



“REASONS TO REJOICE”

*“Your Words were found, and I ate them,
and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.” Jeremiah 15:16*

PHILIPPIANS LESSON 1

Welcome to our study of the Book of Philippians, Paul’s letter of joy! This is one of the simplest Epistles in the New Testament, containing only 104 verses. Paul is not writing to reprimand the Philippians or to deal with any complicated problems, but to express his joy and to encourage them to have joy also. Known as one of Paul’s prison Epistles, it’s difficult to imagine he’s in prison as you read through this book. He’s excited, he’s encouraged, and he’s rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Sounds more like he’s sitting in his parlor than a prison. I don’t know about you, but if I was sitting in prison, waiting for my trial, my letter may sound a little less “happy.” But Paul’s faith in God was unwavering and unshakable. I believe Paul ached for God. He wasn’t afraid of the present because he was assured of the future. Philippians 1:21 gives us a glimpse of Paul’s heart. It reads, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Do you believe that?

Our prayer for you over the next four weeks is that you will understand why Paul had so much joy in his heart, and that you will find yourself rejoicing in Jesus along with him. God bless you, ladies. May the Holy Spirit fill you, empower you, stir you, and enlighten you as you spend time in His Word.

First Day

Before we begin chapter 1, let’s take a brief look at the background of this book. Hopefully this will give you a better understanding of Paul’s purpose for writing to his friends in Philippi.

The City of Philippi

Philippi, originally known as the “Fountain City,” stood at the head of the Aegean Sea. Philip II, (father of Alexander the Great) the King of Macedonia, enlarged the city and named it after himself. F.B. Meyer writes,

“Philippi was the scene of the great battle between Brutus and Cassius on the one side, and Octavius and Antony on the other. In commemoration of the decisive victory of imperialism over republicanism, Augustus gave it the dignity and privilege of a Roman colony. In fact, it was a miniature Rome. The Great Egnatian Way passed through it, and as a Roman colony situated on this great thoroughfare, it was flourishing and wealthy.” It was a main overland route between Asia and the West. The colonies were part of the system of fortifications securing the empire against enemies. Philippi wore the unmistakable stamp of Rome. The population consisted of Roman soldiers, retired veterans, etc. There were very few Asians and even fewer Jews because it was a military town. Because of this, there were no synagogues in Philippi.

Why was Paul in Philippi?

Paul received his call from God to go to Macedonia in a vision. The Gospel had not yet been taken to Europe, and it was time to spread the Good News of the Gospel throughout the world. Let’s read about Paul’s first exciting, action-packed visit to Philippi.

1. Read Acts 15:36-16:40 and answer the following questions:

- A.** *Who was traveling with Paul?*
- B.** *What did God want them to do in Macedonia?*
- C.** *Who were the first people they encountered?*
- D.** *What do we know about Lydia?*
- E.** *How did she respond?*
- F.** *Who did they meet next, according to verse 16?*
- G.** *Why were Paul and Silas thrown in prison?*
- H.** *How did they respond?*
- I.** *What happened to the jailer?*

J. Why didn't Paul just want to go in peace?

K. What is remarkable about this chapter?

To Whom was the letter written?

Paul wrote to the believers and the leaders in the church that was established in Philippi in Lydia's home. The letter was written in about AD 62, approximately 10 years after he evangelized Philippi. It was written from a prison in Rome where Paul was awaiting trial. He was under house arrest, chained 24/7 by his wrist to a Roman guard.

Why was it written?

Paul wrote this letter for a few reasons. First, he wanted to thank the Philippians for the generous gift they sent him by way of Epaphroditus (4:14-16). He also wanted to remind them of the joy that was possible in Christ. Christ is mentioned over forty times. The words "joy" and "rejoicing" are used 16 times in this letter and found in every chapter. He most likely wanted to give them some gentle guidance, as well as assurance of his well being. It has been said that he wrote them to fill their minds and hearts with the spirit of gladness. You can tell ... he loved them dearly. No strong rebukes or corrections are present, except for an urging to get along with each other. It is the most positive of all Paul's letters, yet it was written while he was in prison. Its tone is warm, positive, and encouraging.

2. Read through the entire book (all 4 chapters!) in one sitting. Circle every time the word joy or rejoicing is mentioned. Give each chapter a title that reflects the main thought.

Chapter 1:

Chapter 2:

Chapter 3:

Chapter 4:

That's it for today. I know the first day is always much more reading than usual. Hang in there! God will bless your diligence!

Memory Verse of the Week: “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” *Philippians 1:21*

Second Day

Work on your memory verse. Do you agree with Paul?

Each chapter in the Book of Philippians reveals a different aspect of joy. Charles Swindoll makes a neat observation in his book Maybe It's Time to Laugh Again. He said in chapter 1, we will learn there is joy in living. In chapter 2, we will learn there is joy in serving, beginning with the attitude of humility. In chapter 3, Paul points out that there is joy in sharing; and in chapter 4, we will learn there is joy in resting. Philippians is often called a “gem of joy.” I can't wait to get started! I need some joy, don't you?

