

Philippians 1:3-11 (NKJV)

³ I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,
⁴ always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy,
⁵ for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,
⁶ being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ;
⁷ just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.
⁸ For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.
⁹ And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment,
¹⁰ that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ,
¹¹ being filled with the fruits of righteousness which *are* by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Who of us does not want to **live** in joy?

Who does not like the **experience** of joy? Of having that deep satisfaction that it is **well with my soul**? And that **happiness** that results?

Well, I think it is safe to say that none of us come by this state of being **naturally**. That is why it is difficult to maintain.

Our natural tendency is to believe **that sure**, it is easy for the people whose lives are **going well** to have joy. It is easy for them if they do not have **my** difficult situations to have joy. It is easy when relationships are **going well** to have joy. It is easy when one is not experiencing **tragedy** and **heartbreak** to have joy. But no one can really expect me in **my circumstances** to have joy. That is just unreasonable.

Well Philippians is a book that will show us exactly how to **maintain joy** through all circumstances. As we go through this study I will try to remember to point out how **this theme** runs through Philippians. And we are being taught by someone who has put his money where his mouth is. So **he shows** us **how** to have joy by **example**. And **he tells** us **how** to have joy by his **instruction**.

Paul shows us how and tells us how. It doesn't matter what learning style we have, we can learn **joy** at the competent hands of **Paul**.

Let's hear what he says with an ear to joy.

³ **I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,**
⁴ **always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy,**
⁵ **for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,**
⁶ **being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;**

What is the first thing we see this morning? Where is Paul's focus.

Now let's put this in focus.

Paul is in Rome. He is under house arrest. There are lots of negative complications as a result of this.

First, Paul was given a mission to do. He was to spread the gospel primarily where it has never gone before.

Now Paul is chained to a guy in a house that he cannot leave. If you were Paul, how would you have processed that? What would you have done? Have you ever considered that the difference in how **we** would process it and how **he** processed it could easily be the difference why **he** had joy in situations where **we** rarely have joy?

Paul was given a mission by God that he **cannot accomplish** in his current situation.

Paul has also been robbed of his ability to **provide for himself** and his team.

Paul has always, by his own tenacity and ambition, provided money for himself by his own hands when needed. He was not one to ever accept the **lack of money** as an obstacle to the gospel. He would just get out and earn it along with the hard work of evangelism and discipleship he was doing.

Imagine tomorrow you lost all known sources of income for your family or for yourself. Bang. No income. Would that be a sufficient excuse for us to not have joy.

After all, how can you possibly have joy in that situation? Well, Paul did.

Paul also lost all ability to **socialize** with the people he wanted to be with. He could **not go to them** and most of them could **not come to be with him**. He had lost much of the fellowship group that he was accustomed to. It looks like for the most part he just had Timothy. And Timothy was a kid compared to Paul. How can a person have joy when he is robbed of the fellowship he so richly desire? Isn't that absence a good spiritual reason to not have joy? Well not for Paul. He still has joy.

Paul is also powerless against the big political machine that was Rome. He could do nothing about the powers that be. And you can rest assured that they were very corrupt and they were leading the country to its demise. And Paul was a victim of the political system's injustice. It wasn't fair that he was

under arrest. Is **that** not reason that we are sometimes robbed of our joy? Well let's watch how Paul handles it. Because it does not rob **him** of joy. And Paul was robbed of all privacy. He was chained to a stranger for most, if not all, of the day. Can you imagine that? There is nowhere to go to get away from this intrusion. You know how sometimes we go to a private place in our home just to be alone. That may not seem like much until you have to endure not having it. He had no place to go to just process things. This person was always with him, chained to him. Would that not be something we would want to whine about incessantly? Or at least complain about some. Well let's learn from our teacher Paul. How did **he** think about it? Because that situation did not steal his joy.

So was Paul just so idealistic that he was not even noticing the things that were happening to him? I think we all know enough about Paul to know that he was always **totally realistic**. He had a very good grasp on reality.

Did Paul have a spirituality that we are **incapable of**? For sure that is not the case because he actively goes on to teach us how to be like he is. Paul was just a person much like us. And above all He trusted the sovereign provision of God.

So how can we learn what Paul learned? How can we live in joy more like he did? How can we stop things from stealing our joy?

I think we need to start by **confessing our excuses**. Is there any place in your life where you say "if someone else had my situation, they would not have joy either"? If someone had my history, if they had my medical condition, if they had my psychological makeup, if they experienced the tragedy I did, if they had my difficult job, if they had my difficult spouse or family, if they had to face what I have to face, they would not have joy either.

That is the best place to start. Because no matter what example we bring up we can find examples of people in scripture who faced all those things and still maintained their joy.

Now we have talked about this joy before. This joy has its share of ambivalence, **feeling conflicting things strongly** at the same time. The deep feeling of well being resides along with the legitimate sorrows, even gut wrenching sorrows in our lives. Paul did not live free of sorrow or turmoil. But those feelings and the situations that cultivated them did not steal his joy, or at least not for long.

So this joy is not a giddy superficial happiness. But it does break out into that state from time to time when free to. It does break into true happy emotions at times when the coast is clear. At least that is how I understand it.

