

Lesson Fifty

Philippians

	Joy in Living for Christ Even when we don't get what we want In spite of circumstances Even with conflicts CHAPTER 1	Joy in Serving Christ in Unity Starts with right attitude Maintained through right theology Encouraged by right models CHAPTER 2	Joy in Knowing Christ A warning A testimony A goal A command CHAPTER 3	Joy in Resting in Christ Unity Peace Final predictions CHAPTER 4
Christ	... my Life	... my Model	... my Goal	... my Contentment
Spirit	His provision (1:19)	His fellowship (2:1)	His worship (3:3)	His peace (4:7)
Positive Reaction	To difficulty: "Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel." (1:12)	To others: "Do all things without grumbling or disputing." (2:14)	To the past: "Forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize." (3:13-14)	To the "unchangeables": "Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am." (4:11)
Tone	Warm, encouraging, affirming			
Key Words	"Rejoice," "Christ," "Mind," "Act"			
Uniqueness	No major problem passages. "Joy" is found in each chapter. Not one quotation from the Old Testament. Christ mentioned over forty times. Most positive of all Paul's letters, yet written while he was chained to a Roman guard.			
Theme	By centering our lives around Christ, we can experience true joy.			
Key Verse	1:21			
Christ in Philippians	Jesus is the Son of God from heaven, who humbled Himself by becoming human, who suffered for us, and who was exalted to heaven (2:5-11).			

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Author: The author is identified in 1:1 as the apostle Paul and there is no legitimate reason to doubt that he is the author of this letter. Philippians is one of the "prison epistles" he wrote while in chains in a Roman prison.

Audience: Philippi was a Roman colony. After the Battle of Philippi in 42 B.C., Anthony ordered some Roman soldiers to live there. Twelve years later, Octavian forced some to leave their homes in Italy and settle there to further secure it to the Roman empire. However, in doing so, he gave them special rights. Their land was treated as though it was part of Roman soil; they were considered Roman citizens and were exempt from paying taxes to Rome. Perhaps this is why Paul places such an focus on our citizenship in heaven (3:20).

Paul visited Philippi on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:14-34). There, the Philippian jailer and his family were saved, as well as Lydia and her family. Paul established a church there before leaving and this church helped in many ways in the years that followed. This letter was written to acknowledge specifically their current financial contribution to him.

The church sent Epaphroditus, one of their leaders, to Rome with a financial contribution for Paul, possibly to assist with his living expenses or legal fees. While Epaphroditus was there, he became so sick that he almost died. When he finally recovered, he went back to Philippi and carried with him this thank you note from Paul.

Theme: Paul obviously felt very close to the church at Philippi. It was to them that he wrote the famous words in 1:3, "I thank my God every time I remember you. . . ." The church obviously filled his heart with joy and joy is the central theme of his letter to the church. Joy is literally on every page of this book. The word is used nineteen times in just four chapters and is included in each of the chapters. This is a letter written from a heart of joy to encourage others to experience joy in their daily Christian living.

Finding Joy In Peace

Philippians 4:4-7

Warren Wiersbe once wrote, “Most Christians are being crucified on a cross between two thieves: yesterday’s regrets and tomorrow’s worries.” This is an astute observation because it is these two thieves which rob us of today’s joys.

These are unprecedented, anxious times in which we are living. If we watch the news, it is easy to lose hope and be filled with worry. However, the apostle Paul gives us the cure for anxiety and worry in this passage. It can be summed up in three words: WORRY ABOUT NOTHING; PRAY ABOUT EVERYTHING. Let’s dig into this passage a little deeper and see how we can find joy in peace.

I. THE PRACTICE THAT DEVELOPS PEACE

A. Paul begins with a familiar admonition – “Rejoice in the Lord always; I will say again, rejoice!” This is a command for the believer that is not dependent on the circumstances of the day. Paul was in jail when he wrote this!

B. This is not to say that we are to live in denial of what is happening in the world, or to fake a smile when the world is falling apart around us. He doesn’t just call on us to rejoice, but to rejoice in the Lord. This is important to remember. It is not empty rejoicing, but a decision of the heart based on the belief that God is still in control, no matter what happens.

C. Learning to rejoice in spite of the circumstances around us is the practice which can ultimately lead us to experience peace.

II. THE PROCESS THAT DEEPENS PEACE

A. After giving the command, Paul outlines the process that will lead us to peace:

1. Be anxious for nothing – just as we are commanded to rejoice, we are commanded here not to worry. This is nothing new. Jesus commanded us in the Sermon on the Mount not to worry about anything.

2. Pray about everything – not just spiritual things; pray about EVERYTHING. There is nothing that you cannot talk to God about it. If it causes you concern, anxiety or worry, it is worthy of praying about.

3. Have the right attitude – we often skip over this part of the admonition; we are to pray *with thanksgiving*. It is easy to focus only on what is wrong in our lives when we pray. But focusing on those things for which we can be thankful helps us to rejoice in God’s faithfulness.

B. If you are dealing with anxiety, go to the Lord in prayer and begin by giving Him thanks for the blessings you have. Then tell him about the situation that is causing you worry and ask Him to take away that worry.

III. THE PROMISE OF PEACE

A. If you follow the process outlined above, there is a promised blessing which follows. It is the promise of the peace of God. This peace is a gift from His Holy Spirit to us.

B. There are two beautiful things to note about the peace which God gives:

1. It transcends human understanding – God’s peace cannot be logically explained. It is not the absence of conflict. It is a sense of calm in the midst of conflict.

2. It stands as a guard to our heart and mind – Paul may have looked at the guards in his prison cell as he wrote this. Those guards kept anyone from getting to him. That is what God’s peace does – it stands like a sentry to protect our heart and our mind, where anxiety dwells.

Corrie ten Boom once wrote, “Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows – it only empties today of its strength.” It also robs us of our joy. What are you worried about today?