

The Book Of Philippians

Philippians Is Paul's Joy Letter

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Philippians

OVERVIEW:

Everyone wants to be happy; we make chasing this elusive ideal a lifelong pursuit: spending money, collecting things, and searching for new experiences. But if happiness depends on our circumstances, what happens when the toys rust, loved ones die, health deteriorates, money is stolen, and the party's over? Often happiness flees and despair sets in.

In contrast to *happiness* stands *joy*. Running deeper and stronger, joy is the quiet, confident assurance of God's love and work in our lives—that he will be there no matter what! Happiness depends on happenings, but joy depends on Christ.

Philippians is Paul's joy letter. The church in that Macedonian city had been a great encouragement to Paul. The Philippian believers had enjoyed a very special relationship with Paul, so he wrote them a personal expression of his love and affection. They had brought him great joy (Phil. 4:1). Philippians is also a joyful book because it emphasizes the real joy of the Christian life. The concept of *rejoicing* or *joy* appears sixteen times in four chapters, and the pages radiate this positive message, culminating in the exhortation to "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" (Phil. 4:4).

In a life dedicated to serving Christ, Paul had faced excruciating poverty, abundant wealth, and everything in between. He even wrote this joyful letter from prison. Whatever the circumstances, Paul had learned to be content (Phil. 4:11-12), finding real joy as he focused all of his attention and energy on knowing Christ (Phil. 3:8) and obeying him (Phil. 3:12-13).

Paul's desire to know Christ above all else is wonderfully expressed in the following words: "What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in him. . . . I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death" (Phil. 3:8-10). May we share Paul's aspiration and seek to know Jesus Christ more and more. Rejoice with Paul in Philippians, and rededicate yourself to finding joy in Christ.

THE BLUEPRINT

Although Paul was writing from prison, joy is a dominant theme in this letter. The secret of his joy is grounded in his relationship with Christ. People today desperately want to be happy but are tossed and turned by daily successes, failures, and inconveniences. Christians are to be joyful in every circumstance, even when things are going badly, even when we feel like complaining, even when no one else is joyful. Christ still reigns, and we still know him, so we can rejoice at all times.

1. Joy in suffering (Phil. 1:1-30)

2 Thes. 3:1-18

Finally, dear brothers and sisters, I ask you to pray for us. Pray first that the Lord's message will spread rapidly and be honored wherever it goes, just as when it came to you. [2] Pray, too, that we will be saved from wicked and evil people, for not everyone believes in the Lord. [3] But the Lord is faithful; he will make you strong and guard you from the evil one. [4] And we are confident in the Lord that you are practicing the things we commanded you, and that you always will. [5] May the Lord bring you into an ever deeper understanding of the love of God and the endurance that comes from Christ.

[6] And now, dear brothers and sisters, we give you this command with the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ: Stay away from any Christian who lives in idleness and doesn't follow the tradition of hard work we gave you. [7] For you know that you ought to follow our example. We were never lazy when we were with you. [8] We never accepted food from anyone without paying for it. We worked hard day and night so that we would not be a burden to any of you. [9] It wasn't that we didn't have the right to ask you to feed us, but we wanted to give you an example to follow. [10] Even while we were with you, we gave you this rule: "Whoever does not work should not eat."

[11] Yet we hear that some of you are living idle lives, refusing to work and wasting time meddling in other people's business. [12] In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we appeal to such people—no, we command them: Settle down and get to work. Earn your own living. [13] And I say to the rest of you, dear brothers and sisters, never get tired of doing good.

[14] Take note of those who refuse to obey what we say in this letter. Stay away from them so they will be ashamed. [15] Don't think of them as enemies, but speak to them as you would to a Christian who needs to be warned.

[16] May the Lord of peace himself always give you his peace no matter what happens. The Lord be with you all.

[17] Now here is my greeting, which I write with my own hand—Paul. I do this at the end of all my letters to prove that they really are from me.

