

A New Look at Philippians

Philippians 1:1-11

- I. Philippians is a book about...
 - A. Happiness?
 1. *Happiness is an attitude of satisfaction or delight based upon some present circumstance.*
 - B. Joy?
 1. *Joy is a deep down confidence that all is well regardless of circumstances.*
 2. True joy is found only within a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ.
 3. True joy is a gift from God through the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22).
- II. Paul's circumstances and context.
 - A. Philippians was written while Paul was in prison.
 1. Philippians is an "epistle" or a letter to the church at Philippi.
 - B. Paul begins his letter with relationships.
 - C. Salutation.
 1. Names, status and position (verse 1)
 - a. "Bond servants" = *doulos* = slave: Paul and Timothy were voluntary slaves of Jesus Christ.
 2. "Grace" not "Greetings".
 - a. Grace = the supreme divine gift of everlasting peace.
- III. Relationships.
 - A. Joy through being grateful for the people in your life (verse 3).
 1. The nature of man is to be critical of others.
 2. Joy comes from being grateful of others.
 - B. The joy of praying with joy for the people in your life (verses 3-4).
 1. What do I pray? (verses 9-11).
 - a. Pray that they will grow in love.
 - b. Pray that the people in your life will make wise choices.

- c. Pray they will live with integrity.
 - d. Pray that they will become like Jesus.
- C. The joy of expecting the best from others (verses 5-6).
- 1. It is normal to expect the worse from people.
 - 2. Paul's confidence in other Christians isn't because of them, it is because of the work God is doing in them (verse 6).
- D. The joy of affection for others (verses 7-8).
- 1. Paul loves with his mind and his heart.
 - 2. Most relational problems happen when one reacts with the head rather than the heart.
 - 3. "Affection" = (Gr) *splagchon* = one's deep inward parts, the internal organs (stomach, heart, liver, lungs, etc.).
 - 4. Our goal should be to love others like Christ loved us.
 - a. John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life...

b. 1 John 3:16

We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

A New Look at Philippians

Philippians 1:1-11

This morning we are going to begin a new series... we will be taking a **new** look at the book of Philippians... what do I mean by “a new look”...here’s the story.... last time I spoke we looked at wisdom and how to get it for the New Year...

I began by showing how fast human knowledge was exponentially growing... I’ll spare a repeat of the numbers but I concluded with the estimate that we are doubling human knowledge every 12 hours...that is a stunning figure.....

What this means is that much if not most of what we know now will be obsolete in a very short time... this hit home to me a few months ago as I was preparing for a sermon and I opened one of my fairly new commentaries... published in 2008... and as I read the commentator’s application of the passage...[exposition and application]. It was no longer relevant..... it was out of date...

Our society...our culture... our current situation has changed so very drastically in just the last five years.... That books written five years ago are out of date!... think of how the world has changed in just the last two years!... I was reading a wonderful book written in 2019 and it was out of date!

The world looks nothing like it did in 2019, 2018... and we are concerned with things... dealing with things... thinking about things we never could have imagined just two or three years ago... as I mentioned last time...It will no longer be church as usual ...

When you consider the current events of today... the socio-political...economical...and moral make up of our rapidly changing society and world...general world unrest...lack of confidence in being able to find truth .. and let us not forget the spiritual condition of our culture....all are converging on us **not letting us** “do church as usual” ...

You can’t be a nominal Christian... you won’t make it!... animosity and hostility is welling up towards those who profess a biblical belief and embrace a life in Jesus Christ...culture around us is demanding compromise as a minimum...

Because of all this reality... for the last year in my personal Bible reading time I keep going to the book of Philippians... Philippians has been such a great help in keeping me from a state of fear, panic, doubt, depression and worry....as I look around I don’t see much joy in the faces of people....

So I thought... we need to go through Philippians together.... The thing is... we’ve already gone through Philippians together if you were here in 2018...just four years ago...I pulled out my notes from 2018.... And my first thought was... the world has so drastically changed since I preached this series... in fact... much of what I said then as far as application goes... is not applicable today....

