

October 26, 2025 (Lesson 8)

SERVING WITH JOY

1. **Praying With Gratitude and Joy** (Philippians 1:1-11)
2. **Rejoicing in Adversity** (Philippians 1:12-30)
3. **Rejoice Together; Experience God's Peace** (Philippians 2:17-18; 4:4-8)

Central Truth: The joy found in Christ is not dependent on circumstances.

Focus: Learn the value of joy, and serve Christ by praying with joy and rejoicing in all circumstances.

Evangelism Emphasis: Jesus offers joy to all who believe in Him.

Golden Text: “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice” (Philippians 4:4).

Philippi was located in the Roman colony of Macedonia, the northeastern section of Greece.

Although small, the colony was important because it was located on a major east-west Roman travel route. The city of Philippi was diverse, consisting of residents from many different cultures and backgrounds, most of whom were loyal to the Roman Empire. Paul and his companions visited there during his second missionary journey (approximately AD 50; see Acts 16:11-40), making it the first town in Greece, and thus Europe, to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. There he met Lydia, a wealthy cloth dealer, who invited the crew to stay with her (vv. 13-15). He also was temporarily imprisoned there by the city leaders, but was miraculously delivered by a chain-breaking, door-opening earthquake (vv. 16-40).

Paul's letter to the believers in Philippi was written in spring, AD 63 while he was under house arrest in Rome. It is part of the Prison Epistles, which he penned during this time (including his letters to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon). Epaphroditus brought an offering to Paul from the Philippian congregation to help him during his time of need (Phil. 4:18). The apostle was their spiritual father, and they allowed God to work through them to bless him. Paul wrote this epistle and sent it back with Epaphroditus to thank them for their generosity and kindness (2:25). As well, he encouraged them during their own persecution that no matter what circumstances are faced by

individual Christians, or congregations, they must rejoice, for God is in control—a message as relevant today as it was in the first century.

1. PRAYING WITH GRATITUDE AND JOY

A. Thankful and Confident (Philippians 1:1-7)

³ I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, ⁴ Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, ⁵ For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; ⁶ Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷ Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

Following Paul's customary salutation to the church (1:1-2), he recorded an encouraging and unique sentiment (v. 3). Every time the church entered his thoughts, it produced thankfulness for them and gratitude to God for His work in their lives and their response and acceptance thereof. He usually expressed thankfulness for the churches in the letters written to them, but this is the only place he used the phrase "upon every remembrance of you." This church held a special place in his heart.

Further, whenever Paul did think of them ("always"), especially during prayer, he joyfully interceded on their behalf (v. 4). "Every prayer" conveys that every time he prayed to God on behalf of others, he brought requests for them (his prayer list?). Each time he made those requests, it produced an emotion of joyful rejoicing ("with joy"; see 2:2; Acts 13:52). *Joy* is the inward state or continual attitude of great delight and gladness that results in outward expressions and evidence. Joy is based on reason and faith, founded on our relationship (past, present, and future) with Jesus Christ, and empowered by the continual presence and provision of the Holy Spirit (John 15:11; 1 Thess. 1:6; Rom. 14:17).

Paul informed them of the reason for this gladness (v. 5). They chose to be active and engaged participants (“fellowship”) with him. The term Paul used (*koinonia*) suggests they did not see themselves as simply generous supporters (though they were; see 4:18), but as partners with him in spreading the magnificent and life-changing news (“gospel”) of Jesus Christ. They had done this from the time he first preached the Gospel to them, approximately ten years earlier (see Acts 16:11-40).

Further, Paul expressed he was completely persuaded (“confident”) of two things (v. 6). First, their foundation was sure because it was created by the redemptive provision (“good works”) of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:2-3; Eph. 2:4-10). Second, what God started He would bring to wholeness and perfection (Heb. 13:20-21; 1 Thess. 5:23-24). This sanctifying process (laying down our desires to embrace God’s love and will), however, will not be completed until the “day” Jesus Christ appears and we are completely transformed (1 John 3:1-3).

The Philippian saints had a righteous and deeply emotional (“in my heart”) relationship with Paul (Phil. 1:7a). They supported him financially, prayerfully, and emotionally through three distinct aspects of his legal process (v. 7b). First, they walked alongside of him (“partakers”) when he was in prison (“bonds”). Second, they accompanied him during his “defense” proceedings before a judge. Third, they were there when he presented evidence to confirm his innocence (“confirmation”). This legal process was because of “the gospel.” Notice, Paul did not call them “partakers” of his affliction, but rather, partners with him in “grace”—the totality of God’s redemptive interaction with humanity. For this, he was willing to suffer—and so were the Philippians.

