

The Joy of Knowing All Things In Christ



The following is an interpretation of **Colossians 1:11-14** from J.B. Phillips' *New Testament in Modern English*. This book of his was an inspiration to me in my earlier years of knowing the Lord. You should find this passage helpful and encouraging as you face what may seem to be the unlikely results of your having trusted the Lord Jesus as your Savior. I say "unlikely results" because many who come to the Lord soon find that the attacks coming against them come as surprises. There are many, new and old believers, who wake up to realize that things are happening in their lives that do not immediately bring joy. But then—without knowing from whence it comes, they awaken to the realization that there is a deep and *most unusual* joy at work in them. Paul captures some of this in the following:

"As you live this new life, we pray that you will be strengthened from God's boundless resources, so that you will find yourselves able to pass through any experience and endure it with courage. You will even be able to thank God in the midst of pain and distress because you are privileged to share the lot of those who are living in the Light. For we must never forget that He rescued us from the power of darkness, and reestablished us in the Kingdom of His beloved Son, that is, in the Kingdom of Light. For it is by His Son alone that we have been redeemed and have had our sins forgiven."

J.B. Phillips-*New Testament in Modern English*—HarperCollins, London

The words in the title of this article seem not to belong together in the same string of words. But, Paul found they fit together quite well. The same was so of other early believers. In fact, the saints who went before us even learned to include words like "shipwreck, shame, trouble, distress, perplexity and persecution" and then go on to speak of a *rejoicing* that could only be born from the heavens where they learned that Jesus is enthroned at the right hand of His Father. Here's an example from Paul: *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment*—it is but a short time by comparison with the joy that awaits us—*worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*—II Corinthians 4:17.

Paul wasn't the only one to find joy in the midst of tribulation. While he was still *breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord* (Acts 9:1), some believers were already ...*rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name* (Acts

5:41). They were being dishonored and were enduring indignity and abuse on account of their testimony for Jesus. But in it all, they were happy. Can you figure that out?

We'll discuss it later on. An amazing thing was taking place in them.

The first prophetic Word that came to Paul was most unusual in that it had to do with how he would suffer for the ministry into which the Lord was about to call him. Here's what took place, as we find it told in **Acts 9:1-20**. Paul—then called *Saul*—was on his way to *Damascus* from Jerusalem to gather up the disciples of Jesus and take them bound as prisoners to Jerusalem. But, as you probably know, he met the resurrected and ascended Jesus on the way and was instantly changed. The brilliance of the Lord's appearing blinded him and he had to be led into Damascus. His companions took him to the house of a man named *Judas*. Living in Damascus was a certain disciple of the Lord named *Ananias*.

Ananias was alarmed that Saul was on his way to Damascus. But in a vision the Lord appeared unto him, told him where Saul was and told him to go to him. The Lord said Saul was a chosen vessel *to bear His Name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel*. He went on further to say; *For I will show him how great things he must suffer for My Name's sake*. (From **Acts 9:10-16**) Hesitantly, Ananias went and a miracle of healing took place as he laid hands on the man he had feared. He called him *Brother Saul* and delivered the message the Lord had given him. Something like scales fell from Saul's eyes and he could see.

This man, later called *Paul*, became an instant witness that Jesus was, indeed, the Son of God. It wasn't long before he became acquainted himself with the kind of suffering he had inflicted on others, all because he too began proclaiming that Jesus was the Son of God. But—and here is the most amazing thing—this same man became the one who wrote from his prison in Rome: *Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice*—**Philippians 4:4**. He discovered a joy deeper than any suffering ever inflicted on him because of His testimony. He also discovered: *But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus*—**Philippians 4:19**.

Paul never deplored suffering; he discovered its value. God enabled him to put to the proof that a Word from the Lord Jesus about being blessed in persecution was a true Word, of supreme value for all His disciples who, through the ages, would suffer persecution for His Name's sake. It was also a Word of Truth to those who would simply be obedient.

