

Romans – An In-Depth Study

[Chapters 9-16]

[Part 9]

Romans 15:1-3 [NIV] *“We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbour for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.”*”

We are **not**, as Christians, isolated individuals, for we live in a community of both Christians and non-Christians.

A true Christian has the mind and the attitude of a servant to all other human beings that come into their presence.

Self-interest must be at the bottom of our list of activities and thoughts.

The hallmarks of a Christian and a Christian fellowship.

a) **Consideration** – for all other human beings inside and outside their fellowship.

This consideration must always be designed to build up other people mentally and spiritually.

This attitude of mind is **not toleration** that really stems from laziness, but active compassion.

Any human being will be more easily brought to a fuller faith if surrounded by love and compassion than by attacking them with a battery of criticism.

b) **Study of scripture** – from the study of scripture the Christian draws encouragement.

We are encouraged by the history of God’s love, compassion and provision when dealing with the nation of Israel.

We are encouraged with the record that demonstrates that it is always in the end better for us and our relationship with our Creator God, to do what is right, even if we have to suffer because of it.

We are encouraged when scripture warns us that although obeying God’s commands of love and compassion will **not** be an easy way of life, in the end it is the **only** way to everything that will make life worthwhile in time and in eternity.

In the study of scripture that expands on the promises of God, any struggles we face in life will be small compared with the eternal future that can be ours.

c) **Fortitude** – this is an attitude of the heart to life.

Often in the New Testament we meet with the Greek word “*hupōmōnē*” translated “*patience*” which means far more than cheerful endurance.

The word indicates triumphant adequacy.

That is transmuting all we have to cope with in life into a glorious opportunity to grow spiritually.

James 1:2-4 [NIV] *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”*

We even face trials with the attitude of inner joy, because we know they can aid spiritual growth.

d) **Hope** – a Christian is always a realist but never a pessimist.

The Christian hope has a firm foundation on the promises of our Creator God whose word is always sure.

Romans 8:24 [NIV] *“For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?”*

The strong hope is a key to our salvation for it is based on the sure promises of the Creator God.

1 Thessalonians 5:8 [NIV] *“But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.”*

Hope protects our human spirit from the doubts that Satan will try to put in our minds, as he did with the very first humans and has continued to use this weapon ever since. [**Genesis 3:4-5**]

1 Peter 3:15-16 [NIV] *“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.”*

Being able to express the hope that we have in Jesus Christ, is a powerful tool to encourage others to follow our example.

e) **Harmony** – however ornate a church may be, however perfect its form of worship and music, however liberal the giving of its people, if it has lost harmony in its fellowship it has lost the first essential of a Christian church.

John 13:35 [NIV] *“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

The harmony that such love brings is a powerful witness for any Christian fellowship to give to this blinded non-Christian society.

f) **Praise** – a good test for any human being, who claims to be a Christian, is whether the main thrust of their conversation is grumbling discontent or cheerful thanksgiving.

Romans 8:28 [NIV] *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”*

Believing this promise will cause any true Christian to be filled with praise towards God and also to praise all the efforts of other Christians to accomplish good.

g) **Looks to Jesus Christ as its pattern for life** –

Philippians 2:5-7 [NIV] *“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”*

The Christian’s attitude to life is one of serving others.

John 3:17 [NIV] *“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”*

Not condemn other humans but seek to be a vehicle in God's hands to bring them to salvation.

Hebrews 7:25 [NIV] *“Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”*

A true Christian will intercede on behalf of other human beings in prayer before the throne of God.

The above are but a few of the many attributes, that were those of Jesus Christ, that a true Christian should seek to have in their own lives.

Romans 15:4 [NIV] *“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”*

This statement should encourage us to **overcome** any reluctance we naturally have as a human being in this society to **not** be disciplined in deep study of the Word of God, the Christian Bible.

Our eternal hope is based on the firm promises that are found in God's Word, the Christian Bible.

