

## The Quality of Life

(Philippians 4:1-9)

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Last week, Pastor Jose gave us a good picture of what sin did to devastate the quality of life that God originally intended for mankind to have when He placed them in the Garden of Eden.

In this lost world, mankind spends his time trying to figure out what will give him quality of life. In his letter to the church at Philippi, Paul talks about quality of life from a Christian point of view.

### Introduction:

In the New American Standard Bible, the translators put topical subtitles in the passages of the Scripture, to help with quick reference identification on important topics.

The subtitle for the first nine verses of Philippians chapter four is, "The Quality of Life". But how does one define what is meant by the phrase, quality of life? One website posted several quotes in an attempt to answer this question.

"Quality of Life is tied to perception of '**meaning**'. The quest for meaning is central to the human condition, and we are brought in touch with a sense of meaning when we reflect on that which we have **created, loved, believed in or left as a legacy.**"

- Frankl VE. 'Man's search for meaning.' New York: Pocket Books, 1963.

"Our definition of quality of life is: The degree to which a person enjoys the important possibilities of his/her life. Possibilities result from the opportunities and limitations each person has in his/her life and reflect the interaction of personal and environmental factors. **Enjoyment** has two components: the experience of satisfaction and the possession or achievement of some characteristic, as illustrated by the expression: "She enjoys good health." Three major life domains are identified: **Being, Belonging, and Becoming.** The conceptualization of Being, Belonging, and Becoming as the domains of quality of life were developed from the insights of various writers."

Quality of Life Research Unit,  
University of Toronto

"In quality of life research one often distinguishes between the subjective and objective quality of life. Subjective quality of life is about **feeling good** and being **satisfied** with things in general. Objective quality of life is about fulfilling the societal and cultural demands for **material wealth, social status and physical well-being.**"

Quality-of-Life Research Center,  
Denmark

(These three quotes came from <http://www.gdrc.org/uem/qol-define.html>, **emphasis added, dgb.**)

In general, the world defines quality of life with very transient parameters as illustrated in these three quotes.

- Meaning as seen in the things we have created, loved, believed in, or left as a legacy.
- Enjoyment as seen in being, belonging, and becoming.

- Satisfaction and feeling good, which come out of material wealth, social status, and physical well-being

Keeping in mind some of these principles, let's see what Paul has to say to the church at Philippi. He gives them some guidelines on what quality of life should look like for the Christian.

We will notice as we study this passage that at the center of the quality of his life is Christ on the throne of his heart. The quality of life that saturated all of Paul's writings has an eternal perspective, which lifts it beyond transience.

### Sermon Body:

#### *Understanding the Text*

#### **Philippians 4 (NASB)**

[1] **Therefore**, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.

Paul starts this portion of his letter with a qualification. What he is about to say is dependent on something he wrote previously. Since it has been two weeks since we looked at it, we need to read a portion of chapter three so we understand the context of our passage for today.

#### **Philippians 3 (NASB)**

[12] Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

The things Christ laid hold of for us are:

- Salvation through the cross
- Eternal life through the empty tomb

- Christian lifestyle through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit

#### **Philippians 3 (NASB)**

[13] Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,

Paul's reaching forward describes a lifestyle of repentance. This is a lifestyle where every follower of Christ is continually walking toward God, and away from sin and temptation.

#### **Philippians 3 (NASB)**

[14] I **press on** toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

[15] Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this **attitude**; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; [16] however, let us keep living by that same **standard** to which we have attained.

[20] For our **citizenship** is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

[21] who will **transform** the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

When Paul said, "Therefore, my beloved brethren ...in this way stand firm in the Lord", he was referring to those who had made the choice to "press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

The context of what Paul is saying in chapter four is inseparable from what he says in chapter three. So, having made this choice to press on...

### Philippians 4 (NASB)

[1] ...**my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.**

Probably the words we notice most of the time when we read this first verse are the words "stand firm". What is described as quality of life, which is indicated by satisfaction in life, comes from taking a stand for something that is greater than self or the individual.

Certainly, the words, "stand firm", are important words, and they affirm what Paul said in chapter three, but we should not miss the fact that there is a strong element of fellowship in this first verse as well.

An important element of standing firm in our commitment to follow Christ is the fellowship we have with other followers. Paul continues with the importance of fellowship in the next three verses.

