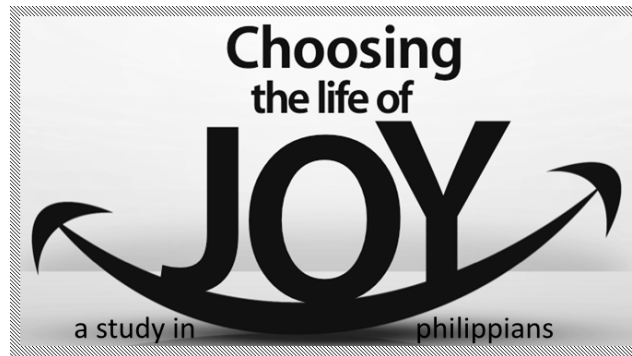


# Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, October 3, 2018 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



## CHOOSING THE LIFE OF JOY A Study in Philippians “Joy in Spite of Troubles” *Philippians 1:12-18*

*“<sup>12</sup> But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, <sup>13</sup> so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; <sup>14</sup> and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. <sup>15</sup> Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: <sup>16</sup> The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; <sup>17</sup> but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. <sup>18</sup> What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.” –Philippians 1:12-18 (NKJV)*

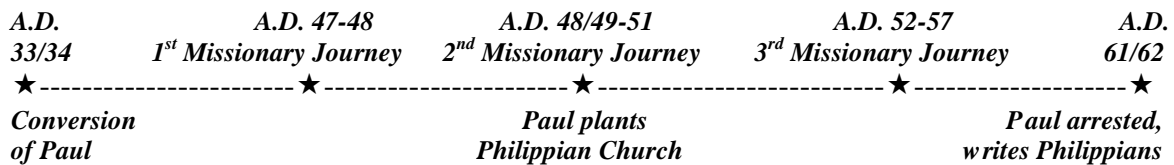
Dr. Warren Wiersbe calls the book (letter) of Philippians, “a personal manifesto on how to live a life full of joy.” We began our verse by verse study of the book of Philippians a couple of weeks ago entitled, “Choosing the Life of Joy; A Study in Philippians.” The book is a book of joy, and that is surprising given the circumstances surround the book.

Just for review let’s be reminded of some of the more interesting facts about Philippians that we have been looking at as a background to the book.

**5 Important Background Facts on the Book of Philippians:** *\*these may be some things that set the book of Philippians apart from Paul’s other letters and writings*

1. **The book of Philippians is written by the Apostle Paul** – The apostle Paul wrote the book as clearly stated in **Philippians 1:1-2**, “<sup>1</sup>*Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: <sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*”
2. **The book of Philippians is written to believers/Christians at the church at Philippi** – As already stated Philippians is a letter written by the Apostle Paul during his Roman imprisonment to a group of people that were very special to him. These at Philippi had come to know the Lord Jesus through Paul’s witness to them during his “Second Missionary Journey,” and in response to the “Macedonian Call” of Acts 16. Notice who Paul identifies as the recipients of this letter in verses 1-2, “<sup>1</sup>*Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: <sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*”
3. **The book of Philippians is actually a letter written by Paul to the church at Philippi** – The apostle Paul wrote this as a letter to the Christians in Philippi, from Rome. Paul ministered at Philippi during his second missionary journey, spending about three months in the city. The ministry at Philippi marked Paul’s entrance into Macedonia (Greece, Europe), which came about as a result of a vision he had in the city of Troas, just across the northeastern corner of the Aegean Sea from the port city of Neapolis and its close neighbor Philippi (Acts 16:8–12). During this first stay in Philippi—he later briefly visited the city on his third missionary journey (20:6)—Paul brought to faith in Christ people who would form the core of the burgeoning congregation in the city. Among them were Lydia, a businesswoman who opened her home to Paul and his coworkers (16:13–15), and the Philippian jailer, who was converted under Paul’s ministry after an earthquake miraculously broke open the prison (16:22–34).
4. **The book of Philippians was written around A.D. 61/62** – Of the four Prison Epistles, Paul likely wrote Philippians last, near the end of his Roman imprisonment in AD 61 or 62. Paul sent the other three Prison Epistles—Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon—by the hand of Tychicus, as their destinations were near one another. However, the letter to the Philippians was to be delivered by Epaphroditus, who had come to Paul in Rome with financial help from the church at Philippi (Philippians 2:25; 4:18). But during his time in Rome, Epaphroditus took ill, which delayed his return home and, therefore, the delivery of the letter (2:26–27).

