

Joy in Philippians

David Marsh, July 27, 2025

1. Introduction

- a. We've been away a month. Being back with you at Wayside brings me...JOY!
 - i. Saying the word (2 syllables) captures some of its essence
 - ii. Who doesn't want more!
 - iii. Anyone having too much?
 - 1. Happiness => Ice cream cone
 - 2. Joy, Fruit of the Spirit, which requires time, effort, God
- b. Philippians overflows with joy.
 - i. Gk for joy: *chara* (haRA); Rejoice: *chairō* (HYAro); vs. enjoy
 - ii. Bible's most "joy-dense" book. Next Psalms, Isaiah
 - iii. Paul, a **serious** man and a **prisoner** (What is special about prison letters?)

2. Philippians refresher

- a. Philippian church planted on Paul's 2nd missionary trip (Acts 16), a key event: Paul's **jailing**, praying, praising, escaping...
- b. Paul wrote to the church in Philippi ~ AD 60 a decade later, while in **prison** probably in Rome.
- c. Philippians packed with scripture "favorites" (which are yours?); we will only touch on some
- d. My purpose: to examine circumstances of joy that pepper Philippians to better understand it
 - i. Hint: Christian joy sees wider/deeper/further than world
 - ii. 10 passages! In the interest of time...
 - 1. I will make only a few observations on each
 - 2. I will condense some passages (I will indicate)

3. 10 "Joy" passages

- a. 1:3-6 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with **joy**, ⁵ because of your partnership in the **gospel** from the first day until now.
⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of **Jesus Christ**.
 - i. **Partnership in the gospel**—*koinonia*: fellowship, communion, sharing, participation
 - ii. Not just a point in time partnership, but special
 - 1. Quantitatively no loss ("from first day until now"); no snatching (Jn 10)
 - 2. Qualitatively complete on the day of Christ: "Golden Chain" (Ro 8)
 - iii. An on-going joy for Paul since it accompanies each repeated prayer
- b. 1:12, 15-18a ¹²I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me [i.e., imprisonment] has really served to advance the gospel,... ¹⁵Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. ¹⁶The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁷The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. ¹⁸What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, **Christ** is proclaimed, and in that I **rejoice**.
 - i. **Christ proclaimed!**

- ii. More than information. Gospel has power
 - 1. 1 Thess 1:4 “...our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction...”
 - 2. Ro 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes
- c. 1:18b-19, 23b-25 ^{18b}Yes, and I **will rejoice**, ¹⁹for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of **Jesus Christ** this will turn out for my deliverance...^{23b}My desire is to depart and be with **Christ**, for that is far better. ²⁴But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. ²⁵Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and **joy** in the faith...
 - i. Double joy in near future because...
 - ii. **Philippians’ Christ-mediated praying => heard => answered as deliverance**
 - 1. God’s plan over-riding his preference
 - iii. Philippians’ progress and **joy in the faith**
 - iv. Positive feedback loop of joy begetting joy
- d. 2:1-2, 4-5 So if there is any encouragement in **Christ**, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ²complete my **joy** by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind... ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in **Christ Jesus**
 - i. What follows: hymn of humiliation (emptied, form of servant) => exaltation (every knee)
 - ii. Rhetorical command, grammatically conditional, but...
 - iii. Paul’s future joy: once Philippians achieve **unity, love and humility** following Christ’s example, upon letting out the clutch on this power train of sanctification
 - iv. Smile: “complete”—no endpoint to Christian’s joy.
 - 1. *pleroo* can mean “supply”
- e. 2:12b-18 Therefore...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is **God** who works in you, both to **will** and to work for his good pleasure. ¹⁴ Don’t grumble...don’t dispute, ¹⁵ ...be **blameless**,...be innocent... without blemish ... shine as lights in the **world**, ¹⁶ hold fast to the word of life... ¹⁷ Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the **sacrificial** offering of your faith, I am glad and **rejoice** with you all. ¹⁸ Likewise you also should be glad and **rejoice** with me.
 - i. Ro 12:1-2 “I appeal to you **therefore**, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as **a living sacrifice**, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the **will of God**, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
 - ii. **Sacrificial offering of faith**, i.e., sanctification, do this, not that; elsewhere, put off this, put on that
 - iii. Even to the point of Paul’s disintegration (death) “poured out” upon that offering
 - iv. Infectious joy: “...I rejoice with you...you rejoice with me...”

