

16. The Book of Philippians 3:3; 4:4

Joy in the Lord-Part 1

a message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
(9-17-23)

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We have begun a study in Paul's letter to the Philippians—looking at its theme of 'joy' topically.

So far, we've looked at:

- I. Joy in Fellowship—1:3-6
- II. Joy in Proclaiming the Gospel—1:12-18
- III. Joy of Faith—1:25
- IV. Joy in Unity—1:27-2:2
- V. Joy in Service—2:12-18
- VI. Joy in the Lord—3:1; 4:4

Philippians 3:1 (NKJV)

¹ Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord...

Philippians 4:4 (NKJV)

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

In other words, *"Whatever else comes your way in life whether good or bad—rejoice in the Lord!"*

This was something that Paul had taught all Christians to do—

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. *[in the Greek it is a command!]*

'Joy in the Lord' is not the same as the 'joy of the Lord.'

Think of the 'joy of the Lord' as a joy emanating from Jesus the way sunlight emanates from the sun—the sunlight comes *from* the sun but is not the *source*.

However, joy in the Lord speaks of the joy that is ours when we are in Christ—saved.

This joy is rooted in our relationship with Jesus, Who is the source—a joy that is ours by virtue of us being in Him, one with Him—a member of His Body.

Joy in the Lord works its way out in our lives as the ‘*joy of the Lord*’—a *practical* joy others notice, that draws them to Jesus. But joy in the Lord, is a *personal* joy that continues everyday as we maintain our fellowship with Him—or as Jesus put it in John 15:1-11 as we abide in Him.

John 15:1–11 (NKJV)

¹ “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴ 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. ⁵ “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. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. ⁸ By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. ⁹ “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

So, Jesus tells us here that our joy (“*joy in the Lord*”) will be full as we abide in Him every day.

The core principle of this entire passage (John 15:1-11) on bearing fruit in the Christian life and having fullness of joy is that of ‘**abiding in Christ**’—that is the heart of this passage and the secret to everything in the Christian life.

The word ‘**abide**’ is a key word in John’s writings occurring 11 times in this chapter, 40 times in his gospel, and 27 times in his epistles—but what does it mean?

1. The definition of ‘abide’

The Greek word is ‘meno’ and it means to ‘*remain*’, or to ‘*continue*’

2. The nature of abiding

When it comes to **abiding in Christ** there are two sides to it—*union* and *communion*.

a. Union

Union with Jesus is the connection that comes when we put our faith in Him, accepting Him into our heart as our Lord and Savior. This is a *positional* connection to Christ which we commonly refer to as salvation.

When I say that this is a ‘*positional*’ connection I’m saying that it isn’t subject to what we *do* or *don’t do* in our Christian lives—it is a gift of grace (salvation) which we receive by faith.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NKJV)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Since salvation is a *gift* (you don’t earn a gift, you just receive or accept it)—therefore our salvation is something we cannot lose or forfeit—it’s our positionally and that never changes once we are in Christ.

I believe the eleven remaining disciples that night had genuinely entered into union with Jesus—which He verifies in verse 3:

John 15:3 (NKJV)

³ You [plural] are already clean [cleansed of sin—saved] because of the word which I have spoken to you [they had received the gospel].

But there was one disciple who wasn't 'clean', that wasn't genuine—one who wasn't saved:

John 13:10-11 (NKJV)

¹⁰ ...and you are clean, but not all of you." ¹¹ For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean." [speaking of Judas]

So, in that regard these 11 disciples had already entered into a *positional* abiding in Christ or in other words—they were genuinely saved.

So, first you have *union* and then communion:

b. Communion

The whole point of salvation is to glorify God by bearing fruit—

John 15:8 (NKJV)

⁸ By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be [i.e., 'prove to be'] My disciples.

But that won't happen unless we as Christians stay in a perpetual state of *connectedness* to Jesus—we call this *communion* or fellowship.

This is a *practical* connection to Jesus that is dependent on what we do or don't do in our Christian lives—which would involve sins of *commission* and *omission*—(Explain—doing what's wrong or not doing what's right).

If we don't stay in *communion* with Jesus everyday (a deep personal relationship as opposed to a superficial one)—we will never experience all that God desires for our lives.

John 15:11 (NKJV)

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

When Christians don't abide (don't maintain practical fellowship with Jesus)—they lose a number of blessings and spiritual privileges—i.e., they lose:

- *The assurance of their salvation.*
- *Victory over the flesh.*
- *The spiritual dynamic and power of the Holy Spirit.*
- *The abundant life which includes great joy and fruit bearing.*

- And finally, they lose their witness, their opportunities to serve God and ultimately their rewards in heaven.

