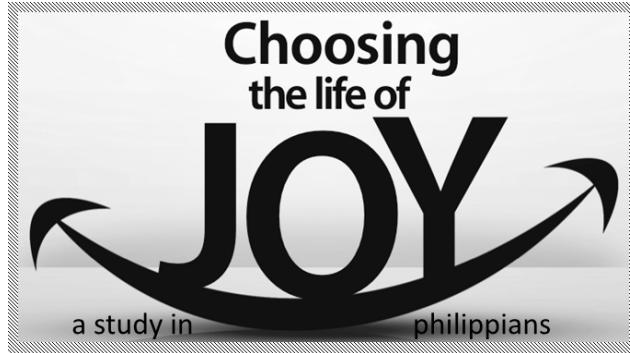


Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, February 5, 2019 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



CHOOSING THE LIFE OF JOY A Study in Philippians

Real Joy Is Determined By How You Walk and Where You Are Walking To
Philippians 3:17-21

¹⁷ Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.
¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: ¹⁹ whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. ²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. —Philippians 3:17-21

EXEGESIS OF PHILIPPIANS 3:17-21

17 Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. — “My example”... literally “be imitators of me.” Since all believers are imperfect, they need example of less imperfect people who know how to deal with imperfection and who can model the process of pursuing the goal of Christlikeness. Paul was that model. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “*Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.*” And in 1 Thessalonians 1:6 Paul said, “*And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.*” **Note those who so walk.** The Philippians believers were to focus on other godly examples, such as Timothy and Epaphroditus (see Philippians 2:19-20), and see who they conducted themselves in service to Christ.

We should follow the example of godly and faithful believers who have gone before us – It is okay for us to have “heroes” in the faith that we want to copy and imitate because they have done it well. However, a word of caution here... our primary focus should always... always be on Christ Jesus. Others, even godly others, can and will fail and fall short at times, and let you down. If your primary focus is on them their fall can be your downfall as well. That is why it is always dangerous to put

others up on a pedestal. So what is Paul talking about here? To what degree should we “follow” others who may be a faithful and godly example? We are follow and imitate what they did or do well, not what they don’t do well. Paul is certainly a good example to follow in most of what he modeled for us as recorded in the New Testament record, but we shouldn’t follow his example of a lack of grace, forgiveness and mercy as expressed in his ill-treatment of John Mark prior to his second missionary journey, causing a sharp dispute between Paul and Barnabas.

We should be careful how we live our lives, because someone is always watching us – Others are always watching for the good and for the bad. The life of a believer is lived under a microscope. A lost and unbelieving world often watches, waiting for a Christian to fail, mess up, and fall so that he or she can cry “hypocrite” and prove that religion is false and doesn’t work. Sometime an unbelieving world watches to see if, in fact, faith is real and may provide some hope and help for a searching life. Other believers watch the life of a more seasoned believer in order to grow and learn. Sometime, if not careful in how one lives, a more seasoned believer my put a stumbling block in the way of a less mature believer, but the thing he or she allows in live, behaviors, attitudes, words, etc. How we live our lives as believers certainly matters?

¹⁸ **For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:** - “**Told you often.**” Apparently Paul had warned the Philippians on numerous occasions about the dangers of false teachers, just as he did the Ephesians as in Acts 20:28-30, “²⁸Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. ²⁹For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” “**Weeping**” Paul had a similar response as he warned the Ephesian elders about the dangers of false teachers in Acts 20:31, “³¹Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.” “**Enemies of the cross of Christ**” Implied in Paul’s language is that these men did not claim to oppose Christ, His work on the cross, or salvation by grace alone through faith alone, but they did not pursue Christlikeness in manifest godliness. Apparently, they were posing as friends of Christ, and possibly had even reached positions of leadership in the church.

Why would Paul call them “enemies of the cross”?

