

**Subject: *The Satisfying Spring of Christian Joy***

**Scripture: *Philippians 4:1-4***

Paul closes this letter by writing about three special blessings of the Christian life: joy, peace, and contentment. In our text he deals with Christian joy and the key verse is 4:4. Joy is a prominent theme in this letter and so it's often called the epistle of joy.

Years ago I enjoyed visiting my great-grandmother who lived in Chuckey, TN. It was like a trip back in time—the wood-burning stove, the pails of spring water on her porch, and the outhouse. I remember getting a dipper of that cool, clear spring water. That's the image that came to mind as I was thinking about our Christian joy. The joy of the Lord is always satisfying.

### **1. THE WORLD'S SEARCH FOR JOY**

People are constantly searching for joy, but they usually settle for happiness. They may find a measure of happiness in pleasures, possessions, or other people. But that's not the same as joy. It is the same way with love. People are searching for love, but they settle for lust and romance which are only cheap substitutes. Happiness depends on what happens. It depends on circumstances. If circumstances happen to be good, then people are happy, and if circumstances happen to be bad, they are unhappy. But real joy is constant and doesn't fluctuate depending on circumstances. Paul wrote this epistle of joy to the Philippians while he was a prisoner in jail.

### **2. THE BELIEVER'S SOURCE OF JOY**

Christian joy can only be found in Christ (vs. 4, "rejoice in the Lord"). The phrase "in Christ" is one of Paul's favorites. It describes the relationship a believer has with Christ. It is a spiritual union with Christ that begins in salvation. This is a spiritual union that is maintained by faith and obedience. To understand how our joy is in the Lord let's look at two scriptures:

***John 15:1-11***

***1 John 1:1-4***

There is joy in knowing Christ as your Lord and Savior. There is joy in having eternal life in Christ. If a person is not united to Christ by faith and obedience there is no Christian joy. The old song says it best, "*Trust and obey, for there's no other way, to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.*"

### **3. THE SPECIAL NATURE OF CHRISTIAN JOY**

Joy is different from happiness. Joy does not ultimately depend on circumstances.

They can change, but you can still have joy. Isaiah 53 describes Christ as "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," but He still had a deep joy that sustained and satisfied Him. Paul was in prison when he wrote Philippians, but he still had joy (Phil. 4:4).

Joy does not ultimately depend on other people. They can disappoint you, but you can still have joy. Paul refers to two ladies in verses 2-3, who were at odds with each other and this may have caused trouble in the church body. Even though he knew about these women, Paul still had joy

(Phil. 1:3-4, Paul prayed for this church, “making request with joy”). Some people were making Paul’s life even more difficult, but he still had joy (Phil. 1:15-18).

Sometimes we find great joy in other people. Of course that includes our family, but also our church family and dear Christian friends (see Phil. 4:1, “my joy and crown”).

**3 John 1:4** *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*

But people can be unfaithful, so our joy doesn’t depend on people alone.

**2 Timothy 4:9-10** *Be diligent to come to me quickly; for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world...*

**2 Timothy 4:16** *At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them.*

Joy does not depend on events or special times. Paul writes (vs. 4), “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice.”

**1 Thessalonians 5:16** *Rejoice evermore.*

A. Christian joy is based on our faith in Christ – “rejoice in the Lord”

Unlike circumstances, Christ will never change. Unlike people, Christ will never let you down. We can rejoice in the Lord despite our circumstances. We can rejoice in the Lord despite other people. We can rejoice in the Lord all the time, not just special times.

B. Christian joy is based on knowing the person and work of Christ

Puritan pastor Isaac Ambrose (1591-1664) wrote a large book on the person and work of Christ called, *Looking unto Jesus*. The introduction of the book tells about his custom every year to spend one month in a little hut out in the woods where he would give himself to study, prayer, and meditation. In his book Isaac Ambrose writes about the life and ministry of Christ from eternity past to eternity future. The things that many Christians take for granted were the very things that captivated the heart and mind of this godly man. He writes about “knowing Jesus as carrying on the great work of our salvation” in His eternal existence, His birth, His years of ministry, His suffering, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, and His second coming. Then he makes application of this truth in eight ways: considering Jesus in that way, desiring after Jesus in that way, hoping in Jesus, believing in Jesus, loving Jesus, calling on Jesus, conforming to Jesus, and rejoicing in Jesus. We rejoice in the Lord if we know who He is and what He does.

C. Christian joy is based on our hope of being with Christ one day

**Hebrews 10:34** *For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.*

**Colossians 3:2** *Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*

Paul had a wonderful ministry on earth, but his mind was always on the things of heaven (see Phil. 4:3 (“whose names are written in heaven”) and Phil. 4:5 (“the Lord is at hand”).

During His three years of ministry Christ sent out a group of 70 disciples to minister in His name. We should pay attention to what happened and learn an important lesson about joy.

***Luke 10:17-22***

Christ reminded His disciples that the primary reason for joy is to know their names are written in heaven. And even Christ rejoiced in God's sovereign and gracious plan to reveal the truth about salvation to babes instead of wise men.

The most satisfying joy is to know that you are saved and that the only reason you are saved is the grace of God who revealed salvation to you and opened your spiritual eyes to see Christ and receive Him.