This is not profound or original... but this is something I wrote in my notes just three days ago... *Everything in the world is in a constant flux... always changing... everything is subjective... but God and His word never changes....*

Yesterday... I received an email from one of our members and she ended with... *it is all crazy...as everything seems to be fluid... subjective and changing rapidly... I'm so grateful God never changes....*

God's word never changes because God never changes... this is such good news!... we have a rock we can stand in in a world built on sand!...the book of Philippians hasn't changed.... But the world around it certainly has.... so we are going to look again at this wonderful book... a new look...in the context of now...

I believe we are actually closer to the culture and spiritual condition of the people and times that Paul wrote this epistle for... this morning is introductory...

I was reading an article about Philippians written by a very well known pastor of a very, very large church in Southern California...He said Philippians is the "*happiest book in the Bible*"... *it is all about happiness and how you can get it.... You don't go looking for happiness... you create it...*

Actually Philippians is about something far greater than happiness... happiness... it is tenuous...its fleeting...fickle... you have it one day and maybe not the next... Philippians is not really about "happiness"... it is about "joy"...Only 104 verses but 16 of them contain the word "joy" or "rejoice"... I think it would be more accurate to say.... *Philippians is the most JOYFUL book in the Bible...because it is!*

I think there is a confusion with the difference between happiness and joy... It would really be great if all of you are happy this morning... but I hope and pray all of you are joyful this morning..... so what's the difference... that's a good place to start.

Happiness is an attitude of satisfaction or delight based upon some present circumstance....

Ok... circumstances are not so good today are they?...

Happiness is related to happenings.... Happiness is related to *happenstance*. That's an interesting word... Happiness is related to *hap*, which is an ancient word that basically conveys the idea of chance. I means "lucky"...by chance

Happiness is that which you really can't plan and program...you can't schedule it into your day [Dennis Praeger on Fridays has the happiness hour...] *you can't schedule in happiness.....*

Happiness... it may happen, it may not happen, and it seems so elusive today...

[I was raised about a mile away from the "*Happiest Place on Earth*".... Disneyland... that's what the sign says at the entry.... And it is a happy place... you go in... and all these pleasurable sensations come over you...you feel happy... at the end of the day... you add up all that it cost.... And the happiness dissipates!]

But joy...is not related to circumstances or chance at all... **joy is a deep down confidence that all is well**... no matter what is going on in your life...no matter what comes at you... no matter what your circumstances are...no matter the difficulties... no matter the problem... you can have joy... if you are filled with joy...it's immovable. **[because joy is not fixed on your circumstances....]**

Joy, is to be understood in a biblical sense...joy is inseparably related to God...**[I don't believe that true joy can be found outside of a genuine relationship with Christ...]**...It must be understood to be a permanent possession of *every* believer... not some whimsical delight that comes and goes as chance may offer it opportunity.

I truly don't think you can be a Christian and not have joy...to be in Christ is to have great joy. I believe that only Christians know true and lasting joy...we know that joy is intrinsically linked to the Holy Spirit.... remember the fruits of the Spirit?....

Galatians 5:22....remember?... **the fruit of the Spirit is... love... joy! Peace, patience, kindness...** SO... you accept Jesus as your personal Savior.... The Lord of your life... God gives you an amazing gift... what?.... The Holy Spirit!... the Holy Spirit dwells in every believer... and what does He do?.... He yields within you fruit!..... JOY!

So joy... is a gift from God to every believer!

Not that it can't be diminished...just as the power of the Holy Spirit can be diminished in your life if you suppress Him... you can *diminish* the *realization* of your joy when you sin against God.... Sin against Jesus Christ...because there is a dynamic between your relationship with Jesus and your level of realized joy... if you are going through a season of sin in your life... *realization* of your joy will diminish..... But if you are truly a Christian... you can't *lose* your joy....you must consciously realize it.

The verb "to rejoice" appears 74 times in the New Testament... the noun "joy" appears 59 times in the New Testament.. it is part and parcel of the Christians experience... We're talking about joy; much, much different than happiness.