Joy re-cap

- Philippians' partnership
- Christ proclaimed
- Answered prayer & Philippians' faith
- Philippians' unity, love, humility (Christ's mind)
- Philippians' and Paul's sacrificial faith

9

- f. 2:27-30a ²⁷ Indeed he [Brother Epaphroditus] was ill, near to death. But **God** had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. ²⁸ I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may **rejoice** at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. ²⁹ So receive him in the Lord with **all joy**, and honor such men, ³⁰ for he nearly died for the work of **Christ**, risking his life...
- i. **Seeing him again**, yes and through eyes of faith
 - 1. Perceiving **God's mercy**
 - 2. He risked his life **for the work of Christ**
 - ii. All joy: hyperbole
- g. 3:1a, 2-3 Finally, my brothers, **rejoice** in the **Lord**... ² Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. ³ For we are the circumcision, who worship by the **Spirit of God** and glory in **Christ Jesus** and put no confidence in the flesh.
- i. As if winding up his letter with a summary call to rejoice **in the Lord** (only)
 - 1. Both the what (Lord and Lord alone) and the how (in the Lord, High Priestly prayer for church Jn 17)
 - ii. Which may have reminded him of those for whom the Lord is not enough, who put confidence in the flesh
 - 1. Vs. *solus Christus*
 - iii. Which reminds him of his former self who HAD confidence in the flesh => lengthy aside into his past as alpha predator and powerful persecutor
 - 1. Worldly gain = loss for the sake of Christ
- h. 4:1 Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my **joy** and crown, stand firm thus in the **Lord**, my beloved.
- i. **Brothers (and sisters) in the Lord** equated with joy
 - ii. Crown: a public symbol of joy and/or accomplishment both now and in glory
 - 1. 1 Thess 2:19 For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?
- i. 4:4-8 ⁴ **Rejoice** in the **Lord** always; again I will say, **rejoice**. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The **Lord** is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to **God**. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in **Christ Jesus**. ⁸ Finally,

brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

- i. Repeated rejoicing! Biblical emphasis
- ii. Perhaps looking to the remarkable commands and promises that follow
 - 1. Not anxiety, but peace (another fruit), etc.
- iii. Or perhaps—now he knows he's really wrapping up—he's just overwhelmed with JOY
- j. 4:10, 17 ¹⁰ I **rejoiced** in the **Lord** greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.
 - i. Not for the gift (which was a blessing).
 - ii. Not even for the generous heart attitude (also a blessing)
 - iii. But **for the credit** that redounds to their favor, clearly in future (heaven), but could be in the here and now as the world sees how lovers of Jesus behave or both

Joy re-cap

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Partnership | 6. Healed brother |
| 2. Christ proclaimed | 7. In the Lord |
| 3. Prayer & faith | 8. Local church |
| 4. Unity, love, humility | 9. In the Lord PLUS |
| 5. Sacrificial faith | 10. Gift & giver's credit |

15

4. So, joy in Philippians: Summary

- a. When? And Why?
 - i. Christ proclaimed
 - ii. His church
 - iii. Its partnership, prayer, sanctification, unity, humility, fruit, heavenly credit, suffering, risking death
 - iv. Healing
- b. How?
 - i. When specified: in the Lord (cf , Jn 17)
- c. Reminder: seeing wider/deeper/further (mind of Christ)
- d. And finally, WHAT is JOY? => brief detour (like Paul)

5. Joy-impaired people

- a. Examples
 - i. Euodia and Syntyche (4:2)...[co-laborers who don't yet] agree in the Lord
 - ii. False helpers (2:21): ...seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ

- iii. Insincere preachers (1:17) ...proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment.
- iv. Judaizers (3:2): ... who mutilate the flesh.
- v. Enemies of the cross (3:19): Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.

b. Observe

- i. Paul's conversion gives hope to any
- ii. Scripture imparts godliness by command, exhortation, precept, example—both positive and negative
- iii. Joy is resilient among the joyless

6. So WHAT is JOY, tentative definitions

- a. Bible has more to say—but we have enough to take a stab.
 - i. Without consulting experts...
- b. A Jesus-focused; Spirit-mediated; settled and continuous peace, confidence and gladness; independent of worldly circumstance; sometimes with exuberance; often shared; in the working out, fruitfulness and victory of God's Kingdom.
- c. Our soul's response to wanting, receiving, having, and sharing the greatest treasure, Jesus (and His Spirit/soul)
 - i. Soul = will, emotion, intellect
 - ii. Accounts for different manifestations
- d. You try!

7. Application

- a. Longer term: ultimately gaining mind of Christ
 - i. Treasure Jesus => Joy
 - 1. Phil 4:8-9a Indeed, I count **everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord**. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him...
 - 2. Pearl of great price
 - ii. Joy is a fruit => abide in the source of grape's nourishment
 - 1. John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.
- b. Today
 - i. Pause and ponder scriptural "joy, joyous, joyful, rejoice"
 - 1. Look for analogous settings here
 - a. Making Christ known
 - b. Missionaries lives and letters
 - c. Answered prayer, healing
 - d. Baptism, Lord's Supper
 - e. Growth in new believers, the disciples
 - ii. Examine our own lives,
 - 1. Our blessings and their source
 - 2. Cultivate thankfulness, gratefulness

- iii. Identify and spend time with the joyful in our midst
 - 1. Those who treasure and abide in Jesus; 2 pastors
- iv. Share joy
 - 1. Gently encourage those who are downcast
- v. Remember when I said being among **you brought me joy**?
 - 1. Long game we play: long, wide, deep, joyful
- vi. All people said “Amen”—some quietly, some exuberantly

Benediction: Romans 15:13 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.