



Publishing Peace

A quarterly journal published by West Virginia School of Preaching under the oversight of the elders of Hillview Terrace Church of Christ, Moundsville, WV 26041 (304) 845-8001 (dirwvsop@aol.com).

Vol. 22 No. 3 July-September 2024

*“Behold on the mountains
the feet of him who brings
good tidings, who proclaims
peace!...” (Nahum 1:15)*

Upcoming Events

Sing & Pie “Fling”

Friday, August 30, 2024

Singing: 7-8 p.m.

Fellowship & Dessert: 8-???

30th Annual Victory Lectures

October 20-24, 2024

“LET THIS MIND BE IN YOU”

A Study of Philippians

Rejoice in the Lord

John Keith

Little is known of the life of the prophet Habakkuk (whose name means “embrace”). Many conservative scholars date his writing after the fall of Nineveh (612 B.C.), and prior to the 1st carrying away of Judah into Babylon (606 B.C.). The contents of the book are a conversation between God and the prophet and during this conversation we find a series of “woes” pronounced upon the Babylonians. The book closes in chapter three with a lyric of surety that God will deliver His people although He had promised to punish Judah by “raising up the Chaldeans . . .” (Hab. 1:6).

Habakkuk simply cannot understand how God could do this since they are more wicked than Judah (1:13), but the prophet decides to wait and be patient (2:1). Finally, Habakkuk praises Jehovah and the final three verses are a wonderful lesson on having patience while anticipating joy.

Christianity is not a system of sadness or extreme asceticism. Paul says, “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice” (Php. 4:4); remember that Paul wrote this while in a Roman prison. Paul teaches us that the heart may be joyous while awaiting Heaven regardless of circumstances. We, like him, must desire to “finish [the] race with joy” (Acts 20:24).

Our joy is in the Lord and to rejoice in the Lord requires knowledge of Him. We cannot rejoice in the Father, Son, or Spirit until we know and appreciate what they accomplished on our behalf: creation, revelation, salvation, etc. “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). The Lord must be our focus.

The Christian’s joy is independent of earthly possessions. The prophet points out that even if the Babylonians destroy everything, he has determined to rejoice for the salvation that is in the Lord because he knows that earthly things do not make for true rejoicing (Hab. 3:17-18). The writer of the Book of Hebrews commended his readers writing, “for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven (Heb. 10:34).

Christian joy is the joy of salvation: “Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation” (Hab. 3:18). We have several examples of rejoicing in salvation. After passing through the Red Sea, Israel sang of their salvation (Exo. 15:1-18). The Ethiopian eunuch “went on his way rejoicing” *after* Phillip baptized him (Acts 8:39). The Philippian jailor and his family—“rejoiced believing in God with all his house” *after* being baptized (Acts 16:33-34). Recognizing that bondage is a terrible state will help us to appreciate the true joy of salvation. Notice what David said: “Restore to me the *joy of Your salvation*, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit” (Psa. 51:12 emp. added); and Isaiah; “Therefore with joy you will draw water From the wells of salvation” (Isa. 12:3).

It is also the joy of anticipation. Our calling is not to remain where we are. We were called out of sin and we must press on, like the old hymn says: “I’m pressing on the upward way, new heights I’m gaining every day...”¹ (cf. Php. 3:13-15; Col. 3:1-3).

God will help us to stand firm when we are standing for truth and right and He will help us to move swiftly toward the goal when it’s time to move. Very seldom has one ever seen a deer lose its balance; they are some of the most sure-footed creatures on earth and when prompted, they are also among the swiftest.

If you are an unhappy Christian, could it be that you have forgotten what the Lord has already done and promised to do? Perhaps you have started seeking your joy in worldliness only to realize that, like the flash of a shooting star, it is soon departed. The joy of the true believer is like a star in the heavens; it is abiding and ever-present. Rejoice in the Lord! Know Him—come to Him and allow Him to be the joy of your salvation. People and things may disappoint—God never will! Embrace the joy which can be found only in Christ!

¹Oatman, Johnson and Charles H. Gabriel. *Higher Ground*.

Paul's Character

Andy Robison

Several glimpses into the lifestyle of Paul are afforded by an analytical examination of his speech to the Ephesian elders. The speech did not take place in Ephesus, as you might expect, but in Miletus. Paul had left Ephesus after three years there, then desired a conference with the overseers of the church he had come to know and love so well. So, "From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church." (Acts 20:17) In the verses that constitute the remainder of the chapter, the inspired apostle's admonitions are recorded. There is more to the speech, however, than instruction. There is a glimpse into the importance of character, the blessedness of fellowship, and the battle against false teachers.

Paul's instructions to the elders are predicated upon, first, his apostleship. He was inspired. None of us could so boldly command our brethren, especially elders. But Paul was inspired. The forerunner of his instructions in this chapter, through, is his own godly example (vs. 18-21). His lifestyle corroborated the message he preached. He could be rightfully accused of no wrong. Had this not been established over a period of years, anything he said by way of spiritual instruction would have been for naught. A person must practice what he preaches. Otherwise, no one will listen, even if he has something true to say.

The occasion for Paul's speech is his impending journey to Jerusalem. Trouble awaits him there, as predicted by the Holy Spirit (vs. 22-25). Once again, heroic character shines through. Paul faces the coming troubles with an air of finality. His boldness is seen in his lack of fear to go. His human side is seen in the sad recognition that he will no longer see his brethren. Paul wrote in other places of his desire to go to heaven in tension with his need to be with the brethren (Phil. 1). For him, as it ought to be for us, fellowship with the brethren was precious.

Further, this fellowship wasn't just gathering at a few meals together. It was serious, hard labor for the Lord, together. That creates quite a bond.

Paul's admonition to the shepherds to feed their flock emanates from his inspired knowledge that false teachers will arise—especially from within the church (vs. 28-31). A perennial proliferation of wolves in sheep's clothing will plague the church until the end of time. Christians need to be on studious and prayerful guard against those who claim to speak truth, but teach (however unwittingly) error. Elders have the responsibility for taking the watchful lead (Titus 1:9).

A lot can be said in a little bit. Paul spoke volumes about the Christian life in his speech to the Ephesian elders. Live an exemplary life. Fellowship in the Lord's work. Be on guard against false religion. These are bed-rock principles of obeying our loving Lord.

Commentaries

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We have been blessed to handle our dear brother Gene West's commentaries. These are available (with requested donation prices noted; extra for shipping is appreciated).

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Romans (\$20)

Hebrews (\$20)

Revelation (\$25)

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2021: Enumerating My Blessings—Enduring My Sorrows (Vol. IV)

2023: Elevating My Lord (Vol. V)

Also available in print:

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