Many have erroneously concluded that because this letter.... This epistle is such a joyful letter... that the circumstances surrounding Paul and the Philippian church he was writing to was a happy, joyful problem free church.... Not like the other churches Paul wrote to.... The fact is...

Philippians is a joyful letter but its undercurrent is a sober realization that time is running out...Paul wasn't writing this epistle sitting on his 50 million dollar yacht under the Mediterranean sun... "*consider it all joy folks!*"

Paul was in prison when he wrote it... facing a possible death sentence...the church that he began in Philippi was facing the encroachment of a very hostile world toward their

Christianity... false doctrines were trying to infiltrate... always the threat of persecution...relationship tensions within the church... and just good old stress...over life...

So I thought... this just might be applicable to us today!... the message of Philippians is pointed at us... let me just read what J.A. Motyer says Philippians answers for the twenty-first century church... You and me:

The answer to the brevity of life... how we navigate through the sad spectacle of a church crumbling in its denominational castles... what objectives should control the rest of our lives?... what is the REAL nature of the church?... What is the faith of the church and how can we maintain it steadfastly and untarnished in a day of threat and doctrinal confusion?

*... And what does our Lord promise to us?... What will we find Him to be in our hour of need?... How can we enjoy His benefits.... And will we find them sufficient?...the answers to **all of these are rooted in the joy that we have only through Jesus Christ**.... this is why we are going to spend some time in Philippians!.... we need to embrace our joy!....joy IS the Christian life...*

Philippians is called an epistle... an epistle is simply a letter...and Philippians is a very personal letter from Paul to the church he started in Philippi... which is the first “European church”... present day Greece... Paul loved this church... and this church loved Paul... as I said... Paul is in prison... possibly in Rome...some think Ephesus...

It is tempting to pass right on by the formalities of the letter.... The introduction.... The greetings...the structure that all letters followed and get right to the meat of the letter which begins in verse 12.... But in these first eleven verses we can get some very important insights for us... this is very practical....they are somewhat hidden gems that give us great insight into Paul his listeners and his message.

For where does Paul begin in this letter of joy?.... where would you begin if you were writing a letter about joy?... would you talk about careers..... marriage.... Family..... how to spend your time?..... where to go on vacations?..... how to relax and not work so much?..... where would you begin?.....THIS IS IMPORTANT....

Paul begins with relationships... all eleven verses... Paul pours out his heart over his relationship with these dear people of the Philippian church... I think Paul knew that if you don't have a proper perspective about relationships.... Your joy can be diminished... will be attacked... another way to put it.....

If your relationships are miserable... it's hard to excel in your joy...your relationships and joy are intrinsically linked together..... let's walk through these verses... the very first notable observation is in verse 1:

Read verse 1

The way Paul begins his letter defied the traditional letter writing rules of the day...[norms and conventions taken very seriously] just about every letter found in the first century had a pattern for the opening that went like this... *Name to Name to Greeting*....

A great example of this is found in Acts 23:26... the military commander in charge of Paul's imprisonment would write his letter to the governor of Judea like this: *Claudius Lysias, to His Excellency Governor Felix... greetings (Acts 23:26)* ...Name to Name to Greeting.... All formal letters followed this structure...

What does Paul do?... he skillfully adapts the writing letter customs of the day so that the reader of his letters can discover his primary concerns in the very opening sentences... in other words... ***Pauls' letters contain nothing meaningless***...but rather powerful expressions that reflect the gospel of Jesus Christ....

Paul and Timothy bond-servants of Christ Jesus... not just their names... but their status and position... they are bond-servants....let me read you verse one from a great new translation [you'll be hearing more about this translation this year]... the Legacy Bible... arguably the most literal English Bible in the Greek....

Paul and Timothy... SLAVES of Jesus Christ....

Bond-Servant = more like an employee...

Doulos = Slave.... You were the master's servant... for life... no choice.

Slaves!... a description of someone owned by someone else....BUT only in this case... Paul and Timothy.... this was Voluntarily Slavery!... [Jesus Christ purchased us with His blood!]

