

## 2. The Book of Philippians 1:3-11

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### *Joy In Fellowship-Part 1*

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier  
(3-19-23)

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Find this weeks' sermon audio and video message [HERE](#).

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Last week we began a new study here at Calvary—a study in the epistle to the Philippians.

But instead of going verse by verse thru Philippians (which is the standard style of teaching we do here at Calvary Chapel)—we are going to do a topical study thru the book.

Every book in the New Testament has a theme and so I thought it might be beneficial to build a series of messages around **the main theme of the Book of Philippians—which is joy.**

- Now, what makes that theme so powerful is that—**Paul wrote this letter while he was a prisoner in Rome.**
- It's easy to be joyful when you're in the midst of blessings—but when you find **yourself joyful in the midst of adversity and suffering**—that is something else entirely.
- Now as we said last week, the letter to the **Philippians was one of four epistles** that Paul wrote while under house arrest in Rome—the others being Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon.
- **He was waiting to stand trial before Caesar** to defend himself against the false accusations that were leveled against him by the Jewish leadership in Israel.

**These accusations were extremely serious**—that Paul was an insurrectionist and an inciter of riots around the empire (the Jewish leadership knew what charges the Roman Government would take most seriously which is why they charged Paul with these crimes).

**In Roman law, these crimes were capitol offenses and if found guilty, would have resulted in Paul's execution—and yet the theme of this epistle is joy in the Lord!**

- *How was it that Paul could have so much joy while in such a terrible place with his very life on the line?*

Well, before we answer that—we need to define what **joy** is. **Joy is an inward reality which only comes into a person's life when they accept Jesus into their heart as their Savior and are born-again (become a child of God).**

- **Don't confuse happiness with joy—they are not the same thing.**
- **Joy is an inner unchanging quality of the heart based on absolute truth—whereas happiness is a frame of mind based on outward circumstances** (which means it comes and goes—it's here one minute and gone the next etc.).

**The Christian life doesn't promise constant happiness,  
but it does promise perpetual joy.**

As we have pointed out many times—‘joy’ is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22)—which means it’s an **‘attribute of God.’**

>>> The **Joy of the Lord is a divine attribute only found in the nature of God** <<<  
which means we can’t manufacture it no matter  
how much pleasure and material things we  
try to stuff into the void in our hearts.

The closest we can come to reproducing *joy* from a human nature standpoint—is the fragile, fleeting and easily lost feeling of *happiness*. Now look, I’m not putting happiness down (I like being happy), but when compared to the joy which comes from God—it is a cheap substitute to be sure!

You see our English word **‘happy’** is based on the old Anglo-Saxon word *hap*, which means **‘chance’**—as in **“happenstance.”** **Happiness is circumstantial and therefore it is—uncertain, temporary, and insecure.**

But unfortunately, that’s as close as we can come to the attribute of joy when trying to replicate it from our *human* nature. You see, **because joy is part of God’s nature—the only way for joy to fill our hearts is if God Himself fills our hearts.**

- **And the only way for God to fill our hearts is when the Spirit of God lives inside our hearts—which only happens when a person receives Jesus Christ into their heart by faith.**
- The apostle Peter tells us in his second epistle that **we who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ** have been made—**“partakers of the divine nature”** (2Peter 1:4).
- This means we can now experience the fruit of the Spirit (the attributes of God) in our hearts—**“Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”**

**REFLECTION:** How would you explain the difference between Human Happiness and God’s Joy?

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- And so, to say it again - **joy is an attribute of God** available **only** to those who are **partakers of His divine nature thru Jesus (salvation).**
- **There is no true joy apart from God and His Son Jesus Christ**—but that doesn’t mean once God’s joy fills our hearts as Christians—it can never be taken from us.
- **There are certain conditions we have to keep if joy will be constant and unbroken in our lives**—what are those conditions you might be thinking?

**John 15:7, 11 (NKJV)**

<sup>7</sup> If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you... <sup>11</sup> “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

**So, Jesus is saying that if we abide in Him and His words abide in us that we will bear much fruit or in other words - we will have “much joy”.**

- Yes, but **how do we abide in Jesus?** - By continuing in His Word (remember that Jesus is the Word—John 1:1-3, 14)—and if you do, Jesus promised—His joy will remain in you and be full! (v.11)

**John 15:11 (NKJV)**

<sup>11</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

I want you to notice what Jesus is saying here - **He is saying that His joy, once placed in the heart of a believer at salvation—won’t automatically remain in their heart.**

- **The Lord Jesus is telling us that joy can be stolen from us**—how?

Well Paul is going to tell us in Philippians the **things that will rob us of our joy**. He talks about four things throughout the book (we’ll point them out as we go)—but I’ll give them to you up front.

- **The things that rob us of our joy (if we let them) are Circumstances, People, Selfishness & Worry.**

**REFLECTION:** Regarding the things that rob us of our joy (as noted above) , think of some examples that have potentially robbed you of your joy for each one of the categories listed?