¹⁹ **whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.** – These enemies of the cross could have been either Jews (the Judaizers, v.2) or Gentile libertines... precursors of Gnosticism, who maintained a dualistic philosophy that tended toward antinomianism, which is a discarding of any moral law. “**End is destruction**” The Greek word here for “end” refers to one’s ultimate destiny. The Judaizers were headed for eternal damnation because they depended on their works to save them. The Gentile libertines were headed for the same destiny because they trusted in their human wisdom and denied the transforming power of the gospel. “**God is their belly**” This may refer to the Judaizers’ fleshly accomplishments, which were mainly religious works. It could also refer to their observance of the dietary laws they believed were necessary for salvation. If the Gentile libertines are in view, it could easily refer to their sensual desires and fleshly appetites. As always, false teachers are evident by their wickedness. Listen to how Peter describes them in 2 Peter 2:10-19, “¹⁰and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, ¹¹whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord. ¹²But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own

corruption,¹³ and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you,¹⁴ having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children.¹⁵ They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;¹⁶ but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet.¹⁷ These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.¹⁸ For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error.¹⁹ While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.” And how about this in Jude 8-13, “⁸ Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries.⁹ Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”¹⁰ But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves.¹¹ Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.¹² These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots;¹³ raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.” “**Glory in in their same**” The Judaizers boasted of their self-effort, but even the best of their accomplishments were not better than filthy rags or dung as Paul has said in verses 7-8, “⁷ But what things were gain to me (his previous works and religious efforts), these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.” Remember that the Prophet Isaiah tell us in Isaiah 64:6 that even our good works, or best efforts and righteous acts are as “filthy rages” before a holy God. The Gentile libertines boasted about their sin and ambushed Christian liberty to defend their behavior. But Paul said in in 1 Corinthians 6:12, “¹² All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” “**Earthly things**” The Judaizers were preoccupied with ceremonies, feasts, sacrifices, and other kinds of physical and outward show. The Gentile libertines simply loved the world itself and the things in it. But as James said contrast to that in James 4:4, “⁴ Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” And John said it this way in 1 John 2:15, “¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

²⁰ **For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.** - “**Our citizenship**” The Greek term here refers to a colony of foreigners. In one secular source, it was used to describe a capital city that kept the names of its citizens on a register. “**In heaven**” The place where God dwells and where Christ is present. It is the believers’ home as John says it in John 14:2-3, “² In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” ... where their names are registered... Luke 10:20 says it, “²⁰ Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.” ... and their inheritance waits... 1 Peter 1:4 says, “⁴ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.” Other believers are there according to Hebrews 12:23, “²³ to the ^{la}general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made

perfect." We belong to the kingdom under the rule of our heavenly King, and obey heaven's laws. That is why Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2:11, "²¹*Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.*" "**Eagerly wait**" The Greek verb used here is found in most passages dealing with the second coming and expresses the idea of waiting patiently but with great expectation. Romans 8:23 says, "²³*Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.*" And in 2 Peter 3:11-12 it says, "¹¹*Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹²looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?*"

²¹***who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.*** – "**Transform our lowly body**" The Greek word for "transform" give us the word "schematic," which is an internal design of something. Those who are already dead in Christ, but alive in Him in spirit in heaven, will receive new bodies at the resurrection and rapture on the church, when those alive on earth will have their bodies transformed. "**Conformed to His glorious body**" The believer's new body will be like Christ's after His resurrection, and will be redesigned and adapted for heaven. "**Subdue**" The Greek word here means "to subject" and refers to arranging things in order of rank or managing something. Christ has the power both to providentially create natural laws and miraculously overrule them.

INTRODUCTION

What could our having and experiencing true joy possibly have to do with how we walk or live each day and where we are headed? Much in every way? Let's remind ourselves of what we mean by joy. Remember Paul's letter to the Philippian Christians is all about "joy," a word that is listed at least 16 times thought this short letter to these believers.

Dr. Warren Wiersbe, called Philippians, "**a personal manifesto on how to live a life full of joy.**" The book is a book of joy, and that is surprising given the circumstances surround the book. We have already established some characteristics of joy in our study.

