

Joyful Living in a Grumpy World

Philippians: A Study about Faith, Love, and Joy - Week 1
Philippians 1:1

Introduction: Today, we are beginning a new Bible study from the book of Philippians. Over the next few weeks, we will explore three major themes of this book: faith, love, and joy. Since joy is a central theme throughout Paul's letter, it prompts us to ask whether we have the kind of joy Paul describes and, if not, why not.

Thieves that can rob our joy

Joy Thief #1 - Circumstances.

Joy Thief #2 - People.

Joy Thief #3 - Things.

Joy Thief #4 - Worry.

Reasons Philippians is such a favorite book

Reason #1 - Philippians is a positive book.

Reason #2 - Philippians is a practical book.

Reason #3 - Philippians is a prophetic book.

Reason #4 - Philippians is a powerful book.

Let's begin with a bit of background

Question #1 - Who wrote the book?

Answer: Philippians was written by the apostle Paul (Philippians 1:1a) around AD 60-62. Although Timothy's name is mentioned, his name is stated as a greeting of friendship, not authorship.

Question #2 - Who is the book written to?

Answer: Philippians was written to fellow Christians living in the city of Philippi (Philippians 1:1b).

Question #3 - What is the purpose of the book?

Answer: A primary purpose for the writing of Philippians was to remind believers that they could experience Christian joy and peace even in the midst of challenging circumstances (Philippians 4:4-7).

A definition of Christian joy - Joy is an inner confidence that, regardless of my external circumstances, I have the assurance that God knows me and knows how to care for me (Philippians 4:4-7).

Happiness and Joy: There is a difference

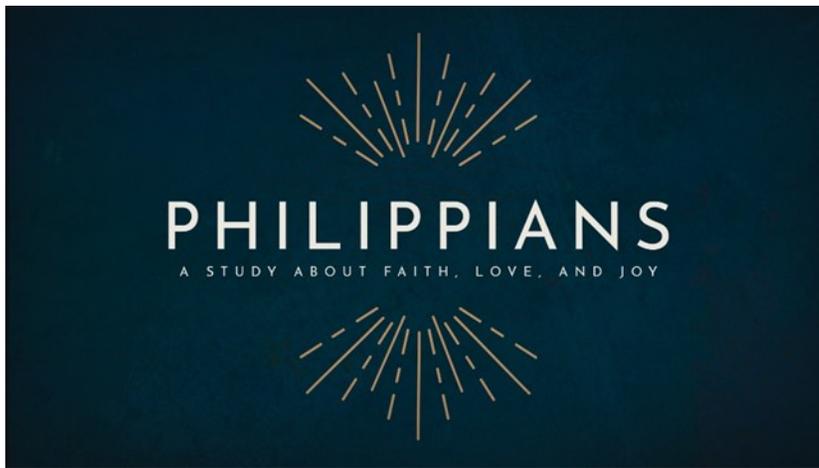
(1) Happiness is EXTERNAL, whereas joy is INTERNAL.

(2) Happiness happens by CHANCE, whereas joy happens by CHOICE.

(3) Happiness is EMOTION-based, whereas joy is FAITH-based. Joy is not an emotion dependent on circumstances but a trust dependent on God, who is always faithful.

Billy Sunday quote: "If you have no joy, there's a leak in your Christianity somewhere."

Conclusion: The Christian's joy doesn't come from this world, and therefore, this world can't take it away. It is based on an inner assurance that God knows me, cares about me, and wants to help me. Knowing "God's got this" allows me to experience joyful living even when the world may seem grumpy.



Making Me What I Ought To Be

Philippians: A Study about Faith, Love, and Joy - Week 2

Philippians 1:3-11

Good things happen when we say "yes" to God. (1) We get blessed. (2) We bless others. (3) We please God.

Two Reasons Philippians is a special study

Reason #1 - Although the letter has only four chapters, it covers several important Christian doctrines that every Christian should know.

Some helpful definitions for what we will be studying

(1) Christology. The study of the nature of Christ. Philippians contains one of the most significant Christological passages in the Bible (Philippians 2:5-11). We will examine the pre-existence of Christ, the incarnation of Christ, the "self-emptying" of Christ to take on human form, the death of Christ, and the exaltation of Christ.

