

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, lap tops, i pads? 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 be-headed?.

*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, Col 1:8-9 ) 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 Rom 14:17 ) that we are never away from His presence.

As the old song says, (Jn 16:22)

*“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”. (Find your happy, Feed 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”.*

- The people were weeping.
- When they heard the Word read.
- They couldn’t read the Word.
- They couldn’t speak the language. (They didn’t have the language of Zion)
- They had no understanding.....wept .....lack of joy.

As Christians if we insist in living by how we “feel” we have a very serious problem! (Jn 20:19-20)

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. 1 John 5:20.

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”*  
Vocalising my Joy.
- Professor Barclay says, “This last greeting, ‘Joy be with you’

#### 1. **The Fellowship of the Gospel.** 1:1-11. (Joy boasts of our relationship)

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. (In 10 verses he mentions the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming twice)

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.*

Jesus to Pilate. *“You have no power over me except it be given you from heaven”* Jn 19:11a.

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) (Col 1:10)

*“We are confident that you are meant for better things, things that come from (accompany) salvation” Heb 6:9. NLT.*

- Realizing your Joy.
- Renewing your Joy.
- Overflowing in your Joy.
- Vocalizing your Joy.
- Resting in your Joy.
- Remain in your Joy.

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 fellowshiping 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. Watch your motives 2:3.

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.

*“Taking pride in Christ Jesus” (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. v29.

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 (through our understanding of the Word) 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.

Our hope in Christ, we have Joy ever increasing as we grow in the knowledge and understanding Of God.

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?

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## Philippians chapter 4.

Introduction. A teaching principle. If you hear it retention is low 30%. If you hear it and see it retention is 50+%. If you hear it, see it, and put it into practice the retention is 80+%.

Paul as in all his letters commences with the theological and finishes with the practical application of his teaching, how it applies to our lives. The putting into practice all that you have learned.

*Join together in following my example.....and just as you have us as a model,  
keep your eyes on those who live as we do. 3:17.*

*Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk,  
as you have us for a pattern. 3:17 NKJV*

*Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice.  
And the God of peace will be with you. 4:9.*

This should result in a stronger more mature church able to cope with all the pressures, difficulties, relational and strange circumstances that we the body of Christ will experience in this our pilgrimage on this Earth.

The day we received Jesus as our Saviour our lives changed, our attitude changed, our priorities changed, our focus changed, our activities changed, emotional, mental spiritual and physical being changed. There was a complete turnaround in our lives. We were born again by the Holy Spirit

*And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves  
but for him who died for them and was raised again.*

2 Cor 5:15 NIV

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:*

*The old has gone, the new is here!*

2 Cor 5:17. NIV.

Now this change is two fold:- Positional and progressive.

- (a) **Positional.** When we are “born again” there is a change in our position. Our sins are washed away. Positionally we become “perfect” in Christ. We once were sinners estranged from God. But we have as yet we not reached complete perfection... One day soon! Amen!

Meanwhile:-

*“and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. <sup>13</sup> For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins”. Col 1:12-14. NIV*

- (b) **Progressive.** When we are “born again” our position in Christ is perfect. We are not separate from Him any longer, but our walk with God is now progressive. As Paul records in 3:12.

*Not that I have already attained, **or am already perfected**; but I press on,  
that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.*

*This also we wish for: even that you were perfect. (New Matthew Bible) 2 Cor 13:9.*

*“this we also pray for, even your perfecting”. ASV. American Standard Bible.*

*“We also pray that you might become fully mature” (complete/restored).  
Holman’s Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)*

*We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord  
and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory;  
this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

CSB. Christian Standard Bible. 2 Cor 3:18.  
(1John 3:2-3, Romans chapters 6-8.)

The world's focus is short sighted,

*"They are focused on earthly things" 3:19b.*

The Christian's focus is on a higher realm,

*"But our citizenship is in heaven" 3:20.*

- Speaking the heavenly language of Joy.
  - Realizing source of your Joy..... Phil 1:6; Acts 13:52; Rom 14:17.
  - Renewing your Joy.....Phil 3:7-9; Lk11:3
  - Overflowing in your Joy.....Phil 1:9:11; 2:13-15; Jn 15:11, Heb 10:24
  - Vocalizing your Joy..... Phil 1:14; John 15:27; Phil 4:4.
  - Resting in your Joy.....Phil 1:29-30; John 14:27.
  - Remain in your Joy..... Phil 2:5; John 15:3;7
  - Increasing your Joy.....Phil 1:25.
  - Fulfilment of Joy..... Phil 3:10.
  - Permanence of your Joy..... Phil 1:6; John 16:22.
  - Completion of Joy..... Phil 3:20-21; John 15:11.
  - Contentment of Joy.....Phil 4:11-12.
  - Assurance of Joy.....Phil 4:19.
- ✓ Everything that happens to us is" filtered" through our Joy.
  - ✓ Every circumstance is gauged by our Joy.
  - ✓ Every negative thought is taken captive by our Joy,
  - ✓ Our reaction to these situations, tests the quality of our Joy (*I want to know Christ 3:10*).

As we springboard into chapter four from this scripture, that is the ultimate **fulfilment of our Joy**.

*But we are citizens of heaven and are eagerly waiting for our Saviour to come from there.  
Our Lord Jesus Christ<sup>21</sup> has power over everything, and he will make these poor bodies of ours  
like his own glorious body. Phil 3:20-21.  
Contemporary English Version. (CEV)*

Meanwhile not just citizens but "special representatives" of the Heavenly Kingdom as Paul calls believers,

*We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.  
We implore you on Christ's behalf: be reconciled to God. 2 Cor 5:20.*

Anticipation is threefold..."Waiting", in anticipation of the "fulness" "completion" of our Joy.  
Or if you like the Final Miracle.....Changed into His likeness.

