

Introduction.

This letter was written by the Apostle Paul when he was a prisoner in Rome. Most scholars would record that this would have been in the year 62 AD. Paul had established the church at Phillipi after his second missionary visit as recorded in Acts chapter 16.

When we look at Paul here in prison, with restrictions on his liberty, in chains, and guarded by four sets of six soldiers twenty-four hours a day seven days a week.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT.

- How would you feel?
- How would you be emotionally?
- How would you get through each “long” twenty-four hours a day.?
- Without internet, smart phones, laptops, iPad? Privacy and personal ablutions.

Well, his relationship with the Lord Jesus is what he has to sustain him. This was what we note in Acts chapter 16:20-34. Here we get a glimpse of the “spiritual stature” of the Apostle. Dragged before the authorities, chief magistrates, attacked twice (vs19:22) stripped beaten with rods and inflicted with many blows, (vs 22-23) thrown into the inner prison and secured by their feet to stocks. (v27) He might be acquitted, or he might be beheaded?.

At midnight they begin to pray and sing songs to God. v28.

Then the Lord responds.....Something for another time.

Here in the Philippian letter we begin to understand the foundation for his positive attitude and response to such a negative and brutal attack upon his person..

It would be to our benefit to understand what “joy” really is and how it applies to us. Not as an artificial “high” given to us on an occasion to help us through a difficult time. Or as a type of anaesthetic to numb the pain.

*“Always praying with **joy** for all of you” 1:4.*

But as it relates to the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:1-5) residing in us who is the deposit guaranteeing what is to come. 2 Cor 5:5. The joy of the Lord comes from the Holy Spirit living within us, as Paul records in Romans 8:17-18,

*“The Spirit Himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God’s children,
heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ....seeing that we suffer with Him
so that we may also be glorified in Him”*

As a result regardless where we are, whatever we are doing, whatever circumstances we find ourselves to be in the Spirit continually witnesses with us and shares with us the overwhelming hope, delight and Joy (which characterises our personal being) that we are never away from His presence.

As the old song says

“I’ve got something the world can’t give, and the world can’t take it away”

The world has happiness, the church has joy. Let me explain.

The world lives on its emotions...how it feels. We live in a society that has the false notion that happiness is always achievable....a state of happy equilibrium. That constant happiness is the “norm”?

Nothing could be further from the truth or reality.

Within the normal parameters of emotion, you can at one point feel elated, another moment a little sad or even a little melancholy. So, within those parameters there is a mood swing. If your emotions swing beyond the “normal” parameters in either direction you can become ill.

- (a) If you go too high you may become manic. Or manic depressive.
- (b) If you swing in the other direction you may become depressed. Clinically depressed.
A Unipolar Effective Psychosis.
- (c) If you suffer from both you are probably suffering from a Bipolar Effective Psychosis.

Fort in Glasgow “let out your happy”. In today's society if you are not happy change it so you can be happy. Job, marriage or a relationship etc. But that is not the answer that is chasing a shadow! This is a false hope. To be happy 24/7 is an unrealistic goal, even in this day of hedonism.

As Christian we have the same emotional parameters as the unsaved but the difference is that my whole being is not based on how I “feel” but on the non-emotional (that's all the world has) but we have this “other” dimension our spiritual relationship of “Joy in the Lord” .

Our joy in the Lord is not affected by how we feel. I might be sad.....but rejoicing in the Joy of the Lord. Paul to the Corinthian church 2 Cor 5:7.

“For we live by faith not by sight”.

The LORD to Nehemiah. (8:10)

“Don't be dejected and sad, for the Joy of the LORD is your strength”.

As Christians if we insist in living by how we “feel” we have a very serious problem! Part of the problem being as James Montgomery Boice, records in his excellent book Foundations of the Christian Faith. Marks of the Church. Chapter 5. p467.

.....“When we give up trying to run our own life or when we give up what seems so precious to us, it is then (and only then) that we suddenly find the true joy of being a Christian and enter into a life so freed from obsession that we can that we can hardly understand how it could have had such a hold on us.

This is primarily the difference between a joyless and joyful Christian, a defeated and victorious one, Death and Resurrection! Joyless Christians may have died and risen with Christ in some abstract sense, so they can in the same sense be termed new creatures in Christ. But they have certainly never known its practice.