7 Characteristics of Joy from Philippians:

1. **Joy is a heart expression of a genuine believer toward other people (Philippians 1:3)** – He blesses our lives with other people that make us joyful
2. **Joy is a fruit of spirit in the life of a believer place there by God alone (Philippians 1:11)** – Our joy comes from Him.
3. **Joy is not dependent on our outward circumstances (Philippians 1:12-21)** –
4. **Joy is found in cultivating the mind of Christ and being like Him (Philippians 2:5-10)**
5. **Joy is found in salvation (Philippians 2:12-18)**
6. **Joy is found in discarding things that don't make for our joy (Philippians 3:4-11)**
7. **Joy is found in pursuing Christ and Christlikeness (Philippians 3:12-16)**

Let's contrast what Paul tells us about "joy" under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the book of Philippians up again our sometime mixed up and confused blurring of the ideas of joy and happiness in this life. Are joy and happiness the same thing? How are they different? How does the Bible delineate the differences between joy and happiness or does it? I think most people would agree that happiness is a goal. What about joy? Doesn't everyone want to be happy? What is the difference between joy and happiness in the Bible?

6 Difference Between Joy and Happiness:

1. **The truth is the Bible never promises happiness, however it does promise joy** - There is a difference.
2. **You can have joy and be happy but you can't really be happy without joy... at least lasting happiness** - It's easy to be happy when you have freedom from suffering, you're financially secure, and all your relationships are good, but then you have trouble with one or more of these, what happens to the "happiness?" It's probably gone but if you've trusted in Jesus and know you are secure in His hands (John 10:28-29) you've still got joy.
3. **Happiness is based upon "happenings," joy is not** - Meaning if things happen to go well, you're happy, but if it happens that something bad occurs then you're happiness is likely gone. Not so with joy. As I said before, you can be happy and have joy but happiness is dependent upon circumstances; joy is not. Here's why. Before Jesus went to Calvary He said "*These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full*" (John 15:11). You will have "*sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you*" (John 16:22). Jesus promises the disciples that their joy will be full or complete. Filling a glass of water to the brim makes it full or complete. Jesus went to the cross to make sure that joy would be complete. Next, Jesus reassures them that no one's going to take their joy away. That is a permanent possession, not a fleeting moment like happiness is. Jesus says to them and He says to us, today you might "*be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy*" even though it is still today. John writes in John 16:11, "*These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*" Hopefully I have established the fact that happiness and joy, though related on some level, is not the same thing. You can be in a state of happiness one moment and then dread the next. If something happens to go wrong, you lose nothing in heaven. You get bad news but your good news is better. You are happy one moment then sad the next but you can be joyful in that same moment.
4. **One is permanent while the other is fleeting** – In this context happiness is going to be fleeting, while there is permanence... a lastingness to joy. Even though joy and happiness have a lot in common, one thing that they don't have in common is one is permanent while the other is fleeting. The Permanence of Joy... we have joy because we've been saved. How amazing that we've been rescued from the wrath of God Who placed it on His Only Son. Paul rejoiced in this, writing "*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope*" (Rom 15:13). One of the fruits of the Spirit is joy (Gal 5:22). This joy doesn't depart when we shed tears. Paul shows that the two can co-exist, writing "*As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy*" (2 Tim 1:4). Apparently Paul ached to see Timothy again and wept over him with longing but still had joy. Even when we encounter trials, James tells us, "*Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds*" (James 1:2). Do you remember Jesus saying "*These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full*" (John 15:11)? Full is a way of seeing it as complete and that same completeness of joy is found in many places in the Bible like in Jesus' words, Paul's epistles, James, Peter, and the Apostle John too (2 Tim 1:4; 2 John 1:12).
5. **One is from God and one is from us** – Biblical "joy" that is permanent and in all circumstances comes from the Lord and a personal relationship with Him. He places it in us, and give it to us. It is even listed as one of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. And although it could be said that no one is really "happy" until they know the Lord, there are many temporary things from which people may get happiness... though fleeting. It can be said that we can make our own "happiness," yet what happens when something takes that thing (whatever it is) on which we have based our happiness away.

