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*SINGING WITH VIOLET*

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**Read: [Philippians 1:21-26](#)**

An elderly woman named Violet sat on her bed in a Jamaican infirmary and smiled as some teenagers stopped to visit with her. The hot, sticky, midday air came into her little group home unabated, but she didn't complain. Instead, she began wracking her mind for a song to sing. Then a huge smile appeared and she sang, "I am running, skipping, jumping, praising the Lord!" As she sang, she swung her arms back and forth as if she were running. Tears came to those around her, for Violet had no legs. She was singing because, she said, "Jesus loves me—and in heaven I will have legs to run with." Violet's joy and hopeful anticipation of heaven give new vibrancy to Paul's words in [Philippians 1](#) when he referred to life-and-death issues. "If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me," he said. "I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far" (vv. 22–23).

Each of us faces tough times that may cause us to long for the promise of heavenly relief. But as Violet showed us joy despite her current circumstances, we too can keep "running, skipping, praising the Lord"—both for the abundant life He gives us here and for the ultimate joy that awaits us.

***Application:***

1. What is a current life burden or hardship that you will not face in Heaven? Take some time to praise the Lord for the hope of Heaven.

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2. Name three things that can give us hope in hard times:

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*Ignore No More*

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**Read: [Philippians 1:27](#)**

I don't know how these people find me, but I keep getting more and more flyers in the mail from folks asking me to show up at their events so they can teach me about retirement benefits. It started several years ago when I began getting invitations to join an organization that works on behalf of retirees. These reminders all serve to say: "You're getting older. Get ready!" I have ignored them all along, but soon enough I'm going to have to break down and go to one of their meetings. I really should be taking action on their suggestions.

Sometimes I hear a similar reminder in the wisdom of Scripture. We know that what the passage says is true about us, but we are just not ready to respond. Maybe it's a passage like [Romans 14:13](#) that says, "Let us stop passing judgment on one another." Or the reminder in [2 Corinthians 9:6](#), which tells us, "Whoever sows generously will also reap generously." Or this reminder in [Philippians 1](#): "Stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel without being frightened" (vv. 27-28). As we read God's Word, we get vital reminders. Let's take these seriously as from the heart of the Father who knows what honors Him and is best for us.

***Application:***

1. What is the command given in [Philippians 1:27](#)?

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2. "Conversation" in this verse refers to lifestyle and "becometh" refers to acting in a worthy manner. What are some ways that your lifestyle can make the gospel "look good" to the world?

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## A Bumpy Road

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### **Read: Philippians 1:28-30**

When people tell me life is hard, I always reply, “Of course it is.” I find that answer more satisfying than anything else I can say. Writer Charles Williams said, “The world is painful in any case; but it is quite unbearable if anybody gives us the idea that we are meant to be liking it.”

The path by which God takes us often seems to lead away from what we perceive as our good, causing us to believe we’ve missed a turn and taken the wrong road. That’s because most of us have been taught to believe that if we’re on the right track God’s goodness will always translate into a life free of trouble.

But that’s a pipe dream far removed from the biblical perspective. God’s love often leads us down roads where earthly comforts fail us. Paul said, “To you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake” ([Philippians 1:29](#)). When we come to the end of all our dark valleys, we’ll understand that every circumstance has been allowed for our ultimate good. “No other route would have been as safe and as certain as the one by which we came,” Bible teacher F. B. Meyer said. “If only we could see the path as God has always seen it, we would have selected it as well.”

### **Application:**

1. What 2 things does verse 29 indicate every believer will face?

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2. What does 1 Peter 1:6-7 say will be true of those that go faithfully through trials?

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## Dingo the Dog

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### **Read: Philippians 2:1-4**

Harry Tupper is a fishing legend here in Idaho where I live. There’s a spot on Henry’s Lake over on the east side of the state that’s named for him: “Tupper’s Hole.” The thing I remember most about Harry, aside from his rare ability to catch those huge Henry’s Lake trout, was his dog, Dingo. Now there was a dog! Dingo used to sit alongside Harry in his boat and watch intently while he fished. When the old fisherman hooked a trout, Dingo would bark furiously until the fish was netted and released. Dingo’s enthusiasm taught me something: It’s better to get more excited about what others are doing than what we are doing.

So, as I read [Philippians 2:4](#) and think about Dingo, I ask myself: Do I spend time thinking about “the interests of others”? Do I get as excited about what God is doing in and through a friend as I do about what He is doing in and through me? Do I long to see others grow in grace and find success, though it may have been my efforts that made them prosper? This is the measure of greatness, for we are most like God when our thoughts for ourselves are lost in our thoughts for others. Paul said it best: “Let each esteem others better than himself” (2:3). Is that how we live?

### **Application:**

1. According to verse 3, what is the secret to looking on the things of others rather than having a selfish viewpoint?

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2. What are the 4 things listed in verse 1 that help us to have a “others-centered” mindset?

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## *Royalty Recognized*

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**Read: Philippians 2:5-11**

As a kid, I loved watching the film *Little Lord Fauntleroy*. The story focuses on Cedric, a boy growing up in a poor home with his mother in Brooklyn. He discovers the stunning news that he is actually the direct descendant of the Earl of Dorincourt and the heir of a vast fortune. One day he's a nobody playing "kick the can" on the streets of New York, and then suddenly he's traveling through an English town to the cries of "Your lordship!" from adoring villagers.

If you had seen Jesus playing in the streets of Nazareth as a boy, you wouldn't have taken any special notice of Him (except that He probably wasn't playing "kick the can"). If you had seen Him in the carpentry shop, you wouldn't have had a clue about His deity. And if you had seen Him hanging on the cross, that horrific scene wouldn't have enticed your heart to adore Him if you didn't know what was behind it. But in His resurrection, Jesus revealed His true identity. He is the conquering King—ultimate royalty! Since "God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name" ([Phil. 2:9](#)), how much more should we adoringly worship Him who, in such surrendered humility, died so that He could become our victorious King!

***Application:***

1. What specific event mentioned in verse 8 showcased Christ's humility? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. What was the result of Christ's humility (v.9)?  
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3. According to verse 10 and 11, will anyone be able to completely avoid calling Jesus Lord?  
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