(2) Sanctification. The ongoing work of God in our lives to make us like our example, Jesus, in our attitudes and actions (Philippians 1:6; 2:13)

(3) Eschatology. The study of end times. Paul keeps the "day of Christ" in view throughout his letter (Philippians 3:20).

(4) Glorification. When our earthly bodies are transformed to be like Christ's glorious body (Philippians 3:21).

Reason #2 - Philippians teaches us how to experience peace and joy in the midst of challenging circumstances and personal pain.

Note this: The Christian's joy doesn't come from this world, and therefore, this world can't take it away (John 14:27). It is based on an inner assurance that God knows me, cares about me, and wants to help me. Knowing "God's got this" allows me to live joyfully even when the world may seem gloomy and grumpy.

God making us what we ought to be

1. God wants to grow us from being less self-centered to more others-minded (Philippians 1:3-5). Verse 3: "I thank my God every time I remember you." "*I have you in my mind.*"

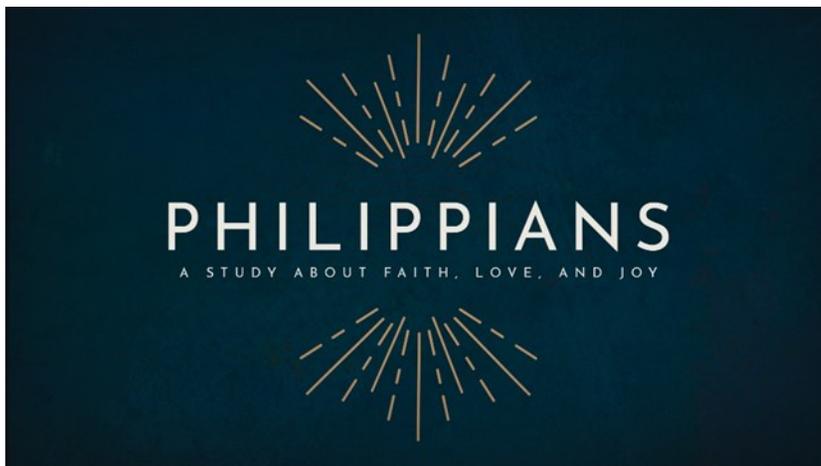
2. God wants to grow us from focusing less on people's faults to praying more for people (Philippians 1:7-8). Verse 7: "I have you in my heart." "*I have you in my heart.*"

3. God wants us to grow us from a limited love to an increasing love for Him and others (Philippians 1:9-11). Verse 9: "And this is my prayer." "*I have you in my prayers.*"

"PBPGIFWMY". Those cryptic letters stand for an important truth about the sanctification of us and others: "**Please be patient. God isn't finished with me yet.**"

"He's still working on me,
To make me what I ought to be.

It took Him just a week to make the moon and stars,
The sun, and the earth, and Jupiter, and Mars.
How loving and patient He must be,
Because He's still working on me."



Our Perspective Makes the Difference

Philippians: A Study about Faith, Love, and Joy - Week 3
Philippians 1:12-18

Perspective: “As you ramble through life, whatever be your goal. Keep your eye on the donut and not on the hole.”

Today's Key Truth: Paul experienced peace and joy even during tough times because he focused on the bigger picture of what God was doing. His “what God can do” perspective during hard times made all the difference in Paul’s life and will do the same for us!

What Paul knew about the adversities of life and the working of God

1. **Paul knew that God never wastes adversity.** (Philippians 1:12)

★ **Notice this:** To be sure, Paul’s plans didn’t happen the way he had envisioned them. Instead of going to Rome as a preacher, he became a prisoner. His preaching was not in the temple, but in a prison. This reminds us of an important principle - our disappointments are often God’s appointments. Paul’s tough circumstances actually opened up new opportunities to preach Jesus and share the Gospel. He soon realized that his hardships were helping, not hindering, God’s plans for him.

2. **Paul knew his suffering was a testimony to the watching world for both believers and non-believers.** (Philippians 1:13-14)

★ **Notice this:** Paul mentions his chains in verses 13 and 14 because he was literally chained to a Roman guard while in prison. Typically, a rotation was arranged so that every four to six hours, a new guard replaced the previous one. This meant Paul always had a captive (or captured) audience! The Palace guard was highly influential, and Paul took every opportunity to share the gospel with them. Paul’s imprisonment also had a positive impact on believers, encouraging them to speak out more boldly. There was a ripple effect. Paul was sharing the gospel in prison, and the church was sharing the gospel outside of prison.