6. **One can come and go but the other will remain** – A one preacher put it, “If joy and happiness were friends, happiness would be the unfaithful one of the two.” What do you think I means? Happiness will betray you given the wrong or bad circumstances, but joy is in all things.

Here is Dr. John MacArthur is a quote that we have turned to several time in our study. MacArthur says, “A believer's spiritual maturity can be measured by what it takes to steal his joy.” Listen, the truth is many things, almost anything can steal our “happiness” but for a genuine believer, a growing and maturing believer nothing should be able to steal your “joy.”

As we have said previously in our study, 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.

6 Commonly Held Dangerous Misconceptions Christians May Make: *These misconceptions really contribute to our inability to deal with the trials and struggles, the heartaches and difficulties of this life and affect our “joy” many even causing us to lose our joy. Exposing these “misconceptions” may help us to know we are not alone in our struggles, and may help us to really experience the joy of the Lord in all circumstances.

1. **Once you become a Christian, God will solve all of your problems (John 6:33, 1 Peter 4:12-13) – How might this misconception affect your joy and how might it show our blurring of joy and happiness?** 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) – How might this misconception affect your joy and how might it show our blurring of joy and happiness?** 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 verse 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) – *How might this misconception affect your joy and how might it show our blurring of joy and happiness?* 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 encourages 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) - *How might this misconception affect your joy and how might it show our blurring of joy and happiness?* 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 churches are always safe places, where you can trust everyone and no one should ever get hurt (1 Peter 5:8, Matthew 10:6) - *How might this misconception affect your joy and how might it show our blurring of joy and happiness?* 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 hurts 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)*
6. 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.

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 – *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵If 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, *“⁴Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”* And similarly in 1 Thessalonians 5:16, *“¹⁶Rejoice 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 - *“²My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴But 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.

All of that sounds good and maybe even right, but how do we get to the point at believers where we are able to look past the difficulties, and hardships, and trial and circumstances of this life like Paul and experience this in all things kind of joy. Paul closes out the 3rd chapter of Philippians with just such help but showing us 2 things about joy:

2 Things About Real Joy:

1. **Real joy is determined by how you walk** – In other words how you live out your Christian life.
2. **Real joy is determined by where you are walking to** – In other word your "citizenship"

Let's explore each of these as Paul explains them in Philippians 3:17-21 to close out chapter 3.

REAL JOY IS DETERMINED BY HOW YOU WALK (Philippians 3:17-19)

¹⁷ Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.
¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: ¹⁹ whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.

Mahatma Gandhi once remarked, "**I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.**"

Even within the church some of us may find ourselves agreeing with this statement because human beings so often disappoint us. When someone points to the mishaps of a professed Christian as a reason not to embrace the faith, we may tell him to look at Jesus instead. But in our text, Paul calls his audience to look at people and to imitate them. Listen to how he says in in verse 17, "¹⁷ Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern."

Paul says, "**follow my example**"... literally "be imitators of me." **That's pretty bold don't you think!** → **Would you be comfortable saying that? "Hey, follow my example!" Why do you think Paul could say that or do you think he was out of like to make such a boast?**

Since all believers are imperfect, they need example of less imperfect people who know how to deal with imperfection and who can model the process of pursuing the goal of Christlikeness. Paul was that model. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "**Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.**" And in 1 Thessalonians 1:6 Paul said, "**And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the**

word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.” “Note those who so walk.” The Philippians believers were to focus on other godly examples, such as Timothy and Epaphroditus (see Philippians 2:19-20), and see who they conducted themselves in service to Christ.

