

The Believer's Joy! (Phil. 1:1-30)

Introduction:

- I. If you have your Bible, turn with me to Philippians the first chapter. From a prison cell in the city of Rome, Paul shares with us how to experience joy as Christians. That will be our text for this lesson. I want you to know in the very beginning of this lesson that God wants you to possess joy. And let me say to you that joy is not only a blessing for the child of God, it is a responsibility as well because joy is a fruit of the Spirit. When we allow ourselves to dwell in depression and mope in misery, we are giving Satan the advantage. There is nothing more un-Christ-like than to have a gloom and doom mentality. God instead wants us to rejoice in Christ.

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (Jn. 15:11).

“But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defends them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee” (Psa. 5:11).

"These things have I spoken unto you that your joy might be full" (1 Jn. 1:4)

- II. So then, it is the blessed privilege of saints to be able to rejoice in the Lord. Sadly, though, the devil has taken the joy of Christ out of the lives of too many Christians today. There are at least three things that can rob Christians of their right to be full of joy (**Circumstances, People and Things**).

Paul did not allow any of these things to deny and deprive him of his joy. Though he was imprisoned for his Christ-centered convictions, Paul was still always able to talk about rejoicing in Christ. Why? Because regardless of the circumstances of his life, regardless of the kind of people he was surrounded by, and regardless of the things, or lack of things, that he possessed, Paul rejoiced in the Lord. Paul was a man full of joy, and we need to pattern our life after his. As even Paul himself said, **“Brethren, be followers together of me.... (Phil. 3:17)**. And a part of following Paul is to rise above circumstances, people and things and rejoice always in the Lord.

So then, what was it exactly that made Paul a man of joy. How did Paul arrive at this state of being? There are five things that caused Paul's joy? I want to share those five things with you in this lesson with the hope that we will follow in Paul's steps.

Lesson:

I. **Position - Paul Knew His Position Was In Christ (vers. 1, 26).**

You have heard me say before that this phrase in Christ, or its equivalent, is found 172 times in the New Testament (the specific phrase "in Christ" is found 93 times in the ESV). That tells me that being in Christ is a significant place to be and that those who are there are in a truly blessed place. The problem is as Christians we sometimes forget just how blessed we are in Christ. Listen to me: to be in Christ is to be in a position of **power, peace and privilege**. To be in Christ is to be in a position of **righteousness, rewards and spiritual riches**. To be in Christ is to **sit in heavenly places with Christ**, safe from the Devil as long as we walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh. Contemplate with for a minute the following truths:

A. **In Christ we are reconciled to God(2 Cor. 5:17-19).**

That means we are no longer God's enemies. We are now friends of God. But where does this reconciliation take place? In Christ

Our old position has been exchanged for a new one. We are a new creation made by God. We are now identified with Jesus Christ and have a wonderful relationship with God. That's a part of what it means to be in Christ. It may be that Paul was having trouble with some people, but he could bask in joy because he had no trouble with God. He had been reconciled to God by Jesus Christ and he knew it. Listen to me: it didn't matter that Paul made havoc of the church in times past. He was a new creation in Christ. It didn't matter that Paul was a blasphemer and persecutor of saints before he obeyed the gospel. He was a new creation in Christ. And such is the case with everyone of us. While our sins separated us from God in the past, we have now been reconciled to God. Our friendship with God has been restored in Christ and thus we can and should rejoice.

B. **In Christ we are made the righteousness of God (II Corinthians 5:21).**

God is as righteous as it is possible to be. Everything about God is right and just. Everything about God is good and holy. He is, without question, a righteous God in Whom there is no darkness. Now, we as Christians have been made the righteousness of God. Why? All of our sins have been taken away. They have not just been ignored. They have not just been forgotten or overlooked by God. Our sins have been taken out of the way. They're gone ladies and gentlemen!

They have been removed by the blood of Christ. We stand before God as if we have never sinned. But where, pray tell, can we possibly stand in such a position? Paul tells us: IN HIM! Paul stated this position in **Philippians 3:7–9**.

C. In Christ we are spiritually complete.

From a spiritual standpoint, we have everything that we will ever need in Christ. As Christians we tap into the greatest of Christ and are perfected by that greatest. Listen to what Paul said in **Col. 2:9-10**, together:

“For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power.”

- In Christ we have perfection (**Col. 1:28**).
- In Christ we have perfect redemption (**Eph. 1:7**).
- In Christ we have a perfect inheritance (**Eph. 1:11**).
- In Christ we have perfect salvation (**2 Tim. 2:10**).
- In Christ we have perfect hope (**Rev. 14:13**).
- In Christ we have no condemnation (**Rom. 8:1**).