#### *Philippians Timeline*



5. **The book of Philippians is called a prison epistle, because Paul write the letter while he was imprisoned for his faith in Rome** - The book of Philippians is actually one of four “prison epistles” (or letters) and most likely the last of the four written by Paul. As stated, Paul wrote Philippians while he was in prison in Rome. The four “prison epistles” are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. Given the theme of the book it is significant that Philippians was written by Paul at a particularly difficult time in his life... while he was in prison.

Along with these essential background facts surround this letter written by Paul, we have also sated these interesting fact about the book/letter of Philippians:

### **5 Interesting Facts about Philippians:**

1. **The book of Philippians has no Old Testament quotes** – This is distinction that not only sets it apart from Paul’s other writing in the New Testament where Paul is said to have quoted the Old Testament as many as 500 times, just not in Philippians. The Old Testament is quoted more than 1,000 time in the New Testament with half of those being found in Paul’s writings. The lack of Old Testament quotes in Philippians could be as simple as Paul’s purpose in writing. It is a more practical letter.
2. **The book of Philippians contains little historical or theological material, and is primarily a practical (*relevant, everyday, pragmatic, useful*) letter** - The only exceptions to this are the historical biographical material contained concerning Paul’s life in prison during his Roman imprisonment. And Philippians, chapter 2 that describes the humiliation and exaltation of Christ in theological terms. Philippians is the only of Paul’s letter that was not written primarily to address doctrinal, theological issues. The apostle Paul did not write Philippians in response to a crisis (caused by false teachers and false teaching), as he did with Galatians and Colossians. And, in fact, it may be the most practical of Paul’s 13 New Testament books/letters. What do we mean by practical? We mean that of all of Paul’s letters, Philippians in it purpose and content is the most pragmatic and common every-day letter he wrote. We will get more into this as we progress through our study, but suffice it to say that the very reason Paul wrote the letter is simple, every-day in it application.
3. **The book of Philippians is essentially a thank you letter** – This itself sets Philippians apart as the most unusual of Paul’s letters. Instead of writing to correct doctrinal matters, he writes a “thank you” letter to the church at Philippi that had been so generous in supporting him over the years. He primarily wrote to express his appreciation and affection for the Philipian believers. More than any other church, the believers in Philippi offered Paul material support for his ministry. Paul’s affection for these people is clear through the letter as he encouraged them to live out their faith in joy and unity.
4. **The book of Philippians contain the word “joy” in some form at least 16 times** – With the common occurrence of this word in some form repeated throughout the letter, it make it clear that this is the theme of Paul’s letter to the Philippians and to us. And as stated above this theme of “joy” is particularly astounding given the fact that it is a prison epistle, written while Paul was incarcerated and being persecuted for his faith.
5. **The book of Philippians was written to a church and Christians that represent the one of the most important advancements of the Gospel to the west, particularly Europe** - Paul’s “Macedonian Call” in Troas during Paul’s 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey led him to his work in Philippi and the planting of the church there. Philippi was located in Macedoina, in northern Greece, on the continent of Europe. So the “Macedonian Call” and the planting of this church in Philippi through Paul’s second missionary journey, and Paul’s letter to the church at Philippi are very significant because they represent the advancement of the gospel further west, into Europe and ultimately to the entire world through Europe. It is not to be missed that the first converts on the continent of Europe were Lydia and her household, a demon possessed girl, and a Philipian jailer.

With these important facts about the book of Philippians let's probe a bit deeper into our study by looking at verses 12-18 (**READ: Philippians 1:12-18**)

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Dr. John MacArthur say, "The joyful Christian thinks more of his Lord than his personal difficulties, more of his spiritual riches in Christ than his poverty on earth, and more of his glorious fulfillment in heaven than his present pain. Therein lies our joy." This is certainly true and reflected clearly in the New Testament book of Philippians, and as Paul begins to reveal his current circumstances as he writes we begin to see the very practical teaching of a **believer joy in spite of trouble and troubling circumstances**. Indeed, the theme of Philippians 1:12-18 is joy in ministry. The keynote is Paul's declaration, "*...I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice*" (v. 18). He wrote that statement in the midst of some very difficult circumstances. Yet in spite of the difficulties, Paul rejoiced in the ministry God had given him.

