

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS

# TRIUMPHANT CHRISTIAN LIVING

**A Study Guide for Use by  
Individuals or Groups**

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## **Triumphant Christian Living, by Gracia Rinden**

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TRIUMPHANT CHRISTIAN LIVING

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## PREFACE

Paul's letter to the Philippians has brought comfort and hope to people of all generations. His words, inspired by the Holy Spirit, will do the same for you as you enter this study.

The title, *Triumphant Christian Living*, conveys the life that a Christian has in Christ. This life is not free of sorrow, trial or heartache. Life has plenty of that. Yet, in the midst of a world of turmoil, the Christian is triumphant, because Christ is triumphant.

The purpose of this study, then, is to point to Jesus who is our hope. Life around us may look hopeless, but in Christ we find triumph.

This guide will work if you study Philippians on your own. It will also work if you use it in a group setting. The group leader moderates the discussion by reading the questions and commentary. Questions marked with an arrow are more conducive to discussion. The leader should not lecture on the answers but invite responses from members of the group. Generally the discussion will be more lively if the group participants have worked through the lesson ahead of time. Group members should be encouraged to tell of ways the truths of this book have been applied in their own lives.

May the Holy Spirit, who is our teacher, guide you as you study Philippians.

## LESSON 1

# PARTNERSHIP

*Philippians 1:1-11*

### KEY VERSE

*"I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now."  
(Philippians 1:4b, 5)*

### INTRODUCTION

In this letter Paul expresses his warm affection for a group of people he had met earlier while traveling in the Roman province of Mesopotamia. He writes to commend them and also to encourage them to keep on growing in their relationship with God and with each other.

While in Philippi Paul had been with his companion Silas; now in writing to this group of people he joins with another friend, Timothy. Paul recognized that when we are in Christ we share together, we are *partners*, joint-heirs of a new kingdom with others who also believe. This idea of partnership was in Paul's mind as he and Timothy wrote to the Philippians.

All of us need the warmth of Christian companionship. The experience of being together with others of like-mind helps us as we deal with the pressures of living for our Savior in a world that has rejected Him.

### OPENER

⇒ Think of someone who is a real joy to be with. Why does just thinking about that person make you feel great?

**BACKGROUND**

In Acts 16 Luke writes about the experiences of Paul and Silas when they first visited this city of Philippi.

1. List the people Paul and Silas met in Philippi.

2. Briefly describe what happened there.

⇒ 3. What attitudes or responses of Paul serve as inspiration for us?

⇒ 4. What else do you learn about the church at Philippi from reading Philippians 4:10, 14-18 and II Corinthians 8:1-5?

**CIRCUMSTANCES OF WRITING:**

Paul was in prison in Rome when he wrote this letter to his friends. The year was probably about 60 A.D.

⇒ 5. Imagine *yourself* as being in prison. What problems would you have?

⇒ 6. What would you have included in a letter to close friends? Would you have included some of the unpleasant details of your circumstances so that they could pray for you?

7. Keep in mind Paul's situation and read Philippians at one sitting. As you read, list phrases or verses from the letter which point to Paul's thinking about what was going on in his life.

a. "I thank my God" (1:3)

b. "I am confident" (1:6)

etc.

### **PHILIPPIANS 1:1-2 - PAUL'S GREETING**

8. Fill in the blanks in the sentences below:

Paul and \_\_\_\_\_ wrote this letter to \_\_\_\_\_.

The word Paul uses to describe himself is \_\_\_\_\_.

The word he uses to describe those he writes to is \_\_\_\_\_.

⇒ 9. What thoughts do each of the words in the last two sentences suggest to you?

⇒ 10. What difference would it have made if these two words above were interchanged?

11. The first words of greeting to these people are found in verse 2. Copy this verse below.

As we receive God's grace and His peace, God can use us as He used Paul to be an instrument of grace and peace in the lives of others.



**PHILIPPIANS 1:3-11 - PAUL TELLS THESE PEOPLE OF HIS LOVE FOR THEM**

Because of his past experiences with these people and because of what he had seen and heard about the work of God in their lives, Paul was full of joy as he thought of them.