3. **Paul knew that God could always bring something good out of difficult times.** (Philippians 1:15-17)

★ **Notice this:** How could Paul look at his circumstances in such a positive light? Paul knew that God was always at work behind the circumstances. He wrote to the believers in Rome, “And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them.” (Romans 8:28) Even when some preached the right message (the gospel) but did so with wrong motives, the gospel of Jesus still continued to be spread.

4. **Paul knew that adversity can remind us what matters most.** (Philippians 1:18a)

5. **Paul knew that the Christian’s attitude comes from an inner gratitude and trust in God.** (Philippians 1:18b)

Conclusion: Remember that Paul initially didn’t see the bigger picture of what God was doing. Until then, he trusted God one day at a time. And Paul’s perspective on the guiding hand of a providential God made all the difference in his life and can do the same for us.



The Key to A Successful Life

Philippians: A Study about Faith, Love, and Joy - Week 4
Philippians 1:19-26

Quick quiz: How would you complete the following sentence? "For to me to live is _____." What word or phrase would you put in the blank? If your name were LeBron James, the word might be "basketball." If your name were Aaron Judge, the word might be "home runs." If your name were Bill Gates, the word might be "Microsoft." If you are a parent, the word might be "children," or for grandparents, the word might be "grandchildren." The list of possibilities is endless. But don't miss the point. No one leaves that sentence blank. Everyone finishes the sentence with something.

Introduction: If you want to know the Apostle Paul's key to success in life in just one sentence, here it is from Philippians 1:21, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." This verse reveals why Paul did what he did, why he said what he said, and how he found the strength to push past life's challenging circumstances. Today, we will examine "The Key to A Successful Life" from Philippians 1:19-26.

Paul's faith gave him the key to a successful life

1. **Paul's passion - to always honor Jesus.**
(Philippians 1:19-20)

Notice this: When we go through difficult times, Paul says we have two resources to strengthen us: the prayers of others for us and the help of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, here are two questions for us to ask. One, "Am I aware that others are praying for me?" and two, "Am I regularly praying for others?" If I believe that God answers prayers and that prayers change things, shouldn't I be praying daily for others?

2. **Paul's purpose - to live for Jesus.**
(Philippians 1:21)

Notice this: Paul understood that for the Christian, death is not defeat. Death is just a change of address from this earthly life to an eternal one, from earthly struggles to heavenly joys! This is why Paul saw death, not as a loss but as a gain. Whenever and however he died, he knew that the best was yet to come! Paul's death wouldn't place him in a grave; it would send him to Heaven to live with Jesus and other believers forever!

3. **Paul's perspective - we always win with Jesus.**
(Philippians 1:22-26)

Paul's conflict and confession - Paul desired to depart and be with Christ, yet he felt a responsibility to remain and help others know and grow in faith in Jesus. What an example of a well-lived Christian life is the Apostle Paul. He was willing to postpone going to Heaven in order to help Christians grow and lead more people to Jesus! He put aside his own preferences for the cause of Christ and the good of others.

Conclusion: It has been said, "As long as I'm on the right side of the grass, I've got nothing to complain about." That can be true, but it's not complete. Paul was at peace with either side. If he were above the grass, he would keep sharing Jesus with anyone and everyone. If he were below the grass, he knew he would be in Heaven with Jesus. "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:1) "For to me to live is _____." What word or phrase would you put in the blank?



Make Sure Your Walk Matches Your Talk

Philippians: A Study about Faith, Love, and Joy - Week 5
Philippians 1:27-30

Introduction: Our passage today begins with an important challenge and reminder: “conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.” We might say it this way today: “Make sure your Christian walk matches your Christian talk.” One way to evaluate the effectiveness of our Christian walk is by asking a thought-provoking question: “If I were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict me? Would I be known for reading the Bible, praying to God daily, attending church, financially supporting Christian work, helping others, and sharing my faith in Jesus?” True Christians live in such a way that no one can deny they are a Christian.

How to make sure our walk matches our talk

1. Whatever happens in life, always try to live like Jesus. (Philippians 1:27a)

Good question to ask: The idea behind WWJD is that, when making decisions in life, we should first ask ourselves, “What would Jesus do?” and then follow His example. The phrase was meant to encourage Christians to consider how Jesus would act in their daily lives, promoting

Christ-like love, compassion, and choices (1 Peter 2:21: “... leaving you an example, that you might follow in His steps.”).