### **JOY IN THE MIDST OF DIFFICULTIES**

Here is another quote from Dr. John MacArthur on "joy." Listen to MacArthur's statement and respond. Do you agree or disagree? What is meant by this statement? What does MacArthur mean?

*"A believer's spiritual maturity can be measured by what it takes to steal his (or her) joy."*

*-Dr. John MacArthur*

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### **The Believer's Joy Amidst Difficulties**

Here is Dr. John MacArthur gain, "A believer's spiritual maturity can be measured by what it takes to steal his joy."

New Christians will quite often have misconceptions about God, the Christian life and other believers and the things we face in this life... namely the struggles, the problems, the trials this life can hold, and when those trial and struggles strike they may cause one to lose their joy, or for their joy in their Christian life to be stolen away. They may be left floundering in their faith and wondering, "where is God in all of this?" Has He left me? Why are all of these bad things happening to me.

But that is not only a reality for new Christians, many who have been Christians for years may carry these misconception tucked neatly in their back pocket and when trial, and difficulties, and hardships come... when things don't go as they expected in their Christian world these misconceptions may reveal themselves in a lack of joy and victory in their walk, in their life and witness, and even in their spirit and disposition communicated to others... ever wonder why some who call themselves Christians look so miserable all the time and it is reflected in how they treat others. . This look at the common misconceptions of Christianity is designed to dispel some

of the myths that typically hinder Christians from growing and maturing in the faith even in the face of trials.

**10 Commonly Held Dangerous Misconceptions Christians May Make:** *\*these misconceptions really contribute to our inability to deal with the trials we face and sometimes are themselves a catalyst for great trials themselves and a loss of joy*

1. **Once you become a Christian, God will solve all of your problems (John 6:33, 1 Peter 4:12-13)** - In other words, “no more trials”... “all my restless tossing and trials are over.” Not so! Christians are shocked when the first trial or serious crisis hits. Here's a reality check -- get prepared -- the Christian life is not always easy! You will still face ups and downs, challenges and joys. You will have problems and troubles to overcome. Jesus said in John 6:33, *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”* And 1 Peter 4:12-13 offers encouragement for Christians facing difficult situations, *“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.”*
2. **Becoming a Christian means giving up all fun and following a life of rules (John 10:10, 1 Corinthians 2:9)** – This age old idea seem to imply that becoming a Christian will just be one problem after another...one trial heaped on another...that you will have to give up all your good times, all your friends, and that becoming a Christian is a real trial in itself. A joyless existence of mere rule-following is not true Christianity and the abundant life God intends for you. Rather, this describes a man-made experience of legalism. God has amazing adventures planned for you... not trial free, but amazing. As a matter of fact, Jesus, Himself described the life a Christian has as “abundant” when He said in John 10:10, *“... I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”* (NKJV) This verses gives a description of what it means to experience real life, full life... the best life even in the midst of a trial-prone existence. 1 Corinthians 2:9 says it like this and reminds us that though not problem free the Christ life is truly a blessed life, *“However, as it is written: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him”*
3. **All Christians are loving, perfect people (Colossians 3:13, Philippians 3:12-13)** – This misconception can pose serious problems itself for a believer. It doesn't take very long to discover that Christians are not always loving and perfect people. Quite the contrary can be true sometimes for any number of reasons. But being prepared to meet the imperfections and failures of your new family in Christ can spare you future trials of pain and disillusionment from the hands of others from whom you may be tempted to expect perfection. Although Christians strive to be like Christ, we will never obtain complete sanctification until we stand before the Lord. In fact, God uses our imperfections to "grow us" in the faith. If not, there would be no need to forgive one another. As we learn to live in harmony with our new family, we rub each other like sandpaper. It's painful at times, but the result brings about a smoothing and softening to our rough edges. Paul reminds us in Colossians 3:13 that we are to *“Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”* The very fact that he encourage us to have to do this “bearing with one another” implies that we are not always loving and perfect people, but rather a people who must be “beared” with. Do you get it? And he reminds us in Philippians

3:12-13 that we aren't there yet, but rather still a work in progress when he said, *"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead ..."* In other words, I am not perfect yet... I'm still working on it, or rather He is still working on me!