So just in the opening verse... Paul tells his church that he and Timothy are willing, devoted, and determined permanent slaves to Jesus Christ!... and notice... they are slaves *of Jesus Christ*.... Not the church.... Or anything or anyone else.... Just slaves to Jesus....

To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, including the overseers and deacons... all believers are saints... not because they are themselves righteous... **but because they are IN JESUS CHRIST...**

No other religion makes this claim.... A Buddhist does not describe himself as IN BUDDHA... a Muslim would never claim that he is IN Mohammed.... They follow the teachings... but are not IN THEM!.... the followers of Jesus Christ are saints because they are IN JESUS....

Grace to you and peace from our God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.... A great salutation...sure beats "greetings!"...Paul is so amazing... He knew that the form for a letter would be "*greetings*".... The Greek word *chairo*... by changing the word ending to *charis*...it becomes a far superior term.....**grace**.....Paul didn't just want a salutation... some formal nicety.... He wanted to deliver a message with significance... Grace and peace to you...

grace is the supreme divine gift... paid for by the supreme sacrifice of all time... God's Son on the cross... and as a result... **everlasting peace is the greatest blessing EVER!!!**...the source of both is God the Father and Lord Jesus Christ.... That's the greeting.... But then he reveals to us some things about relationships that all of us need to hear....four things...

There are at least four principles...four specific elements of **Spirit engendered joy** as it relates to relationships... **specifically... with other believers**...these are very simple to understand...pretty straightforward.... But I'm going to tell you.... They are VERY hard to do!... In fact...you can't do them without the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit.... That is why they are Spirit engendered!

Engendered=*the cause of*... The Spirit caused them...this isn't under YOUR power!

You desire them...you seek them...you make the decision to do them...because they are the result of the joy that is in you...all that is the work and empowerment of the Holy Spirit within you.

I grappled with these for the last few weeks...I wondered *why* I struggle with these four things in my own relationships...**I realized that I struggle LESS than I used to**... that is because I am a spiritual work in progress just like everyone else....[God's doing His work in me verse 6.....]

The deeper my relationship goes with...in... Jesus.... The greater my joy will be... a joy completely centered on Him... and that will reflect in these four areas in my relationships with others..... before I give these to you... here's the

Key: **it is not IF YOU DO THESE things you will have joy**.... It is *because* you have joy that you do these things...and that you CAN do these things...the more you have turned yourself over to Christ...the more Christ has come into your life... the greater the joy you have....the greater joy you will have in your relationships with others.... See the dynamic? **[circular]**

[Married people... you want a better marriage?... you want to have a better relationship with your spouse?... go deeper with Jesus!...as you go deeper with Jesus you get a better relationship with your spouse...not to mention your joy will go through the roof!..]

1. Joy through being grateful for the people in your life.

Read verse 3

The more grateful you are the more joy you will realize... the less grateful you are the more diminished your joy is... it's a fact... Paul is saying **EVERY TIME I think of you... I thank God for you....** There's a lot of decision making in that statement... because what is the natural thing for people to do when they think of someone? [one thing that is so prevalent today is the stress between people....]

Be honest... think of the people in your life... stop and really think about them... now... **are your first thoughts about them gratitude?**.... not if you're normal!... It's probably more like... *they didn't do this one thing I wanted them to do... they're always late... they always leave their*

stuff in my way... I'm always having to clean up after them... they haven't been giving me any attention lately... we have problems...

Paul says... *EVERYTIME I think of you... I am thankful for you...* wow... a miserable fact in humanity seems to be the longer you know someone...the closer you get to someone... the more you take them for granted... the more you focus on their faults... and the easier it is to remember the bad times than the good times...

[the more we know someone, the more we spend time with someone, the more important that person becomes in our lives... we tend to become more critical of them...that's natural]

We are by our very nature NOT contented people... our very nature we are discontented people... we are by nature critical people...

Paul's remembrance of these people... the Philippians... began with his second missionary journey... He and Silas had sat down and made plans to go Bithynia to establish a church... Acts 16 tells us about it... as they were set to go... the Holy Spirit basically said... *that's a nice thought... but I want you to go to Macedonia instead of Bithynia...*

There's a great sermon in that passage!... how set are you in your plans?