The one thing they don't lose is their salvation—that is secure because it is a free gift of God's grace—"not the result of works..." (Eph.2:9)

3. The practice of abiding

a. The outward actions

When it comes to the practice of abiding in Christ on a daily basis, two schools of thought have developed, two approaches that try to address this important issue—the *pacifist* approach and the *activist* approach.

The pacifist approach

Those in the pacifist camp say the way to abide in Christ on a daily basis is to do *nothing* but simply yield to Him and let Him do all the work.

"Christ lives in you" they say, "and wants to use you the way a hand uses a glove—the glove does nothing except to surrender (submit)."

The activist approach

Those in the activist camp respond by saying, *"We're not dead gloves! We have a responsibility to put the effort into our walk with God and do the things He has commanded us to do. Yes, we must yield to God, but He won't force us to do these things against our free will."*

Actually, both schools of thought contain a measure of truth.

Abiding is not a passive thing, like a glove on a hand because a glove doesn't have a free will as a person does—a glove *can't* rebel—all a glove can do is surrender!

On the other hand (no pun intended) abiding is not such an active thing on our part that it's all on us—we do *everything*, and God basically does *nothing!*

Jesus made that abundantly clear—

John 15:5 (NKJV)

⁵ **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.**

I think that Paul struck the balance on this subject when he admonished us as believers to—

Philippians 2:12-13 (NKJV)

¹² ...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.

So, Paul is saying that—God works in—we work out. Or in other words—God has a part, and we have a part—God won't do our part (walk our walk for us) and we can't do His part (supply the power to grow and be victorious).

As we surrender—God works *in* us, and then as we obey—God works *out* from our lives His will and purposes. Practically speaking, there are things we must do if we are going to continue *abiding in Christ* everyday—and in the process experience *‘joy in the Lord.’*

If abiding in Christ was all God’s doing (we don’t do anything but submit to the Holy Spirit)—the writers of the New Testament (like Paul) would not have admonished us *‘to abide’* if it were *‘automatic’* and required no effort on our part because God was doing everything!

1) Prayer

Prayer is simply talking *with* God (dialogue not a monologue)—in that regard, *communion* is first and foremost communication.

2) The Word of God

John 8:31 (NKJV)

³¹ Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide [continue] in My word, you are My disciples indeed.

1 John 2:3-5, 24 (NKJV)

³ Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him [i.e., “abiding in Him”]...²⁴ Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning [the Word of God spoken thru Jesus] abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.

Here’s the problem—

A recent George Barna survey noted that:

“Professing Christians who read, listen to, or pray with the Bible on their own at least three or four times a year outside of a church service or a church event—had reached a 10-year low, registering only 48 percent of Americans. The proportion of American adults who never use the Bible has fallen to 29 percent, its lowest point since 2016.

One of the main reasons why American Christians don’t read their Bibles is—only 22% of them believe the Bible is fully inspired by God Himself and written by men who were divinely appointed by the Lord Almighty. And so, over three quarters of American Christians believe the Bible to be a book written by mere men, not at all the Word of God.”

Andrew Murray in his classic work *‘Abide in Christ’* had this to say—

“The more I think of and pray about the religious situation in our country, the deeper my conviction becomes that Christians do not realize that the aim of conversion is to bring them into daily fellowship (communion) with the Father in heaven. For the believer, taking time each day with God’s Word and in prayer is indispensable. Each day we need to wait upon God for His presence and His love to be revealed. It is not enough at conversion to accept forgiveness of sins or even to surrender to God—that is only a beginning. We must understand that we have no power on our own to maintain our spiritual life, we need to receive daily new grace from heaven through fellowship with the Lord Jesus. This cannot be obtained by a hasty prayer or a superficial reading of a few verses from God’s Word. We must take time to come into God’s presence, to feel our weakness and our need, and to wait on God through His Holy Spirit to renew our fellowship with Him. Then we may expect to be kept by the power of Christ throughout the day. It is my aim to help Christians to see the absolute necessity of spending time with the Lord Jesus. Without this, the joy and power of God’s Holy Spirit in daily life cannot be experienced.”

3) Confession

Sin severs our communion (practical connection) with God—but *confession* reconnects us to Him—

1 John 1:9 (NKJV)

⁹ If we confess our sins [“*to say the same thing*”], He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

4) Obedience

A life of obedience is absolutely essential to maintaining your communion with Jesus—because again, sin severs our fellowship with God:

Isaiah 59:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. ² But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden *His* face from you, So that He will not hear.

1 John 1:6 (NKJV)

⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

1 John 2:6 (NKJV)

⁶ He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

So, under the heading—**The practice of abiding** we have seen:

a. The outward actions

- 1) *Prayer*
- 2) *The Word of God*
- 3) *Confession*
- 4) *Obedience*

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](#).

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