

JOY IN SERVING JESUS

TEXT: PHIL. 2:17-30

Introduction:

1. There was a great preacher up in Canada, by the name of Oswald Smith. He wrote many hymns, such as “Saved, Saved, Saved. My sins are all forgiven.”
2. Another one of his hymns is “Joy in Serving Jesus.”
3. “There is joy, joy, joy in serving Jesus, Joy that throbs within my heart;
Every moment, every hour, As I draw upon His power,
There is joy, joy, joy that never shall depart.”
4. As we have seen in our study in Philippians, true joy only comes through serving Jesus. I like what Scofield says in his introduction: “Christian experience, he (Paul) would teach us, is not something which is going on around the believer, but something which is going on within him.”
5. Tonight, as we move towards the end of chapter 2, we once again see this great theme of Christian joy (2:17, 18). And once again, we see that this joy comes through serving Jesus.
6. Tonight we will look at three servants of the Lord and see how each of them was faithful in exhibiting the mind of Christ (cf. 2:5): Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus.

I. THE APOSTLE PAUL (2:17).

1. The Scofield Bible calls this, “The apostolic example.”
2. “Sacrifice and service” (2:17) are at the heart of true Christianity, but we hear very little of it today.
3. Here Paul is referring to the drink offering, well known not only to Jews but to Gentiles as well (cf. Gen. 35:14, 15).
4. The Lord Jesus Christ has already made the supreme sacrifice on the cross. Paul is saying, “I want my life to be poured out like a drink offering on the offering of Christ.”
5. The drink offering was quickly consumed by the fire. It went up in smoke and steam and disappeared. Paul wanted to be so consumed and obscured that all that is seen is just the Lord Jesus Christ. He wanted the Lord to receive all the glory and honor.
6. Harry Ironside said Paul “was one who ever sought to judge himself in the light of the cross of Christ, with the power of Christ resting upon him.”
7. This scripture also suggests Paul was ready to lay down his life for the Gospel (cf. II Tim. 4:6-8). He knew that his upcoming trial could result in his execution. But this did not affect his joy.

8. Paul's dedication was cause for others to rejoice (Phil. 2:17b, 18).

II. TIMOTHY (2:19-23)

1. Sometimes wives with unsaved husbands think that it is very hard to raise their children in the faith. Remember that Timothy had a godly mother and grandmother and an unsaved father (cf. Acts 16: 1, 2; II Tim. 1:5; 3:15).
2. Paul was hoping to send Timothy to Philippi in the near future so that he would be comforted by the good report (2:19).
3. Paul pays Timothy a great compliment by describing him as "like-minded" with him (2:20). Paul could trust Timothy.
4. He knew that Timothy was unselfish and dedicated. Unfortunately, this was not the case with other men (2:21). They had become so absorbed with their own worldly interests that they had little time for the work of God (2:21).
5. Our biggest problem today is that so many Christians lack commitment. They are not dependable. They are not consistent. They are not reliable. It is hard to build a church with this kind of unfaithfulness.
6. Many just want to show up on Sunday morning at 11:00 and that's it – no S.S., no evening service, no prayer meeting, etc. Many Christians never go out soulwinning, never get involved in the church, etc.
7. It gets discouraging sometime. That is why Paul wrote: "For all seek their own..." (2:21).
8. Timothy was Paul's son in the faith. He had proven himself not only to Paul, but to all that knew him – "But ye know the proof of him..." (2:22).
9. Paul wanted to send Timothy to the Philippians "as soon as I shall see how it will go with me" (2:23, 24), in other words, as soon as he learned the outcome of his appeal to Caesar. Tradition has it that he was released from prison but this is not recorded in the Bible. We do know that he was eventually executed by the Roman government.

III. EPAPHRODITUS (2:25; 4:18).

1. According to Scofield (*Dictionary of Scripture Proper Names*, p. 17), his name means "handsome." His name literally means, "favored of Aphrodite" (the Greek goddess of love and beauty, answering to the Roman goddess Venus). This indicates that his parents were heathens.
2. Paul speaks highly of Epaphroditus, calling him "my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow soldier" (2:25). Someone said the Christian life is one of "building and battling." One thinks of Nehemiah,

- rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem with his sword in one hand and his trowel in the other (Neh. 4:17).
3. In addition to being a loyal fellowsoldier and hard worker, Epaphroditus was their “messenger” (2:25b). While not as well known as Paul and Timothy, Epaphroditus was a humble man of God who “ministered” to Paul’s wants.
 4. Phil. 2:26 is an interesting verse. Epaphroditus “had been sick.” In fact he was very sick – “For indeed he was sick nigh unto death” (2:27a). The news of his sickness got back to the saints in Philippi and they were concerned for him. This caused Epaphroditus to be “full of heaviness” – not for his own condition but for theirs (cf. 2:20, 21, 30).
 5. Phil. 2:27 exposes the error of faith healing. Certain Pentecostals and charismatics teach that there is healing in the atonement, that it is always God’s will to heal, etc. There is no question but that Epaphroditus was a godly man and that God chose not to heal him right away – he almost died, “nigh unto death” (2:27, 30).
 6. There are several other examples in the N.T. Paul had a “thorn in the flesh” (II Cor. 12:7-9). Timothy had stomach problems (I Tim. 5:23). And Paul left Trophimus in Miletum sick (II Tim. 4:20). Obviously, none of these men subscribed to the modern “faith healer” heresy.
 7. Instead of mourning, Paul wanted them to rejoice (Phil. 2:28-30).
 8. Note the respect they were to have for this man of God (2:29).
 9. Whenever we are tempted to get discouraged, we need to remember Epaphroditus, Timothy, and Paul – laboring for the Lord in the pagan cities of Ephesus, Philippi, Rome, etc.

CONCLUSION: A preacher once made an interesting statement. He said that in a very real sense, all of us live in either Phil. 1:21 or Phil. 2:21. Where are you?