

## Philippians 1:3-7

Happiness to most people is defined by what happens to them. Happiness is tied to the horizontal circumstances of life. That is exactly why happiness can't be guaranteed or kept for very long. The Scripture reveal the real elements of joy that are lasting, unlike the temporary superficial joys of this world. **Psalm 16:11**, "*You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*"

Paul will use the word joy often in this letter. Joy is deeper and different than happiness. Happiness depends on horizontal happenings; joy depends on the commitments of the heart.

Paul had every reason to be anything but joyful. Paul was under house arrest, Roman guards were handcuffed to Paul. If Paul can be joyful in prison then believers living in this Roman city of Philippi can catch joy also. Paul is totally depending on God. Paul knows he will be victorious if God's will is completed in his life. If every church had the spirit of victory, the spirit of confidence, and a pilgrim character, the lost world would believe our testimony. We would see more conversions than we witness currently.

### 1. The First Component of Joy Is Gratitude

This thank you letter was first and foremost the giving of thanks to God. Verse 3, "*I thank my God.*" Paul's vertical relationship with God highlighted, shaped, influenced, and defined his horizontal perspective in relation to his circumstances. "*I thank my God*" This starts the journey toward "joy."

### 2. The Second Component of Joy: It is a choice

Paul is choosing to thank God. When we're unhappy or there is little joy in our life, is it because we fail to realize that joy is a choice?

Joy is a choice, not a wish. As humans we will experience joy when we make a choice to be happy in the Lord only. When we want what God wants for our life, our job, our home, our marriage, and our family we will experience joy.

Why was Paul joyous? Again, he was chained to a Roman guard. Paul's life was greatly restricted. But Paul is joyous. Why? Because he has chosen to let what God has determined for his life to actually be his life and be content with that. **Romans 12:1** instructs how to do this, "... *present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*" Later in **Philippians 4:11** Paul will say, "*Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.*"

Secondly he's choosing to thank God for, "... *in all my remembrance of you.*" Paul is thanking God for people in his life and not material things or pleasures in his life. The person who focuses on the faults, shortcomings, unfortunate events in life, personal mistakes or the mistakes of others is a person who gives too much focus to the flesh. That is where resentment and a critical spirit will rule. A key ingredient to a joyful spirit is limiting our recollection of the difficulties of life and that which produces resentment and choosing gratitude to God.

### 3. The Third Component of Joy Is Faithful Intercession

Va. 4 – The Scriptures reveal that Paul rarely prayed for things, but he was always praying for people. The same Greek word is used 4 times in verses 3 and 4 and is translated *all* or *every*. Paraphrased it is, "*I thank my God in all my remembrance of you; at all times and in all my prayers for all of you.*"

Paul, once a proud Pharisee who was passionate to arrest anyone who dared defy his religion, and who was so proud that if he accidentally brushed up against a Gentile in the market place would immediately go and follow the ritual cleansing required. Now this same man Paul is so consumed by the grace of God that with joy he prays for Gentiles. A person cannot be prejudiced or hate others and be in fellowship with God!

Those who pray for others are winning the battle against I-me-and-mine – and in so doing they are vaulting the greatest obstacle to joy in the entire world, which happens to be themselves.

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Intercessors are winning that battle against the flesh and worldly desires. Paul's prayer life didn't change his circumstances. When he said "Amen" he was still chained to that Roman guard . . . but his prayer life changed his spirit.

### 4. The Fourth Component of Joy Is Unfailing Participation

Verse 5, "*for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now*" The Greek word for "fellowship" comes from *koinonia*. Depending on its appearance as a verb, or an adjective, or a noun, the word can be translated fellowship, communion, partnership, participating, or being ready to share. It is used as a noun in verse 5 and it is translated as partnership, shared ownership, or mutual contribution.

Sharing in ministry is what we've got to do if we want to experience joy personally and corporately as a church and to do so we must elevate our understanding of biblical *koinonia*. *Koinonia* fellowship is shared responsibility; it is serving together in women's Bible studies; volunteering to serve in children's ministries; joining a team and serving on a ministry project or a short-term mission trip, do mercy work to alleviate suffering after some devastation or natural disaster. That's *koinonia*. That's biblical fellowship!

Kent Hughes in his book *Disciplines of a Godly Man* wrote the following primarily to challenge Christians, "*The church today has produced a host of ecclesiastical hitchhikers. The hitchhiker's thumb says, 'You buy the car, you pay for repairs, upkeep and insurance; you buy the gas – and I'll ride with you. But if you have an accident, you're on your own. So it is with so many in today's church; their creed is, 'You go to the meetings and you serve on the committees and volunteer teams; you grapple with logistics and needs and issues of the church and you take care of the bills and the mortgage while you're at it – I'm just along for the ride. And if things don't suit me, I'll probably complain and criticize and maybe even bail out – you see, my thumb is always out for a better ride.'*"

Notice Paul's confidence and encouragement in verse 6, "*being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;*" This phrase "*the day of Jesus Christ*" emphasizes that future day when Jesus Christ returns and raptures away His church. In contrast to the phrase, "*the day of the Lord*" used in the New Testament which refers to a Day of Judgment and tribulation, described by Paul in *1 Thessalonians 5*.

### 5. The Fifth Component of Joy is Loyal Devotion

Verse 7, "*It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart.*" He effectively told them in verse 3 that they were on his mind – and now here in verse 7 he concludes the thought by telling them that they are *on his heart*. *In the defense* – that word is "apologia" which gives us our word apologetics – the defense of the gospel to those outside the church.

The components of Joy:

- **Joy is found in gratitude** – we called it, selective remembering; let me put it this way: joy is choosing to remember when people treat you right, instead of when they've done you wrong
- **Joy is a choice** – We choose God's choices for our life as our choices
- **Joy is found in faithful intercession** – joy is choosing to pray for people instead of things we want for ourselves
- **Joy is found in unfailing participation** – joy is choosing to participate in the church instead of hitchhiking as we travel toward our final destination
- **Joy is found in loyal devotion** – joy is choosing to defend the gospel more than we care to defend ourselves

These are the components of joy that will:

- Sanctify your memory
- Enhance your relationships
- Enlighten your perspective
- Order your priorities
- Strengthen your loyalties
- Energize your life with grace, wisdom, and joy