- 4. Bad things don't happen to truly godly Christians (2 Corinthians 11:24-26, 1 Peter 1:6-7)** - This point goes along with point number one, however, the focus is slightly different. Often Christians begin to wrongly believe that if they live a godly Christian life, God will protect them from pain and suffering... problems in this life... from trials. This just "ain't" so according to God's Word. Paul, a hero of the faith, suffered much. He lays out some of the bad things that happen to this truly godly Christian... just listen to it in **2 Corinthians 11:24-26**, *"Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers."* Some faith groups believe the Bible promises [health, wealth and prosperity](#) for all who live a godly life. But this teaching is false. Jesus never taught this to his followers. You may experience these blessings in your life, but they are not a reward for godly living. At times we experience tragedy, pain and loss in life. This is not always a result of sin, as some would claim, but rather, for a greater purpose that we may not understand immediately. We may never understand, but we can trust God in these difficult times, and know he has a purpose. [Rick Warren](#) says in his [popular book](#), "The Purpose Driven Life" says *"Jesus did not die on the cross just so we could live comfortable, well-adjusted lives. His purpose is far deeper: He wants to make us like himself before he takes us to heaven."* **1 Peter 1:6-7** says it like this, *"So be truly glad! There is wonderful joy ahead, even though it is necessary for you to endure many trials for a while. These trials are only to test your faith, to show that it is strong and pure. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold--and your faith is far more precious to God than mere gold. So if your faith remains strong after being tried by fiery trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world."* ([NLT](#))
- 5. Christian ministers and missionaries are more spiritual than other believers (1 Timothy 1:15-16)** – This is a major "problem" in church and with many Christian. The problems associated with this misconception are varied, but deadly. This is a subtle but persistent misconception that we carry in our minds as believers sometimes. Because of this false notion, we end up putting ministers and missionaries on "spiritual pedestals" accompanied by unrealistic expectations. When one of these heroes falls from our self-constructed perch, it tends to make us fall too -- away from God. This creates a terrible "trial" for our faith... sometimes to the point of disillusionments and abandonment of our previous commitments to our Lord and to His church. Don't let this happen in your life. You may have to continually guard yourself against this subtle deception. Paul, Timothy's spiritual father, taught him this truth - we are all sinners on an equal playing field with God and each other. **1 Timothy 1:15-16**, *"This is a true saying, and everyone should believe it: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--and I was the worst of them all. But that is why God had mercy on me, so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst*



*sinner. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life.”* (NLT)

6. **Christian churches are always safe places, where you can trust everyone (1 Peter 5:8, Matthew 10:6)** - Although this should be true, it is not. Unfortunately we live in a fallen world where evil resides. Not everyone who enters the church has honorable intentions, and even some who do come with good intentions can fall back into old patterns of sin. People get injured in church, and words said in a heated moment can cut deeply. Disagreements and squabbles can seem to hurt even deeper in a church leaving their victim feeling like the one place they felt was a holy separate place is suddenly a war zone. “Trials” can come us even in the seemingly “safe” environment of the church, because churches are made up of imperfect people, and the enemy likes to disrupt and dis-unify the body of Christ whenever and where he can. Peter warned us of this very thing in 1 Peter 5:8, when he said, *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”* (NKJV) And Jesus, Himself, warned us in Matthew 10:6, *“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves”* (KJV)
7. **Christians should never say anything that might offend someone or hurt someone else's feelings (Ephesians 4:14-15, Proverbs 27:6)** – This is a misconception. Many believers have a wrong understanding of meekness and humility. The idea of godly meekness involves having strength and courage, but the kind of strength that is submitted to God's control. True humility recognizes complete dependence upon God and knows we have no goodness except that which is found in Christ. Sometimes our love for God and our fellow Christians, and obedience to God's Word compel us to speak words given in love that to some, who are caught up in some worldly things or in a path of sin, may possibly be offended at or hurt by. Some people call this "tough love," and although some may use this approach too readily and carelessly injure others, there is a time and a place under the leadership of the Holy Spirit and done with the right heart attitude and in the Spirit that things must be handled and said. Be aware that this may create a crisis of faith for that one... a real trial for them. Paul states it like this in Ephesians 4:14-15, *“Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.”* (NIV) And listen to this wise proverb from Proverbs 27:6, *“Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.”* (NIV) Wow! In other words, even hard words said in love from someone who really cares about you are flattering words from someone who just says what you want to hear.
8. **As a Christian you should not associate with unbelievers (1 Corinthians 9:22-23)** - I am always saddened when I hear so called "seasoned" believers teaching this false notion to other Christians. Yes, it is true that you may have to break off some of the unhealthy relationships you have had with people from your past life of sin if and when their pull and draw on you is so strong that it is leading back into that life of sin. At least for a while you may need to do this until you are strong enough to resist the temptations of your old lifestyle. However, Jesus, our example, made it his mission (and ours) to associate with sinners. How will we attract those who need a Savior, if we don't build relationships with them? Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:22-23, *“When I am with those who are oppressed, I share their oppression so that I might bring them to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone so that I*