12. The words “all of you” are repeated four times in verses 4-8. What does Paul say in each instance about “all of you?”

⇒ 13. What was Paul’s expectation for the future? (see also Ephesians 2:10)

14. Read verses 3-11 again and answer the questions below:

a. Paul says he is thankful. What is he thankful for? (verses 3-6)

b. He gives the reason for his thankfulness. What is it? (verses 7, 8)

c. He tells them about his prayer for them. What *four* things does he ask of God for them? (verses 9-11)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

d. What significance is there in the order in which these four qualities above are listed?

This prayer of Paul's is a good one for us to pray for ourselves as well as for others. When these qualities are a part of our daily lives, when they become the aim and goal of our existence, then we become the kind of people that God can use.

### **Conclusion**

When we believe in Jesus, we are not alone. We have many people surrounding us who are "partners" with us; people who love us and care for us in a unique way because the same Holy Spirit that is in us, is also in them.

In this section Paul is saying to his friends: "You are a delight to me! Whenever I think of you I am happy. You have encouraged me many times and the memory of who you are and what you have done is a great blessing to me!"

What practical lesson can we learn from seeing Paul's great regard for the believers at Philippi?

Paul moved beyond thinking about these individuals. He prayed for them often; he also wrote to them to tell them how he felt. Do you think that God would want us to tell someone, either in person or by letter that they are a delight to us? Let's try this and see what happens!



## LESSON 2

# ENCOURAGEMENT

*Philippians 1:12-30*

### KEY VERSE

*"I will continue to rejoice." (Philippians 1:18)*

### INTRODUCTION

Despite all of the problems in the world, it makes sense for a Christian to be optimistic. God has given us His precious and very great promises through which we can overcome the corruption that is in the world because of sin. (see II Peter 1:4)

We can be optimistic because we are on the winning side. We can also encourage our fellow believers by letting them know about the daily victories we experience as we are learning to trust Him.

In this section, Paul encourages his friends by demonstrating his confidence in the power of God. He tells them about the faithfulness of God that is more powerful than all the forces of evil.

### OPENER

⇒ Do you know someone who is an eternal optimist or an eternal pessimist? Give an example of encouragement or discouragement which you have experienced because of someone like that.

**PHILIPPIANS 1:12-18 - GOOD THINGS HAVE HAPPENED**

Proverbs 25:25 says, "Like cold water to a weary soul is good news from a distant land." Read verses 12-30 and imagine yourself as one of Paul's friends reading this letter in Philippi.

1. *Why* would these words be good news to you?

Paul gives some insight into his specific situation when he says, "you are engaged in the same conflict which you saw me wage and which you hear to be mine still." (verse 30)

2. Read I Thessalonians 2:2. How does Paul describe his earlier experience?

3. Do you think that this also described what was happening to him in Rome? If so, in what way? (For further information about Paul's two-year imprisonment in Rome read Acts 28:14-30.)

4. Paul knew that God was able to free him from prison. He knew because it had happened in miraculous ways earlier. Briefly describe what had happened in each of the following:

a. Acts 5:17-21

b. Acts 12:6-9

c. Acts 16:25-28

The issue was not God's ability to deliver but rather the even greater miracles that were taking place because he was in prison in Rome.

⇒ 5. What were the good things that had been taking place? (Philippians 1:12-14) Try to express this in your own words.

⇒ 6. If Paul had been less thankful during this time, if he would have chosen rather to focus on the negative aspects of his life, do you think this would have made a difference in the kind of results of his imprisonment? Why?

We can know that not all who claim to be followers of Jesus are living and working with the most noble aims. This was true in the year 60 A.D. as it is today.

⇒ 7. What words are used in verses 15-18 to describe right and wrong motives for telling others about Jesus? (A variety of translations will help you with answers).

*Wrong motives:*

*Right motives:*

8. Why didn't Paul let these undesirable motives bother him? (verse 18)

⇒ 9. What can you learn from Paul's attitude expressed in these verses?

**PHILIPPIANS 1:19-26 - PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE ARE BRIGHT**

Part of what makes the life of a prisoner uncomfortable is thoughts of the future and the uncertainty of what will happen. A prisoner's destiny is in the hands of others. Prospects of further discomfort or suffering or even death are always at hand.

