

## Wednesday Evening Bible Study

May 1, 2024

Series - The Life and Writings of the Apostle Paul

*The Prison Epistles*

*The Letter to the Philippians – The Joy of Faith*

Text - Philippians 1:1 - 11

Congregational Reading – Philippians 1:3 - 6

Two verses from Philippians that particularly support the theme of Joy are found in Philippians 1:25 and 26. Paul states in the preceding verses that he would rather go to Heaven, but the Lord had called him to continue to serve on earth, and then he states:

*"And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and **joy of faith**; That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again."* (Philippians 1:25-26)

Notice that phrase – “joy of faith” – We have taken that phrase for our title to this series of messages from Philippians.

Also, another great supporting verse from this letter is Philippians 4:4:

*"Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice."* (Philippians 4:4)

You get the idea from this letter that Christians should be a happy and always rejoicing people.

### Introduction

Philippians is one of four New Testament letters that are known as “The Prison Epistles” because they were written by the Apostle Paul when he was incarcerated while awaiting trial at Rome and after being accused by the religious leaders from Jerusalem of bringing a Gentile into their Temple, which he did not do. The other three letters written from this time in Paul’s life were Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon.

Philippi is a port city located in an area called Macedonia, which is in present-day northern Greece. Paul had ministered there on his second missionary journey and had again visited the city on his third journey.

All the background material for Philippi can be found in the Book of Acts, chapters 16 and 20.

Two very important historical events that occurred in Philippi were the salvation of Lydia and her family, and the Philippian jailor and his family. You might also recall that Paul spent a night in jail there in Philippi, where he and Silas were beaten, but then sang praises to the Lord from their prison cell.

This letter is unique among Paul's letters to churches. Paul had a great relationship with this church. He loved them and they loved him. This will prove very evident as we study the epistle. There is very little correction given here, but mostly encouragement. It is also a very practical letter; unlike Paul's letters to the Romans and Ephesians, which are very heavy in doctrine.

One of the key themes in this letter is that of rejoicing. The words *joy* and *rejoice* appear in the epistle eighteen times. The phrase *rejoice in the Lord* appears 3 times and *rejoice in Christ* appears 1 time.

Other key verses in this letter: 2:5; 3:7 – 8; 4:6; 4:8; 4:13; 4:19

### I. Paul's Greeting Extended to the Church at Philippi (vs. 1 – 2)

*"Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."* (Philippians 1:1-2)

This is a typical salutation for Paul's letters. He identifies himself, and Timothy who was a minister to Paul, and one he would send to places to minister on his behalf. I do not believe that Timothy was a fellow prisoner with Paul. Paul apparently had liberty to receive guests while he awaited his hearing with Caesar, and Timothy was a dear friend to Paul that would not only minister to him, but also could bring him messages, and deliver messages for him.

On the surface, this letter was, perhaps, written to more than one church because of the reference to "bishops" (plural), but Philippians 4:15 seems to indicate that only one church is indicated here:

*"Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only."*  
(Philippians 4:15)

Notice in verse 2, the phrase "grace and peace". Receiving God's grace or unmerited favor through salvation is imperative if we are to fully experience the joy that God has for us on this pilgrimage here on the earth. Salvation brings us "peace with God," meaning that we know that we have a clean slate with God. We know that He has forgiven our sins because of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary. We may not be perfect people, but we know that God has saved us, and we are not going to be punished in Hell when we die.

**Preaching Point** – What a tremendous source of joy it is to know that we are on our way to Heaven when we die. We have received God's grace – that which we don't deserve.

*"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:"*  
(Ephesians 2:8)

And we also have peace – God is not our enemy. The Lord Jesus Christ has paid for our sins.

In this greeting, Paul extends more grace and peace from God to the saints at Philippi, and to us as well. The same grace that saved us, and the same peace that came with it, is available to us daily as we live this life.

Grace and peace were not a one-time gift, only received at salvation; they are a continual source of joy to the believer that is wise enough to continue receiving them. James states, *"but he giveth more grace"*.

If we are going to enjoy the journey of this Christian life, we are going to have to continue receiving the grace and peace that is available to us from God by faith.

Grace and peace, because they are spiritual gifts from God Who is in us are also gifts that we can give each other. We can extend grace to our brothers and sisters, to our neighbors, to our co-workers; and we can demonstrate the peace of God towards them as well.

## **II. Paul's Gratitude Expressed for the Church at Philippi (vs. 3 – 8)**

Notice the love that Paul expresses for this church in these verses.

*"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." (Philippians 1:3-8)*

The church at Philippi was a tremendous source of joy to the imprisoned Apostle. Do we bring joy to people's minds when they remember us?

### **Preaching Points**

- 1. It is a great source of joy to know that people are praying for you. It is a great gift of joy that you and I can give to others to pray for them, and to let them know that you are praying for them.**

Illustration – text message from a guy I went to college with. "I prayed for you today. Thank you for loving on me so many years ago."

- 2. It is a great source of joy to know that somebody is supporting you.**

“Notice the word “fellowship” in verse 5. It has to do with the fact that the church at Philippi helped support the Apostle Paul, not only by helping to meet his needs as a travelling evangelist, but also because they supported his collections for the saints at Jerusalem.

**You can be a source of joy to others by supporting them, perhaps by meeting a need.**

- 3. It is a tremendous source of joy to have someone express confidence in you. This too is something that you can give to others.**

Also note that as believers we have confidence or security knowing that God is going to keep working on us. He is chipping away the rough edges and molding me into what I will someday be. I am not what I used to be, thank God.

- 4. It is great source of joy to know that somebody genuinely loves you and cares for you. Love is a great gift that we can express to others.**

Notice that all four of these things that we have discussed from verse 3 – 8 are things that we can feel without expressing, but for joy to transfer, they must be expressed.

### **III. Paul’s Given Expectations for the Church at Philippi (vs. 9 – 11)**

*"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." (Philippians 1:9-11)*

In these three verses Paul reveals four specific requests that He has made to God regarding these saints at Philippi:

#### **1. Their love would abound in knowledge and judgment (discernment)**

Notice the phrase “more and more” meaning that their love would increase. This phrase is found twice in Paul’s Letter to the Thessalonians:

*"Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound **more and more.**" (1 Thessalonians 4:1)*

*"And indeed ye do it [express brotherly love] toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase **more and more;**" (1 Thessalonians 4:10)*

God wants us to grow:

*"18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen." (2 Peter 3:18)*

## 2. They would approve things that are excellent (higher, better)

*"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you."* (Philippians 4:8-9)

## 3. They would be sincere and without offence.

Sincerity speaks of the genuineness of our faith and love for the Lord:

*"12 For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward."* (2 Corinthians 1:12)

*"7 In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,"* (Titus 2:7)

One of the ways that we demonstrate the sincerity of our faith is through giving:

*"8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love."* (2 Corinthians 8:8)

## 4. They would be filled with the fruits of righteousness.

*"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. 19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."* (Galatians 5:16-25)

Notice that these four things in our life bring joy to the Lord – *"unto the glory and praise of God"*