Friendship and Fellowship

There is a brotherhood within the body of believers, and the Lord Jesus Christ is the common denominator. Friendship and fellowship are the legal tender among believers.—J. Vernon McGee

B. Affectionate and Focused (Philippians 1:8-11)

⁸ For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. ⁹ And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; ¹⁰ That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ. ¹¹ Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

It is no wonder the Philippians held such a special place in the deepest, most emotional part of Paul's being. He greatly desired for them in the depths of his being ("long . . . in the bowels") the full provision of the grace found only in Jesus Christ (v. 8).

In verse 9, Paul's prayer for the Philippians shifted from thanksgiving to specific petitions on their behalf. He used the common term for "prayer"—the redeemed communing with the Redeemer—and showed praying can include making specific concerns known to God ("that," or "in order that"). First, he revealed "love" is the source and foundation of who we are, for love is the foundation of God's interaction in our lives (1 John 4:7-12, 19). There are four Greek terms for love: (1) *eros*, love on the physical or elementary plane; (2) *storge*, family affection; (3) *philia*, warm personal friendship or deep affection; (4) *agape*, the core of the entire person as centered in Jesus Christ. *Agape* is the source, guiding force, and boundary for all relationships; therefore, it is God's dimension of love. Anything that usurps that love is idolatrous. *Agape* does not negate but rather enhances the other aspects of love. Paul (and Christ) wanted the believers to richly and abundantly beyond measure overflow with that love ("abound"; Phil. 1:9; 2:2-4; 1 Thess. 3:12-13).

Second, with abounding love as their motivation and gatekeeper, Paul prayed that they grow in three ways (Phil. 1:9-10): (1) "knowledge" resulting from the process of discovering, learning, and coming to a full understanding of Paul's goal for them; (2) "all judgment," the ability to clearly

perceive and, thus, completely understand an issue; (3) the ability to carefully examine and determine (“approve”) the good (the urgent) from the things that are truly important (“excellent”). All this was building toward the ultimate goal of a full comprehension of and surrender to Christ and His kingdom and the implications such knowledge had for them (see v. 11). Paul clearly stated this prayer was very possible and fulfillment was expected, but it was not automatic. They must actively participate in the process, if they were to be “sincere”; that is, operating without hidden motives and free from stumbling or causing offense to others (“without offence”) when Christ returns (2 Cor. 1:12; 1 Thess. 3:13).

Third, the goal is that they become living proof of “the fruits of righteousness” overflowing in and through their love (Phil. 1:11a). *Righteousness* is a rich, multifaceted term. Here it points to a right standing before God (Gen. 15:6) that results in a right relationship with Him (Matt. 6:33). That, in turn, produces right relationships with others (“fruit”; see 1 John 3:10). We can say righteousness is given, caught, and taught, but it all finds its source and supply in Jesus Christ! As the Philippians became the fulfillment of this prayer’s intent, it would result in “the glory and praise of God” (Phil. 1:11b). This can be interpreted two ways. First, it brings glory and produces praise for God. Second, the glory and praise is given by God. This is known as *Pauline ambiguity*, perhaps intentional to make the reader think of the implications.

§ *In Philippians 1:8-11, what can we learn about how to pray for fellow Christians?*

2. REJOICING IN ADVERSITY

A. Bold and Effective Witnessing (Philippians 1:12-18)

¹² But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.

¹⁵ Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: ¹⁶ The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: ¹⁷ But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the

defence of the gospel. ¹⁸ What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

Our situations are not always as they appear (v. 12). Paul's imprisonment resulted in the Gospel being brought to new audiences ("furtherance"; see Acts 8:4; 11:19-21). *Furtherance* can carry the idea of that which has been commissioned (see 1 Cor. 9:7; Col. 1:25). The apostle noted his situation had caused bold preaching in others and the reception of the Gospel in the most unlikely places (Phil. 1:13-14). There are times God is working in and through our lives to accomplish His will and build us up in Christ in a way we may not initially comprehend (Rom. 8:26-28). It may be uncomfortable for us at the moment, but this is where faith and obedience become more than platitudes and talking points. Paul understood this and noted that even in imprisonment ("bonds") he was sustained and empowered "in Christ" (Phil. 1:13).