- (a)The Return of the Lord Jesus. ....Mt 24:36-44; Lk17:26-36; Acts 1:11.
- (b)The Resurrection of our bodies. ....1 Cor 15:51-57; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.
- (c)The Renewing into likeness of His Glorious Body...1 Cor 15:49;51-52;1John 3:2.

*Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for,  
my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends! v1.*

No wonder he says,

*"Rejoice in the Lord always" v4.*

Keep the unity.

*"Let your gentleness be evident to all"*

Peter talks about the evidence of our spiritual life and Christlikeness. 2 Peter 1:3-9

He refers back to chapter one verse 27-29, Living your life in a manner worthy of the Gospel, the need to address the way we live, and react to each other. Making sure they are standing firm in one spirit and one mind. This unity was the testimony to unbelievers of their impending judgement but of our deliverance.

There appears to be some “tension” between Euodia and Syntyche, and his advice to help these woman (to agree) who have worked alongside Paul in the Gospel with Clement and other co-workers. Whose names are in the Book of Life.

The Book of Life is mentioned eight times in the NIV,  
Psalm 69:28. Rev 3:5. 13:8; 17:8; 20:12;15. 21:27.

In the Bible particularly in New Testament there is this mention of a book, a “record” of all who have responded to the Gospel of grace. Your name is in the “book” then he encourages them to **vocalize their “Joy”** in the Lord by **rejoicing**.

This is the result/fruit of their hope in Christ.

*“Let your graciousness be known to everyone”. v4*

Resulting from their inner conviction and witness of the Holy Spirit that,

*“The Lord is near” v5.*

Verses 6-7.

*“Don’t worry about **anything**, in **everything** give thanks”*

**A wayside pulpit.** *“Worry is a rocking horse it gets you nowhere”*

Your mind is your command centre, so this will be under constant attack 24/7. We live in a very visual world that “feeds” our mind negative things. In today’s parlance the expression would be “virtual signalling”.

For the Christian, the Bible speaks a lot about the mind.

*“Do not conform to the pattern of this world,  
(That will destroy our joy)  
but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Rom 12:2.  
(The continual **renewing of your Joy**)*

*“Set your minds on things above” Col 3:2.*

*“ but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. <sup>15</sup> Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death”. James 1:14-15.*

*“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. <sup>5</sup> We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we **take captive every thought** to make it obedient to Christ”.  
2 Cor 10:14-15.*

Now this is a constant battle we must win 2 Tim 1:7 informs us we have the ability,

*For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid,  
but gives us power, love and **self-discipline**. NIV UK.*

*“In Everything”* by prayer, petition, and thanksgiving, talking to Lord as He is the only One who can “fix” whatever it is that comes against us, and causes us to worry.

- Often the solution eludes (whether its thoughts, actions, etc) us because we want to take it into our own hands.
- The solution is quite clear, we give it to God and trust Him.

- Then the peace of God comes in.....Oh the Joy.

NOTE. The thoughts being made captive creates a realm in your mind for the peace of God to reign.

*The peace of God surpassing every thought.  
Guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

*Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. Prov 4:23.*

Now we know the procedure there is the need to continue in the “Joy” vs 8-9. Paul advises us to reflect on the quality things that develop your relationship with God and  
**maintains the minds stability and peace of, and with God.**

- Whatever is True.....honourable....just....pure....lovely....commendable....moral excellence....and if there is any praise.... **dwell** on these things. Not on the things that are going on around you in the world.....meditate on Godly things.
- Something external to focus upon. Paul says use my example of how I handle my circumstances, or what I taught you, or what you saw me do. 3:17;4:9.

**And the God of peace will be with you.**

Paul’s joy in the Lord for their “**overflowing joy**” of their care for him. They may not have had opportunity recently v10. But none the less he has learned a valuable lesson whether he has little or too much he has the “**contentment of Joy**” vs11-12.

He is able to qualify the statement that, (although they did help him in his hardship)

*”I can do all things.....  
through Christ who strengthens me”*

Paul comments that from the earliest days of his ministry they were the only church that came to his aid on several occasions. He thanks them for their generosity received by Epaphroditus and calls it a “fragrant offering” “an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God” v18. Not that he sought a gift from them but does seek the “profit” that will be recorded against them in the heavenlies. v17.

Perhaps he is thinking ahead to the Bema Seat of Christ as recorded in 1 Cor 3:9-15.

We might call this closing verse the “**Assurance of Joy**” 4:19.

*And my God will meet all your needs  
according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.*

**Note:-**

The promise is to supply our “needs” not wants. It is not the doctrine of the false prosperity preachers. The “Name it and claim it”, or “Blab it and grab it”. Our needs are met according to “His riches in glory”, not out of His riches.

He knows our needs. If you are fulfilling your walk with God as per the Scriptures. He will never see you short. A verse that has become more precious to me as I get older, Psalm 37:25.

*I was young and now I am old,  
yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken  
or their children begging bread.*

We close, as Paul does giving thanks to God that He may receive all the glory forever and ever. Greet the saints, those who are with me send greetings to you. We note the Gospel has “invaded” many places especially those in Caesar’s household,

*the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [is] with you all. Amen.  
Young’s Literal Translation. YLT.*