*might bring them to Christ. I do all this to spread the Good News, and in doing so I enjoy its blessings. (NLT)*

9. **Christians should not enjoy any earthly pleasures (Job 1:21)** - I believe God created all of the good, wholesome, enjoyable, and fun things we have on this earth as a blessing for us to enjoy. The key is not holding on to these earthly things too tightly. We should grasp and enjoy our blessings with our palms held open and tilted up. Job 1:21 reads, *"And (Job) said: 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.'"* (NIV)
10. **Christians always feel close to God (Psalm 63:1, Psalm 42:1-3)** – When a person first becomes a Christian he or she may feel very close to God. Your eyes have just been opened to a brand new, exciting life with God. However, you should be prepared for dry seasons in your walk with God. They are bound to come. A life-long walk of faith requires trust and commitment even when you don't feel close to God. Sometimes those dry seasons and distant feeling can come in the midst of the problems that we face. It is in those moments that we may feel at times like God has deserted us, or our own disappointment with life may cause us to feel not as close to Him. In these verses, David expresses sacrifices of praise to God in the midst of spiritual times of drought. Psalm 63:1, *"O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water."* (NIV) And Psalm 42:1-3, *"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, 'Where is your God?'"* (NIV) He is still there even when do feel as close to Him as we may have at one time. Go to Him! Seek after Him and don't stop even in those times when problems persist.

**QUESTION:** *We stated that these misconceptions really contribute to our inability to deal with trials that come our way in this life and sometimes are themselves a catalyst for greater trial themselves, and a loss of joy. How? How do these misconception contribute to our inability to deal with trials and sometimes serve as catalyst for greater trials, and a loss of joy?*

### **3 Biblical Calls for a Believer's Joy in the Midst of Difficulties:**

1. **Joy is part of the fruit of a Spirit-controlled life... Galatians 5:22-25** – *"<sup>62</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. <sup>24</sup> And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup> If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."* In speaking of the fruit of the Spirit... the fruit that ought to flow from the life of a believer, notice that "joy" takes a front and center position. This ought to be one of the most striking qualities noticeable in the life of a believer regardless of the circumstances.
2. **We are to rejoice always... Philippians 4:4, 1 Thessalonians 5:16** – Paul says in Philippians 4:4, *"<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!"* And similarly in 1 Thessalonians 5:16, *"<sup>16</sup> Rejoice always."* Notice the word "always!" Paul signifies here the sphere in which the believer's joy exists... a sphere unrelated to the circumstances of life, but related to the unassailable, unchanging relationship to the sovereign Lord.
3. **Joy in trials is seen as a characteristic of a believers life... James 1:2-4** - *"<sup>2</sup> My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, <sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces <sup>4</sup>patience. <sup>4</sup> But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."* James, particularly seems to give us something to focus on as a



source of joy in trials... our spiritual growth and maturity in Christ. The Greek word “count” may also be translated “consider” or “evaluate.” The natural human response to trials is not to rejoice; therefore the believer must make a conscious commitment to face them with joy. “Trials” here is the Greek word that connotes trouble, or something that breaks the pattern of peace, comfort, joy, and happiness in someone’s life. The verb form of this words means “to put someone or something to the test,” with the purpose of discovering that persons’ nature or that thing’s quality. God brings such tests to prove... and increase... the strength and quality of one’s faith and to demonstrate its validity. Every trial becomes a test of faith designed to strengthen; if the believer fails the test by wrongly responding, that test then becomes a temptation, or a solicitation to evil. The word “perfect” is not a reference to sinless perfection, but to spiritual maturity. The testing of faith drives believers to deeper communion and greater trust in Christ... qualities that in turn produce a stable, godly, and righteous character.

