

Find Joy - In Life

Today we're starting a series from the letter to the Philippians called "Find Joy".

In Philippians we find Paul in a Roman prison and while imprisoned, he writes this letter that people call "the letter of joy."

Do you know that in Christ, it is your spiritual right to have joy in all circumstances? This is one of the most underutilized and overlooked blessings that Jesus gave His people.

Think about this.....because of the work on the cross, when we accept Jesus as Savior and Lord, we are forgiven of our sin and given His righteousness. And this makes peace with God because we are brought back near.....but look at this verse and tell me what we often miss...

Romans 14:17 (NKJV)

for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but **righteousness** and **peace** and **joy** in the Holy Spirit.

If you have righteousness and peace with God but no joy in the Holy Spirit.....you'll be miserable!

Because you'll believe you are saved and that Jesus is on your side, but the circumstances of life, all the junk you have to deal with will continue to drag you down and you'll miss out on the abundant life that He has for you....you'll miss it....because you'll always be looking at something else instead of Jesus!

Look at what Jesus told the disciples before He goes to the cross:

John 16:22 (NKJV)

Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.

Wow.....what a promise.....first, when you see Jesus your heart will rejoice.....but on top of that no one will take your joy from you....NO ONE!

How many of you let people steal your joy? Be honest now.... (someone cuts you off in traffic, says something you don't like, at the last of the bacon, sits in your seat at church). You know it happens....

I thought Jesus said it wouldn't? They don't take it from you, you give it up. You exchange it for anger, disappointment, sadness, misery....

Romans 15:13 (NKJV)

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

I want this.....filled with ALL joy and peace in believing! Because I want to abound (flourish, thrive) in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit!

Church, this is the icing on the cake, scratch that....it's the sugar in the cake mix and the icing. It's what makes what Jesus did so sweet!

You can have joy in your life no matter what satan throws at you....and no matter what mess you make for yourself....this is just another thing that sets Christianity apart from all other religions.....empty grave, risen Lord, righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit!

Let's get into this letter....and see how we can find joy in life!

Philippians 1:1-2 (NKJV)

Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ,
To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:
2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul starts with this little nugget.....to the whole church, even the leaders....here's what is so special about you.....you have a relationship with God, one that is full of grace and peace!

Philippians 1:3 (NKJV)

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you

I want you to look at this wording, from a man who is in prison. "I thank my God". See prayer should get personal. That's your God you are speaking to. You aren't speaking to someone else's God....He's yours!

This is the foundation of finding joy. Knowing that even if your circumstances are the worst they could possibly be.....He's still God.....and He's still YOUR God!

Is there anything too big for our God?
Any situation He can't handle?
Any hurt that He can't heal?
Any bad that He can't turn to good?

Then you can have joy knowing Jesus is your God....a God of hope....a waymaker....

Philippians 1:4-5 (NKJV)

always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, 5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,

You know Paul was great right? He was used to reach so many people in so many places....but have you ever thought about the help he must have had? He did....

When Paul prays to His God, he makes requests with all joy for those who partnered with him in the gospel.....for all who supported him, loved him, encouraged him, provided for him, labored with him.....

He prays for them with all joy because he finds joy in knowing that he is not alone. He finds joy knowing that His God is big but so are the people of God who have the Spirit of God in them!

Consider what others have done in your life....especially those who supported you spiritually.....guys this is why church is so important....like it or not, we need each other!

Look around....do you thank your God for these people, do you pray for them with all joy? If not you should start!

Not only that but make sure you are living your life in a way to be a blessing to others and they will be thankful for YOU! Are you giving others a reason to thank God for you, to pray for you with all joy? If not, maybe something needs to change! (everyone can't be a taker....)

Philippians 1:6 (NKJV)

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 is one of my favorite verses in the bible.....(** read again)

Do you believe that Jesus has begun something in you?
Do you know what that thing is? Salvation.

When it says He has begun a good work in you, it means to make a beginning. Where is your past? It's gone....when Jesus begins this work, salvation, it's your beginning.

Have you seen God start on something and then bail out? If I know anything about God it's that He is persistent. He doesn't give up. When He begins something, He completes it!