Ok so let's learn a little about how Paul went about his life that cultivated this state of joy.

3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy,

5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,

6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

The word for **thank** here is *eucharisteō*

It is the same word the English word Eucharist comes from. Eucharist is normally a word referring to the Lord's Supper and it means giving thanks to Christ for **who He is and what He has done.**

It simply means to **give thanks** for something.

Have you ever noticed the relationship between how much people **trust** God and how much people **thank** God?

Think about that.

How much do you feel compelled **to thank** people that you do **not trust**?

Carla tells me about people in her family that she was required to show things like appreciation and positive affection to that were very difficult for her.

Because down deep she did not trust that they were ultimately **for** her. Her **distrust** impeded those responses.

It is the same with God. If we are not quick to **thank** God, even when we are facing hard things, it is more than likely that we do not, deep in our hearts believe that this **God is for us.** He loves us. He is delivering what is going to be best for us.

If you want to be a joyful person, do the thanks test. **Can you honestly thank God in everything without feeling you are violating reason? Can you trust God enough to thank Him?**

Trust is a **foundation** of **thanks.** And giving thanks is an **action of trust,** a **symptom** of trust. And thanksgiving both leads to the **experience of joy** and is an **expression** of that joy.

I am convinced if we were to simply do what scripture tells us, and make giving thanks a disciplined part of our day, we would find many things to be thankful for and we would spend less time thinking about the things that make us miserable.

Now let's look at this sentence again.

3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

Then skip to verse 5

5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,

Paul is always thankful for fellow believers because they are...well... fellow believers. They share the miracle of God's gracious salvation. If they are **children of God** they are **valued brothers** to Paul. But we don't always see Paul be **so enthusiastic** about the reason. These people have given Paul even more reason to be thankful.

These people shared Paul's heart and were actively **carrying out** the same kinds of things that were so central to Paul's mission. The word for fellowship here is koinonia. This is sharing something in common. Some people share a sports team. Some share a social organization. These people share Christ and the mission of Christ.

Brother William Hendriksen expands on this fellowship concept. These are things we have koinonia fellowship in. The list isn't comprehensive but they are mentioned in scripture.

They are *grace, faith, prayer and thanksgiving, love, service, contributing to the needs of others, separation from the world, and spiritual warfare*.

MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Philippians.

Those are the shared things that we are intertwined because of. When we think to fellowship, it is those kinds of things that our fellowship is based on. Remember how our brother Pawson explained that what happens to one happens to all. I really liked how he explained it.

These Philippian brothers and sisters caught the heart of what Paul was **trying to do** and they are **actively engaged**. They show that they are like-hearted by their like focus. They not only have good intentions. Their intentions turn into actions. They have the fellowship of Christ, but we will go on to see in this letter they are actively involved in not just **believing** the gospel but in **spreading** it.

If you had been given the mission Paul was given, wouldn't it just warm your heart to have people like this to **think about** and **pray for**?

It is always a good thing to keep our lives focused on the mission Christ gave us. It is good when we are actively involved in **evangelism and discipleship**.

It is good when our lives are dedicated to **serving** as opposed to **being served**. When leadership is doing what they should do, their most pleasant fellowship is with those **most engaged** in the same mission. These people in Philippians have **made themselves a joy** to Paul, people he could easily find reasons to give thanks for.

³ I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

⁴ always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy,

I think Paul gives us a little clue here about how he prayed for people. He appears to have prayed for them when he thought of them. He thanks God upon **every remembrance**. That is a good model for us to follow. When you think of a fellow believer, **give thanks for them** then **ask stuff for them**. It is difficult to imagine going too far wrong if we practiced this. Maybe you think of something irritating about me. Maybe you are thinking of how to deal with it. Wouldn't **praying for me** in that context be a great thing to do to keep the perspective straight? When we think of each other we should **pray** for each other. That is also something Paul did that tended to affect his joy.

And notice that his thanks was not just **left** at thanks. He did the work for them as well. He asked requests of God for them. We don't have to guess too much about what kinds of prayers he prayed. His prayers are often written out in Paul's letters.

Here is an example

Ephesians 1:17-23 (NKJV) Paul prayed

17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,

18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power

20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,

23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Nearly always his prayers are for believers to **know God better**. And it most often includes **increased understanding** of the truths of God. It is mostly about **growth** in the things that **our minds** do. He rarely prays that people be delivered out of their suffering. His prayers are usually that they know Christ in such a way that they are prepared **to face** their suffering.

So we don't even need to wonder what kind of prayer Paul was praying for his fellow believers when they came to his mind. He was always praying that they

would be built up in Christ in various ways.

⁵ for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,

We already touched on this earlier. The Philippians believers really were exemplary. They were doing a lot of stuff right. And they were a **cheering section** of Paul's that was not yet corrupted with **dissenting leaders**. They did not have the pro Paul and anti Paul voices. There was false doctrine knocking at the door. But it had not made itself comfortable on the sofa yet. And the Philippians have been on board from the day Paul met with the worshippers down by the water until now. They have a consistent track record of supporting Paul and his ministry. How refreshing to Paul that must have been.