**Key Thought: In all circumstances the Spirit of God produces joy, so there ought not to be any time when we're not rejoicing in some way.**

Still, though we should not allow circumstances to make us sullen, bitter, or negative, or “joyless,” the one thing that will rob our joy is sin. It's then we cry out like the psalmist, *"Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation"* in Psalm 51:12. Nothing short of sin should steal our joy.

But **change, confusion, trials, attacks, unmet desires, conflict, and strained relationships** can throw us off balance and rob us of our joy if we're not careful.

We ought to expect trouble. Again, Jesus said, *"In the world you [will] have tribulation"* in John 16:33. The apostle James as we have seen said it, *"Consider it all joy ... when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance"* in James 1:2-3. **God has His own profound purpose in our afflictions, but it's never to take away our joy. To maintain our joy we must adopt God's perspective regarding our trials. When we yield to the working of His Spirit in our lives, our difficulties will not overwhelm us.**

### **Paul's Joy Amidst Difficulties**

The apostle Paul seems almost larger than life because his joy seems to have known no bounds. As you read through his letters, it seems that the greater the trial he faced, the greater his joy. His life is a living illustration of severe affliction mingled with supreme joy.

Paul was in Rome when he wrote to the Philippians, which is exactly where he wanted to be for many years (Rom. 15:23). He had written the Roman church that he had wanted to minister to them (Rom. 1:11) and perhaps use Rome as a base from which to reach out to Spain (Rom. 15:24).

But when Paul wrote to the Philippians, his circumstances were not in accord with what he had planned. He told the Romans of his desire to *"have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come to [them]"* (Rom. 1:10, KJV). But instead he came to Rome in chains as a prisoner and only after being shipwrecked. You would think that Paul’s joyous spirit would at least be hampered, but by our passage it doesn’t seem to be so. Notice his word in our passage (**Philippians 1:12**),

*“<sup>d2</sup> But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel.”* These words reflect a man with a joyful perspective of his difficulties.

So think with me of how Paul’s joy in the midst of all the difficulties he faced was a trend in life, not just a point he had now arrived at while in prison in Rome while writing Philippians.

### **The Extension of Paul’s Joy in the Midst of Difficulties He Faced:**

1. **Paul’s journey to Rome** - Acts 21-28 explains how Paul ended up in Rome. It began with his return to Jerusalem after his third missionary journey. To affirm he was still living in obedience to the law, he went to the Temple to participate in a ceremony. There he was accused of teaching against the law and violating the Temple, was attacked by a mob. He might have been killed had he not been rescued by Roman soldiers. They kept him in custody to protect him from his Jewish enemies. As time went on, Paul became a point of contention between the Jewish and Roman authorities. Hearings before Governors Festus and Felix, and an audience with King Agrippa brought no disposition of Paul's case. As a result he languished for two years as a prisoner in Caesarea (where the Roman army was garrisoned). Eventually he appealed to Caesar and was dispatched by ship to Rome. On arrival in Rome he spent another two years in prison (Acts 28:30). During that time he wrote what are known as the prison epistles, including Philippians. He was given an initial opportunity to defend himself (perhaps alluded to in Philippians 1:7). At that time he probably spoke of his belief in Christ and his calling to preach the gospel. The Roman emperor at the time was Nero, so when Paul wrote to the Philippians, he was waiting for Nero to make up his mind regarding his case. Months may have passed while awaiting word of release or execution. How do we know he never lost his joy during this time? This is when he would write the words in *Philippians 4:4*, *“<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”* referred to earlier.
2. **Paul’s house arrest** - The conditions of Paul's imprisonment were unusual. *Acts 28:16* says, *“When we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him.”* He was not put in a prison with other criminals... he had not committed any crime against Roman law. The Roman authorities probably realized there was no real criminal charge against Paul, yet because they could not release him before his case was adjudicated, they allowed him to be a private prisoner in his own quarters. Paul was under constant guard. Verse 20 records his saying to Jewish leaders in Rome, *“I requested to see you and to speak with you, for I am wearing this chain for the sake of the hope of Israel.”* The Roman government was sufficiently anxious about Paul that he was kept chained to a guard twenty-four hours a day. Roman custom provided for a change in guard every six hours, so Paul would have had four different men chained to him during the course of a day. Nevertheless, Paul had many freedoms. He was allowed to see visitors (vv. 17, 23) and stay in a private residence (v. 30). He was allowed to preach and teach there, and may have been allowed to leave for the same purpose (vv. 30-31). The sphere of his preaching and teaching was essentially unhindered, and included a captive audience--the Roman soldiers chained to him. Yet that was a far cry from the freedom he previously enjoyed journeying throughout a large part of the Roman Empire, founding and strengthening churches, and training leaders. He was always on the move to realize his apostolic commission to the greatest extent possible. He still sought to fulfill his commission even though he was imprisoned in Rome. Yet he did not have the solitude that the man of God craves for his personal worship. Even