- **Circumstances:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **People:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **Selfishness:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **Worry:** \_\_\_\_\_

**So, our study in Philippians will not only teach us how we can have joy, but also, how we can keep that joy once we have it!**

**>>>** Let me say by way of review from last week’s introduction into our study in Philippians—which I’ve entitled, “*It’s all in your head*”. As I said in that message—**the secret of having joy in the Christian life (along with all the other spiritual virtues God wants for us)—starts in the mind, with the way you think.**

By saying that, I’m not talking about any kind of weird metaphysical nonsense—I’m saying that joy will be accessed from your heart (where it was planted when you gave your heart to Jesus and the Holy Spirit moved in and made you a partaker of God’s divine nature)—**joy will be accessed from your heart thru faith.**

But the only way for faith to be active and powerful is by what you **‘feed’ it—by what you allow to dominate your thinking.** In other words, what are you going to let to dominate your thinking on a daily basis—the promises of God or the circumstances you find yourself in (again, think of Peter walking on the Sea of Galilee).

Again, **Paul wrote Philippians while waiting to stand trial—a trial that could very well have ended in his execution—and yet the theme of this epistle is joy in the Lord.**

- The reason Philippians is called the epistle of joy is because Paul uses the word ‘joy’ and ‘rejoice’ 16 times in these four chapters.
- Which begs the question: ‘How was it that Paul could have **so much joy while in such a terrible place** with his very life on the line?’

Well, Paul had a secret—a secret he had learned (and honed) over his years as a Christian—a secret he shares with the Philippian Christians (and us). Very simply, **it was that he learned to fill his mind with Jesus**—and by that, I mean with the promises of God made possible by Jesus dying and rising from the dead on our behalf.

- We see this clearly in the first chapter alone where Paul uses “Christ” or “Jesus Christ” 17 times—which figures out to more than once every two verses!
- So even though Paul talks about *joy* quite a bit in this epistle—he **talks about Jesus more!** In so doing, he reveals to us that **the secret of joy in the life of a child of God is to have our minds focused on Jesus Christ.**

So let me say it one more time—the secret of having *joy* starts in the mind, with the way you think.

**REFLECTION:** What can you do to increase God’s Joy in your life by the way you think?

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But then, **everything in the Christian life starts with the way you think about God’s Word** and your willingness to *feed* on it every day and *hide* it in your heart (Psalm 119:9, 11) and believe all that it says—then and only then will it transform your life and, in the process, fill you with the joy of the Lord!

But look, as long as we mentioned those things that can rob us of our joy—let me just mention again what then becomes our defense, or safeguard against these joy stealers. We don’t have to guess because Jesus gave us the answer to that in John 15:

**John 15:4–5 (NKJV)**

<sup>4</sup> Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. <sup>5</sup> “I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

In reading this, we need to remember that Paul tells us in Galatians 5 that **joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit**—which Jesus is making reference to right here in John 15.

**John 15:7–11 (NKJV)**

<sup>7</sup> If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. <sup>8</sup> By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. <sup>9</sup> “As the Father loved Me, I also

have loved you; abide in My love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. <sup>11</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

Did you notice that Jesus said, “*If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you...you will bear much fruit*”— or in other words, you will have “much joy”.

**Abiding in the Word, filling your mind with the Word and allowing it to transform your thinking about circumstances, people, self and worry is the key to Jesus’ joy remaining in us and overflowing our lives.**

**REFLECTION:** How might you abide in God?

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→ Watch: “[Guard Your Hearts and Minds](#)” excerpt

That in a nutshell was the secret to Paul’s ability to have joy while in prison with his possible execution hanging over his head—**he learned to fill his mind with Jesus.**

- In fact, Paul uses the word ‘mind’ 10 times; ‘thinking’ 5 times; and ‘remember’ 16 times in this epistle on joy.

It’s because **the secret to Christian joy is found in your mind**—it’s rooted in the heart but accessed by your mind in **how you think about life**, how you approach it and you’re attitude towards it—and might I add that **your ‘outlook’ will be determined by your ‘up look’:**

**Colossians 3:2 (NKJV)**

<sup>2</sup>Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

**This is not PMA (‘Positive Mental Attitude’) I’m talking about its BMA (‘Biblical Mental Attitude’) or what Paul calls having the “mind of Christ”.**

Now let me just say again that this study in Philippians is going to be different from the normal way we study a book in the Bible—which is verse by verse. I have already taught the Book of Philippians verse-by-verse here at Calvary (you can go online and check it out [HERE](#))—and so with this study I want to take the main theme of joy and build this study topically around that theme.

So, what I did was I used the concordance resource in my computer Bible program and searched thru Philippians to see all the places in the book where the words “**joy**” and “**rejoice**” (including all of its forms: “*rejoicing*” and “*rejoiced*”) **appeared—which was 16 times.**

I then went to each of those verses (and the surrounding verses to make sure I didn’t take any of them out of context) and copied and pasted all of them into a word document.

