

# ***“Both To Be Abased, To Be Abound”***

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**TEXT: Philippians 4:11, 12**—“...for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound: Everywhere and in all things I am instructed to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.”

**INTRODUCTION:** Stephen—one of the 7 men chosen to distribute food in the young church—was wrongly accused by the Jewish leaders of committing blasphemy against the Temple. Then he was dragged before the Jewish authorities. In his speech, he said little in his defense but said a great deal about Israel’s historical tendency toward missing what God was doing. Stephen boldly stood before the high priest/Jewish council. He gave a intense review of the history of Israel, and abruptly called them “stubborn people...heathen at heart and deaf to the truth” (Acts 7:51). He then he accused the Council of murdering the Messiah (vs. 52).

Their response was in line with history...Violence. This sermon sent the Jewish leaders into a rage resulting in the first Christian martyrdom. Stephen died as his Master died, asking God to forgive his tormentors. Luke noted that among those present at Stephen’s death by stoning was a young man named Saul (7:58), the soon-to-be convert to Christianity & missionary to the world.

**I. Paul’s Walk in The Flesh:** —Paul (Saul at the time) was first mentioned in scripture in Acts 8 at the stoning of Stephen, a courageous and bold deacon in the Church at Jerusalem. He collected the coats of Stephen’s executers (Acts 7:58), and approved of Stephen’s death (Acts 8:1). Paul believed he was doing God a great service by intensely persecuting His Church by capture, imprisonment, and death.

**A. Read: Acts 7:54-60**—(immediately after Stephen testified about the prophets).

1. False witnesses gnashed on Stephen with their teeth, tho he was full of the Spirit.
2. Terribly bitten, S. looked into heaven, saw glory of God w/Jesus on right hand.  
*“Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of man sitting on the right hand.”*
3. The accusers screamed loudly and ran on him as “one”, cast S. out of the city and stoned him. Witnesses laid their clothing at Saul’s feet.

**B. Read: Acts 8:1-3 (Persecution continues in Jerusalem).**

4. As they stoned S., he called on God, saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Then he knelt down and loudly called out, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. Then, he fell asleep. (8:3)
5. Saul consented to Stephen’s death. There was great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.
6. Saul continued to make havoc of the church, entering into homes, committing the residents to prison.

**II. The Conversion of Saul and his calling (Acts 9:1-16)—Read**

**A. Jesus knew Saul’s heart; readjusted his mind, by knocking him off his horse.**

1. When Saul stood, he couldn’t see.
2. His friends led him to Damascus (vs. 9).
3. **He was blind for 3 days**— He fasted during the 3 days (vs. 9).not 3 weeks.

“11) And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. 12) And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, 13) Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.” (Acts 22: 11-13).

### III. Jesus anoints Paul’s Sufferings

- A. Ananias saw the Lord in a vision; He called “Ananias”. “Ananias: I am here Lord” “Go to “strait” street, and ask in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: he is in prayer there” (vs. 11).
- B. Paul saw the Lord in a vision: “Ananias is coming to lay hands that he might regain his sight (vs. 12).
- C. Ananias complains that he’s heard how Saul has persecuted **all** the Church (vs. 13, 14).
- D. God responds to Ananias: “Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel; For I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name’s sake.” (vs.15, 16).
- E. Paul testified that after conversion and he became Spirit-filled, he began to preach the Word of God immediately. Later, while testifying to the Galatians, he said:

**(Read Galatians 1:8-20—Emphasizing vss 11-20)**

**Note:** Please don’t ever wrongly translate Romans 7 where Paul speaks as if he spoke about himself as a wimpy man who cannot stop sinning *He actually stated that he cannot even resist sin*, in Romans 7; but he states the following in Galatians 5: 16-18: **16) “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. 17) For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. 18) But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.”**

Now, how can one of the greatest followers of Christ ever to live...lose track of the “walk in the Spirit” in such a way that he cannot even practice righteousness!

**IV. Paul Testifies of His Sufferings** (2 Corinthians 11:20—30; 2 Cor. 12: 1—11).

**V. Philippians 4:8-14**

**Closure:** Joy is contentment, extreme security and the ability to laugh wholeheartedly—especially if you are someone who loves the Lord with all your might, strength, and soul. Yet joy is often found in the pain and struggles of life. No matter if in the hospital for serious surgery, the unemployment office, a broken marriage, God cares about us and we know that to be a real fact of our Christian life. This *true joy* runs deep, and forever. Therefore, a huge dose of *true peace* direct from the Throne of God enters into our substance, called *true life in Christ Jesus*. We know JOY from His Kingdom is *true joy*.

Paul was full of joy; and you know what? He was also under continual attack from the enemy of his soul—satan! That’s called suffering. Suffering for Christ can be a continuous thing in our lives also, but our joy will always overcome suffering if we determine to “suffer well”; for to *suffer well* is to always grow stronger in the Lord.