Paul gives us several pictures of Christ throughout this book. Let's take a look.

1. In the following verses, how is Christ portrayed?

- A. 1:21**
- B. 2:5**
- C. 3:21**
- D. 4:13**

2. Read Philippians 1:1-30. Observe and list the facts you find. Ask yourself the questions Who? What? Where? When? Why? Find out all you can about this chapter.

3. What repeated words or phrases do you find?

4. What is the main point of the chapter?

5. *Whom does Paul include in his greeting? What do we know about him? Read the following verses and write a brief character sketch. Acts 16:1-3; 2 Timothy 1:5, 3:15; Acts 17:14, 18:1-5, 19:22; Philippians 2:22, 1 Timothy 1:2, 18; 1 Corinthians 4:17.*
6. *How does Paul explain his present circumstances? How would you describe his attitude?*
7. *How would you describe Paul's prayer in verses 1-11?*
8. *How does Paul refer to himself and Timothy?*
9. *What two words do you find in Paul's greeting that is common to his writings?*

It was customary in Paul's day to begin a letter with a signature and a greeting, wishing them well. I wonder what the Philippians thought as soon as they read that first word ... Paul. How excited they must have been! He also mentions Timothy, who was loved by the Philippians. He was not the "co-author," but he was in full agreement with the letter. Paul was planning to send Timothy back to visit them soon (2:19-23). Paul is seen as a joyful servant of Christ, revealing his love for his friends. They had a great bond of fellowship.

10. *Spend some extra time today praying for a friend that you are thankful for. Paul's prayers for his friends are so deep, aren't they? Pray that your friend will be "filled with the fruits of righteousness."*

See you tomorrow! I will pray for each of you today. "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Third Day

Practice your memory verse. Are you living for Christ?

1. Read Philippians 1:1-11. Why is Paul so thankful for them?

The phrase “every remembrance” means “my total recollection of you.” Paul had great memories of being with them. God had done, and was still doing, a great work in their lives. It brought Paul great joy to bring his friends before the throne of God. Paul’s prayers were certainly not self-centered.

2. What phrases reveal Paul’s love for them?

Paul had the Philippians in his mind, in his heart, and in his prayers. This kind of fellowship produces great joy.

3. According to verse 6, what was Paul confident about?

Paul wanted to see “agape” in the lives of the Philippians (1:9). This Greek word for love is the same word used to describe God’s love. Stuart Briscoe said, “The essence of agape is giving. God’s agape drove Him to give and give and go on giving.”

4. Paul prayed that their love would abound “more and more.” He didn’t want their love to have any boundaries and for them to keep on giving. What does that practically mean? How is this accomplished?

5. Does this kind of love include those who are “unlovable”?

6. What does it mean to love “with knowledge and discernment”?

7. *What does Paul pray for concerning their character in verse 10? (Do you pray for your friends' character?)*

The word "sincere" means unadulterated, pure, unmixed, and something that "can pass the test." Do these words describe your character? Do you strive to remain unmixed from the world, seeking a pure and undefiled heart?

8. *He not only prays for their character, but for their service to the Lord. What does he pray they would be filled with? (Read Galatians 5:22-23, Romans 1:13, Romans 6:22, and Hebrews 13:15.)*

9. *Let's take a "joy test." What kinds of things bring you joy? (Think about that for a while.) Does it bring you joy when you pray for your friends? Does it bring you joy to see God working in their lives? Does your fellowship with other believers create great joy in your heart?*

Paul prays that the Philippians will be without offense until "the day of Christ." Paul is referring to the day of triumph that we all look forward to. Stuart Briscoe puts it this way: "This is the day for which the risen Lord has waited at the Father's right hand, the day for which the saints have labored, the day when the Church will be complete and Christ will come with great glory." This thought brought Paul great joy.

10. *Do you think much about the future? Does the thought of Jesus returning for His Church bring you great joy and gladness?*

Paul could be happy in prison because of the joy he found in Christ. Do you need to rediscover some joy? Meditate on the fact that Jesus Christ Himself is preparing a place for you personally until He comes to take you home. That should change your mourning into dancing!

Fourth Day

Spend some time memorizing your verse and asking the Lord how to apply it to your life.

1. *Today let's begin by reading Philippians 1:12-18. What was happening as a result of Paul's chains?*

The phrase "furtherance of the Gospel" can also be translated "greater progress." This Greek word "prokope" depicts a group of woodcutters clearing the way through a forest for an advancing army. Paul had been falsely accused, unlawfully arrested and unfairly imprisoned, but his circumstances had cleared the way for the Gospel to be preached.

There's something very important here that we need to remember. Years earlier, Paul had made plans to take Rome by storm! He probably dreamed of leading many to Christ, starting churches for the new believers, and sending out missionaries to spread the Good News. Rome was the most important city in the world. If he won Rome for Christ, what a victory that would be! Maybe he could even visit the synagogues and start a revival among the Jews. From there he wanted to go to Spain, continuing the work of the Lord. But ... he was in prison. No longer could he freely move about, sharing Christ with those he encountered. So what was Paul's attitude? Did he question God's plan? Did he sink into depression? Heavens no! Instead, he writes this letter that is bubbling over with joy. How could Paul have such an incredible attitude? Simple. It's all about perspective.