⇒10. In what way is the situation described above true not only of people in a physical prison but also for others? (See James 4:14 and I Peter 1:24)

11. Paul knew that his imprisonment could end in death. How did he feel about this?

⇒12. If you were speaking to someone who expressed to you a great fear of dying, what would you say to help or comfort this person?

13. What was the two-fold source of Paul's confidence? (verse 19)

14. As Paul considers the outcome of dying and going on longer, what does he enumerate as the benefits of each?

*His death:*

*His life:*

Paul's faith gave him boldness. Martin Luther once described faith in this way:

"Faith is a living, resolute, total confidence in God's grace, a trust so certain that it is willing to die a thousand deaths for its belief. And such a trust in God's grace and such knowledge of God's grace make a man joyous, resolute and robustly cheerful over against God and all God's creatures." (*Concordia Self-Study Commentary*, p. 193)

15. It was not his circumstances, not things around him, that made Paul happy in this situation. What was it? (verse 21)

⇒ 16. Paul believed that his presence would make a difference to his fellow believers at Philippi. He was confident that he could be a help and an encouragement to them.

a. Which verses or which words of Paul express this idea?

b. Is it possible for us to be confident in the same way about our usefulness to other people?  
How?



**PHILIPPIANS 1:27-30 - YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AFRAID**

Both Paul and his readers were facing opposition. Because of this he knew that certain things would be helpful during this time.

17. Put in your own words the advice he gives in verses 27-30.

⇒18. What thought in these verses is an encouragement to you?

**CONCLUSION**

When we belong to the family of God, one of the benefits we have is the experience of being mutually encouraged by each other's faith. Problems give us an opportunity to demonstrate our faith.

We are not alone. Whether we know it or not, the way in which we respond to trials will influence others; either for good or for evil.

## LESSON 3

# OBEDIENCE

*Philippians 2:1-30*

### KEY VERSE

*“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed - not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence - continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. ” (Philippians 2:12, 13)*

### INTRODUCTION

Obedience makes a difference in our aim to understand triumphant Christian living.

In preparation for this lesson on the subject of obedience, read Matthew 7:20-27, Romans 10:9 and John 14:23. These verses concern some of the Bible’s teaching on the relationship between our faith (the things we believe) and our actions (the things we do). Record your observations.

### OPENER

⇒ When has obedience resulted in something good in your life?

### PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11 - JESUS OBEYED PERFECTLY

Paul is concerned that these believers at Philippi have the right kind of relationship with each other. This was important not only for their own benefit but also for the benefit of the world of people around them who were living without God.

This group, like all groups of believers, was composed of individual people. These people had differing opinions, different ways of looking at things, different personalities and abilities. Either they would compete with each other and destroy the sense of unity or they would learn to take advantage of their diversities, and genuinely appreciate each other.

⇒1. Paul reminds them of some of the benefits of belonging to the family of God. What are they? (verse 1) (Try to express this in your own words as you think of what each of these benefits mean to you.)

The believers at Philippi were even now showing the evidence of these blessings in their lives (see Philippians 1:3-7). In spite of what had already taken place, however, Paul encourages them to keep going, to continually expect more out of their Christian life.

2. List four aspects of unity from verse 2.

⇒3. Do you think it is possible for people to experience the blessings listed in verse 1 and yet be lacking in the characteristics seen in verse 2? Why is this possible (or not possible)?

⇒4. In verse 3 Paul says, "Do nothing out of *selfish ambition* or *vain conceit*." What do each of these attitudes mean to you?

⇒5. What are some of the practical ways to follow the advice given in verses 3 and 4?

As Paul gives these instructions, he is led to think of the example of the life of Jesus. As Jesus fed the hungry, prayed for the children, taught His disciples, healed the sick and washed the disciples' feet, He was actively looking to the interests of others.

Jesus did this and He was God. Jesus, the Almighty God, did this for us. He, the perfect One, did all this for sinful people. He did all of this and then He did the most important thing - He "became obedient to death - even death on a cross!" (verse 8)

As we grasp this concept, we are led to worship Him. How fitting then that the next verses are given in the form of a poem. Verses 6-11 may have been part of a hymn which the early Christians sang as a part of their worship.

