

CONSIDER IT ALL JOY

Encouragement For Living The Christian Life

Philippians 1:1-8

We live in a generally *depressed, sad world...a fallen world* well acquainted with *despair, depression, disappointment, dissatisfaction, and hopelessness*. There is a longing for *happiness* that seems to be *incessantly evasive*. Moments of *pleasure* and *satisfaction* are *scattered* through the general *pain, sorrow, and broken heartedness* of people's lives. The sad part is...many people *have little hope* that their situation *will ever change*.

Most people define *happiness* as *a sense of satisfaction, pleasure, or contentment* based on *positive circumstances...* most of which are *beyond their control*. *Happiness*, therefore, *cannot be planned or programmed...* much less *guaranteed*. It's experienced only if and when *circumstances are favorable*. It is therefore *extremely elusive and uncertain*.

Spiritual joy, on the other hand, isn't *dependent* on *chance* or *circumstances*. It's the *deep and abiding confidence* that, *regardless of one's circumstances* in life, *all is well* because of the *sovereignty of God...* that God is in *control*. No matter what *difficultly, pain, disappointment, failure, rejection, or other challenge* one is facing...*genuine joy remains* because of God's *grace...* and especially *grace* that *brings salvation*. Scripture makes it clear that the *fullest* and *most satisfying joy* is derived from a *true relationship* with God. It's not based on *circumstances* or *chance...* it's the *gracious* and *permanent possession* that every child of God has received.

A Biblical theology of joy includes many features:

- **Joy is a gift from God to those who believe the Gospel** (**Luke 2:10-11; John 3:16; John 15:11**). It's a result of our *salvation*.

- **Joy is produced by the Holy Spirit** (**Galatians 5:22-23**). *It's a fruit of the Spirit*.
- **Joy is experienced most fully as believers receive and obey God's Word...and engraft it into their hearts** (**I John 1:4**).
- **Joy is deepened and refined through trials** (**I Thessalonians 1:6; James 1:2; II Corinthians 6:3-4, 10; Romans 5:3-5**).
- **Joy is made complete when one sets their hope (their confident, anxious anticipation) on the glory of heaven** (**Romans 12:12; I Peter 1:8-9; I Peter 4:13; Jude 24-25**).

I. PRAISE FOR THE SAINTS: (vs. 1-2)

Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons (**vs. 1**)...

Bondservants...describes a person who is *voluntarily subservient to...and dependent on...someone as their master*. It describes *willing, determined, and devoted service*. Paul used it to *describe himself* at the beginning of *three* of his epistles (**Romans, Philippians, Titus**). **James, Peter, and Jude** also described themselves as **bondservants**.

To all the saints...*all believers* are **saints**...not because they are *righteous* in and of themselves...but because they are **in Christ**, whose *righteousness* is *imputed* to them.

"Therefore it was also credited to him as righteousness. Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him, but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead."

~Romans 4:22-24

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (vs. 2)...

Paul used this common greeting in several of his letters to churches. It expresses his *abiding love* and *concern* for the *faithful believers* in **Philippi**.

II. **PRAISE FOR THEIR CONSTANT WITNESS:** (vs. 3-5)

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now (vs. 3-5)...

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you...About 10 years had passed since Paul had first worked among the believers in **Philippi** during his *second missionary journey* when the *church was established* there in **Philippi**. It must have been *very encouraging* to them to hear how **Paul often thanked** God for them.

Acts 16:11-40 describes **Paul's work** in **Philippi**.

Always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all...Paul was at this time experiencing some of the *most difficult* and *painful times* of his ministry. Not only was he *in prison* in **Rome**, but he was also being maligned by other *false teachers* and *preachers* who questioned and attacked his teachings. But he was determined not to allow it to *diminish his joy*.

In view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now...

Participation...Gk. *koinonia*, means *fellowship* or *communion*...and has the *root meaning* of *sharing possessions or money*.