for the little tasks of life he knew no privacy. In sleep, while writing, while eating--he always had to endure the presence of the soldier he was chained to.

- 3. Paul's response to the Philippians** - The Philippians hadn't heard from Paul in a long time, yet by some means were aware that he was in prison at Rome. They loved him deeply and had always been compassionate and sympathetic toward him. So they were concerned about him and sent Epaphroditus to Rome to seek the answer to two questions: What was Paul's condition, and what was the condition of the gospel? They also sent along a monetary gift (Phil. 4:18-19) and commissioned Epaphroditus to help Paul as a loyal friend and companion (Phil. 2:25-30). Paul wrote to the Philippians to answer their questions. Paul's letter is full of joy and rejoicing because, in spite of his circumstances, the gospel was going forward and he had joy in his ministry. He didn't want the Philippians to worry needlessly about him, so he emphasized his joy throughout his letter to them. In **Philippians 1:3-4**, "*I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all.*" And in **Philippians 2:17**, "*I rejoice and share my joy with you all.*" c) **Philippians 3:1--** "*Rejoice in the Lord.*" And of course in **Philippians 4:4**, "*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!*"

Paul's joy was unrelated to his circumstances. If his joy had been tied to pleasures on earth, possessions, freedom, prestige, outward success, or a good reputation, he wouldn't have had any joy. Paul's joy was centered on his ministry and was indifferent toward all other things. He had joy in spite of trouble as long as Christ's cause advanced. He had joy in spite of detractors as long as Christ's name was proclaimed. He had joy in spite of death as long as Christ was exalted. And he had joy in spite of the flesh as long as Christ's church was assisted.

### **3 Clarify Statements about Trials and Troubles:**

- 1. It is incorrect to think that because one is a Christian, he or she will never face any trials or troubles, and that all his or her trials and troubles will automatically be solved** – Paul's sure weren't. As a matter of fact, Paul's trials and troubles intensified.
- 2. It is incorrect to believe that having a problem, trial or troubles means one is unspiritual** – Certainly that cannot be said of the Apostle Paul
- 3. It is incorrect to assume that being exposed to Bible teaching and spiritual truth automatically immunizes and inoculates one from trials and troubles in this life** – Paul was the dispenser of Biblical and spiritual truth, his words inspired by the Holy Spirit, he had a literal conversation with the living Lord, yet his trials and troubles on grew more fierce. As a matter of fact his dispensing of Biblical and spiritual truth across the New Testament world was what bought him the trials and troubles he encountered.

### **JOY IN SPITE OF TROUBLE (vv. 12-14)**

Notice Paul's words to the Philippians believers in **verses 12-14**, "*But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel,<sup>13</sup> so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ;<sup>14</sup> and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.*"

Paul had joy in spite of trouble. Even though he was in chains he rejoiced because he knew Christ's cause was progressing. That's in contrast to what we might think. Because of Paul's circumstances, it would be natural to think his ministry had been totally crippled.

When Paul said, *"I want you to know,"* he was using a phrase often used in ancient letters. Today we might write, "I want you to understand this," and we would be saying much the same thing Paul meant. The phrase is significant for two reasons: Paul was pointing to the importance of what he was about to write, and he was signaling that it could be easily misunderstood and therefore needed to be clear and carefully how and what he said. It is a positive way of restating the phrase, "I do not want you to be unaware" (Rom. 1:13; 1 Cor. 10:1; 12:1; 1 Thess. 4:13). The Philippians might have thought his imprisonment was a terrible thing, but Paul wanted them to understand it was just the opposite.