1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 11 [NIV] *“For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.” ... “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come.”*

The record of the Israelites whom God brought out of Egypt, a type of sin, is for us to avoid making the same mistakes that they made, that displeased the Creator God.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 [NIV] *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

We **cannot** be equipped to serve our Saviour without a deep understanding of the scriptures.

Romans 15:5-7 [NIV] *“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.”*

We receive endurance through the hope that God's promise gives us.

We have encouragement also from the scriptures, God's Word the Christian Bible.

We bring glory to God in two ways.

Our love for Him in our heart that will be seen by others and our knowing and able to express His Word, the Christian Bible.

The unity that God desires in His potential family comes as we all follow the lead of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of all humanity.

Romans 12:16 [NIV] *“Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.”*

For the above to happen we have to humble ourselves before God and our fellow Christians.

1 Corinthians 1:10 [NIV] *“I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be **no divisions** among you and that you may be **perfectly united in mind and thought.**”*

True Christian leaders will encourage the above in their congregations.

2 Corinthians 13:11 [NIV] *“Finally, brothers, good-bye. **Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace.** And the God of love and peace will be with you.”*

The final statement in any letter from Paul and the other apostles, is the most important summary of what has been said before.

Philippians 2:1-2 [NIV] *“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by **being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.**”*

Selfish ambition and vain conceit will always bring discord.

Romans 15:8-9 [NIV] *“For I tell you that **Christ has become a servant** of the Jews on behalf of God’s truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: *“Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name.”**

Jesus Christ is our example of humility.

When He in His physical life had the attitude of a servant, **not** an authoritarian king.

Jesus Christ is the perfect example of the pathway to greatness that is paved with humility.

Matthew 20:28 [NIV] *“just as **the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**”*

The ultimate expression of service was to offer His life on the cross in horrific pain and humility.

Matthew 16:24 [NIV] *“Then Jesus said to his disciples, **“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”***

We have to follow Jesus Christ by giving up our life, our time and substance, to be His disciple, that is to be living the life of a Christian.

Galatians 2:20 [NIV] *“**I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.** The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”*

This was the driving force and lifestyle of the apostle Paul.

One that we should follow.

Romans 12:1 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to **offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.**”*

Always keep this scripture in the front of our thoughts and actions.

Jesus Christ also came to fulfil the promises that God had made to patriarchs.

Genesis 17:1-8 [NIV] *“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, **“I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless. I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.”** Abram fell face down, and God said to him, *“As for**

*me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. **I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.** The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.”*

One promise made to Abraham would be a blessing for many of the nations of the world.

Genesis 35:11 [NIV] *“And God said to him, “I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. **A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will come from your body.**”*

This could refer to Great Britain and the British Commonwealth.

Genesis 18:17-19 [NIV] *“Then the LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? **Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him.** For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.”*

Eventually all nations will be blessed through Abraham and his descendants.

Both Israel and the Gentiles will eventually praise and worship the one true Creator God.

2 Samuel 22:50 [NIV] *“Therefore I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations; I will sing praises to your name.”*

This will only happen when all accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

Romans 15:10 [NIV] *“Again, it says, “**Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.**”*

The Gentiles, those who do **not** know Jesus Christ as their Saviour and God, will rejoice as they accept Jesus Christ.

Deuteronomy 32:43 [NIV] *“**Rejoice, O nations, with his people, for he will avenge the blood of his servants; he will take vengeance on his enemies and make atonement for his land and people.**”*

All who have opposed the Christian message of forgiveness, through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, will be judged by Jesus Christ.

Romans 15:11 [NIV] *“And again, “**Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples.**”*

The love and faithfulness of God, once known by the Gentiles, will cause them to praise and worship the only true Creator God.

Psalms 117:1-2 [NIV] *“**Praise the LORD, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples.** For great is his love towards us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures for ever. Praise the LORD.”*

What a wonderful new world this will be once this promise of God comes to fulfilment.