II. Purpose - Paul Had An High Purpose In Life (vers. 20-21).

Joy and purpose go hand in hand. Life without purpose is a life not worth living. When we look around at all the sadness in the world today, a lot of it is caused because people have no real purpose in life. We need more than to go through life satisfying the physical appetites of the body. If all you ever do is work so that you can eat and be clothed and have a place to live, there is going to be an insatiable desire in your life that can't be filled. Thus, you will always have a sense of emptiness inside that results in a feeling of sadness. Unfortunately, that's the existence of many. But Paul had more than that. Yes, he worked with his hands to provide for himself and he understood the importance of that in the physical realm. Paul once said that we must labor, working with our hands the thing which is good. Paul did that. He was a tentmaker by trade. But making tents was not the purpose of Paul's life. He had a higher purpose than that. His ultimate purpose was to live for Jesus (**Phil. 1:20-21**).

Paul was a man of purpose. Not just any purpose but the highest purpose of all -- living for Jesus Christ. Listen to me: we live in a social world that is full of social issues, events, activities and agendas, but we must not allow those things to overwhelm us. There is nothing wrong with having an interest in the community, getting involved in different social organizations, but don't allow that to dominate you. Why? Because that should not be the

purpose of your life. There is nothing wrong with getting involved in your children's life, taking them to ball games and participating in their different activities, but don't let that monopolize all your time. Why? Because that should not be the purpose of your life. There is nothing wrong with getting involved in sports, having a favorite team and that kind of thing, but don't allow it to become an obsession. Why? Because that shouldn't be the purpose of your life. Like Paul before us, severing Christ and magnifying Him in our bodies should be our main purpose. Paul never lost sight of what was really important and was serving Jesus (**Phil. 3:12-14**).

III. Privilege - Paul Saw His Service And Suffering For Christ As A Privilege (ver. 27-29).

To Paul everything was a matter of grace. He view everything as a matter of God unmerited favor. The concept of grace is a summary of Paul's overall theological viewpoint. Every good thing that happened to Paul he attributed to God's grace. He was saved by grace. He became an apostle by grace. He labored in the Lord by grace. To Paul nothing is deserved. Everything comes by God's loving kindness and unmerited favor and as a result of that view, Paul felt that everything he did for the Lord was a privilege and never a burden. Do you know why many Christians aren't as happy and joyful as they ought to be? I'll tell you why. Too many of us view our duties before the Lord as a burden we must bear. There is no real joy when you approach your service to Christ like that. If your the kind of person that says, "*I have to go to worship service again,*" you're missing the whole point of worshiping God. God is blessing us with the privilege of serving Him and we should view as an honor and something we look forward to with great delight (**Psa. 42:1-4**). Listen to me: if you give just out of a sense of duty; if you pray just to fulfill an obligation; if you sing just because you think you have to; if you preach to the lost just because your afraid of the consequences of not doing so; if you help your neighbor or support the local church and the cause of Christ begrudgingly, you're just not going to be happy about it. But if you can say with Paul what a privilege it is to serve God and His Son in any capacity, then you will be able to shout for joy at every opportunity to do so, even if the opportunities leads to some kind of suffering (**Acts 5:21**). Every time you pray it's a privilege. Every time you sing it's a privilege. Every time you have the opportunity to give it's a privilege. Every time you read your Bible it's a privilege. Every time you teach somebody about Jesus it's a privilege. Every time you sacrifice something for Jesus it's a privilege. Every time you suffer for Christ it's a privilege. Every time you serve God in any capacity whatsoever it is a privilege that God has given to you!

IV. Passion - Paul Had A Passion That Could Not Be Quenched (ver. 18).

That passion of Paul's was to preach the gospel of Christ. That brought Paul joy. It didn't matter where he had to go. It didn't matter what he had to sacrifice. Paul was happy every time he had the opportunity to preach the gospel of Christ or even when he heard that the gospel was being taught by someone else. It didn't matter. Gospel preaching was Paul's passion. And it should be our passion as well. There is no joy more full than winning souls to Christ. When you rescue a person from the debts of hell, and then witness that person growing stronger and stronger in Christ, the result is joy unspeakable. Paul wanted to experience that joy over and over again. So he preached. It was his passion! And he encourages all of us to make preaching to the lost our passion.

Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2).

I'll tell you now, I have never yet seen a person who occupied his life preaching the gospel to the lost and making it his passion, not filled with joy. There's joy in doing good and the highest good of all is saving souls for Christ.

V. Prospect - Paul Had His Eyes On A Greater Prospect (ver. 23).

When it was all said and done, Paul knew that this world was not his home, but that he was just passing through. His eyes were on things eternal, not the things of this world (**2 Cor. 4:13 - 18**). True joy comes when we realize that our situation here on earth, whether it be good, bad or somewhere in between, is only temporary. In the end our souls will be saved and we will be in heaven seeing God face to face (**1 Pet. 1:1-9**).

Conclusion:

Of all people, certainly we as Christians should be able to rejoice in the Lord. If we can't, or better yet, if we won't, it is only because the Devil has gotten to us. Listen one more time to Paul:

"Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord" (Phil. 3:1)

"Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say Rejoice." (Phil. 4:4).

Will you do it or not? The choice is up to you!