

The Joy in the Journey

Message Notes

Facts (quick summary):

Philippi - the first European city to hear the gospel and have a Christian congregation planted in it.

The letter is written during Paul's captivity in Rome, about 10 years after the congregation was formed based on Lydia and her family + the jailer and his family, who came to faith in Acts 16.

The strongest theme of the letter is the joy in Christ - the words 'joy' or 'happy' appear 16 times in the letter!

This series have already touched on the foundations of joy, the joy of serving and the joy of faith - and found that the source of joy in the kingdom of God is completely different from the source of joy in this world.

Philippians 4 - The Joy in the journey

v1

Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved. (NKJV)

Twice in the same verse, Paul refers to the church as greek 'Agapé-toi' (translated 'whom I love' and then 'dear feiends'). This is the same word (but in the plural form) used when the Father said of Jesus:

Matt. 3:17

"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (NKJV)

No other identity should be more fundamental in your life than 'agapé-toi' - 'loved by God'!

Damaged as we are by the fall of man, we so easily slip into a mind when we think we are judged by performance and results. But the Father says of Jesus that he is 'my beloved son' even before he has

preached a single sermon, performed a single miracle or died on the cross. Only the certainty of God's infinite love for you - not for what you do for him but for who you ARE for him - will produce true freedom and joy.

The sentence ends, in Greek:

'Stékete en Kyrió agapétoi'

= '*Stand fast in the Lord, beloved*', or literally:

'Stand fast in being loved by the Lord'.

Paul then concludes the whole letter to the church in Philippi with

Five guidelines for the Christ-centered journey:

v 4-5

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all.

1.Rejoice

Again, we come back to the very truth we started with: joy is a choice. Otherwise, Paul would never have been able to urge us to 'always' rejoice (note that he is writing this from a Roman prison!).

It is up to us to choose every day to drink from a) the source of our circumstances or b) the source of true joy - which has its origin in the fact that Jesus is alive and has won an eternal victory!

- 'Dance!' story

How do we display this joy in our world? By gentleness/kindness to all people. Being quick to forgive, not getting upset when others would, being grateful, patient, and generous in showing the fruits of the Spirit.

v 6-7

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

2. Do not worry

Worry too, is a choice.

Worry is not an attack that we cannot escape, it is a chosen response to a problem. You may be sitting here thinking that worry is inevitable, but that's not true; in that case, the bible would not have encouraged us not to worry.

We all have challenges, problems and difficulties - they can't be avoided in this fallen world. But it is possible to live in all this without worrying.

When you choose gratitude before frustration every day, you open yourself to let the peace of God guard your heart and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.

- Grandma story

v 8

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

3. Think about the right things

We have already stated that joy is a choice, that worry is a choice - and now Paul is taking it all to a new level: my thoughts are a choice!

Many times we think we are slaves to our own thoughts, and that we cannot control them. But the Bible says otherwise:

Proverbs 16:32

Better a patient person than a warrior, one with self-control than one who takes a city.

Proverbs 25:28

Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control.

The first arena where we need to win victory is in our own head, choosing to let our thoughts be shaped according to what is already a reality in our heart: that Jesus is with us, that nothing is impossible, that God is full control.

Aids for renewing one's thoughts:

- Fill yourself with the right information (our thoughts are a product of what we feed ourselves with)
- Spend time in the presence of God
- Hang out with people whose lives are marked by the fruits of the Spirit - Live in the midst of the church

v 11-13

I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

4. Be content

'I can do all things' does not mean that I have the ability to do exactly everything that can be done in this world (for example, I can not sing if I do not have a singing voice). But it means - according to the context - that in Christ I have the ability to be a conqueror and live the life of Christ *no matter what circumstance I end up in!*

This world is built on stress. Stress to keep up with, to be seen, to be on the inside, to have everything you 'must' have, to achieve all your ambitions, to be happy, to get rich, not to age, not to die ... This stress is what makes man more depressed than ever, even though we are doing so well materially.

Don't let that stress kidnap you! What makes you different is that you have already received as a gift that others spend their whole lives looking for!

v 17-19

Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

5. Live generously

The whole Epistle to the Philippians is actually a letter of thanks to a church that had shown generosity to the kingdom of God and to the spreading of the gospel - and is at the same time the letter that more than anything else is about joy.

Giving and joy go hand in hand!

When we take what we could have used for ourselves and release it to God, He, in turn, releases joy, peace, and satisfaction into our lives.

And so - when we give generously to all of God's work - we also qualify for the promise that God will give us 'everything we need' - spiritually, physically, socially, financially, professionally.