Keep in mind these reminders with WWJD

Reminder #1 - We must make sure that our answer to the question “What would Jesus do?” is based on the objective truth of Scripture and not subjective opinion (what I think or feel).

Reminder #2 - We can't really know what Jesus would do unless we know what He has already done. His past actions, as shown in the Bible, will guide us today.

Reminder #3: We must avoid using “WWJD” as an excuse to follow our desires. The heart (our feelings) can be deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9). WWJD should not turn into WDIWTD (“What Do I Want to Do?”).

2. Always be mindful that unbelievers draw conclusions about Jesus by the way Jesus-followers live.

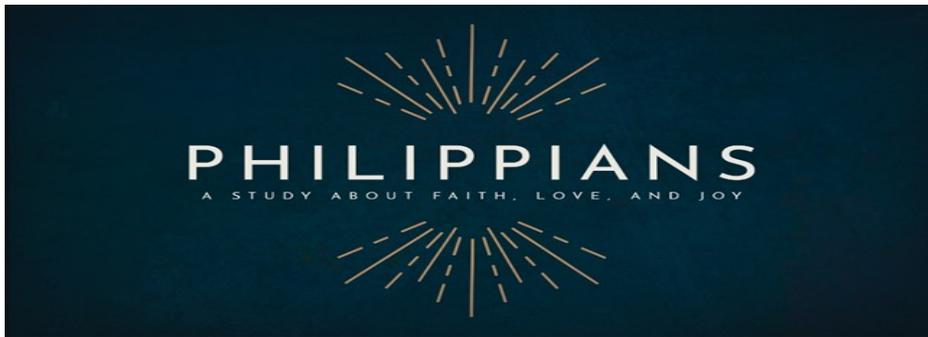
(Philippians 1:27b)



3. When a world in conflict sees people in unity loving each other, it is a witness to the world that we are Jesus followers. (Philippians 1:27c)

4. Don't be afraid to speak up about your faith. It's the good news everyone needs. Some people will oppose the gospel. Don't let that stop you - keep sharing anyway. (Philippians 1:28)

5. As faithful Christians, we don't just say we believe in Christ, but our actions show a willingness to suffer for His cause. (Philippians 1:29-30)



Make Sure Your Walk Matches Your Talk - Part 2

Philippians: A Study about Faith, Love, and Joy - Week 6

Philippians 1:27-30

How to make sure our walk matches our talk

1. Whatever happens in life, always strive to live like Jesus. (Philippians 1:27a)

What would Jesus Do? Last week, we looked at the popular acronym “WWJD,” which stands for “What Would Jesus Do?” The idea behind WWJD is that when making decisions in life, a Christian should first ask, “What would Jesus do?” and then follow His example. The question is meant to encourage Christians to think about how Jesus would act in their everyday decisions. As Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:2, Jesus left us an example “that you should follow in His steps.”

WWJD Reminder: We must be certain that our answer to the question “What would Jesus do?” is based on the objective truth of what the Bible says, not on the subjective opinion of what I think or feel. Some people say things like “My Jesus would be okay with that or my Jesus wouldn’t have a problem with that.” We must be aware of not using “WWJD” as an excuse to follow our own desires. The heart (our emotions) can be deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9). We must always focus on the Jesus of the Bible when asking, “What would Jesus do?”

2. Always be mindful that unbelievers draw conclusions about Jesus based on how Jesus-followers live. (Philippians 1:27b)

Stand firm: The phrase “stand firm” refers to a Roman military formation in which soldiers stood shoulder to shoulder and back-to-back, shields up. Paul says Christians need to work together like a well-trained army. Christians

should be like a company of soldiers, standing shoulder to shoulder, united in formation. This is not unity just for the sake of unity, but unity for the purpose of effectively sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The problem with the Philippians, as we will see later, is that some of them were fighting with each other instead of fighting for each other. One main reason Paul wanted the Philippians to “stand firm” in unity is that compromising Christian living compromises what others think about Jesus.

3. When a world in conflict sees people coming together and loving one another, it is a witness to the world that we are followers of Jesus.