Let us see that Word from the Lord Jesus about *persecution* and *rejoicing*. We find it in **Matthew 5:11,12**. This is the last of the nine *Beatitudes*. The word “beatitude” has reference to the blessings Jesus pronounced on those who embrace His Kingdom. We interpret this last Beatitude as we interpret it from the Greek New Testament. ¹¹ *You are blessed* (or, “Oh, the blessings that are yours”) *whenever they bring reproach upon you and persecute you, and slander you with all sorts of evil words and lies, on account of Me.* ^{12a} *Rejoice and be exceedingly glad because your reward is great in the heavens...* In the secular world in which most people live, what one might receive as the result of obedience to the Lord Jesus would not seem a good thing. What else might we say about the infliction of *evil words and lies* Jesus said others would bring against us when we are obedient to Him? But He called on us to rejoice whenever this happens. Why? Because, the *reward* is ours, even now, *in the heavens*.

There are some very significant things in what the Lord has said in the above two verses. First is the word *blessed*. It is a plural form of the word *makários*. It might best mean, “Oh, the blessings and the joys that belong to those who are persecuted for My sake.”

Jesus went on to say, “Great is your *reward in the heavens*.” The Greek word from which *reward* is taken is *místhos*. It means the wage, or salary, one receives for some service rendered or work done for another person. Jesus said, when speaking to people who give themselves to His Kingdom, your *reward is great in the heavens*.

When we look carefully at these words, we may discover there is no place for hirelings in the service of His Kingdom. By this we mean people who only serve Him for a reward, that is, for a salary. Jesus definitely said our reward, that is our salary, is not in the earth. It is in the heavens. These heavens about which Jesus spoke in **Matthew 5:12** and about which Paul teaches in **Ephesians 6:10-17** are present realms into which we have freedom of access now.

The *heavens* are where Paul in **Colossians 1:16** has told us that Jesus has created realms of spiritual government: *principalities, powers, thrones* and *dominions*. They were created by Him and for Him. Quite simply spoken, they belong to Him. They are the spheres of governmental rule that have been invaded by anti-Christ spirits and into which we are now released to go in the Name of Jesus to demand the withdrawal of those spirits. You have learned about this “warfare” in **Ephesians 6:10-17**.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY OF EPHESIANS BE SURE TO ORDER THE EPHESIANS CONNECTION.
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Picture, if you can, where the manager of the company for which you work instructs you to go to collect the salary you have earned. In the **Matthew 5:11,12** passage at which we have looked, Jesus has told us that if we have suffered and been persecuted on account of Him, we have a *reward* that is *great*. It is waiting for us *in the heavens*. Does this mean we can receive nothing till we reach heaven, which most people believe comes only after death, or after the return of the Lord? This is hardly so. We'll see.

The Greek words we have translated *in the heavens* in the **Matthew 5:11,12** passage, occurs frequently in Paul's Epistle to the **Colossians**. There is a great deal about heaven that remains a mystery, at least to my own heart. It seems that much of the belief about heaven has come over on the Church through Gospel songs, many, *many* of which lead us to believe that our final destination is a place called "heaven" where we shall rest and have a glorious good time for ever. For many, that would seem to be the whole reward of our salvation. But, this doesn't seem to be the case with Jesus, with the Prophets, with Paul or others who wrote in the New Testament. There is much waiting for us to receive from words ready to open to our hearts.

But, let's just see some of what Paul revealed of the revelation that came to him, most particularly in his Epistle to the **Colossians**. There he told of the amazing work of the Lord Jesus that was done *in the heavens*. It was a work that is ours to know now.

But first, see in **Colossians 1:5** that Paul told of *the hope which is laid up for you in Heaven*, that is, *in the heavens*. In **Matthew 5:12** Jesus used the Greek term, *en tois ouranois*. Take note that our *reward*, as well as our *hope*, is kept in store for us *in the heavens*.

Then see **Colossians 1:16-20**. This is a most significant passage. Here Paul makes use of the Greek term *ta pañta*. It is a little difficult to translate, but is very exciting and important. Literally it means "the all things." But, we will be content to keep it as **ALL THINGS**. We place verses **16** through **20** as they occur in the King James Version, taking note that *ta pañta* occurs four times, four *very* significant times.