6. Read this "hymn of worship" in verses 6-11. As you meditate on what these words mean, make a list of all that you learn about Jesus in these verses.

7. What else does God look for besides our believing that Jesus is God and that He died on the cross for our sins? (see verses 10 and 11 and compare with Romans 10:9, 10)

### **PHILIPPIANS 2:12-18 - GOD IS THE ONE WHO MAKES OUR OBEDIENCE POSSIBLE**

Some people may be troubled about these words of Paul's in verse 12: He says, "continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling." "After all," they say, "doesn't the Bible also say we are saved by grace, through faith, not by works, not by anything we do ourselves?" (see Ephesians 2:8, 9)

The answer lies in the truth of Philippians 2:13. When we believe, God through His Spirit lives in us. He is able to do in us what we could never do without Him. (see I Corinthians 3:16; Romans 8:10-14; Ephesians 3:20)

⇒ 8. How could verse 13 be an encouragement to you in living the Christian life?

⇒ 9. Paul says we are to “do everything without complaining or arguing.” What does “everything” mean? Is there a place for expressing dissatisfaction about the circumstances in which we find ourselves?

⇒ 10. The result of our obedience to verse 14 is found in verses 15 and 16. The Jerusalem Bible expresses verse 15 in this way: “Then you will be innocent and genuine, perfect children of God among a deceitful and underhanded brood.” In what way will we as children of God distinguish ourselves from the rest of the world? (verses 15, 16)

Paul says that no matter what happens to him, he rejoices to know that people he has met and introduced to Jesus are living lives that are useful to others and to God. (see verse 16b-18) How was it possible for Paul to feel this way? God was at work in him. God was the one that made him both willing and able to respond in a way that pleased God.

### **PHILIPPIANS 2:19-30 - TIMOTHY AND EPHAPHRODITUS - TWO EXAMPLES OF CHRIST-LIKE OBEDIENT LIVING**

Both Timothy and Ephaphroditus were with Paul in Rome as he wrote this letter. These men had encouraged and helped him and he writes to tell them about what they had done.

Paul talked about good things when he spoke of Timothy and Ephaphroditus. Do we choose to tell the good deeds of others to people we know? How much of our thinking is geared toward seeking to see and encourage ourselves and others by the Christ-like qualities we observe in other Christians?

11. How does Paul describe Timothy? In what ways was his behavior like that of Jesus'? (verses 20-22)

⇒12. What lessons can we learn from the experiences and responses of Ephaphroditus?

### **CONCLUSION**

Obedience has always had its price. For Jesus, obedience to the will of God meant death on the cross. His obedience has made all the difference - the difference between life and death for those who believe.

In our Christian life, a life that is meant to be characterized by "progress and joy in the faith," obedience makes all the difference.



## LESSON 4

# A CLEAR FOCUS

*Philippians 3:1-21*

### KEY VERSE

*"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." (Philippians 3:8)*

### INTRODUCTION

Paul wrote this letter while confined in Rome anticipating his execution. Circumstances were certainly far from ideal, yet in this letter he gives us a pattern for living *during* the time we are facing opposition of one kind or another.

When we are in difficulty it helps us to learn the Biblical pattern for triumphant Christian living. This pattern is more than an intellectual exercise; it involves the practical day to day living out of our faith. Paul teaches this pattern and he also demonstrates it as he turns away from the natural response of grumbling and complaining and chooses to focus his attention on Jesus.

The knowledge of Jesus Christ had given Paul pure joy. This joy, which is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (see Galatians 5:22), was an encouragement to the believers in Philippi as it has been to countless others who have read this letter.

### OPENER

⇒ Binoculars help you to focus on an object in the distance. How have you focused on a goal in your life?



This third chapter of Philippians can be divided into two sections. In verses 1-11 Paul says "Remember Who You Are." In verses 12-21 he says, "Remember Where You are Going."

Read this chapter, take time to meditate on the words and answer the following two questions in as many ways as you can. (One example is given for you).