Romans 15:12 [NIV] *“And again, Isaiah says, “**The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him.**”*

The “*root of Jesse*” refers to Jesus Christ as the heir from the family line of Jesse, King David’s father. [**1 Samuel 16:1**]

Isaiah 11:1-5 [NIV] *“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. **The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him — the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD, and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash round his waist.**”*

A direct reference to Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 11:10-12 [NIV] *“In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious. **In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the sea. He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth.**”*

The beginning of the uniting of all humanity under the loving rule of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 12:17-21 [NIV] *“**This was to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:** “Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out; no-one will hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory. **In his name the nations will put their hope.**”*

Jesus Christ reminds His disciples of the prophecy about His role as the Saviour of all humanity, both Jews and Gentiles.

Romans 15:13 [NIV] *“**May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.**”*

The more we trust God the greater will be our joy, peace of mind and hope.

Hebrews 6:16-20 [NIV] *“Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. **Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath.** God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. **We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.** It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest for ever, in the order of Melchizedek.”*

This hope we can have in the promises that God has made in His Word, the Christian Bible, can be an anchor to our lives bringing us stability and contentment.

As we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives the intensity of this hope will increase.

1 Corinthians 2:4-5 [NIV] *“**My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.**”*

Only through the power of the Holy Spirit in us can we have this eternal confidence.

1 Thessalonians 1:4-5 [NIV] *“**For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.**”*

Every Christian leader should, in their own lives, be a living example of the Holy Spirit in them, giving them total confidence in the promises that God has made in His Word, the Christian Bible.

Romans 15:14-22 [NIV] *“I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another. I have written to you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. **I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done, by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit.** So from Jerusalem all the way round to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation. Rather, as it is written: “Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand.” This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you.”*

Paul is coming to the end of his letter that he wishes will prepare the ground for his visit to the Roman church.

We see in this part of his letter, the secret that Paul had in winning people to accept Jesus Christ as their saviour.

Paul was a man of tact – there is no rebuke like that of an angry schoolmaster, in Paul’s approach to others.

Paul reminds them of what they well knew and assures them he is aware of their outstanding service to each other and to God.

Paul was far more interested in what a person could be than what they were at that moment of time.

Paul saw faults in people with utter clarity and dealt with them in complete fidelity.

All the time Paul was thinking **not** of what a wretched creature the person was **but** what a splendid creature they could become.

Paul spoke always with honesty and severity but **never** to criticise, but to enable the person to attain what they could become.

The only glory Paul claimed was to be a bond slave of Jesus Christ – for all the great talent and intellect that were his, Paul acknowledged his total dependency on his Master and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Paul’s ministry was an example to every Christian minister, to ensure that at least half of their time and resources were directed towards those who do **not** as yet know Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

This work of a Christian minister should even at times be so concentrated on seeking those who do **not** know Jesus Christ as to delay serving those within their fellowship.

Paul always saw himself as an instrument in the hands of Jesus Christ – Paul **never** said “*I did it*” it was always “*what Christ used me to do.*”

Philippians 3:3-11 [NIV] *“For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who **put no confidence in the flesh**, though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, **I***

consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

Although Paul had many talents and great intellect, he put **no** confidence in these abilities, only in being a vehicle that Jesus Christ could use to fulfil God’s Will.

Acts 9:15-17 [NIV] *“But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.” Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord, Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here, has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”*

I’m sure Ananias told Paul [still named Saul] that the Jesus Christ whom he had met on the road to Damascus [**Acts 9:1-5**] had told him.

That Paul was to carry the Christian message, which he had tried to stop, to the Gentiles.

Acts 15:12 [NIV] *“The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous signs and wonders **God had done among the Gentiles through them.”***

Both Paul and Barnabas realised it was God who was doing the work of witness through them.

Acts 21:19 [NIV] *“Paul greeted them and reported in detail **what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.”***

Again Paul gave all the credit of what had been done among the Gentiles to God.