Macedonia is present day Greece... where Philippi was... Paul and Silas get to Philippi... On the Sabbath day... the two men wanted to go to the synagogue to worship.... But there wasn't a synagogue in Philippi...

It takes ten Jewish men to form a synagogue...that's called a minyan...a minyan was ten men and apparently there wasn't a minyan... so no synagogue they went down to the river, hoping to find some Jewish worshippers so that they could also worship....

Interesting... why would they go to a riverside?... because if there were any Jews... they knew that they would have been by the riverside on the Sabbath.... Why... because in Psalm 137 it says that when the Jews were in captivity in Babylon... they went to the riverside and wept... and it became a custom for the Jews in captivity,... In exile... to go to the river and weep,... For they were away from their land... their home...they didn't have their place of worship...

The tradition grew... it became a custom that when there was no temple...no synagogue... Jews would find a riverside... go there and weep.. and worship.... That's what Paul and Silas did...they get to Philippi, no synagogue... they left Philippi and found a riverside... and found the Jews... but no men... **only women.**

One of the women was named Lydia... from Thyatira... it says she was a **“worshipper of God”**... that was a term for a gentile who came over to Judaism... the Lord had opened her heart to Christ through Paul.... She got baptized...

Lydia and her household became the first European converts to Christianity!... and she became the very nucleus of that new church in Philippi... from the very first day... Lydia opened her home to Paul and Silas.... She did everything she could to be hospitable to them.... That's one of the **I thank God in all my remembrance of you** people Paul was referring to.

I doubt that Lydia was above reproach... I'm sure she had some quality or something annoying about her... we know she was very wealthy... a great business person...she could have been a little arrogant... yet what Paul is saying is... *every time I think of you Lydia...I only remember the great things about you...and I thank God for you...* what if that was how we viewed all of our relationships!?!...**how much joy in our lives is forfeited because we chose to be critical rather than thankful of others in our lives?**

Bottom line is we are all weird!... we are all full of faults... sometimes annoying.

How many marriages have slipped into ungratefulness for each other... only harping on the negatives...if each one of us would embrace this joy of being grateful for the people in our lives... your spouse... your family, children, friends, church family..... how that would change everything!

The truth about Paul... is that he actually could have been pretty bitter and critical about his experience at Philippi... it wasn't a great start up... back in Acts 16... right after we meet Lydia... it says that Paul and Silas went back to riverside... and there they met up with a demon possessed girl who was making money as a fortune teller.

Good story... read it... bottom line is they cast out the demons in the girl ruining her fortune telling business and the management...her masters didn't like that... losing the money they made off of her...so they seized Paul and Silas, dragged them to the marketplace before the authorities.

“And they said, *‘These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, they’re proclaiming customs not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans... ‘They’re violating our Roman customs.’* And then mob rule takes over, and you have a lynch mob, and the whole crowd rose up, and “the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods”

“**They inflicted many blows on them, threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely.**” Of course, the jailer would pay with his life if he lost them. **He fastened their feet in the stocks.**”

Paul and Silas had just been flayed open by a bundle of rods in the hands of experts that left their back a pulp, that often caused intense hemorrhaging, often caused injuries to organs, often smashed vertebra, crushed ribs, and could cause death.

So these aching, bleeding, limping men are then taken in, thrown into a deep, dark cell in the inner dungeon, and then they're put in stocks... **Not the kind of stocks that we think of** – we think of the English, that you drip your hands through, and sort of stick your feet through, and stick your head in, and sit like this.

The stocks that the Romans used had a series of holes extending further out. Depending on the size of the individual, they stretched the legs to the farthest possible extremity, and then locked them in those holes. And then they stretched the arms to the same extremity, and locked them there....hanging there in excruciating pain.

And in that condition, they were placed in that inner dungeon, aching, bleeding, in a dark cell, cramping up in ways that we couldn't even imagine, along with the filth of the cell, the rats, in their own excrement – whatever it was, that was the condition. And why? Because these men lost their money when they lost their demon-possessed girl....