Joyful Christians have found satisfaction in whatever God gives them (*or places them in His programme of growth*) and they are truly satisfied. They have said no! to anything that might keep them from the richness of God's own blessing and presence and have risen to new life”.....

Italics in the quote are mine for better understanding.

This is one of the marks of the church there are 6 in John 17.

1. Joy. v13.
2. Holiness. vs 14-16.
3. Truth. v17.
4. Mission. v18.
5. Unity. vs 21-23.
6. Love. v26.

It is interesting to note that the characteristic mentioned first by Jesus is joy. Many of us would not naturally mention it, let alone put it first. We might point to love or holiness or true doctrine. But Jesus said,

“Now I am coming to You, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have My joy completed in them.” Jn 17:13.

.....”That most of us do not think of joy as a primary characteristic of the church probably indicates how much little we regard it and how far we have moved from the spirit of the early church. The early church was a joyous assembly.

We see their joy immediately. When we begin to study the subject in the New Testament. In the Greek language, here the verb meaning “to rejoice” or “be joyful” is *chairein*; it is found seventy-two times. The noun, meaning joy is “*chara*”; it occurs sixty times. As we study we discover that joy is not a technical concept, found only in highly theological passage. Rather it most often occurs simply as a greeting, meaning “joy be with you”. To be sure, *chairein* is not always restricted to the speech of Christians.

It is used for example, in the letter to Felix about Paul by the Roman officer Claudius Lysias, where it means “Greetings” (Acts 23:26) But in Christian hands it obviously meant more than it did with pagans and is used more frequently”James Montogery Boice .

NOTE:

- Angels in Lk 2:10-11 the words here obviously meant more than “Greetings”.
- Jesus later said, in Jn 15:11
“I have spoken these things to you so that My joy may be in you and your joy may be complete”
- Paul’s writings contain many uses of the word. In Philippians, (4:4) the apostle, wrote wishing to give a final admonition to his friends, wrote,
“Rejoice in the Lord always, again I will say, Rejoice”
- Professor Barclay says, “This last greeting, ‘Joy be with you’

1. **The Fellowship of the Gospel.** 1:1-11.

Paul pens it beautifully in verse v7

“You share with me the special favour of God”

His confidence in God is that the Lord who commenced the work in them will continue their transformation and that work will not be complete until He returns. v6 and again that they will live blameless lives until the day of Christ’s return. v10. NLT.

His Prayer. v3. Always praying.... with Joy. v4.

The foundation of our walk with God.

He is giving thanks to God for every memory he has of them. They have certainly made a lasting impression upon him. Since the day the jailer and his family responded to the Gospel when Paul and Silas were imprisoned in Acts 16:25-34 right up to the present where Paul is in prison again Phil 1:18.....On both those occasions Paul would see his incarcerations (from his "joy" in the Lord) as he records,

*"A Prisoner of Christ Jesus". Eph 3:1.
"The mystery of the Messiah, for which I am in prison. Col 4:3b.*

His prayers (vs 9-11) are unselfish and from his heart that they, may grow in knowledge and have the understanding of what they "have" in Christ, what they "are" in Christ, what is "still to take place" in Christ, for the Church and the world. That their love will "overflow" more and more. (v9) The overflowing of their joy expressed in practical love and support. This then and in turn would produce in them fruit that accompanies salvation. 1:11. (Gal 5:22-23)

*"We are confident that you are meant for better things,
things that come from salvation" Heb 6:9. NLT.*

So as always God would receive all the glory. (v11)

Paul's imprisonment rather than having a negative impact upon the church had the opposite, because of the JOY that was in their lives and in the church.

1. You share with me my imprisonment. v7.
2. My imprisonment here has made most of the believers more confident to speak God's message. v14.
3. We are in this struggle together. v30.
4. We are partners in spreading the Good News about Jesus. v5. NLT.
5. Or the non-PC expression these days but Scriptural. "Slaves" of Christ Jesus. v1 NLT.

2. His Partnership with them in the Lord. 1:12-26.

He wants and needs them to understand the Sovereignty of God. That everything that has happened to him (the Christians in Philippi and all Christians) helps to spread the Good News about Jesus. v12.