Paul addressed contrasting situations concerning the preaching (public proclamation of the Gospel) of the Word. First, some individuals were preaching out of wrong motives (v. 15a). They were envious of Paul and saw themselves in competition with him ("strife"). They were motivated by selfish ambition ("contention," v. 16), rather than sincere and holy love for the Gospel. In doing so, they thought they were adding "affliction" to Paul's situation. The idea conveyed is intense pressure that results in distress of mind. This is hardly the reason to proclaim Christ! In contrast, others were preaching motivated by a desire to fulfill God's purpose in their lives and ministry ("good will," v. 15b). Their preaching was based on their "love" for God and Paul (v. 17). They understood Paul's situation was not about one person in dire straits, but a defense of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

These scriptures show the power of the Gospel is effective even if communicated through less-than-perfect vessels. We sometimes see individuals and ministries who "talk the talk, but don't walk

the walk,” yet positive results are evidenced. This can cause confusion as to how this is possible, or why God allows it. We must remember the power resides in the message and the Source of that message, not the proclaimer. Paul understood ultimately the message of Christ was being proclaimed, and that was reason to rejoice—even in the face of imprisonment and death (v. 18)!

Powerful Preaching

The preacher who will proclaim this glorious truth and magnify the cleansing power of the blood of Christ will find that his message of full deliverance touches life at every point. He is doing a disservice to his hearers and is dishonoring his God if he substitutes any other theme.—Duncan Campbell

B. In Life or Death (Philippians 1:19-30)

²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. ²³ For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: ²⁴ Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. ²⁵ And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; ²⁶ That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

Paul understood the power of the Gospel did not reside in him, but required spiritual power to enable him to communicate the Word effectively. Thus, he requested that they pray for his deliverance (“salvation,” v. 19). *Salvation* is a multifaceted term that encompasses our forgiveness from sin and our deliverance from all evil forces so we might be made completely whole—*body* (physical realm), *soul* (the entirety of our being), and *spirit* (full communion with God and the full realization/actualization of His perfect life force in us). Paul knew as well that he had the support (“supply”) of the Holy Spirit, often described as “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom. 8:9; 1 Peter 1:11). This is not just a “portion” of help supplied by the Spirit; it is the Spirit’s presence walking alongside us every step we take (John 14:16; 16:13; Rom. 8:26)!

In Philippians 1:20, we see a personal side of the Apostle Paul. From the depths of his soul (“earnest expectation and my hope”), he anticipated two things. First, he would not be “ashamed” in anything. This means Paul did not want to do anything that would bring a reproach upon the Gospel. It can also mean Paul was certain he would not be brought to shame in the eyes of those watching him, for God would not forsake him. With God’s empowerment, we can be a visible example of the testimony of Jesus Christ. Second, Paul desired a “boldness” of speech that would proclaim Christ. Further, he wanted Christ to be greatly amplified (“magnified”) in every aspect of his life in whatever way God chose, “whether . . . by life, or by death.”

It is said the threat of death brings clarity of mind and soul. This was true of Paul. He understood he was primarily a citizen of God’s kingdom. “To live” required the work and power of Christ (v. 21a). There are two primary Greek words for “life”: (1) *bios* emphasizes the biological or quantitative aspect; (2) *zoe* emphasizes the qualitative aspect. Paul used the latter here. He did not just exist; he lived a meaningful and vibrant life (even in imprisonment) through Christ. With this foundation, he also understood there was something much greater (“gain”) in store for him when he met Christ face-to-face (v. 21b).

The Philippians must have wondered about Paul’s future, given his current imprisonment. It was something Paul was pondering himself. He was torn between entering into his reward and staying on earth and continuing his ministry (vv. 22-23). Yet, he understood it was not about him, but God’s knowledge of what the early church needed (v. 24). Apparently, God had communicated to him that he would continue to minister to the Philippians (and others) for their advancement in knowledge, wisdom, and maturity (“furtherance”) with the result of increasing their joy in and through (“of”) faith in God (v. 25). Because of Jesus Christ and His provision, Paul anticipated the Philippians’

“rejoicing” (v. 26) would be founded on a deep confidence in God’s ability and presence. *Rejoicing* is the deeply confident and triumphant expression of our joy (see 2 Cor. 7:4).

