

My Favorite Thing About PHILIPPIANS

Philippians 4:4-7
December 11, 2021

Philippi was a Greek city founded in **350 BC**. In **86 BC**, it became a Roman colony. Although a relatively small city, Philippi had 2 significant advantages: it was a major seaport and it was located on a major trade route.

In about **52 AD** Paul came to Philippi and a church was established there.

As we know, by **62 AD**, Paul was imprisoned in Rome and it is from his prison cell that he wrote to the believers in Philippi. The tone of the letter is decidedly different from the other letters Paul had written. He does not spend time defending himself nor does he deal with some major theological crisis. It is a letter full of joy and tenderness.

My Favorite Thing About PHILIPPIANS is ----- Paul's emphasis on Joy / Rejoicing.

Remember that Paul was not on a beach somewhere sipping a drink with an umbrella in it when he wrote this letter, he was a prisoner. His circumstances were unpleasant, his enemies were trying to undermine his work and his death could occur at any moment and yet, he chose joy.

Joy is a biblical concept, but we have come to see joy as the absence of sadness or hardship - tying it directly to external circumstances. But notice these verses:

- **2 Corinthians 8:1-2** - And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ² Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing **joy** and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.
- **Hebrews 12:2** - Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the **joy** set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
- **James 1:2-4** - Consider it pure **joy**, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. ⁴ Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Certainly, in Paul's experience, joy was not found in the absence of pain and suffering, but in spite of it. Who can forget all that he had endured:

- **2 Corinthians 6:4-10** - but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵ beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶ by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, ⁷ truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸ in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ⁹ as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see -- we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; ¹⁰ as sorrowful, yet **always rejoicing**; as poor, yet making many **rich**; as having nothing, and yet **possessing everything**.
- **2 Corinthians 11:21b-12:10** - What anyone else dares to boast about -- I also dare to boast about. ²² Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I. ²³ Are they servants of Christ? I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. ²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, ²⁶ I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. ²⁷ I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. ²⁸ Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. ²⁹ Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn? ³⁰ If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. ³¹ The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is to be praised forever, knows that I am not lying. ³² In Damascus the governor had the city guarded in order to arrest me. ³³ But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands. To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

And so, to the little church in Philippi, with death hanging over him, Paul wrote about joy. He rejoiced:

- When He remembered them:
 - **Philippians 1:3-6** - I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with **joy** ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.
- Because Christ was being preached:
 - **Philippians 1:15-18** - It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. ¹⁶ The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁷ The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. ¹⁸ But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I **rejoice**.
- Because the believers were growing in Jesus:
 - **Philippians 2:1-2** - If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my **joy** complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.
- In his personal sacrifice:
 - **Philippians 2:17-18** - But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am **glad** and **rejoice** with all of you. ¹⁸ So you too should be **glad** and **rejoice** with me.

Paul's final thoughts begin with urging a spirit of unity between 2 members:

- **Philippians 4:2-3** - I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. ³ Yes, and I ask you, loyal companion, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

But then, he quickly returned to joy as he now encourages the believers to rejoice:

- **Philippians 4:4-9** - **Rejoice** in the Lord always. I will say it again: **Rejoice!** ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with **thanksgiving**, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable -- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy -- think about such things. ⁹ 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.

Throughout the entire letter Paul expressed joy and faith in sharp contrast to the circumstances he was facing. His personal experience teaches a vital truth – it is possible to have joy and contentment no matter what life throws our way:

- **Philippians 4:11-13** - I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be **content** whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being **content** in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Paul's joy was anchored in Jesus – not in circumstances – therefore:

- Joy – when the world has turned against you.
- Joy – when life is broken.
- Joy – when sickness and even death threaten to derail you.
- Joy – when loneliness threatens to overwhelm you.
- Joy – in the darkest night or deepest valley.

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”

That's why **JOY** is **My Favorite Thing About PHILIPPIANS**.