[18] May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

2. Joy in serving (Phil. 2:1-30)

Philip. 2:1-30

Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and sympathetic? [2] Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one heart and purpose.

[3] Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. [4] Don't think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing.

[5] Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had. [6] Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. [7] He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form. [8] And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death on a cross. [9] Because of this, God raised him up to the heights of heaven and gave him a name that is above every other name, [10] so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

[12] Dearest friends, you were always so careful to follow my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away you must be even more careful to put into action God's saving work in your lives, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. [13] For God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey him and the power to do what pleases him.

[14] In everything you do, stay away from complaining and arguing, [15] so that no one can speak a word of blame against you. You are to live clean, innocent lives as children of God in a dark world full of crooked and perverse people. Let your lives shine brightly before them. [16] Hold tightly to the word of life, so that when Christ returns, I will be proud that I did not lose the race and that my work was not useless. [17] But even if my life is to be poured out like a drink offering to complete the sacrifice of your faithful service (that is, if I am to die for you), I will rejoice, and I want to share my joy with all of you. [18] And you should be happy about this and rejoice with me.

[19] If the Lord Jesus is willing, I hope to send Timothy to you soon. Then when he comes back, he can cheer me up by telling me how you are getting along. [20] I have no one else like Timothy, who genuinely cares about your welfare. [21] All the others care only for themselves and not for what matters to Jesus Christ. [22] But you know how Timothy has proved himself. Like a son with his father, he has helped me in preaching the Good News. [23] I hope to send him to you just as soon as I find out what is going to happen to me here. [24] And I have confidence from the Lord that I myself will come to see you soon.

[25] Meanwhile, I thought I should send Epaphroditus back to you. He is a true brother, a faithful worker, and a courageous soldier. And he was your messenger to help me in my need. [26] Now I am sending him home again, for he has been longing to see you, and he was very distressed that you heard he was ill. [27] And he surely was ill; in fact, he almost died. But God had mercy on him—and also on me, so that I would not have such unbearable sorrow.

[28] So I am all the more anxious to send him back to you, for I know you will be glad to see him, and that will lighten all my cares. [29] Welcome him with Christian love and with great joy, and be sure to honor people like him. [30] For he risked his life for the work of Christ, and he was at the point of death while trying to do for me the things you couldn't do because you were far away.

3. Joy in believing (Phil. 3:1-4:1)

Philip. 3:1-4:1

Whatever happens, dear brothers and sisters, may the Lord give you joy. I never get tired of telling you this. I am doing this for your own good.

[2] Watch out for those dogs, those wicked men and their evil deeds, those mutilators who say you must be circumcised to be saved. [3] For we who worship God in the Spirit are the only ones who are truly circumcised. We put no confidence in human effort. Instead, we boast about what Christ Jesus has done for us.

[4] Yet I could have confidence in myself if anyone could. If others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more! [5] For I was circumcised when I was eight days old, having been born into a pure-blooded Jewish family that is a branch of the tribe of Benjamin. So I am a real Jew if there ever was one! What's more, I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. [6] And zealous? Yes, in fact, I harshly persecuted the church. And I obeyed the Jewish law so carefully that I was never accused of any fault.

[7] I once thought all these things were so very important, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. [8] Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the priceless gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I may have Christ [9] and become one with him. I no longer count on my own goodness or my ability to obey God's law, but I trust Christ to save me. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith. [10] As a result, I can really know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I can learn what it means to suffer with him, sharing in his death, [11] so that, somehow, I can experience the resurrection from the dead!

[12] I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection! But I keep working toward that day when I will finally be all that Christ Jesus saved me for and wants me to be. [13] No, dear brothers and sisters, I am still not all I should be, but I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, [14] I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us up to heaven.

[15] I hope all of you who are mature Christians will agree on these things. If you disagree on some point, I believe God will make it plain to you. [16] But we must be sure to obey the truth we have learned already.