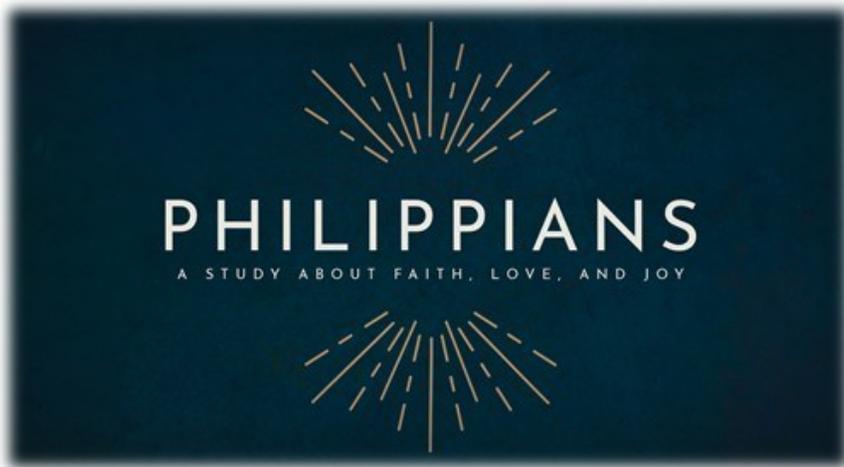
(Philippians 1:27c)

Do you want what we have to offer? Do we understand how the world views fighting Christians and a divided church? When we share with the spiritually lost, “God loves you,” unbelievers hear it through the static of compromised Christian living and internal gossiping. Thus, the message that comes through is, “God loves you, but we don’t because we don’t even like each other.” No wonder they don’t want what we have to offer. When will we realize that loving one another is what makes the gospel beautiful? However, this kind of love doesn’t happen by accident, just because we are Christians. Whether our relationships are strained or strong depends on our choosing to love like Jesus. “Jesus help me to see this person the way You do.”

4. Don’t be afraid to speak up about your faith. It’s the good news everyone needs. Some people will oppose what you share. Don’t let that stop you - keep sharing anyway. (Philippians 1:28).

Look what has come: In one of his books, the famous evangelist E. Stanley Jones noted that the first Christians didn’t wring their hands in despair and say, “Look what the world has come to.” Instead, with great delight, they declared, “Look what has come to the world.” It’s never been easy to be a Christian in any generation. It wasn’t in Paul’s day, and it isn’t now. But blessed are those who are so excited about Jesus that they can’t keep quiet about it!

5. As faithful Christians, we don’t just say we believe in Christ, but our actions show a willingness to suffer for His cause. (Philippians 1:29-30)



Getting Along with Cantankerous Christians

Philippians: A Study about Faith, Love, and Joy - Week 7

Philippians 2:1-4

Definition: "Cantankerous." A bad-tempered, argumentative, and uncooperative person.

Introduction: Satan, the spiritual enemy of every Christian and church, enjoys it when Christians fight. First, Christians split hairs by majoring on minor things, and then, if there is no reconciliation, they split churches. The Apostle Paul understood this truth well. He had been told about two women who were acting like cantankerous Christians (Philippians 4:2). He knew that if disunity wasn't repaired in a relationship, the crack of disunity would grow and affect others. That is why today's Bible study from Philippians 2:1-4 is important for us to understand with both our minds and our hearts.

What we need to know about the importance of unity

Principle #1 - Loving others is motivated by God's love for us. (Philippians 2:1)

→ **Notice this:** Paul states that the Christian's love for others is motivated by God's love for us. Paul wants Christians to see in verse 1 that we

have been blessed beyond what we deserve.

His point is this: "Since you've been given all this grace from God, shouldn't you extend grace to others and work to promote peace and unity?"

Principle #2 - Loving others will bring joy to us. (Philippians 2:2)

→ **Notice this:** When we are out of sync with someone in mind and heart, we can experience conflict and feel miserable. However, when we discuss our differences, we can find unity, which brings us joy.