### Philippians 4 (NASB)

[2] **I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.**

I wonder if Paul had the words of Christ in mind when he was encouraging these two individuals to live in harmony. John records Jesus' command concerning the fellowship of believers.

### John 13 (NASB)

[34] "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have

loved you, that you also love one another.

[35] "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

The unique witness to the world, that shows them that we are genuinely part of the Kingdom of God, is that we love one another. The fellowship of the followers of Christ is one of the most important witnesses we can give to our culture today. Paul continues...

### Philippians 4 (NASB)

[3] **Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.**

[4] **Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!**

So far, Paul has talked about two elements that contribute to the Christian's quality of life.

- First, standing firm in our commitment to live the repentance lifestyle.
- Second, by realizing that our faith and commitment to follow Christ are dependent on the fellowship we have with other followers.

Next Paul talks about a gentle spirit as one of the elements of the quality of life for the follower of Christ.

### Philippians 4 (NASB)

[5] **Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.**

The gentle spirit that Paul speaks of here was part of the message Jesus tried to get across in His own preaching.

### **Matthew 11 (NASB)**

[28] “Come to Me, all who are **weary** and **heavy-laden**, and I will give you **rest**.”

[29] “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am **gentle** and humble in heart, and **YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS**. [30] “For My yoke is **easy** and My burden is **light**.”

A gentle spirit is wrapped up in our relationship with Christ. Not just in a relationship that shares only head knowledge, but a relationship that is wrapped up in a unified effort.

Christ comes along side those who choose to follow Him, and offers to help them in pulling the load of living a daily lifestyle of repentance. Keep in mind Paul's words at the end of verse five, "[The Lord is near.](#)"

The word gentle is used to describe the very nature of God, which is hard to understand if we are not in relationship with God. One of my favorite Old Testament characters is the prophet Elijah. In an encounter he had with God, God reveals His gentle nature to Elijah.

### **1 Kings 19 (NASB)**

[11] So He said, “Go forth and stand on the mountain before the LORD.” And behold, the LORD was passing by! And a great and strong wind was rending the mountains and breaking in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake.

[12] After the earthquake a fire, but the

LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of a gentle blowing.

[13] When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And behold, a voice came to him and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

Look at the display of the power of God in these verses as He comes near the prophet Elijah.

- There is a powerful wind that is tearing the mountain apart.
- Then an earthquake.
- Then there was fire.

However, none of these represented the presence of God. They were a reaction of the creation as the Creator came near. But, when a gentle breeze came, Elijah immediately knew God was there. The very nature of God is gentleness. Out of His gentleness flows mercy, forgiveness, healing, and provision for life.

In our relationship with God, His indwelling presence brings us a gentle spirit. That is what Paul is trying to get across to those who would seek the quality of life that comes to the followers of Christ.

In the next two verses, Paul talks about a peaceful heart and mind, which he says, comes out of anxious free thanksgiving.

### **Philippians 4 (NASB)**

[6] Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

[7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Remember, Paul is talking about having peace while he sits in a prison cell. This is not the kind of peace that the world talks about. In fact, this would look like insanity to the world. In the detail, Paul gives us in these verses; there are several key words that stand out.

- Be anxious for nothing.
  - Easier said than done sometimes. I don't think Paul is saying that the follower of Christ will never have anxiety. In fact being a follower of Christ can sometimes cause anxiety.
  - This is exactly the situation the Prophet Elijah found himself in. Forty days prior to his encounter with God outside the cave he had been hiding in, Elijah had killed more than 850 of Queen Jezebel's evil prophets. Look at her reaction.

### 1 Kings 19 (NASB)

[2] Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me and even more, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time."

[3] And he was afraid and arose and ran for his life ...

- I think Paul is trying to tell us that when anxiety overcomes us we have a safe place to go. That is where the Spirit of God led Elijah. Standing just outside the cave, with all the elements of nature raging, God arrives on the scene.
- Prayer and supplication are important for they bring us into the

presence of God. That is the safe place.

- As the wind raged around him, as the earth shook violently beneath his feet, and as the inferno of fire swirled up the mountainside, Elijah hid in the safety of a cave.
- But, when the presence of God finally arrived, Elijah stepped out into the open. He knew he was in that safe place where God's presence would dispel all of his anxieties.
- Thanksgiving is, I think, the most important key word in these two verses. You see, thanksgiving is the attitude of our communication and relationship with God.
  - In fact, once we become followers of Christ, the attitude of thanksgiving shapes our whole life.