§ *Should every Christian be “torn between [the] two desires” (Phil. 1:23 NLT) Paul described here? Why or why not?*

3. REJOICE TOGETHER; EXPERIENCE GOD’S PEACE

A. Rejoice Together (Philippians 2:17-18)

¹⁷ Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

Paul warned the Philippians persecution is a fact of life for Christ’s followers (1:27-30) and a humble, yet confident attitude is essential (2:1-4). He set forth for them (and us) the perfect example of Jesus Christ in the Christ Hymn (vv. 5-11), and instructed them to have the same determined attitude (or mindset) Jesus had. He then moved to a call for action—obedience (vv. 12-16). It is easy to rejoice with an embracing and encouraging congregation on Sunday, when uplifting worship and inspiring preaching touch us at the core of our being. It is more difficult to live it out during the week, when we are spiritually pummeled and persecuted in a hostile world. Paul says God is always at work in our lives as believers, even when we may not fully comprehend His presence (see v. 13).

With this admonition in mind, Paul returned to the theme of being a living sacrifice in light of his situation. Paul was a student of the Old Testament, and here he drew upon Old Testament imagery to illustrate his life. Paul viewed his life as “being poured out as a drink offering” in worship to God (v. 17a NKJV; see Num. 15:1-13; Gen. 35:14). The language can be understood one of two ways: (1) God chose to do this in spite of Paul’s wishes. (2) Paul, as a willing participant of God’s plan, chose to offer his life in service to God. The surrounding language leaves no doubt that Paul

was eager to embrace God's plan. Remember, the only problem with a living sacrifice is that it keeps crawling off the altar!

Paul not only saw himself as a willing sacrifice, but as a commissioned servant with a prescribed and public function to encourage and edify the Philippians and others ("service of your faith"). Because of their fellowship, Paul rejoiced with them (2:17b) and they rejoiced with him (v. 18).

Joyful Freedom

Augustine, one of the early church fathers, was drawn to Christ because of the joy he saw in Christians. He initially feared that surrendering to Christ would remove the "joys" (probably better understood as pleasures) in his life to which he had become accustomed. Instead, he found a joy founded in God that far surpassed anything he had ever experienced. Surrender to God results in joyous freedom and nothing less! (See Augustine's *Confessions*, Book 10.)

B. Experience God's Peace (Philippians 4:4-8)

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. ⁶ Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Verse 4 is considered the key verse in this epistle. In every circumstance—good or bad, encouraged or discouraged, on a mountaintop or in a dark valley—Paul commanded the Philippians, and us, to "rejoice in the Lord always"! It is not a suggestion! He repeated the command to emphasize its importance. This joy is not a surface emotion, easily swayed by circumstance, but a concrete determination founded on the Rock, Jesus Christ, and our relationship with Him. It begins as a decision, but flows throughout our body, soul, and spirit.

Paul then provided further exhortation concerning the believer's daily walk. We are to make sure our living witness before others is evident, especially our gentleness or mildness ("moderation," v. 5). We can accomplish this because the Lord is present in our lives ("at hand"). As well, we are not to be anxious or distracted ("be careful for nothing," v. 6); rather, we are to remain in a grateful or thankful attitude of "prayer and petition" (NIV) in every single thing we face. Doing so will result in a deep calmness, confidence, and wholeness that is tangible, but unexplainable (v. 7).

Paul then listed a set of virtues to be incorporated into our lives (v. 8). We are to remain focused ("think on these things") on "whatsoever" is (1) "true," not what is false; (2) "honest," or worthy of respect; (3) "just," or things that lead to righteousness; (4) "pure," or morality that leads to adherence to God's commands concerning our body and has no hidden motives; (5) "lovely," or things that please God; (6) "good report," or worthy of praise, because we are free of offense; (7) "virtue," or moral excellence; (8) "praise," or things worthy of approval and recognition.

§ *What types of things must Christians not "think on" (Phil. 4:8), and why not?*

FAITH AND JOY

As followers of Christ, we are faced today with an ever-changing world that is increasingly hostile to Christian morality and ideals. The degradation is disheartening. It is no wonder that Jesus said hearts will fail because of fear resulting from the condition of the world (Luke 21:26). The Philippian letter serves as a much-needed reminder that our lives and attitudes are not guided by what we see, but by whose we are (Gal. 3:26). That means we do not operate in fear, but in faith—and faith in Christ produces those who are joyful in Him. Rejoice because we are in Christ! Rejoice because He is coming for those who are His!

Daily Devotions

M. Joyful Singing (1 Chronicles 15:16-22)

- T. Joyful Shouting (Ezra 3:10-13)
- W. Fullness of Joy (Psalm 16:1-11)
- T. Joy Replaces Sorrow (Psalm 126:1-6)
- F. News of Great Joy (Luke 2:8-14)
- S. Blessed Joy (Luke 6:20-23)