The **Philippian saints** were *partners* with **Paul** in the things of Christ...specifically, the *proclaiming of the Gospel*. They shared with him in his need...they sent him *financial gifts*, as well as *giving of themselves*.

To be in the company of those who are *joint heirs with Christ*...people who *love, care for, understand, pray for and with each other, who minister and fight the good fight together*...is to be *assured* of *abundant* and *abiding joy*.

III. **PRAISE FOR THEIR CONTINUED SPIRITUAL GROWTH:** (vs. 6)

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus (vs. 6)...

Nothing can *encourage a believer* as much as the *knowledge* that, *despite life's uncertainties and difficulties*, and *no matter how many spiritual defeats* there may be along the way, one day *he will be made perfect*.

Confident...means *to be persuaded of* and *to have assurance in*. Because *salvation is exclusively* God's work...*its completion is as certain as if it were already accomplished*.

"For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified."

~Romans 8:29-30

Perfect...a *compound word* that gives the *intensified meaning* of being *fully complete*.

The day of Christ Jesus...refers to the time when believers will be glorified...when their *salvation will be completed and made perfect*.

God has *no unfinished work*. The God who *saves* is the God who *justifies*...*sanctifies*...and *glorifies*. The God who *begins*, is the God who *completes*.

IV. **PRAISE FOR THEIR CONTINUOUS AFFECTION:** (vs. 7-8)

In these verses, Paul's *rejoicing* reaches a *crescendo*.

For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me (vs. 7)...

For it is only right...denotes more than *mere appropriateness*. It expresses *moral* and *spiritual rightness*...not merely that which is *expected*...but that which is *required*.

In my heart...the *mind* and *heart* are often *synonymous* in Scripture. It expresses the basic meaning of having both the *intellect* and *will* to express one's *feelings of affection*.

In the defense and confirmation of the gospel...both the word for **defense** and **confirmation** are *legal terms*. The word for **defense** means *apologetics*. The word for **confirmation** refers to *validation* and *authorization* of the Gospel.

Paul affirmed that the **Philippian** church *selflessly* and *sacrificially* stood by him to give *encouragement*...to *help alleviate his suffering*...and to *meet his needs in every way they could* while he was imprisoned.

For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus (vs. 8)...

Affection...literally *refers to internal organs*...specifically the *bowels* or *intestines*. It describes *selfless, compassionate love*...a *gut wrenching love*. It was an **affection** so *deep* and *pervasive* as to *reflect* that of **Christ Jesus Himself**.

What robs believers of Biblical joy?

- **A false salvation...lack of assurance of salvation.**
- **Rejecting grace** (Hebrews 12:15).
- **The influence of Satan and his demons...spiritual warfare.**
- **An inadequate understanding of God's sovereignty.**
- **Prayerlessness.**
- **Uncontrolled emotions.** *The emotional lows that frequently follow a spiritual high.*
- **When one focuses on circumstances.** *Three key things: worry...stress...fear.* (Romans 5:3-5; Romans 8:26-31; James 1:2-4).
- **Ungratefulness** (*ingratitude*).
- **Forgetfulness.** *Forgetting what God has done.*
- **Fleshly living.** *Sinfulness...pornography...adultery...homosexuality...etc.*
- **Lack of forgiveness.** *Giving forgiveness...getting forgiveness...forgiving one's self.*

All of this leads to the inescapable conclusion that *the fellowship of God's people should be a fellowship of joy*.

LESSONS WE NEED CAN LEARN:

- **True joy is an UNWAVERING CONSTANT in a Spirit-filled life.** Happiness...the fleeting feeling of exhilaration...is elusive. Joy is not. Biblical joy comes from

the settled conviction that God sovereignly controls the events of life for the believers' good...and His glory is available to all who know Him and obey Him.

- **Biblical joy is not dependent on CIRCUMSTANCES... it's the gift (fruit) of the HOLY SPIRIT.**

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...”

~Galatians 5:22-23a

- **A non-Christian's joy must come from the OUTSIDE; the Christian's joy comes from WITHIN.**