Paul continues to build on this idea in verses eight and nine. Verse eight talks about the actions of the mind, the things we dwell on. Verse nine talks about the everyday actions of our lifestyle.

### Philippians 4 (NASB)

[8] Finally, brethren, whatever is **true**, whatever is **honorable**, whatever is **right**, whatever is **pure**, whatever is **lovely**, whatever is of **good repute**, if there is any **excellence** and if anything **worthy of praise**, *dwell on these things*.

The words Paul uses to describe the activities of the mind of a follower of Christ, are almost words of contempt in our culture today.

TRUE

HONORABLE  
RIGHT  
PURE  
LOVELY  
GOOD REPUTE  
EXCELLENCE  
WORTHY OF PRAISE

In the context of the Scriptures, these are the words that should describe the activity of the mind.

In our culture today we have stepped outside of the context of the Scriptures and conjured up our own definitions and standards for these words. Our definitions are tainted by sin and rebellion against God, the Creator of all that exists.

Not only the activity of the mind is important, for relationship with God is not just a head thing. A relationship with God is a lifestyle that is lived out in the daily actions of our lives. In fact, our lifestyle reveals the kind of relationship we have with God. Paul says relationship is a practice, not just a state of mind.

### **Philippians 4 (NASB)**

[9] *The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*

Out of the practices of our daily lives flow the peace that comes in an intimate relationship with God.

### **Conclusion:**

Remember the world's view of what the quality of life looks like. In general, the world defines quality of life with very transient parameters.

- Meaning as seen in the things we have created, loved, believed in, or left as a legacy.
- Enjoyment as seen in being, belonging, and becoming.
- Satisfaction and feeling good, which come out of material wealth, social status, and physical well-being.

How does this compare to what Paul outlines as quality of life for the followers of Jesus Christ?

Paul says that quality of life has these elements:

- Standing firm in a commitment to live the repentance lifestyle.
- Realize that faith and commitment to follow Christ are dependent on the fellowship we have with other followers.
- Understanding that the very nature of God is His gentle spirit which flows out of our relationship with Him
- A peaceful heart and mind that reaches beyond the foul circumstances of life
- The activity of the mind which dwells on what God describes as true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, of good repute, excellent, and worthy of praise.
- The activities of our lifestyle, which emerge from thankful hearts. \*/\*

Have I ever mentioned that I love the Peanuts comic strip? There is one that talks about the quality of life that God

provides and how most people react to the provision of God.

The first frame paints the scene. Snoopy is lying on his back on top of his red doghouse. Sweat is popping out of his brow as the hot summer sun bears down on him. In front of his doghouse is his blue water bowl.

In the next frame, Snoopy is on his stomach, his head is hanging over the edge of the roof and his tongue is hanging out of his mouth as he pants feverishly.

Jumping down off the roof, he stands over his water bowl panting, and says, "Empty! And I'm dying of thirst."

He then picks up his water bowl, and walks over to the faucet and holds it there waiting for water to flow out of it. Nothing happens of course, as there is no one to turn the faucet on for him. He stands there looking back and forth for help, but no one comes around.

Then suddenly it starts to sprinkle, then rain, and soon it is pouring. When the bowl is full, and the rain has stopped, Snoopy sets it down and drinks his fill of the cool rainwater.

He stands there for a long time as if he is thinking about what just happened. In the last frame, he is lying on his back on

top of his red doghouse and he says, "That's one I'm going to have to think about for awhile."

This cartoon tells us two things:

1. That there is an unseen quality of life that flows out of the abundance of resources that our Creator provides for us. (Where the faucet failed the rain supplied.)
2. That we often don't recognize God's provision for what it is, or for the quality of life it provides for us. (Think about this: from the faucet, or the rain, ultimately God supplies the waters of life.)

Life that has any kind of lasting quality to it flows out of an intimate relationship with the Creator. Our quality of life does not have to be defined by our circumstances; it can be defined by the will of God who has promised to supply all of our needs.

### Credits:

NASB - New American Standard Bible (NASB). Cedar Rapids: Laridian, 2002. (*emphasis added, dgb*)

Peanuts cartoon by Charles Schultz.

Final editing by Robyn Harper.