[17] Dear brothers and sisters, pattern your lives after mine, and learn from those who follow our example. [18] For I have told you often before, and I say it again with tears in my eyes, that there are many whose conduct shows they are really enemies of the cross of Christ. [19] Their future is eternal destruction. Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things, and all they think about is this life here on earth. [20] But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. [21] He will take these weak mortal bodies of ours and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same mighty power that he will use to conquer everything, everywhere.

[4:1] Dear brothers and sisters, I love you and long to see you, for you are my joy and the reward for my work. So please stay true to the Lord, my dear friends.

4. Joy in giving (Phil. 4:2-23)

Philip. 4:2-23

And now I want to plead with those two women, Euodia and Syntyche. Please, because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement. [3] And I ask you, my true teammate, to help these women, for they worked hard with me in telling others the Good News. And they worked with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are written in the Book of Life.

[4] Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! [5] Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.

[6] Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. [7] If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

[8] And now, dear brothers and sisters, let me say one more thing as I close this letter. Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. [9] Keep putting into practice all you learned from me and heard from me and saw me doing, and the God of peace will be with you.

[10] How grateful I am, and how I praise the Lord that you are concerned about me again. I know you have always been concerned for me, but for a while you didn't have the chance to help me. [11] Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to get along happily whether I have much or little. [12] I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. [13] For I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need. [14] But even so, you have done well to share with me in my present difficulty.

[15] As you know, you Philippians were the only ones who gave me financial help when I brought you the Good News and then traveled on from Macedonia. No other church did this. [16] Even when I was in Thessalonica you sent help more than once. [17] I don't say this because I want a gift from you. What I want is for you to receive a well-earned reward because of your kindness.

[18] At the moment I have all I need—more than I need! I am generously supplied with the gifts you sent me with Epaphroditus. They are a sweet-smelling sacrifice that is acceptable to God and pleases him. [19] And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus. [20] Now glory be to God our Father forever and ever. Amen.

[21] Give my greetings to all the Christians there. The brothers who are with me here send you their greetings. [22] And all the other Christians send their greetings, too, especially those who work in Caesar's palace.

[23] May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

MEGATHEMES

THEME: Humility

EXPLANATION:

Christ showed true humility when he laid aside his rights and privileges as God to become human. He poured out his life to pay the penalty we deserve. Laying aside self-interest is essential to all our relationships.

IMPORTANCE:

We are to take Christ's attitude in serving others. We must renounce personal recognition and merit. When we give up our self-interest, we can serve with joy, love, and kindness.

THEME: Self-sacrifice while he was in prison.

EXPLANATION:

Christ suffered and died so we might have eternal life. With courage and faithfulness, Paul sacrificed himself for the ministry. He preached the gospel even

IMPORTANCE:

Christ gives us power to lay aside our personal needs and concerns. To utilize his power, we must imitate those leaders who show self-denying concern for others. We dare not be self-centered.

THEME: Unity

EXPLANATION:

In every church, in every generation, there are divisive influences (issues, loyalties, and conflicts). In the midst of hardships, it is easy to turn on one another. Paul encouraged the Philippians to agree with one another, stop complaining, and work together.

IMPORTANCE:

As believers, we should contend against a common enemy, not against one another. When we are unified in love, Christ's strength is most abundant. Keep before you the ideals of teamwork, consideration of others, and unselfishness.

THEME: Christian living

EXPLANATION:

Paul shows us how to live successful Christian lives. We can become mature by being so identified with Christ that his attitude of humility and self-sacrifice rules us. Christ is both our source of power and our guide.

IMPORTANCE:

Developing our character begins with God's work in us. But growth also requires discipline, obedience, and relentless concentration on our part.

THEME: Joy

EXPLANATION:

Believers can have profound contentment, serenity, and peace no matter what happens. This joy comes from knowing Christ personally and from depending on his strength rather than our own.

IMPORTANCE:

We can have joy, even in hardship. Joy does not come from outward circumstances but from inward strength. As Christians, we must not rely on what we have or what we experience to give us joy, but on Christ within us.

An invitation is given to open your heart's door.

Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print