2. *Explain how Paul saw disappointments as **His**-appointments.*

Paul was chained 24 hours a day to a guard. Verse 13 is most likely referring to the headquarters built by Tiberius for the powerful Praetorian guard. Every time the changing of the guard occurred, I'm sure Paul took the opportunity to share the Gospel with them. I read that there were more than 9,000 men on this force. I wonder how many of them Paul got to talk to! The Gospel was being spread through the whole barracks! As the guard

sat, chained to Paul, he was forced to listen to him share, listen to him pray, hear him dictate letters, watch his incredible attitude, and hear him preach to the people who came to see him from all over the world. Did God have a great plan, or what? Even though it wasn't Paul's plan, he accepted his circumstances, knowing that it was God's will for him. Paul made the choice to rejoice.

- 3. Are you in the middle of difficult or trying circumstances? How does your perspective need to change? (Can you look at your situation as His-appointment for you?)*

- 4. Has God ever allowed something to come into your life that was totally opposite of what you planned? As you look back, can you see how God's plan was perfect? Will you share it with your group?*

- 5. Is it easy or difficult for you to change your perspective when things get crazy? What steps can you take to "make the choice to rejoice"?*

- 6. How did his imprisonment affect others, according to verse 14? Why?*

In verse 18, Paul says that even if some are preaching with wrong motives, at least Jesus Christ is being preached. Remember in Galatians 1:6-9, Paul said that those who were trying to change the Gospel of Grace into a Gospel of works should be accursed! In Galatians he was denouncing the false teaching, and here he's rejoicing that the truth is at least being proclaimed correctly. He didn't let their impure motives rob him of his joy.

Knowing that Jesus was being preached brought Paul great joy (vs. 18). Paul knew the secret of joy was not pursuing happiness, but having the mind of Christ.

7. *Read verses 19-21. What was Paul's prayer for himself?*

8. *Explain Paul's statement in verse 21.*

This statement is translated many ways. The Living Bible says, "for to me, living means opportunities for Christ, and dying – well, that's better yet!" Phillips translates it, "For living, to me, means simply 'Christ' and if I die, I should merely gain more of Him." Paul wasn't pursuing anything, but Christ.

9. *What's the difference between happiness and joy? Which one is lasting? Why?*

10. *How would you fill in these blanks? For me, to live is _____, and to die is _____. (Some may say, to live is money, to die is to leave it all behind. To live is fame, to die is to be forgotten.) Let me ask you again ... how would you fill in the blanks?*

Happiness depends on circumstances, or on "happenings." Because of that, happiness can disappear as quickly as it came. But joy defies circumstances. In his book Holy Sweat, Tim Hansel points out that "Joy can coexist with doubt, ambiguity, and pain. It is a contentedness beyond circumstances, an indestructible kind of confidence."

11. *Search your heart on this one. Are you pursuing happiness or joy? (Is Christ your life?)*

That's it for today. Remember, make the choice to rejoice. It's all about perspective!

Fifth Day

Write out your memory verse.

1. *Read Philippians 1:21-30. Does Paul desire to live or die? What seems to be his dilemma?*

2. *How was death a "gain" for Paul? How would Christ be exalted in Paul's death? (vs. 20) Why would his death be loss to the Philippians?*

3. *Paul certainly isn't afraid of death. How about you? What are your thoughts about death? Are you fearful or confident? Why?*

4. *Describe Paul's challenge to the Philippians in verses 27-30. (How does it compare to Ephesians 4:1?)*

The word "worthy" in verse 27 means "to be of equal weight." It means our actions should be consistent with the Gospel of Christ. The phrase "striving together" is an athletic term used to describe "laboring together vigorously" or "wrestling." He wanted them to work hard at being faithful and fearless.

Paul tells them not to be terrified or alarmed by their enemies. This word literally means “a horse shying away from the battlefield.” In other words, don’t look for trouble, but don’t run away from it.

5. Are you afraid of your adversaries? Do you run, or do you stand fast? How does standing together with other believers help us in the battle?

6. According to verse 29, why shouldn’t opposition and suffering catch us by surprise?

7. How should knowing that opposition will come help calm our fears?

8. Paul had faced opposition and was coming forth as gold. (vs. 30) How can we use our own experiences to comfort others?

Remember ... it’s all about perspective. Keep your eyes on Jesus, not on your problems. Some people worship their problems more regularly than God. Don’t allow them to govern your behavior, or allow your life to revolve around them. It’s all about Him. To live is Christ, to die is gain. God bless you!

“God is the author of the Gospel: those who defend it may therefore expect deliverance and victory from Him as surely as those who resist it may expect to incur His judgment.”

F.F. Bruce