And also, keep in mind these people were sending real tangible help. Theirs were not just good wishes. They were sending **money** and a **cook and housekeeper**. They were providing Paul what he needed to remain fed and healthy. It is good to know that we have people who are on the same page as us. But it is even better when they express this heart by meeting the need.

⁶ being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

To be confident mean to be **persuaded** of something to the point one is **confident** of that thing.

Notice what Paul did not say.

He did not say that I am confident of your salvation because you people are such strong and determined Christians. Evidence in our lives of our salvation is definitely necessary. But that is not what he says. That is not **WHY** Paul is confident.

In fact what Paul is confident does not even mention anything that anyone has done. Again, certainly their lives have **given Paul** an indication that God truly **has** begun a work in them. But the focus is not even on the great changes that God has already brought about in their lives. Look at the focus.

I am confident because of He. I am confident because of God. It is **GOD** who has begun a good work in you. If that is true. If God began that good work, it is impossible that God will not finish it. Remember that God is the author and perfecter of our faith. We did not start it. We do not finish it. We are involved. But we are not the cause.

That is where Sovereign Grace theology and Armenian theology have distinct differences in how they explain this. Sovereign grace theology can own this straight up. We say even our salvation was brought about prior to our exercise of faith. We are **first** made alive in Christ. Then we, **secondly**, express **our faith** in Christ. Armenian theology believes that when we express

our faith that is the **cause** of our regeneration. It believes that we **first** express our faith in Christ and then **secondly** we are made alive in Christ. It is important for us to understand for ourselves what we truly believe.

Jesus promises all believers that "**all that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out... This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day**"

Praise God that God **takes responsibility** for the delivery of His children to heaven. Praise God that it does not ultimately depend upon **us**, though we should live in a way that onlookers might **think** it does.

Remember when we talked about why God should let us into heaven. I think this is another reminder. Why will we be saved? **Because God**. That is the most important principle. Everything else stems from there. Salvation **starts** with what God does and it **continues** with what God does.

As I mentioned, some views of salvation start with **man's decisions**. I believe that to be an understandable error based on our experience.

And then it also seems like **another error** would think that the **completion** of our salvation is **dependent upon** our efforts. After all, it is **we** who are making our discipleship decisions. It is **we** who decide how we are going to respond to God's word and life's situation each day. So it would be easy to think that it is **we** who are either succeeding or failing at the Christian life. But even that is not exactly like what we might think.

Galatians 3:3 (NKJV)

³ Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

The answer in Galatians is clear that it is not the result of human effort on its own that grows us in Christ. Without a doubt, just like in salvation, human effort is affected. Human effort becomes involved in the process. But it is not **the cause**. It is **the effect**. We are made perfect by the Spirit. We are made perfect by God's work in our lives that inspires our work.

We will see this a little later in Philippians where Paul says this

Philippians 2:12-13 (NKJV)

¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.

Without a doubt we must exert great diligence, great effort. Humans do that for anything they think is important. But when we look at it spiritually, when

we look at it from the “above the sun” way that God sees it, what we find out is that it is God **working us to will** and when the will is changed the doing happens. And He still takes responsibility for the cause of the spiritual growth.

Paul is confident that it is **Christ** who will complete it. And that completing of Christians by God will continue until a future date. And the future date is **until the day of Jesus Christ**

This is the day in which we all are glorified. There will be nothing more needing done for our completion or perfection after that date.

What a wonderful thought. What a wonderful event. What a wonderful day. The day of Jesus Christ. The day when what Christ **finished on the cross** becomes **completed in our lives**.

FB Meyer once said this:

We go into the artist's studio and find there unfinished pictures covering large canvases, and suggesting great designs, but which have been left, either because the genius was not competent to complete the work, or because paralysis laid the hand low in death; but as we go into God's great workshop we find nothing that bears the mark of haste or insufficiency of power to finish, and we are sure that the work which His grace has begun, the arm of His strength will complete. (*The Epistle to the Philippians* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1952], 28)

I hope we are seeing some of the components of Paul’s joy.

His joy is couched on his prayers and ministry **for** others and **to** others. He is looking out for the needs of others even when in the midst of his own difficulties. He is **thinking of** others. He is **remembering** others.

He is finding those things in them, where he can, that are worthy of positive consideration.

But he does not stop there. If he did, fear could consume him. There are so many things that could go wrong. There are so many things that could happen.

No this joyful consideration comes back to the foundation of the rock. This is **rock solid theology**.

He has thought about it. He has considered it. He has drawn conclusions. And the conclusions are true. He is confident of this.

If salvation happened, God started it. And since God started it. God will finish it.

That is the solid foundation that joy can rest on. It is confident of the **sovereign plan of God** being **carried to its completion**. And we come full circle. We are back to trust in the character of God as the foundation for our joy.

So I hope we have been challenged this morning to follow Paul's example in having joy and of praying for others intentionally when they come to our minds. It would also be good to apply the joy test.

Can you honestly thank God in everything without feeling you are violating reason? Can you trust God enough to thank Him?