Principle #3 - Loving others gives us a new attitude in the way we see others. (Philippians 2:3-4)

How to deal with difficult people

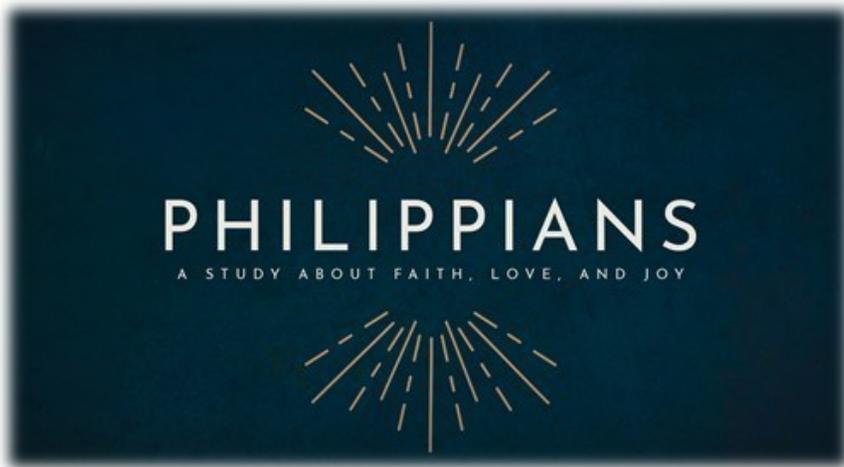
(1) It may be difficult to do, but pray for the difficult person in your life (Matthew 5:44).

(2) Remember, some people carry baggage, burdens, or broken hearts, and they may express their pain wrongly through anger. Some are like the lion that was always angry because it had a thorn in its paw. Be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving of one another, just as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32).

(3) When possible, try to be at peace even if the other person won't. (Romans 12:18).

(4) Not every difficult person will stop being a difficult person. In Matthew 10:14, Jesus told the disciples to shake off the dust from their feet, symbolizing a formal separation from people who refuse to change. We can continue to pray for difficult people, but we must wisely use our time and energy with the opportunities to love and help others.

Conclusion: Dealing with difficult people is unavoidable. It's easy to respond from our old nature, but that only brings out the worst in us. How much better to respond like Jesus, which will bring out His best in us. God wants us to respond in love to everyone, like Jesus - including difficult, cantankerous people.



Knowing the Full Story of Jesus

Philippians: A Study about Faith, Love, and Joy - Week 8

Philippians 2:5-11

Introduction: Before Paul begins the full story of Jesus, he prefaces it with a reminder: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus..." (Philippians 2:5). When we ask the question in our attitudes and actions, "What Would Jesus Do?" we are practicing having the "same mind" or "same attitude" as Jesus, our example for how we are to live. It has been said that our outlook determines our outcome. If our outlook is to strive to live like Jesus, we will make a positive spiritual difference in others' lives. However, if our outlook is "me-minded" and we live a self-centered life, our attitude will be the opposite of Jesus's, and we will miss many opportunities to make a positive spiritual difference in others' lives.

The full story of Jesus tells us about ...

1. **The Deity of Jesus - the Eternal Christ in Heaven.** (Philippians 2:6)

→ **Notice this:** Being the eternal Son of God means long before Jesus was born at Bethlehem, long before the world was created, from all of eternity, Jesus shared eternal glory with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. To the question: Where does the story of Jesus start?

The answer is eternity. Jesus was before Genesis 1:1 because Jesus has always been.

2. **The Humanity of Jesus - the Earthly Christ on Earth.** (Philippians 2:7-8)

→ **Notice this:** When Jesus came to Earth, he set aside His "outward glory." Consider a General removing his uniform and dressing as an ordinary man on the street. No one would recognize the General from anyone else. Is he still a general? Yes. Is he wearing his General's uniform? No. Jesus came wearing the uniform of an ordinary man while bearing within himself the glory of God. No deity was subtracted from His nature when He became one of us; instead, humanity was added to His nature. Because this is true: "We do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet he did not sin." (Hebrews 4:15)

3. **The Glory of Jesus - the Exalted Christ in Heaven again.** (Philippians 2:9-11)

→ **Notice this:** Jesus humbled Himself to the lowest place, but God exalted Him to the highest place. There is no one and no thing higher than the Lord Jesus Christ. God exalted Him to the highest place, and He is above all things. Verse 9 also tells us that God gave Jesus "the name that is above every name." What did God give Jesus that He didn't have before? He couldn't give Him supreme glory - He already had that. He couldn't give him deity - He already had that. But there is one thing he didn't have that He now has by virtue of his triumphant return to Heaven. God has ordained that He will eventually be universally recognized as the Lord of all things by all people at all times. Many people didn't recognize Jesus when he walked the earth. There are people today who still don't know who Him is. But a day is coming when that will change, and He will reign forever and ever!