⇒1. Philippians 3:1-11 "Remember Who You Are"

*As a believer in Jesus, who am I?*

a. I am a person who needs to be reminded to rejoice in the Lord (verse 1)

b.

c.

d.

etc

⇒2. Philippians 3:12-21 "Remember Where You are Going"

*As a Christian, where am I going ?*

a.

b.

c.

d.

etc

**PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11 - REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE**

Because of their situation it was important for the new believers to have a clear picture of who they were in Christ Jesus. During this time certain people were being used of Satan to side-track Gentile believers. Paul refers to such people as "dogs." (Philippians 3:2)

3. What was wrong with the way in which these “dogs” viewed the Jewish rite of circumcision? (see verses 2, 3 and compare with Romans 2:29 and Romans 4:9-12)

4. List the three characteristics of a person who is right with God. (verse 3)

In this section Paul thinks back to his past. He remembers the years in which he zealously tried to be a good person and do all he could to gain God’s favor. Read verses 5 and 6 in which Paul lists some details concerning his religious and social back-ground.

5. Acts 9 describes the experience Paul had which changed the direction of his life. Read Acts 9:1-9; 17-22. What happened to him? What was the result?

⇒6. In stating his present position, Paul says, “I have suffered the loss of all things.” (verse 8) What do you think he meant by this? (see verses 7 and 8)

To have a clear vision, to live triumphantly, our focus must not be on ourselves. We need to remember who we are and what our position is in Jesus. We are *in* Him: we are righteous.

⇒ 7. Define "righteousness" by reading verse 9 and completing the following two categories:

What it is *not*:

What it is:

8. List Paul's aims in verses 10 and 11.

⇒ 9. What does "becoming like him in his death" (verse 10) mean to you? What was Jesus *like* in His death?

Paul was concerned that his readers would not place their security in the wrong things. The key to this is in verse 1 - we are to rejoice in the Lord. To do this is a safeguard, something that protects us.

10. What do you think it means to rejoice in the Lord?

**PHILIPPIANS 3:12-21 - REMEMBER WHERE YOU ARE GOING**

In the 12th century, Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) wrote some hymns that have since been sung by countless numbers of people. One of these is the following:

*Jesus, the very thought of Thee  
With sweetness fills my breast.  
But sweeter far Thy face to see  
And in Thy presence rest.*

This writer may have been thinking of Philippians 3 when he wrote these words. The first sentence reminds us of who we are in Jesus; the last points to our future hope.

⇒ 11. If we follow Paul's example, how are we to regard the progress we have made in our Christian life? (verses 12-16)

12. Compare verse 15 with Philippians 2:13. What comfort do these verses give?

13. With tears, Paul remembers the many who "live as enemies of the cross." (verse 18) The destiny of these people is destruction. Read verse 19 and in your own words describe the attitude and behavior of these people.

⇒ 14. What do you learn about heaven and about Jesus from verses 20 and 21?

## **CONCLUSION**

God wants us to remember that we are His children and that in Jesus we have righteousness. He also wants us to look beyond this life, to know that our citizenship is in heaven and to look forward to the time when we will see His face.

A clear vision will help us to live triumphantly as we make a distinction between God's ultimate goal for us which is perfection and His daily goal which is growth.

## LESSON 5

# JOYFUL CONFIDENCE

*Philippians 4:1-21*

### KEY VERSE

*"I can do everything through Him who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:13)*

### INTRODUCTION

Out of his great love for these people at Philippi, Paul urges them to "stand firm in the Lord." (read Philippians 4:1) To stand firm is the opposite of caving in or falling apart; it means to deliberately lay claim to the heritage that is ours as God's children and heirs of the coming kingdom.

Although we will never in this life reach perfection, it is possible for us to stand firm, to be joyously confident, *in the Lord*. To do so involves following the example of Paul in continually learning to know Jesus better. (This was his aim - see Philippians 3:8) If God is big in our minds, the problems or obstacles don't bother us as much.

### OPENER

⇒ Have you ever been in an earthquake, tornado or other natural disaster? Describe how you felt.