2 Words of Caution and Concern Here:

1. **We should follow the example of godly and faithful believers who have gone before us** – It is okay for us to have “heroes” in the faith that we want to copy and imitate because they have done it well. However, a word of caution here... our primary focus should always... always be on Christ Jesus. Others, even godly others, can and will fail and fall short at times, and let you down. If your primary focus is on them their fall can be your downfall as well. That is why it is always dangerous to put others up on a pedestal. So what is Paul talking about here? To what degree should we “follow” others who may be a faithful and godly example? We are to follow and imitate what they did or do well, not what they don’t do well. Paul is certainly a good example to follow in most of what he modeled for us as recorded in the New Testament record, but we shouldn’t follow his example of a lack of grace, forgiveness and mercy as expressed in his ill-treatment of John Mark prior to his second missionary journey, causing a sharp dispute between Paul and Barnabas.
2. **We should be careful how we live our lives, because someone is always watching us** – Others are always watching for the good and for the bad. The life of a believer is lived under a microscope. A lost and unbelieving world often watches, waiting for a Christian to fail, mess up, and fall so that he or she can cry “hypocrite” and prove that religion is false and doesn’t work. Sometime an unbelieving world watches to see if, in fact, faith is real and may provide some hope and help for a searching life. Other believers watch the life of a more seasoned believer in order to grow and learn. Sometime, if not careful in how one lives, a more seasoned believer may put a stumbling block in the way of a less mature believer, but the thing he or she allows in life, behaviors, attitudes, words, etc. How we live our lives as believers certainly matters?

The Pattern to Imitate

What Paul Is and Isn’t Saying Here?

1. **Paul wasn’t saying he never sinned or was flawless** – He wasn’t saying he was perfect, and should be worshipped as such. That is not the same as saying follow my example. Paul appeals to his readers to imitate him. This may seem to be an expression of insufferable vanity. However, remember in the first part of chapter 3 Paul has just used himself as a negative example of putting stock in one’s own status and accomplishments before God. He now regards these as rubbish for the sake of knowing Christ (chapter 3).
2. **Paul wasn’t calling on other believer to imitate his failings but his successes** - Paul does not want his audience to imitate false teachers who valued external ritual practices like circumcision (3:1-3). Rather, he wants his audience to imitate him in throwing off all external markers for the single-minded pursuit of sharing in Christ’s suffering and knowing the power of his resurrection (3:10-11).
3. **Paul’s was calling them to follow his example in who he follows and who/what he doesn’t follow** – Remember his words in Philippians 1:21, “²¹For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” That’s the example they are to follow. Paul’s audience is to imitate him or, if he is not present, to imitate those who follow his example, like Timothy and Epaphroditus (see 2:19-30). The word “example” translates the Greek word *typos* in 3:17. Etymologically, *typos* refers to a blow that leaves an imprint, like what is left by a stamp or a seal. In moral discourse, the word came to refer to an example or pattern. Paul presents his own life as the *typos* that has made an imprint upon the lives of his associates and that is worthy of imitation. But Paul himself is not the

archetype. Again, Paul's model for his life was Christ, reflected in the words "for to me, living is Christ and dying is gain" (1:21). For Paul, all of life is captured in Christ so that everything Paul does is generated by Christ and done for his sake. For this reason, Paul provides Jesus Christ as the quintessential example for his audience to follow. He calls them to think and act in humility and self-sacrificial service towards each other (2:1-4). They are to look at Jesus, who acted in humility and self-sacrificial service towards humanity in his incarnation and in his crucifixion (2:5-11). Jesus Christ is the archetype, the *typos* that made an imprint on the life of Paul. This is a certain kind of living that requires a certain mindset: not asserting your own rights, considering the needs of others as more important than your own. It took Jesus to the cross. It landed Paul in prison. Paul's call to imitate him is, in fact, a call to imitate Jesus.

Notice Paul's words again in verses 17:19, "¹⁷ Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. ¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: ¹⁹ whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things."