The furtherance of the Gospel. Whether we like it or not "joy" comes increasingly to us through the challenging circumstances He leads us through. Remembering that it is a partnership with God the Holy Spirit.

James records 1:2-4.

*"Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way,
consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested
your endurance has a chance to grow. So, let it grow, for when your endurance is
fully developed,
you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing".*

Thinking along these lines of “growing” in the faith from the first day of your calling. I as a Pastor have often said to young men who wanted to work with me, just like Elijah said to Elisha (remember all that Elijah experienced the “highs” and “lows” of his walk with God. 1 Kings 19:20.

“Go on back,” he replied” “for what have I done to you” HCSB

Such is the focus and faith of Paul, Heb12:2; Gal 2:20; Col 3:1-4.
This then is the fellowshipping of the Gospel...the sharing of the partnership with Christ. The sharing and working together of like minds, for the set purpose of winning the lost and seeing God’s Kingdom extended....and His Name glorified. Phil 2:13-15.
HCSB

“God is working in you, enabling you both to desire and to work out His good purpose. Do everything without grumbling and arguing, so you may be blameless and pure children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation.

Among whom you shine like stars In the world.

The encouraging and support we give to each other as recorded in Hebrews 10:24.

“Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works” NLT

Although many loved and prayed for him, recognising his Divine appointment to preach the Gospel. Yet sadly not all were supportive and some even rejoiced that he was in prison. There was jealousy and rivalry because of some with un pure motives whose actions made Paul’s experience in “chains” more painful. (vs15-19) But regardless the Word was being preached.

Paul gives us a glimpse of his understanding and appreciation of the quality of eternal life in comparison to this life on Earth. Here he expresses v21.

“For to me to live is Christ but to die is gain”.

He is torn between the two because going to be with the Lord would be far better for him, but for the church it would be for their benefit for him to remain. He is convinced (v25) that he will remain alive to continue his ministry among them, Leading, encouraging, teaching, guiding and supporting them. With the hope of after being released from prison he may make another visit to them. Which would bring the church further encouragement because of what the Holy Spirit was doing through him. (v26.) as he says in chapter 4:9, NLT.

“Keep putting into practice all you have learned and received from me everything you have ever heard from me and saw me do

3. His Personal Relationship with them. 1:27-30.

His advice to practical living.

Paul’s relationship with Jesus (as does ours) makes for healthy relationships with other members of the Body of Christ. So together we must remember, how we act, how we live, for we are not citizens of the Earth but our citizenship is in heaven. Sadly, too many Christians have “roots” that bind them to the things of the world. (v27) With the world’s accompanying language, thinking and values. As Paul exhorts,

“conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Jesus” v27.

Paul is confident that whether he visits again or only hears reports about the church there in Philippi they will stand together in one spirit with one purpose united fighting for the faith which is the Good News. He counsels them to be strong and not be intimidated by those who are enemies of the cross. Standing firm is a visible sign to the world that if there is no repentance they are going to be destroyed, but that you are going to be saved by God Himself. v28.

This is the truth that Christians do not want or like to hear.

The first part is very acceptable,

“The privilege of trusting in Christ”

The second part is very challenging,

“The privilege of suffering for Him”

The cold reality is we are in this struggle together. He reminds them that they have witnessed his struggle in the past.....but they know he is still in the midst of it.....Such is our pilgrimage.

Further food for thought. 2:10-11.

“But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives.

And we are eagerly waiting for Him to return as our Saviour. He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like His own, using the same power with which He will bring everything under His control” (3:20)

Conclude this section.

It is the joy of the Lord that carries us through our spiritual life whatever we face. The hope the promise and the soon coming of the Lord keeps us joyful and rejoicing. we hope in Him not our emotions.

Discussion:- Knowing what you know now about the joy of the Lord.

(1) How would you respond to “Imprisonment” ?

(2) What is your thinking of others capitalizing upon his (or your difficulties) incarceration to cause him further anxiety? Phil 1:17.

(3) Have you ever experienced such activity in your Christian walk?
How did you cope

(4) How will you cope if this kind of behaviour happens to you again?