**PHILIPPIANS 4:1-9 - JOY IS A RESULT OF CHOOSING JESUS**

When God created human beings He created them with the responsibility and the privilege of making their own choices. Because He is love, God sent Jesus. He also gave the Bible to point the way to live.

The Bible teaches us that the joy of the Lord is our strength, (see Nehemiah 8:10) Joy does not depend on our circumstances but has a lot to do with the choices we make daily. To live victoriously we must choose to do what Jesus tells us to do. When we choose Jesus, when we live as He tells us to live, one of the results is joy.

1. In Philippians 4, Paul gives various instructions to these friends of his at Philippi. These instructions were intended for their well-being. Read verses 1-9, and as you do, list in summary form the commands that are given.

Two women in Philippi, Euodia and Syntyche, were having problems getting along with each other. Perhaps it was this difficulty that Paul was thinking of when he wrote earlier, "make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose." (Philippians 2:2)

2. How did Paul handle this situation? (verses 2, 3)

⇒ 3. Strained relationships often take away joy from our lives. How could verses 1-3 help you in dealing with this kind of conflict?

Any new teaching must be repeated in order for us to remember and begin to act upon it. In verse 4 Paul returns to a thought he had expressed earlier; he tells these believers again to “rejoice in the Lord.”

⇒ 4. Compare Philippians 4:4 with Philippians 3:1. Why do you think rejoicing in the Lord is such an important thing for us to do?

Strained relationships with people are not the only thing which takes joy from our lives. Another enemy we must struggle with is our thought-life and especially our tendency to worry.

⇒ 5. What is wrong with worry? Why do you think it is a sin for a Christian to worry?

6. If someone is anxious about some situation, it is usually useless to simply tell them not to worry. A better way to be of help is to give a scripture passage on how to deal with their anxiety. What is this help? (Philippians 4:6)

Paul is saying to his friends and God says to us as well, “No matter what the circumstances, don’t be anxious, pray!” Worry and anxiety aren’t good for us; they rob us of joy. When we worry we are allowing our minds to dwell too much on things over which we have no control. It is fear of the future and regret over the past which will ruin today.

We choose joy when we pray instead of worry. A vital ingredient in prayer is worship which is letting our minds dwell on the majesty of God. When we worship God we acknowledge His greatness as the Creator and Sustainer of all of life. To worship is to fix our eyes on Jesus.



⇒ 7. Verse 8 describes Jesus. According to this verse, what is He like? (These characteristics are seen not only in Him but in anything or anyone in whom He dwells.)

⇒ 8. In the lives and thoughts of many people, even good, church-going, religious people, God is not very big. Why is this?

⇒ 9. Has your own concept of who God is and what He means to you changed in the past months or years? If so, how?

We live above our circumstances when we discipline our minds to dwell on the good things that are coming out of difficult situations. Grumbling and complaining and feeling sorry for ourselves will only drive us farther away from triumphant Christian living.

Paul not only taught people how to live the Christian life but he demonstrated it by the way he reacted to his sufferings. He had earned the right to say, "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." (verse 9)

**PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23 - Confidence Comes from Seeing God at Work.**

Paul had experienced victory and was now living in that victory, yet his spiritual attainment did not lead him to be insensitive toward his fellow believers. He is grateful and commends them for what they have done to help him.

10. Read verses 10-23. What specifically had these people done to encourage Paul?

11. Paul had learned that God (not his job, not other people, not his talents or abilities) was the ultimate source of supply for all his needs. Which verses express this concept?

The confidence expressed in these verses is a part of the process we go through in growing up spiritually. To learn that God can supply our needs both in the good times and in the bad times, we need the opportunity to experience *both* of these.

12. What was the secret of Paul's contentment? (verses 11-13)

⇒ 13. Out of his own experiences Paul encourages his friends to trust God. What does verse 19 mean to you?

**CONCLUSION**

God's will for us is that we live a life of joyful confidence. As we learn to know Jesus better our joy is not in our circumstances but is in Him and in what He supplies for us. We are confident because we know He is in control of all of life.

Martin Luther once said, "Blessed is he who submits to the will of God; he can never be unhappy. Men may deal with him as they will...; he is without care; he knows that 'all things work together for good for him.'" This is triumphant Christian living.







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