be made full*" (2 John 12).

David prayed,

*"Restore to me the joy of Your salvation" (Psalm 51:12), and another psalmist exulted, "Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting" (Psalm 126:5).*

Seeing an individual coming to saving faith in Christ is a joy but it is even a greater joy to see that same person serving faithfully the Saviour they have come to know. It is one thing to get hold of the truth, but when the truth gets hold of you and me that is something entirely different. This is when God is glorified, the church is blessed, and the world is being lit up. Ministry that is Spirit operated is visible, heaven rejoices and hell trembles. To think that we can do that under God is amazing. That we can bring joy to the Lord is really mind blowing. To bring joy to the church, and life, by walking in the Gospel truth is powerful. Also, we can be a blessing and an encouragement to church leaders by keeping the faith, which is where Paul was going in his remarks here. He was writing to Christians who were not moody, grumbling and complaining over everything, like a family at war, with each other; but here were people living for the first time in truth, love, grace, and relative peace (given the times they lived in) and no longer alone, no longer in doubt, no longer in fear but in the presence of Christ.

As already noted, in the present text Paul is speaking specifically of the **glory**, or joy, he would experience at **the day of Christ** (cross reference Philippians 1:6, 10). The apostle was now in prison and, for all he knew at the time, might possibly die there (see Philippians 1:13-14, 20-21). As he expressed later in this letter, his beloved brethren in Philippi were even then his "joy and crown" in the Lord and he longed to see them again (Philippians 4: 1). Whether that hope was fulfilled or not, he knew that he longed to have the reward of ultimate joy in heaven for his faithful ministry among them.

In His Upper Room Discourse, Jesus told the disciples,

*"You will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy... I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you" (John 16:20, 22).*

To desire and anticipate joy not only acknowledges Jesus' promise but follows His example:

*"[He] for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).*

To the Thessalonians, Paul wrote,

*"For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?" (1 Thessalonians 2:19).*

In the closing benediction of his short letter, Jude wrote,

*"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen." (Jude 24-25).*

The best thing believers can do for their pastors and fellow believers is to faithfully live out the truths of God's Word that has been preached and taught, so that he can say with Paul, I **did not run in vain nor toil in vain**. Every pastor desires that the reward of his efforts will be full, that the people under his care will obey the Lord without grumbling or complaining and with their lives and words effectively demonstrate the gospel to be true and believable. It is the church's responsibility and privilege to

*"appreciate those who diligently labour among [them], and have charge over [them] in the Lord and give [them] instruction" (1 Thessalonians 5:12).*

*"Obey your leaders and submit to them: 'the writer of Hebrews admonishes, "for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13:17).*

The greatest joy of any servant of God is the godly living of his flock.

*"I have no greater joy than this: 'John said, "to hear of my children walking in the truth" (3 John 4).*

We need to place in here a word of caution, it was necessary in the early church and it is most certainly necessary now. When we speak of a leader, it is someone who is Bible based and biblically behaved. We may not dot all there "i's" or cross all the "t's" but they are

seeking to honour the Lord both with their words and in the way they lives. So many today, sad to say, are extreme charlatans of which both Jesus and the apostles warns us about (see Jude 16-25).

We need personally to respond to the Word of God, to ask the Holy Spirit for His divine assistances and help us to get hold of the word and for the Word of God to get hold of us. We need to live in the grace of God, as gentle as doves believing the truth so that we will stand before God to receive our reward just as the Lord has revealed. We have His promise and we have His enabling power.

*Amen.*