Notice that in these verses Paul contrast the walk of a genuine believer with the walk of those who aren't believers. The walk of a Christian is a distinctive walk. In other words there are things that

→ distinguish it from the walk of others. ***If a genuine believers walk is not right, his or joy will not be right either... they won't experience the joy of the Lord as He desires. Why might this be true?***

When we speak of the "walk" of a believer or Christian, we are talking specifically about the life of a believer... how one lives his or her life. This is a favorite theme for Paul... one that he picks up in many of his letters found in the New Testament. Perhaps none give a better description of what that walk looks like than Ephesians 5:1-15, "Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.² And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.³ But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; ⁴ neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.⁵ For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.⁷ Therefore do not be partakers with them.⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light⁹ (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), ¹⁰ finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.¹¹ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.¹² For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.¹³ But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.¹⁴ Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light."¹⁵ See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,¹⁶ redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Paul describes the walk of a believer, a walk filled with the joy of the Lord, three ways:

3 Characteristics of the Joyful Walk of a Genuine Believer:

1. A walk of love (Ephesians 5:1-2) – What does it mean to walk in love? We so often have a mixed up and confused understanding of love.

4 Greek Words for Love Used in the New Testament:

(1) STORGE LOVE – This is familial love... the love within a family between parent and child, a mother to her children or a father to his children. Family love.

- (2) **PHILIA LOVE** – This is friendship love or brotherly love, this is a friendship type of love between friends. The city of Philadelphia gets its name from this Greek word, hence Philadelphia is called “the city of brotherly love.”
- (3) **EROS LOVE** – This is romantic or sexual intimacy, the romantic love shared between a husband and wife. We recognize this Greek word for “sexual love” as it has been corrupted to mean “erotic” a word you most commonly hear associated with pornography. Sad that this word has been hijacked by the world to point to something perverted and ugly, because “sexual love” within in a marriage is beautiful, and created by God, and is something to be honored and esteemed not seen as dirty. Remember the world always perverts love.
- (4) **AGAPE LOVE** – this is Divine love, God love. New Testament writers used this word to describe the way God loves us... God unconditional love for us. This is the highest form of love. In the New Testament it takes on a distinct meaning. *Agape* is used to describe the love that is of and from God, whose very nature is love itself: “God is love” (1 John 4:8). God does not merely love; He is love itself. Everything God does flows from His love. *Agape* is also used to describe our love for God (Luke 10:27), a servant’s faithful respect to his master (Matthew 6:24), and a man’s attachment to things (John 3:19). The type of love that characterizes God is not a sappy, sentimental feeling such as we often hear portrayed. God loves because that is His nature and the expression of His being. He loves the unlovable and the unlovely, not because we deserve to be loved or because of any excellence we possess, but because it is His nature to love and He must be true to His nature. *Agape* love is always shown by what it does. God’s love is displayed most clearly at the cross. “God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved” (Ephesians 2:4–5, ESV). We did not deserve such a sacrifice, “but God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). God’s *agape* love is unmerited, gracious, and constantly seeking the benefit of the ones He loves. The Bible says we are the undeserving recipients of His lavish *agape* love (1 John 3:1). God’s demonstration of *agape* love led to the sacrifice of the Son of God for those He loves. We are to love others with *agape* love, whether they are fellow believers (John 13:34) or bitter enemies (Matthew 5:44). Jesus gave the parable of the Good Samaritan as an example of sacrifice for the sake of others, even for those who may care nothing at all for us. *Agape* love as modeled by Christ is not based on a feeling; rather, it is a determined act of the will, a joyful resolve to put the welfare of others above our own. *Agape* love does not come naturally to us. Because of our fallen nature, we are incapable of producing such a love. If we are to love as God loves, that love—that *agape*—can only come from its Source. This is the love that “has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us” when we became His children (Romans 5:5; cf. Galatians 5:22). “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters” (1 John 3:16). Because of God’s love toward us, we are able to love one another.

When Paul calls us to walk in the love, he means we are to love like God loves... to imitate God’s love for us.

