



The Joy of Being Thankful

Coming into Thanksgiving, we enter the 'holiday season' where there is an intentional emphasis on joy, happiness, and family. But as we all know, this season can also be stressful, overwhelming, and even lonely. This often stems from the secular expectations the world puts on us or that our fulfillment is coming from the wrong places. Today we'll look at where true joy can be found, regardless of what is going on around us.

As we've seen in the first few verses of his epistle, Paul was exceedingly grateful, thankful, and joyful for the Philippians. They blessed him with resources and gifts in a time when he was in great need, and they boldly participated with him in furthering of the gospel.

He wrote in [Philippians 1:7-8](#), ***"For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me. For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus."***

Called personally by the risen Lord to be an apostle, Paul had been promised that he would suffer much for the gospel of Christ ([Acts 9:16](#)). His imprisonment in a Roman jail, where he wrote this epistle, certainly qualified as a time when Paul was suffering. The encouragement and support of the Christians in Philippi clearly meant a great deal to Paul. He took much pleasure in the godly fruit this church was bearing, so much so as even to seemingly defend it by saying that it was ***"only right for me to feel this way about you all."*** Paul was not only thankful for the physical blessings, but also the rich spiritual blessing these believers provided him in his time of need.

As we saw last week, in the previous verse Paul commented on how confident he was that God would continue the good work He began in these believers until the day of Christ ([Phil 1:6](#)).

In the same thread, he then acknowledged how the Philippian church was ***"in his heart"*** because through his ***"imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel"*** they were all ***"partakers of grace"*** with him. To Paul, the gospel was the most important thing in the world (cf: [Phil 1:18](#), [1:21](#), [3:7](#)). The gospel being preached and believers flourishing in the truth and knowledge of Christ surpassed everything else this



world could pretend to offer Paul. As we read further into Philippians, we see how he relished and celebrated the upstanding and fitting behavior of these believers, as well as the evidence of their truth faith in Christ.

Herein Paul found real joy. His present physical circumstances were overshadowed by the warm and heartfelt love of the church he planted. We read in [Philippians 4:1](#) that Paul said of these believers, ***“therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.”*** This agape love Paul had for the church caused him to ***“long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.”***

This season, let's not allow the fake and fleeting happiness the world tries to offer up as pleasure to get in the way of the real source of joy in life: being loved, chosen, and redeemed by our Lord Jesus Christ and sharing the blessings He has poured on us with others. And we should remember to receive the genuine joy of seeing others come to a deeper and more profound faith in Christ. This should be our goal, just as it was our brother Paul's.

The perfect turkey dinner or lots of gifts under the tree are evanescent moments which can be enjoyed, however true and lasting joy comes only from loving and serving the Lord. The more we pour ourselves out for Him, the more He pours into us through His Holy Spirit. Let this be our aim and goal as we give thanks for all the Lord has done for and through us as we surrender our will and lives to Him.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7

~Associate Pastor Jeremy Preece