

### Philippians – The Blueprint for Joy #3

We continue our study of the book of Philippians. We have seen thus far that Paul writes one of the most joy-filled letters ever written. Last week we discovered the difference between happiness and joy. Happiness is rather short-lived at times. It seems it's mostly on the surface, based on circumstances. Joy is much deeper. It's based on our relationship with Jesus. Can I ask you this question? What does it take to steal your joy? I personally think the security of our joy in our hearts is directly related to our spiritual character. Our level of spiritual maturity and strength will always be directly correlated to how secure our joy is in our hearts. You see, only when Christ truly reigns in our hearts can we really have joy. As Paul wrote this letter to the Philippians, he remembered his time fondly with the church at Philippi and we looked last week at the three prayer concerns that he had for the church and really for all Christians. Remember the 3 prayer concerns; that your love may abound, also that we will have a sense of discernment of what is best for our lives and that we would display the fruits of righteousness. The letter is written while Paul is in chains at a prison in Rome. He really writes the letter in order to answer some questions the church at Philippi had and to respond in thanks for sending an offering and also for sending Epaphroditus. The questions he answered don't come until Philippians 2:25 and Philippians 4:18, 19. Basically the church at Philippi wanted to know how the Gospel message was continuing now that he was in jail and also about his personal condition. Our support text for today is Philippians 1:12-14

#### Philippians 1:12-14

<sup>12</sup> Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, <sup>13</sup> so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, <sup>14</sup> and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.

Let's look more closely at verse 12 where Paul begins to answer the question how was the message of the Gospel continuing. Next week we will answer the question of how he was doing personally.

#### Philippians 1:12

<sup>12</sup> Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel,

Paul had joy in spite of trouble. "Now I want you to know" – a common use of words in ancient letters. Paul was pointing to the importance of what he was about to write. It's almost like the town crier who yelled "hear ye hear ye". What he is about to say should be read very carefully. He calls them brethren. It signifies the intimate relationship he had with the church at Philippi. Paul understood that his circumstances, although not pleasant on the outside, had really worked out better than he could have imagined. His ministry had not been shut down but instead expanded. The progress of the Gospel was Paul's passion. We might ask ourselves what is our passion. What takes up our time and energy? I don't expect any of us to be as on fire as Paul was, but do we invest some of ourselves into the furtherance of the Gospel?

Let's look at verse 13

#### Philippians 1:13

<sup>13</sup> so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else,

Paul always saw himself as a prisoner because of Christ, not because of any crime he had committed. He was in chains because of his commitment to Jesus. The chains were almost a badge of honor. Paul even referred to them in Ephesians 6:20.

#### Ephesians 6:20

<sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

When Paul says he is an ambassador in chains. Two different Greek words are used for chains. The first is “desmos” which is a long chain which would have secured prisoners in a dungeon. The second word is “halusis”... a short chain like on a wrist. The positive result was that he had become well known to the Praetorian guard as each shift ended and a new one began, he had a new captive audience to share the Gospel with. Have you ever noticed how many captive audiences we have in our life? How about the person cutting your hair, or the person sitting next to you on an airplane. These may be short term captive audiences and Pauls’ were longer, but we may still use the opportunities we have to share the gospel. Each guard had an opportunity to see Paul’s character. Things like his graciousness, his patience, his love, his wisdom and his sense of conviction for the Gospel. Does the world get an opportunity to see that in us? The lesson here is... you don’t have to be chained to a guard. You may be chained to the desk in your office or in front of a class teaching or a sales position you have. My thought is, the more difficult situation you are in, the more you can demonstrate your relationship with Jesus. The transformed life can be displayed at the water cooler, at lunch, or just in everyday situations. You have lots of opportunity, if you just look to display your joy. Have you ever played the word association game? I say a word like “dark” and the first word that comes to your mind is “night” or “black”. I say a word like “blue” and you think of “sky”. Let me try this game with you. Let’s see. What word comes into your mind when I say “smile”? What word comes into your mind when I say the word “ear”? Now, what word comes into your mind when I say the word “Christian”? Be honest with me. How many of you could say the first word that came into your mind was “joy”.

We see that Paul had much success promoting the Gospel while inside the prison walls or better yet, in his cottage. But how about the impact he had in the church, in the city of Rome? Let’s look at verse 14.

#### Philippians 1:14

<sup>14</sup> and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.

Paul’s imprisonment also had impact inside the church in Rome. I’m sure the implication in verse 14 is that the church in Rome lacked courage to share and now because of what they saw in Paul they now became full of boldness. The church’s lack of boldness was understandable. Let me back that up with a verse from Scripture. It’s from Acts 28:22, also written during Paul’s incarceration in Rome. Here’s what was going on outside the prison gates.

#### Acts 28:22

"But we desire to hear from you what your views are; for concerning this sect, it is known to us that it is spoken against everywhere."

Christians were spoken against everywhere. The Roman Christians were saying ‘I don’t want to end up in jail so I’d better keep quiet’. But Matthew 5:14 reminds us that we are the light.

#### Matthew 5:14

<sup>14</sup> “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;

The Roman church was tempted to hide their light under a bushel basket but verse 14 of our text today says that because of Paul's strength other Christians were sharing the Gospel without fear and Paul was able to instill a new confidence in the Roman Christian church.

### **Conclusion**

Let's conclude. The ebb and flow of your life vacillates according to the earthly benefits we receive. But what propels your joy? What is the passion of your life? What do you live for? If you live for the same passion that Paul did, the furtherance of the Gospel, you will pour your life, your time, your energy and your money into the extension of the Gospel. Guess what? You will find your joy there also. It will not waiver according to the ebb and flow of your life. Paul is telling us that his joy was tied to the progress of the Gospel. Paul tells us that we should fix our hearts on the progress of the Gospel and that our joy should be constant as an extension of God's kingdom. Wouldn't it be nice if God spoke to us the same way He spoke to another apostle, Peter, when he saw how Peter's faith would enable the Gospel to prosper.

### **Matthew 16:18**

**<sup>18</sup> I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.**

God reminds us in a nice way when He spoke to Peter when He called Peter the rock. It wasn't Peter that was the rock, but it was the steady constant sense of being firmly planted on the rock of Jesus that is referred to. If we are searching for the difference between happiness and joy we also need to be firmly planted on the Rock. And then even though life's circumstances may change, our sense of joy, if we look at the big picture should never waiver. Let's pray.