Characteristic of God’s Love for Us:

- (1) **God love for us is giving (Eph. 5:2)**
- (2) **God’s love for us is forgiving (Eph. 4:32)**
- (3) **God’s love for us is sacrificial (Eph. 5:2)**
- (4) **God’s love for us is impactful (Eph. 5:2)** – sweet smelling aroma
- (5) **God’s love for us is unconditional (Eph. 5:2)**

2. **A walk of light (Ephesians 5:3-14)** – Paul says in verses 3-13, “³*But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; ⁴ neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.* ⁵*For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷Therefore do not be partakers with them. ⁸For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), ¹⁰finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. ¹¹And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹²For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. ¹³But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.”* Given the context in these verses and Paul calls right in the middle of these verses, what does he mean when he says that as believer we are to “*walk as children of light.*” He is speaking of our behavior... how we live our lives every day. It matters how you live your life, Christian! We are not saved by being good or by moral behavior, but as believers we are called to it. We are saved by grace plus nothing else. We are not saved by what we do, but how we live our lives gives evidence that we are saved. But that is not all, how we live our lives to please the Lord dictates how “joy-filled” we will be. A believer/Christian, who is not living for the Lord will be a miserable Christian, if he or she is one at all. Today, it seem we have watered down sin, condoned sin, accepted sin into the church, we excuse it, cover it, make it okay, everybody does it... seems today we often have the “libertine” mind of the New Testament world that Paul so often encountered. There is nothing new under the sun.
3. **A walk of caution (Ephesians 5:15)** – Paul says in verse 15, “¹⁵*See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, ¹⁶redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*”

REAL JOY IS DETERMINED BY WHERE YOU ARE WALKING TO (Philippians 3:20-21)

²⁰*For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.*

Don't be Earthly-Minded (verses 18-19)

Some, however, are not following this example and have become “enemies of the cross of Christ” (verse 18). They do not follow the example of Christ as modeled by Paul. Instead of having a mind set on Christ, they have “minds set on earthly things.” Instead of being guided by self-sacrificial service to others, they are guided by their own desires (“their god is their belly”). These people have not denied Christ by their confession or words, but have denied Christ by their behavior. They are enemies of the cross of Christ because they refuse to conform to the pattern of humility and self-sacrifice that led Jesus there.

Be Heavenly-Minded (verses 20-21)

With a sharp contrast, Paul says that he and his audience are not earthly minded, but are heavenly minded (verse 20). Paul reminds them that their true citizenship is in heaven and not on this earth. Philippi was a Roman colony, so Paul’s audience were Roman citizens with rights and benefits of which they were proud. Paul himself invokes these benefits when he is in Philippi to his aid (Acts 16). But here Paul redefines the citizenship of the Christian. The Philippians -- and we as Christians -- are

citizens of Christ's city, governed by the gospel. Paul uses the present tense, "our citizenship *is* in heaven," which calls them to enact their true citizenship now in a foreign land.

Paul has had his mind on the redefinition of citizenship throughout the letter. His use of citizenship language in 3:20 recalls 1:27. Most translations disguise the sense of the Greek language with a translation such as the NRSV, "let your manner of live be worthy of the gospel." Literally, it is "live as citizens worthy of the gospel." They do this by participating in the common cause of "standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel." Paul comes full circle in our passage to speak of citizenship again. Notice that in 3:17 Paul asks his audience to "join together" in imitating him. The kind of living to which he calls is not a solitary job, but is necessarily done in community.

There is an old adage: "she is so heavenly minded that she is no earthly good." Paul's point, however, is that we must be heavenly minded if we are to be any earthly good. To enact our heavenly citizenship is to follow the example of Christ as modeled in Paul, acting in humility and self-sacrificial service to others. As citizens of heaven, we live in a foreign land where self-aggrandizement and self-satisfaction are prized.

During Lent many of our congregants have fasted in order to practice disciplined living and the mortification of bodily desires, following the example of Jesus when he was tempted in the wilderness. As helpful as this practice is to stave off a mind set on earthly things with our god as our belly, we may still find ourselves as enemies of the cross by the way we treat each other. Let us imagine ways to follow the example of Jesus through humble and self-sacrificial living for the sake of others. When we see someone replicate this example, theirs is a life worth imitating.