¹⁶*For by Him*, that is, by Jesus, **were ALL THINGS created, that are in Heaven**,
(the things that are in the heavens),
and that are in earth (and the things upon the earth), **visible and invisible**,
whether they be • thrones, or • dominions (lordships),
or • principalities (head positions of government), **or • powers** (authorities):
ALL THINGS (*ta pañta*, the all things) **were created by Him** (through Him),
and for Him (and unto Him).

This clearly means that all the realms of the heavenly Government were created *by* Christ, and *for* Him. It becomes evident, however, by what we see in **Ephesians 6:12**, that these realms have been infiltrated by *rulers of the darkness* and *spiritual wickedness* that operates *in high places*. We have learned, however, in **Colossians 1:13** that God has *rescued us from the authority of the darkness*. These forces of government, created by Christ Jesus and for Him but now infiltrated by insurgent forces of spiritual evil, seek to rule the nations. They also would rule us. They will be major forces of opposition to God's Kingdom in the close of this age. They take their positions under the *prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience* (the chief ruler of the authority of the atmosphere, the spirit now working as an energizing force in the sons of unbelief—**Ephesians 2:2**). Paul has told us in **Ephesians 6:12** that presently we are to *wrestle* with these ungodly forces as they seek to rule our lives in opposition to God's Kingdom.

But let us go on to see the verses that follow **Colossians 1:16** as they tell of the supreme authority of Christ Jesus.

17 *And He* (Christ Jesus) *is before ALL THINGS*

(*pro panton*, He is in advance of all the opposing spiritual forces)

and by Him all things consist (and in Him ALL THINGS, *tapańta*, hold together).

18 *And He is the Head of the Body, the Church: Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in ALL THINGS (tapańta) He might have the preeminence*

(that He might hold the first rank, the chief place, preeminent above all.)

19 *For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell*

(in Him all the fullness was pleased to dwell);

20 *And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile ALL THINGS (tapańta, the all things) unto Himself;*

by Him, I say, whether they be (the) things in earth,

or (the) things in heaven (in the heavens).

The things reconciled unto Christ are those *thrones, lordships, principalities* and *positions of authority* that were created *by Him and for Him in the heavens*. It is definite and clear that only those things created by Him and for Him are reconciled unto Him. We cover this in some of the "prayer starters" in the book we hope you receive this month. In it we will discuss further this matter of reconciliation. It has been a matter of confusion for some, but should no longer be the case as we gain the joy of knowing Christ's triumph.

Some time ago, I had checked into a small hotel in South India. It was the policy of the hotel that guests sign a registry, placing the name of our hometown after our personal name. Shortly after I had gone to my room, a knock came at the door. On answering it, I found it was a man inquiring if I was the person registered from such-and-such a town. I told him I was. He was the next registered guest and was surprised to find someone there from a town not far from where he lived. After some conversation, he invited me to have breakfast with him the next morning. I found he was a businessman who had finished work with his business companions and wanted to take some time alone to explore India. There was no indication that he knew the Lord or had any idea about the principles of His Kingdom.

In the course of our conversation, after I had told him I served the Lord as a missionary, he wanted to know how I received support. Without stopping to think how I should answer him, I said, “We *loose* it.” This made no sense to him. So he asked for an explanation. In talking to him, I came to the realization there was no other answer. We knew nothing of deputation work that is going about seeking people who would pledge us their support on a monthly basis. We had, without really knowing it, attached ourselves to the Kingdom principles of buying the field as required of Jesus in • **Matthew 13:44**, of giving without reservation as He taught in • **Luke 6:38** and the binding and *loosing* in • **Matthew 18:18**. Thus, I found myself speaking with a man who, as far as I knew, didn’t even know there was such a thing as the Kingdom of Heaven, much less of living out of its resources.

But, that’s where many of us are now being drawn to live, and many more have yet to learn to live, out of the *reward* that’s ours *in the heavens*. I can tell you this with deep conviction: the reward that awaits us in the heavens is boundless. God has more solutions to the problems of our support and our protection than there are birds flying in the heavens all over the earth. They all belong to His Son. Just read, and read again, **Psalm 2**. That’s where the *Covenant Promise* is made plain.

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