2 Corinthians 10:17 [NIV] *“But, **“Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”***

Paul **never** boasted as to what he had accomplished, knowing it was Jesus Christ working in and through him by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 52:15 [NIV] *“so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. **For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.”***

Paul was quoting this passage and realised that God was commencing to accomplish this through him.

Every true Christian should seek to continue this work that Jesus Christ gave to Paul.

Paul’s one ambition was to be a pioneer –

Romans 15:22-24 [NIV] *“This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you. But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you, **I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while.”***

Why did Paul want to go to Spain?

Spain was at the very western end of Europe.

In a sense, the then limit of the civilised world.

The pioneer spirit in Paul lured him to preach the Gospel Message there.

At that time Spain was the centre for many great men in the Roman Empire.

Lucan, the epic poet; Martial, the master of the epigram; Quintilian, the greatest teacher of his day; Seneca, the great stoic philosopher, who was to become the prime minister of the Roman Emperor Nero.

It may well be that Paul was thinking if he could reach such great men with the message Jesus Christ brought, that tremendous things would happen in Spain and the rest of the Gentile Roman Empire.

Romans 15:25-29 [NIV] *“Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there. For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews’ spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings. So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this fruit, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way. I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ.”*

Paul had arranged for a collection to be taken up in the new Christian churches God had established through him, for the poor in the church in Jerusalem.

There were poor in Jerusalem because much of the available employment was linked to the temple authorities who were Sadducees, the supreme enemy of Jesus Christ.

It must therefore have happened that many men, when they became Christians, lost their jobs.

Paul looked on this personally as a payment of debt and a duty, because of how he had treated Christians in Jerusalem before his conversion.

Also the injunction that had been laid on him by the leaders of the church to remember the poor [**Galatians 2:10**].

There was no better way to demonstrate, in a practical sense, the unity of the church.

Such a gift was teaching the young churches they were **not** isolated units, but part of one great church worldwide.

There is no better way of putting Christianity into practical action, and strengthening the faith of the people.

James 2:14-17 [NIV] *“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? **In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.**”*

Giving to those in need is Christian faith at work.

As far as we know Paul never got to Spain, as in Jerusalem he encountered on this visit, trouble which led to his imprisonment and his death.

Romans 15:30-33 [NIV] *“I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. **Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there, so that by God’s will I may come to you with joy and together with you be refreshed.** The God of peace be with you all. Amen.”*

Too often prayer is viewed as a time for comfort, reflection and making our requests known to God.

Paul in this passage of scripture urges all Christians to use prayer as weapon in our fight against Satan and the deception and evil he is bringing on the majority of human beings.

Ephesians 6:18-20 [NIV] *“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.”*

Next to the “*sword of the spirit*” the only offensive part of the spiritual armour of God [**Ephesians 6:10-17**], is prayer for those who are active in the spread of the Good News that Jesus Christ brought to all humanity.

Prayer and the Word of God can work together as powerful weapons against Satan and his work of deception.

2 Thessalonians 3:1-5 [NIV] *“Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honoured, just as it was with you. And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith. But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance.”*

Paul expected the church at Thessalonica to be praying for him and the other evangelists.

Philippians 4:4-9 [NIV] *“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me, put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”*

It seems strange that Paul, who was writing this from prison in Rome, should be rejoicing.

Paul’s attitude teaches us an important lesson, to focus on what is happening in our internal spiritual world rather than on our outward circumstances, in a physical world.

It is easy to become spiritually discouraged, unless we focus on what God is creating in us, through the indwelling Holy Spirit and the Word of God, the Christian Bible.

Prayer full of thanksgiving will dispel any doubt and discouragement.

Philippians 4:10-13 [NIV] *“I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”*

Paul had learnt contentment and peace of mind as a result of what Jesus Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit was doing through him.

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

If we do this, we all can experience this great joy when we, out of great thankfulness to God for what He has done for us through the physical life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.