### **What Paul Wanted Them To Know:**

- 1. Paul wanted them to know that he was joyful in that what had happened to him had furthered the gospel** – Isn't that exactly what he said in verse 12, *"<sup>d2</sup> But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel."* The phrase "for the furtherance" may be better translated "for the progress," which refers to the forward movement of something... oft time in speaking of the forward movement of an army in spite of obstacles, dangers, and distractions. Paul's imprisonment proved to be no hindrance to the spreading of the message of salvation. Actually it created new opportunities. How? Look how far west the gospel has no advanced through Paul.



- 2. Paul wanted them to know that he was joyful because he was actually having the opportunity to share the good of Christ personally to some who had never heard** – Notice what he says in verse 13, *"<sup>c13</sup> so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ."* Paul was not put in a prison with other criminals... he had not committed any crime against Roman law. The Roman authorities probably realized there was no real criminal charge against Paul, yet because they could not release him before his case was adjudicated, they allowed him to be a private prisoner in his own quarters. Paul was under constant guard. The Roman government was sufficiently anxious about Paul that he was kept chained to a guard twenty-four hours a day. Roman custom provided for a change in guard every six hours, so Paul would have had four different

men chained to him during the course of a day. Nevertheless, Paul had many freedoms. He was allowed to see visitors (vv. 17, 23) and stay in a private residence (v. 30). He was allowed to preach and teach there, and may have been allowed to leave for the same purpose (vv. 30-31). The sphere of his preaching and teaching was essentially unhindered, and included a captive audience... the Roman soldiers chained to him. He was actually getting to preach the gospel and share about Jesus every day with some of the roughest, toughest, meanest men in all of Rome, and many of them were not doubt brought to salvation and thereby dramatically changed... they were going home every day changed men, and it was reflecting in their homes and to their families and the gospel was spreading through them.

3. **Paul wanted them to know that he was joyful because his testimony of joy, strength and faithful endurance in the midst of his suffering was encouraging other believers going through similar circumstances -** Isn't that what he says in verse 14, *"<sup>14</sup> and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."* In others his testimony, had encouraged others to share the gospel without fear, and endure (I hold up) whatever trials and troubles it may bring.

Paul knew that God had worked out a far better plan than he could have on his own. His ministry had not been shut down but expanded. The New American Standard translates verse 12 to read, "For the greater progress." A better translation would be, "Rather for the progress," which better reflects the meaning of the Greek text. Paul was emphasizing that things had turned out differently than one might have expected.

### **Some Helps from Joy in Spite of Troubles:**

1. **Focus on the furtherance of the good news of Jesus Christ** – Is Christ Jesus being made known through my trial and trouble?
2. **Look for opportunities to share the gospel with others who are hurting** – Joy is sure to follow, we focus on the needs of others rather than on our own.
3. **Encourage other believers who are struggles with our own story -**

### **CONCLUSION**

Does your joy ebb and flow according to the tide of earthly benefits? Do pleasure, possessions, prominence, prestige, reputation, comfort, and fulfillment of your own ambitions propel your joy? If they do, your joy will ebb and flow according to the shifting tides of life. But if your joy is tied to the progress of the gospel, it will never diminish. Fix your heart on the progress of the gospel and your joy will be as constant as the extension of God's kingdom (cf. Matt. 16:18).

### **3 Principles for Joy in Spite of Troubles to Pondering:**

1. **In a world wracked with pain, violence, and heartache, a person who radiates joy is a rare commodity -**
2. **Joy is to be the distinctive of every Christian, making him or her winsome to those seeking spiritual answers in an unbelieving world -** The Puritan **Thomas Watson** wrote, *"Spiritual joy is a sweet and delightful passion, arising from the apprehension and feeling of [God's goodness and favor], whereby the soul is supported under present troubles, and fenced against future fear"* (*A Body of Divinity [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1965], p. 267*). Who does not desire such joy? Is your life characterized by a joy that makes unbelievers wonder what you have that they don't?



3. **To have joy in the midst of trials requires a mind fixed on something trials cannot touch**  
- Thomas Manton said, "If a man would lead a happy life, let him but seek a sure object for his trust, and he shall be safe: 'He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting the Lord' [Ps. 112:7]. He hath laid up his confidence in God, therefore his heart is kept in an equal poise." (cited in *The Golden Treasury of Puritan Quotations*, I.D.E. Thomas, ed. [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977], p. 160). *What determines the joy in your life--your circumstances, which shift like desert sand, or the Lord Jesus Christ, the rock of salvation (cf. Matt. 24-27)*