There they are in jail. And what is their attitude in jail? Verse 25: “**About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and**” – **what** – “**singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.**”

You have to love how this story raps up... remember the jailer who would lose his life if these guys broke free?....

Read Acts 16:26-34

Paul and Silas leave Philippi at the request of the officials.. ... **The church in Philippi was born out of joy** – a joy unrelated to circumstances. They were alone. They were in pain. They faced the loss of their life. And they rejoiced!..... That's joy, that's not happiness, that's joy...so deep, and so profound, that nothing touches it.

They knew the joy which is a gift from God to those who believe... being produced in them by the Holy Spirit because they were willing to obey God... being mixed with trials, and **they set their hope on future glory.** That's why they knew that joy.... And it affected their relationships!....

Every time I remember you I thank God for you.... What is that?.... ***selected memory!***... not everything was wonderful rosy and delightful in Paul's life... but Paul CHOSE NOT to dwell on painful memories...had most people experienced what Paul experienced at Philippi, they would have shut the place out of their memories...

Paul had true joy.... Joy in remembering his Philippian brothers and sisters in Christ.... To do so... he had to have selected memory!... he selected to remember the good things...and he forgot the past!... wouldn't we benefit from doing the same?

[Two women were talking.... One said to the other.. *don't you remember when your husband did -----?* And the other said.... ***I distinctly remember forgetting that!***] Paul had a lot of reasons to hold some bad memories of Philippi.... He focused on the good..... that is the mark of a truly joyful person...

2. The joy of praying with joy for the people in your life.

(I struggle with this...) **Read verses 3-4**

Now.... For a moment... think of someone who really irritates you... ***don't look at them.. think about them!***... do you pray for them?... it was a joy for Paul to pray for everybody.... “**you all**”... if we are honest with each other... we would admit there are some things about the people in our lives we would like to change...

Not so much change something about our life.... But others... *If he would just do this... if she would just do that... what's wrong with them?...* we are professionals at knowing what other people need to change about themselves!... but WE CAN'T CHANGE THEM!

You can't change anybody BUT yourself.... ***But you can pray***... and God can change them... pray and it is no longer your problem!...

If I go up to someone and say.... *You are so selfish...you make so many stupid decisions you drive me nuts!... you compromise everything you do... you act like the devil...* how's that going to go over?... what will that achieve?... nothing good!.... even if all that is true... you won't change a thing about that person....

the quickest way to change a bad relationship into a good one is to pray for it.... It will change you and it will change them.... *What do I pray?*... Paul gives us a great example in verses 9-11

Read verses 9-11

So... four things you pray.... About ALL your relationships... your spouse...children... friends... workmates....

1. Pray that they will grow in love.
2. Pray that they... the people in your life will make wise choices....
3. Pray they will live with integrity... Paul says I pray you will approve the things which are excellent...
4. Pray that they will become like Jesus. **Read verse 11**

What is the fruit?.... ahhh.... ... fruit on the vine?...

All those things listed in Galatians 5:22-23... love...joy...peace...patience...kindness on

What is the fruit?..... ***the qualities of Jesus***... pray that they will become like Jesus... **you can pray these four things for me every day of the week!**.... all four of those things covers those four negative things I previously said!... but God is the change agent in prayer...

3. The joy of expecting the best from others

Read verses 5-6

What is normal is that we expect the worse in people...it is far easier being critical and expecting disappointment...expecting them to let us down... Paul shows us that joy includes expecting the best from others...other brother and sisters in Christ...

"I am confident"... *I am confident that God is going to keep making you more and more like His Son Jesus Christ... from this day forward... you will get better and better and better...* that's a whole lot different than *I know you're going to mess up.. I know you're going to fail...*

Its like a parent watching his child in a race... the child slips and falls to the ground... a good parent isn't going to yell out..... **YOU WIMP! I KNEW YOU WOULD DO THAT!**.... no.... a good parent will yell out... **YOU CAN DO THIS! GET UP... I KNOW YOU CAN! I BELIEVE IN YOU!**...

That's what God does for you when you stumble... that is what you should do when others stumble...