Then I studied each passage to determine what the context was in which Paul was using the concept of joy and rejoicing. I then placed each passage under a specific heading—“Joy in Unity”, “Joy in the Lord” etc.

These headings will become the main points I want to build this series around—so let’s begin!

### Philippians 1:3-11 (NKJV)

<sup>3</sup> I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup> always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with **joy**, <sup>5</sup> for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, <sup>6</sup> 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; <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, <sup>10</sup> that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, <sup>11</sup> being filled with the fruits of righteousness which *are* by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

So the word ‘joy’ appears in verse 4 and is connected to what comes after it in verse 5—“for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.”

This becomes the main thought of the passage (like a river) which then flows into ‘tributaries’ of connected thoughts—thoughts that become the first main point of our outline on joy.

I’m going to call this first main point—

#### I. Joy in Fellowship—1:3-11

The concept of fellowship permeates the Bible—but is especially important and prominent in the New Testament for various reasons (which we’ll look at)—but for right now we need to define what biblical fellowship really is.

I will say this—fellowship among believers in Christ was one of the pillars the early church was built on:

### Acts 2:42 (NKJV)

<sup>42</sup> And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and **fellowship**, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

The Greek word translated ‘fellowship’ is—*koinonia*. It’s a word we really don’t have an English equivalent for—which means we have to use several words in the English to capture the meaning of this one Greek word.

It basically means ‘having things in common.’ The Latin form “*communio*” is where we get the word “**communion**” from. In fact, this word is translated “*communion*” in:

- 1 Corinthians 10:16
- 2 Corinthians 6:14 and
- 2 Corinthians 13:14.

It’s translated “*distribution (sharing)*” in 2 Corinthians 9:13; and “*contribution*” in Romans 15:26. But it’s most frequently translated “**fellowship**” in the New Testament—a word that describes the interaction of believers with one another in the early church.

- It means the sharing of one’s life and possessions with another.
- It speaks of their unity, their oneness—the intimacy they had and the love they shared.
- It was a whole lot more than cake and coffee after the service

It describes lives that were interconnected with each other - lives that were dependent on one another.

Koinonia has a variant that is closely related to it, koinonikos, which means “generous.”

**REFLECTION: What does biblical fellowship mean to you?**

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Those who are ‘in Christ’ (saved) have God’s nature within them—which means that because God by nature is generous—so are His people generous with those around them.

We see this exemplified in Acts 2:44-45 and again in Acts 4:32-35—

**Acts 2:44-45 (NKJV)**

<sup>44</sup> Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common [a form of koinonia], <sup>45</sup> and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

**Acts 4:32, 34-35 (NKJV)**

<sup>32</sup> Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common...

<sup>34</sup> Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, <sup>35</sup> and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

Some teach from these verses that the early church practiced a form of communism, that they lived a communal lifestyle—and so should we live as Christians today.

Those early believers didn’t practice Communism, they practiced ‘commonism’—and there’s a big difference.

Communism says: “What’s yours is mine—I’ll take it”; “Commonism” says: “What’s mine is yours I’ll share it.”

➤ How do we know that the early church didn’t practice Communism?

**Acts 2:44-45 (NKJV)**

<sup>44</sup> Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, <sup>45</sup> and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

The Greek is literally—“...**and were continually** selling their possessions and goods, and were continually dividing them among all...” In other words, they never just sold everything at one time and moved in together as some teach.

They still owned their own homes which they met in throughout the week going from house to house eating together as Acts 2:46 tells us. These possessions they were selling as needs arose were—land holdings that individual members owned and extra houses some owned which were sold (at various times) to meet the needs of others.

**Their sharing was completely voluntary (unlike Communism) and motivated by love not by commandment or constraint by the apostles.**

We see this clearly when Peter was confronting Ananias when he and his wife lied about some land that they owned and sold—claiming they had given all the money to the church:

**Acts 5:4 (NKJV)**

<sup>4</sup> "While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control?..."

- This confirms that the selling of personal property was no command from God that those early Christians had to follow.

One pastor has rightly said—

*“...God has designed the family to be an independent unit. And that the church is made up of families that are living in a connected but not in a communal environment. Otherwise when a family entered the church they would cease being a family in the biblical sense and everyone would come under the authority of a few elders which would be a perversion of what God intended the church to be.”*

**Communism produces no joy—but commonism (Christian fellowship) produces great joy.**

**REFLECTION:** Consider churches you have attended and/or visited and think about their “fellowship” – how would you describe their fellowship in the context of true agape Christian fellowship? (in Christ, communism versus commonism, sharing, selling, supporting, assisting, etc.)

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I want you to compare the kind of fellowship the early church had with what typically passes as fellowship in churches today across America and see how it stacks up.

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If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Reach out to us [here](#). Want to know more? Click [here](#).