"Begin with the end in mind." - Stephen Covey

I love this quote.....it's to encourage us but it shows us how God sees us as well....

He began saving you and He is going to complete it....you are a work in progress!

But don't use that as an excuse. You being a work in progress doesn't mean you can live a life of sin or dismiss any mistakes you make.

Your spirit man is not a sinner.....he's a saint! Because you are complete in Christ!

Colossians 2:10 (NKJV)

and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

Spiritually speaking, the work has been done. It is finished. But your soul is still being saved, He's still working on that and He will continue to until that day when your salvation is completed....and you get a glorified body too!

1 Corinthians 1:8 (NKJV)

who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Can you find some joy knowing that the Holy Spirit is in you and He's gaining ground in the spiritual battle in your soul? He is sanctifying you. He is making you more like Jesus. It's a process.....find joy in the fact that He's not going to quit until the job is done!

Philippians 1:7-8 (NKJV)

just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. 8 For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.

Paul is expressing a deep love for the people here. He loves them with the affection of Jesus. It's part of the evidence of the last verse....the Holy Spirit at work in Paul.

Do you remember that Paul had hate for Christians before his own conversion? Now....he loves them with the love of God!

Why? Because when we are exposed to the love of God, when it makes sense to us it changes how we feel, how we think, what we say, what we do.....

We can go from hate to love in an instant.

And the reason we can do that? "We love because he first loved us" (John 4:18)

Find joy in your love for people. It's the most God-like thing you can do. Tell it and show it...it's one of the most powerful things you can express in life.

Philippians 1:9 (NKJV)

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment,

Do you know how to get that love to abound (flourish, thrive)? Knowledge and discernment.

The bible. If you want to love with the love of God you've got to be rooted in the truth of His Word!

Not only that but you've got to be regulated by this Word. It's got to be your starting point but it also has to be what you keep coming back to and measuring up against!

You ever built something out of lumber? I remember I was once taught to measure twice, cut once. Why? To be sure. I'm less likely to make a mistake. I measure before I cut...sometimes I measure again after I cut just to be sure, what if I'm not quite there yet?

And I never assume a measurement. Yesterday I was dealing with 6 eight foot boards and two needed cut in half. The problem was the first board was 96 1/4 but the second was 96 3/4. I was making a box, they all needed to be the same. If I would have assumed and just cut with the same measurement I made last time I would have had one board that was too long.

How often do you just assume you are good but never measure up to God's standard? You may need to check and check again. You thrive in love when you know this Word and when you have discernment (you know how to use it)

Find Joy in God's Word, in learning it, in using it....

Philippians 1:10 (NKJV)

that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ,

You need that knowledge and discernment to thrive in love but also to test things that are excellent....so you can be sincere.

This means genuine. Anyone like being a fake? Who wants to be genuine?

This Greek word for sincere means without wax. In the ancient world, dishonest potters would fill cracks in their pottery with wax and then put the glaze or paint on them. There was only one way to really know if the pottery was good. They held it up to the sun and the wax would show or maybe even begin to melt...

So legit dealers would mark their good pottery "without wax" it was genuine, sincere.

What do you look like when you are held up to God's Son? Are you without wax? You can be if you get in that bible...

Philippians 1:11 (NKJV)

being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Here's what that means, the fruit that righteousness produces.

What kind of fruit do the branches of an apple tree produce?

How about a cherry tree?

A pear tree?

What about the branches that are connected to Jesus the true vine? Righteousness

All of this concludes with a life where we produce the character of Jesus to the world around us.

There's not much that satisfies like when you show others who Jesus is through your life.....and it gives glory to Him. We know that it's that same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead that dwells in you and produces the fruit of the Spirit.

That's when you really find joy in life, when you live the life of righteousness that is connected to Jesus.....

Stop trying to find joy in:

Getting high, piling up \$, getting drunk, putting down others, sexual outside marriage,

None of those things lead to unending joy, your spiritual right!

Find Joy in:

Your God

You are not alone

The Holy Spirit is at work in you, He will complete it

Your love

Knowledge and Discernment

Sincere

Fruit of righteousness

Glorifying Jesus