Paul can have great joy in his expectations in his brothers and sisters in Christ because **his confidence is NOT in the person**... the reason Paul has confidence in someone isn't because of that person.... His confidence is in **the one who began a good work in you.....** who was that?

God!...I believe specifically it is the Holy Spirit.... Paul says something similar in Galatians 3:3... **Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?...** what is the good work that has been started in that person?... his salvation... and his sanctification... God began that great work... and through His continuing grace.... He will perfect it to the end...

These are such encouraging words from Paul to his church at Philippi... some of them may have begun to get discouraged.... Let down in their faith... Paul doesn't say.... Yeah... things are pretty miserable, hang it up!...

He says.... I AM CONFIDENT.... *You are going to be developed into the person God wants and intends you to be....* I heard an older preacher teaching younger preachers how to preach.... He said *Don't tell it like it is... tell it like it could be....* I had to let that run through my head... I'm a big **tell it like it is** guy... but I see it... some preachers pride themselves in "*Just telling it like it is*" and *that's it!*... that's wonderful... but that doesn't change anybody...

I do think some people love it when a preacher preaches condemning sermons... they're like spiritual masochists... *that was so good... you really told it how it is... lets go home and be miserable!... what a great Sunday!... can't wait to come back next Sunday and let Dan whip us some more! That's such a great sermon it made me feel so bad...*

Paul is giving encouragement in what they **could become... not what they are...** *God's going to continue to perfect you!*... There is such joy in that expectation both for Paul and for those he's writing to

4. The joy of affection for others.

Read verses 7-8

"There can be no greater or more exhilarating joy than produced by deep, abiding and genuine affection for others".... Sure...People love with their minds.... But Paul includes the heart... **I have you in my heart...** *it is more than intellectual... I have great feelings for you!*

I have found that when people are not in my heart they are on my nerves!.... and I need to move them over to my heart!.... and I literally consciously move them back over to my heart... I do this all the time!...sometimes it takes a week or two....maybe three!

When they are in my heart... I feel FOR THEM... I am concerned FOR THEM... I want the best FOR THEM... when I let them slide off my heart and on to my nerves... it's ABOUT ME... and how they bug me...

When people are in your heart... you have patience.... The key to patience is love... when people are in my heart I have empathy for them.... Empathy= the ability to feel and understand another person's situation...

When they slide off my heart and land on my nerves... I lose all that... **MOST RELATIONAL PROBLEMS HAPPEN** when one reacts with the head rather than the heart...

MEN... your wife comes to you and says....*This thing really frightens me... this really worries me... I'm very concerned about this thing...* do you react with your head or your heart?.... your head will open your mouth and say something like.... *Well that's not logical... that's dumb...*

Where will you be sleeping that night?.... when someone says to you *You don't understand! You just don't understand!*... they don't mean "you don't understand... they mean... you don't **FEEEL** my pain.... When someone is in your heart.... You feel their pain...that's empathy.

Paul says (8) **how I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ...** that word "affection" is *splagchon* in the Greek... much more powerful than affection... it literally refers to internal organs... specifically the bowels... or intestines.. in other words... an affection so very deep... deep into the internal organs... the feelings are so intense there is almost pain in the lower organs of the body...

Our goal as Christians should be to love the people in my life like Jesus does... *that's easy... right?*... it is when you have true joy...empowerment of the Holy Spirit...How did Jesus love?... **For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life...**

Jesus showed His love for us by dying on the cross for us...How are we supposed to love?...

1st John 3:16 **We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.**

... we are to show our love for others by laying down our lives for them!... the most selfless act one can do... or be willing to do which is the context here... that's how that love looks...the problem with relationships today... we know know john 3:16 but ignore 1st John 3:16!

this is REAL love... God gave His Son for us.. to die for us... we must be willing to do the same thing!... Can you imagine a world like that?... where everyone embraced the gospel of John 3:16 and initiated 1st John 3:16 in their lives?.... we wouldn't have any relational problems.... We wouldn't be obsessed with ourselves...we wouldn't so concerned with ourselves... we would be thinking about others...