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HOW TO BE SUPREMEY HAPPY WHILE IN JAIL

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS
NUMBER 34
EPHESIANS 4:1-2

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EPHESIANS 4:1-2 "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;"

It is refreshing to see Paul's mental attitude while he was under great pressure. Paul here shows how through the inhale of Bible doctrine he has been able to sustain his courage and mental composure even though he was in jail. In other words, Paul had accomplished the impossible through grace.

Please notice that Paul started off this chapter by using the personal pronoun "I". Now there are some superficial emotional believers who think that you can't use the personal pronoun "I" and be a humble Christian. We even have Christian organizations that avoid using the word "I." Now this is a very stupid and unnatural attitude. Please notice that Paul used the personal pronoun "I" and in the same context used the words "lowliness and meekness and longsuffering." The "I" here is very important and doesn't mean that Paul is a proud individual. To say "I am going to do this" doesn't mean you are proud. It is so easy to evaluate pride or humility with superficiality.

Never forget that it is necessary to inhale doctrine in order to be able to exhale faith toward God. Moses had a period of forty years of quietness in the desert with God alone so he could inhale truth and doctrine. Then when the time came he could exhale enough leadership in order to lead the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt. In like manner Paul spent four years in jail inhaling truth and doctrine so he could give out these books of doctrine which have blessed the whole Christian world.

In chapter 1 of Ephesians, Paul outlined the idea that God has a pre-designed plan for your life. Then in chapter 2 he showed that God's plan for your life begins at the cross. Then in chapter 3 he showed how the Christian must breathe in doctrine if he is to give out faith and love and service.

Paul in Jail

Paul realized that being in jail was a setback to his usual way of living. Paul loved to be on the move and he traveled more than almost any other individual in the ancient world. He literally went from one end of the Roman empire to the other and was well acquainted with all sections of the ancient world. In our passage, Paul is confined to one place and unable to move about from country to country. But please notice something--Paul did not have one moment's worry or one single defeat in his mental attitude. And please notice that Paul did not blame anyone else for his plight. Paul recognized the fact that being in jail was part of the plan of God for his life. He was actually a prisoner of Nero, but notice he said, "I am a prisoner of the Lord." At the beginning of chapter 3, he had said that he was a prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ. The principle which Paul stated in Romans 8:28 worked in his life, and though he was in jail, he was not the least bit worried or distraught.

As a prisoner, he used the word "Beseech" which is a present, active, indicative of "para kaleo" which means "to call to one's side," and therefore, it means "to encourage." If you are going to be successful in your Christian life, you must have the desire in your mentality and this must link up with your volition.

Now I am sure Paul didn't like to be in jail, confined to one place. He liked to move about. But Paul was able to lift himself out of his own personal failure and live in triumph and victory.

It is good for all of us on occasions to do those things we don't like to do. It may be to suffer or to take some course of action that is not exactly in keeping with our wishes. And quite often when we come to these difficult times, our mental attitude is terrible. Life is just filled with things we don't like to do and quite often there is friction in the gear box of our minds. But in spite of all these objectionable things in this chapter, we find Paul's mental attitude was victorious and triumphant. Nothing could get him down.

Though in jail himself, he was thinking of the spiritual welfare of other believers and exhorted them to "walk worthy of the vocation" which really means that Christians are to attempt in every way to fulfill the purposes of God. The word "vocation" is from "klesis" and is a technical word which refers to God's plan for you from eternity past. God's "klesis" for you is very simple. He wants you to have perfect happiness. Paul was in jail but he was just bubbling over with perfect happiness. So these words of Paul actually say, "I keep on encouraging you that you walk worthily of the plan and be happy every minute of it." God's plan always calls for perfect happiness. The whole book of Philippians is devoted to this idea of perfect happiness. Inner happiness is to be the mental attitude of the Christian.

EPHESIANS 4:2 "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;" The preposition "with" is "meta" and is a preposition of association. Every Christian is in full-time Christian service. Paul says that God's plan for you, which he designed in eternity past, is to be associated with a worthy walk of lowliness. This word "lowliness" is a tricky word and it doesn't mean self-effacement or self-induced humility. It is a long Greek word and comes from "tapeinophosune." You can lose your humility just learning how to pronounce this word. It is a triple compound noun. The word "tupeino" means some objective thinking according to a standard. This word demands that you take Bible doctrine into your soul. "Tupeino" actually means that you are demanded to take in Bible doctrine and this is the real meaning of "meekness." The truth from God crowds out fear and frustration and gives you the right mental attitude toward God. "Prautes" means a mental attitude that is based on the proper orientation to life through Bible doctrine. You cannot have a relaxed mental attitude and perfect happiness unless it is built out of the truth from God.

WHAT YOU ARE IS WHAT GOES ON IN YOUR MIND.

IF YOUR MIND IS NOT FILLED WITH THE TRUTH FROM GOD, IT WILL BE FILLED WITH SOMETHING LESS THAN GOD'S PERFECT TRUTH. YOU ARE WHAT YOU THINK.

If you inhale Bible doctrine then that's what you are. You inhale doctrine and exhale love and meekness and humility. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee."

Now how do you stay your mind on the Lord? You have to have the food, the substance, the raw material, as we say, if from it you are going to produce a vital Christian faith. The pure air of doctrine is breathed in and the exhale of faith comes out and there is one thing that stays behind--PERFECT HAPPINESS AND A RELAXED MENTAL ATTITUDE.

The word "longsuffering" comes from "makrothumai." Suppose people don't like you and they criticize you and malign you, you are suppose to show "makrothumai" toward them. It means that you are not to strike back. You are to respond with a relaxed mental attitude when they try to beat you down. It doesn't mean to pat your foot and wait for an opportunity to strike back.

ROMANS 12:14 "Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not." This is to be the attitude of Christians at all times. Longsuffering is a mental attitude word and it means a mental attitude of love and forgiveness and patience to counter their sins toward you.

The word "forbearing" is a present, active, participle of "anechomai" and it means to stand your ground on the basis of the doctrine you have in your mind. It means to find a good position of truth and love and stand there. Bible doctrine in your soul is the only solid ground on which you can stand, and it is always this way and it never changes. You don't have to stand one way today and another way tomorrow. There is one good position for you and for me and that is the truth of the Word of God. But you can't take your stand on it unless you have it in your mind. Then your attitude toward God and people will be right. "One another" means one another of the same kind. "In love" is from "agape" love and means mental attitude love. This is the grace principle operating in your life. This gives you power to love God and also power to love people.

Every single bit of this verse is mental attitude.

ISAIAH 54:13 "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children." This is exactly the same principle stated by Isaiah. It refers to all born again children of God and all of them are to have a mental attitude of live and let live.

ISAIAH 54:14 "In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee." When you think right, based on the truth of the Word of God, then no one can pressure you into fear or distrust.

ISAIAH 54:15 "Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake." When you are in the Lord's will, you are in a perfect defense position. The doctrine in your soul is greater than the sin of those who sin against you.

ISAIAH 54:16 "Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy." This verse simply says that the peacemaker is the stabilizer.